

Continued support for volunteer run libraries 2022 to 2023

Appendix 1: Review of the support package

This section outlines the offer contained in the Executive report of 2019, it describes the support provided by SCC subsequent to the report, and evaluates this against the feedback from the volunteer libraries in the recent survey in 2021.

This analysis results in recommended “offers” for future support.

Grant for Associate Libraries

Offer described in the cabinet report 2014:

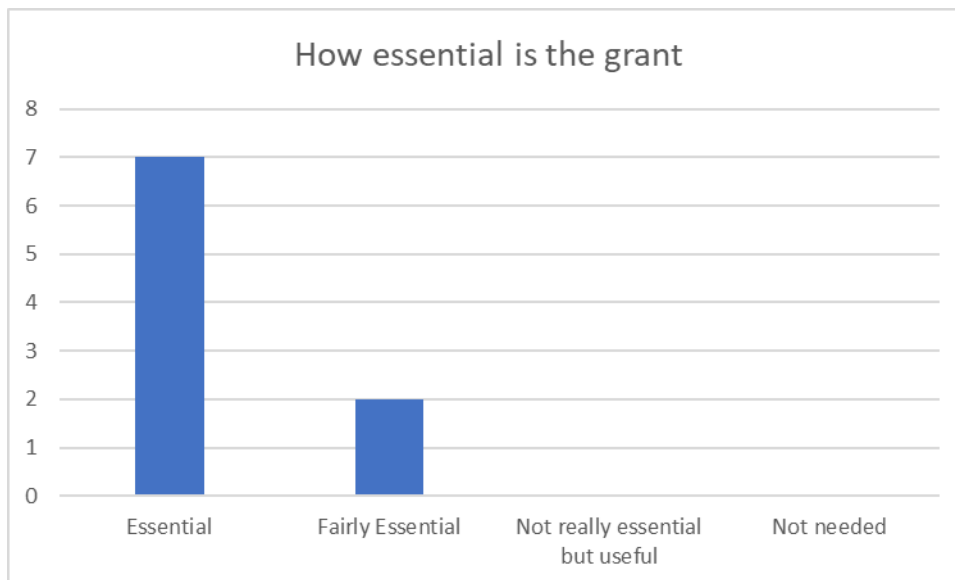
A grant pot allocation of £135,100 a year for 2 years to 31st March 2021 from Council funds linked to a viable (and approved) business plan. Each Associate library can apply for funding (up to the level of the running cost budget for that library as of 2013/14.

What has been provided?

Each of the Associate libraries applied for and received a grant during 2019/20 and 2020/21. The funds are administered and monitored by the Volunteer Liaison team.

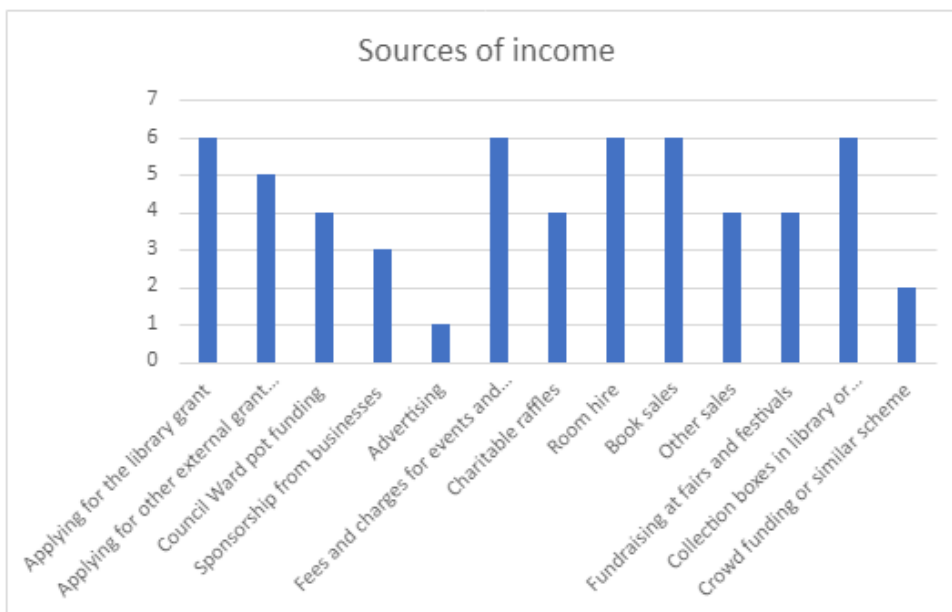
Evaluation of the grant offer

All of the Associate library groups rated the continuation of the library grant as essential.



