

Community Libraries

Key considerations for community organisations seeking to take over library services and assets



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Introduction

This guide forms part of a series of resources produced for the My Community programme, which is funded by the Department for Communities and Local Government. This guide explores the subject of community managed and/or owned libraries, and contains advice that is relevant to both established and new community organisations, as well as Town and Parish Councils who are interested in exploring how they may play a role in supporting and developing local community library services and buildings.

This guide is tailored for community organisations. It is informed by recent practice undertaken through the Community Ownership and Management of Assets (COMA) programme and provides an overview of the key considerations and sources of support. A checklist is provided early on to help groups to assess where they are and how they can get started or move forward in taking on local library services.

Locality's earlier guidance on principles for library transfer offers further advice to local authorities on the subject, and should be regarded as complimentary to this toolkit, see: <http://locality.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/Income-Generation-for-Public-Libraries.pdf>

Local authorities all over the country are looking at ways of transforming library services. This interest is driven in part by reduced budgets, but also in recognition of the need to modernize and develop library services that continue to meet the needs of communities. One option being considered by local authorities in achieving this is through community management and/or ownership of library services.

How to use this guide

This toolkit can either be read from beginning to end to provide an overview of the key issues, or it can be used as a reference document for organisations who are already on a journey to take over a library. A comprehensive checklist is provided as a simple self-assessment tool for community organisations to reflect on. Any unanswered questions can be used to develop a bespoke action plan to help move the organisation forward. The checklist also cross references relevant sections of the guidance document to help with more detailed next steps.

What is a library - a building, a service, or both?

Transferring a library to the community can mean a range of things. The term “library” can be understood to mean either the building in which the library is based, or the actual service of managing and providing a library (or indeed both). Local authorities have the ability to transfer just a library service (via a service contract), a building (via lease or freehold), or both.

There are a range of distinct legal and practical considerations in each case. There are also issues to consider when a library service is being transferred alongside a building.

The table below highlights some of the key differences between a service transfer, or procurement, and the transfer of an asset or building.

Table 1: Differences between Asset transfer and Service transfer

Asset transfer	Service transfer
Transfer of building or other physical assets	Outsourcing of library service delivery to another provider (community organisation, Town and Parish Council, or private sector)
Agreement is usually in the form of a long-term lease	May or may not be within the same building
No specific service agreements, although certain obligations or conditions may be put into a lease agreement	Agreement can be in the form of a service level agreement or a contract with specific requirements
Integration with library authority services may not be supported by the library authority	Organisations are likely to receive support from the library authority to integrate with its service provision
Organisation has flexibility to use building for community benefit (subject to any other separate agreements)	Staffing issues need to be considered, including the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 2006, commonly referred to as TUPE. Further information on TUPE and asset transfer is available at: http://locality.org.uk/resources/asset-transfer-legal-toolkit-stake/

In between these two ends of the spectrum, there is a middle ground whereby a library transfer may involve elements of both a service agreement and an asset transfer. Some local authorities are inclined to consider the transfer of library assets and services together, seeking to link the transfer of an asset to the delivery of a service through the lease terms. However, this approach can be problematic in practice, for the following reasons:

- The transfer of an asset does not necessarily allow for the revenue required to maintain the service delivery. A service contract involving a revenue income stream is regarded as a more appropriate way of resourcing the delivery of a statutory service
- When asset transfer is linked to service delivery, it may be regarded as a procurement exercise as a result, and legally speaking may need to be subject to a competitive process
- The lifespan of an asset and a service delivery contract are generally not of the same length. Whilst asset transfer may involve long lease terms of 25+ years to enable security of tenure for fundraising and planning purposes, service contracts are generally much shorter.

It is also worth noting that not all land and buildings are ‘assets’ in that they can all cover their running costs, and produce a surplus for reinvestment purposes. This is the case where maintenance costs, or restrictions on how the building can be used, limits its income generation potential. In the case of libraries a number of factors need to be considered in determining whether the proposition is viable and sustainable, to determine if it is an asset or a liability.

What are the benefits of transferring library assets and services?

The benefits of transferring library assets and services will vary depending on a range of factors, including the local authority’s approach towards asset transfer, the aims and capacity of the group involved, the physical asset, the support and funding available, etc.

However, a number of positive benefits are commonly reported by community organisations who have taken on community assets such as libraries, and by local authorities who have been supportive of the process, e.g.:

- Local branches can be saved from closure, helping to retain local access to library services
- Community management often results in a greater degree of community engagement and involvement in service delivery, including volunteers
- Asset transfer can lead to the community becoming more engaged in wider community activities

- Asset or service transfer can help strengthen local community enterprises
- Transfer can open up new opportunities for fundraising to help improve library buildings.

The opportunities also need to be balanced against the key risks and concerns often encountered, e.g.:

- Concerns that volunteers are substituting paid jobs
- The potential for the quality of the library service to diminish without professional staff input
- Transferring liabilities can place significant strain on community organisations.

Where to start

Feasibility work often requires community organisations, and others, to commit time and resources at risk, without any assurances that a project can proceed. Therefore, it is advisable to take a phased approach to exploring the feasibility of a community library proposal to avoid wasting resources on unviable projects.

There are six key areas that you need to understand and develop in more detail before taking on a community library. These are:

- Organisational development
- Developing the service and business model
- Information and digital technology
- Securing support
- Understanding community benefits and outcomes
- Asset issues.

This guidance includes key information on all these areas, to help community organisations to decide on the feasibility of embarking on a library project.

Community library checklist

The checklist below provides a starting point to establish the likely feasibility of a community library project and will help you to identify any issues that need to be resolved before the people involved should commit themselves further. All of the checklist topics are developed in more detail in the rest of the guidance.

The most sensible approach to addressing feasibility will vary on local circumstances, but a proportionate approach is recommended. Therefore, it may be helpful to structure your development work in phases to minimise wasted effort.

Organisational development

**Tick
complete**

Is there a willing group of people with the capacity and skills to drive the project forward through its early stages?

Relevant sections in guidance:

- *Setting up a new organisation*
- *Skills and experience*

Is there a formal group in existence with a written governing document?
The local authority and most funders will only be able to work with formal organisations to develop community libraries. A constitution, a set of rules, or articles of association may need to be developed and agreed before your project can proceed.

Relevant section in guidance:

- *Setting up a new organisation*

Has the group considered how appropriate its legal form is to take on a library service?
Organisations will have to consider what the most suitable legal form is for their group as well as whether or not to register as a charity. Is a new legal form required or advantageous to take the project forward?

