

Equalities Monitoring – Services

H – Libraries

Annual Report - 2018-19



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1. Introduction

The library service has nine libraries located throughout the Borough. They provide a wide range of resources to their local communities and visitors to the area. These resources include books, e-books and e-magazines, spoken word CDs, DVDs, newspapers, free internet access via public computers, digital resources, photocopying, printing and scanning, plus a wide range of activities and events.

Residents and visitors to the area can apply for an e+ smartcard that acts as a membership card to access the resources. Each time the card is used a transaction is recorded to enable usage to be monitored.

The purpose of equalities monitoring is to ensure the Council is providing a fair and equitable service to all its residents.

To ensure the service is fair and equitable, monitoring has been undertaken in terms of:

- Access to the service
- Changes in service provision

It has been analysed by the following equality groups:

- Age
- Race
- Sex
- Religion
- Disability

A satisfaction survey of the library services was undertaken in 2015 and is usually scheduled to take place on a rolling three-year programme. However, as two public consultation surveys were undertaken in 2016 as part of the Library Service's transformation review, in addition to the number of technological changes that took place in Libraries during 2018 and are continuing to be implemented during 2019, the survey has been deferred until 2020, to enable customers to become accustomed to the new technology before a satisfaction survey is conducted.

When sufficient data for analysis is available for the other protected groups in the Equality Act 2010, these will also be included.

The data below has been taken from:

e+ smartcard database – enrolments and transactions for libraries (1/04/18 to 31/03/19).

Office for National Statistics (ONS) population estimates unit published tables. Crown copyright.

Office for National Statistics (ONS) - Census 2011.

2. Access to the service

Access to the library service can be measured by enrolments and transactions using the e+ smartcard at the nine libraries. Although people who do not use the e+ card may also use the service, the e+ card numbers are sufficiently high to make this a viable measurement of access to the library services.

As people may enrol for the e+ card but not use it, transactions have also been analysed. The tables below show the age, gender, ethnicity and religious belief of those who are using the library facilities.

All data is for residents of Bracknell Forest only. Enrolments for access to library facilities by non-residents were 1,757 in the year; transactions were 12,889 in the year.

The data below pertains only to enrolments undertaken within the Library Service and does not include enrolments that include library membership undertaken at other Council venues.

Table 1 – Enrolments by age

Enrolments in e+ card - Libraries 01/04/2018 - 31/03/2019 (Bracknell Forest residents only)					
Age Range	Enrolments in e+ card	E+ card %	Bracknell Forest population Mid-2017	Bracknell Forest population Mid-2017 %	Variance
Under 18	1,087	37%	28174	24%	13%
18 to 34	626	22%	24707	21%	1%
35 to 49	561	19%	27260	23%	-4%
50 to 64	306	11%	22637	19%	-8%
65 to 79	289	10%	12362	10%	0%
over 80	32	1%	4307	4%	-3%
Total	2,901	100%	119447	100%	

N.B Percentages may not sum due to rounding

Table 2 – Transactions by age

Transactions - Libraries 01/04/2018 - 31/03/2019 (Bracknell Forest residents only)					
Age Range	Library transactions	Library transactions %	Bracknell Forest population Mid-2017	Bracknell Forest population Mid-2017 %	Variance
Under 18	27360	31%	28174	24%	7%
18 to 34	3795	4%	24707	21%	-17%
35 to 49	12581	14%	27260	23%	-9%
50 to 64	12957	15%	22637	19%	-4%
65 to 79	24102	27%	12362	10%	17%
over 80	7999	9%	4307	4%	5%
Total	88794	100%	119447	100%	

N.B Percentages may not sum due to rounding

Comments

The number of enrolments within a majority of the age ranges is slightly below the Bracknell Forest population, with the major exception being the 'under 18' group where there is a positive variation of 13%, this is a continuing trend from the previous year where there was also a 13% variance.

The number of transactions varies considerably amongst each age range, with significant negative variances within the 18-34 (-17%) and 35-49 (-9%) brackets, whilst the opposite is the case within the 65-79 age range with positive variance of 17%. This is a similar trend that was noticed in the previous three years.