The reasons given for the continuity of the grant are:

- We need to keep raising enough extra funds to resource a proper library that has a good turnover of new books - the additional costs amount to around an additional £18K pa on top of the grant.
- We had to borrow from our reserves and contingency fund in 20/21 to cover outgoings that were not covered by the council grant but we couldn't do our normal fundraising - so this must be paid back – £4000 on our costs this year.
- A major financial challenge would arise if support from SCC were to be significantly scaled down or withdrawn. Whilst we have built up reserves that would enable us to continue operations for some years lack of support would threaten our longer term viability.
- We are reliant on the council grant to cover a major proportion of our core running costs and will remain so for the foreseeable future; the grant is therefore essential to us.
- Our business plan (drawn up pre-covid) assumed a tapering council grant and predicted long-term financial sustainability. However, the pandemic drastically reduced our income and right now it is difficult to know how well this will recover.
- The grant gives us financial security



All of the groups that responded to the survey raise funding from book sales, room hire, fees and charges and collection box schemes, for some this is a big contributor to their fundraising. Most of the groups have accessed the Ward Pot and CIL grants from the Council, but are concerned about the availability of such funds in future years. The majority of the groups who responded have been successful in gaining external grant funding, this is in the main low level. The groups find it difficult to find volunteers with fundraising skills.



It can clearly be seen that during the financial year 21/22 income has not met expenditure, this is largely due to a large drop off in the capacity for fundraising, many libraries accessed covid support grants, but this was mostly spent on the installation of covid protection equipment.

- We had to borrow from our reserves and contingency fund in 20/21 to cover outgoings that were not covered by the council grant but we couldn't do our normal fundraising - so this must be paid back – £4000 on our costs this year
- We will not get another Covid business support grant, but Covid related costs will carry on
- We are reliant on the council grant to cover a major proportion of our core running costs and will remain so for the foreseeable future

Volunteer library network meetings

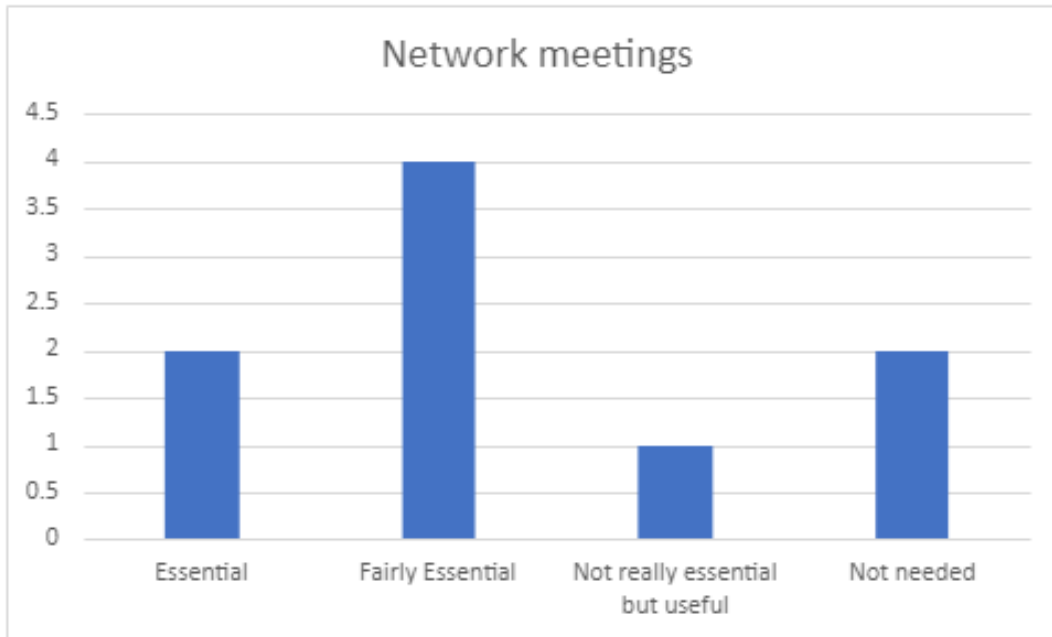
What has been provided:

