

The impact of Homework centres in Sheffield Public Libraries:
An investigation into Library provision for children.

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Abstract

This report presents the results analysis and conclusions of a research project conducted into the impact of 'homework centres' in children's library services.

The aim of the project was to investigate homework provision in Sheffield libraries in relation to the needs and expectations of service users and providers. It was also the aim to highlight key issues and concerns in this area that should contribute to the improvement of service delivery both in Sheffield, and library authorities in general.

The investigation was undertaken in five local libraries through the use of two research methods: Interviews were used to survey the views and experiences of library staff whilst separate questionnaires were used to survey service users and teachers. In addition to this some teachers were surveyed through the use of telephone interviews (the telephone interviews were based on the Teacher questionnaires). This way existing services can be surveyed whilst identifying principles which ensure good practise in the future.

The findings show that 'Homework centres' depend upon their ability to satisfy the educational and social needs of users and potential users. A co-operative relationship between all local authority children's services is important both because of the way that it can help satisfy these needs but also because it makes everybody's jobs easier. A failure to heed these concerns will prevent the homework centre from fulfilling its role as educational resource and social equaliser.

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Chapter 1. Introduction to the Study

Homework Centres or After-school centres have been heralded by the Government and by the profession as the way forward in educational and library service development. They contribute to the community whilst promoting the role of libraries and drawing children into the fold at an early age.

1.1 Origin and Development of the topic

In the last two years article after article has appeared praising these schemes and the way in which everybody is benefiting from them: 'Tailor-made for Local needs': "*GCSE results are already improving*" LA Record (1997:88-9), 'Homework Help Clubs' Public Library Journal (1997:11-12) and 'Helping with homework': "*Homework centres are in the political limelight -join in says Anthony Tilke, LA Youth advisor*" LA Record (1997:190-1). Southwark in particular has received a huge amount of media attention, and David Murray (Service development Librarian) even held a conference in 1996 to deal with the amount of inquiries. As a further endorsement, in the March 1998 edition of The LA Record (Vol.100 (3)) we read that a number of clubs and centres across the country have been chosen to receive lottery funding. The aim it says is to '*set up out-of-hours learning clubs for 8,000 schools by 2001.*' (198)

As these articles had predicted, and perhaps in response to the intense media coverage, library authorities have been quick to embrace the idea and homework initiatives have begun to appear nation-wide. For instance, in the August 1998 edition of the Record, the Library Association published details of a recent LA survey that shows that nearly 25% of library authorities have developed homework centres and that; "*A fifth of local authorities were interested in developing homework centres, with a quarter saying they would if external funding were available*" Library Association Record (1998:399). We are told that library usage will increase and literacy will improve but since their

rise to prominence in the mid Nineties few investigations have been made to assess whether these claims have been born out in practise; or indeed whether these benefits have been accompanied by new problems.

It was with all of this in mind that I approached this topic and decided to carry out an investigation in to the development of services in Sheffield.

In February I attended my first meeting with Andrew Milroy the Group manager of Sheffield's Learning and Young Peoples Unit. It became apparent that there are many areas in which problems could arise and that although there are lots of positive aspects to this new trend, there has been a tendency to oversimplify the consequences of homework services on the ground: The library service was worried primarily that

- a)** the unpleasant association of libraries with homework would effect children's use of libraries as they grew older and that libraries would cease to be seen as a leisure pursuit; and
- b)** that the lack of co-operation between schools and libraries would scupper any attempts to produce an effective service.

In our second interview these themes were developed and expanded to include and identify other concerns relating to security, IT training for staff and resources in terms of opening hours, training and stock. These points illustrate the way in which the profession's expectations could be disappointed but they also show how there is need for further investigation in this area.

Finally, as the 1997 LISU survey reports; between 1991/2 and 1996/7 expenditure has only beaten inflation in Wales and Northern Ireland. (Creaser and Murphy). Authorities are increasingly having to rely on grants and much time and effort is spent on bidding for these funds. Indeed it would seem that in Sheffield, money remains the biggest problem and without new funding these

initiatives will fail. Government it seems is willing to praise and encourage these new initiatives and use them as publicity opportunities but not willing to provide a regular income. One key question then is: Can library resources in reality always support satisfactory levels of service?

1.2 Political background and Introduction to the literature

“*Education Education Education*” has been launched as the key issue for the new labour administration and this year has been designated ‘National Year of Reading’. This is important because until very recently and this shift in emphasis, libraries were very low down on the Government’s list of priorities. This turning point is marked for us in *Borrowed Time* (Comedia 1993) where libraries were officially linked by a government department to educational needs:

Britain is under skilled. If it is to regain some competitive advantage it must support new opportunities for education and re-training. The public library could regain a central role in this emerging scenario.
(1993:26)

In recent years there have been a number of influential reports which have highlighted and drawn attention to the role that libraries can play in education and in children’s learning in particular.

The most famous of these are *Reading the future* (DNH 1997) and *Investing in Children* (DNH 1995); they bring attention to the way in which public libraries can provide homework space for all children. ‘Investing’ though goes even further and advocates “*an integrated strategy for delivering library and information services to meet the identified needs of young children*” (66) within Local authorities and therefore institutionalising links between schools and libraries.

Moreover there are several other initiatives that have tackled this issue. In April 1998 David Blunkett announced that schools would now be required to give minimum amounts of homework per day to children as young as five. For instance the recommended time for a five year old to spend each evening is twenty minutes whilst a secondary school pupil should be provided with an hour and a half to two hours work each evening.

It is against this background that Homework centres have emerged as the natural and most effective way of improving levels of literacy and 'new literacy' outside of school, whilst exploiting existing resources and expertise.

The white paper Education in Schools also identifies the need to encourage children out of the classroom through the National grid and homework, whilst Labour's Literary Task Force specifically mentions the role that libraries play in promoting reading outside of the curriculum. These together with the National Literacy Project have all brought the educational role of the library and the need for after school initiatives into centre stage. It seems to me that at this point in time libraries are seeking to redefine themselves according to educational or technological needs and not by their traditional leisure role.

Another development in this field is the involvement of private sector and other agencies such as the Prince's Trust in homework projects and summer schools such as that at Sheffield Wednesday's Hillsborough ground. Moreover, David Blunkett's new plans for educational actions zones may soon extend this trend into schools as private money may be used to fund evening and weekend school opening where by homework clubs and sports events would be held on school premises. This is particularly worrying at a time where the principal of a statutory library service is under question and the profession are increasingly seeking to justify the service through its educational rather than leisure role. Therefore if we are to claim this educational role both in relation to

conventional homework practices and IT we must be seen to offer an effective service.

1.3 Aims and Objectives

This project aims to investigate Homework provision in relation to the needs and expectations of service providers and users within the Sheffield area; To highlight key issues and concerns which should form the basis of future development in this area and should contribute to the improvement of services both specifically in relation to Sheffield, and Library services in general. This way existing services can be surveyed whilst identifying principles which insure good practise in the future.

In order to achieve these aims the following objectives must be fulfilled:

- Reviewing previous literature on the libraries role in education in general and recent reports concerning lifelong learning.
- Identifying the major concerns of the user population.
- Identifying the major concerns of the professionals.
- Assessing the level of satisfaction, and effectiveness, in existing services
- Identifying areas where improvement is needed whilst acknowledging areas of excellence.

Chapter 2. Review of Literature

In order to investigate this topic, I will first survey all areas of literature that relate to the role of the library in education and any relevant information concerning education and even educational psychology. This will include not only the present crop of publications such as Investing in Children and Focus on the Child, but also those materials that relate to library services and the small amount of literature that deals with Homework centres specifically.

Secondly, materials on any kind of format, hardcopy and electronic will be investigated, reviewed and visited.

2.1 Children, Education and Libraries

It is consideration of children, and what libraries can add to their quality of life, which must inform and determine the nature of library services to children and young people. Blanshard (1997: 13)

Children's needs should be central to the core element of public library service. DNH (1995:2)

The best place to begin when discussing the role of libraries in education is the fact that in the main they are perceived to be a good thing (despite the fact that services are continually being on the receiving end of cuts). Last year this point was stated forcefully by the DNH in the report Reading the Future when it was argued that libraries were the '*first rung on the ladder to literacy and learning*' as they provide the '*opportunity for young kids to develop reading and a love of books*' (1997:20) However, it is equally accepted that in order for libraries to ever really fulfil this role there are many problems to overcome and issues to consider.

Catherine Blanshard lists the following objectives as essential when delivering services to children and young people:

- *to develop the skill of reading by providing stock which is appropriate for acquiring and developing this skill;*
- *to encourage reading for pleasure and enjoyment;*
- *to develop activities with a sense of purpose which promote the library and reflect the overall service objectives;*
- *to ensure sufficient resources to support the homework and leisure needs of children;*
- *to provide access to technology such as software, CD ROMs and the Internet;*
- *to train staff in listening and enquiry skills so that children have the best opportunity of finding what they want;*
- *to develop information handling skills* Blanshard (1997:18)

The children's library then has two key functions. Firstly, it must provide support to educational services through providing back up materials and access to IT and materials not readily available in the home and secondly, it must encourage the use of libraries and initiate the child's information handling or reference skills. If a service fails in either of these objectives it is failing to fulfil its designated role in the community.

Broadly speaking, there are five main strands that run through the literature on this subject and these can all be related to these key functions. These are equally important to Homework Centres and to Children's libraries in general.

2.1.1 The relationship between the School and the Local Library

The first and most important of these considerations is the role of co-operation between schools and library services: "*Co-operation with schools is essential in our work in public libraries, whether or not we are responsible for a school library service.*" Fleet (1973:91):

The public library will provide books for home reading but it will be the teachers who will be using the books with the children in school and encouraging the reading habit at home. Help by personal visits, book lists, exhibitions and courses should be regularly forthcoming from the library concerned.(82)

It is for basic practical reasons and the effective usage of resources and expertise, that book after book recommends co-operation between agencies. Homework Centres particularly, will depend on teachers and librarians working together and without this it is difficult to see how the curriculum can adequately be supported.

In recent years this concern has been endorsed afresh since the publication of Investing in Children which goes as far as to develop it further and recommend a formal integrated approach to service delivery. It argues for an: “*Integrated strategy for delivering services, including public, SLS and school library providers.*”(1) :

The role, function and mission of library services for children and young people have to be seen in the round, with integration of the major channels of delivery- the public library service for children and young people, the schools library service, and libraries in individual schools- at strategic levels. DNH (1995:v)

Moreover by 1997 this was incorporated into The Library Association Guidelines and a clear response to how this might be implemented was published:

To be effective, such strategies will need the endorsement of appropriate local authority committees, head teachers and governing bodies, and the support of staff in those library services which are party to such strategies. Blanchard (1997:33)

It seems that from whatever perspective you come from it is necessary that you communicate with one another both to insure effective service and to make everybody’s job easier. It is interesting to note that one recommendation from

Investing in children, has been implemented with the establishment of ASCEL (The Association of Senior Children's and Education Librarians). This organisation brings together librarians from children's libraries, schools library services and school libraries and cements relations between these separate agencies.

2.1.2 Staff, Skills and Training

The second theme that tends to feature heavily is the issue of staff, skills and training both in relation to IT and children's needs.

When dealing with children as opposed to other users the presence of educational needs adds another dimension to the quality of the service. For this reason then it is crucial that staffing is underpinned by a high degree of expertise and clear service objectives. This is demonstrated in Investing in Children, as both issues are included in the final recommendations:

- *clear objectives of service provision (4)*
- *specialist training (15). Wilding (1997:12)*

Moreover, training and development is featured extensively within Children and Young People which points out how training is needed both in respect of developing staff generally and in order to benefit children's services.

- *Whatever structure of staff organisation exists, the training programme should ensure that the knowledge, skills and expertise (including IT skills) required to deliver a high quality library service are possessed in all staff to an appropriate degree.*
- *All staff, irrespective of seniority or specialist background, will benefit from having access to adequate and relevant training opportunities which will broaden their professional development.* Blanshard (1997:44)

It is not only these government reports that set out the importance of training, Library Association publications and the literature as a whole all agree that training and staff development is of paramount importance. June Whetherly for instance, looks at the issue from another angle and argues this case by pointing out what the consequences will be if an organisation fails to appreciate its value:

- *The organisation/library service is not meeting its objectives.*
- *Change is difficult to achieve because staff have got out of or never developed the habit of learning at work.*
- *A high rate of staff turnover, especially of the able and ambitious, (though this will be affected by the state of the employment market).*
- *Underdeveloped staff who are not ready for promotion and who feel stuck in the organisation and unable to compete for jobs outside.*
- *Demotivated and disillusioned staff . Whetherly (1994:3)*

Training is essential therefore because it contributes to the ongoing success of an organisation both in terms of increased performance and morale. In the long term its benefits are huge and the disregard of these factors will only cause difficulties to future operations.

Finally, Investing in Children recommends that “*Every library authority should have a strategy for specialist training of staff engaged with children and young people*” DNH (1995:viii)

2.1.3 Staff, Skills and IT Training

Because IT is changing many aspects of our lives, away from the workplace as well as within it, organisational needs can be seen as coinciding with the training needs of the individual. Such a mutual

interest should, with the right management approach, provide a sound basis for staff development and the achievement of service objectives. It is through such a partnership approach that staff morale can be better maintained and the necessary re-assessment of jobs more satisfactorily achieved. Biddiscombe (1997:ix)

Therefore when considering staff needs and IT training, managers have to consider not only the importance of training in general but the added benefit of combating any resistance by employees to the technology itself. Biddiscombe acknowledges this and recommends that by approaching IT in its broadest context, its place in society, we can make employees more receptive as this way they can begin to appreciate what it can do for them: *“It is important to involve the participants in such a way that they see the process as a positive experience which will help in their own personal professional development”* Biddiscombe (1997:8). He has expanded this conciliatory approach to conclude that sensitivity is as important as efficiency when implementing changes and that any training policy must be carefully planned and designed to reassure and encourage staff.

2.1.4 Stock, Skills and Training

A further requirement featured heavily within these texts is a thorough knowledge of stock, which is recommended as being crucial to an effective service. Children need to know that the person at the desk is approachable and able to help them; *“The child should be shown that the librarian is there to help him and he should never be reluctant to ask for help”* Fleet (1973:81) This is desirable because it not only assists the child but it encourages a good attitude towards library use in the child’s adult life.

Stock policy in general though relies upon the ability of librarians to choose the correct strategy according to the particular needs of the user population:

With ever dwindling funds for materials, it becomes even more important to ensure that the processes of collection development are effective and efficient, i.e., that the limited money is spent as carefully and critically as possible. A policy can help ensure the effective spending of the budget.

Meeting users' needs and expectations and cultivating the collection's strengths are facilitated through a policy. Elkin and Lonsdale (1996:136)

This need for a strategic approach to collection development and the importance of users' needs in determining this is set out in Investing in children which recommends that: *"The percentage of the total materials budget applied to services for children should be determined locally"* DNH (1995:vii). This is developed in the Library Association Guidelines for children and young people which recommends that *"In determining stock provision it is important to build up a clear picture of the community comprising each library's catchment area"* Blanshard (1997:9) Moreover, Lonsdale extends this principal to the layout of the library and the categorisation of stock as well:

A cardinal rule, but one that is often overlooked, is that the arrangement of the collection should accurately reflect the needs of the user and not the perception which the librarian may have of those needs. Research in North America has revealed that collections are frequently librarian-orientated, and that young people and adults choose materials with little information and guidance. Elkin and Lonsdale (1996:154)

Everything then relating to service delivery must be developed according to and informed by an awareness of user needs. This must be applied to children's homework needs as well as to children's needs in general.

To draw these last three sections together then:

As the web of knowledge becomes more complex, the role of trained, informed library staff will be increasingly significant, especially for

children who are still learning to use library resources. The training and employing of children's staff should be a priority, and there should be greater emphasis in children's formal education on learning the lifelong use of public libraries Wilding (1997:2)

2.1.5 Delivering a Service to the Whole Community

Another key area of service delivery which requires consideration and high levels of training is the presence of different user groups within the community; or “*Do all staff have the sufficient training to make the library a cultural and educational force in the community?*” Fleet (1973:83)

There is a need to educate all staff about the needs and interests of user groups in the community and train all staff to serve those interests. Marshall (1981:50)

Without this training staff will not be able to adequately satisfy the needs of those children whose needs and beliefs are different from their own. This can apply to: etiquette, religion, and artwork but, especially stock selection which is important here as many older titles are insulting to everybody except white middle class males: “*All books must be selected carefully and should not be included if inaccurate or prejudicial in any way*” Fleet (1973:132)

On the one hand, children need to be able to access materials that reflect their own reality or the library risks discouraging users through alienation and on the other hand children need to be exposed to different lifestyles and cultures in order to operate as part of a multi-cultural society. This brings us to the third subject of interest.

Every library serves children of different cultures and different ages and abilities and it is in response to this that the literature in the main asserts; that children “*should not be dealt with as a homogenous group*” Blanshard (1997:13):

The concept of 'child' as a universal user type should be replaced with an awareness that this covers a wide range of users who need different services at different times. Gilder (1981:5)

Now we have seen how this relates to children from different cultural backgrounds but there is also the issue of age and varying stages of development. One notorious example of this is the predicament of the teenager. There is much evidence to suggest that library usage declines once children enter their adolescence.

Libraries cannot afford to be complacent and there are no good excuses for so many young people ceasing to use the library. Where libraries are modern in design and the staff in them are alert and enthusiastic, they are better used by teenagers. Fleet (1973:135)

This in relation to library leisure services is not particularly worrying as it is not surprising that at a time when schoolwork is at its peak that teenagers positively choose to avoid books in their leisure time. However, a problem does arise if teenagers are avoiding Homework centres as well.

Another point to make and perhaps the most important in terms of defining a role for children's services is the social dimension of library usage:

It should be obvious that even with schools of equal quality a poor child can seldom catch up with a rich one. Even if they attend equal schools and begin at the same age, poor children lack most of the educational opportunities which are casually available to the middle class child. These advantages range from conversations and books ('this would include IT today') in the home to vacation travel and a different sense of oneself, and apply, for the child who enjoys them, both in and out of school. Hill (1973:8)

Janet Hill writes movingly on this topic but she is not alone in her highlighting of this problem.

It aims to provide a critical analysis of library services to young people in the UK, assessing the degree to which they are responding to the contemporary needs of the child and the forces presented by society. It offers a broad conceptual framework and philosophical approach for students and practitioners alike. The last book that attempted to do this was Children are People by Janet Hill. Wilding (1997:3).

This quote comes from Children are People and it is one book that attempts to define children's needs in relation to society. Here Judith Elkin is quoted as relating Children are People to Focus on the Child.