Table 3 – Enrolments by Race

Enrolments in e+ card for Libraries - Race 01/04/2018 - 31/03/2019 (Residents of Bracknell Forest only)					
	Resident	% (exc. 'unknown')	BF pop. Census 2011	BF pop. Census 2011 %	Variance
White	772	27%	102,554	91%	-64%
Mixed	13	0.5%	2303	2%	-1.5%
Dual Heritage	0	0%	0	0%	0%
Asian	89	3%	5664	5%	-2%
Black	28	1%	2189	2%	-1%
Other	8	0.5%	495	1%	-0.5%
Not known	1983	68%			
Total (exc. not known)	2893	100%	113,205	100%	

*N.B Percentages may not sum due to rounding
Non-specific data included under not known*

Table 4 – Transactions by Race

Transactions for Libraries using e+ card - Race 01/04/2018 - 31/03/2019 (Residents of Bracknell Forest only)					
	Library transactions	Library transactions % (exc. unknown)	BF pop. Census 2011	BF pop. Census 2011 %	Variance
White	37204	42%	102,554	91%	-49%
Mixed	357	0.4%	2303	2%	-1.6%
Dual Heritage	117	0%	0	0%	0%
Asian	2632	3%	5664	5%	-2%
Black	150	0.2%	2189	2%	-1.8%
Other	329	0.4%	495	1%	-0.6%
Not known	47313	54%			
Total (exc. not known)	88102	100%	113,205	100%	

*N.B Percentages may not sum due to rounding
Non-specific data included under not known*

Comments

Apart from people identified as “white”, race enrolments and transactions using the e+ card are broadly in line with most of the population. However, given the number of enrolments and transactions where people have opted not to give their ethnicity, the results are rather skewed. The reality is that the majority of Library users actually reflect the Bracknell Forest Census data.

Table 5 – Enrolments by Sex

Total enrolments by Gender for Library Service 01/04/2018 - 31/03/2019 (Bracknell Forest Residents only)					
Gender	Resident	Leisure transactions % (exc. unknown)	Bracknell Forest population Mid-2017	Bracknell Forest %	Variance
Female	1,617	56%	59,868	50%	6%
Male	1,265	44%	60,509	50%	-6%
Unknown	11				
Total	2,893	100%	119,447	100%	

N.B Percentages may not sum due to rounding

Table 6 – Transactions by Sex

Transactions - Libraries 01/04/2018 - 31/03/2019 (Bracknell Forest residents only)					
Gender	Library transactions	Library transactions % (exc. unknown)	Bracknell Forest population Mid-2017	Bracknell Forest %	Variance
Female	53,307	60%	59,868	50%	10%
Male	27,155	31%	60,509	50%	-19%
Unknown	8,332				
Total	88,794	100%	119,447	100%	

N.B Percentages may not sum due to rounding

Comments

Enrolments show more women than men are enrolling for the e+ card. Females are also shown to have completed more transactions during the year with a variance of 10%.

It is a national trend that women are the majority of users of a library service. Bracknell Forest is clearly reflecting this. This has also been corroborated by previous user surveys.

Table 7 – Enrolments by Religion

Enrolments in e+ card - Libraries 01/04/2018 - 31/03/2019 (Bracknell Forest residents only)					
Religion	Enrolments in e+ card	E+ card %	Bracknell Forest population Census 2011	Bracknell Forest population Census 2011 %	Variance
Christian	41	28%	68,524	65%	-37%
Buddhist	4	3%	825	1%	2%
Hindu	6	4%	1,824	2%	2%
Jewish	0	0%	176	0%	0%
Muslim	6	4%	1276	1%	3%
Sikh	1	1%	455	0%	1%
Other religion	1	1%	490	0%	1%
No religion	87	59%	32184	30%	29%
Prefer not to say	2,747		7451		0%
Total	146	100%	105,754	100%	0%

*N.B Percentages may not sum due to rounding
Non-specific data included under prefer not to say*

Table 8 – Transactions by Religion

Transactions - Libraries 01/04/2018 - 31/03/2019 (Bracknell Forest residents only)					
Religion	Library transactions	E+ card %	Bracknell Forest population Census 2011	Bracknell Forest population Census 2011 %	Variance
Christian	7,897	59%	68,524	65%	-6%
Buddhist	24	0.5%	825	1%	-0.5%
Hindu	447	3%	1,824	2%	1%
Jewish	56	1%	176	0%	1%
Muslim	186	1%	1276	1%	0%
Sikh	40	0.5%	455	0%	0.5%
Other religion	12	0%	490	0%	0%
No religion	4656	35%	32184	30%	5%
Prefer not to say	75,476		7451		0%
Total	13,318	100%	105,754	100%	0%

*N.B Percentages may not sum due to rounding
Non-specific data included under prefer not to say*

Comments

Religious group enrolments and transactions using the e+ card are broadly in line with the population, with only exceptions being the negative variance with regards to Christian enrolments, and a positive variance towards the enrolments of those who declared themselves as having no religion.