Representatives from the volunteer library groups meet monthly currently via Zoom, the meeting have carried on throughout the covid pandemic and have been important in sharing information. The SCC Volunteer coordinator attends the meetings, to share information and provide support.

The volunteer library groups made the following comments about the benefit of the network meeting:

- It's helpful to meet with other volunteer libraries to share experience and expertise
- Useful at both the Sheffield and national level to share experience - best practice

- Not sure if they are essential (ie we could survive without them) but they are of course very useful.



Training for volunteer library management committees

Evaluation of training for Management Committees:

The feedback from the volunteer library groups focused on what training they would like in the future:

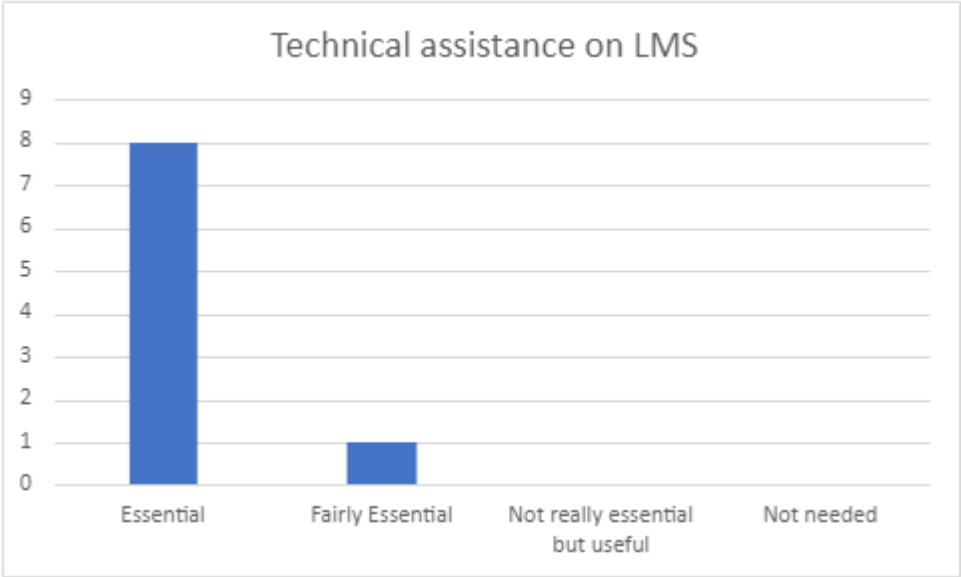
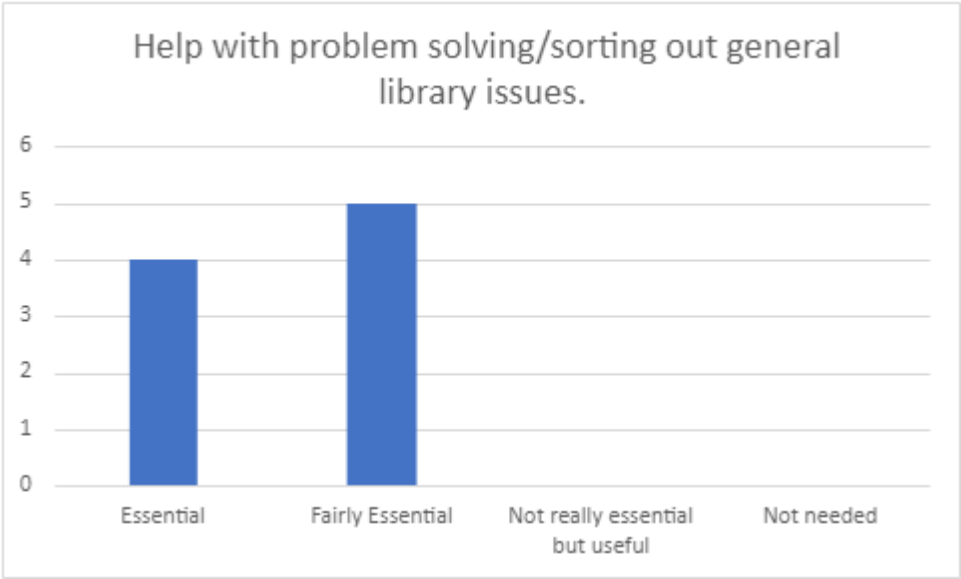
- Book keeping and budgeting training
- “Need refresher training for management committees for new members”