Relevant sections in guidance:

- *Setting up a new organisation*

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community libraries and charitable status 	
<p>Is there clarity about governance?</p> <p>Governance concerns structures and decision making processes through which an organisation is led, and should address:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Members, criteria and benefits • Management and decision making/size of board • Accountability to the wider public. <p>Relevant section in guidance:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accountability and reporting to stakeholders 	
<p>Is the group well known and supported by the community?</p> <p>Demonstrating widespread community support will be critical to the success of any community library project.</p> <p>Relevant section in guidance:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community involvement 	
<p>Does the group have appropriate policies and procedures in place?</p> <p>For example, regarding the management of volunteers and staff and safeguarding policies for working with different groups, e.g. children and young people.</p> <p>Relevant section in guidance:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policies for community managed libraries 	

<p>Is the organisation clear whether it intends to employ staff or run on a purely volunteer basis, and what the resourcing consequences are as a result?</p> <p>Relevant sections in guidance:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Staffing and volunteers</i> • <i>Transfer of existing staff?</i> 	
<p>Has consideration been given to the training of staff and volunteers?</p> <p>Relevant section in guidance:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Skills and experience</i> 	
<p>Does the organisation have relationships with the people and organisations it needs to in order to make a success of the project, e.g. the local authority?</p> <p>Relevant section in guidance:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Partnership building</i> 	

Developing the services and business model

Tick
complete

Is the organisation clear whether or not the service provided will form part of the local authority’s statutory provision?
The answer to this fundamental question will determine the parameters of the project.

Relevant section in guidance:

- *Public versus an independent library service*

Is there clarity of purpose?
Is there a clearly articulated Vision, Mission and Objectives for the organisation or the project?

Relevant sections in guidance:

- *Defining purpose*
- *Community need*
- *Developing a Vision, Mission and Strategic Objectives*

Is the organisation clear to what extent the service will be supported and integrated with the local authority’s library management system and book stocking services?

Relevant sections in guidance:

- *Sourcing and maintaining stock*
- *Library management systems*

Is it clear how the service will be staffed and/or what the role of volunteers will be?
Do you understand the existing staff structure, and what is proposed in any new arrangements? Are any existing staff to be transferred in the event of a transfer, and if so are all TUPE liabilities understood? (TUPE stands for Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 2006).

Relevant sections in guidance:

- *Staffing and volunteers*
- *Transfer of existing staff?*

Has the full range of supporting services been considered, from cleaning to accounting, and decisions made about how they will be managed and how they will be resourced?

Relevant sections in guidance:

- *Supporting functions*
- *Customer service and relationship management*

Has the organisation identified how it can realistically generate income to sustain the service?

Relevant sections in guidance:

- *Identifying sources of income*
- *Diversifying services in community libraries*
- *Commercial services*

Has the organisation considered co-location with other services or organisations?

Relevant section in guidance:

- *Co-location of community services*

Can you demonstrate that there is a demand and market for any proposed income generating services?

Relevant section in guidance:

- *External consultation and market research*

Does the organisation have an appropriate business plan?

Relevant section in guidance:

- *Business planning*

Does the organisation understand its cash flow, i.e. the amount of money being moved into and out of the organisation?

Relevant section in guidance:

- *Cash flow*

Information and Digital Technology

Tick
complete

Is the organisation clear about what technology it needs to meet its objectives, and who will be responsible for its management and maintenance?

Relevant sections in guidance:

- *Information and digital technology*
- *IT Hardware and equipment*
- *Broadband*
- *Software*

Securing support

Tick
complete

Have you identified the key stakeholders, and developed a plan to engage, consult, inform or lobby them as appropriate?

Relevant sections in guidance:

- *Partnership building*
- *Campaigning and lobbying*

Is there a positive relationship with the local authority, and is there common understanding and clear expectations?

Relevant section in guidance:

- *Defining purpose*

Can the support of partners be relied on? Have you got any evidence of support from key partner organisations to support your cause?

Relevant section in guidance:

- *Strategic fit*

Has the organisation considered how it is going to raise any start up finance and/or capital funding to establish the project?

Relevant section in guidance:

- *Securing funding and finance*

Understanding community benefit and outcomes

Tick complete

Is the organisation clear what it is trying to achieve, and how it will measure success?

Relevant sections in guidance:

- *Developing a Vision, Mission and Strategic Objectives*
- *Monitoring services*

Does the organisation understand what the local authority and others expect in terms of monitoring?

Relevant section in guidance:

- *Monitoring services*

Is the organisation clear in articulating their intended aims and impact to other stakeholders?

Relevant section in guidance:

- *Demonstrating impact*

Asset issues, i.e. ensuring that the building is appropriate for its intended function

Tick complete

Is the organisation clear where the library service will be run from?

<p>Relevant section in guidance:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assessing the viability of buildings 	
<p>Have appropriate checks and surveys been done to identify any potential issues with the building, e.g. maintenance costs?</p> <p>Relevant section in guidance:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Site appraisal questions 	
<p>Is legal support required?</p> <p>If an organisation is seeking to secure a lease or take on an asset on a freehold basis, legal advice is highly recommended before committing to any agreement.</p> <p>Relevant section in guidance:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Asset ownership and management agreements 	

Organisational development

Organisational structures

A range of organisational types can, and have, taken over library services and assets, including:

- Existing community organisations: Constituted community organisations and enterprises with objectives of benefiting the local community
- Newly established community organisations, emerging from residents coming together with an interest in saving their library
- Parish and Town councils.

If a pre-existing organisation already exists, consideration should be given to the pros and cons of establishing a separate legal entity with the purpose of managing the community library instead. The rationale for this is explored in the next section.

Setting up a new organisation

For any organisation looking to own or run a community library, it is important to have a robust structure with a written constitution and an appropriate legal status. This is not only to safeguard the organisation and the individuals running it, but to also give funders and other partner organisations confidence that they can invest their time and money in the transfer.

Setting up a community organisation should happen only where and when it is necessary. It is worth exploring whether existing organisations, including local charities, or your parish and town council, have an interest in working with the community to develop a solution before setting up something new.

When setting up a new community organisation to take over a library, there are several possible incorporated legal structures you can choose, including:

- Company Limited by Guarantee
- Community Benefit Society
- Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO)
- Community Interest Company (CIC).

Deciding which type of structure is most appropriate is a crucial decision and should be given careful thought. Each structure has its own set of strengths and weaknesses, but the most appropriate form will probably not be clear until you understand more about what the organisation will do.

The choice of organisational structure will influence:

- What sources of funding and finance you are able to access
- What level of accountability and control the local community has
- The liability of the organisations' members and management group
- Reporting requirements.

Useful resources to help you consider the most appropriate legal structure include:

- <http://locality.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/Choosing-a-legal-structure-toolkit.pdf>
- http://www.uk.coop/sites/default/files/uploads/attachments/simplylegal_0.pdf

You may also be able to get more bespoke advice from your local Council for Voluntary Services or infrastructure body, if available locally. You can search for details of local support organisations here: <http://data.navca.org.uk/members/directory>

Community libraries and charitable status

Libraries may take a variety of forms and some of them may be established as charities. However, not all community libraries will pass the eligibility criteria for charitable status. The Charities Act says that a 'charity' is an institution which:

1. Is established for charitable purposes only.
2. Is subject to the control of the High Court's charity law jurisdiction.

A 'charitable purpose' (as defined in the Charities Act) must:

- Fall within the descriptions of purposes in the Charities Act.
- Be for the public benefit - the 'public benefit requirement'.

The public benefit requirement applies to each of an organisation's purposes. A charity cannot have some purposes that are for the public benefit and some that are not.

If a library applies to the Charity Commission to register as a charity the Charity Commission will make a decision about the charitable status of that organisation based on the application and supporting material provided.