Finally, the role of promotion cannot be over estimated as a means by which the community as a whole can be reached and therefore served. This is especially the case with libraries as the profession still struggles with a poor and stereo topical public image. In Children and young people promotion is described as “*..a vital and integral part of service delivery and is not something to be added on. Promotional strategies should, therefore, be built into service development at the planning stage*” Library Association (1991:29). This is important both in terms of raising the profile of the existing services and promoting new services such as homework centres to old and new users.

Therefore it is important not only to consider the needs and expectations of different user groups but also to find ways of reaching and communicating with them.

To conclude then, all these factors must be considered if a service is to fulfil its objectives.

2.2 Homework Centres and Clubs

The first point to make here is that there are many different types of homework provision and that it is therefore very difficult to define exactly what we mean by the terms ‘Homework club’ or Homework centre’. In his unpublished ASCEL briefing paper, David Murray of Southwark Libraries, addresses this issue and describes how Southwark define the purpose of these services:

Basically a homework help club operates at certain times when the library service guarantees to offer specific staff to help young people deal with their school, project and homework. Staff are there to help young people help themselves to find, understand, interpret and use information and resources held in the library, or accessible via the library. They can operate every night, or once a week depending on need and, more likely, resources. Blanshard (1998:178)

These clubs then cast the library in a specifically educational role where the user can expect to receive specialist knowledge and a proactive response to their needs that is reflected both with in the stock selection policy and the staffing and training policy of the organisation.

The second point to make is that there is, due to the youth of the service, unsurprisingly very little literature that deals specifically with this topic. However as a children’s library service all of the concerns discussed in the last section can be applied to Homework Centres and after school services in general. The second limitation here is that what little literature there is almost all of a descriptive or prophetic nature. There is therefore little critical or evaluative criteria on which to base future recommendations.

The first real mention of Homework Centres came in Borrowed Time: The future of public libraries. It noted how LMS and the 1988 Education Act had effected school’s resources and resulted in a greater reliance on materials held by public libraries (It also mentioned how the notion of life long learning

and 'non vocational education' had added to this). It then went further to show how this had effected library usage:

Nearly all of the libraries we looked at in the case studies reported large increases in the number of school students who were coming in to the library on a regular basis to do project work, use the reference section, ask librarians the answers to all their homework questions, occupy the seats and tables, and generally make their presence felt in mostly pleasant (but occasionally disruptive) ways. Comedia (1993:26)

It then goes on to state that “*research has shown the need for places for out of school study and the potential for such centres to improve students’ self confidence and develop independent learning skills.*”(30) However it only really deals with how the service was developing and makes no attempt to evaluate the service or recommend practice.

Another publication that deals with this topic is *The Peoples Network* which talks about the prospect of how: “*Several studies have indicated that children can benefit both educationally and socially from having well managed access to various forms of information and technology.*” Library and Information Commission (1997:1.9) Here we see how the role of these centres is defined as being part of a nation wide initiative which seeks to insure a greater deal of access to networked information. In this case then these centres have succeeded in being placed within a broader framework. Again there is very little on which to base an evaluative response to existing services. There are however some exceptions to this rule.

Catherine Blanshard’s book Managing library services for children and young people, is the most useful here as it attempts to set out a definitive set of objectives by which to judge the level of service in this area:

- *to provide additional support and ‘safe spaces’ for young people after school*

- *to develop the education, skills and employment prospects of young people*
 - *to tackle under-achievement in schools*
 - *to tackle poverty by increasing access to information and information technology*
 - *to promote equality of opportunity for all children*
 - *to enhance the quality of life for young people*
 - *to overcome the problems of rural and urban deprivation by increasing opportunities for access to information*
 - *to assist young people in developing information handling skills and the exploitation of all media forms*
 - *to establish or confirm the library as a place for support.*
- Blanshard (1998:178)

This list is useful because it not only identifies the purpose of these services but it also identifies what the author sees as the long term benefits of these policies both in relation to the service itself and to the community as a whole. Obviously, there is no way to assess the extent to which these rather ambitious long term goals have been fulfilled, however it is useful in terms of assessing the level of service that should be on offer. Blanshard here is advocating a comprehensive and specialist service that requires its own separate resources and a prevalent and proactive role in the community. She continues:

Homework centres or clubs often need additional resources, particularly for the GCSE level, and this may often require negotiation with the adult library as to whether this stock should be removed from the adult non-fiction and shelved separately in a homework section. Equally crucial is the access to a wide range and sufficient quantity of CD-ROMs and word processing facilities.

It is not enough therefore to try to deliver this extra service using only existing stock and expertise because in order to really fulfil the role of an educational

resource these centres must be able to provide a wide range of materials and the professional knowledge to deliver them.

This approach is also interesting because it raises the issue of how these clubs might effect or infringe upon the service as a whole. Can the homework service share other resources such as adult stock without removing it from the adult shelves or must all homework stock be new and separately shelved?

Blanshard also identifies the following factors as crucial to the success of any homework service:

- *opening times: after school, weekends and holidays all need to be considered*
- *sponsorship*
- *links to schools*
- *the relationship between books and CD-ROMs*
- *refreshment and toilet facilities*
- *charges such as photocopying, printing from the PC, etc.* Blanshard (1998:179)

Reading the Future, too mentions the important issue of the effect of homework provision on the rest of the service: “*Libraries working with suitable partners, should continue to extend the provision of Homework Centres, so long as they do not disrupt other users*”. DNH (1997:3.16) This comment raises the issue of how the library as children’s educational resource could begin to usurp its role of leisure and community provider.

This though is not typical and by far the most material that appears on this subject can be said to lack this balanced and critical stance and this is the proliferation of material that tends to appear in professional journals. This is perhaps best illustrated by the glowing coverage that greets every development at Southwark Libraries:

The clubs act as gateways through which libraries increase awareness and use of the resources Southwark's Library and Information Services offer, helping the library service to remain a focal point of the local community and supporting young people working to meet their own educational needs. Public Library Journal (1997:11)

This is not to say that it is not justified or useful in terms of defining the role of the service, it is just that little helpful evaluative research is available. Moreover, there is no mention of how funding effects service delivery and if Homework Centres are able to achieve everything that is expected of them.

Chapter 3. Methodology

This chapter will introduce the methodology used to achieve the objectives of this study. This will explain the methods chosen here to enable effective data collection whilst also including a brief discussion of expected findings and the way that these and other concerns have informed the design of this survey. Moreover, it will also consider the advantages and disadvantages in order to limit inaccuracies when conducting the investigation.

3.1 Introduction to Survey

This survey needs to take both quantitative and qualitative data in to account and will therefore require more than one method of collecting data. The former is needed to investigate whether or not these services have been successful in terms of attracting acceptable numbers of children and whether or not their existence has encouraged new users in to the library. But the latter is of paramount importance in evaluating the level of effectiveness in educational terms and in terms of whether such initiatives are likely to increase library use in the long term. The latter will be of most interest to library professionals, where as, it seems, the other qualitative measures may be of more importance to the users as they will give some indication of whether Sheffield libraries have helped or can help their children to improve their learning skills.

The best place to start then is with a definition of what a 'survey' is:

A survey is a form of planned collection of data for the purpose of description or prediction as a guide to action or for the purpose of analysing the relationships between certain variables, such as cancer and smoking. Oppenheim (1966:1)

In this case, we are seeking to assess the opinions of users and providers whilst trying to establish whether or not there is any link between Homework Centres and improved standards in education.

Finally, whilst attempting this all data was independently analysed and without any predetermined ideas. There were no preconceived ideas as to which direction the research would take the investigation. Moreover, every source will be treated as valid and on an equal basis. My investigation was “guided not by hypothesis but by questions, issues, and a search for patterns” Patton (1987:15)

3.1.1 Quantitative Methods

Qualitative research is important both in regards to this topic and in relation to our profession as a whole because of the simple fact that we exist to provide a good service to our users and in this depend upon the needs of people. However although the bulk of my investigation concentrated on these, an initial quantitative approach was be used to assess whether Homework Centres encourage new users whilst also trying to assess any immediate impact on quantifiable improvements in local schools.

This approach is useful, as Catherine Blanshard and David Murray point out, firstly because of the way that it enables service providers to build up a picture of who is (and who is not) using the service and secondly, to what degree particular services attract users:

David Murray suggests evaluation of; who is attending, what age and gender they are and, if agreeable, their ethnic background; what stock the young people use most; what their most asked questions are and what stock gaps have been identified (i.e. where was most demand either not met or where was there insufficient material to meet all requests). Blanshard (1998:180)

This is obviously most valuable in terms of identifying areas for improvement and in determining stock management policy.

To do this I have attempted to compare the levels of usage in libraries before and after the introduction of the new services and also the usage of those libraries without these facilities to those with. This was done both by original research and the addition of statistical data that has already been collected by the libraries in question; this consisted of issue statistics and community profiles.

This original research was be done through the use of the questionnaires which attempts to gauge user details through questions about age, frequency of use, use of stock and whether or not individuals have increased their usage since the homework services were established.

3.1.2 Qualitative Methods

It is hard to define exactly what it is we mean by the terms *qualitative* and *quantitative research*, but the broad understanding of these terms relates the former to the more subjective and human concerns such as feelings and evaluations whilst the latter is used to measure what is more easily measurable such as the number of people who have visited a library in one week..

Jennifer Mason, for instance defines qualitative research as:

...based on methods of data generation which are flexible and sensitive to the social context in which data are produced (rather than rigidly standardised or structured, or removed from real life or natural social context, as in some forms of experimental method). Mason (1996:4)

Basically, it is for data which cannot easily be put into a box, defined or measured and it is more importantly suited to ‘*areas dedicated to human service*’. Mellon (1990:1).

Only Westminster, to my knowledge, has conducted any real qualitative research into this area and they have done this by simply asking users what they like about the service. Blanshard (1998:180) This approach is also suitable to

this research and both users and teaching staff were interviewed personally through the use of the questionnaires.

The objective of this research was achieved by using a mixture of questionnaires, interviews and phone interviews in order to evaluate existing services from the perspective of both users and providers. This was used to gather information concerning the needs and expectations of both groups whilst assessing whether or not existing services are fulfilling this criteria. Questions deal with personal judgements and therefore asks respondents to give their personal opinions about the service and the different areas of service delivery.

Research was carried out in Sheffield Libraries and was on the one hand a review of the views of Management, Ground staff and Teachers whilst on the other hand surveying the attitudes and concerns of users. This was done through a combination of interviews, and questionnaires. In addition to this Mike Surr (IT Training officer) was interviewed after initial research revealed the huge concern surrounding IT training and support.

The questions were formulated with the co-operation of Andrew Milroy.

3.2 Librarians and Library Assistants

For this part of the investigation I need to be able to survey firstly, the expectations that the professionals have of the service and secondly, to what extent the actual reality satisfies this criteria. Both these elements were more to do with the needs of an educational service where as those statements and views gathered from the users tend to be linked more to preferences and expectations.

It is important though that we make a distinction between the librarians that help to provide the service and the teachers that do not. This is because of their different objectives and agendas. Librarians judge services according to

whether they encourage new users, save resources, and influence or change other services within the library. Teachers though are interested mainly in educational concerns. Therefore, these groups were questioned separately, and separate questions and questionnaires were designed for the two groups.

The most important thing to remember is that whatever way we choose to survey the needs and judgements of people, whether on the giving or the receiving end of a service, the method must be capable of allowing respondents the freedom to express opinions.

The task for the qualitative evaluator is to provide a framework within which people can respond in a way that represents accurately and thoroughly their point of view about the program. Patton (1987:11)

Any quantitative approach does not allow this to occur and that is why in this case a qualitative approach is the most desirable.

Firstly, Librarians were surveyed through the use of face to face interviews and were carried out in the workplace on a one to one basis. All of the interviews were conducted according to a semi- structured approach where by interviewees were questioned informally according to a check list that identified ten key areas: Stock, Staff, Training, Funding, Information Technology, Library layout and design, Relationship with local schools, Opening hours, Users and Security. The interviewees were then invited to express their views and feelings on these topics. This approach meant that the nature of the conversation was not influenced by predetermined areas of debate whilst insuring that important considerations were always included.

3.3 Teachers

Teachers on the other hand were surveyed primarily through the use of a personally distributed questionnaire

This method of data collection ensure a high response rate, accurate sampling and a minimum of interviewer bias, while permitting interviewer assessments, providing necessary explanations (but not the

interpretation of questions), and giving the benefit of a degree of personal contact. Oppenheim (1966:36).

The initial plan was to use the local libraries to gain the names and contact numbers of their contacts in local schools. However due to discouraging reports from librarians and the negative response to my initial telephone enquiries it was decided that in order to survey teachers effectively I must change my initial methodology and seek to interview teachers by another approach.

Therefore, I decided to take my original questionnaires with me to the Schools Library Service where Andrew Milroy allowed me to interview teachers as they used the library. Again, the teacher's response was not always inviting but I was able to get a fuller picture of their perspective than I would have done through the use of telephone interviews alone. I had planned to distribute my questionnaires but I found that most users were more willing to co-operate if I asked the questions verbally and filled in the forms in for them. Here we see a valuable a flexible approach can be to an investigation.

Only those teachers from schools local to libraries with or soon to have homework services were interviewed. This way the level of consultation between schools and libraries over homework services could be gauged.

In addition to this I persisted with the phone survey and was able to get an individual judgement from teachers closely connected with four of the libraries investigated. However, the fifth school, that associated with Manor Library declined to take part in the survey.

The questionnaire itself contains a variety of different question types.

The whole questionnaire will consist of a series of question sequences that must first be considered. We may wish to start with some factual

questions followed by some attitudinal ones or the other way round.
Oppenheim (1966:37)

In this case I have attempted to organise them according to theme however I have attempted to place attitudinal and factual questions in a way that is suitable to my objective. For instance I have to gauge whether a user first uses a service before I can then ask them to judge it. The themes then usually begin with questions that require quantitative YES/ NO answers and then develop to include a more complex level of questioning. This approach was adopted because it allows a certain degree of variety which is needed if users are to remain interested in the task whilst also maintaining the sense of order suggested by Oppenheim.

3.4 Users

In order to fully evaluate a service, it is important to survey the concerns and attitudes of its users despite the fact that they may not always be equipped to make judgements about the educational value of some services. I did this through the use of questionnaires that were distributed to those children using homework and non-fiction materials and then completed whilst I was present. In addition to this I was able to observe some users but there was not sufficient time to use this method in a comprehensive or satisfactory manner. The questionnaires require both qualitative and quantitative responses.

I have already mentioned above how users or non professionals are not always equipped to judge the value of a service but this is especially the case when dealing with Children. For this reason, it is important to consider all collected data alongside educational matters.

This problem of producing a suitable methodology for dealing with children's services was highlighted in Investing in Children:

A proper survey methodology, capable of being applied nationally, is critical to any understanding of the extent to which public libraries are meeting the needs of children and young people. DNH (1995:1)

In a recent issue of The Library Association Record) this concern was answered by Gordon and Griffiths (1997) in an article relating to a CIPFA (Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accounting) working party that was set up to investigate the above statement. During the course of their investigation they have produced a number of recommendations that will allow libraries to collect relevant data. This is of use here because of its advice on how to question children of different ages. For this purpose the report separates children by three age groupings: 0-4; 5-9; and 10-16. These are apparently based upon the national census, as this '*reflected the mix of abilities but gave us a more established basis for statistical reference*':

It was decided that the youngest age group would be surveyed via the parent/carer completing the form on the child's behalf; the middle age group would be on a self completion basis, with help when required; and finally the oldest group would be based entirely on self completion. Gordon and Griffiths (1997:372)

It was with these guidelines in mind that it was decided that in the case of younger children parents and carers would be approached whilst also providing assistance to under nines and also pre-adolescents if they request any help with filling in the Questionnaire. However, as we are assessing Homework needs it was unlikely that it would be necessary to assess children below the age of ten or eleven years old (Key stages 2/3 and 4 are most suitable to this study).

The major difference between the interviewing techniques used for the users and that of the professionals was that I used slightly different questionnaires for the users of libraries with homework centres than those used for the libraries without. Users at Chapeltown and Darnall could not be asked about specific homework services and were instead asked about homework provision generally and what they thought would contribute to a good homework service. However the majority of questions were the same and therefore allowed some comparison to be made between the two levels of service.

In these I have followed the basic principle set out for us by Oppenheim that advises that questions of a similar nature should be grouped together within the questionnaire: In this case as with the teacher questionnaires I have organised the questions into themes and then into a series of factual questions requiring straight forward, *Yes/ No* answers or quantitative data and then attitudinal questions that require a more considered and personal response. The questionnaires require both quantitative and qualitative responses.

Finally, it is just as crucial that the questions are worded appropriately, when constructing questionnaires, as it is to ask the right questions in the first place.

The most critical need for attention to wording is to make sure that the particular issue which the questioner has in mind is the particular issue on which the respondent gives his answers. Payne (1980:9)

This consideration is very important when dealing with children as they may only have a limited vocabulary. This is especially the case if English is their second language. Therefore I have attempted to use vocabulary and syntax that is as simple as possible without seeming to patronise older children. This has caused some problems as in the case of words like 'leisure' that are obvious to some users but unknown to others, however due to the decision to personally distribute these questionnaires I was unable able to supervise and assist users and therefore limit these misunderstandings. This approach also has the added advantages of increasing the response rate, allowing me to engage users in conversation and therefore encouraging further elaboration and more detailed responses.

3.5 Library and Schools Chosen for Topic

The following libraries have been chosen for this investigation:

- Chapeltown
- Darnall
- Highfield

- Manor
- Waterthorpe ¹

These sites have been chosen because they reflect a cross section of communities, and geographical location whilst also representing different degrees of provision. In addition to this all of these libraries are featured on a new publicity brochure; ‘Homework made easy: Children’s Learning Centres with Books and CD ROMS’ that are used to advertise homework provision across the authority.

3.6 Limitations of Methodology

3.6.1 Time limits

The time span for this project set considerable constraints and meant that I had to limit my investigation in a number of ways. This was compounded by the need to conduct surveys of teachers and pupils before the end of the school year the completion of homework tasks.

1. Only one authority could be studied in such detail.
2. All the data from teachers and pupils had to be obtained before the end of the summer term.
3. In depth or face to face interviews with teachers could not be undertaken because of the constraints on their time due to the busy end of school year.
4. Parents could not be interviewed in relation to their expectations of the service.
5. Only one visit to each library, in order to survey users, could take place before the end of term.

3.6.2 Limitations of Research Techniques

¹ (This service is only being launched this month)

The overall problem in using a small group of libraries to draw conclusions about homework services is that there is no guarantee that these libraries are representative of homework provision in general. Moreover, there is no guarantee that the communities involved are representative of user groups.

Secondly, I was unable to carry out five small case studies in to libraries and their local schools as had been hoped. This was due to the problems discussed above and the lack of response from local schools. Instead teacher questionnaires were distributed at the Schools Library Service and used in conjunction with the five sets of results from the libraries. This meant that I was unable to compare teachers' views directly with library staff and investigate each library individually.