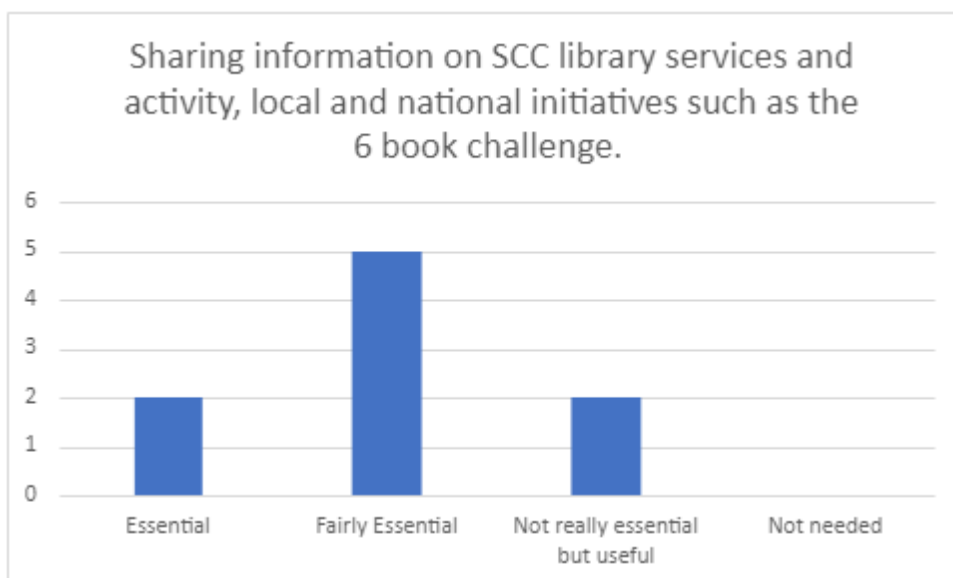
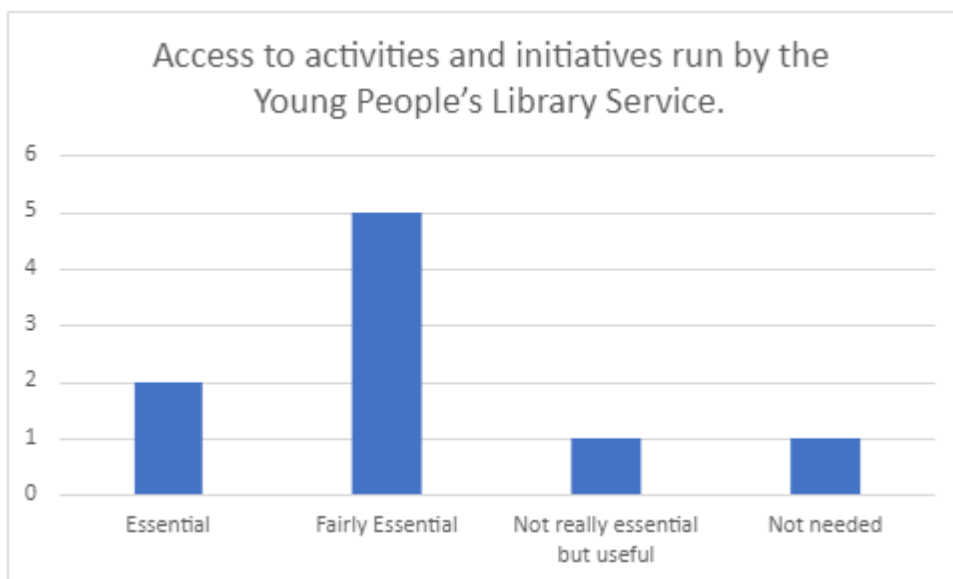
Support from a volunteer co-ordinator and E-Services Officer

