

CHILDREN'S SERVICES DEPARTMENT

ARTS, LIBRARIES &  
LIFELONG LEARNING SERVICE

BURY METRO  
LIBRARIES  
OUTREACH  
LIBRARY SERVICE  
POSITION PAPER  
JANUARY 2006



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE



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# Bury Metro Libraries

## Outreach Library Service Position Paper January 2006

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### **Introduction**

At a time when the majority of Library Services have been either closing libraries or remaining static Bury have been opening new libraries, in fact eight new service points have opened since 2000, but these are libraries with a difference. Bury's Outreach Library Service is a network of community based libraries which have been established for and with local people. Each library reflects the needs of the local community and they can see their influence in the service. Input from the community has included assisting with consultation, selection of books and furniture and working in the library itself. To paraphrase a line from a popular TV show – 'these are local libraries for local people!' Well that, at least, was the original idea but as some libraries have developed we have seen that local can be a flexible concept and some libraries now attract people from right across the borough.

### **Aims and objectives**

Originally conceived as a pragmatic response to try to address the problem of a lack of library service points in parts of the Borough, the driving ethos behind Bury's outreach libraries strategy is now the belief that libraries should be at the heart of every community, giving everyone, irrespective of age, social background or disability access to the widest possible range of information, knowledge and services for education, leisure and social needs and a real say in how their service is planned and developed.

Outreach libraries provide changing collections of resources tailored to meet local needs and to offer a gateway to other services including the wider Library Service, local authority and other community resources. A fundamental principle of the service is that we will work with local people to help them discover what is available to them and, whenever we can, help them extend their opportunities.

### **THE OBJECTIVES OF THE OUTREACH LIBRARY SERVICE:**

- ④ To work with local people to develop a library and information service that is both responsive and pro-active in regard to their needs
- ④ To increase the opportunities and skills of local people in regard to leisure and recreation through access to resources and the provision of or access to training
- ④ To promote the local community and its activities and help build community confidence and self reliance
- ④ To contribute to the improvement and re-generation of local communities by working with, supporting and creating projects which bring social and economic benefits to the area
- ④ To create a positive image of the Library Service and Bury MBC particularly amongst disaffected communities

## THE TOPPING FOLD PARTNERSHIP

The Library Service started The Topping Fold Partnership in 2001 when we realised that to develop facilities at our, then fairly new, library on the troubled Topping Fold estate we needed to work more closely with local people and also to get support from other organisations. We approached the local Tenants and Residents Association (TRA) and the authorities Housing Services Division. It has to be said that initially both organisations were wary and we had several very tense meetings before any progress was made at all. The TRA at that time had a very negative view of the council as a whole

Slowly trust did develop and the opportunity for funding from SRB5 if we could show that we were working together gave the impetus for a properly constituted group to be formed. This successful bid led to the appointment of a community development worker and funding to start off the plans for converting empty shops into a community centre and library. The Partnership now provides the management committee for this centre and for activities on the estate and beyond.

### Development strategy

The underlying strategy could be termed 'knowing and changing' this applies to both Library Services and to the local community. 'Knowing' involves discovering the locality – the demographics, the issues, the problems, current services and the physical layout. We have found that many people know very little about their own community, and sometimes care even less. During the knowing stage Library Services and the local community may start off working separately but as things progress will be brought together.

As the 'Changing' phase begins we need to be working together to address the problems that face us – and it must be 'us'. Perhaps the key to the success of the Outreach Services is that Library staff identifies with the local community and become part of it.

### The planning process

Although the planning process used to develop the Outreach Service provides a good framework that actually works we have found that it is important to be flexible with every aspect and to be ready to abandon any ideas that don't work rather than try to make them work because 'this is what we always do'. The basic process is as follows:

- ④ FIND A LOCALITY – look for an area that is isolated from current library provision and where the residents have limited opportunities for travel to a library
- ④ MEET LOCAL PEOPLE INFORMALLY – walks round the area at different times of the day, during the week and at weekend helps us meet people and find out what is going on in reality rather than what other agencies may tell us

- ④ LIAISE WITH OTHER AGENCIES – generally there is little activity from formal bodies
- ④ LOOK FOR A COMMUNITY PARTNER – most areas have Tenants and Residents Associations (TRAs) and it is with these groups that we have found a great deal of positive success but it has to be remembered that most are run by a handful of people who may have their own interests
- ④ CONSULTATION – find out what the widest section of the community actually want, bearing in mind that this may change as soon as it is provided. Crucially make people aware that this is 'not just a library' and that libraries have changed considerably since most people last entered one
- ④ SET UP A STEERING GROUP – we always try to establish these with one third Library Service staff to two thirds community representation, being clear from the outset that there may be some things e.g. stock selection policy that are given helps reduce conflict. There are generally enough volunteers and in practice we don't turn people away. It is important to try and ensure that all sections of the community have representation at this stage and that members of the steering group understand their responsibilities towards this.
- ④ LIBRARY SERVICE RESOURCES – the first Outreach locations were set up on minimal budgets, as the programme developed budgets increased. However, we are not interested in providing a second rate service with cast off materials; the service may start small but it starts with resources that are the equal of the mainstream service. The more prudent planner would no doubt start off with this part of the process but we never let the apparent lack of resources get in the way of a good idea!
- ④ SOURCE OTHER FUNDING OR SUPPORT – Funding in the way of grants, goods or services has been obtained from a variety of sources including Area Boards (Bury MBC); local firms and charities plus offers of help from the local community
- ④ ASSESS POTENTIAL PROBLEMS – there are always more than you think and they are never the expected ones, keeping everyone informed and admitting responsibility where appropriate can overcome a lot
- ④ CONSIDERING ALL ABOVE DRAW UP A REALISTIC PLAN – which will need to be constantly amended
- ④ AT ALL STAGES CREATE OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE COMMUNITY TO COMMENT, CRITICISE AND CHANGE