Interviews with library staff

- 1.** It was not possible to make uniform arrangements with libraries and so the number of staff attending varied.
- 2.** Some key members of staff were absent or unavailable during the time span available.

User questionnaires

1. It was not possible to interview school children who do not use this service in order to ascertain reasons for lack of use at some libraries.
2. Due to sporting events, The World Cup and Wimbledon, usage was low throughout the time span available.
3. The number of users surveyed was not high enough to constitute conclusive evidence
4. Users were often in groups and may have influenced each other when answering questions

5. It was impossible to assess equal numbers of children in each library due to the low attendance rate in July.

Teacher questionnaires

1. Due to their reluctance to answer questions, comments were brief and it became impossible to carry out detailed interviews
2. The number of teachers surveyed was not high enough to constitute conclusive evidence
3. Due to the unexpected problems concerning school contacts for the five libraries involved it was impossible to use these schools specifically and questionnaires were distributed to teachers in general.

Teacher telephone questionnaires

- 2.** Telephone interviews especially cold calling are not ideal however, time constraints made them necessary
- 3.** It would have been useful to talk to more than one member of staff to be fully representative, but this was not possible over the phone.
- 4.** Again, the reluctance to be questioned made in depth interviews impossible
- 5.** The refusal of one school to co-operate with the research meant that there was no set of results to compare with the interviews conducted at Manor library. Therefore libraries were investigated as part of a group.

Chapter 4. Library Profiles and the Communities of Chapeltown, Darnall, Highfield, Manor and Waterthorpe.

In a recent survey of activity and group provision in public libraries, carried out by Creaser and Murphy, it was found that 61% of metropolitan districts provided homework support. This report also gives a breakdown of services provided by the districts that participated in this survey: Sheffield also provides a teenage collection, a parent's collection, minority languages, story sessions, reading groups, holiday and seasonal events, special needs support, year round events, under five's sessions and OPAC for children. (1997:53) The authority therefore provides a wide range of specialist activities for children of all ethnic and social backgrounds.

The basic strategy for homework support in Sheffield is to establish 'Homework centres' in all district libraries and some local libraries by the year 2002. These homework centres consist of one or two PCs, a collection of fifteen to twenty CD-ROMs and a selection of illustrated reference books. These facilities are not however provided with specialist staff, staffing levels, library layout or opening hours. However, despite the fact that there is much support for homework initiatives both in government and local government, funding is still erratic. This lack of a regular revenue means that long term objectives are hard to formulate and even harder to fulfil.

This difficulty is compounded by the outsourcing of vital technological services and worries about the maintenance and support of these new multi media resources. Responsibility of this now falls to Joy Drever who is also responsible for IT training and homework support in general despite being employed in a part-time post.

Materials management in Sheffield is organised centrally and individual libraries have little purchasing power and are not responsible for stock

selection. However there is a degree of flexibility built in to this method of organisation and libraries are able to recommend and request purchases.

So far only two homework centres, at Highfield and Waterthorpe, have officially been opened in Sheffield. Highfield's service is well established and was set up over a year ago where as Waterthorpe was officially opened in May 1998. In addition to this Manor offers the same service but has had no official opening yet. (For the purposes of this investigation we shall call these *Group A*). Chapeltown and Darnall on the other hand are due to be opened in the near future but even without these extra resources they still offer homework support and learning support for adults which is well used. (These *Group B*). The five libraries explored in this investigation therefore offer different levels of provision.

4.1 Chapeltown Library

Chapeltown is situated in a largely middle class area in the north of the city where the majority of the population live in private housing. There is a very low ethnic population and the need for multi ethnic resources is very low. The library runs a very family orientated service and is well used.

In regards to homework provision the library up until recently has concentrated on children's leisure needs and therefore have not had to rely upon class visits and contact with schools. However, in the past, Chapeltown offered space for homework but without specialist staff and stock. This service was well used because it provided a quiet study area but interest dropped when opening hours were reduced and the library closed at 5:00pm instead of 5:30pm. Its users are largely between the ages of eleven and fourteen.

The library presently contains some reference stock that is shelved within the children's area and there are some desks and seating provided both next to the teenage and non-fiction areas.

4.2 Darnall Library

Darnall library is the busiest library in East group (which also includes Highfield and Manor) but issues have declined slightly since the stop on adult purchases. According to library statistics 1997-1998, 2% were of community language materials and 7% of users first language is not English. These include Bengali, Urdu, Malaysian and Somali. The majority of users though are older people and 51% of issues were to people over the age of 56.²

Children's issues though have continued to increase whilst adult issues have declined. In terms of educational provision the library has some contact with local infant and junior schools and some class visits but staff report a decline in these visits since the National Curriculum and the increased time pressures on teachers.

The library provides teenage fiction, children's fiction and non-fiction and some reference stock. The new PCs will be placed away from the children's and teenage area next to the issue desk. There are two desks provided for children's study.

4.3 Highfield Library

Highfield this year reported the largest increase in issues, with almost 11000 issues to children. Highfield serves a population where 16% of users do not speak English as a first language: 10% of issues were to the Chinese

² Statistics taken from an internal document produced by Martin Dutch, April 1998

population. In contrast to Darnall the user population is relatively young and 70% of users are under 46.

Highfield has a very popular children's section and this accounts for 35% of the total issues for this library. Highfield has a lot of contact with local schools and receives regular class visits every week. Staff have close links with schools and the community as a whole with users continuing to use the service once they are at secondary school. This section is situated separately from the adult stock on the first floor. This area covers both educational and leisure needs and provides a large amount of study desks placed near to the non fiction area. The reference stock is placed with the CD-ROMS at the front of the library next to the issue desk.

4.4 Manor Library

Manor is situated in a deprived area of Sheffield where the majority of users speak English as a first language. 60% of users are over 46. Manor used to be the busiest library in the community sector, but since the opening of Waterthorpe library at The Crystal Peaks shopping centre and the new Supertram lines, usage has declined. Now it seems that things might be improving and recent statistics would suggest that usage might be on the increase.

Children's issues too would seem to be increasing and this is partly attributed to promotional initiatives both in relation to children's and adult stock. Contacts with schools are good but on the decline due to the National curriculum and the library needs to encourage more users.

The library provides a wide variety of CD ROMS and a work station, which like the other libraries is operated through a booking system. However

this is not positioned within the children's area but at the other side of the library next to the teenage stock.

4.5 Waterthorpe Library

Waterthorpe is situated within a busy shopping centre on the outskirts of the city. The catchment area is wider and more dispersed than other libraries but the user community is fairly regular.

The children's facilities are comprehensive and feature a wide selection of fiction and non-fiction, but most noticeable are the play areas and models provided. There are two specialist children's assistants here and children's usage is high. The provision for homework is the same as at Highfield and Manor but due to the recent opening it is not yet possible to judge its performance in terms of encouraging new usage. The CD-ROMs are placed with the adult learning centre at the front of the library.

Chapter 5. An introduction to Sheffield : The role of the library in relation to homework provision and usage.

In 1995 Investing in children still defined the role of the public library in terms of the reading and information needs of children and young people. It concluded that:

...at a time when unfulfilled reading potential affects the economic, cultural and social life of the country, the potential of the library, and in particular the public library which is freely available to all, as a force in support of reading and information literacy cannot be too strongly emphasised. DNH (1995:16)

The report does link this to educational standards but it is more concerned with improving literacy by fostering the love of reading and independent research. It does not therefore recommend that the library should fulfil a purely educational role but instead uses words like ‘enjoyment’ and ‘encouragement’ which point to the library as leisure service. Books in Schools, also views the library as contributing to literacy and is cited by the DNH to argue that the primary function of libraries is to make books and literature accessible and available to all children:

Public libraries are vital for giving children easy and free access to a wide range of books, forming the basis for a lifetime’s use and enjoyment. In teaching information skills and the subject courses, most schools require pupils of all ages to use sources outside the school. They should have to search for and assess the information sources as they will have to in their adult working and personal life. The public library is central to this. DNH (1995:15)

In this chapter I hope to discuss how the new emphasis upon homework and out of school learning, and the importance of IT, have resulted in the library service beginning to redefine itself in relation to children’s services. Secondly, if libraries choose to take up the challenge of this new role it is important to consider the implications that this will have on all areas of service delivery.

As we have seen in the literature review (see Chapters 1 and 2) the library service is actively seeking to define itself as an educational resource. At a time where homework is increasingly linked with educational standards, and children and young people of school age have increasing amounts of project work to complete outside of school hours, the library as homework venue has been given a high profile. In addition to this they have begun to promote themselves as such and the term 'homework centre' or 'homework club' has come into common usage. It seems then that if service deliverers, service users and the political climate all regard libraries as fulfilling an educational purpose then the library service has begun to relinquish its leisure role.

When discussing the role of an organisation we have to consider, firstly, the way in which the service is used and secondly, the way it is seen or perceived. The latter can relate both to service users and service providers.

Libraries have always been seen as contributing indirectly to educational standards and literacy through its part in encouraging the love of reading. However, until recently libraries were not considered to be an explicitly educational force and have traditionally been part of leisure services in many local authorities. The main reason that this issue is so important is because if libraries decide to concentrate on providing an educational service they risk losing their traditional association with leisure or in other words reading for fun. As we have seen above the value of libraries in relation to children is that they encourage the reading habit whilst allowing the child to maintain independence and more importantly the love of reading. The worry expressed to me by many librarians is that by institutionalising links between schools and libraries the reading habit and the use of libraries will be discouraged as children will associate the library with school work.

Here are some comments made to me by librarians and library assistants:³

- *I think we should be uneasy about prioritising education over leisure*
- *It is a shame to view the library as an adjunct of school*
- *Kids come here to meet friends and have fun, maybe they won't in the future*
- *I think we limit ourselves by concentrating on school work*
- *I am worried that kids will grow up with the library having unpleasant associations with school work.*
- *The library has a social role to play as part of the community it should be careful about prioritising education.*
- *Supporting the children's schoolwork is only part of our job; it is not our main function.*
- *We have to be careful that we do not allow education to dominate service delivery although I do realise that the issue of education and IT may be what saves public libraries*

³ A representative sample of quotations collected from library staff during interviews at all five libraries.

On the other hand some library staff expressed the opinion that introducing homework centres would make no difference to the way in which children and young people would use the library service. They believed that the two areas were separate and that homework provision would not prevent children coming in to use the fiction collection. Here are some examples of these comments:

- *Anything that encourages children into the library can only be positive*
- *If children are really keen on reading, homework provision is not going to deter them*
- *Kids come in and use the fiction and the non-fiction I don't see how more homework provision is going to change that*

5.1 Usage

The first things to look at here are:

- Who is using the service
- How often they are using it, and
- What are they using it for

5.1.1 The Users

During the survey 42 children and young people were questioned and their ages ranged from 8 years to 16 years old. In **Figure 1** we can see how by far the majority, 62%, of those users, across the authority, are aged between 10 and 12 or key stages 2-3. It is not surprising that only 5% of users are aged 10 or less because of the simple fact that younger children do not as yet receive

significant amounts of work to do outside of school hours. However, it is more interesting that young adults over the age of 12 only accounted for 33% of respondents when levels of homework are high. The same was true in *Group A* and in *Group B* where users over the age of 12 accounted for 27% and 42% respectively. However, although *Group B* attracts more users of this age it still shows the majority of users are between 10 and 12.

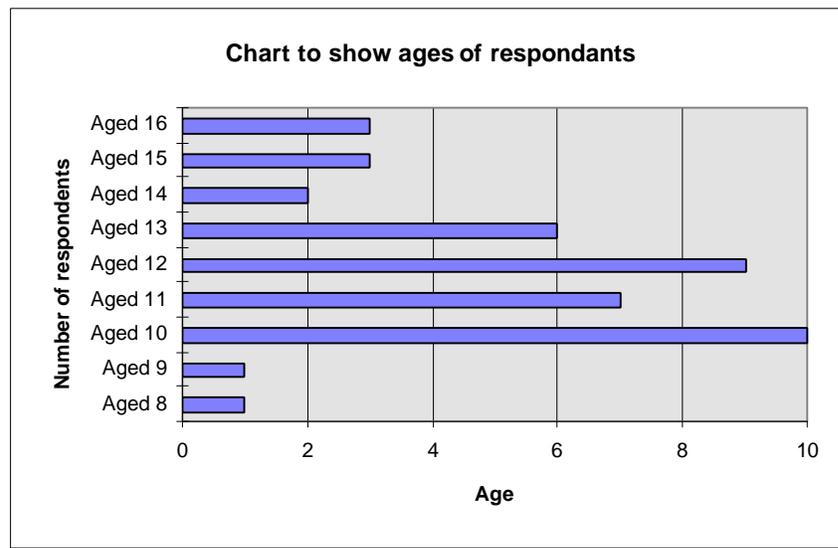


Figure 1.

As we have seen in the literature review (See **Chapter 2**) the falling off of use by children as they become young adults is well documented. Moreover, Joy Drever (Co-ordinator of Sheffield’s Learning Centres) pointed out that Sheffield services are used almost exclusively by 9-12 year old so it seems that my results are in this respect representative. If these figures are right it would seem that homework provision like library services in general are failing to meet the needs of this key user group and these must be identified if we are to raise usage levels. This issue will be discussed at length in **Chapter 10**.

5.1.2 Frequency of Use

The results show (**Figure 2** and **Appendices B, C and D**) that 86% of users surveyed use the homework provision once every fortnight or more. Moreover, exactly half of respondents use the service at least once a week. In addition to this 47% of users at Libraries in *Group B* claim to visit at least once a week, whilst libraries in *A*, show a slight increase on that with 52%. From these results alone it seems as though homework provision may encourage usage.

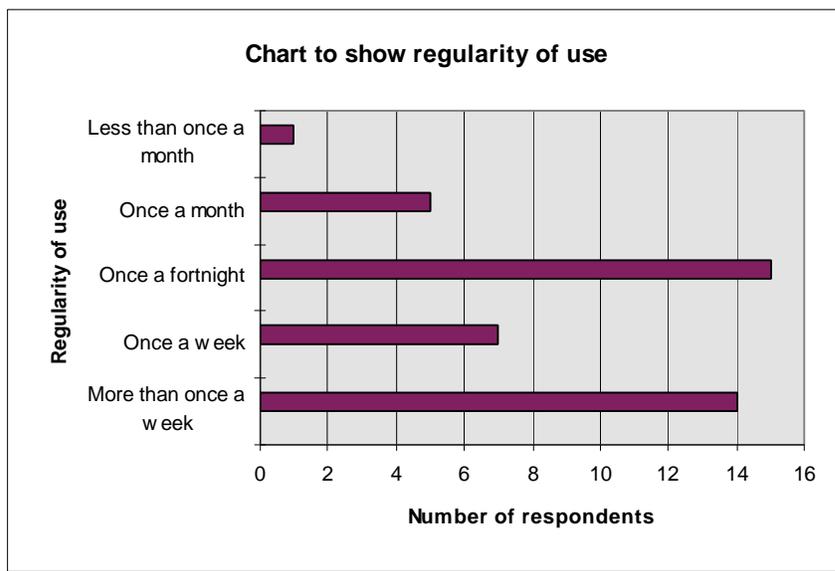


Figure 2.

5.1.3 Type of Use

In **Figure 3** (and **Appendices B, C and D**) we can see how respondents use the service. Firstly, perhaps because of the extra reference resources provided, *Group A* users would seem to use this collection more than *Group B* with 61% compared to 47%. It is not surprising that users would be attracted to using these attractive new resources especially if they are placed near the PCs as they are in Waterthorpe and Highfield. The obvious difference between those libraries in *Group A* and *B* though is that where as 65% of users at libraries with homework centres use CD-ROMs, libraries in *Group B* do not yet offer this facility. Secondly, perhaps because of this where as 100% of users in

Group B use the non-fiction collection, only 39% in *A* use it. Library staff in those libraries with IT facilities have all talked about the way in which hardcopy materials have been neglected since the advent of PCs.

Here are some typical comments:

- *Books are a foreign thing to them now*
- *Kids just won't go and use books anymore*
- *Hardcopy materials are not natural to kids anymore, its computers they want to use*
- *If you ever suggest that they use an encyclopaedia in book form they look at you as if you're mad.*
- *If the PCs are broken the kids tend to leave a lot quicker.*

IT then has become an integral part of the homework centre and this may contribute even more to the redefining of the library role. It seems though that users enjoy using CD ROMs and this may in itself help to compensate for the concern that homework centres might deter users from using the library as a leisure resource.

The other interesting feature of these results is that users in *Group B* seem to use less of the adult stock. For instance, where as 35% in *A* use adult non-fiction only 26% of users in *B* use this stock. One might think that those libraries with homework centres might be better equipped to deal with the demands of the National Curriculum with regards to older children than *Group B*, through their new collections of CD ROMs and reference books. However, it seems that users are still turning to the adult stock. It is hard to define

whether this is a real problem and educational resources are failing to cater for Key stage 3-4 or whether these users are simply making good use of the stock and using the whole library. (Figure 1).

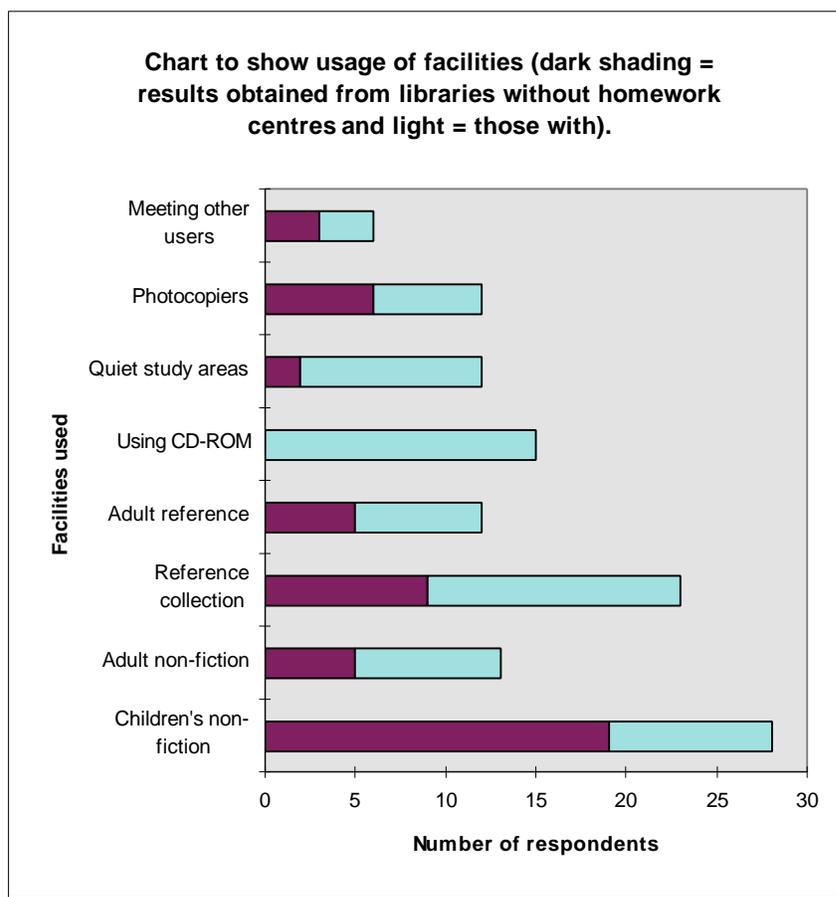


Figure 3.