Charities are required to be independent in the way that they operate. Organisations that are, therefore, established to simply carry out the statutory function of providing a library service are unlikely to meet this test.

More information on how to register as a Charity is available here:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/how-to-register-your-charity-cc21b>

Community involvement

Involving the community is an important factor that contributes to the sustainability of any community enterprise or asset transfer project. To successfully take on a community library organisations will need substantial community support. They must be sure that there is a strong desire in the community to retain or develop the library service or building and make a commitment to its success. This support must be wider than just a small group of committee members.

Effective community involvement can reduce costs and generate greater community ownership of the facility. However, for most projects there is not one local community but a number of different communities which need to be approached in different ways and at different times. Defining groups of people is important since it enables information and invitations to people to happen in a targeted way. It can also help to 'manage' some people who may not understand the project.

Organisations should seek to consider the views and needs of:

- Neighbours
- Services users
- Potential users within the catchment area
- Other community organisations and groups.

A range of methods can be used to engage with the community on your proposals. e.g.:

- Talks at existing groups, e.g. school assemblies and community events
- Holding public meetings
- Local radio, TV, newspapers, press releases
- Leaflet drops to local houses, shops and public buildings
- Websites and social media campaigning tools
- Newsletters, (email or paper).

- Exhibition information stand in the local library
- Survey of members
- Notice board outside the site with regular updates
- Posters in local shop windows and other venues
- Publicised drop-in times to look around the library.

Whatever engagement methods are used, it is important that they are inclusive, clear and productive, encourage collaboration, are recorded and followed up.

Evidencing the level of community involvement and support will help you make your case to the local authority and other funding bodies. Retain survey responses, petitions, meeting records, and other evidence such as photos from events that may help you prove support for your project.

It is also important to consider what consultations have already taken place before planning further engagement. Local authorities are likely to already have a considerable amount of information about service users which can help to inform decision making.

For further ideas on creative approaches to engaging with your community, see: <http://toolkit.creativityni.org/>

Accountability and reporting to stakeholders

Community organisations have a responsibility to report their performance to their own management committees and wider stakeholders. Traditionally this is formally undertaken on an annual basis (at an annual general meeting, or AGM) to coincide with legal reporting requirements that organisations formed as companies or charities have to adhere to. This also creates an opportunity to make further use of the AGM to engage with and discuss key issues with users/members.

Communication and accountability should not just be confined to the AGM. There are a variety of methods for communicating to different key audiences. Consider setting up a website, or social media page to publish updates about what the group is doing, share information about your meetings and how to get involved in shaping key decisions.

Policies for community managed libraries

Policy development is the process of setting up procedures that set out how staff and volunteers behave and what responsibility the organisation has towards the people it employs or works with.

Key policies need to be in place for when staff and volunteers start to work for an organisation and are needed primarily for two reasons:

- For legal reasons, as organisations have many statutory obligations to fulfil and failure to do so increases the risk of legal action
- To give clarity by providing staff, volunteers, and directors/board members with guidelines to refer to that direct their behaviour in certain situations.

A wide range of policies may be useful to a new organisation. This list is a good place to start, but is not exhaustive:

- Volunteer management/volunteer recruitment and selection
- Annual leave, sickness and absence
- Health and safety
- Data protection
- Community involvement
- Safeguarding of vulnerable adults and children and young people
- Equal opportunities
- Disciplinary and grievance

- Environmental sustainability.

Sources of support when developing policies for your organisation may include:

- Your local authority: Voluntary sector engagement or support services
- Community Matters: <http://www.communitymatters.org.uk/content/465/Managing-your-organisation---policy>
- Your local Council for Voluntary Services or voluntary sector support agency: <http://data.navca.org.uk/members/directory>.

Skills and experience

Before taking on a library service or building, organisations should carry out a check to ensure that they have people involved with the skills and ability to complete the project. This can provide a prompt for members of the group to be pro-active in seeking the support that they need from elsewhere, for example through training, recruitment, or partnership working.

Groups may wish to consider to what extent that they have access to the following skills and knowledge before making a commitment to take over responsibility for a library service or asset:

- Management of a community organisation or charity: Familiarity with how voluntary organisations operate, and relevant statutory responsibilities relating to charity law and company law as appropriate
- Experience in fundraising
- An understanding of financial management, including bookkeeping or accounting and an ability to develop and manage budgets. Whilst an accountant in your group is not essential, organisations will need people who are financially literate and are able to read and understand basic management accounts
- Skills or experience relevant to the proposed services: A librarian or customer services professional will be helpful for example

- Community engagement: Experience in engaging effectively with the community
- Marketing and communications: An ability to effectively communicate the project and your group and develop support using various forms of media
- Technology expertise: e.g. an understanding of digital technology, including IT hardware and software systems
- Evaluation and monitoring experience
- Asset management experience: e.g. experience in managing capital builds or refurbishment projects, or looking after public buildings.

Equally important is for the people involved to have the enthusiasm, and time, to support the project through to completion. Skills can be acquired, but engaged and motivated individuals will bring energy to the project.

Developing the services and business model

Public versus an independent library service

A key consideration for both local authorities and community organisations involved in a library transfer is to determine whether they will be required to deliver public library services that constitute a part of the local authority's statutory responsibility. If this is the case, there are several requirements that need to be met and subsequently managed in some form of agreement.

The modern public library service stems from the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964: <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1964/75> This act requires every local authority to make a provision for a 'comprehensive and efficient' public library service and that the basic lending and reference services should be free at the point of use. The Chartered Institute of Librarians and Information Professionals (CILIP) published "What Makes a Good Library Service?" <http://www.cilip.org.uk/cilip/advocacy-awards-and-projects/advocacy-and-campaigns/public-libraries/briefings-and-resources-2> which states that, in order for local councils to meet the requirements of the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964, and other key legal requirements, a local public library service must:

- Serve both adults and children
- Be available to everyone and meet any special needs required by members of the local community
- Encourage participation and full use of the service
- Provide materials in sufficient number, range and quality to meet general and specific requirements of those in the community
- Provide value for money, working in partnership with other authorities and agencies.

If your library is to be considered a part of the public library service it would be reasonable to expect support with this through the local authority's existing network, which is likely to

include a central stock buying function, access to the library information management system and inter-library loans. If operating independently, an organisation will need to think through how it will function effectively without the local authority's support. Most community managed libraries in England operate as part of the statutory library network with the support of their local authority.

An independent community library service is one that is not operating under the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964. It may or may not receive support from the local authority and be completely integrated with other local authority run branches. As a result any independent library body may make decisions regarding its service provision entirely at its own discretion. Such services should be considered as an addition to public provision rather than a replacement, as the local authority is still obligated by the act to provide its library service.

An important consideration is how the arrangement affects public lending rights. Care needs to be taken to avoid breach of copyright for intellectual property. Under section 40A (2) of the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988 copyright in a work is not infringed by the lending of copies by a "prescribed library or archive (other than a public library) which is not conducted for profit." See: <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1988/48/contents>

However, any libraries seeking to charge a fee for the loan of materials are likely to breach copyright legislation unless appropriate licences are obtained.