3. Actions from last year's equalities monitoring

A Public Library User Survey has not been carried out since 2015. They are usually conducted on a three-year cycle. However, as part of the Library Service's Transformation Review programme, the public were able to take part in two separate consultation surveys about future service provision in 2016. They also had the opportunity to attend 8 public consultation meetings, led by the then Director of Environment, Culture and Communities and former Executive Member for Culture, Delivery and Public Protection, Cllr Iain McCracken.

The review included consultation with all members of the community, including children and young people. As a result of the feedback received, the Library Service actively recruited 88 volunteers from all sectors of the community to assist with service delivery and is currently in the process of extending opening hours through self-service technology and technology enabled-opening in 2019.

By the end of March 2019, Open+ technology was successfully implemented in Binfield and Sandhurst Libraries, increasing the opening hours by an additional 53 hours and 39.5 hours respectively. This has made services at both libraries more accessible, especially for people who work.

4. Equality objectives and service planning

Although data from the E+ enrolments and transactions should ideally be used for service planning, the available data is very limited due to the large number of people who refuse to answer questions relating to equalities' monitoring when joining the Library Service. Feedback about usage is obtained from frontline staff, along with consultation with community groups, public feedback forms and stock suggestions.

4a. Feedback from community groups

Discussions have taken place with the Nepalese community in Sandhurst, the Indian Community Association and with Polish and Russian library users to ascertain if there is a need to provide stock in other languages. Members of the Nepalese community were invited to join a focus group at Sandhurst Library. A Librarian attended meetings of the Indian Community Association in Great Hollands and a Russian group that meets in Bracknell Library were asked for feedback. Polish customers were approached individually by library staff.

The feedback was interesting and informed the service's updated Resource Management Policy 2018. As a result, stock is provided in Polish and Russian, including dual language texts in English / Polish / Russian for children, and story times have been organised in Russian and Polish by native speaking volunteers.

The Asian community requested subtitled DVDs in a variety of Indic languages, as members reported that they did not have time to read. However, they indicated that they enjoyed watching films.

The Nepalese community wished to improve their English and wanted their children to read English, so did not want the Library Service to provide Nepalese stock.

The Library Service also subscribes to Press Reader, enabling library members to access thousands of newspapers and magazines in every language.

Although LGBT fiction is purchased, it is not identified as a separate genre within the Borough's Libraries. This is a result of feedback from this community, some of whom completed customer comment forms, who did not wish LGBT stock to "stand out" and requested that it be interfiled with general fiction.

4b. Services to the elderly, disabled and those with special needs

Visually impaired users can borrow up to 6 spoken word items at a time, free of charge.

Members who are registered hearing impaired can borrow up to 2 subtitled DVDs per week, free of charge.

Adults and children with special needs can borrow up to 6 spoken word items at a time, free of charge.

Older people and people with disabilities who have difficulty physically visiting a library can sign up for the Home Library Service. A selection of stock will be chosen for them, according to their preferences, and will be delivered to their homes free of charge either by a volunteer, or by a member of the Home Library Service staff. Volunteers also play a befriending role, as many of our housebound clients are socially isolated.

The accessibility of buildings has been of paramount importance when considering the rollout of Open+ technology to extend opening times, and consultation has been held with the Bracknell Forest Access Group. A full Equality Impact Assessment has been carried out. All Libraries, apart from Bracknell, are fully accessible to wheelchair and motorised vehicle users when staffed and unstaffed. Bracknell Library has lift access to all floors, but the Access Group felt it was acceptable to put the lifts out of action in Open+ mode, to avoid anyone being trapped in the event of a fire.

In 2018 -19, Binfield and Sandhurst Libraries went live with Open+.

The Library Service runs a large programme of events and activities for people of all ages and are socially inclusive. These include reminiscence sessions for the elderly, coffee mornings for carers with experts on hand to provide advice on benefits, chess clubs to improve memory, knitting and craft activities, sensory story times for children with special needs, and a range of activities to promote health and well-being, such as yoga and mindfulness. A great deal of anecdotal feedback has been recorded from members who have attended events, and some have stated that the Library Service has been a lifeline for them and enabled them to meet new people and make friends.

4c. Volunteers

The Library Service had 88 active volunteers registered in the year 2018-2019. Of these, 11% are from ethnically diverse backgrounds, 3% have special needs and 2% are registered disabled. This has enabled us to foster good relationships with people from protected characteristics' groups. All have reported that they enjoy the positive contribution that they are making not only to the Library Service, but to the local community as a whole.

5. Conclusion

Plans for the coming year include extending opening time at all Libraries with Open+, which will increase accessibility for everyone in all areas of the Borough, and to conduct a Public Library User Survey. Although this is a national survey with prescribed questions, it will ensure that useful feedback is received on the demographics of service users, and their satisfaction with stock, opening times and the level of service received, and will inform further decision making.