

## **APPENDIX**

### Plymouth School Library Service- Peer Review 1/ 9/ 10 - Interim Paper

**Please note that this is an interim paper illustrating the key findings and recommendations. The final report will provide an executive summary, the national context, the background to the current review, the local context and sections on organisational management, finance and options for the future.**

#### **1. Executive Summary**

There are a number of factors affecting the viability of the Plymouth School Library Service (SLS) including pressures on school budgets leading to a reduction in “buy back” but it must be noted that 82% of Plymouth Schools still purchase the service. There is evidence to suggest that the service is valued by schools and there are examples of best practice. However in order to establish a robust business model Plymouth SLS needs to continue to ensure that it delivers against learning and achievement goals and can if required, re engineer the service to demonstrate how it support these outcomes. It would also be prudent to investigate other delivery models and costs including revisiting all internal service level agreements.

#### **2. Introduction**

As a result of the review planning process Plymouth School Library Service identified the following priority areas for discussion:

- 1. Sustainable service provision packages and ‘pick and mix’**
- 2. Staffing structure- current and future (subcontracting / casuals)**
- 3. Partnership working – business models/ other internal departments/ other authorities**

#### **3. Issues of concern**

For the purpose of this interim paper the key issues of concern identified by the reviewers have been grouped together with recommendations and where appropriate a link has been made to *School Libraries: A plan for improvement, a report by the School Library Commission*.

##### **3.1 Resources**

The Schools Library Service offers a core package and a “light package” giving half the borrowing entitlement at two thirds of the price. The SLS does not offer artefacts, multi media or e resources. The unique selling point (USP) of the SLS is the “book for life” and this is an excellent proposition to tempt schools to continue “buy back.” However the key challenge is how to continue to offer this USP, when budgetary constraints may lead to a reduction in the resources fund and the “light package” which is financially tempting for schools will ultimately result in less income.

## Recommendations:

- Think of the book fund as the resources fund. Artefacts multi media and e resources may need to be offered sooner rather than later.
- Explore the economic feasibility of using Devon's multi media resources with Plymouth getting a percentage cut from materials borrowed.
- With reference to e resources think in terms of regional SLS buy in e.g. JISC for schools.
- Explore the option of creating multi media packs with museums/ archives

This challenge concerning resources in all media correlates with the Commission's findings *"The need to tailor resources in the library to different audiences came through as a strong finding of the National Literacy Trust's research for the Commission. Their need for differentiated resources was a particularly significant trend. Young people's media consumption patterns and forms of accessing information as well as their behaviours and attitudes to reading are influenced by their age, gender, socioeconomic backgrounds and ethnicity"*

### 3.2. INSET (In SERVICE Training)

INSET training is currently not generating much income or demand from schools in Plymouth. However there is a need to reassess why and it would be prudent to use the leverage of the *School Libraries: A plan for improvement* (partnerships with planning and teaching) to re evaluate the training offer and seek support from Pupil and School Improvement, Head teachers and Governor Support to:

- *Recognise school library services as a cost effective way of providing expertise and skills around reading and information literacy to schools.*
- *Use them as local agencies of school improvement with a particular focus on improving literacy standards.*
- *Schools library services should have links to local authority governor support units and ensure an annual training opportunity relating to school libraries.*
- *A module in library management and children's reading should be available for all those teachers and teaching assistants who currently manage a school library.*

Plymouth delivered a very effective programme of Literature Matters: Inspirational Reading Spaces to trainee teachers at Marjon;

- To increase knowledge of children's books and libraries in ITT with particular reference to Diversity
- To increase confidence in promoting children's books and using libraries in ITT.
- to enhance the links between ITT providers and libraries and the literature sector.

## **Recommendation**

- This module and variations of it could be updated and offered to all teachers and teaching assistants who currently manage a school library. The content could be updated by working with the other School Library Services and sharing resources. This course of action would link into the Commissions recommendation, *“All providers of initial teacher training should make available modules or placement opportunities in school libraries. Where possible these should be offered in association with Higher Education Institutions who are offering courses in librarianship and information management.”*

### **3.3 Recharge**

The recharge costs for the SLS are 10% of the total budget. The main costs are for services supplied by the Library Service.

## **Recommendation**

- Revisit the senior management costs for the service including the strategic advice from the Public Library Service. It should be noted that the Manager Plymouth School Library Service is an SMT member and contributes to service wide issues.
- Review the transport arrangements in terms of customer survey feedback.
- Undertake a risk assessment of the impact on the Public Library Service if the School Library Service cannot meet SLA recharge costs.

### **3.4 Staffing**

Although the service has completed a staff restructure, further work needs to be undertaken to scope out the appropriate staff and roles that the service requires.

## **Recommendation**

- Review staff numbers and roles in light of current and future service delivery
- Revisit method of using advisory staff - it would be more cost effective for advisors to oversee clerical staff undertaking stock work in schools
- Revisit the ratio of senior staff to support staff posts

### **3.5 Future Business Models**

## **Recommendation**

- Given the current economic position it is prudent to model buyback for the next three years. Particularly, because at the end of March 2011, 11 schools are at the end of a 3 year contract and 10 are at the end of a 1 year contract. Big question is sustainability, “Some schools went for the “light” package once it was offered which suggests schools would be prepared to do with less” (SW)

- Need to rethink the secondary provision as it is more time intensive but there is greater income potential
- Consideration needs to be given to the possibility of shared services, cross border working, outsourcing and perhaps the role of volunteer to bring added value to the service. During our challenge the following ideas were discussed:
- Joint working with Cornwall – there is the need to explore the outcomes of the Cornwall School Library Service Review. Is there a business opportunity?
- Consider the impact/outcome of a partnership arrangement with Devon Learning and Development Partnership
- Consider the impact / outcome of an integrated service with Devon Learning and Development Partnership?
- Consider the possibility of a regional SLS offering agreed core services with local variation as required.

These suggestions relate to the Commissions findings that local authorities should *“support the service in looking at new business models which could enable them to diversify their services; provide better value for money and survive and thrive. In the future school library services will need to look at new governance arrangements which would allow them to operate in different and more flexible ways, diversifying their business and operating across local boundaries. These might include working as social enterprise arms of commercial companies and working with public libraries and other agencies to provide different types of reading support.”*

### **3.6 Marketing the Service**

*“The expansion of the academies programme, the creation of free schools and the end of the National Strategies means that this market will become increasingly complex. In response schools library services need to creatively respond to the commissioning environment and develop services that meet local needs”*

#### **Recommendation**

- On the web Plymouth School Library Service has the strap line “Empowering the individual learner” and then immediately talks about an integrated package and lists the offer, perhaps given the need to sell the service the focus should be on outcomes and then illustrate what the elements of the package can contribute. With reference to the School Libraries: A plan for improvement it would be prudent to make reference to “supporting teaching and learning” ( “Empowering the individual learner by supporting teaching and learning”)and then demonstrate how the SLS can do this:
  - supporting literacy *i.e. resources in all media for all abilities and interests..*
  - motivating children to love and enjoy reading – *e.g. themed collections for reader development, advice and help with running reading groups*
  - teaching children to access and use information and turn it into knowledge- *e.g. Information skills training for teachers/ librarians and other relevant INSET courses.*