

# Case Study: Leading Modern Public Libraries

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## Client

Museums Libraries and Archives Council

## Aims of Project

Develop, pilot, recruit to and deliver the first national leadership training programmes for public library managers, at three levels:

- *Head of Service/Chief Librarian*
- *Senior Manager*
- *Future Leader*

## Background to Project

“Framework for the Future” set out a challenging vision for libraries to modernise and develop their role. Effective leadership in public libraries, locally, regionally and nationally was central to achieving this vision. The library service historically lacked investment in leadership and management development. It mirrored many other professional services in facing a transformation to a more modern form of leadership and management which can embrace rapid change, complex inter-relations and partnerships with other agencies, performance management and accountability and a clear strong focus on users’ needs.

FPM Training with the support of the Society of Chief Librarians won the tender to develop, pilot, recruit to and deliver, the pilot programmes and the subsequent roll-out.

## Partnership working

The programme required FPM to work closely with the contractor (MLA) through a national **Steering Group** comprising key agencies and bodies in the field, including: MLA, Department of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS), the Society of Chief Librarians, Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals (CILIP), Lifelong Learning UK, the University of Sheffield, two Clore Fellows (graduates of the Clore Leadership Programme), Leadership Research and Development Ltd.

## Deliverables

- *10 days of learning with a 6 day **residential contextualised leadership programme for Heads of Service** with 360 degree appraisal and one to one coaching.*
- *10 days of learning with a 6 day **residential contextualised leadership programme for senior managers** with 360 degree appraisal and one to one coaching.*

- 9 days of learning with a 5 day **residential contextualised leadership programme for future leaders** with Myers Briggs Type Indicator feedback and one to one coaching.

Participants were recruited through an allocation of places to each service, with a central clearing process to accommodate spare places. The programme was designed to build a nucleus of managers who had been through the same learning journey and who would support each other in leading organisation wide change back at work. This process achieved some notable successes and the impact of the programme on some services was profound.

The programme was initially piloted to 50 participants over the three levels of delivery: future leaders, senior managers and heads of service. Invitations to participate in the pilots resulted in over 170 nominations for 50 places.

This programme was rolled out between November 2005 and February 2006. The participants were: Heads of Service – 112; Senior Managers – 257; Future Leaders – 294. In all, **663 participants** were trained.

More women than men participated in the programme (reflecting the composition of the workforce). 12% of those attending the Senior Managers programme and 10% of those attending the Future Leaders were from BME backgrounds

A group of Black and Minority Ethnic managers worked closely with the project to ensure recruitment was as diverse as possible and that content embedded issues of equality and diversity.

### **Impact**

100% of those providing feedback evaluated the programme satisfactory or better. 94% of participants rated the programme excellent/very good/good.

A large percentage (34% on Future Leaders; 35% on Senior Managers and 35% on Heads of Service) gave the course an overall rating of excellent (the very highest rating available). This is significantly above training industry benchmarks.

The University of Sheffield were commissioned to produce an independent report to evaluate the impact of the programme. The report's conclusions included:

- *We conclude that anyone who joined the Leading Modern Public Libraries Programme with a readiness to develop their leadership capacity and skills was given ample opportunity, as well as support in doing so. This programme has **clearly made a substantial contribution to meeting the aims of the Framework for the Future.***
- *Even those who described themselves as 'old cynics' felt the programme overall was of value at the time and in a continuing way both for themselves and for other staff from their service. One very experienced Head of Service described the effect on his participating staff as "staggering".*
- *The combined energy, enthusiasm and learning of several participants, provided a launch pad for new developments in their service's planning and delivery.*
- *Senior Managers felt they had been able to adopt different perspectives and acknowledge the 'bigger picture'*

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### Case Study

- *Heads of Service had cascaded ideas within the library service and with more senior colleagues within the wider local authority, as well as identifying specific situations in which to use tools and processes presented on the programme.*
- *There is growing evidence that a significant number of those attending the Future Leaders' programmes have moved to more senior posts.*

### **Legacy**

Overall, these were three extremely successful programmes which met the needs of participants and the contractor. The evaluation did not attempt to measure the impact of the programmes on the public library service as a whole. However the Tavistock Institute Evaluation of the Framework for the Future Action Plan 2003-2006 found that:

87% of respondents to a national survey reported that the Leading Modern Public Libraries Programme had made a **strong or very strong contribution to developing leadership** in their library service.

When funding was no longer available, there was still a need for leadership and management training and many authorities wanted the programmes to continue.

FPM offered a shorter non-residential programme -Leading Libraries- which has since reached over 120 further managers in the field.

In 2008/09 the Museums Libraries and Archives Council commissioned FPM to design and deliver a new programme (Take the Lead) building on the foundation of the LMPL, for managers across Museums, Libraries and Archives, to support the drive towards integration in the sector.