5.1.4 Lack of Use

Finally, it is also interesting to look at why children might not be using these services. During the course of my investigation into user expectations I attempted, as an after thought, to gain some insight into why school pupils might not use the local library. I did this primarily through asking existing users why, they thought, their friends did not visit. Obviously, no conclusive evidence can be drawn from these answers as reliability is low, but never the less their responses do give some indication of children's concerns.

These responses fall into three main areas. The first two areas seem to be more to do with what the respondent feels to be inadequate about the service, than a real awareness of their friend's concerns. Firstly many users talked about the lack of resources and commented that there were not enough desks and that they would like to see more copies of some books. In addition to this IT was a common concern and was often mentioned in relation to *Group A* and *Group B*. Here are some examples:

- *There should be more books as everyone gets them when we have projects*
- *I would like to see a few more computers and upgraded encyclopaedias*
- *We have IT rooms at school to use*
- *There should be more children's areas, seats and tables for sitting at with friends*

From this we can see that there are improvements that need to be made in relation to stock if user concerns are going to be addressed but there is no evidence to conclude that these are reasons for lack of use without surveying school children in general. All of these concerns will be discussed further in **Chapters 7,8 and 9**

The Second theme that was identified here was the issue of opening hours. This is a real concern to both users and staff but again more children would need to be questioned. Here are some typical comments:

- *I'd like the library to be open longer in the evenings and Saturdays get really busy*
- *It is very good I have access to CD ROMs but often I don't have the time to do work before the library shuts*

Furthermore, all these concerns are echoed in **Figure 4** which illustrates which features users would most like to see improved. 38% of users would like to see opening hours extended and 31% would like to see the selection of materials improved.

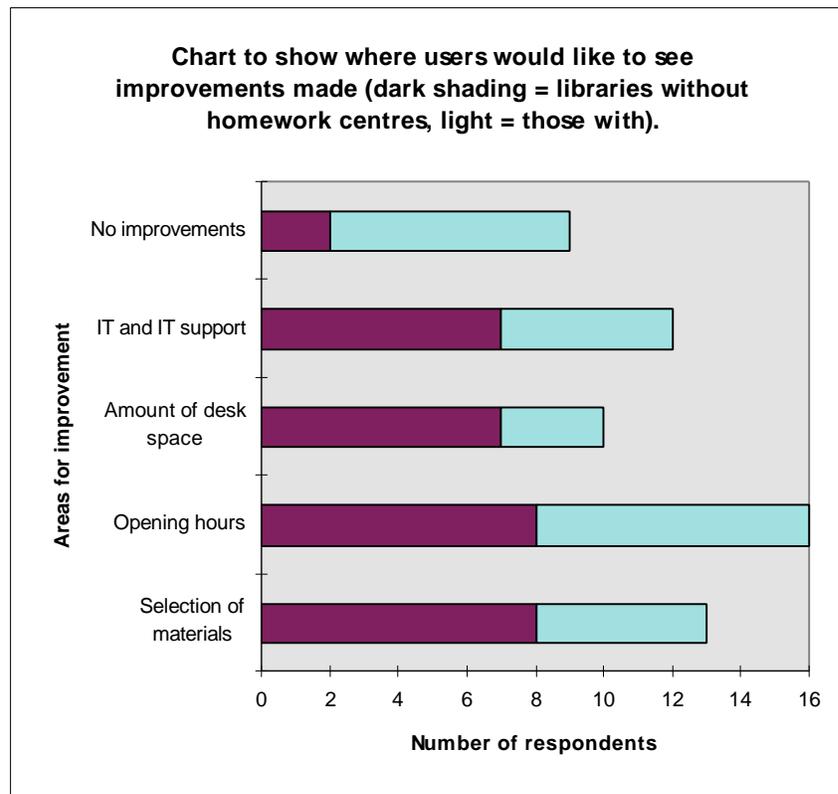


Figure 4

The third theme and perhaps the most pervasive relates to the idea that it is not that children have decided positively not to use the service but rather that it just hasn't occurred to them. Most responses pointed to this issue and the fact that if children have never used libraries and they can satisfy homework tasks using text books then they will continue to do so. Here are some typical comments:

- *We can use school books-I live near the library so I use it but my friends don't bother*

- *I don't think they use libraries*
- *I use the library for computers and we've got computers at school so they don't need to*
- *They use the school library or stick to text books*

This then relates to the issue of promotion as well as to general inadequacies in stock or IT provision and this issue will be discussed further in **Chapter 10**.

5.2 Education and Leisure: Conflicting Roles?

The data so far would suggest, bearing in mind that the homework provision in Sheffield is only in its infancy, that those library staff who believed that homework provision would be beneficial or enhance usage were correct. 88% of those users surveyed in all five libraries used the library both for leisure and homework purposes.

If we break this down in to those libraries which have homework centres and those that do not: 79% of users at Chapeltown and Darnall, and 96% of users at Highfield, Manor and Waterthorpe use both services. Furthermore, when asked whether they used this library for leisure purposes before they used it for homework, only 74% at Chapeltown and Darnall answered Yes, which means that 5% of users have begun to use the non-fiction collection only after using it for schoolwork.. The same is true at those libraries with homework centres, 87% of users answered yes which means an increase of 9% since the extra service was introduced. In addition to this I observed that most children using the library were using both educational and leisure resources and were using fiction and non-fiction stock (See **Appendices B,C and D**).

When asked 87% of users in Group A said that they believed that the children's service had improved since the homework centre had been introduced. (See Appendices C) Furthermore, users comments from *Group A* would also suggest that the dual functions of homework venue and leisure facility actually compliment one another and improve the service. Here are some comments from pleased customers:

- *Friendly atmosphere and wider selection of books here than at school library and can use adult stock because a lot of junior stuff is too young*
- *It is nicer sometimes to work here than at home-nice friendly atmosphere and helpful librarians*
- *Whenever I need to use it I come in and look for any relevant material in the adult selection as well as in the homework areas*
- *I could do my homework by using the books provided at school but by coming here I can produce just that little bit extra get information my friend don't have*
- *It is nice to work with friends or just in a friendly atmosphere*
- *Coming here has helped me with reading and spelling as I have easy access to all kinds of books*
- *It is easier to do homework because all resources together in a supportive environment*
- *It has got more stuff than at school and I now use more dictionaries and reference books*
- *It is good for me and my sister because we haven't got computers at home and we can use the books as well*

This survey is too small to draw any definite conclusions however this evidence does indicate that homework services do not discourage users and they may encourage new users to start using the library as a leisure resource. Indeed those libraries with actual established 'homework centres', would seem to have a higher increase in usage than those without. It seems then that by allowing the library to become an educational resource that it may indeed be possible to encourage users in general and reach those children that have not discovered the library through their parents or infant schools. Moreover, the presence of IT, even if in an educational capacity, is popular with users and draws people in to the library.

As we have explored above there is no evidence to suggest that homework provision and the library as educational resource might threaten the traditional role of the library service. There is a need for children and young people to have after school access to materials that support the National Curriculum and libraries are fulfilling that role. Moreover, research in these five libraries shows that usage reflects this function and that libraries are being used by local children as a place from which to obtain information and use for quiet study.

Finally, despite this there still remains a definite tension between the role of library as educational resource and library as leisure and community facility. There is a fine line between offering materials that can be used by the individual child for homework and on the other hand allowing the library service to compensate for the inadequacies in school libraries. This is why the decision has been made to deliberately avoid the temptation to prioritise education over leisure and remain a community service. However, this is a particularly thorny issue when attempting to deliver a satisfactory level of homework provision and accommodate the need for a wide selection of materials that support the National Curriculum. How well can the library service cater for this need without crossing the line and risk 'picking up the tab' for educational resources? This is a very important issue and it maybe

responsible for the failure of these services to fulfil some user expectations and it will be discussed in further detail in **Chapter 6** and in **Chapter 7** with relation to stock.

Chapter 6. Conflicting Roles: Schools and Libraries

It has already been suggested throughout the literature that a more integrated approach should be adopted when dealing with those services that serve children. Investing in children is important in this respect because it acknowledges the need for greater co-operation between those agencies that deal with children's provision. Moreover, the need for co-operation between libraries and schools is especially great when delivering homework services. However, as Investing in Children, (p.25) also draws attention to, there are times when the role of the public library directly conflicts with that of the school library and this is when the public library as educational support service is discussed.

6.1 Conflict between Libraries and Schools

Since Local Management of Schools (LMS) and because of diminishing school funds it has become apparent that teachers are attempting to borrow public library stock and use it in the classroom. This has become a problem despite the fact that libraries see themselves as an educational resource because libraries are reluctant to let what little funds they have be used to supplement the National Curriculum at the expense of the individual child user and the libraries role as leisure provider. Focus on the child also highlights this point by citing the responses of local authorities to the "undoubted increase" in this practice. Wiltshire for instance are quite clear and publish a guide that states firmly where the library service's responsibilities begin and end: "*The public library should not offer any service to a school that is already available from Wiltshire Learning Resources*"(1996:204). Judith Elkin concludes:

Evidently most authorities are becoming increasingly aware of the need to have clear distinctions. This of course is not a new issue, because public libraries for years have freely supported inadequate school libraries, with little or no support from the education authority and, sadly, with little public recognition. LMS and increased pressure to support the National Curriculum, has merely focused attention on

this issue and forced it out into the open: all services above and beyond the standard personal loan and access to books and information have to be paid for by schools.(1996:204)

In Sheffield, the same is true. Sheffield Libraries and Information Services have responded to this problem by producing a set of guidelines entitled Library Strategy: 'Library services to education and the National Curriculum'.⁴ These define in no uncertain terms how keen the library authority is to prevent relevant materials being used to supplement school budgets. These include:

- *There should be no loan of public library stock to schools other than what is normally available on an adult ticket. Dynix should be alerted to the needs to 'police' this when accession number prefixes change next year. Libraries should be particularly aware of this in relation to private schools and GMS schools who do not choose to 'buy back' into the LEA funded Schools Library Service.*
- *Public libraries will need to reflect the ongoing need for study support materials, however, this should be seen in relation to ever declining budgets and the need to ensure that resources are not drained from the important areas of children's stock. Materials should continue to be bought for curriculum topics but not in quantities that are out of proportion to the other stock, or which see the public library service resourcing under-funding in the Schools Library Service or individual schools.*

Sheffield Libraries and libraries in general are taking steps to ensure against, not only the systematic abuse of the service by schools, but the likelihood that libraries will become a support service for the National Curriculum.

⁴ Extracts taken from internal document produced by Andrew Milroy, April 1997

In terms of homework needs this issue is especially important as in order to function as an effective homework service the library must begin to specifically stock materials that support the National Curriculum. However as we have seen Sheffield have made the positive decision to limit this stock. Moreover, although set collections for these new services have not been defined yet, there is no sign that this approach will be altered. As Andrew Milroy points out *“We are not attempting to support the National Curriculum only to cover a range of materials and we are determined not to neglect leisure material”*. However, this tension between roles maybe responsible for future problems because of the simple fact that users will judge the service only according to their homework needs.

As we shall see in **Chapter 7**, users are already concerned about the variety of materials available and 60% of users listed materials as the most important factor in homework services. Teachers too rate the National Curriculum as important to homework provision, and the results show that 93% of teachers view stock that supports it as fundamental. (**Appendices E, F and G**)

These results show how important the National Curriculum is and this indicates how the failure to provide suitable materials could have grave consequences in regards to the needs and expectations of users and teachers. If the needs of pupils are neglected the service will fail to benefit their schoolwork; and if we fail to gain the confidence of teachers we cannot expect them to recommend or support the homework service in any way. The result of all of this will be the failure to meet the objectives of a good homework service and the role of library as educational resource will be undermined.

It could be argued then that once a service specifically defines itself as serving an educational purpose it cannot reject its responsibility to the National Curriculum. In order to satisfy user needs libraries cannot afford to approach homework centre resources in the same manner as they do children’s stock in

general. However, it could also be argued that it is not surprising that teachers would prioritise these materials. If they are keen to use the library as a support service they would wish it to supply these materials and even without an ulterior motive the very nature of their role as educators restricts their view of children's resources.

Both of these views are understandable and this problem is a difficult one but it must be addressed and the evidence would suggest that these services must provide suitable stock. Library services have to decide whether or not to do this or risk running a service that is flawed, in which case I suggest that they do not label them homework services.

However, it is equally important to prevent this service being used by teachers and schools. These resources are meant for the individual child and not to serve schools and it is only right that the final responsibility should lie with schools. It is not in my remit to explore how this can be made possible, but one way to ensure fair conduct is to put materials that support the National Curriculum in to the reference collection and as Andrew Milroy has already recommended use the library management system to police loans.

Another more drastic solution would be to enter into partnerships with local schools or with the Education department and consider the possibility of schools making a financial contribution to the book fund . This way schools would be free to use the service in addition to the Schools Library Service. Admittedly, this is going to be very hard to achieve and declining budgets will not make this easy but it is important for both professions to realise the benefits of homework services. This approach has worked in Southwark where the integration of library and educational services has enabled homework centres to benefit from education's resources: *"...the channels opened up between libraries and education have been good for both. Libraries for instance, have gained extra funds for GCSE materials and literature."* Swaffield (1997:88)

Only through greater co-operation would any of this be possible and it is ludicrous that schools and libraries who both have the same long term interest in education and the development of the child should be forced to compete. Libraries must use whatever opportunities are available to promote their services. For example they could:

- visit schools,
- offer their expertise to assist teachers in selecting materials,
- lobby education departments
- forge links with school librarians

Co-operation is the only way by which this problem can be solved. It will benefit schools because they can rely upon an effective after school resource that will benefit children, a support service that can assist with the selection of materials and the guarantee that relevant materials will be available to enable pupils to complete project work. It will benefit libraries because they can rely upon schools to promote the library service, because they can deliver a more effective service and because prior warning will enable them to cater for high demand due to projects. Finally, both professions will gain from each others expertise and everybody will gain from an improvement in educational provision.

6.2 The Need for Co-operation between Schools and Libraries⁵

We have discussed above how the role of schools and libraries often conflict however, it is the co-operation between the two that we need if homework provision in libraries is to succeed. Catherine Blanshard lists “*links with schools*” (1998:179) as crucial to the effectiveness of such initiatives and the data demonstrates how a failure to maintain such ‘links’ has effected service delivery in Sheffield.

⁵ See **Appendices E**

Firstly, when asked whether or not their schools had regular contact with their local library 43% interviewed at the Schools library Service said they did not, (**Figure 5**). This was a surprisingly high figure and one made more distressing by the fact that all of those interviewed were from schools local to existing or planned homework centres, although 75% said they were aware of homework provision. Moreover 75% of those that answered Yes reported that neither they nor their colleagues had been consulted or approached to assist in the planning of these resources. However, 75% of teachers that are aware claim to actively encourage their pupils to use the service. (**Appendices E, F and G**)

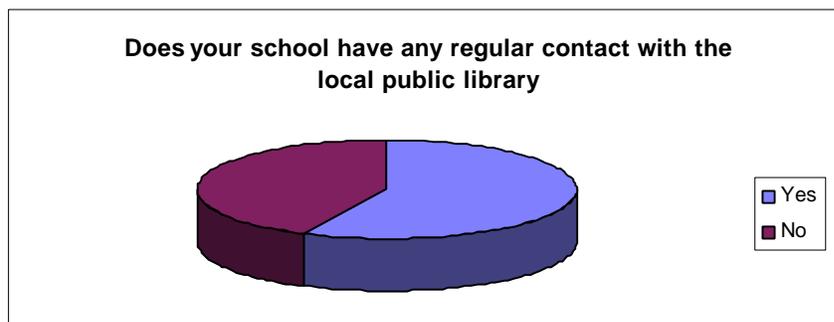


Figure 5.

Another interesting factor is the National Curriculum and the effect that this has had on school timetables. I have discussed in the Methodology (**Chapter 3**) how I was unable to do as I had originally planned which was to talk to the libraries regular school contacts. I was surprised to find out that although librarians were able to give me names of local head-teachers or school librarians they were unable to provide me with the names of teachers who would have any real knowledge of the services I wished to examine. Highfield was the only exception The reason I was given for this was that the National Curriculum and the constraints that this put on teachers time. Equally when I approached teaching staff I was told the same thing. Teachers and librarians were both concerned that Class visits were dwindling and that there was less

time available for library based activities. Although some teachers did remark that they hoped that the introduction of the 'Literacy Hour' might change this.

Here are some comments from the interviews relating to this issue. The first group are from library staff, and the second group are from teachers:

- *We still have a lot of class visits but they are declining and they are all with primary schools: homework provision would benefit from more co-operation with secondary school*
- *Yeh I'm worried about class visits, every year you have to work harder to keep them coming in –it's the National Curriculum*
- *The national curriculum means that teachers just don't have the time anymore.*
- *We used to have a lot of contact with Manor but there isn't the time anymore, it is a shame*
- *I hope that the Literacy hour will improve this, but at the moment time makes the time is hard*
- *There just isn't the time I'm afraid*

Finally, this lack of co-operation was also apparent in the attitude of teaching staff to my questions. It took an awful lot of effort to persuade teachers to talk to me either in person or by phone and one school refused outright to talk to me. It seemed that homework centres were very low down in their set of priorities.

The main point to make is that this research indicates that current practice in Sheffield does not satisfy one of Blanshard's key objectives. If

teachers are not in regular contact with libraries we can assume that the level of co-operation is low between the two services. However, it is not all doom and gloom: all staff interviewed both at the Schools Library Service and by phone said that they personally felt that information skills were an important skill. Secondly when asked to choose the statement that best illustrated their view of the role of library services in Education, 57% said that they thought that it had an 'important role' and 43% said that they felt it had a 'supportive role to play'. This at least means that we have a commitment from teachers to the importance of libraries, and the contribution that they can make in this area. Therefore, we must use this bargaining power to develop mutually beneficial relationships.

We have discussed this issue so far without really explaining why such relationships are so crucial. It has become apparent throughout this investigation that there are many areas of service delivery that would benefit from a deeper level of co-operation between schools and libraries. Here are some examples of how it has hindered service delivery.

