ARTS COUNCIL ENGLAND

Minutes
English Public Libraries Stakeholder Working Group (EPL)

Date	Tuesday 9th May 2023
Time	15:00 – 17:00
Location	Virtual Meeting

Present:	Luke Burton	Director, Libraries, Arts Council England (ACE) (Chair)
	Alison Hoolihan	Officer, Libraries Development Team, ACE
	Isobel Hunter	Chief Executive, Libraries Connected
	Sophie Lancaster	Senior Manager, Libraries, ACE
	Lauren Lucas	Advisor – Culture, Tourism and Sport, Local Government Association (LGA)
	Iain Moore	Commercial Director, Libraries Connected
	Adam Tulloch	Chief Executive, ASCEL
	Kelly Saini Badwal	Head of Cultural Services, London Borough of Sutton
	Liz White	Head of Public Libraries and Engagement, British Library (BL)
	Sue Wells	CEO, Lincs Inspire
	Sue Wills	Assistant Director Arts, Culture & Libraries Surrey County Council
Guest:	Annette French	Project Manager, Libraries Accreditation Scheme (ACE)
	Annabel Gittens	Chair, ASCEL
Apologies:	Prof. Steven Broomhead	Chief Executive, Warrington Borough Council

Nick Poole	Chief Executive, CILIP, The UK library and information association
Chris Neath	Community Managed Libraries Peer Network (CML)

	Action

1. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

1.1 Luke Burton welcomed everyone to the meeting and apologies were noted.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

2.1 There were no interests to declare.

3. ASCEL INTRODUCTIONS

3.1 Luke introduced Adam Tulloch and Annabel Gittens from ASCEL to the group. ASCEL is a new IPSO and will be a member of EPL moving forward. Annabel, the chair of ASCEL, explained that they are a newly formed charity and are in the process of expanding their board from 6 member trustees to 15. Adam is the newly recruited CEO of the organisation and gave details of ASCEL's priorities over the coming months including team recruitment, establishing a youth engagement network of up to 120 children and young people, convening a CYP Alliance, skills development for staff within the sector, developing research, and training and induction for the ASCEL board and team.

3.2 Liz offered introductions to the BL Communities and Engagement team, and Lauren offered to connect Adam with LGA's CYP colleagues and extended an invite to the LGA Cultural Education event happening later in May.

3.3 Sue Wills updated the group on the £15m investment in CYP services in Surrey and invited ASCEL to test out the co-creation and consultation that will take place with children and young people as part of the investment.

4. THEORY OF CHANGE

4.1 Luke addressed feedback shared by the group in the last EPL meeting regarding the Theory of Change document and reiterated that it is an internal tool for EPL to use to focus its work and direction of travel. Luke acknowledged that allyship is not addressed in the current model

and that this is an issue that should not be rush and so will be revisited by the group.

4.2 Isobel stated that the workplan needs to highlight two to three priorities in order to achieve focus.

4.3 Kelly noted that there should be joined up working across the sector on equality, diversity, and inclusion, rather than each stakeholder trying to address it separately.

4.4 Sue Wills added that all Heads of Service are facing financial issues currently and so data work to demonstrate impact is key. Luke agreed and added that data will be a key focus in the Baroness Sanderson report. Liz agreed that data should be a priority in the model and also suggested that the group should consider what needs to be in place to achieve each priority and to sequence the priorities. Kelly stated that the resources needed should be put against each piece of work such as funding.

4.5 Lauren noted that advocacy and communication is key and underpins the work of EPL, and that data and evidence is needed for advocacy to take place.

4.6 Sue Wills added that workforce development is also key given that a trained workforce needs to know how to interpret data and use it effectively. Advocacy skills for staff are also crucial.

4.7 Luke summed up by noting that the workplan should be prioritised to make it a useful document and then added to the monthly agenda as a standing item. Isobel also suggested that work carried out collectively should be differentiated in the plan.

4.8	**ACTION: Luke and LDT to update plan with suggestions and transfer to a working document for the monthly agenda.**	**LUKE BURTON / LDT**

5 STOCK CENSORSHIP

5.1 Luke introduced the issue of stock and content censorship following a Guardian article centring on a CILIP survey on stock removal, and recent issues faced by Stuart Hamilton (Head of Libraries Development at the Local Government Management Agency in Ireland). Luke asked if it would be useful for the group to have a coordinated understanding on this issue.

5.2 Isobel informed the group that Libraries Connected had recently hosted a webinar on controversial content for library staff. They took a cautious approach in order to maintain a safe space for staff attending. LC have also drafted a statement following the piece in The Guardian.

