

# Culture and Communities Committee

10.00am, Thursday, 7 December 2023

## Edinburgh Libraries – No Going Back

Executive/routine  
Wards

Routine  
All

### 1. Recommendations

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- 1.1 Culture and Communities Committee is asked to note this update on the development and delivery of the youth engagement programme, No Going Back, in libraries.

**Paul Lawrence**

Executive Director of Place

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## Edinburgh Libraries – No Going Back

### 2. Executive Summary

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- 2.1 This report provides an overview of the Edinburgh Libraries No Going Back project, a community engagement programme undertaken with young people aged 11 – 18 years, to gather views and suggestions in relation to the Edinburgh Library Service, both positive feedback and the identification of suggested areas for improvement.
- 2.2 The report also highlights what steps are being taken to respond to the suggestions for improvement in the form of an action plan.

### 3. Background

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- 3.1 The library service contributes to the wider support and development of young people through the provision of reading for pleasure, informal learning, personal development, and the provision of safe spaces. Covid-19 lockdowns and the subsequent phased reintroduction of services acted as a barrier for young people accessing the service for a considerable length of time.
- 3.2 Edinburgh Libraries viewed the changes in service delivery that came with Covid-19 as an opportunity to reconsider how it meets the needs of young people. In the lead up to the pandemic, some libraries were experiencing a range of challenging behaviours, mainly involving older teenagers, and it was felt that developing an improved understanding of what young people need from the service (both school and community) would assist in creating more positive engagement going forward i.e. No Going Back.
- 3.3 Edinburgh Libraries applied to the Scottish Government's 'Public Libraries Covid Relief Fund', aimed at reconnecting libraries with the public. The fund was managed via the Scottish Libraries and Information Council (SLiC) and Edinburgh was awarded £33,100.
- 3.4 The funding supported the development of an ambitious engagement programme involving young people aged 11 – 18 years across the city, and to purchase new digital resources.

## 4. Main report

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- 4.1 No Going Back was a community engagement programme which was delivered between July 2021 and August 2023. The project was undertaken across all community and secondary school library services and used several methods of engagement which concluded with an online questionnaire.
- 4.2 The external funding was used to: deliver workshops designed by creative practitioners alongside library staff; purchase new digital hardware and software; and produce a short film of the process.
- 4.3 2,097 young people aged 11 – 18 years participated in the project. Workshop activity provided some of the richest inputs where young people talked openly about their involvement with the service and highlighted what they value the most about libraries. The process also supported an open and honest dialogue with young people enabling them to identify areas for improvement and potential barriers to access and positive engagement with the service.
- 4.4 There were 29 creative workshops held in community and school libraries which involved 295 young people.
- 4.5 Discussion groups were held in each of the four localities with a specific focus on digital delivery. These sessions assisted in identifying the type of hardware and software that young people felt would help to improve service delivery, support them to learn new skills, and encourage more participation. This was further supported by the inclusion of specific questions in the final online questionnaire.
- 4.6 1,802 young people completed the online questionnaire. The information and questionnaire link was circulated across schools (including Independent Schools) and community library networks. The questionnaire was deliberately brief and included drop-down and multiple-choice responses to questions, however, the addition of additional specific questions provided opportunities for free text – ‘other’. These were:
  - 4.6.1 What are the best things about the library you use?.
  - 4.6.2 If you could change anything about the school or community library you use, what would it be?
  - 4.6.3 Is there anything that might prevent young people from using the library? and
  - 4.6.4 Is there anything else you feel might make a positive experience for you?
- 4.7 Alongside the drop-down responses, over 1,500 individual comments, suggestions, or suggested areas for improvement were submitted.
- 4.8 The questionnaire was vital in helping the service understand the point of view of young people who might not use libraries and the reasons for this.
- 4.9 The key findings include:
  - 4.9.1 A desire to participate in more digital-based activities and to learn new skills;

- 4.9.2 A need for the service to develop improved practices to manage and reduce negative behaviours that may prevent others from accessing libraries;
  - 4.9.3 The importance of investment in physical and digital reading resources aimed at teenagers;
  - 4.9.4 The need to improve marketing and the promotion of the wider library service to young people, including better web/digital-based information; and
  - 4.9.5 The identification of a number of specific areas for improvement which will be addressed through citywide strategic development and changes at an individual local library level.
- 4.10 The overall project has assisted the service to ensure that future delivery is cognisant of the wider needs and aspirations of young people. It is evident from the feedback that young people using the service value what it has to offer but it is also clear that there are areas for improvement if the service is to continue to meet the needs of wider groups and individuals.
- 4.11 Whilst ongoing dialogue will continue with young people using the service, it is planned to repeat aspects of the wider engagement process in 2025, to ensure the service remains relevant and responsive to the changing needs of all young people.