Feedback from the volunteer library groups is:

- The support of named dedicated members of staff is vital when we have problems/requests which we have not encountered before. Their availability, knowledge and experience is essential to the smooth running of the library services
- Just about but this resource is very stretched especially since the IT contract returned to being in house. This has led to a worsening of the service leading to Jacqui having to do far more support. Both her role and Darrel's need boosting
- We have been happy with the support provided by SCC especially the direct support from Darrell, Lynne and Jackie.
- Having a dedicated named member of the library service is important for communication



National & Local Initiatives



What has been provided:

The Volunteer run libraries have been encouraged to take part in National library initiatives, i.e.:

- Summer reading Challenge. Have been closely involved with training and support from the Libraries young people team. Materials for the initiative were purchased for the groups in 2015 and again in 2016.
- 1225 children participated in the SRC in 2015 through volunteer libraries alone out of 4918 in total throughout Sheffield Libraries.

- 632 children completed the challenge through volunteer libraries out of 2643 in total for all libraries, this is approximately 52% completion rate with the Sheffield average being 54% for 2015.
- Six Book Challenge/ Reading ahead. Volunteer libraries have been invited to information sharing sessions run in Central Library, they have been provided with materials and support to offer the Six Book Challenge (2015/2016).
- Children's University/Passports to Learning. Volunteer libraries have been provided with materials to offer Passports to Learning and are Children's University venues. The libraries have been provided with help and support where required. Special children's activity sessions linked to the Children's University have been offered to the volunteer libraries free of charge.
- Bookstart. All volunteer libraries are part of the bookstart scheme; we provide bookstart bags that the libraries can offer out to new parents. Volunteer groups are also invited to participate in any Bookstart events we run. We also provide help and support with this scheme.
- Chatterbooks. We will be providing training to run Chatterbooks groups to the volunteer libraries, we will also purchase Chatterbooks materials for the volunteer libraries from the grant (so far they have not run any Chatterbooks sessions).
- World book night. Volunteer libraries have been able to act as suppliers for book givers as part of World Book Night.
- Books on Prescription. Volunteer libraries are part of the books on prescription scheme, though they are not purchased new books as part of this (Associates) they can order the books in.

Local Initiatives

The Volunteer run libraries have been encouraged to take part in local initiatives, i.e.:

- Adult summer reading challenge. Volunteer libraries were included in the adult summer reading challenge which was run for the first time over summer 2015.
- Off the Shelf Festival. The volunteer Libraries are encouraged to participate in the OTS festival and are given support to do this.

- Sheffield Children's Book award. Run by the school library service members from the volunteer libraries will be invited to participate in this prestigious nationally recognised award ceremony.

Some comments:

- reading Challenge, CUP etc / Important to remain part of the Sheffield Library Service
- Share good practice, promote services and activities; and celebrate the best in library provision
- As long as we get the information on time. There can be a lack of sharing information with volunteer libraries.

Support from Transport and Facilities Management (T&FM)

The offer described in the Cabinet report 2014:

Each building will be negotiated individually with Property & Facilities Management. Peppercorn rent subject to conditions.

The Council will explore where any further capital support may be available as part of the Council's capital programme.

What has been provided:

All library buildings, now and prior to the Cabinet report in 2014, are the responsibility of Transport and Facilities Management. Therefore T&FM are responsible for lease negotiations with the Associate library groups.