Further information on public lending rights can be found here:

- <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/public-lending-right-how-it-applies>
- <https://www.plr.uk.com/>

Strategic fit

A community managed library is very likely to require external support from public bodies, funders and other partner organisations to succeed. Identifying shared objectives will help you to build constructive relationships with key decision makers including the local authority.

Communities are advised to identify if any local existing strategies exist, or reviews that are underway, regarding library services or issues of relevance to the community, e.g.:

- Library service transformation initiatives
- Other services related to your aspirations for the site e.g. youth services, care for vulnerable adults, employment support and education
- Community asset transfer, or corporate property management.

An awareness of the local context will ensure that efforts are focussed on where you can make the most difference, which will help you to develop a positive relationship with the relevant people and organisations. Demonstrating an understanding of local priorities and how your group can meet them can help to avoid an adversarial approach and establish the foundations of a mutually beneficial partnership.

Some useful sources of national context regarding public library trends include:

- **The Libraries Taskforce:** A panel set up in response to a national review of library services to enable libraries in England to exploit their potential and be recognised as a vital resource for all. You can follow their activities online: <https://librariestaskforce.blog.gov.uk/>
- **Arts Council England:** Arts Council England is the development agency for libraries in England and has a responsibility for supporting and developing libraries: <http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/what-we-do/supporting-libraries/>

- **CarnegieUK Trust:** Have published a range of resources linked to the transformation of public libraries: <http://www.carnegieuktrust.org.uk/changing-minds/knowledge--culture/the-future-of-libraries>
- **Locality:** Have developed a range of resources for community libraries: <http://locality.org.uk/projects/community-libraries>

Defining purpose

There needs to be a clear vision for the future use of the library building and the service. It is important for any library transformation to be based around long term and shared aspirations by the community and the local authority. It is also important to be aware of the factors which may influence the different perspectives of each party.

Shared aspirations may include:

- A desire to keep a local library branch open
- Improving the quality of the asset leading to an increase in the satisfaction of the experience for users
- Increased opportunities for learning, community usage and participation in libraries.

A community organisation may also be driven by a desire to:

- Establish a physical base or presence in the community
- Diversify its income base, including generating income from room hire or rent
- Take on a library building and develop new uses that meets community needs.

In addition, a local authority may have additional drivers such as:

- Reducing the revenue costs of running the service
- A desire to reduce its asset base, and potentially generate a capital receipt from the sale of assets to invest in other projects.

Shared aspirations can form the basis for partnership. Being aware of differing aspirations highlights areas of potential risk, which need to be managed.

Community need

In terms of taking on a community library, a fundamental step is to establish need and demand. It is also important to consider where the gaps are in existing services or where existing facilities could be better used.

This will involve reviewing provision in the surrounding area and testing demand for any new services or facilities that will be on offer (the local authority will be a good source of information on historical usage figures, but these should be compared against your own research from public consultations and speaking to users). For all elements of your proposal, organisations need to take into account what the likely level of use will be, and what capacity there is to meet demand. Even libraries that are currently in use will benefit from a needs analysis to test assumptions about impact under community management/ownership.

An asset is most likely to be considered for transfer if there is evidence that:

- It is currently underused but there is clear potential for growth
- It could be more efficiently or effectively run by a community based organisation
- Transferring it to a community based organisation is likely to achieve additional benefits.

In most instances it is those libraries that have low levels of usage that are the ones being prioritised for community transfer. Therefore, to become more viable and popular it is important for something to change to reverse any trends of declining use. This presents an opportunity for community organisations to tap into their local knowledge and provide a service that will engage with the community in its broadest sense.

Many community led libraries adopt a “community hub” model, where the library is one of a number of services that attracts people, and (in some instances), generates income.

Grassington Hub & Community Library

Grassington Hub & Community Library is a volunteer led community hub situated in Grassington Village in North Yorkshire. The Hub provides a wide range of services to residents and businesses; including the promotion of local events and the production/sales of tickets for community groups in the locality. They host a range of services from their outreach room which is hired by different agencies and local residents. <http://www.grassington.uk.com/grassington-hub/4564463593>

Developing a Vision, Mission and Strategic Objectives

A common approach for organisations to define and communicate their purpose is to develop a strategic plan comprising of a vision, mission and strategic objectives. A vision is a statement of what your group would like to realise or achieve. Ask yourself, what does the picture of the future you want to create look like? This is an example vision statement from a community library:

We want Belsize Community Library to become an open space that fosters co-working, collaboration, enterprise, learning and socialising.

Belsize Community Library

A mission statement is what your organisation does, or will do, to achieve your mission. This is an example mission statement for a community library:

To serve all sections of the community by providing a facility which inspires lifelong learning, offers access to an extensive range of information and supports recreational activities in a welcoming and safe social environment.

Haddenham Community Library

Some further examples of vision and mission statements, as well as a useful worksheet to help you create your own can be found here: <https://topnonprofits.com/vision-mission/>

Strategic aims or objectives can provide more detail with regards to how you will achieve your mission. An organisation may adopt several, typically about 5 or 6. They can provide the basis for ongoing monitoring and evaluation, helping the management committee or board to check if things are going to plan. Objectives may relate to intended social outcomes, or the sustainability of the organisation. Examples of strategic objective may include:

- To support learning for people of all ages in the community
- To provide a diverse range of educational, cultural and leisure activities
- To provide local residents and visitors with access to good quality information about the local area
- To develop a strong and sustainable organisation.

If you are seeking to establish objectives as the basis of ongoing monitoring, you may wish to ensure they are “SMART”, i.e.: Specific, Measurable, Acceptable to the people working to achieve the goals, Realistic and Time bound.

Any existing organisations considering taking on library services or assets should establish clear project aims which are compatible with their organisation's objectives. For example, the aims for a community library project may be:

- The encouragement of reading and the improvement of reading skills
- Providing access to ICT, and support with ICT skills
- Providing access to important information and services relevant to the local community
- Enabling active participation in local democracy and decision making.

Practical considerations for library service delivery

A clear understanding of what level and type of library service you hope to offer will be essential in identifying the support and resources you will require to make your ideas become a reality, e.g.:

- Will the service be staffed, or totally dependent on volunteers? For example, the availability of people resources will impact on the opening times?
- Will you focus on a book based service, or include other lending materials?
- Are you aiming to only provide 'library' services, or are there other services that could be delivered from the building that might also help advance your aims? Are you clear if, and how, the local authority will support you going forward?
- Will the authority assist with stock selection and supply?
- What existing information technology (IT) infrastructure might be made available to your organisation?
- Will the library authority be willing to offer general advice, or more specialist librarian support and resources?

Locality has produced a set of guiding principles to support local authorities considering community engagement in the management of library services. This may help you to see how

the local authority would approach such a project: http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/media/uploads/pdf/Community_libraries_research_2013_guiding_principles.pdf.

Sourcing and maintaining stock

All libraries require a good supply of stock to attract users. The most obvious being books, but this may also include other items to lend or sell. A key consideration is not just the initial securing of stock, but the ongoing renewal and replacement of stock to keep the collection current, and relevant to your community.

There are different approaches to stocking a community library.