6.2.1 Materials Management

In my initial interviews with Andrew Milroy and Joy Drever they told me of their concern about the way in which this lack of communication was making it impossible for libraries to provide stock that is relevant to the projects being set in local schools.

- *Time and time again we have children asking for books on topics that we just don't have, there is no point in setting these tasks without establishing whether or not there are the resources to support them*
- *If we had some warning, we could prepare ourselves for 30 kids all wanting books on hamsters, this is not to say that we would buy 30*

books on hamsters but we could borrow books from other branches or consider making them reference for a short period

Again the results in Sheffield correspond to the national picture. Investing in children highlights this problem when it observes that: “*the major difficulty is trying to provide sufficient material to meet homework demand when the same topic is being covered by a whole class or, in some cases, a number of classes or schools simultaneously*” (1995:25). Equally, libraries should be taking positive action and putting some pressure on schools to do this. Promotional tools and lobbying should be used to convince teachers of the benefits of co-operation in this area.

There is no real solution to this problem, given the financial constraints, and this report doesn't offer one however, some prior warning can at least help to alleviate the situation. Here we see one example of how better links with schools can help both parties. Materials management is discussed in **Chapter 7**.

6.2.2 Promoting the Service

Another area of service where better links with schools can benefit services is the way they can be used to reach potential users. Firstly, those students who do not normally use library services can be reached and encouraged to use a resource that they may not be aware of (In this case the public library service in general benefit). If teachers believe in the local homework service they will recommend it to pupils and parents. Secondly, those families that already use library services will be reminded and reassured by an endorsement from a reputable source. Either way the co-operation of schools benefits the homework service. **Chapter 10** explores this issue in greater detail.

6.2.3 Reference and Information Skills

The third example of how co-operation is desperately needed is its role in the improvement of information skills. Regular class visits, the advice of information professionals and exposure to reference materials are all ways by which libraries can assist schools to prepare children and young adults for the information age. This is relevant to homework provision because of the importance of information skills to project work. (see **Chapter 11**).

Key Conclusions

- Ground research and the literature on this subject suggests that greater co-operation between agencies would benefit all parties.
- There is considerable support from schools for library homework initiatives and this should be the basis for future partnerships
- The National Curriculum has put considerable pressure on schools and libraries and it is only through stronger links that the problem of scarce resources can be addressed
- Homework services cannot fulfil key objectives without a commitment to supporting the National Curriculum
- Library services must ensure that their budgets are used to support the needs of individual users and not as a supplement to inadequate school libraries.

Chapter 7. Stock and Materials Management

The basis of all criteria for selection is the appropriateness of the item in terms of age and interest level, readability, and of the community serviced by the library. Esson & Tyerman (1991:5)

In this chapter we will examine the effectiveness of present stock selection in relation to user needs and expectations. In addition to this we will consider the extent to which current practice reflects the overall aim of the homework service.

7.1 User Needs and Expectations

The user surveys found that stock or the actual materials available to children and young people are seen as the most important part of the service. The users survey found that 38% believed that hardcopy materials were the most important factor in service delivery and 60% thought that electronic and conventional materials together were the most important (**Figure 6**). This majority opinion demonstrates just how important it is to deliver a stock policy that satisfies the need of users. With this in mind it was important to gauge the exact level of satisfaction felt amongst these users and so the methodology was adapted to enable users to judge stock provision by choosing the statement that best illustrated their view. The results of this were very encouraging because although only 42% overall said that “It always has the specific items that I need” those users in *Group A* were considerably more satisfied than those in *Group B* with 52% and 32% respectively. This is important because it means that homework centres are delivering a service that has produced recognisable results in stock provision. Moreover, all users in both groups said that the library always managed to provide them with the items they needed or relevant information of some kind. (**Figure 7**).⁶

⁶ See **Appendices A, B, C and D**.

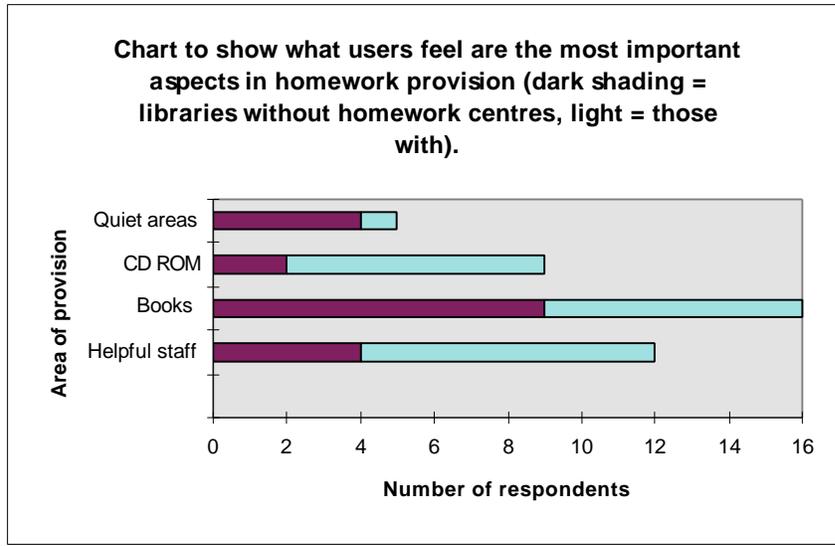


Figure 6.

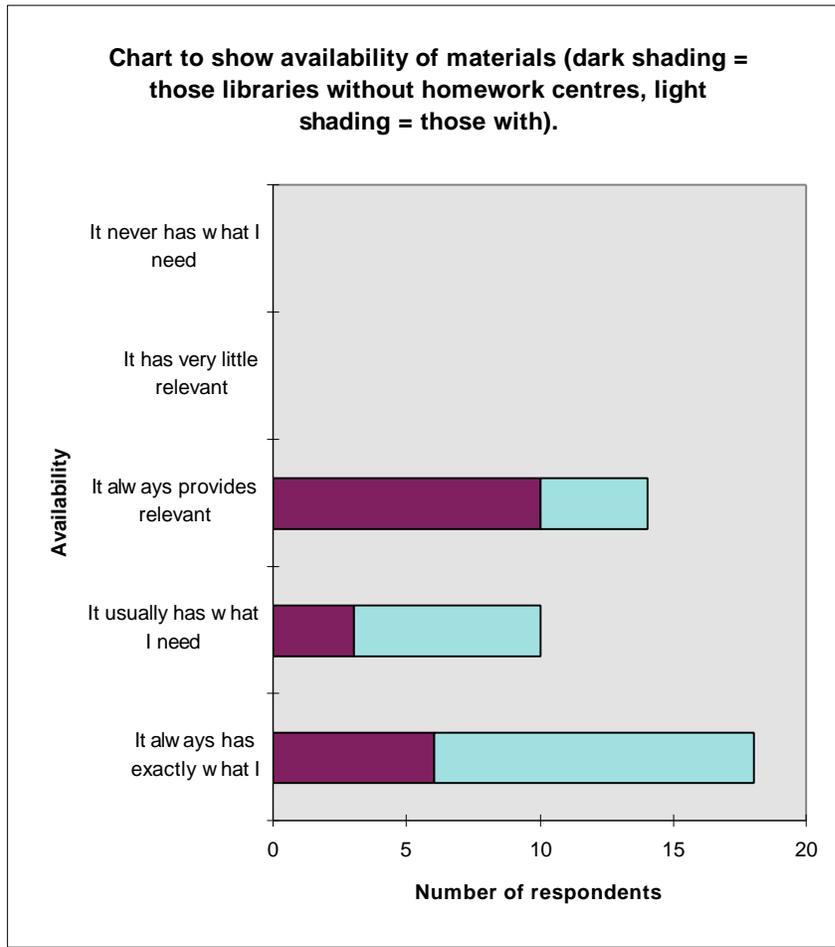


Figure 7.

However, when asked which features if any they would like to see improved 31% still believed that the selection of materials could be better as one 12 year old user remarks: “*Everybody wants the same books and there aren’t enough*” (See **Figure 4**) Therefore, although these results are very promising and users are pleased with the existing service there is still room for improvement.

We have already discussed the importance of teachers and their support and so it is also necessary to try to gauge their opinions of the materials available. Overall the enthusiasm seems to be lukewarm and teaching staff have awarded rather average scores. Firstly, hardcopy materials on average scored 3.75 out of 5 for the variety of materials and 3.625 for the relevancy. Materials overall (hardcopy and electronic) scored 3.875 and 3.375. (**Figure 8** and **Figure 9**) Electronic materials scored slightly lower with 3.5 and 2.75 for variety and reliability (**Figure 10**). Provision is adequate then but “could do better” and IT, as in relation to staff training, is judged as inferior to its hardcopy equivalent.

7.2 Stock and the National Curriculum

Another point that is important to educational professionals is support for the National Curriculum (see **Figure. 5 and Chapter 6**). Therefore it is important also to try to judge stock provision against this factor. In contrast with the scores discussed above, there is no real disparity between hardcopy and electronic materials with 3.625 and 3.5 respectively. These again are very average scores and illustrate the reservations that teachers have. Indeed one teacher at the Schools Library Service remarked that: “*There is no point in providing stock that doesn’t support the curriculum in these centres, it’s not needed and it won’t be used*” Admittedly this is rather a narrow view to take of the world’s knowledge but it is never the less a realistic one. When we are dealing with limited resources it is right to put them to the best use which is where they will help users the most.

Homework centres are meant to assist children with their school work and so those libraries with centres should demonstrate this purpose by providing the relevant resources. Surely, homework centres can only be judged by the way that they enable users to complete homework. However, as we have already discovered this process would be made easier by a greater degree of co-operation between schools and libraries.

In **Chapters 5 and 6** we explored how the changing role of the library service can produce friction between the educational demands of the National Curriculum and the leisure needs of the community. Stock perhaps more than any other factor effects the way that the library role is perceived and conversely it should reflect the chosen role. Therefore, to establish whether or not a service is committed to educational provision we have to consider the nature of stock provision.

It seems in this case that there is a tension between what the library claims to be delivering and the actual nature of the stock that is available. If the evidence above is representative of public opinion then current stock provision is failing to fulfil expectations of homework provision. Although ratings are very respectable, IT resources slightly less so, users and teachers are still concerned that the level of present provision does not satisfy their homework requirements.

To return to the opening quotation then stock selection should be informed by an awareness of user needs. The findings here show that users needs are being satisfied in relation to general variety and relevancy requirements and are therefore appropriate. However, in regards to the particular needs surrounding homework provision the service needs to show greater commitment. Only through resolving the current conflict between homework needs and library policy can this be made possible.

Key Conclusions

- Stock selection must reflect the needs and requirements of users
- The aim of homework provision is to assist with and develop the child's ability to research and complete homework tasks. Therefore stock selection should reflect this aim
- Stock provision influences the way that the service is perceived and therefore it should reflect the aim of the service.
- Any tension between library policy and the perceived role should be resolved

Chapter 8. Staff, Skills and Training

In the previous two chapters we have discussed the role of library homework provision but now we must examine whether the human resources are capable of fulfilling this role.

The homework centre must be able to deliver the resources that enable children and young people to research and complete homework in a safe and supportive environment. Although Sheffield's services do not aim to provide the services envisaged by David Murray (See **Chapter 2**) there are aspects in his definition of homework provision that are universally applicable. These relate to the role of staff:

Staff are there to help young people help themselves to find, understand, interpret and use information and resources held in the library, or accessible via the library. Blanshard (1998:178)

These points apply to children's services in general but are especially important to homework services as each child has a specific task to complete. In relation to Sheffield, the data would suggest that both teachers and users are satisfied with the level of staff expertise and that staff themselves are confident in this area.

8.1 Staff and their Skills

In **Figure 8**, we can see the importance that users attach to helpful staff⁷: 29% of users said that 'helpful staff' were the most important factor in homework provision and a third said that they thought it was the second most important. Only hardcopy materials were consistently rated higher than staff skills and expertise. Teaching staff too rated these skills as essential. 33% of those interviewed at the Schools Library Service believed it

⁷ Also See **Appendices A, B, C and D**

fundamental and out of those interviewed by phone 75% agreed. (See **Figure 5**).

In addition to this my methodology enabled me to gather data relating to how highly teachers rated existing services. First they were questioned in relation to staff and their knowledge of materials and secondly in relation to the service in general (See **Chapter 9** for results and analysis relating to IT). For materials the average rating given for staff expertise and the approachability of staff, out of 5, were 4.625 and 5 respectively; and for performance overall the average ratings were 4.75 and 5. This demonstrates that the quality of service delivery in all five of these libraries is high and that users and professionals feel a great deal of satisfaction with it. So far then staff on the ground are succeeding in delivering a service that is a credit to the library service and its educational role. (See **Figure 8 and Figure 9**)

Library staff also were comfortable with their own abilities however, it became apparent that it was staffing levels that they were more concerned about. Catherine Blanshard highlights this issue and highlights the importance of providing enough staff to cater for the individual needs of children's homework demands:

Adequate staffing is what will make these clubs or centres effective. They are an additional resource and should not be built on existing staffing. Blanshard (1998:179)

Unfortunately, in Sheffield and in libraries generally there are not always the funds to satisfy demands.

It has been mentioned how Joy Drever in only a part-time post is responsible for 11 libraries, but low staffing is a problem across the whole library service. Children's services in general have seen a decline in specialist staff and where as there used to be children's library assistants in every branch and specialist input into their training. The result of this in individual libraries is

that there is not enough staff to devote full attention to assisting children with homework.

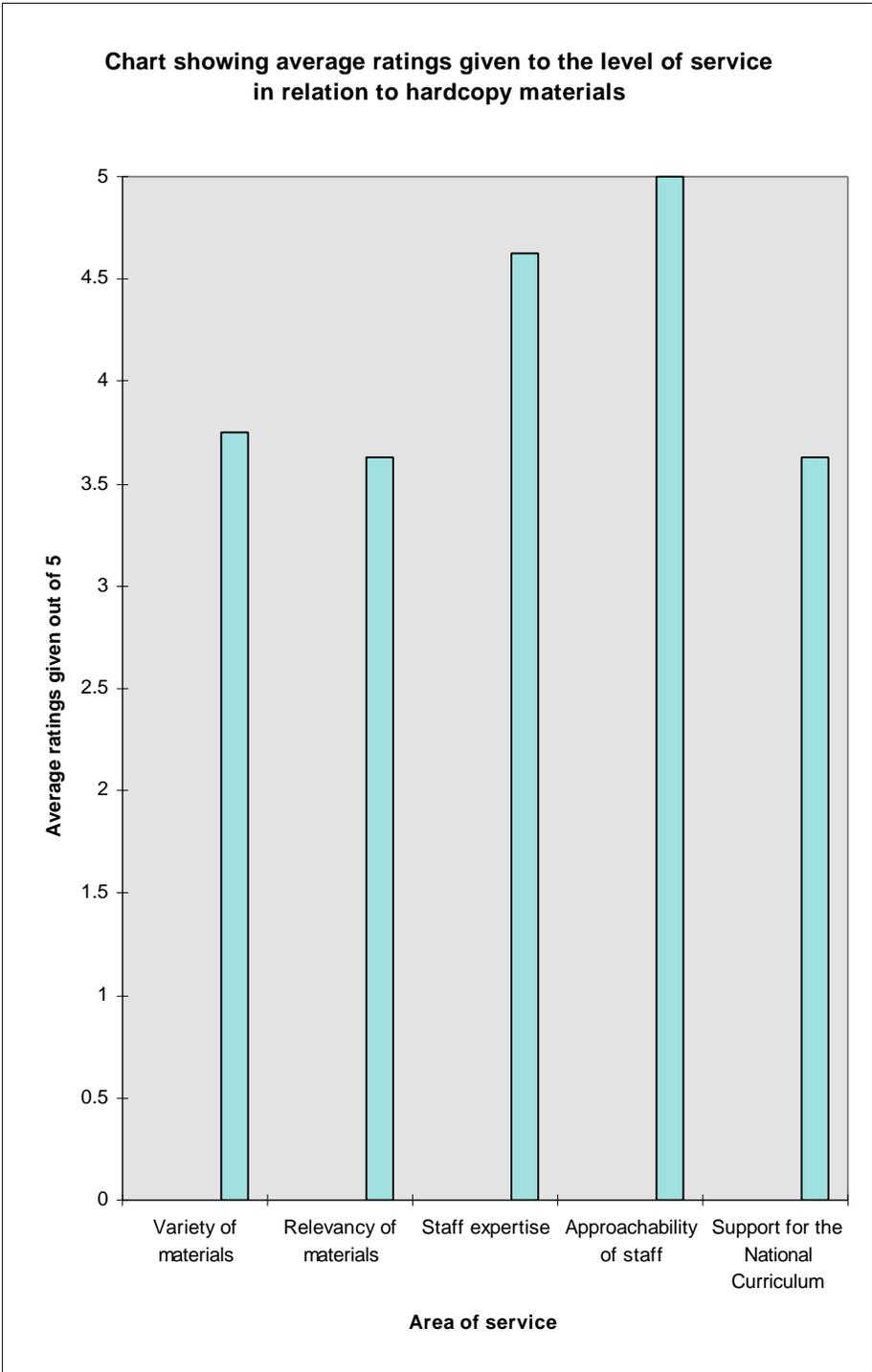


Figure 8.