The lease negotiations have taken longer than envisaged. In the interim, the library buildings have continued to be maintained by Facilities Management and this included:

Gleadless, Greenhill, Jordanthorpe, Stannington and Totley now have leases, leaving Ecclesfield, Frecheville, Newfield Green and Walkley tyet to get a lease.

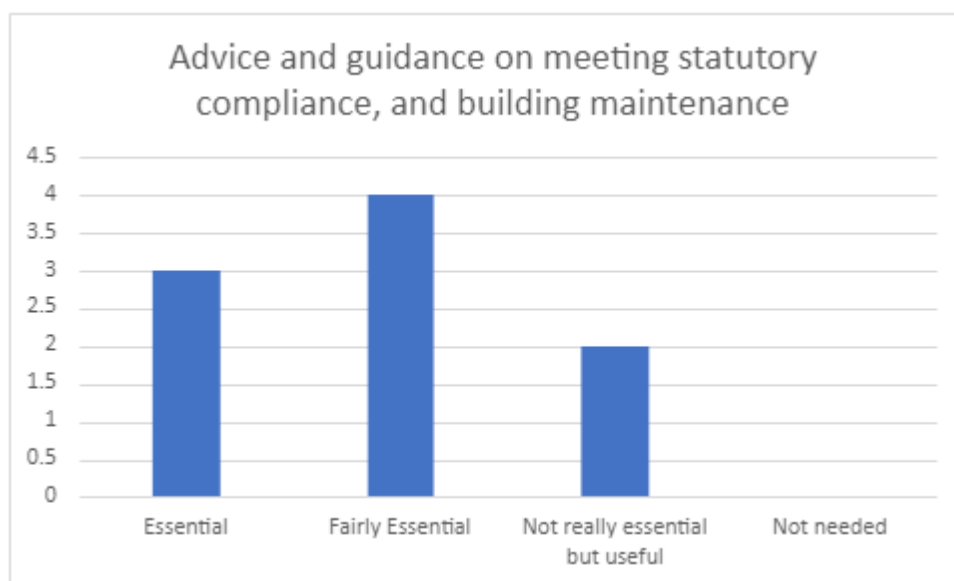
- Compliance checks for fire, asbestos and legionella
- Maintain and repair buildings in line with priorities
- Provide training in fire, asbestos and legionella regulations
- Completed and committed to any essential repairs required to meet compliance standards that were outstanding to April 2015.
- Helpdesk reporting

Facilities Management produced a comprehensive building pack for each library including details of statutory compliance.

Evaluation of support from T&FM:

Comments from the volunteer libraries were very limited, and included the following:

- Certainly until we get the lease, but then still useful.



Once a library has a lease they need less support, though there have been difficulties in libraries gaining landlords consent to work.

Provision of Library Management System (LMS) to volunteer run libraries

What has been provided:

- Use of the Library Management System (LMS) software and I.T. Sirsi Dynix provide the Symphony library management system who contract with Capita who are currently the system administrators.
- Provision of computers and repair/maintenance, and computer accounts by Capita.
- Training in how to use the LMS – by the Volunteer Co-ordinator
- I.T. support for dealing with errors and faults – by the E-Services Officer
- Provision of the Peoples Network (internet) - Capita
- Provision of computers and printers – Capita
- Provision of RFID machines (where they are installed)

The Business Support Unit is the operations team of the Library, Archives and Information Service and provide the following support for the Associate & Co-delivered libraries:

- Ordering and supplying consumables
- Supplying stationary for the Co-delivered libraries.
- Inputting library books found to be not on the system.
- Checking and correcting new borrower records.
- Occasional reporting of IT faults.
- Delivery and collection of books to the volunteer led libraries via a regular van round.