## **BRANDLESHOLME COMMUNITY LIBRARY**

Brandlesholme opened in 2004 and has proved to be a very popular library. We had been looking for a location in west Bury for some time and had been unable to find a suitable location for an Outreach Library but then we were approached by Brandlesholme Residents Association. They had been given a room in the recently opened Playaway Centre (the other room being used by a long established play group) and wanted to use it for community activity. We had an initial meeting to talk about the kind of things we could offer; they had been expecting a couple of racks of books and were rather surprised when we offered them a library.

We set up a steering group made up of community members, a local councillor, the Area Board Co-ordinator and Library Service staff. This group carried out consultation with community, chose furniture, selected books – after training from Library staff the community members came on book buying trips and helped with publicity. Later they recruited a team of volunteers to help in the library. This group is now starting to look at ways to develop community activities in the area.

### **Why Libraries?**

The Outreach Service is meeting the needs of local people in regard to conventional library services such as books and access to IT but it is also responding to the social needs of people through community development and community cohesion. In some ways the answer to why Libraries is simply that no one else was really fulfilling the role, at least not in the flexible way we have chosen. By removing many of the normal service barriers – for example not saying ‘this is nothing to do with us’ and by seeking out partners from both inside and outside the local authority we have developed a far reaching service. In doing this we have met our original aim of widening access to library services but have also realised that traditional measures of success, such as book issues, are not necessarily the most relevant criteria.

The way the Outreach Service has developed has, in some ways, led the Library Service far from its tradition role but in other ways it has actually taken us back to the principles of the first public libraries. We are now involved in a wide range of activities ranging from renovating derelict properties, creating gardens, organising community clean-ups and even challenging other local authority departments which seem a long way from what libraries are perceived as doing. But on the other hand the public library system was established to provide opportunities through education and the positive use of leisure to working class i.e. socially excluded people and that is exactly what the Outreach Libraries are doing – this is our ‘Knowing and Changing’ strategy.

## Community Development

One of the important aspect of Bury's work with the Outreach Service is that we work across whole communities, not just one group. We are trying to help a community change its perception of itself – in reality to value itself and to change what it does not like about itself. This is done in two different ways, firstly by having a broad approach that will impact to a greater or lesser degree on different parts of the community and secondly by doing specific tasks or projects with specific groups.

The broad approach is met by:

- ④ Identifying the strengths and values of the community and using them to create a vision for the future
- ④ Developing a flexible approach which allows people to make a real contribution
- ④ Seeking to get a consensus on local priorities through meeting with people using formal and informal consultation
- ④ Sharing positive experiences and learning from the negative

The specific approach looks to develop practical projects which serve a real need. This may involve such things as improving the organisational capacity of a group through training, working together on projects and linking to other organisations and opportunities.

### TOPPING FOLD GARDEN PROJECT

The rear of Topping Fold Community Centre and Library was originally five very overgrown gardens full of brambles and discarded furniture, today they have been replaced by a community garden with well tended beds, seating areas and full disabled access. In addition The Topping Fold Partnership runs a Tool Loan Scheme and a Garden Tidying Scheme. Our original idea was to simply tidy our gardens with volunteer help as we did not have a budget to cover this but a successful bid to the Living Spaces Fund from the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister gave us the opportunity to develop the garden. A steering group of mainly local people was set up and we carried out consultation on the estate to find out what people would want from the garden. With the help of Groundwork a design was drawn up to reflect the community's views.

As the garden was nearing completion additional funding was obtained to buy tools which can be loaned out to people on the estate and a small group of community volunteers agreed to carry out garden tidying for older or disabled people on the estate.

This project has involved community members in developing many new skills including designing questionnaires, researching plants and health and safety regulations, commissioning plans, and interviewing contractors. The Library Service supported the process by providing a member of staff to co-ordinate the project, IT and research skills training and providing space and resources.

## **Community Cohesion**

One of the most striking things we found as we began to establish Outreach Libraries was just how insular people were, even those who appeared to have so much in common took little interest in each other and it was clear that many communities were that in name only. Working to improve cohesion is recognised by national and local government as essential but why should it matter to the Outreach Library Service and what are we doing to support it?

A community that shares certain values and interests is, generally, much easier to work with. If this can be developed into an element of shared responsibility the bases for successful community involvement is in place. One problem is frequently that people may share these values and interests but have had little opportunity to find out just what they have in common with their neighbours and even less chance to actually work together. One of the ways the Library Service is helping overcome this is by promoting and publicising local success. Another way is by linking groups, including generational groups, together to work on projects and to share experience.