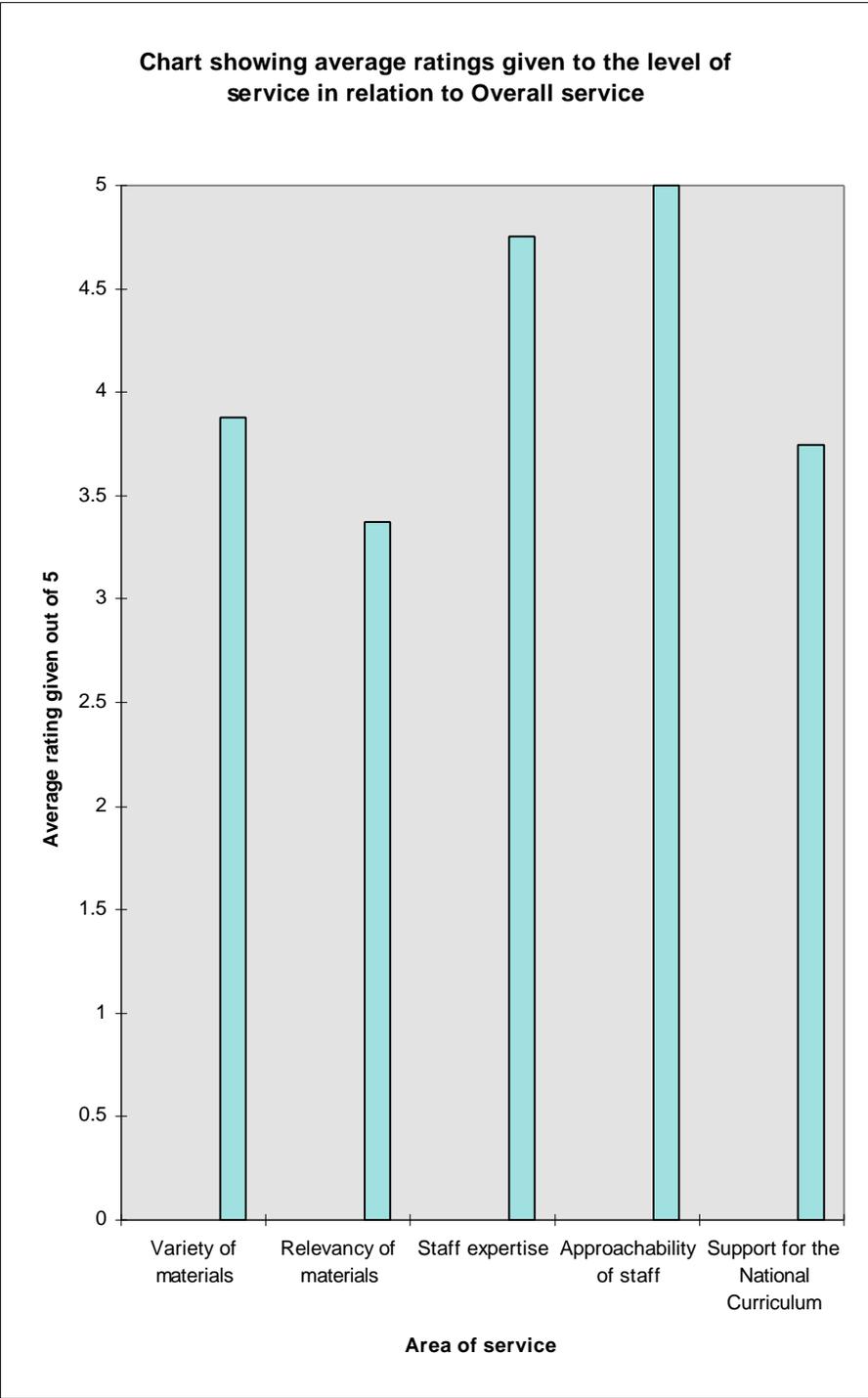


Figure 9.

Moreover, there is not the staff in general to keep libraries open long enough in the evenings to really establish an effective homework service. Here are some comments from library staff:

- *The priority is the issue desk, there just isn't the time to help the kids as much as we'd like*
- *I think homework services really require staff support, not specialist staff necessarily but someone there who isn't chained to the issue desk. I'm uneasy about loads of kids using CD ROMs unsupervised.*
- *A lot of our kids go to the Mosque, or have to take their little brothers and sisters home first and by the time they've done this the library is nearly closed*
- *Secondary school children often don't get back home till nearly 4.00 and the library closes at 5.00.*

Surely, service delivery should reflect the potential user population. If opening hours are not suitable to children's timetables, and the number of staff can't cater for their considerable needs it is difficult to see how homework centres can fulfil their potential.

In addition to this the users interviewed also highlight the importance of opening hours as we have already seen in Chapter 6. 38% of children said they would like opening hours to be extended. **(Figure 4)**

It seems then that staff at present are able to fulfil Murray's definition. Where staffing levels permit staff deliver a quality service where their knowledge of materials and of children enable them to assist users in their search for and dissemination of information. However, staffing levels do need to be improved if Blanshard's recommendations are to be fully observed. It maybe useful to set out guidelines stipulating minimum staffing levels in this area.

8.2 Staff and the Importance of Training

There have been a number of children's service training courses through the years including service development training, children's stock training, promotional courses and even talks on traveller children but, there has been no specialist training organised for these specialist homework services. It is not clear, therefore, whether present training policy is responsible for existing expertise.

Most library staff that I have talked to have been employed for many years and Sheffield in general has a low turnover of staff. It is too early to tell how dependant the existing high quality of service delivery is a result of long serving staff who have benefited from previous training initiatives. However, as time moves on and new staff are employed it is essential to maintain previous levels of training and staff development.

There is much literature on this subject and commentators are agreed that training and staff development are fundamental to service delivery:

A training 'atmosphere' needs to be created in the library; all groups must realise that adequate training is an essential part of work and not a discardable luxury; training must help management make the best use of available staffing resources. Baker (1986:6)

It is essential therefore that Sheffield renew their commitment to training and provide their staff with the new skills that the library as educational resource requires. This is a particularly important issue when it comes to IT training and this will be discussed in **Chapter 9**.

However, despite the fact that this value is universally acknowledged by the literature, local authorities are often forced by budget constraints into dealing with more immediate concerns such as stock at the expense of training. Libraries especially are required to prioritise areas of service delivery and there

is pressure to ignore factors that only have long term benefit: For instance, Sheffield at present has a training budget of only £1700 for all of its 250 staff per year.

This approach though may only be a false economy and insufficient training will always eventually effect the quality of service delivery. Margaret Lobban emphasises this point when she argues forcefully for a continued commitment to training programmes:

Quality and value for money are major themes in all aspects of public and private service provision. There may be a temptation to reduce training budgets, especially for staff working in service rather than developmental roles. However, with the emphasis on enhanced customer satisfaction such cutbacks will be short-sighted: training for library assistants has probably never had such an important role in the provision of quality services. Lobban (1997:37)

Finally, it is worth considering the special significance of training in relation to homework services: when attempting to establish itself as an educational resource it is important that staff are equipped to deliver a quality service or the public library service and its new role are undermined.

Key Conclusions

- Training and continued professional development are vital if library staff are to be equipped to deal with the specialist information needs of children and young people using homework services.
- Users rely upon the advice and value the contribution of staff when completing homework tasks and teaching staff consider specialist knowledge essential to the success of homework services. It is vital then to provide training if user needs and expectations are to be fulfilled.

- Homework services require certain resources and staffing levels and opening hours should reflect use and the user community

Chapter 9. “We’re just rubbish really”: Staff, Skills and IT

Training.

This need for training and staff development, both in terms of professionals and para-professionals, is of particular importance when dealing with IT. This is firstly because of the fact that IT is being introduced into organisations where most staff have little or no experience of electronic resources. Training then has to address a fundamental lack of knowledge and experience. But secondly, and because of this lack of skills, IT training has to attempt to allay the fears and win the trust of employees or risk failure. In addition to this IT tends to evolve at a faster rate than other service areas and so relies especially on a continuing training programme.

It was not originally planned that IT and training would have its own chapter but in the course of my interviews with library staff and users it became apparent that this issue was fundamentally important.

Over all statistics would suggest that electronic resources are not considered particularly important however, if we look at *Groups A* and *B* separately we see that in those libraries that provide it the commitment to IT increases: 30% of users in *Group A* believe that it is the most important factor compared with only 11% in *Group B* and 65% of those users questioned at libraries in *Group A* said they used the CD ROMs. It is also interesting to note that overall 29% of users would like to see improvement made to the IT facilities available. Out of these 37% of users at libraries in *Group B* would like to see IT provision in their local libraries (**Figure 3** and **Figure 4**).

Teaching staff also regard IT as an important factor in children’s homework provision. 79% of teaching staff believed that it was one of the most important services (**Appendices E, F and G**). However, those school contacts interviewed by phone were much less enthusiastic and only one out of

four interviewees said that they believed that it was important. In total then 66% prioritise this area of service delivery. More importantly though to this investigation however is the point that, 50% of teachers overall said that library staff with a knowledge of IT was necessary (See **Appendices F and G**).

This evidence shows that there is an expectation amongst users and educational professionals that homework initiatives will provide IT facilities and the staff expertise needed to support it. There is an awareness amongst children and young people that computing skills are important and this awareness seems to increase when the facilities are provided. This is beneficial in that homework centres are succeeding in increasing the knowledge of IT but it also means that until IT is provided users do not prioritise it.

With this in mind we can see how important training and staff development is if the level of IT support is to fulfil user expectations. Staff are not equipped to deliver this level of service if they do not have the support and expertise that training provides:

The IT needs of staff in any organisation are continuous and growing and have to be addressed if it is to run efficiently and effectively. They are even more essential for a profession whose whole purpose and function is concerned with the provision, delivery and dissemination of information.(1997:44)

However, it seems that library staff in Sheffield are not yet receiving this training and this has meant that they have not felt equipped to deal with their new responsibilities in Homework centres. This applies both to *Group A* which already have CD ROM equipment and *Group B* which are soon to have them.

The strategy so far has been merely to set up workstations in libraries and then to allow staff to begin to deliver the service without initial training

until the authority can afford to supply training. The same is true in relation to the maintenance of equipment as Andrew Milroy points out: *“There is basically not enough staff and anything to do with maintenance or breakdowns is the responsibility of poor Joy”*. This general lack of resources has been made harder by the fact that there are no technicians on call because the service has been outsourced. These factors together have resulted in a situation where front line staff have found themselves in a very difficult situation.

The sense of apprehension that prevails amongst library staff is quite overwhelming. This does not mean that they are against IT, on the contrary the staff that I interviewed all believed that it was essential to future library provision, it was just that they felt let down by the lack of training. The feeling was that they were unable to assist users with enquiries and that because of that they were or would not be able to deliver the same standard of work as they do in relation to conventional resources.

Staff at one library, who have some skills, have produced a manual called *“Trouble shooting and the awkward bits”* which they have found helpful but which is, they admit, not very helpful without some basic training. It seems then that it is not enough to let staff muddle through, training has to be provided by experienced trainers with a professional knowledge of IT.

Here are some comments from library staff:

- *We're just rubbish really*
- *There has been a complete lack of training*
- *We're supposed to go through it in our spare moments but we haven't got any-there is not enough staff*
- *You have to be able to help the kids the same, their reference skills are still poor, its just that they can find their way around computers.*
- *We can't help them improve their reference skills when we don't understand the format*
- *Its frustrating when you can't help*
- *We're all hopeless at day to day maintenance and printers are a nightmare*
- *We've tried to fiddle about with it during our breaks but we're so useless and we're scared we'll break it*
- *We're all as hopeless as each other and it is really bad for the image*
- *It is all very ad-hoc, there is one person who is alright but when they are ill we're lost*
- *We don't feel as if we're giving a very good service*
- *I am really disappointed with the support we have received and there has been absolutely no training*
- *They know we don't know what we're talking about and they laugh at us*
- *If your report does anything it should recommend more IT training*

The main point that comes out of these comments is that library staff feel rather as if they have been abandoned. They have been expected to deliver a service not only without training but also without any support. Maintenance issues especially have caused consternation and staff are worried about the day to day running of equipment such as PCs, CD ROMs and printers. This state of affairs is not only detrimental to the service itself but it is also damaging to the public image of libraries in Sheffield and to staff morale.

This general inefficiency has it seems not gone unnoticed and it is reflected in the relatively low scores given by teachers to library staff in relation to IT resources. The first thing to point out is that to their credit they are still scoring a maximum rating of 5 in relation to staff approachability. However, the scores for expertise are considerably lower. The average rating given is only 2.25 from staff at the Schools Library Service and slightly higher at 3.5 from those contacts I interviewed by phone. When we consider that staff expertise is gaining maximum scores in relation to hardcopy materials it is clear that present levels of IT service delivery are inadequate and training is needed if this situation is to be remedied. **(Figure 10)**

In Managing library services for children and young people, Catherine Blanshard states that: *“All staff should be given training with any new technology before the service is offered to the public”*(1998:127). Practice in Sheffield at the moment is clearly at odds with these recommendations. Unfortunately, with the present climate, library authorities are under pressure to provide homework services perhaps before they are actually ready to do so, either financially or in relation to skills and expertise. This point is summed up nicely and the unfortunate state of affairs illustrated by this telling comment: *“We ‘re not ready, but the truth is we cannot afford not to”*. However, it could be argued that it is not better to provide these facilities ‘no matter what’, after all to open these resources to public scrutiny has in some ways caused more harm than good. After all if a user visits the library for the first time and

receives what they consider to be sub standard service they will not return again.

Blanshard's warning then has been realised and Sheffield demonstrates the result of a failure to implement training. This failure to prepare staff has resulted in two things: firstly the possible damage to the authority of staff caused by general inexperience and secondly the subsequent lack of morale. It is hoped that future initiatives will learn from these mistakes and attempt to rectify the problems caused by these pilot services. It is essential that, at a time where libraries are having to justify their existence, any departure from its traditional leisure role is seen to be effective or risk damaging the authority of information professionals and para professionals. Moreover, if these services fail, children and young people will be deprived of a valuable resource.

Finally, it has recently been announced that training is to take place within the next few months once funds become available. This will take the form of staff from each branch being trained in various applications through training packages. These staff will then return to their own libraries where their expertise will cascade through the ranks. Hopefully, this will be successful and help to redress the damage done but, it would have been preferable to have done this before implementation. Perhaps in this case late is not better than never.

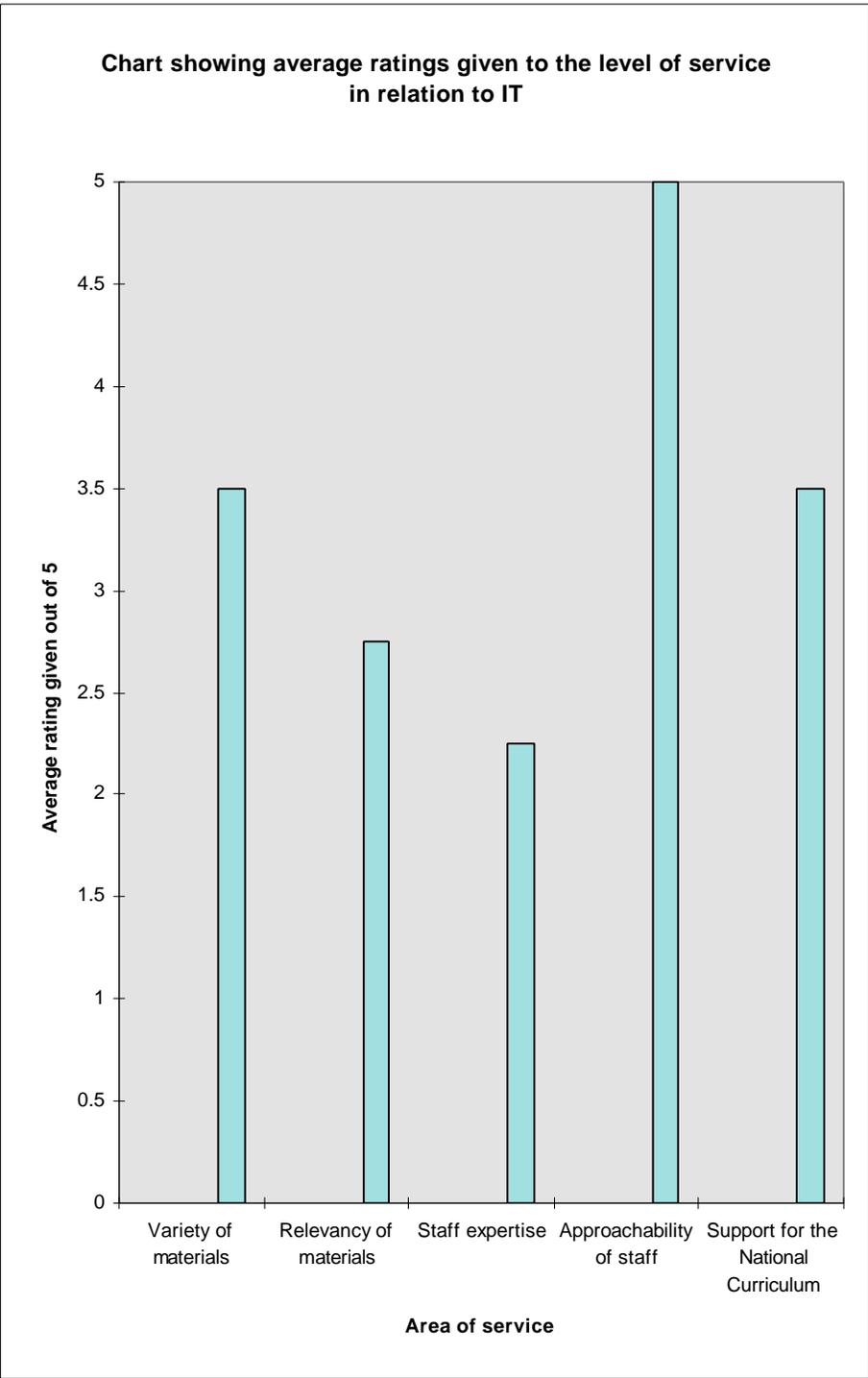


Figure 10.

Key Conclusions

- Training and staff development has a special significance in regards to IT because of the inexperience and anxiety surrounding new technologies.
- There is an expectation amongst users that homework initiatives will provide IT, however there is also an expectation and a need to provide a high level of support.
- The failure to provide an acceptable level of service will result in long term damage to the reputation of the library service.
- All aspects of IT service delivery must be planned and established before opening to the public.

Chapter 10. Delivering a Service to the Whole Community.

It is because of the way that the public library serves the whole community that it is often seen as a means by which to address social concerns such as inequality of access. The library can if successful provide those members of the community whom do not ordinarily have access to educational and cultural resources with the opportunity to use and learn from materials that other users may take for granted.

This social dimension to library services is relevant particularly in regards to education as it is children from poorer families who have been found to read less. Here Margaret Marshall shows us how levels of reading are specifically related to social circumstance: “*Some of the industrial and inner cities indicated no tradition of reading amongst young people while some of the ‘stock broker’ belt areas indicated an acceptance of library use as the norm*”. Marshall (1981:50)

It is the duty of libraries to try to redress this balance and Homework centres in particular have been heralded as a means by which to encourage more children into the library and so increase their “life chances”. This point is made explicit in *The Peoples Network*:

Rich multimedia resources provided after school, in a safe, culturally creative environment, will help overcome the inequality of opportunity experienced by those who do not have access to new technology at home. Library and Information Commission (1997:1.9).

The aim of this chapter is firstly, to explore the degree to which homework centres have succeeded in reaching those new users and secondly, to identify the factors that effect the libraries ability to perform this social role. *Group B* is not relevant to these results.

In **Chapter 5** we looked at how the research showed that leisure usage in library *Group A* had increased by 9% since the homework centres had been introduced. This is a very respectable statistic and if it is not too soon to make predictions we can predict that homework centres could successfully encourage children to develop. 87% of users now use the leisure facilities when only 78% used it before.

In addition to this 4% have begun to use the homework service whom previously studied elsewhere. However, these figures are not astounding and only 23 youngsters were seen to be using the services during my three two hour visits and by far the majority of these were existing users. It seems then that new users are not being reached and in order to really improve educational standards Sheffield must remedy this.