- **Integration with the local authority's book stock:** From a community perspective, this is the ideal solution if the local authority is willing, and has the resources to maintain stock in the same way that it does for its own libraries. Any organisation seeking to set up a community library is advised to discuss the feasibility of this with the library services department in the first instance. Many local authorities have proved that it is possible to integrate community libraries within their existing library management system. However, this may involve changes to existing systems and processes. This can be complicated and time consuming to do, so it is more likely to happen when a local authority is pursuing a coordinated approach to community involvement in libraries.
- **Donations:** Many community libraries receive a significant amount of donated stock. As well as donations from local residents, it may be possible to secure regular bulk donations from a range of sources, e.g. surplus/removed stock from other libraries (public, private or academic) or donations from book suppliers. It is worth noting that relying on book donations alone is unlikely to result in a well-balanced selection of books, or new releases. If a current, varied and high quality book selection is

required, then donated stock will need to be supplemented by purchased stock. Surplus donated stock can be sold to generate income so an “accept everything” policy is adopted in some libraries, even if it does not end up on the shelves for loan.

- **Direct purchasing:** Provided there is a source of income, independent libraries can purchase books directly from distributors. Most libraries benefit from bulk buying discounts, often amplified by collaborative agreements across local authority boundaries. Community organisations may be able to tap into such arrangements.

It may be possible to source book stock using any one, or a combination, of these approaches. An important and related consideration is the library management system. For example, some local authorities will not accept the addition of donated stock onto their systems. For this reason some community libraries offer donated books for sale, either in the library, or online.

Ensuring a suitably diverse and appropriate range of materials is something that needs careful consideration as it will have a direct impact on the number and type of users and book issues you achieve. In a local authority this function is usually performed by a qualified librarian, often working centrally to serve several different libraries in an area. Community organisations seeking to take responsibility for their own stock selection should seek appropriate advice and support to ensure that their collections are suitable for the communities they are based in. It may be possible to buy in professional support to assist with this.

Library management systems

A library management system (LMS), or an integrated library system (ILS), is the software interface and database that library services use to manage data relating to collections and users. There are many different systems in operation across different local authority boundaries.

It is important for community organisations and local authorities to consider how or whether a community managed library will integrate with the public library information management system. Each local authority will take a different view on issues such as network security and data protection, which will have an impact on the level of integration possible with a community run library. In some examples community organisations have been granted full access to systems; in other places access has been restricted to basic functions to enable the checking in and out of books, but restricting access to other functions such as the ability to register new users. Other local authorities may resist giving community organisations access to the system altogether. Licensing arrangements may also mean that there are cost implications related to the provision of access to any system.

Inter-library loans

An important consideration for community organisations and local authorities is how the library might relate to others in terms of inter-library loans on both a local, regional and national scale. This is likely to be particularly important for small community libraries that have limited capacity to hold stock.

Staffing and volunteers

All libraries will require some onsite presence to ensure security, check books in and out, and, perhaps most importantly, provide accessible information and advice to users. Community libraries need to give careful consideration to staffing and volunteer management issues. Effective customer relationships are absolutely critical for a community library. Many libraries now have self-checkout machines, which although initially expensive to install can help to free up staff and volunteer time, enabling them to engage more with customers and carry out other tasks.

It is possible that your project may begin as an entirely volunteer run endeavour. However, if a community managed library is to operate at scale, or you want to diversify into other areas

of service delivery, staff costs will be likely to become the biggest element of the overall cost of running the facility. Many community groups involve volunteers to carry out a range of tasks in both the back office and front desk roles, but the balance of staff and volunteers needs careful management.

Organisations should consider adopting a process to ensure that staff and volunteers are effectively recruited to meet the needs of the organisation. Developing role profiles and essential and desirable criteria can help with this process.

You may be able to get support to recruit and manage volunteers from a local volunteer centre. Further resources and support on volunteering are available here:

- <https://www.ncvo.org.uk/ncvo-volunteering/find-a-volunteer-centre#>
- <https://knowhownonprofit.org/people/volunteers>

In order to ensure people skills are up to date and fit for purpose for delivering the services, consider a staff and volunteer development programme. The Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development <http://www.cipd.co.uk/> provides useful information ranging from subjects such as codes of practice when dealing with people, to employment law.

The Chartered Institute of Librarians and Information Professionals <http://www.cilip.org.uk/> (CILIP) offer a range of education and development opportunities for all of those involved in the information and knowledge management sector.

Transfer of existing staff?

It is critical for any community organisation considering taking on a library service to understand any expectations, or legal requirements to take on existing staff. The Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 2006, protects employees from certain changes to their benefits and working conditions in the event of a transfer of employment. This presents

potential liabilities for community organisations which must be fully understood before committing to any transfer. Independent advice is highly recommended.

Further information on TUPE and asset transfer is available at:
<http://locality.org.uk/resources/asset-transfer-legal-toolkit-stake/>

Supporting functions

You will also need to consider what infrastructure lies behind the library, such as cataloguing, book delivery, human resource (HR) management and other administrative functions. While you may not need to operate at the scale of the existing library, or in the same manner, the basic elements of all of these tasks will need to be done by someone. You should begin planning how this will be done as early as possible to allow time for creative solutions to develop.

Beyond the basic availability of stock and its procurement, you will also need to consider the resources required for sorting, cleaning, building maintenance, facilities management, security, shelving, cataloguing, and issuing materials and managing borrowers' accounts, e.g. sending reminder notes, etc. Your library authority may retain responsibility for some of these functions under agreement, or you may wish to outsource to another organisation.

Customer service and relationship management

Good customer service is critically important to all public services, not least a library. How welcoming a library is, and how helpful staff are, will have a big impact on the users' experience and whether they are likely to return.

Many staff in public libraries are trained in providing information advice and guidance and in customer service. Community libraries should bear this in mind when recruiting volunteers and staff.

Organisations seeking to provide information and advice may consider a relevant accreditation. The Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals <http://www.cilip.org.uk/> provides information and training relating to customer service skills for library staff.

In running any community facility it is necessary to carefully manage your relationships with a range of stakeholders. Customer relationship management is the term used for an organisation's strategy for managing its interactions with customers, clients and sales prospects or opportunities. Community organisations may be dealing with both clients of commercial services and the users of community services. Regardless, the same attention to meeting their needs through a high level of customer service is key to successfully running a community enterprise or facility.

Customer relationship management (CRM) is an approach dedicated to learning more about customers' needs and behaviours in order to develop stronger relationships with them. This kind of understanding can be built up in a small organisation by simply talking with customers and potential customers so you can find out why they are coming, or not coming, to the library.

This approach can be further enhanced by simple techniques such as customer feedback boxes and books or making use of occasional feedback or an online forum. However, once this information needs to be communicated to, or derived from, a large number of people, CRM tends to rely more heavily on the use of technology and the maintenance of databases. Running a library will already probably be reliant on a library management system of some sort, so your CRM may be initially about what useful information you can glean from this existing system rather than creating a new CRM system from scratch. As you will be dealing with personal information, you will need to be aware of your legal obligations in handling such data. The Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) has guidance on this subject <https://ico.org.uk>

Identifying sources of income

Most healthy and sustainable community enterprises, including those that manage libraries, have a diverse income base.