### **SUPPORTING THE COMMUNITY AT SOUTH CROSS STREET**

When we originally began work at South Cross Street we worked with The New Mosses Tenants and Residents Association (TRA) but over the last two years the key members of this group have left mainly due to family problems. This left a very small and relatively inexperienced group trying to maintain services. It was difficult for the group to attract members and within the remaining members a split was developing between those from the Asian population and those from the white population. The group also lost focus and was unsure what they should be doing. As the Library Service was the only council department they had any knowledge of they turned to us.

Our solution to the TRA's problem was to find another problem! We suggested that if we could find an issue that affected everyone in the area and could show that the TRA could solve not only would a role be established for the group but also new people might think it was worthwhile getting involved. From this the Library organised what would be the first of a series of community meetings inviting local people, community police and councillors. From that we started to identify issues and at subsequent meetings officers from appropriate council departments attended. The issue we chose as our 'problem' was litter. This has led to a major environmental project involving street cleaning, anti fly tipping campaign, work with children and schools and a family fun day. Although their problems are still not all resolved membership of the TRA has gone up and new people joined the committee.

## **Volunteers**

The Outreach Service would not have succeeded in the way that it has without the many volunteers from the community who have helped. This is not just people who helped plan services but people who helped clear derelict properties, assist library staff with activities, brew drinks, help increase security and act as volunteer library assistants and much more. Some people have been involved in specific projects whilst others have been with us since the beginning.

The value of the volunteer is far more than the worth of their labour it is also the assistance they give in integrating the Library Service into the community. We have found that even one respected community member giving a good report about the service can have a tremendous effect. Their presence is a signal to others that this is a worthwhile project.

It is also important that we give something back to the volunteers and this is done particularly through training and developing skills. This has been so successful that some people have come forward specifically to help them gain skills to take into the job market.

### **ROBERT AND MALC**

Robert and Malc are just two of the volunteers who work with us to support our community activities. Robert works every Wednesday at Moorside Community Library as a volunteer library assistant. A retired teacher, he was looking for an opportunity to do voluntary work that would provide stimulation as well as giving something to his local community. When he began working with us he received awareness training about the library service plus training specifically related to the library service at Moorside. Since then he has attended a variety of courses including Reader Development, Reference skills and has also done the European Computer Driving Licence course with other library staff. Robert has also taken part in joint Library Service and Church projects including a reminiscence project at a local school and the Library Luncheon Club.

Malc is a member of Topping Fold Tenants and Residents Association and has been involved with the development of the community centre since its beginning. Everyone on the estate knows Malc; he has spent hundreds of hours supporting work at Topping Fold including helping with the garden and the security project (installing door chains, external lights etc for local people) that has been run by the Partnership. He also is also a regular in the library and is working with staff to establish a reading group.



## Trust

Developing the Outreach Service has depended on many things and many people but we believe the most crucial factor is trust. We have taken the Library Service to some areas of the borough where people had only negative experiences of the local authority and where they were extremely suspicious, of any council activity. In some areas our early work was treated with open hostility and progress was very slow. The use of volunteers was important in gaining trust and the other important thing was to actually keep our promises – it seems so obvious but the communities we went to had little experience of that. We also found that it was incredibly important to be honest, if things went wrong admit immediately, say why it went wrong and then sort it. Communities might get exasperated with mistakes but they always forgave then but they would neither forgive nor forget any attempt at subterfuge.

Trust has to go both ways and Library Service staff had to learn to trust community members as well. Like most local authority departments we have a lot of partnerships but the Outreach partnerships were a little different they had to be equal partnerships and members of the community had, on occasion, to be trusted with confidential information. We also had to learn to trust people to select stock and other resources. Once libraries were established security was minimal, in some cases people could walk in off the street and take books and videos never to be seen again if they wished but they didn't. The more trust we have given the more we have got back.

## Measuring success

As has been stated previously traditional ways of measuring success in libraries such as book issues do not work in the Outreach Service. A library may have 40 people coming into it on a Saturday morning but only a handful of items might be issued. We have to look for other ways to measure what the impact of the service is and this is something we are still trying to perfect. Some of the methods we have been exploring are similar to those developed in the LASER Report<sup>1</sup>.

- **ADULT LEARNERS** – we have been looking at the people who attend courses in our Outreach Libraries particularly those at Topping Fold.
  - As well as considering the numbers of learners we need to look at the age, gender and locality of the learners and whether or not they are new to learning and if they will continue the process.
  - Through observation and informal interviews we have found that most of our learners are older women who have not had any formal education for 30 years or more. Many of them are now on their third or fourth course with us and although the content of the course is initially important the value of meeting other people in a 'safe environment' is also crucial.
  - We are also attracting younger women who have been out of the job market due to child care commitments and now want to develop skills to enable them to return to work.
  - As a result of our findings so far we need to consider the provision of child care facilities and to develop courses with our partners to attract more men.