## **5. Next Steps**

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- 5.1 The large number of comments and suggestions for service improvement identified from the engagement activity have been consolidated to create actionable outcomes. An action plan has been created (see Appendix 1) which includes 11 key outcomes supported by 25 actions.
- 5.2 The action plan delivery will be managed and monitored via the Libraries Youth Service Support Group (under development) comprising the responsible Library Development Manager, Strategic Library Development Leader, and representative Library Development Leaders from each locality and Central Library.
- 5.3 School and public libraries will support continued ongoing dialogue with young people around service provision and to ensure young people are appraised of progress against key actions from this project.
- 5.4 Any newly developed web-based service information created for young people will act as a key platform to provide progress to young people.
- 5.5 It is anticipated that a wider engagement process will be repeated in 2025.

## **6. Financial impact**

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- 6.1 The project was awarded £33,100 from the Scottish Government – Public Libraries Covid Relief Fund, managed by the SLiC. This supported the delivery of 29 workshops delivered by creative practitioners, the development of a project support film, and the purchase of new digital hardware and software.

- 6.2 The Council Support for the Reopening of Libraries budget provided a further £10,000 to support the purchase of 10 new game consoles, games, and ancillary hardware to provide access to more modern equipment in 10 libraries across the city.
- 6.3 No further financial commitments are required to support the delivery of the associated project outcomes.
- 6.4 All expenditure has been receipted and reported to the Scottish Libraries information Council in line with funding requirements.

## **7. Equality and Poverty Impact**

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- 7.1 The project was designed and delivered using the YouthTalk model as the core platform. The YouthTalk (Engagement) model is widely regarded as best practice and aims to positively respond to the UN – Convention on the Rights of a Child, and in the case of No Going Back this included:
  - 7.1.1 Article 3 (best interests of the child) The best interests of the child must be a top priority in all decisions and actions that affect children;
  - 7.1.2 Article 12 (respect for the views of the child) Every child has the right to express their views, feelings, and wishes in all matters affecting them, and to have their views considered and taken seriously; and
  - 7.1.3 Article 31 (leisure, play, and culture) Every child has the right to relax, play, and take part in a wide range of cultural and artistic activities.

## **8. Climate and Nature Emergency Implications**

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- 8.1 There are no positive or negative environmental impacts as a result of the delivery of the No Going Back project.

## **9. Risk, policy, compliance, governance and community impact**

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- 9.1 This report reflects the outcomes of an engagement exercise involving 2,097 young people aged 11 – 18 years. The outcomes including external budget spend and associated action plans will directly positively impact service delivery aimed at the target age group.
- 9.2 There are no significant risks associated with this project or any of the outcome actions.

## **10. Background reading/external references**

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- 10.1 There are no background papers or external references associated with this report.

## 11. Appendices

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11.1 Appendix 1 – No Going Back Outcomes Action Plan.

Edinburgh Libraries

No Going Back

ACTION PLAN

2023- 2025

## 1. Digital & Skills Development

Evidence	What will happen - Outcomes	How we will do it - Actions	Who is responsible	When will it be completed	Does it need resources	Is it on track
<p><b>Priorities</b></p> <p>1037 young people identified VR/Digital activity and learning as either 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> choice to provide</p> <p>920 young people identified music mixing as either 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> choice</p> <p>758 young people identified new skills as either 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> choice</p>	Following the purchase of new equipment, the service will create an improved programme of digital activity with integrated learning opportunities	<p>a) Take stock of all items of equipment and software to create support kits</p> <p>b) Create a 'menu' of projects and activities that can be supported by staff across the library service</p> <p>c) Publicise the 'menu' to young people to identify delivery interest</p> <p>d) Develop a programme of activity</p> <p>e) Deliver programme</p> <p>f) Continuously monitor and evaluate the involvement of young people and learning</p>	<p>Libraries Development Manager (Digital/Engagement)</p> <p>Libraries Development Manager (C&amp;YP/Schools)</p>	<p>a) Nov 23</p> <p>b) Dec 23</p> <p>c) Feb 24</p> <p>d) Mar 24</p> <p>e) Mar 24 onwards</p> <p>f) Ongoing</p>	The library service already has a wide range of digital resources. This has been further supported by the No Going Back Project - £20k investment in new resources.	YES

## 2. Tackling Negative Behaviours

Evidence	What will happen - Outcomes	How we will do it - Actions	Who is responsible	When will it be completed	Does it need resources	Is it on track
468 young people identified other library users as an issue	The library service will learn from recent incidents involving challenging behaviours to put in place agreed	a) Community Libraries Young People Support Group will co-create a youth engagement agreement to include zero tolerance towards bullying – young people will be asked to comment and agree approaches with	Libraries Development Manager (C&YP/Schools)	<p>a) June 24</p> <p>b) Ongoing</p>	<p>Staff training budget</p> <p>Small budget to support young people's group</p>	YES

<p>212 young people identified attending libraries as a safe space</p> <p>328 mentioned bullying as a deterrent for young people</p>	<p>practices to prevent repeats.</p> <p>Staff will also be supported to better manage any associated challenges.</p> <p>A zero tolerance approach to bullying will be promoted.</p>	<p>a view to creating consistency across the service</p> <p>b) Staff will continue to receive appropriate training to help manage challenging situations</p>			<p>Potential support required for promotional materials and campaign</p>	
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### 3. Stock Management

