

Appendix D

How community engagement work links with government policy agendas

Here is a summary of how this work is able to contribute to and deliver upon some current government policies and their stated outcomes.

DfES

The *Youth Matters* green paper <http://www.dfes.gov.uk/publications/youth/> highlights the need for organisations, specifically public services, to involve young people as volunteers. Whilst the value of consulting young people is acknowledged, the importance is emphasised of allowing young people (and their parents or carers) the responsibility to make decisions for themselves. DfES proposes increasing the opportunities for young people to volunteer, emphasising that opportunities need to be accessible to all, particularly young people with disabilities and those from BME groups. This paper makes specific reference to libraries' ability to better utilise accommodation to provide venues for youth activities. The need for libraries to expand their work with young people is further articulated in the *Fulfilling Their Potential* report produced by The Reading Agency http://www.readingagency.org.uk/projects/children/fullfilling_potential.html

Home Office

The Home Office Active Communities Unit has a target (PSA 8) to increase the level of participation in communities. Library services are well placed to contribute to achieving this goal. <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/communities/>

The Home Office index of community cohesion indicators includes '*the percentage of adults who feel they can influence decisions affecting their local area*'. Libraries are clearly able to contribute to this ideal by providing mechanisms for people to be involved in making decisions relating to their library service.

Together We Can <http://www.active-citizen.co.uk/> involves 13 government departments (the Home Office is taking the lead) setting out a commitment to empower citizens to work with public bodies in setting and achieving goals. There are specific action points that relate to working with Children's Trusts, where young people can get involved in design and delivery of services. The active involvement of older people is recommended. Libraries have the opportunity to contribute to racial equality by helping new residents 'settle in'. The London Libraries Development Agency (LLDA) is currently piloting such a project, and providing volunteering opportunities.

The *Respect Action Plan* <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/anti-social-behaviour/> launches an initiative led by the Home Office. The emphasis is on building stronger communities and reducing anti social behaviour. Museums, libraries and archives are highlighted as having a role to play in the provision of positive activities for young people.

Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS)

DCMS <http://www.culture.gov.uk/> has priorities around involving young people in participation and broadening the impact of culture on communities, which libraries are in a strong position to deliver upon. The DCMS aims to open up institutions to the wider community, to promote lifelong learning and social cohesion. Libraries are referred to as a way to do this, and it is acknowledged that capacity building is needed in order to achieve this aim.

DCMS reports in *A Giving Culture* that as a department, it makes the highest contribution to formal volunteering compared to other sectors of government. In relation to libraries, the report identifies that whilst libraries are more likely than museums and archives to involve volunteers, the number of volunteer hours contributed to libraries is less. The report identifies that volunteer management is also lacking, as there are a very small percentage of organisations with dedicated volunteer managers. The importance of volunteering as a means to increase participation in decision making and active communities is emphasised and encouraged. Public libraries have many opportunities to involve people from all walks of life in community engagement.

Museums, Libraries and Archives Council (MLA)

The *Public Libraries and Community Cohesion* report clearly outlines the scope available to libraries for them to be able to engage with their local communities. MLA is also undertaking work relating to workforce development, which includes work with volunteers. Their report *New Directions in social policy: Communities and inclusion policy for museums, libraries and archives*, <http://www.mla.gov.uk> maps the policy areas to which work within the sector can contribute.

Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM)

The final evaluation report on Local Strategic Partnerships advocates for an 'active' style of partnership working, which describes an attitude to working in partnership that libraries are well placed to adopt. <http://www.odpm.gov.uk/index.asp?id=1163002>

The publication *Promoting Effective Citizenship and Community Empowerment* is a guide for local authorities on how to increase participation in decision making processes and to provide what is needed for residents to become effective citizens <http://www.odpm.gov.uk/index.asp?id=1163365>

The Social Exclusion Unit www.socialexclusionunit.gov.uk report *A Sure Start to Later Life; Ending Inequalities for Older People*, identifies that older people are increasingly excluded. The report suggests increasing opportunities for older people to be active in their communities, through volunteering and life long learning. DCMS commits to providing these opportunities as part of a pilot project. This offers an opportunity for libraries to become involved.

Better Government for Older People

As well as calling for improved services, *Better Government for Older People* <http://www.bgop.org.uk/home.aspx> talks about the need to recognise and encourage the contribution to public services of older people. Engagement of older people and preventing their exclusion are key aspects of this programme. Partnership working between local authorities and others is encouraged.

Russell Commission

The Russell Commission <http://www.russellcommission.org/> recommends volunteering as a positive activity for young people, helping them to increase their involvement as active citizens and in developing their own skills. The scope for public sector organisations to get involved in these projects is highlighted.

Keeping up to date with policy initiatives

Many government agendas are relevant to the work that libraries are doing. <http://www.info4local.gov.uk/> is a web site aimed at keeping people working in local government updated about local and national initiatives.