'Laser Foundation Libraries Impact Project'

[www.bl.uk/about/cooperation/pdf/laserfinalb.pdf](http://www.bl.uk/about/cooperation/pdf/laserfinalb.pdf)

④ CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE – although children still use libraries in reasonable numbers it has become clear that reading and book borrowing are losing their attraction for many. The Outreach Service has created a new audience of child and young adult users but again we needed to look at more appropriate ways of measuring usage. Working mainly through our BRAIN Project (Bury Reading and Information Network) with children between four and fourteen we are looking at how the service impacts on children.

- Mini questionnaires for children and parents are given out to help plan future activities, these use very brief questions and symbols.
- Using images and ideas for the children to rank the library or activity e.g. If the library was a fun fair would it be the local fair, Alton Towers or Disneyworld?
- Some children have been involved with the project for over two years and we have asked for feedback from schools to check on improvements in school work.
- Both Schools and parents have commented on the improvement in social skills as well as academic progress. Crucially the children themselves have noticed a difference:

### **HANNAH AGED 13 FROM TOPPING FOLD**

It has been good to have the library as it gives us something to do. The best thing for me is that it has helped me a lot with my homework and I have made new friends and become better friends with some of the people I already knew. Before we had the library we used to just hang around and we got bored then we started arguing and sometimes I even got into fights. Going to the library has helped keep me out of trouble and we are all getting along now because we go to the Friday youth reading group and we all work well together and it is fun. We have also learned a lot of new things at the youth group and had opportunity to try things that we never do at home or at school. The best thing is that the staff all listen to us and don't treat us like we are stupid.

There are other areas we need to explore with the wider community particularly in relation to how they view their community, their sense of well being and safety. We are also awaiting statistics from Housing Services about council house lettings; anecdotal evidence in Topping Fold has revealed an increase in both lettings and in the time people are staying of the estate since the start of the Topping Fold Project. The effects on other agencies can also be looked at for instance benefits to local shops and services.

## **Future development**

Inevitably each library will develop differently, reflecting the needs of the community and the resources available (see also: sections on individual libraries).

### **THE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT WORKER**

One key innovation at Topping Fold was the appointment a Community Development Worker (CDW) and this is something we would like to emulate elsewhere. The CDW is based in the community and works directly for and with local people in a number of ways:

- ④ Being the identifiable face of the Library Service/local authority
- ④ Managing the day to day aspects of the project and community centre
- ④ Liaising with other organisations to benefit the community
- ④ Providing advice and information particularly in relation to benefits, housing and employment
- ④ Providing and facilitating training
- ④ Working with local people on funding applications to benefit the community
- ④ Working with local people to extend the project and develop new ideas

The CDW is a member of Library Service staff and works with other members of the Social Inclusion Unit to develop the Outreach Service in Topping Fold. The presence of the CDW was a major factor in keeping momentum and enthusiasm going on the Topping Fold Project when it was hit by its many building delays. A person working in the community can keep a project alive despite problems and creates a feeling of trust in the future and the service. The CDW fits naturally into the Outreach/Social Inclusion Unit area as they rely on information, communication, research and customer care skills which are central to the service.

The appointment of more CDW would not only help develop the existing Outreach Service but would also create new opportunities for communities and other organisations. The presence of the CDW increases confidence not only in the Library Service but in the authority as a whole. They provide a point of contact and a re-assurance that problems can and will be dealt with. As the other projects are smaller than Topping Fold either half time workers or full time area (geographic) workers could be appointed. Inevitably the problem is funding but one avenue to be explored is to look at joint funding with other departments and agencies.

### **PARTNERSHIP WORKING**

The foundation of the Outreach Service has been working in partnership with the community and this element will remain but there have been other partners such as churches and local authority departments. This year we are looking to extend both the number and scope of partnerships to develop new projects including:

- ④ At Moorside we have started to work with a new Tenants and Residents Association who are keen to improve the church hall, where the library is situated (as are the church) we also intend to promote library, TRA and church hall to a new housing development.

At Topping Fold the local community, the Library Service and Social Services Learning Disabilities Team recently came together to apply for funding from the Greater Manchester Strategic Health Authority to extend and improve the centre by adding a new kitchen and meeting room. This will enable a group of adults with learning disabilities to join in centre life and also to gain work experience.

- ④ At Brandlesholme Community Library we are looking at ways to extend the library both in the range of activities available and also physically. Working with the Residents Association and Bury Metro's Widening Participation team we are investigating additional funding and carrying out community consultation.

### **SUPPORTING DIVERSITY**

This is a key issue at South Cross Street and Sedgley Park in particular. South Cross Street Community Library is a mainly Asian area and Sedgley Park has a large Jewish population as well as a small but growing Asian community. In both areas there are racial and religious tensions not only between the different groups but also within them. Each library has been established to reflect the different aspects of the local community and care is taken to maintain that balance. Mainly through work with children we have looked at issues of diversity and difference we are now starting the more difficult task of working with adults.

- ④ At South Cross Street we have established a regular Community Meeting to help identify the problems faced in common by all members of the community. Councillors and officers are invited in to answer questions. We now want encourage the community to start working together to solve their own problems.
- ④ The library at Sedgley Park is located in a church which is a barrier to some Orthodox Jews. We are hoping to establish a delivery service for these people but at the same time we are talking to local leaders and Rabbis to see how we can make the library more accessible.

