

Reviewing the library service in Walsall

BACKGROUND

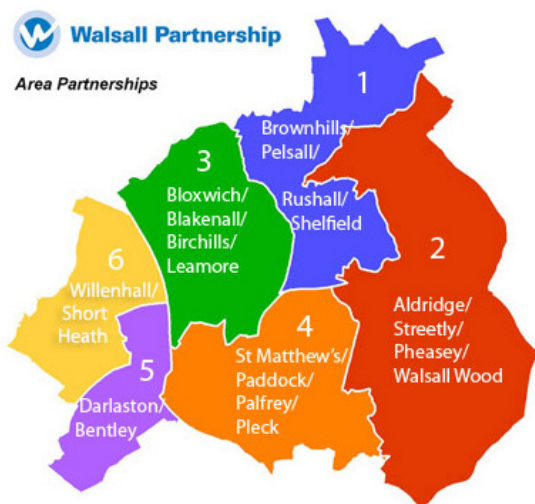
Like many local authority services, the library service is undergoing change. The nature of the service is changing with increasing demand for computer based information and technology, yet fewer resources due to the current climate of austerity. Responding to these changes, the library service must deliver a new, innovative, efficient and effective service.

To inform the changes the council developed a programme of consultation to ask local residents about the library service in Walsall. The programme included self completion questionnaires available in the libraries and the councils First Stop Shop, online surveys and a series of focus groups. The council also commissioned an independent telephone survey with 600 local residents.



METHODOLOGY

Walsall Council appointed M·E·L Research to undertake 600 telephone interviews with residents in March 2011. The survey aimed to find out residents opinion about the current library service, customer needs and how it could potentially operate in the future.



- ◆ Contact numbers were acquired via Random Digit Dial.
- ◆ Both library users and non users were interviewed
- ◆ A minimum of 100 interviews in each of the six area partnerships were undertaken to ensure representation across the borough
- ◆ Interviews took place in March 2011 during the day, evenings up until 8pm and Saturdays 10am-5pm.

OUTCOMES

Results indicated over two fifths of respondents had used a library in the last 12 months, borrowing books and using computers were the top two reasons for using libraries. Based on the current governments 'Big Society' policy, respondents were asked about volunteering and there was a lot of interest in helping out at a local library, one respondent said *[I would be willing to help with...]* "Anything. Cleaning, tidying, helping people access the computers or find books" The results will be analysed alongside the other findings and reported to Cabinet in the Summer 2011.

TESTIMONIAL

"We had a limited budget and tight timescale but through close working with M·E·L Research we were able to work flexibly, exploiting our own skills and resources which was a great way to work. Whilst we achieved a huge response to our locally distributed paper questionnaires and online survey, the telephone survey provided the robustness and independence we required, with the project being completed within 4 weeks from inception to report." Anna Sansom, Corporate Consultation & Customer Feedback Officer, Walsall Council.

For further information about this and other similar projects, please contact Helen Clive at helen.clive@m-e-l.co.uk or call 0121 604 4664