Income for community led libraries may comprise of a mix of one or more of the following:

- **Service level agreement or contracts:** If you are delivering a statutory library service, then you should have an income stream to support this in the long term, or as long as you are required to provide this service. Communities should be aware of the potential impact of future budget cuts to library services. Some community libraries also deliver advice services for other public agencies such as their local housing association.
- **Trading income:** Earned income may come from rent, fees and charges, venue hire, sub-letting parts of the asset, or selling goods and services, e.g. holiday activities, training, refreshments/cafe, vending, etc.
- **Fundraising events.** Many community libraries make good use of volunteers and their links to the community to put on local events that bring people together, and help generate income to support the library. Linking in with seasonal events and holidays can be a useful strategy when planning events. Consider how any activities can complement or take advantage of the rich cultural resource of your library.
- **Grants, donations, sponsorship:** Subscriptions, contributions, and bequests from individuals and local businesses can all provide income, although they also require resources to generate. Some community libraries establish a more consistent income from donations through membership of “friends” schemes, (registered charities can claim Gift Aid).

- **In-kind support.** Local businesses may offer non-cash contributions to support your library in return for recognition and exposure locally. e.g. a local building firm may undertake repair work, or a solicitor may offer legal services. Business in the Community is a national services that helps to broker links between businesses and social enterprises: <http://www.bitc.org.uk/>

A prudent strategy for any community library would be to proactively increase alternative sources of income to provide a more resilient income base.

Diversifying services in community libraries

Alongside core library lending and information services, many libraries provide a range of complementary services and activities. There is scope for community managed libraries to expand or develop related services.

Examples could include:

- Advice and guidance to users to develop their skills
- Storytelling sessions
- Book clubs
- Research support and ICT assistance
- Developing specialist displays or collections to engage with the community
- Translating information resources into other languages.

Locality's guidance note on income generation for public libraries provides further suggestions and approaches: <http://locality.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/Income-Generation-for-Public-Libraries.pdf>

Commercial services

Alongside community activities, community organisations should consider the potential of supporting or developing commercial services as income earning activities.

Although there is likely to be a need to have an element of enterprise running throughout every aspect of your library, commercial services are those that are explicitly operating to make a financial contribution to your wider running costs.

Commercial services might have a tangential relationship with the library service, such as information professional services, or they may have very little to do with the core service, e.g.:

- A café
- Meeting space for hire
- Hot-desking workspace
- Ancillary trading, for example:
 - Photocopying/printing
 - Book sales
 - Computer hire
 - Stationary
 - Vending
 - Local donated goods.

Although they may not be the main priority for a community organisation, inclusion of such activities could make the difference between a viable and sustainable community library and one that is constantly struggling to make ends meet.

Locality has also developed a guidance note for organisations seeking to diversify and increase income to support public libraries:

<http://locality.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/Income-Generation-for-Public-Libraries.pdf>

Co-location of community services

One of the biggest opportunities for community managed libraries is the potential to develop services that integrate with, and compliment library services. This is called co-location, and co-location of services can be key to achieving a sustainable model for community managed libraries. This creates the ability to share costs and multiply impact through interrelationships with other services.

The simplest of these arrangements is that of sharing the same workspace so that overhead costs can be split, e.g.:

- Reception
- Most back-office staffing
- IT infrastructure and systems
- Heat and light and other utilities
- Building maintenance costs
- Promotion and stakeholder engagement
- Fund-raising.

This approach will help host organisations to be more effective and efficient. New income streams may be developed by combining these services with some more enterprising activities that also benefit from developing a critical mass of services in a single location. For example, Alt Valley Community Trust in Croxteth in Liverpool relocated the local library into a leisure centre that is also home to a café, adult education centre, health centre and children's play facilities, see: <http://altvalley.co.uk/>

Organisations should consider if their proposed services could be hosted by existing community anchor organisations, or if the library building could be transformed into a new community anchor hosting a range of community services.

Community services that may be co-located, or developed alongside a community library may include:

- Advice and information services
- Informal or formal education activities
- Children and young people activities
- Credit Union services.

Such services may be delivered by community enterprises delivering library services, or alternatively, space can be sublet to other community providers and public agencies to deliver complimentary services.

Libraries can be centres for education, support and social action. Such provision could be designed from the outset or supported to evolve. In the first instance you could simply consider what other services might benefit from using the library counter, such as time-banks or a more formal advice service. Think about which services or types of activity might help you achieve your objectives and those that might detract from your overall aims. Investigate the experience of previously co-located services to learn more about what has worked, or not worked, locally in the past.

External consultation and market research

Following an initial scoping exercise, testing ideas more widely and undertaking related research will help to refine initial ideas and provide a reality check on the viability of any proposals.

Some useful activities to undertake at this stage could include:

- An analysis of previous consultations, user feedback and evaluations to identify any key points that may help to develop a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) analysis
- Primary research, consultation or questionnaires to test feedback about new ideas and, if appropriate, help identify suitable pricing strategies. This may focus on those not currently accessing library services
- Research into providers of any similar services or products that may be competing for the same or similar markets in a locale.

Business planning

The financial projections associated with a business plan for a library service and asset transfer will be a focus for investors and supporters and as a result should receive careful attention. It should include calculations about all the relevant costs over the time period of the project, or at least an initial period (typically three years) including realistic assumptions about how these costs might change from year to year.

A range of useful tools are available online, such as these business planning tools developed by the Key Fund: <http://thekeyfund.co.uk/community/business-planning-tools/>

The table below sets out the main headings for capital and revenue costs and income as a checklist for both an initial assessment and a detailed business plan. They provide a guide for budget headings which may or may not be relevant to your project. Once you have developed your strategic plan and have a sense of the services and activities that you want to deliver and the resources required to do so, it will be easier to identify which budget headings are most relevant to the project.

Capital costs	£
Land acquisition	
Site investigations	
Survey costs, e.g.: noise, traffic, environmental	
Planning fees	
Building regulation fees	
Legal fees	
Purchase or transfer of initial stock and equipment	
Ground works, construction, finishes, furniture and fittings, equipment, external works	
Professional fees: architect, structural engineer, mechanical and electrical engineer, quantity surveyor, project manager, building surveyor	
VAT	
Stamp duty land tax, (there is relief for registered charities)	

Capital income	£
Sales	
Grants	
Loans	
Equity investment	
Community shares	
Donations	
Subscriptions	

Revenue costs	£
Staff salaries, including employer's National Insurance, pensions, holiday cover, recruitment, training, travel. Specify staff and hours	
Insurance: land, buildings, public liability, employer's liability, contents, consequential loss	
Book stock	
Reception, IT, telephone, post, stationery and reprographics	
Consumables	
Catering	
Professional fees: audit and legal	
Repairs and renewals	
Marketing/letting (direct costs and sub-contractors)	
Promotion, publicity	
Utilities, e.g. gas, electric, water/drainage, rates/charges	
Security, e.g. alarm contract	
Training for staff/volunteers attendance at courses and seminars	
Administration, office costs, book-keeping	
Business rates, (check what rate reliefs you are eligible for)	
Loan repayments	
Cyclical maintenance, e.g. decoration, grounds maintenance, etc.	
Cleaning	
Landscaping, grounds maintenance	
Utility and fire compliance (statutory checks)	
Sinking fund, (reserve fund for future major works, improvements)	
Waste management/disposal	
Car parking	
Licenses, e.g. performing rights	
Membership of professional organisations	
Equipment costs, e.g. leasing of equipment such as copiers	