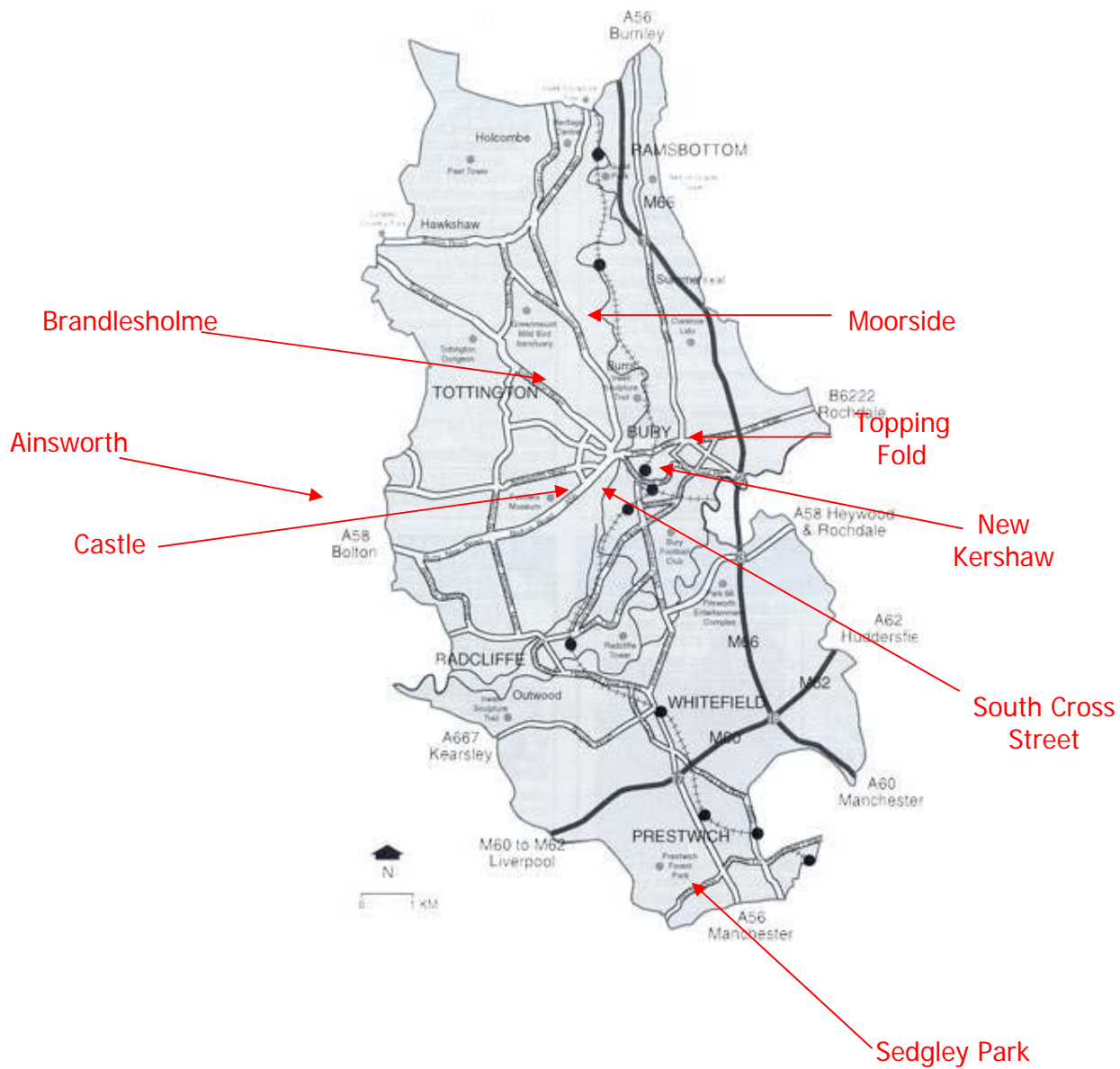
### **EXTENDING THE OUTREACH SERVICE?**

This is the inevitable and difficult question should we open more Outreach Libraries? There are areas of the borough which do not have a library within easy reach and there are undoubtedly areas with significant social problems that could benefit from the service. The main problem is finance; it is not just the resources to establish the libraries but also the infrastructure to support them. Management of the service is within the current capacity of the Social Inclusion Unit but additional locations would require additional staffing to assist with this i.e. staff not working directly in libraries. However, such problems have not stopped development in the past and with the change in the National Lottery regulations meaning that libraries are now eligible for funding extension to the system may well be considered.

