

Worcestershire Library and Information Service**Social Inclusion Policy
August 2006****1. Introduction**

The Government, through the Department for Culture, Media and Sport has encouraged Library Services throughout the country to develop socially inclusive strategies to encourage use of the service by all sections of the community. The Department for Culture, Media and Sport document *Libraries for All* published in 1999 indicated areas of particular concern and these have been addressed through various policy action groups through Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals and other agencies. Further, the DCMS document *Framework for the future*, the Government's vision for the public library service, is the key background document through which service delivery to libraries will be developed. Crucial to social inclusion here is the work in the document on community cohesion and civic values. Focussing on the needs of those who do not use services, for whatever reason, and addressing means of identifying these needs and consequently implementing these services and changes, is fundamental. Worcestershire Libraries and Information Service aims to address these issues through this Social Inclusion Policy.

2. Definition

Social Exclusion has been described by a number of organisations. In the document "Promoting Social Justice and Social Inclusion – the local government role" in February 1999, it is described as the process through which individuals or groups are wholly or partially excluded from full participation in the society in which they live.

The reasons for this exclusion may be any of the following:

disability	health (inc. mental health)
age	poverty
unemployment	ethnicity
poor skills	homelessness
low income	gender
poor housing	sexual orientation
physical or geographical isolation	imprisonment

3. What is the role of our Library Service?

The Library and Information Commission's policy document, "Libraries: the essence of inclusion", outlines the role libraries can play.

By their very nature libraries and information services already embody the values necessary to contribute to a socially inclusive society.

Libraries are a symbol of:

- accessibility.
- positive anonymity and neutrality combining privacy and absence of fear.

- shared community and family values, the values by which a community operates.
- civility and citizenship and of rights and responsibilities.
- trust and respect.
- freedom and liberation.
- parity and justice.
- discovery, opportunity and choice.
- Community, collective identity and ownership.

The Government has identified four main targets to combat exclusion:

- to increase employment.
- to reduce crime and the fear of crime.
- to improve health and welfare of communities.
- to achieve higher standards of educational attainment

The DCMS in its report “Libraries for All: Social Inclusion in Public Libraries” in 1999, also gave authorities the basis for developing its social inclusion strategy, through a six-point action plan:

- Identify the people who are socially excluded and their geographical distribution. Engage them to establish their needs.
- Assess and review current practice.
- Develop a strategy and prioritise resources
- Develop the services, and train the library staff to provide them
- Implement the services and publicise them
- Evaluate success, review and improve

One of the most fundamental pieces of legislation to ensure services are socially inclusive will be the 2005 Disability Discrimination Act. It is essential that this is considered when planning and providing all library services. Worcestershire will take all necessary, but reasonable steps to ensure that services are provided to those identified by this legislation. If we are unable to provide services directly, then alternative methods, for example subscription, will be sought.

4. Objectives

Our objectives have therefore been defined in light of this documentation to enable this fundamental work to be central to our services. Equally, the County Council as a whole sees social exclusion as a key priority and this policy is intended to support that work, as identified in the Corporate Plan. The key objectives therefore are:

1. To champion social inclusion work within the library service and the County Council.
2. To consult (jointly with partners) locally and on a countywide basis on needs and establish priorities.
3. In partnership with others, to undertake continuous research on social exclusion needs, including identifying local 'hot spots'.
4. To work with partners (from both within the County Council and the local community and with national bodies) to address social exclusion.
5. To target resources on a local and countywide basis to address social exclusion.
6. To ensure that all staff have the necessary understanding of social inclusion issues and appropriate commitment and skills to address social exclusion.
7. To ensure that staff, services, buildings and vehicles are accessible and welcoming.
8. To ensure that managers and staff at all levels and libraries take ownership and responsibility for services to **all** groups and communities in the catchment area of their site.
9. To keep library charges for core services to a minimum.

10. To positively market services to socially excluded groups.
11. To undertake outreach activities and arrange events to reduce the barriers for socially excluded and marginalised groups.
12. To monitor the effectiveness and review the appropriateness of services.
12. Social Inclusion should be mainstreamed within all library and information services;
13. Socially Excluded groups should be involved and consulted in order to tailor services to their needs;
14. Services should be located where there is a demand;
15. Opening hours should reflect the needs of the community, particularly socially excluded groups;
16. Libraries should develop their role as community resource centres;
17. To consider co-locating library facilities with other local authority services;
18. Libraries should champion the independent learner and form partnerships with other learning organisations;
19. ICT should be available and accessible to socially excluded groups and be free wherever possible;

5. Partnerships

To identify and contact potential partners on a countywide and local basis including

- County Council Services
 - Adult and Community Services
 - Youth Services
 - Children's Services
 - Archives and Museums
 - County Arts Services
 - Other sections of Cultural Services
 - Other appropriate Council Services
- Non County Council Services
 - local colleges
 - specialist educational establishments, eg Worcestershire College for the Blind
 - Other local authorities and local authority managed agencies
- Specialist support, community and self-help groups
 - Disability groups, for example WAB; Dyslexia groups; Hearing impaired; Illness or injury related self-help groups
 - Ethnic groups and related bodies, eg Worcestershire Racial Equality Council
 - Employment Agencies
 - Other specialist groups as appropriate
- Local and Regional Bodies
 - Government Agencies. eg MLA West Midlands; DFES
 - West Midlands Arts
 - Educational programmes, eg Surestart
 - Other local and regional bodies as appropriate

6. Priorities and targets

Staff

- To ensure that social inclusion is a mainstream priority for all staff.
- To ensure that all staff have the necessary understanding of social inclusion issues, and the appropriate commitment and skills to address social exclusion

- To provide training to ensure that staff have the necessary skills to deliver services to all socially excluded groups

Buildings

- To ensure that all library and other buildings conform to legislation and provide a comfortable, welcoming and accessible environment
- To undertake all necessary evaluation and risk assessments accordingly
- To provide equipment and technology to enable users to make maximum use of buildings and services

Stock

- To ensure that library stock reflects specific needs of local communities.

Marketing

- To market services to socially excluded groups
- To consult socially excluded groups to gain a clearer understanding of needs to ensure effective service planning and delivery
- To undertake outreach activities and arrange events to reduce the barriers for socially excluded groups

Services

- To provide access to all services, through adaptive technology, remote access and partnerships
- To consider all processes and regulations to ensure services are freely available to socially excluded and minority groups.
- To review library membership regulations
- To consult socially excluded groups to enable development and feedback on service provision.
- To provide adequate resourcing to enable sustainability of socially inclusive services
- To develop quantitative and qualitative measures of service provision to socially excluded groups