IT costs (revenue and capital), furniture, etc.	
VAT	
Corporation tax	
Bank charges	

Revenue income	£
Service level agreement or contract income	
Trading income	
Fundraising events	
Grants, donations, sponsorship	
Membership or subscription fees	

Cash flow

When the capital and revenue costs and income have been projected and show that income exceeds costs, it is important that these are put into a cash flow for the initial years of the project and that assumptions about the timing for income in the cash flow are clearly explained and presented. The failure of projects is often associated with problems of cash flow rather than overall profitability. Consistently missed income in terms of its timing can stretch the patience and confidence of investors and the nerves of the management team. An example template can be found here: <http://thekeyfund.co.uk/community/business-planning-tools/>

Information and Digital Technologies

An effective Information Technology (IT) infrastructure can be regarded as essential for any modern library. Libraries have always been valued for their role in providing access to resources, technology and information that is not readily available elsewhere. It is, therefore, important that libraries remain ahead of the curve if they are to attract new users on this basis in a fast changing world.

Consideration should be given to:

- Appropriate hardware: Computers, printers, scanners, etc
- Broadband connectivity and wireless access
- Software.

Nationally, there is an effort to better coordinate and enhance the digital infrastructure of Public Libraries in England, see: <http://goscl.com/wp-content/uploads/151130-DigitalPlatformFinalReport.pdf>

Locality's publication on Income Generation for Libraries explores the potential for New and emergent IT services to support income generation: <http://locality.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/Income-Generation-for-Public-Libraries.pdf>

If you want to support people to access online services and training you may want to look into becoming a UK online Centre, or setting up a similar type of service. The UK online centre network is managed by the Tinder Foundation. Information on setting up a UK online centre can be found here: <https://www.ukonlinecentres.com/home> and <http://www.tinderfoundation.org/about>

Another useful resource on digital technology in libraries is the Common Libraries Project: <http://commonlibraries.cc/about/> A free webinar from Common Libraries is available to view here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8i6V1lqozKI&feature=youtu.be>

Organisations need to consider whether they will outsource IT support services, or manage this requirement themselves.

IT hardware and equipment

For many community organisations, support from the local authority on developing and managing the IT infrastructure is essential if the service is to form part of the wider statutory library network (see section: Public versus an independent library service). For community organisations supported in this way, the local authority is likely to be able to offer support and advice regarding the installation of hardware and software, ensuring that the equipment and services are effective.

However, community libraries may wish to expand on the IT infrastructure provided, or independent community libraries may need to start from scratch. It is worth doing some research before setting up an IT suite to find out what equipment is most appropriate, that will meet local needs, and perhaps also help generate income for your library. With technology changing so fast, many such facilities are underutilised because they offer outdated technology that no longer meets users' requirements. Consider what technology provides added value or benefit that people cannot get from elsewhere. There is increasing interest in libraries providing access to new technologies such as 3D printers. The concept of hacker and maker spaces is receiving interest too: <http://www.publiclibrariesnews.com/practitioners/3d-printers-and-maker-spaces-in-libraries>

Broadband

In England, there is an effort to ensure that all libraries provide Wi-Fi access. Libraries should ensure that an appropriate hi-speed broadband connection is provided that will allow for the volumes of traffic, and types of usage envisaged. Whilst charging for internet access provides some income for libraries, many people now expect free internet access, and it is increasingly available on the high street so careful consideration is required as to whether or not to charge. If you are operating as part of the local authority's network you are likely to be required to offer a certain amount of free access.

Software

Consideration needs to be given to the software systems you will use within your library. If your library is not integrated with the local authority, you will need your own Library Management System. You may wish to control access to the internet. A range of internet café software is available for this purpose. You may wish to adopt free, open source software, or purchase licenses for more commercial products. However, ensuring that your IT system remains secure requires attention.

Securing support

Partnership building

Partnership building is about working with other people and organisations to make the transfer a success. Once the nature of the partner's stake in the project has been defined, it is then possible to plan a process of engagement with them at important stages.

Cultivating 'champions' for your cause, from the public, private and community sector, are fundamental elements of an effective asset transfer. Champions may come from a variety of places.

Seek to develop allies from among:

- Local authority officers
- Councillors
- Other public agencies, housing associations, police services, fire services, job centre
- Local companies
- Other community organisations, social enterprises.

Project champions can advocate to others about your project, supporting your proposals to the local authority and other funders. They may also be able to assist with promoting and communicating your public benefit to the press and the local community.

A stakeholder management strategy can help you to prioritise and manage your approach to developing partnerships and influencing people. A range of online resources and templates are available to help consider your approach: <https://knowhownonprofit.org/organisation/strategy/directionsetting/stakeholder>

Campaigning and lobbying

Campaigning and lobbying is about winning the support of key decision-makers who will ultimately decide whether a particular asset transfer proposal should proceed. The foundation of any campaigning and lobbying activity is both a convincing business case and widespread community support.

You must agree the core messages that you want to convey. Clarity is essential to make sure that everyone supports the same aims. Mixed messages will confuse decision-makers and undermine confidence in your organisation.

Campaigning and lobbying represent two sides of the same coin. Campaigning is the 'outside' game, putting public pressure on decision-makers. Lobbying is the 'inside' game, negotiating and persuading through private meetings. You need to make sure that the inside and outside games work to form a coherent strategy.

A typical outside campaigning activity is to get supporters of the transfer to email/write to a key decision-maker encouraging them to back the scheme. This should be timed and phrased to aid the inside lobbying game, such as before a key meeting. Campaigning and lobbying work best when they are coordinated.

Successful lobbying is about building up relationships. Be persistent and assertive but avoid aggression or arrogance. Make sure your passion is channelled positively. Make sure you have a network of supporters in place able to implement your strategy. This will enable quicker and more unified action when needed. An obvious way to do this is through a petition or community pledges. This demonstrates a level of seriousness to decision-makers and encourages a sense of ownership among supporters of the project.

Avoid self-indulgence. Campaigning is not about venting anger or feeling self-satisfied. The aim is to persuade others to support the project. Focus on what they are interested in not what you

are interested in. Be aware of their agenda and see where that collides with yours. Hone in on areas of common interest.

Securing funding and finance

Successful fundraising happens through good planning and investing time and energy in the process. Generally speaking, prospective funders will look more favourably on community based organisations which can demonstrate their credibility in the following ways:

- A proven track record in the field
- An appropriate structure
- A thorough feasibility study
- A business plan
- Support of partner organisations, which themselves have credibility
- Community support.

New organisations generally need to start small and build up a track record to access larger amounts of funding and there are several small grants that may be suitable for piloting projects.

The finance that can be accessed depends on the structure of the community based organisation looking for funds, what type of project is being financed and when and how much funding is required. Charitable trusts and foundations that primarily fund registered charities are unlikely to fund statutory library services as they are viewed as the responsibility of the council, but they may fund related or complimentary activities.