## KEY POINTS FOR SUCCESS

Throughout the development of the Outreach Service it has become clear that two of the most important factors contributing to the success of the project have been imagination and the willingness to take risks. Other important factors include:

- ④ POLITICAL SUPPORT – working with local councillors makes life considerably easier. The most helpful have been able to provide local contacts, helping speed up the process of getting to know each other and developing trust. The supportive councillor will also be more open to understanding that outreach libraries cannot be measured by traditional means.
- ④ PATIENCE – needed in abundance, few things ever go as quickly as expected and working with a wide range of people from the community means a wide range of ever changing opinions. Everyone has their own priorities and someone needs to be in the middle trying to ensure fairness, it can be the most exhausting part of the process
- ④ FLEXIBILITY – there is a need to be able to work with whatever and whoever is available, responding to the needs of the community and looking for solutions together. Some may prefer a very methodical approach that reaches the goal quicker but in our experience this does not work when working with communities and so many individuals.
- ④ A DIFFERENT KIND OF STAFF - Some of the assistants in the service would probably not have got jobs in the mainstream library but they were the 'right' kind of people for us. The most important quality is the ability to relate to the community. People skills outweigh traditional library skills; the latter can be learnt but the former must be present from day one. The people who come into outreach libraries want to deal with people who are clearly interested in them and concerned about their community.
- ④ USE A DIFFERENT MEASURE OF SUCCESS – Outreach libraries do not improve your issues necessarily but they will help bring about social change and a change in the view people have about local authorities in general and libraries in particular. These things are hard to measure, perhaps even impossible but working with communities makes the difference. You will demonstrate that libraries really do change lives.



Location of the Outreach Libraries



## Ainsworth Library



### The Community

The village of Ainsworth is situated on the Bury/Bolton border. Unlike the majority of areas that the other outreach libraries are situated in is relatively affluent. In recent years it has become a desirable location for house hunters with its stone cottages and proximity to open country. The Ainsworth Village Association is strong in maintaining the look and character of the village, there are however problems. There is a large council estate which has little contact with or interest in these activities and homes that once would have been bought by young people from the village are no longer affordable. There is also a significant elderly population, many of whom have lived in the village all their lives, who now have limited opportunities mainly due to the lack of transport. Village shops have closed and all that remains is a post office, during the day the village is quiet as many residents are out at work and when they return have little involvement in community life.

### The Library



Ainsworth is different to the other Outreach Libraries in that it has been a fairly traditional library since the 1930s. The library was threatened with closure during council cutbacks in the 90s and survived through being run by volunteers for a time. In 2001 it became an Outreach Library and Library Service staff returned.

Ainsworth is very small, in fact it is thought to be Britain's smallest permanent library for most of its life it was damp and dreary building but in 2002 it was completely re-furbished and now is bright and welcoming area. During the refurbishment the whole village was consulted about what they wanted to see in the library and we followed the guidance of the Village Design Statement.

Due to the lack of space for activities much of what we do in Ainsworth has to be run elsewhere. Outreach and Reminiscence Worker Jeanie Linden- Bardsley works with local groups to run a Parent and Toddler group and Afternoon Tea Group for the over-fifties in the nearby church hall. In the library itself story times, computer 'Get-You-Started' courses and coffee mornings take place. In addition councillor's surgeries and



other information slots are a regular occurrence. A new partnership with the local church has resulted in the start of a fortnightly reminiscence club aimed mainly at the over fifties. Older people in Ainsworth are often isolated due to lack of transport and this new venture is aimed at not only providing social contact but also giving older people the chance to access other services through information and advice sessions.

## **The Challenge**

Ainsworth is increasingly becoming two villages with tenants from the council estate and long term, mainly elderly, residents in one half and people who have moved to the village in recent years in the other. Despite the efforts of the Village Association there is a definite loss of the sense of community. The challenge for the Outreach Service is to identify Ainsworth Library as a natural centre for village life. As the existing users are either older people or children it may be that these groups are the best place to start and we are building up our range of activities aimed at them and to participate/arrange village events. There is a need for us to find a real community partner but the Village Association's main priorities lie elsewhere e.g. buildings; the priority for the Library Service is to put together a group from the different organisations and interested individuals in the village. However our activities in the village are providing us with a real start for this work.

## **Brandlesholme Community Library**

### **The Community**

The area around Brandlesholme Community Library is quite densely populated with a mixture of council and private property. The local residents association has over 2000 members and is active in the community, although most work is carried out by a small number of people. The council estate has a number of boarded up houses and is perceived as an area of youth nuisance as is the area adjacent to the library which is a small shopping precinct. Since the late 50s Brandlesholme has seen almost continual house building, most community space has disappeared and parts of the area are now in poor condition.

### **The Library**

The library is situated in a pre-fabricated building known as the Playaway, this being the name of the playgroup which use the other half of the building. The library opened in 2004 following a consultation exercise by the Residents Association which asked what local facilities people would like and the most popular answer was a library. When the library was being planned a steering group made up of local residents





and a ward councillor was formed, this group chose the furniture, layout and stock for the library. Community members went on book buying trips with library staff, following a short training session. Joint consultation with library staff and the Residents Association established the opening hours and created a pool of volunteer library assistant to work with a member of staff.

Since it opened the library has proved to be very popular with local people and in addition to the regular library service there is also a Reading Group, Homework Club, a weekly Library Service run youth group which has 30 members (more will not fit in the building), regular Adult Education sessions featuring both leisure and educational short courses and a weekly advice and information session. In addition we are working the Residents Association to provide extra youth activities including trips out to places of interest.

