

CABINET MEMBER FOR CULTURE – COUNCILLOR CHRISTINE WRIGHT

Libraries

Towards the end of 2014, the Government released William Sieghart's Independent Library Report for England. The report strives for a plan that is achievable and makes three clear recommendations and sets out clear and practical advice on how to ensure they are implemented. There were three recommendations and these are backed up by a number of actions that include Wi-Fi in every library, sharing good practice, encouraging and supporting a top class workforce and to look at ways of supporting e-lending models. The report recognises, as we have, that libraries need to be more than books. Apart from one library, Blackpool Libraries offer Wi-Fi to enable residents to bring in their own devices. Recently two drop-in sessions were held to support customers with the e-book and e-audio offer and because of customer feedback, a decision has been made to streamline our offer in these areas. This will result in a less complicated, improved service to the customers.

Following the review of ICT in 2013, the library service is making final arrangements for a new public ICT offer, including new hardware, an improved management system and a better printing facility. Residents will be able to print from library, home and personal devices. Once this is in place, a review of charges can take place to increase income generation but at the same time offer a much better service.

Successful partnership working has continued during the first part of 2015. The Grand Theatre offered some workshops and tickets to go alongside Horse and Bamboo's production of Hansel and Gretel. The offer included craft workshops at Moor Park and Palatine Library and a puppet-making workshop with the creative director of Hansel and Gretel.

The Dementia Books On Prescription book launch took place in February. Officers in the Public Health directorate supported the library service with the event and purchased book stock and associated publicity for the eight libraries. Many activities were held throughout the day, including knitting sessions, reminiscence work, games workshop, information stands, a tea dance, and music from Fylde Ukulele Network. The Arts Service supported the event by supplying a local artist and the heritage service displayed a couple of their Treasure Trove pop up museums. With the support of the public health service and neighbouring library authorities, all of the libraries team are designated as Dementia Friends. Two members of staff will be trained as dementia friend's champions in March.

A number of events took place to celebrate National Libraries Day, attracting media and social network attention. An online blogging and publishing workshop was hosted by DigiEnable. A family history taster, dark matter games, Dr Who Club and a jobs and skills club were held at Central Library. Dan Worsley's *Impossible Tales* book signing and a local history talk about Old Bispham were held at Moor Park Library.

Grundy Art Gallery

The Grundy, working in partnership with Park Community Academy and Mereside Primary School, successfully applied to become a Quality Hub for Curious Minds and is one of only three in the North West region to receive grant funding of £4,000 for a demonstration project. Curious Minds is the lead agency for creative and cultural education in the North West of England.

The Blackpool Quality Hub has been working with artist Kevin Hunt and students from the partner schools to explore Arts Council England's 'Quality Principles' for working with children and young

people. The partners invited Kevin Hunt to devise a programme of collaborative sessions, in which students from both schools would have the opportunity to develop new work and curate an exhibition of the outcomes in Grundy Art Gallery's spaces. The project sat alongside a main gallery exhibition of artwork produced by local school children in response to the Blackpool Showzam! Festival themes of Circus, Magic and Theatre. The Quality Hub partners intend to share the project at a special event for local teachers, paving the way for future partnership projects.

Curious Minds have also selected the Blackpool Quality Hub as a Case Study for their website, enabling the learning and outcomes from the project to reach a wide audience as an example of best practice.

Grand Theatre

The Grand Theatre continues its commitment to offering Blackpool children and young people high quality learning experiences through the Royal Shakespeare Company Learning and Performance Project. Nine Blackpool schools are in the second year of this programme and most recently four Blackpool children went to a national weekend for Young RSC Ambassadors. Two came from Montgomery and two from Our Lady of the Assumption. They met and worked with young people from the other partner venues and towns taking part in a range of Shakespeare-based workshops, watching performances and experiencing backstage tours. These Blackpool Young RSC Ambassadors will be involved in peer learning, sharing information about the first Blackpool schools Shakespeare festival based at the Grand in 2016 and being young cultural leaders.

The Grand, in partnership with Blackpool Council and Curious Minds, is launching the Shakespeare Challenge Arts Award project. In February and March this year 30 teachers will be trained as Arts Award Advisers and will be running the RSC's Shakespeare Challenge in their schools to contribute to raising standards in literacy and English. All Blackpool schools can take part in addition to the nine schools in the Learning and Performance Network. This June, Blackpool schools in partnership with the Grand will be celebrating Shakespeare in Stanley Park. There will be approximately 400 children performing.