See the My Community guide to further funding:

<http://mycommunity.org.uk/programme/raising-finance/> or: www.fundingcentral.org.uk/

Understanding community benefit and outcomes

Monitoring services

Community organisations should think about how they will monitor the impact of their work in relation to the library transfer and the wider benefits likely to be delivered as the project progresses, for example, increased community involvement. Creating a baseline and setting out to measure your achievements is important for community organisations seeking to transfer library facilities. A baseline is the starting point against which you can measure changes, and identify the impact of your project.

A baseline will enable the organisation to monitor its progress against the targets that it is working towards. It should be noted that community managed libraries will not necessarily be able to meet the past performance of former public library services with reduced budgets. A community organisation may, for example, choose to monitor its progress not solely on the number of books issued, but against a range of other outcomes that relate back to its mission and strategic objectives.

A simple way to create a baseline is to pick a few key objectives that the organisation has and start to measure them. This does not have to be complicated and should not take a significant amount of time. Information collected on activities will vary, but may include: the number of books loaned; the number of users accessing other resources; or the number of young people attending specific sessions.

Demonstrating impact

It is likely that any group delivering a ‘public library service’ under contract to the library authority will be asked to monitor key specified data on an ongoing basis as a part of that contract. Community groups running an additional non-statutory service may not be required to undertake such monitoring but will still find it helpful for quality assurance purposes and for

attracting external support. Future funding and development plans may be dependent on knowing how the facility is working, who is using it, who is not using it and what people think about the service. At a basic level, this will mean keeping records of who attends the library and what they visit for. One method that could be used is designing some standard surveys for people to complete. These can be used in conjunction with registration forms and given out when a person first comes into contact with the organisation and then followed up 6 or 12 months later.

Although these self-reporting measurements are crude, they are simple to collect and quantifiable. However, depending on the scale of your operation and the partners that you are working with, you may find that your organisation will benefit from a continuous improvement framework or tool. A useful resource when considering impacts of community libraries is The Carnegie Trusts publication “Speaking Volumes”:
<http://www.carnegieuktrust.org.uk/publications/speaking-volumes-leaflet-to-view/>

Asset issues

Assessing the viability of buildings

Understanding the library building will help to determine whether an asset transfer is likely to be a feasible, or desirable option for the community organisation and the local authority.

It is important to view the library in the context of other local facilities. It may be worth considering alternative venues from which to deliver the service. It may be better to have one fantastic multipurpose community building that is well used than several that are of poor quality that are not well used or valued.

The site appraisal process will determine how closely the site lends itself to the vision and it will highlight any major issues that might require negotiation prior to any transfer. Unless your group is lucky enough to benefit from expertise in facilities management and property development, professional advice is advised when conducting a site appraisal. Surveyors may be needed to assess the building condition and legal professionals may be needed to undertake relevant searches and check legal titles for example.

Site appraisal questions

- Are there any restrictions of use on the site?
- Does the site provide easy access - vehicular, servicing, pedestrian, disabled, emergency services?
- Is there adequate car parking provision?
- What is the condition of the building, e.g. has a qualified surveyor looked at the roof, physical structure, etc?
- Is the site large enough to support the activities required to make it viable and meet user needs?
- Does the site allow future flexibility, adaptation, extension, etc?
- Does the site have any planning policy issues that may prevent or delay the project?

- If the planning designation is not appropriate for your intended use, how easy will it be to get a change of use?
- What are the implications of any development on adjacent sites or properties, and vice versa?
- Is the existing building listed or in a conservation area?

The importance of knowing the condition of the asset is to fully expose any potential risks which will impact on the business plan and ultimately the delivery of the vision. A qualified surveyor can undertake a condition survey and provide a report about any works required and their costs. Once any potential risks are known these need to be fully discussed with the current owner. This can help you to negotiate any works required before transfer, and can provide a useful basis for developing a capital fundraising plan. The Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyor's website provides a searchable directory of chartered surveyors: <http://www.ricsfirms.com/>

A detailed condition report should form part of the price negotiation surrounding the transfer. If a site or building has been under-maintained in the past, this should be reflected in the negotiation process.

It is important to stress that if too many risks are exposed, and not managed, then the site or building may be a liability, not an asset.

Locality's Building Calculator tool <http://locality.org.uk/projects/building-calculator/> can help organisations understand the ongoing costs associated with managing and maintaining a building in the long term.

A range of other resources on community asset transfer are available at: <http://mycommunity.org.uk/resources/community-asset-transfer-kit/>

Asset ownership and management agreements

Both community organisations and local authorities involved in library transfers need to consider the most appropriate terms for transferring a legal interest in the asset. Broadly speaking, there are three options to consider: license, lease or freehold.

License

This is a permission given by one party to another to enter, use, and occupy property on specified terms. There are often restrictions on an owner's ability to give licenses. A license is different to a lease as it gives no formal legal interest in the property and does not normally provide exclusive use of the asset.

This arrangement may be suitable where the local authority wants to retain ownership of the asset, but wishes to transfer management to a community organisation. A licence agreement will restrict a community organisation's ability to raise funding to invest in the building, and may be restrictive in terms of what it allows it to do. A licence/management agreement may be appropriate where the building is already fit for purpose, and does not require investment, or where it is desirable to trial community management before proceeding to an asset transfer.

Lease

This is the written document recording the deal made between the landlord and the tenant. This document is what gives the tenant a legal interest in the property.

A long term lease is the most common form of community asset transfer. Depending on the terms, this can give sufficient flexibility to community organisations to manage and invest in the asset, whilst enabling the local authority to maintain a longer term interest in the freehold.

Freehold

This is the legal term for when the owner has complete and absolute ownership of the land, and all the buildings on the land subject only to any mortgages, easements, leases, etc.

Freehold transfers will give the community organisation the freedom to use the asset as appropriate. While local authorities will effectively surrender their interest in the asset, assurances that the asset will continue to be used for community benefit can be provided through ‘asset locks’, depending on the legal form of the community organisation.

Careful daily administration of the fabric of the library and its on-site facilities will be essential to ensure that all the legal obligations are met and that the building is being run as cost-effectively as possible:

A useful reference for organisations involved in asset development and management is “To Have and to Hold”, available to download from Locality here:

<http://mycommunity.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/To-Have-and-To-Hold.pdf>

Now that you have learnt more about the different steps involved in taking on a library service and asset, you can see what you are already well placed to do, and what you need to develop as an organisation. Remember to use the checklists at the beginning of this guide to determine which elements you need address.

Useful References

- Locality: Community Libraries - <http://locality.org.uk/projects/community-libraries/>
- Libraries Taskforce: <https://librariestaskforce.blog.gov.uk/>
- Community libraries: A good practice toolkit produced by the Leadership for Libraries Taskforce: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/community-libraries-good-practice-toolkit>
- Arts Council England: <http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/what-we-do/supporting-libraries/>
- UK Online: <https://www.ukonlinecentres.com/about-us>
- Society of Chief Librarians: <http://goscl.com/>
- The Reading Agency: <http://readingagency.org.uk/>
- Common Libraries: <http://commonlibraries.cc>
- Public Libraries News: <http://www.publiclibrariesnews.com/>

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