### **The Challenge**

In just 15 months the library has somewhat outgrown its premises, the service has been far more popular than we envisaged and the other services we have added to the core have exacerbated this problem! Up until summer 2005 there has been no permanent IT resources, although laptops have been brought in for courses, but 2 PCs are about to be installed. This will be a welcome addition to the service but is likely to increase library use even more. In addition our youth related activities are also outgrowing what we can currently provide.

At the same time as the library is growing there is a demand from the community for a centre for other activities. Members of the Residents Association have been up to see the Outreach Service at Topping Fold and have been inspired to want to achieve something similar. The Residents Association and the Library Service are now starting to look at the options we have available to create a combined library and community centre. This summer/autumn the community will be consulted about the facilities they would like in the area and the possible locations/options for extending the current building will be looked at.



## Castle Sport and Leisure Library



### The Community

Castle is a different to the other Outreach Libraries in that it has not been established in a permanent community but serves the users of the Castle Leisure Centre. But, a community of sorts is developing through the library, including adults and children who use the sporting facilities, the people who come with them, staff members and, increasingly, people who come specifically to use the centre.

### The Library

Castle Sport and Leisure Library was developed in partnership with the authority's Leisure Services department and opened in 2004. Utilising an unattractive, underused



external courtyard the library cost in excess of £200,000 to create, a rather different amount the £1000 that established the first two Outreach libraries! Although the library was in some ways a response to the need for increased opening times on the part of the Library Service and for a recreational area for the Leisure Centre the real purpose of the library was to reach a new audience for both departments. To show that libraries can be reflect much of the work done by major booksellers in creating a comfortable but stimulating area. And by

demonstrating to people that sport does not have to strenuous and, through a carefully selected stock, that health and well being are a concern of the centre.

Despite its name Castle Sport and Leisure Library is not simply about sport, it contains a wide range of leisure and educational resources for all ages. With internet access, Get-you-started IT courses, audio visual loans, homework club, Adult Education taster sessions all being available. The libraries long opening hours have also proved popular with both new and existing library users.

## The Challenge

It is noticeable that a lot of people use the library for browsing but many of these people leave without borrowing items. We are now looking at why this is and planning to review resources in the library for instance is there is a need to provide more magazines and newspapers. As with all the Outreach Libraries we need to assess just how relevant traditional measures of success are. Castle is the nearest of the Outreach to a traditional library and has not got the community link we are used to working with so our greatest challenge will be to establish Castle in people's minds as 'their' library.



## Moorside

### The Community

The Moorside ward of Bury is very mixed area; over a third of the ward is open countryside which means that most of the housing is cramped together. Housing ranges from small modern estates, council property and terraced housing. Many of the terraces are very large and there is a significant number of bed sit properties in the area. The ward also has the borough's second highest Asian community.

### The Library



The library is situated in the church hall of St. John with St. Mark; originally the library was situated in little more than a walk in cupboard but is now in a multi use room. And it really is multi use as well as the library regular acts of worship take place, meetings, brownies, Sunday School, youth group and luncheon clubs take place in the same room. The library has two PCs and a Toy Library.

The partnership with the Church has been very fruitful, the church provides volunteers to assist in the library and with the popular monthly 'Library Club' which attracts up to 70 older people for lunch and entertainment. There have also been a number of joint projects including open days, activity days, school projects and now joint publicity. Another joint project is the ABC Club – a parent and toddler group attracting over 20 families.



### **The Challenge**

Libraries and churches have many things in common, perhaps image problems in particular. People who have not used either service either at all or for many years have memories of totally different institutions to the libraries and churches of today. There is also a desire by both organisations to reach out to communities, not only to get more members but also to show that the library or the church is important to the community. So the challenge for both library and church is to change people's opinions and at Moorside it has undoubtedly helped that we work together but there are dangers, in that the library could easily be perceived as part of the church and actually loose potential users and any plans need to consider this. We are now looking to bring in other organisations to work with us to develop the library and its activities.





## New Kershaw Centre

### The Community



The area around the Kershaw Centre is mainly small terraced houses, many of which are in relatively poor condition. It is an area that struggles with a combination of poor housing, heavy traffic, lack of facilities, a perceived youth nuisance, a relatively high number of single parents and a poor public image. There are few real community groups in the locality and although the area has benefited from SRB5 (East Bury Initiative) for the last five years there are still significant problems.

### The Library

The Library is situated within the New Kershaw Community Centre; the centre is currently changing focus from Adult Education to creating more opportunities for income generation. The library moved into a larger, better planned room last year. This year the library will also be housing Adult Education courses which will extend the number of computers. Both Adult Education and Library Services will benefit from shared use and staff will be receiving training to enable them to help both sets of clients.



### The Challenge

This area of East Bury has significant problems and despite the difference in social makeup and affluence has a great deal in common with Ainsworth in that it lacks a real community focus and is becoming increasingly disparate. The East Bury Initiative that has brought resources to the area for the last five years is now winding down and has failed to bring the desired community cohesion. Realistically this is a difficult area for the Library Service but our new partnership with Adult Education will provide improved educational and leisure opportunities for the area this will be combined with new services particularly aimed at supporting families such as a new Toy Library and advice sessions.

