



LONDON PUBLIC LIBRARY BOARD

MEETING DATE: April 18, 2007

Session:	Public Session
Subject:	Customer Services & Branch Operations: Services to "Socially Excluded" Londoners
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Purpose of Report:	For Receipt and Information Only <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Recommendation

It is recommended that this report to the Library Board be received.

Issue / Opportunity

In the summer of 2006, staff member, Ruth Ram, made a submission to "Bright Ideas", a London Public Library program designed to encourage all employees to contribute innovative ideas and suggestions. Ruth's idea was to create a partnership with one or more social service agencies that would have a presence in the Central Library with the goal of doing outreach to homeless and otherwise marginalized people. These workers would provide compassionate outreach to this particular population. A review team was struck to investigate the need for such a service. Members included Beth Kinchlea, Kevin Moore, Anne Lister, Margaret Mitchell, Nancy Ward and Margaret Wilkinson.

Background & Review

Background

Kevin Moore and Ruth Ram conducted a best practices review to see if similar services were being provided in public library settings. Although there are plenty of articles about the presence of the homeless in libraries across North America, there is very little about services that have been specifically designed to help this population in library settings.

The review team met several times and after considerable discussion and reflection, invited a small, but representative group of individuals from various community agencies to meet for a roundtable discussion to discuss how London Public library (LPL) could be of greater assistance to homeless and/or marginalized populations. Discussion centered on the following questions:

- What are the ways the Library can better serve this underserved population (homeless/marginalized)?
- Is there something more the Library can offer without invading privacy and remaining

- respectful?
- What are the barriers for these people?
- How might LPL work more closely with community partners to more fully support our staff through training?
- How can we make better referrals to agencies?

This meeting was held on Tuesday, February 27 at Central Library. Representatives came from Middlesex-London Health Unit, London Intercommunity Health Centre, St. Leonard's Community Services, London YMCA, Canadian Mental Health Unit, Mission Services, My Sister's Place, and the City of London (Community Services). On April 1, LPL staff met to deconstruct the roundtable discussion and to make recommendations to Senior Team.

Recommendations

The team has developed a series of recommendations including, but not limited to, the following:

- "Socially Excluded" is the most appropriate term for the population under discussion and will be the term used in future by LPL.
- London Public Library will design and implement a service delivery plan for socially excluded people as part of the **LPL Strategic Plan**.
- London Public Library will identify specific ways in which to make a difference in the lives of socially excluded individuals in the library core service outcome areas of: literacy; learning; culture leisure and recreation; information; and community meeting place.
- Library service delivery streams, such as "Collections and Lending Services", will be considered in creating opportunities and removing barriers to access. For example, the Lending Services Team could investigate an "in library use" card.
- A community engagement and outreach plan for working with community agencies will be a pillar of the service plan.
 - Community Engagement: For example, London Public Library will seek membership on the London Homeless Coalition which consists of representatives from key social service agencies and other organizations from around the City. Formal, ongoing working relationships will be established with key community agencies that support socially excluded people.
 - Outreach: The comments at the meeting showed that there is a great lack of awareness of and understanding about library services by London social service agencies. Library staff will make a concerted effort to reach out to agency staff and clients, taking the service off-site as necessary.
- Customer Services training for LPL staff will be inclusive. The Library Team heard clearly from the roundtable discussion that we are an important contact point for this target group and that contact needs to be on an individual basis. It is important for the socially excluded to be welcomed by staff.
- The Library will invite different agencies to talk to staff – at staff meetings, training sessions, open house/ special forum designed for this purpose.

Next Steps

A Service Excellence Team will be established to develop a **Balanced Scorecard Project Plan**, which includes specific outcomes, milestones and time lines.