There are two main factors that effect usage and in order to establish why these homework centres are not yet realising their potential we must consider their importance: The first is the ability of the service to reflect the demands of all users and the second is the importance of promotion.

10.1 Reflecting the Needs of all Groups

Every library serves children of different cultures and different ages and abilities and it is in response to this that the literature in the main asserts; that children “*should not be dealt with as a homogenous group*” Blanshard (1997:13):

The concept of ‘child’ as a universal user type should be replaced with an awareness that this covers a wide range of users who need different services at different times. Gilder (1981:5)

This means simply that service delivery must be informed by a consideration of the different user groups. This relates to stock, staff training, staff employment

and layout. Children are all individuals and if their needs are not catered for, the chances are they will go elsewhere. All ready those surveyed all use other venues such as school libraries and other public libraries not to mention their own homes and if they are not satisfied there are alternatives.

The first step towards solving this problem is to identify who is and who is not using the service. In **Chapter 5** we researched this through the questionnaire and found that one gap in present usage is the elusive teenager. **Figure 1** is useful here because it shows how users over the age of 12 only account for 33% of respondents where as 62% are between 10 and 12. It is clear then that at this early stage in their development these centres like the service as a whole are failing to draw in teenagers. This problem is a well-known one and illustrates the point that some user groups are not well served.

Libraries must if faced with this problem seek to identify exactly why this is and then if possible change policy to accommodate it. In Sheffield for example, Waterthorpe library is attempting to address this issue through the use of a survey of school children. This is a good first step and will if used properly allow service deliverers to begin to make provision for those needs that have so far been ignored. Alternatively, it might be an idea to embark on these user surveys before establishing new services as this way provision for the whole community can be planned and built into the policy from the very beginning.

Only then through a concerted effort can all communities be brought into the library. However, in some cases low usage or the failure to entice a group might not be a result of a failure to address their needs but more to do with the failure of the library to get its message across to the whole community.

10.2 Promotion

It is not enough merely to provide a well-stocked, accessible library. It is essential encourage the community to make full and effective use of the service provided... Every opportunity should be taken to ensure that the library service has a high profile and plays an active part in community life. Esson and Tyerman (1991:10)

Promotion is fundamental to all organisations as we have already discussed in **Chapter 5**: As Focus on the child demonstrates: Promotion is useful for a number of different reasons: it increases awareness of existing and new services, it promotes literature and literacy, it increases awareness of facilities which can enhance formal education and it raises the profile of the library service in the community. (1996:179)

However, promotion is primarily important in relation to homework centres because of the way that it enables them to fulfil their social function and reach all sections of the community. Perhaps one of the most important tests that these services can face is their ability to reach those users that most need them and promotion is the only way that this can be done.

Manor library is a case in point. The library serves a deprived inner city area and the library is presently under used. This is not helped by the fact that Supertram runs through the area and the library is situated behind a hedge so that you cannot even see it when you are standing right in front of it. Promotion then is needed if people are to be reached and the homework centre is to really make a difference in the way that is envisaged by The Peoples Network.

However as Focus on the child also draws our attention to it is just as important to promote our services to adults as it is to children. Parents and teachers influence and to a certain extent control the awareness of children in these areas. Moreover, other professionals within the local authority and in

local businesses must also be made aware of the service in order to raise our profile in order to justify existing and encourage new funding:

Promoting libraries and literature for young people is not only aimed at young people themselves but at a variety of potential target groups. One of the significant issues of the world of children is that it is inhabited by a variety of adults, many of whom will play a part in the shaping of children's lives. Elkin and Lonsdale (1996:180)

This point is demonstrated by the part that teachers play in bringing children into the library. In the survey we found that 75% of teachers interviewed at the Schools Library Service claimed to actively encourage their pupils to use their local library service. The telephone interviews also showed that libraries benefit from good relations with external agencies as both contacts for Highfield and Waterthorpe also recommended services. Promotion is important because it can be used to convert those fellow professionals that can in turn help us to promote our message and reach all sections of the community.

Therefore in order to really fulfil this community role the library must not only reflect the needs and interests of existing users but also actively seek to encourage potential users to use the service. Hopefully, by realising the first demand it will be easier for libraries to draw people into the fold. If homework centres are failing to reach diverse groups, and are only succeeding in catering for those families and individuals that are already regular users, they have failed to achieve what is the most exciting part of their remit.

'After school clubs' are one way by which society can attempt to tackle the inequality of access experienced throughout our whole lives. Surely, then Homework Centres should embrace this role and attempt to make the provision of information materials to all areas of society a priority. Although if this is to

be done, good marketing must be used to achieve links with schools, the community and even staff in order to convert people to this way of thinking.

Finally, it is interesting to note that existing and planned homework centres have been placed in libraries which already boast busy successful children's services. For financial and politic reasons it is obviously sensible to place these resources in libraries that will show the best results however, there are other communities that do not yet have easy access to homework centres. It is worth considering whether in this case these services are being distributed in a way that reflects their role of promoting equality of opportunity.

Key Conclusions

- The library serves the whole community and because of this it should reflect the diverse needs of that community.
- Homework initiatives have a particular responsibility to further the educational opportunities of its users.
- Promotion is not only a means by which to encourage new users and contribute to the success of the organisation; it is also a means by which services can be brought to those individuals that need it the most.

Chapter 11. Reference skills and Children and Young People:

Trouble ahead?

During the course of this investigation it became apparent that library staff were worried about the lack of information skills in schoolchildren of all ages. There was no original intention to investigate this topic and my methodology does **not** enable me to draw conclusions however, if these initial findings are representative they might have considerable implications for the way in which children's services and homework initiatives develop.

This chapter will present these initial findings and suggest how future research is needed in this area.

We have already discussed how IT has effected service delivery in terms of the need for staff training however, the other point that came out of this line of questioning was the proficiency of children in comparison with staff. Where as staff felt ill equipped to deal with even basic commands users were able to use the facilities independently. *However, whilst proficient in opening up applications and playing with games staff noticed that they were unable to actually use the equipment for what it was meant for and grasp the concept of search facilities. Staff were concerned as one staff member pointed out that the combination of these two factors would make it very difficult for children to develop: "You have to be able to help the kids the same, their reference skills are still very limited, its just that they can find their way round computers. We can't help them to improve their reference skills if we don't understand the format".*

In addition to IT this difficulty also manifested itself in relation to hardcopy formats and users are unable in increasing numbers to use even telephone books or dictionaries without assistance. Here are some comments from library staff:

- They can do really complex computer stuff and yet kids as old as 13 are asking me where books are because they don't realise that authors are shelved by their surname.
- Their reference skills are appalling and they are not willing to learn, you see their eyes glaze over when you are trying to explain even simple things
- They are not prepared to spend time and effort looking for things, you have to point out that it is actually quicker to do it themselves than rely on us.
- We have to find things most of the time and then all they do is photocopy it or print it
- We haven't got time to give one to one help so we have started trying to organise books differently to try and make it easier for them
- Kids will sit and wait for hours to use the CD ROMs and not even look at the reference stock
- I don't know whether its just laziness or the that the concept of using the library is so alien to them that it doesn't even occur to them.

Staff were concerned that school children are not only unable to use reference skills but also that because of their IT skills they were unwilling to use the conventional formats which could introduce them to basic indexes and keyword searching. Secondly, users were not willing to make the extra effort and learn to use reference skills when library staff were always there to ask. It seems then that the importance of reference skills has been confused with the ability to use equipment.

In the light of this disturbing news I decided to insert another question in to the user questionnaire which attempts to ascertain how easy it is for them to find their way around the library. 31% of users claim that they find it very easy to navigate the resources however, 29% say that they regularly need help

from library staff and 19% admit that they do find it hard to use the library independently or otherwise. (Figure 11).

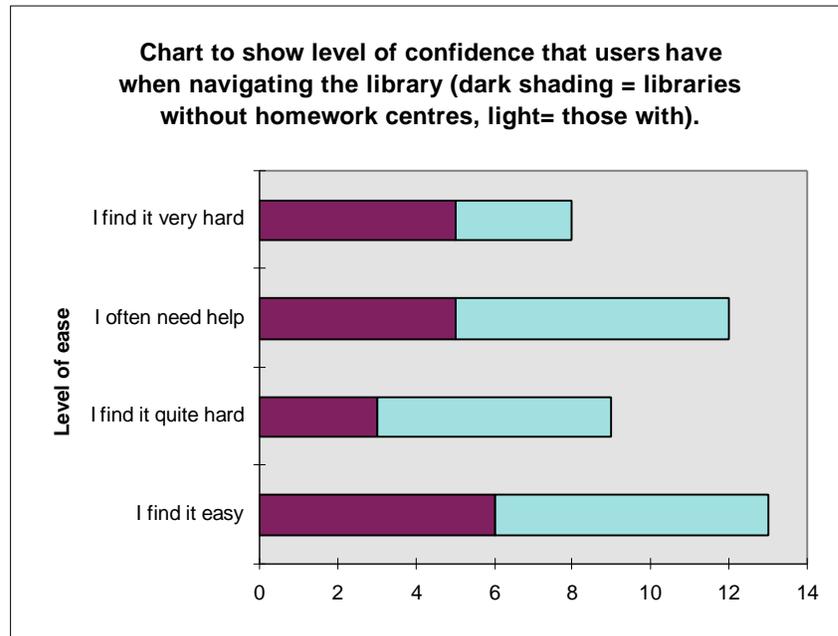


Figure 11.

If we look at the results for the two groups separately, it seems that in most respects there is very little difference however, there is one significant difference. It is interesting to note that at libraries in *Group A* only 13% of users find it very hard to find their way around however, in *Group B* the figure is twice that amount at 26%. This may only be coincidence and yet it does suggest that homework centres might help to improve the child's ability to learn reference skills. However, it might only be that homework centres are organised in such a way that it is easier for children to find resources. Whatever the case it is essential that future investigation is made into this issue.

It is hopeful that a third of users are reasonably assured in the library context but these findings tend to correspond to users over the age of 13 and might only reflect greater maturity. In this case we can assume that the ability

of younger children might improve as they get older however, if the general lack of skills is a result of the impact of the National Curriculum on the school timetable then this will not be the case. It seems then that staff concerns accurately reflect the lack of confidence that children and young people have when using reference resources and this is despite the importance of these skills to the information age.

The teacher questionnaires also deal with the issue of information skills and it seems that contrary to what the above results would suggest, provision is made in schools. All those interviewed believe the skill to be very important and 71% say that these skills are taught in the classroom and school library. In addition to this 79% of staff believe that pupils should be using the library at least once a week. The problem with these results is that surely if this is the case youngsters would be better able to exercise their information skills. The obvious question to ask then is: Why are children so unable to use library resources if reference skills are taught in schools? This report does not claim to be able to explain these results but there are factors that I suggest might warrant some consideration. (**Appendices E, F and G**)

Firstly, as we have already mentioned it might be that the overwhelming concern with computing has deflected attention away from basic reference skills. Perhaps schools and/or libraries have been unable to donate the time to the kind of skills that people of an older generation take for granted. In **Chapter 6** we explored how the National Curriculum was reducing class visits and library contact time, and it maybe that this disappointing lack of skills might be the result of this.

Secondly, another suggestion is that users are learning these skills but that they are then unable to translate them to the library environment. It could be that more practical time is needed to be spent using information resources outside of the classroom environment.

If either of these is the case then the implications for service delivery are huge and libraries will have to address this problem or face a society where users are no longer able to use resources. Secondly, we also have to establish exactly whose responsibility this is and whether this area of concern would also be improved by increased co-operation between schools and libraries. The evidence in **Chapter 6** would suggest that it would and that children's services should always involve both professions. Investigation in to this topic is therefore essential if libraries are to plan for their future and address the needs of their users.

Reference skills are important now more than ever because of the new emphasis upon information resources. We are living in a time where every area of life effected by our ability to use and navigate networked resources. Projects such as *The Peoples Network*, *The National Grid for Learning* and the prospect of an increase in distance learning and lifelong learning all depend upon the individual users ability to use them. Hardcopy materials also are important and the inability to use all these will help to further increase the gap between information rich and information poor.

Children's homework initiatives are defined by Catherine Blanshard as having an important role in regards to these skills: "*they must assist young people in developing information handling skills and the exploitation of all media forms*" (1998:178). It is vital then that all children are taught to use these skills or these centres will risk losing the opportunity to increase equality of opportunity and therefore fail those children that they serve. One example of good practice in regards to this in Sheffield is the *Library and Information Skills Development Forum* which has been set up specifically to address this issue and it is only through further investigation that these problems can be solved.

Finally, it is worth considering that if the professionals do not grasp this opportunity to take a leading role in teaching these skills we could also miss the opportunity to take an active role in the supposed information society. It is therefore important to address this issue particularly in regards to homework centres as they have a particular responsibility to developing their users.

Key Conclusions

- Homework centres are library services and should therefore seek to address the information needs and information handling skills of children and young people.

Chapter 12. Conclusion

In the next few pages the major points of this research will be brought together and emphasis will be given to those themes that are essential to all areas of service delivery. This should enable Sheffield Libraries to identify the concerns of users and staff whilst surveying current performance. It should also raise awareness of those concerns that are fundamental to homework initiatives in general.

12.1 Summary of conclusions

Conflicting roles: schools and libraries

- The present state of play in Sheffield, is that schools and libraries continue to operate in isolation: librarians and the library service have established homework provision without, so the evidence would suggest, the assistance, co-operation or even knowledge of teaching staff. This needs to be addressed if user needs are to be correctly identified and served.
- Ground research and the literature on this subject suggests that greater co-operation between agencies would benefit all parties.
- There is considerable support from schools for library homework initiatives and this should be the basis for future partnerships
- The National Curriculum has put considerable pressure on schools and libraries and it is only through stronger links that the problem of scarce resources can be addressed
- Homework services cannot fulfil key objectives without a commitment to supporting the National Curriculum
- Library services must ensure that their budgets are used to support the needs of individual users and not as a supplement to inadequate school libraries.

Stock and materials

- Provision in Sheffield needs to show a greater commitment to the National curriculum if the concerns of users and teaching staff are to be addressed. However, stock policy in general is rated highly.
- Stock selection must reflect the needs and requirements of users
- The aim of homework provision is to assist with and develop the child's ability to research and complete homework tasks. Therefore stock selection should reflect this aim
- Stock provision influences the way that the service is perceived and therefore it should reflect the aim of the service.
- Any tension between library policy and the perceived role should be resolved

Staff, skills and learning

- Library staff in Sheffield presently deliver an excellent service but the lack of recent training is a matter for some concern. Staffing levels too mean that opening hours are decreasing and busy staff are under pressure to prioritise issue desk duties at the expense of assisting children.
- Training and continued professional development are vital if library staff are to be equipped to deal with the specialist information needs of children and young people using homework services.
- Users rely upon the advice and value the contribution of staff when completing homework tasks and teaching staff consider specialist knowledge essential to the success of homework services. It is vital then to provide training if user needs and expectations are to be fulfilled.
- Homework services require certain resources and staffing levels and opening hours should reflect use and the user community.

Staff, skills and IT training

- The level of IT training at present does not meet the needs of present homework provision. In order to satisfy the demands of staff and users this problem must be addressed.
- Training and staff development has a special significance in regards to IT because of the inexperience and anxiety surrounding new technologies.
- There is an expectation amongst users that homework initiatives will provide IT, however there is also an expectation and a need to provide a high level of support.
- The failure to provide an acceptable level of service will result in long term damage to the reputation of the library service.

Delivering a service to the whole community

- Homework centres in Sheffield are reaching some new users and are therefore improving their ability to reach new users. However, more work needs to be done if this is to be improved upon.
- The library serves the whole community and because of this it should reflect the diverse needs of that community.
- Homework initiatives have a particular responsibility to further the educational opportunities of its users.
- Promotion is not only a means by which to encourage new users and contribute to the success of the organisation; it is also a means by which services can be brought to those individuals that need it the most.

Reference skills and children and young people

- Library staff in Sheffield are concerned about the lack of information skills in users. Users too admit that they find it difficult to use libraries.

- Homework centres are library services and should therefore seek to address the information needs and information handling skills of children and young people.

12.2 General conclusion

The purpose of this report has been to help identify key issues and concerns that should inform the future development of homework provision both in Sheffield and in general. Homework centres should, if managed properly, be an effective way of delivering homework resources whilst also attracting new users and increasing the status of the public library service. However, they are not an easy option and it is a mistake to bow to the media attention and the intense demand for such services. Library authorities should not embark on such projects without ensuring that material resources, human resources and funding is capable of delivering an acceptable level of service.

At present homework services in Sheffield are in their infancy, the service is not claiming to operate the kind of comprehensive specialist service seen in authorities such as Westminster and Southwark but more to provide a set of resources that can be used to assist children with their homework needs. It would be unfair then to draw conclusions from current practice however, it is possible to highlight areas for concern and to show how these might contribute to the service's failure to meet some objectives.

During the course of this investigation two main themes have continued to identify themselves as critical to the success of homework provision. These concerns permeate through all areas of service delivery and can be the difference between failure and success.

The first of these factors is the importance of accurately identifying user needs and expectations and then using these to inform all areas of service delivery. This consideration first entered centre stage with regards to stock and the need for collection policy to cater for the homework needs of local school children.

In Sheffield the findings would suggest that although basic children's stock is good, users and educational professionals are not satisfied with present levels of homework provision. When investigated in relation to current stock policy it was found that this dissatisfaction corresponded to a refusal by the authority to prioritise materials that support the National Curriculum. Here we see how this decision and the consequent tension between user needs and organisational concerns is responsible for users dissatisfaction and may lead to a decline in usage. Stock policy must reflect the needs of the user or risk losing them.

The same is true in relation to staff, skills and training. There is an expectation and a need for highly trained staff that can both apply a developed knowledge of materials and an awareness of children's needs to all areas of service delivery. If training and staff structures do not take this into account, front line staff will be unable to deliver a service that either satisfies users or responds to their educational needs. Sheffield demonstrates this clearly by its failure to provide adequate IT training in time for the launch of its homework service. The subsequent dissatisfaction with IT support clearly shows that once again user need should be the underlying factor in all areas of policy.

This consideration is also fundamental to the library and its ability to reach all areas of the community. Homework centres are seen as a 'sure-fire' way of promoting the library service and providing all areas of society with access to a range of multi-media resources. However, the findings of this research show that Sheffield so far have only succeeded in marginally increasing usage. Although it is too early to judge in this case, the literature on this topic strongly emphasizes the importance of an in depth consideration of potential users and their needs in order to bring them to the service. It seems then in this case and in relation to the above points that it is only through such consideration that library services can hope to attract and then keep attracting a regular clientele.