Isobel highlighted that LC are trying to take a flexible approach to this issue as libraries can very often get caught in the middle.

5.3 Luke reminded the group about CILIP's draft guidance on Managing Safe and Inclusive Public Library Services, soon to be completed. Isobel noted that this guidance will be very much welcomed by libraries. Isobel also highlighted a general concern around the importance of libraries being neutral spaces.

5.4 Luke noted that the legislative regulations within the guidance will be useful for Heads of Service but we need to be aware of political push back from Councils around censorship and stock removal. Sophie offered to share the draft guidance with the Heads of Service Sounding Board.

5.5 Isobel informed the group that she sits on the IFLA public libraries board which is also having conversations about this issue and who have just released the IFLA-UNESCO Public Library Manifesto 2022.

Luke asked the group to share their organisation's statements about this issue if they are happy to and asked them to consider if an EPL statement would be useful.

5.6 **ACTION: Members to share statements relating to stock censorship** — **ALL**

6 MEMBER UPDATES

6.1 **DATA – STRAND 1**

Iain – Key stakeholders are currently agreeing a PID with ACE to fund this project. Strand 1 of the project will see data collected for 22/23 on a monthly basis, with schemas that align with CIPFA. There will be a draft report following this and then full data at the end of the year to allow for comparative analysis. Strand 2 of the project will result in an interrogative dashboard of library data by the end of 2023/24.

6.2 **LIBRARIES CONNECTED**

Isobel – The ACE funded Regional Development project is about to recruit for two managers who will work with the 9 regions across England help them deliver at scale, and to build on each region's strength. The managers will also represent each region at key sector meeting and for key overarching issues such as digital exclusion.

6.3 **LGA**

Lauren – The ACE/LGA improvement programme continues to be rolled out, with 5 remaining library peer challenges. There is a Culture

Commission follow on session in Wigan to discuss the Cultural Development Plan. The local elections have just taken place and a statement will follow from LGA on how this affects its governance structure.

6.4 **BRITISH LIBRARY**

Liz - The LibraryOn grants are now at stage 2 of the process, following submissions from libraries. The Living Knowledge Network's Chinese In Britain exhibition has now ended with the panels having visited 68 libraries. The First Lady of Ukraine visited BL and Ukrainian books, with the support of BL, across the UK.

6.5 **ARTS COUNCIL ENGLAND**

Sophie - Libraries Improvement Fund round 3 is now open for EOIs from libraries. This is a funding pot of £10.3m. ACE Project Grants are always open and it would be good to encourage more library applications. The Basic Dataset, with 100% returns, is now complete and waiting for final clearance before publication.

7. ACCREDITATION

7.1 Annette presented to the group, going through the benefits of accreditation, the problems that accreditation will solve for libraries, and examining the question of why libraries should apply, along with what accreditation will mean for staff, local authorities, ACE, and library users and non-users.

7.2 Kelly noted that accreditation will help with staff recruitment as it will help to distinguish the library service to future recruits.

7.3 Lauren highlighted that, if the local authority has a strong library champion among its portfolio holders, then accreditation will create a good opportunity to progress the service.

7.4 Kelly suggested that accreditation will be useful to funders, as it could be seen as a carrot to apply. Also, libraries can't rely on funding from local authorities, they need to diversify funding which is a key part of the accreditation requirements and so will be driven forward by this.

7.5 Annabel added that accreditation will be used as a benchmark for service that want/need to improve, and also it will help to remind services who are accredited that there is something to lose so will help to maintain standards.

7.6 Isobel suggested looking at the benefits of museums and archives accreditation schemes, and that it is important for ACE to remain in touch with the sector to keep understanding the benefits of the scheme.

7.7 Kelly asked about the duration of the scheme. Annette updated that different modelling is currently being considered based on a lighter touch 3-year process or a more in depth 5-6 year process. Both schemes would have a series of recommendations at the end of the process along with terms and conditions to accept the award.

8. AOB

8.1 **GENERAL ELECTION**

Isobel suggested the group should share notes on their asks for the general election manifestos. LC have looked at a number of issues including building renovations. Luke agreed this was important, asking what comes after LIF? Luke also suggested looking at minimal digital living standards and asked what would the People's Network 2030 look like? Do libraries have the digital infrastructure in place to satisfy the requirements to offer a comprehensive digital service.

8.2 **BARONESS SANDERSON**

Luke - The research being undertaken by Baroness Sanderson is still ongoing. Baroness Sanderson is now finalising conversations and is planning an early draft of the public libraries strategy report.

Date and location of next meeting: Tuesday 13th June 2023, 15:00 – 17:00 Virtual Meeting.