## Sedgley Park

### The Community

The Sedgley Park area of Prestwich is a diverse community with 40% of the population being Jewish, with a high proportion of Orthodox Jews amongst them, 10 % of the population is Muslim and the remainder, nominally at least, Christian. This is a moderately affluent area but because of the faith makeup of the area there are some deep divides. Sedgley Park is on the Salford border and many residents undoubtedly feel a stronger link to the city than to Bury Metro.



### The Library



Sedgley Park Community Library opened in the spring of 2005. The library is situated in the narthex (large entrance hall) of St. Gabriel's Church (CofE); this may seem strange to put a community library in an area with significant Jewish and Muslim populations in a church but it was impossible to find another location despite extensive searches. In order to reduce the problems of the location a considerable amount of work was done first particularly talking to representatives of the different faith

groups. The church premises were also being used already by groups from both the Jewish and Muslim communities. As with Moorside there were some areas of shared interest between the church and the Library Service particularly the desire to get all sections of the community sharing services.

The library was established with the help of a steering committee from the local community and we have managed to get three volunteers from the Jewish community on board; unfortunately we have not yet managed to directly involve anyone from the Muslim community. The library has a range of books, videos and DVDs for all ages including small collections reflecting Jewish culture and books in Urdu. A team of volunteers assist library staff to run the library and volunteers do an additional Sunday session which is proving popular with some sections of the Jewish community. In partnership with the church we run a Baby Reading Group which has members from all communities.



## The challenge

On the surface Sedgley Park seems to be mixed community that is managing to co-exist without any problems. The Jewish community is old and well established and the Muslim community is quite small but undoubtedly there are fears in the community. Many Jewish establishments have significant security measures in place and talking to people reveals many worries. The library is one of the few places in the area open to all the community and it is vital for us to present an open and balanced service.

## South Cross Street

### The Community

South Cross Street is in the centre of the largest population of Asian people, mainly Pakistani Muslims, in Bury MBC. Housing is mainly privately owned small terraced houses and the majority of businesses in the area are Pakistani owned. There are a number of Muslim groups in the area which represent their own particular section of the community. In 2001 a local councillor helped form the New Mosses Tenants and Residents Association which tried to recruit members from across the community. Although only a small number of the Asian community joined it was a start.



### The Library

The Library Service became involved with the group when they asked for help with setting up a small collection of books to loan to members. After talking to the group it was clear that this was a good opportunity to establish a dual language library in the Asian community; although Bury library has a collection of Urdu books it is not well used.



The initial problem with establishing the library was the lack of premises but we got the opportunity to take on a terraced house which belonged to the council. Initially the Tenants and Residents Association took responsibility for the building but after a year the Library Service took responsibility at the request of the TRA as they realised they were not yet equipped to manage the building. A management committee was established between ourselves and this was later added to with the arrival of the Asian Women's Group who use an upstairs room in the building.



The library is very popular with the Asian community particularly children and ladies. As well as the core library service we run twice weekly sessions for children and young people involving crafts and book based activities. When selecting new stock for Urdu readers we hold informal book selection sessions.

### **The Challenge**

Undoubtedly the major challenge is to get the community working together and it seems the best way is to look for the common problems and try to address them. In late 2004 we organised the first community meeting, these are now held every 6 – 8 weeks and give local people the chance to discuss their problems with councillors and local authority officers. As a result of issues discussed in these meetings we have run a major environmental project with Environmental Services involving things such as street clean ups, skips, recycling and garden competitions. For the first time local people are starting to see that they share problems and together they can solve them.



The Kitchen is a very busy place!



## Topping Fold

### The Community

Topping Fold is a large council estate in East Bury; it is mainly semi detached properties but there are also a significant number of flats and maisonettes. For many years the estate had a poor reputation and was not a popular choice with council tenants. Some houses have now been bought by former tenants and there is a small private estate at one end that is inaccessible by car from the estate as barriers have been erected. Topping Fold Tenants and Residents Association has been in operation on the estate since the mid nineties.



### The Library



The first Topping Fold Library opened in a converted butcher's shop in 2000 following an offer from the Housing department who were anxious to do something with empty shops on the estate. The next door shop had been roughly converted into a youth centre, known as the Wall Shop, but was little used. The library was immediately popular and we started to consider how we could expand our services, this was the start of the Topping Fold Partnership. Library Services approached the Tenants and Residents Association (TRA) and

Housing Services to see if we could work together to convert the Wall Shop into a more usable space. It was soon apparent that there was scope for a much larger project and also the opportunity to secure funding from the Single Regeneration Budget (SRB5) if we could make the partnership a reality. It was not always easy but today as well as a small modern library we have a community centre and community garden as well as a dedicated Community Development Worker. The Library Service is well integrated into the community and life on the estate has clearly improved for the people who live there.



## The Challenge

Despite all our success and we have gone beyond what we ever anticipated, there are still major challenges ahead. We have to both maintain and extend the services provided by the community centre and library not only within the buildings but out onto the estate. Working within local authority practices is also problematic when dealing with a community in partnership for instance repairs and maintenance procedures or finding relatively small amounts of money. There are still buildings we need to convert and funding to find. We also want to work towards community management of the centre and to support this we need to provide or facilitate training, bring in new volunteers and ultimately be able to step back ourselves.