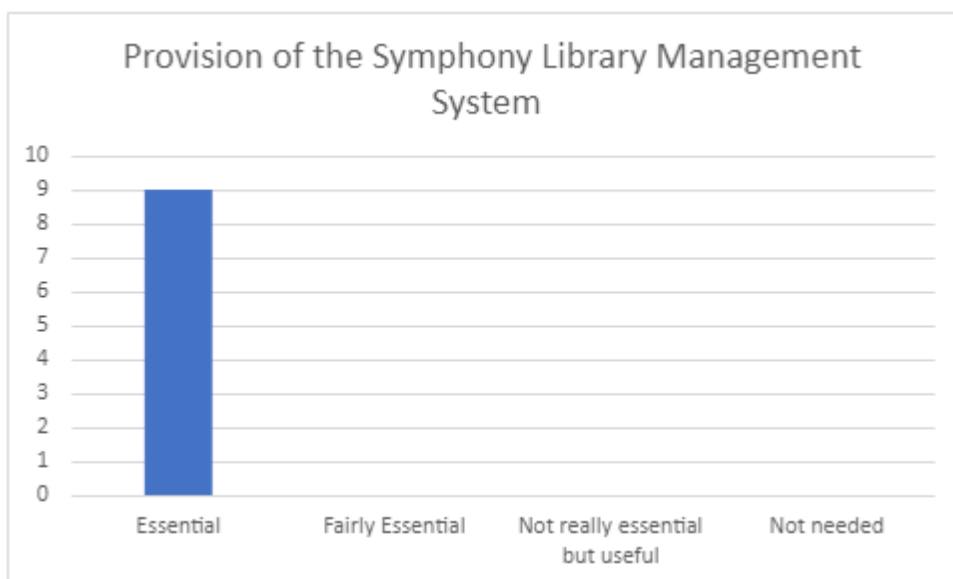
Evaluation of the Library Management system

Many of the volunteer libraries use their own library management system alongside the council system, this brings local benefits to the individual libraries, but does not serve as a city-wide system.

The benefits of the LMS described by the volunteer libraries in the recent survey are:

- Absolutely critical for all the libraries across the city because all the people of Sheffield need access to it via their local library provision
- Essential for the volunteer libraries to be an integrated part of the Sheffield Library Service
- Essential whilst we use SCC books, which is important city wide to provide a strong library service

The chart below shows results from the library group survey in which all of the respondents found the operation of the Councils LMS essential.



Van deliveries

What has been provided:

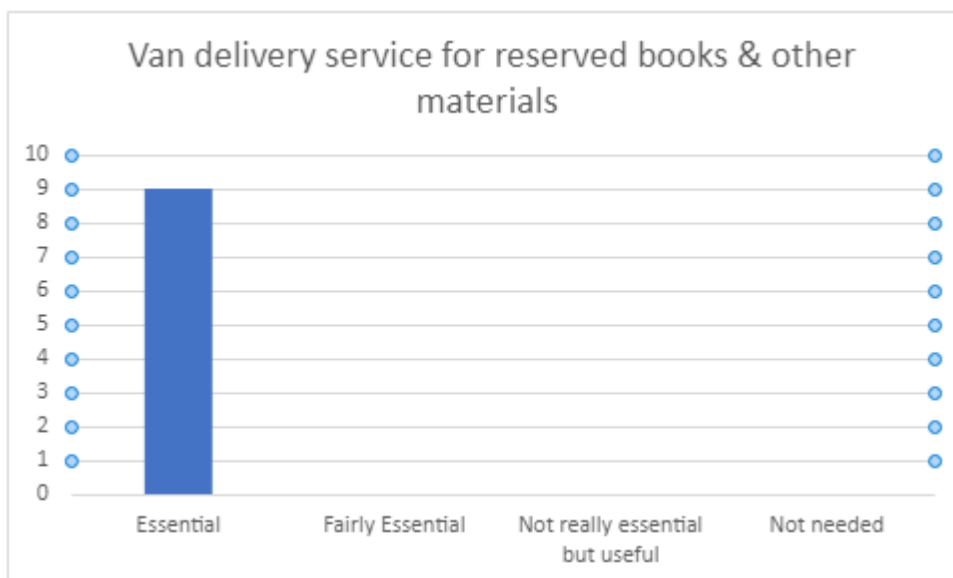
The Associate libraries receive a van delivery/pick up once per week, and Co-delivered libraries twice per week. Deliveries and collections are principally books that have been reserved, enabling users of volunteer run libraries access to the city wide book stock.