The second theme that continues to make its presence known is the importance of co-operation between libraries and schools and the way that this ensures effective service delivery. Moreover, it is co-operation that often increases our ability to serve the user needs discussed above. Often users, especially children, are not always equipped to identify their needs and teaching staff are useful in this instant. The needs of users are easier to establish with the guidance and support of trained professionals and this is also true of planning and developing human resources. For instance, teachers were able to identify the shortfall in IT provision whilst also acknowledging excellence in the case of more conventional formats.

In **Chapter 6** we saw how the failure of libraries and schools to co-operate has led to a situation where homework provision is suffering. Library authorities have been forced into a situation where it is necessary for them to guard their resources against other educational agencies. We discussed above how user needs are crucial and yet because of this friction they are being neglected in favour of more leisure based resources. This extreme example illustrates just how important links with fellow educational professionals are if the needs of the child are to be addressed in relation to stock. However, this issue has resonance's running through all subjects related to homework provision.

Promotion too is an important area for libraries because it can enable them to deliver homework provision to a wider cross section of society than would be possible without it. Co-operation is beneficial here because teaching staff are a valuable ally and can successfully encourage their pupils to use the service if they feel it is worth encouraging. Alternatively, if teachers are not involved with homework centres the lack of school approval can mean that potential users never get to hear of the service, or the lack of official recommendation deters existing users. Either way libraries need to forge links with local schools in order to improve service delivery and raise their community profiles and levels of usage.

In addition to this, co-operation is important if present levels of information handling skills are to be investigated and then addressed if necessary. We have identified that there might be a problem in this respect and schools are crucial to the way in which children develop their reference skills.

Finally, this point is illustrated by the fact that homework services and children's services in general would appear to work most successfully in those local authorities where all areas of service delivery is integrated. Southwark in particular is famous for its innovative work in this area and as David Murray acknowledges integration makes the librarian's job easier: "*the channels are opened up between leisure and education have been good for both...the concept is softer, more about partnership and developing things together rather than two structures duplicating each other*" Swaffield (1997:88).

Homework centres depend upon their ability to satisfy the educational and social needs of users and potential users. A co-operative relationship between all local authority children's services is important both because of the way that it can help satisfy these needs but also because it makes everybody's jobs easier. A failure to heed these concerns will prevent the homework centre from fulfilling its role as educational resource and social equaliser. Moreover, this in turn may interfere with the public library and its attempts to remodel itself and justify its continuing existence.

12.3 Suggestions for further research

1. Partnerships between libraries and schools.
2. The effect of the National Curriculum on provision for information handling skills.
3. The relationship between IT provision and reference skills
4. Homework centres and their ability to promote information skills.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Data obtained from children's questionnaires

Library A: Chapeltown

Total surveyed = 6

1. Age of respondents:

8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
0	0	1	0	0	2	1	1	1

2. How often they use the service?

More than once a week	Once a week	Once a fortnight	Once a month	Less than once a month
2	2	1	1	0

3. Reasons for using the service:

Children's non fiction	Adult non-fiction	Reference collection	Adult Reference	Using CD ROM	Quiet study areas	Photo-copiers	Meeting other users
6	3	3	3	0	1	3	0

5. Where else do you do your homework?

At home	At a friend's house	In your school library	In another public library
6	2	4	0

7. Do you use this library for leisure purposes?

Yes	No
6	0

8a). Did you use the library for leisure purposes before you began to use the Homework services?

Yes	No
6	0

8b) If yes, do you still use libraries for leisure purposes?

Yes	No	Yes, I use it more	Yes, but I use it less
4	0	1	1

9. What effect has using this service had on your schoolwork?

Homework is easier	Homework is more enjoyable	Introduced you to new materials	Encouraged you to work harder	It has made no difference at all
5	2	4	2	0

10. Does the library have the items or types of information you need in order for you to do your homework.?

It always has the specific items I need.	It usually has the specific items I need	It always provides me with relevant information.	It has very little relevant information
2	1	3	

11. How easy is it for you to find the items or type of items you need when you are using the library?

I find it very easy to find my way around the library	I find it quite hard easy to find my way around the library	I often need help from the librarians to find things	I find it very hard to find my way around the library on my own
2	1	1	2

13. What features would you like to see improved?⁸

Selection of books and materials	Opening hours	Amount of Desk space	IT and IT support	No improvements
2	4	3	1	2

⁸ For question 13 the question was not composed in this way; the children were asked open questions and their responses were categorised as above once collected

15a). What service is the most important?

Staff who can help you	Books	CD ROM	Quiet areas to work
0	5	1	0

15b) What service is the second most important?

Staff who can help you	Books	CD ROM	Quiet areas to work
3	1	2	0

15c) What service is the third most important?

Staff who can help you	Books	CD ROM	Quiet areas to work
1	0	3	2

15d) What service is the least important?

Staff who can help you	Books	CD ROM	Quiet areas to work
1	1	0	4

Library B: Darnall

Total surveyed = 13

1. Age of respondents:

8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
1	1	5	2	1	2	1	0	0

2. How often they use the service?

More than once a week	Once a week	Once a fortnight	Once a month	Less than once a month
3	2	7	1	0

3. Reasons for using the service:

Children's non fiction	Adult non-fiction	Reference collection	Adult Reference	Using CD ROM	Quiet study areas	Photo-copiers	Meeting other users
13	2	6	2	0	1	3	3

5. Where else do you do your homework?

At home	At a friend's house	In your school library	In another public library
12	4	4	1

7. Do you use this library for leisure purposes?

Yes	No
9	4

8a). Did you use the library for leisure purposes before you began to use the Homework services?

Yes	No
8	5

8b) If yes, do you still use libraries for leisure purposes?

Yes	No	Yes, I use it more	Yes, but I use it less
6	0	1	1

9. What effect has using this service had on your schoolwork?

Homework is easier	Homework is more enjoyable	Introduced you to new materials	Encouraged you to work harder	It has made no difference at all
11	3	5	6	0

10. Does the library have the items or types of information you need in order for you to do your homework.?

It always has the specific items I need.	It usually has the specific items I need	It always provides me with relevant information.	It has very little relevant information
4	2	7	0

11. How easy is it for you to find the items or type of items you need when you are using the library?

I find it very easy to find my way around the library	I find it quite hard easy to find my way around the library	I often need help from the librarians to find things	I find it very hard to find my way around the library on my own
4	2	4	3

13. What features would you like to see improved?⁹

Selection of books and materials	Opening hours	Amount of Desk space	IT and IT support	No improvements
6	4	4	6	0

⁹ For question 13 the question was not composed in this way; the children were asked open questions and their responses were categorised as above once collected

15a). Which service is the most important when you are doing your homework?

Staff who can help you	Books	CD ROM and IT	Quiet areas to work
4	4	1	4

15b) What service is the second most important?

Staff who can help you	Books	CD ROM	Quiet areas to work
7	2	3	1

15c) What service is the third most important?

Staff who can help you	Books	CD ROM	Quiet areas to work
1	5	4	3

15d) What service is the least important?

Staff who can help you	Books	CD ROM	Quiet areas to work
1	2	5	5

Library C: Highfield

Total surveyed = 7

1. Age of respondents:

8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
0	0	2	0	3	0	0	1	1

2. How often they use the service?

More than once a week	Once a week	Once a fortnight	Once a month	Less than once a month
4	2	0	1	0

3. Reasons for using the service:

Children's non fiction	Adult non-fiction	Reference collection	Adult Reference	Using CD ROM	Quiet study areas	Photo-copiers	Meeting other users
5	3	5	3	3	3	2	3

5. Where else do you do your homework?

At home	At a friend's house	In your school library	In another public library
7	2	4	2

7. Did you use this library for homework before this centre was introduced?

Yes	No
7	0

8. Do you use this library for leisure purposes?

Yes	No
7	0

9a). Did you use the library for leisure purposes before you began to use the Homework services?

Yes	No
7	0

9b) If yes, do you still use libraries for leisure purposes?

Yes	No	Yes, I use it more	Yes, but I use it less
3	1	2	1

10. If so, do you feel that the library service for children overall has improved since the centre has been introduced?

Yes	No
6	0

11. What effect has using this service had on your schoolwork?

Homework is easier	Homework is more enjoyable	Introduced you to new materials	Encouraged you to work harder	It has made no difference at all
7	3	4	3	0

12. Does the library have the items or types of information you need in order for you to do your homework?

It always has the specific items I need.	It usually has the specific items I need	It always provides me with relevant information.	It has very little relevant information
4	2	1	0

13. How easy is it for you to find the items or type of items you need when you are using the library?

I find it very easy to find my way around the library	I find it quite easy to find my way around the library	I often need help from the librarians to find things	I find it very hard to find my way around the library on my own
3	2	2	0

15. What features would you like to see improved?¹⁰

Selection of books and materials	Opening hours	Amount of Desk space	IT and IT support	No improvements
3	2	3	3	1

16a). What service is the most important?

Staff who can help you	Books	CD ROM and IT	Quiet areas to work
2	2	3	0

16b) What service is the second most important?

Staff who can help you	Books	CD ROM	Quiet areas to work
1	4	2	0

16c) What service is the third most important?

Staff who can help you	Books	CD ROM	Quiet areas to work
3	1	0	3

16d) What service is the least important?

Staff who can help you	Books	CD ROM	Quiet areas to work
1	0	2	4

2

¹⁰ For question 15 the question was not composed in this way; the children were asked open questions and their responses were categorised as above once collected

Library D: Manor

Total surveyed = 7

1. Age of respondents:

8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
0	0	2	4	0	0	0	1	0

2. How often they use the service?

More than once a week	Once a week	Once a fortnight	Once a month	Less than once a month
1	0	3	2	1

3. Reasons for using the service:

Children's non fiction	Adult non-fiction	Reference collection	Adult Reference	Using CD ROM	Quiet study areas	Photo-copiers	Meeting other users
6	2	2	1	5	3	1	0

5. Where else do you do your homework?

At home	At a friend's house	In your school library	In another public library
6	1	6	0

7. Did you use this library for homework before this centre was introduced?

Yes	No
6	1

8. Do you use this library for leisure purposes?

Yes	No
7	0

9a). Did you use the library for leisure purposes before you began to use the Homework services?

Yes	No
5	2

9b) If yes, do you still use libraries for leisure purposes?

Yes	No	Yes, I use it more	Yes, but I use it less
2	0	1	2

10. If so, do you feel that the library service for children overall has improved since the centre has been introduced?

Yes	No
5	2

11. What effect has using this service had on your schoolwork?

Homework is easier	Homework is more enjoyable	Introduced you to new materials	Encouraged you to work harder	It has made no difference at all
5	4	5	5	1

12. Does the library have the items or types of information you need in order for you to do your homework.

It always has the specific items I need.	It usually has the specific items I need	It always provides me with relevant information.	It has very little relevant information
4	2	1	0

13. How easy is it for you to find the items or type of items you need when you are using the library?

I find it very easy to find my way around the library	I find it quite easy to find my way around the library	I often need help from the librarians to find things	I find it very hard to find my way around the library on my own
1	2	2	2

15. What features would you like to see improved?¹¹

Selection of books and materials	Opening hours	Amount of Desk space	IT and IT support	No improvements
1	3	0	0	3

16a). What service is the most important?

Staff who can help you	Books	CD ROM	Quiet areas to work
2	1	4	0

16b) What service is the second most important?

Staff who can help you	Books	CD ROM	Quiet areas to work
4	1	1	1

16c) What service is the third most important?

Staff who can help you	Books	CD ROM	Quiet areas to work
1	4	2	0

16d) What service is the least important?

Staff who can help you	Books	CD ROM	Quiet areas to work
0	1	0	6

¹¹ For question 15 the question was not composed in this way; the children were asked open questions and their responses were categorised as above once collected

Library E: Waterthorpe

Total surveyed = 9

1. Age of respondents:

8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
0	0	0	1	5	2	0	0	1

2. How often they use the service?

More than once a week	Once a week	Once a fortnight	Once a month	Less than once a month
4	1	4	0	0

3. Reasons for using the service:

Children's non fiction	Adult non-fiction	Reference collection	Adult Reference	Using CD ROM	Quiet study areas	Photo-copiers	Meeting other users
9	3	7	3	7	4	3	0

5. Where else do you do your homework?

At home	At a friend's house	In your school library	In another public library
9	4	8	0

7. Did you use this library for homework before this centre was introduced?

Yes	No
9	0

8. Do you use this library for leisure purposes?

Yes	No
8	1

9a). Did you use the library for leisure purposes before you began to use the Homework services?

Yes	No
8	1

9b) If yes, do you still use libraries for leisure purposes?

Yes	No	Yes, I use it more	Yes, but I use it less
7	0	1	0

10. If so, do you feel that the library service for children overall has improved since the centre has been introduced?

Yes	No
9	0

11. What effect has using this service had on your schoolwork?

Homework is easier	Homework is more enjoyable	Introduced you to new materials	Encouraged you to work harder	It has made no difference at all
8	6	6	4	1

12. Does the library have the items or types of information you need in order for you to do your homework.

It always has the specific items I need.	It usually has the specific items I need	It always provides me with relevant information.	It has very little relevant information
4	3	2	0

13. How easy is it for you to find the items or type of items you need when you are using the library?

I find it very easy to find my way around the library	I find it quite easy to find my way around the library	I often need help from the librarians to find things	I find it very hard to find my way around the library on my own
3	2	3	1

15. What features would you like to see improved?¹²

Selection of books and materials	Opening hours	Amount of Desk space	IT and IT support	No improvements
1	3	0	2	3

16a). What service is the most important?

Staff who can help you	Books	CD ROM	Quiet areas to work
4	4	0	1

16b) What service is the second most important?

Staff who can help you	Books	CD ROM	Quiet areas to work
1	5	3	0

16c) What service is the third most important?

Staff who can help you	Books	CD ROM	Quiet areas to work
4	0	4	1

16d) What service is the least important?

Staff who can help you	Books	CD ROM	Quiet areas to work
0	0	2	7

Appendix B: Data obtained from children's questionnaires

Libraries without Homework Centres

Libraries A and B: Chapletown and Darnall

Total surveyed = 19

1. Age of respondents:

8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
1	1	6	2	1	4	2	1	1

2. How often they use the service?

More than	Once a week	Once a fortnight	Once a month	Less than once a

¹² For question 15 the question was not composed in this way; the children were asked open questions and their responses were categorised as above once collected

once a week				month
5	4	8	2	0

3. Reasons for using the service:

Children's non fiction	Adult non-fiction	Reference collection	Adult Reference	Using CD ROM	Quiet study areas	Photo-copiers	Meeting other users
19	5	9	5	0	2	6	3

5. Where else do you do your homework?

At home	At a friend's house	In your school library	In another public library
18	6	8	1

7. Do you use this library for leisure purposes?

Yes	No
15	4

8a). Did you use the library for leisure purposes before you began to use the Homework services?

Yes	No
14	5

8b) If yes, do you still use libraries for leisure purposes?

Yes	No	Yes, I use it more	Yes, but I use it less
10	0	2	2

9. What effect has using this service had on your schoolwork?

Homework is easier	Homework is more enjoyable	Introduced you to new materials	Encouraged you to work harder	It has made no difference at all
16	5	9	8	0

10. Does the library have the items or types of information you need in order for you to do your homework.

It always has the specific items I need.	It usually has the specific items I need	It always provides me with relevant information.	It has very little relevant information
6	3	10	0

11. How easy is it for you to find the items or type of items you need when you are using the library?

I find it very easy to find my way around the library	I find it quite hard easy to find my way around the library	I often need help from the librarians to find things	I find it very hard to find my way around the library on my own
6	3	5	5

13. What features would you like to see improved?¹

Selection of books and materials	Opening hours	Amount of Desk space	IT and IT support	No improvements
8	8	7	7	2

15a). What service is the most important?

Staff who can help you	Books	CD ROM	Quiet areas to work
4	9	2	4

15b) What service is the second most important?

Staff who can help you	Books	CD ROM	Quiet areas to work
10	3	5	1

15c) What service is the third most important?

Staff who can help you	Books	CD ROM	Quiet areas to work
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2	5	7	5
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15d) What service is the least important?

Staff who can help you	Books	CD ROM	Quiet areas to work
2	3	5	9

Appendix C: Data obtained from children's questionnaires

Libraries with Homework Centres

Libraries C, D and E: Highfield, Manor and Waterthorpe

Total surveyed = 23

1. Age of respondents:

8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
0	0	4	5	8	2	0	2	2

2. How often they use the service?

More than once a week	Once a week	Once a fortnight	Once a month	Less than once a month
9	3	7	3	1

3. Reasons for using the service:

Children's non fiction	Adult non-fiction	Reference collection	Adult Reference	Using CD ROM	Quiet study areas	Photo-copiers	Meeting other users
9	8	14	7	15	10	6	3

5. Where else do you do your homework?

At home	At a friend's house	In your school library	In another public library
22	7	18	2

7. Did you use this library for homework before this centre was introduced?

Yes	No
22	1

8. Do you use this library for leisure purposes?

Yes	No
22	1

9a). Did you use the library for leisure purposes before you began to use the Homework services?

Yes	No
20	3

9b) If yes, do you still use libraries for leisure purposes?

Yes	No	Yes, I use it more	Yes, but I use it less
12	1	4	3

10. If so, do you feel that the library service for children overall has improved since the centre has been introduced?

Yes	No
20	2

11. What effect has using this service had on your schoolwork?

Homework is easier	Homework is more enjoyable	Introduced you to new materials	Encouraged you to work harder	It has made no difference at all
20	13	15	12	2

12. Does the library have the items or types of information you need in order for you to do your homework.?

It always has the specific items I need.	It usually has the specific items I need	It always provides me with relevant information.	It has very little relevant information	It never has the items I need.
12	7	4	0	0

13. How easy is it for you to find the items or type of items you need when you are using the library?

I find it very easy to find my way around the library	I find it quite easy to find my way around the library	I often need help from the librarians to find things	I find it very hard to find my way around the library on my own
7	6	7	3

15. What features would you like to see improved?¹³

Selection of books and materials	Opening hours	Amount of Desk space	IT and IT support	No improvements
5	8	3	5	7

16a). What service is the most important?

Staff who can help you	Books	CD ROM	Quiet areas to work
8	7	7	1

16b) What service is the second most important?

Staff who can help you	Books	CD ROM	Quiet areas to work
4	10	9	0

16c) What service is the third most important?

Staff who can help you	Books	CD ROM	Quiet areas to work
8	5	6	4

16d) What service is the least important?

Staff who can help you	Books	CD ROM	Quiet areas to work
1	1	4	17

3

¹³ For question 15 the question was not composed in this way; the children were asked open questions and their responses were categorised as above once collected

¹ Questions 4,6,12, and 14 in A and B are not included because the nature of the questions makes them unsuitable for representation in table form.

² Questions 4,6 and 14 in C, D and E are not included because the nature of the questions makes them unsuitable for representation in table form.

³ Questions 4,6 and 14 are not included because the nature of the questions makes them unsuitable for representation in table form.