

REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR LEISURE, CULTURE AND YOUNG PEOPLE

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Adult Public Library User Survey (PLUS)

The survey which ran between the period 8 to 20 October 2012 is a national model for surveying visitors aged 16 and over to public libraries. The survey focuses on various aspects of the library service, for example book and computer usage. It gives people the opportunity to voice their opinions about their local library, which in turn provides a useful service improvement tool.

The results are also used as indicators of satisfaction levels for benchmarking with authorities both regionally and nationally.

People aged 16 and over visiting libraries during the survey period were invited to participate.

Quality in Study Support and Extended Services (QiSS)

The Library and Information Service has successfully re-validated its QiSS kite mark, at established level, until 2015.

Quality in Study Support and Extended Services (QiSS) is a national accreditation scheme overseen by Canterbury Christ Church University on behalf of the Department of Education. It is an assessment programme, recognising quality in the provision of study support to children and young people. It is achievable to all organisations which regularly offer formal or informal learning opportunities to a required range and standard.

Blackburn with Darwen Library and Information Service first gained QiSS accreditation in 2009, as a provider of quality out-of-hours learning for 0 – 19 year olds.

Established recognition must “demonstrate a sustained commitment to improvement” and “increasing leadership of learning by young people.

Blackburn with Darwen is one of only two English library authorities to currently hold QiSS recognition.

Culture & Entertainment King George's Hall & Darwen Library Theatre

Both venues are maintaining the good start to the year. King George's Hall particularly is showing improved attendances and income due to increased bookings and Blakeys trade. One of the Christmas party nights has already sold out.

This next quarter sees the annual Comedy Festival with acts including Jimmy Carr, Alan Davies and the Hairy Bikers. The Panto season started in earnest with the public launch in October. Don't forget to book your tickets at the Box Office 0844-8471664.

BSF Community Use

The Council has successfully secured delivery of Community Use at four BSF schools (Darwen Vale HS, Pleckgate HS, Blackburn Central HS with Crosshills and Witton Park HS) for the next 3 years. The decision follows a successful evaluation of the Council's pilot operation of Community Use at Pleckgate High School which demonstrated significantly increased usage of the high quality facilities for sports activities as well as community activities and adult learning courses with community user feedback being very positive.

Community Use provision will be led by Culture, Leisure Sport and Young People with significant support provided through Sustainable Neighbourhood Services as well as input from other Council departments.

Museum Service

The Museum Service is the recipient of two grants from Arts Council England. Both are the result of partnership work between Pennine Lancashire's Heritage venues.

£3.5 million has been granted for a Museums and Schools programme over 3 years across Pennine Lancashire. Which means over £half a million will come into Blackburn with Darwen. The Pennine Lancashire museums are expected to work with 100 local schools, the national Sir John Soane museum and work with the Arts Council bridge organisation Curious Minds. This partnership aims to increase the number of high quality educational visits by schools in areas which currently have lower than average cultural engagement. Low cultural engagement is defined by low numbers of schools engaging with Artsmark. The programme also aims to reach places of greatest need, as indicated by a higher than national average level of free school meal take up.

Work will concentrate on designing school visits in partnership with the local schools, ensuring they complement and enhance the educational experience and curriculum. An activity plan for the partnership has been produced to cover our range of heritage specialisms and collections. This programme fast tracks the partnership plan for an integrated school museum offer.

The Strategic Funds Programme brings £300,000 for work across the Pennine Lancashire venues. The programme deals with the overarching strategy for shared museum activity that will occur in 2012-13. It adopts a visitor-focused approach to refine the narrative we communicate to visitors. It links the sites across the landscape to increase footfall from day trippers (particularly families) from 1 to 1.5 hour drive times and the local families that make up a core audience segment for the museums.

The Arts Council awarded the grant as they consider our work demonstrates an excellent approach to partnership working that leads to an improved offer for tourists and local families, as well as increased resilience for individual venues.

To back up their interest in our area Hedley Swain, Director of Museums for the Arts Council visited Blackburn Museum and some of the other museums involved in the partnership on 5 October.