Evaluation of the van delivery service

Comments from the volunteer libraries regarding the van deliveries include:

- Absolutely essential
- Being able to fulfil holds from other libraries is essential to remaining part of the Sheffield library service
- Very good service by a friendly and efficient team

The volunteer libraries highlight the importance of the van delivery system to transfer books and other materials between libraries, with each library group rating this service offer as essential.



LMS training

Evaluation of LMS training:

Currently the training room in Central Library is not useable so training is being conducted directly in the volunteer libraries.

The following feedback has been provided by the volunteer library group

- Important to keep the stock looking professional and appropriate
- Discarding of books option- this should only be allocated to an experienced volunteer
- Not needed at the moment but could be valuable in future
- Most basic training now happens in-house, but useful to have any updates.
- Discarding training is important.



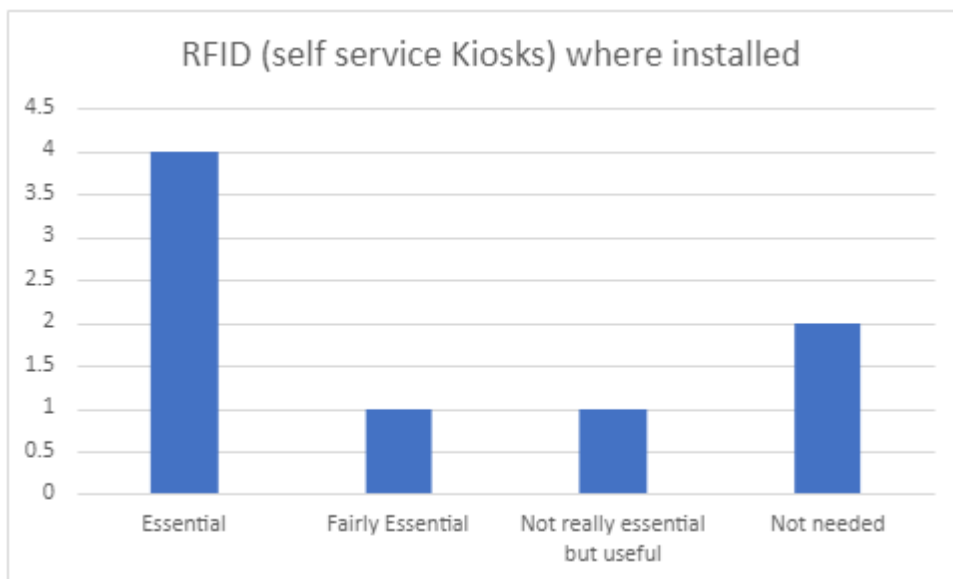
RFID (self service) machines

What has been provided:

11 of the 15 volunteer run libraries have RFID self service machines. When surveyed, of the 10 volunteer groups who responded 4 considered them essential, and 2 considered the RFID machines to be not needed.

In busier libraries the RFID machines help to take pressure off the staff or volunteers by allowing library users to serve themselves. This can have a significant impact on the number of volunteers needed to maintain a library and also impacts the ability for volunteer library's to deliver their own systems as the RFID machines take the pressure off the counter PCs from where the volunteers run their own systems.

- We would get big queues at the front desk if we didn't have these
- Some advantages during lockdown, but many customers want the human contact.



Book stock

Offer described in the Cabinet report 2014:

For Co-delivered libraries the offer is - Book and material stock, and circulation. Associate libraries may remain on the library catalogue system, the book stock will not be transferred to the independent library as the stock may be requested by any library user in the city. Alternatively Associate libraries may prefer to have their own cataloguing system. There is a small annual component of the grant each year for the Associate libraries.



Evaluation of book stock provision:

Feedback from the volunteer libraries in the recent survey includes:

- Duplicates definitely not wanted though – it's a waste of money. Can we influence this please?
- Important for stock control eg discarding old/tatty books /
- Insufficient reference to and involvement with local Staff - should be able to choose own stock relating to area needs /
- Important to demonstrate the strength of public libraries

Associate libraries consider the provision of new books via the grant to be very important and a strong show of support from the Council. Co-delivered libraries would like more say in what books are purchased for them

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