Evidence	What will happen - Outcomes	How we will do it - Actions	Who is responsible	When will it be completed	Does it need resources	Is it on track
<p>616 young people indicated that they felt that not having the right book stock could be a barrier to using their library with suggestions around increasing e-resources and manga</p> <p>1138 young people said book selection was the best thing about the library they use</p>	<p>Staff will continue to engage with young people to identify the type of stock and e-resources most likely to be welcomed by teens and provide feedback to the relevant Libraries Development Manager.</p>	<p>a) Review stock budget to create more scope for purchase of e-resources</p> <p>b) Review teen stock purchases and ensure continued commitment to development of quality book stock for teens</p>	<p>Libraries Development Manager (C&amp;YP/ Schools)</p> <p>Libraries Development Manager (Resource Management/ Performance)</p>	<p>a) Mar 24 - annually</p> <p>b) Mar 24 - annually</p>	<p>The library service manages a media budget for community libraries. The spend for this resource is reviewed annually to ensure identified needs are met.</p>	<p>YES</p>

#### 4. Marketing & Promotion (Including Web solutions)

Evidence	What will happen - Outcomes	How we will do it - Actions	Who is responsible	When will it be completed	Does it need resources	Is it on track
<p>569 young people indicated that they never visit a library</p> <p>Comments were received suggesting a lack of awareness of activities aimed at young people</p>	<p>The library service will seek to improve the web based information, targeted at young people. The service will also improve how it promotes activities and events aimed at young people to increase participation wherever possible.</p>	<p>a) Work with Council ICT and ICT partners to identify opportunities to create appealing web based information and resources</p> <p>b) Agree and develop common approaches to promotional information and materials aimed at young people</p> <p>c) Continuously liaise with young people to ensure materials used are reflective of need and appealing to young people</p>	<p>Libraries Development Manager (Digital/Engagement)</p> <p>Libraries Development Manager (Promotions/Economic Development)</p> <p>Libraries Development Manager (C&amp;YP/Schools)</p>	<p>a) June 24</p> <p>b) Dec 24</p> <p>c) Ongoing</p>	<p>It is intended that any ICT support/ introduction of marketing materials would be provided within existing resources</p>	<p>YES</p>

#### 5. Share Comments to Support Localised Actions

Evidence	What will happen - Outcomes	How we will do it - Actions	Who is responsible	When will it be completed	Does it need resources	Is it on track
<p>Over 1500 individual comments were received, many linking with localised suggestions/ areas for improvement.</p>	<p>The inputs will be reviewed to identify comments specific to local community or school libraries. These will be provided to the respective Development</p>	<p>a) Interrogate all inputs to identify local concerns or suggestions and provide analysis to Library Development Managers</p> <p>b) Library Development Managers will work with key staff to identify any local actions that are required</p>	<p>Libraries Development Manager (Digital/Engagement)</p>	<p>a) Mar 24</p> <p>b) May 24</p> <p>c) Summer 24</p>	<p>Dependent on the actions to be taken forward.</p>	<p>YES</p>

Library Development Managers will support Development Leaders to put in place any specific local actions that can be required.	Manager to discuss with key staff in each location and put in place any necessary actions. These will be recorded and monitored.	c) A local action plan will be created and made available in each location	All Library Development Managers			
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## 6. Share Action Plan

Evidence	What will happen - Outcomes	How we will do it - Actions	Who is responsible	When will it be completed	Does it need resources	Is it on track
2,097 young people provided time to engage with the No Going Back process and it's important that they are aware of the outcomes and type of initiatives / actions that can be supported going forward	<p>A high level (youth friendly) outcomes report has been produced and circulated to young people.</p> <p>The action plan will be developed into a youth friendly version and made available across youth engagement networks and on any new web presence with progress updates provided.</p>	<p>a) Circulate youth friendly high level outcomes report</p> <p>b) Create youth friendly action plan and make available across relevant networks</p> <p>c) Use new web presence to provide young people with progress updates</p>	<p>Libraries Development Manager (Digital/Engagement)</p> <p>Libraries Development Manager (C&amp;YP/Schools)</p>	<p>a) Complete</p> <p>b) Mar 24</p> <p>c) Sept 24</p>	Within existing resource	YES

## 7. Review and Repeat Activity

Evidence	What will happen - Outcomes	How we will do it - Actions	Who is responsible	When will it be completed	Does it need resources	Is it on track
<p>2,097 young people provided valuable information, views and suggestions to help direct library service provision aimed at young people.</p> <p>This represents a snapshot of opinion therefore it's important to continue to engage with young people to gather further / updated views and suggestions</p>	<p>Every 3 years, the library service will undertake a cost-effective process of engagement with young people.</p> <p>This will include seeking opinions on activity based on No Going Back process and outcomes.</p>	<p>a) Conversations in school and community libraries            b) Provision of online questionnaire            c) Linking with youth work providers to engage with young people perhaps not using library services</p>	<p>Libraries Development Manager (Digital/Engagement)</p> <p>Libraries Development Manager (C&amp;YP/Schools)</p>	<p>a) Dec 25            b) Dec 25            c) Dec 25</p>	<p>Limited resources required to support the activity.</p>	<p>YES</p>