



Co-operative Councils

Innovation Network

VOLUNTEERING

Sandwell Council

Delivering Better Outcomes by working together: Libraries

- Unlike many other Library Authorities across the country Sandwell is proud to have retained all 19 of its libraries despite year on year reductions in funding
- We continue to operate a mobile and home library service
- Working together with volunteers, Friends groups and partners libraries have developed as lively, community and cultural hubs with free spaces for people to use at the heart of the communities they serve

Volunteers

Sandwell libraries have developed proactive recruitment and use of volunteers. In 2017-2018, 400 volunteers supported service delivery with 18,436 hours completed (among the highest of 36 Mets).

Friends' groups

There are friends' groups in all 19 libraries as well as a 'Federation' of friends where representatives come together to meet for consultation and share best practise. The friends deliver activities on a voluntary basis, raise money locally through fun days, sell refreshments, hold raffles and apply for small pots of money from a variety of sources. The 'Federation' has achieved registered charity status.

Professional Entertainers – The 'Federation' of friends successfully applied for £12,000 to fund professional entertainers in 2017 and £15,000 in 2018. These bring children into libraries during school holidays and provide a wide range of free things to do in an area where families don't have much money to spare.

Tech play – 'digital playground' equipment is important within Sandwell libraries. In an area where ownership is low we want to encourage young people to have fun with technology and hopefully develop an interest in STEM subjects at school. We provide activities from pre-school on, where we developed 'Tech:Play' sessions for the summer holidays using



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Playstation and Xbox games consoles, Virtual Reality headsets, code clubs and other coding activities, robotics and 3D printing. Partners were initially commissioned to deliver a variety of activities using this equipment, aimed at different groups who experience disadvantage around access, to help with socialising, having fun, and improving health and wellbeing. Library staff and volunteers in conjunction with our partners developed their own skills to make use of the equipment and deliver programmes across Sandwell Libraries.

Cereal Readers - Cereal Readers provides healthy breakfasts and books to children during the school holidays. Children attending are encouraged to take part in the 'Summer Reading Challenge'. Funding came from friends' groups, local supermarkets and other partners with sessions delivered by volunteers, members of friends' groups and partners.



Working together has delivered the following outputs:

- From April 2017, through funding obtained by the Federation, we provided **73 free activities to children and families across all 19 libraries** within Sandwell during school holidays, resulting in 3,649 visits. In 2018, **136 activities were provided with 7,106 visits** as a result
- **76 Tech:Play sessions were delivered with 3,459 people attending** over six months
- To date. **280 Cereal Reader sessions have taken place with 2,000 people attending**

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