

# Leading Libraries Strategic Challenge Case Study

## Service: North Tyneside

### 1. Strategic Challenge Focus

To increase diversity in libraries by story-sharing.

### 2. Rationale and Context

North Tyneside is a borough with low levels of minority ethnic communities and although there are some distinct communities in the borough, the customer base of libraries is predominantly white British. One of our powerful talents suggested that by using multi-lingual story-sharing for children, i.e. story-sharing in both English and another language, this would initially encourage diverse communities to take part and over time, we could recruit people from different communities to tell stories. This would result in people from a wide range of communities to see themselves represented in libraries, to engage with us and to help shape services going forwards.

### 3. Approach and Activity

Initially we wanted to pilot some multi-lingual story-sharing sessions to see whether they would work. There were still restrictions in place for the pandemic, so we decided to trial this by recording an online story session. We knew that we had some speakers of other languages within the service and planned to recruit volunteers to help us pilot the approach, therefore also enabling staff to use their existing skills. One of our powerful talents speaks Farsi, so he became the initial guinea pig and with a colleague, they recorded an English / Farsi version of 'The Giant Turnip'. We used dual-language picture books that we had within the service.

The first session was effective, so we recruited some other team members and recorded story-sharing sessions in Spanish, French and British Sign Language. The sessions were shared online during Creativity and Wellbeing Week and got more than 200 views on Youtube and more than 700 views on Facebook.

The next step was to try some sessions in person. Each year there is a Christmas Market in a public square adjacent to North Shields Library and the library always hosts activities to tie in with this. We decided to hold some multi-lingual story sessions in the library during the market. Two sessions were held telling seasonal stories in Spanish and French. These were received very well.

### 4. Examples of outcomes and impact to date

The staff team involved in Leading Libraries have had the opportunity to use and develop their skills to pilot some innovative new activities across the library service.

We have engaged members of staff who speak other languages to use their skills to get involved in this innovative approach to story-sharing.

Story-sharing sessions have been received well, with good views on social media for the online sessions and audiences who enjoyed the in-person sessions.

## **5. Next Steps**

The next steps are to build on our experiences to develop the story-sharing sessions, to engage with communities outside the library to recruit volunteers for sessions.

We are considering a bid to the Arts Council National Lottery Project Grants to build capacity for the project and have had an initial conversation with our ACE libraries link.

## **6. Lessons learned**

- We have learned more about the communities in North Tyneside and the common languages spoken.
- We have learned lessons on the practicalities of how to deliver engaging dual-language sessions.
- We have identified the need for more sophisticated equipment to enable us to deliver professional online sessions going forward and have purchased some equipment.
- We have learned lessons about sourcing stories to share, including restrictions around publisher permissions.

## **7. How the Leading Libraries Programme contributed to the delivery of the Strategic Challenge**

This project would not have come about without the Leading Libraries Programme. It was during discussions about what an effective project might look like that the idea was suggested by one of the participants and taken on with enthusiasm by other members of the group.

The Leading Libraries Programme then gave us the focus to continue the project, to pilot something new for the service and take away an activity that we can build on to increase usage of the service by diverse groups.

The group have used skills such as researching ideas and increasing knowledge of local demographics and communities; communication with one another, the wider libraries team and customers; building relationships; confidence; use of technology to record video.

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