

Practical Advocacy

The aim of this module is to show you how to develop advocacy at a local level which can help influence local decisions, inform new audiences and develop a network of advocates from a wide range of stakeholder groups.

Tasks

The tasks can be undertaken as part of the online module or completed afterwards. It may also be useful for a number of staff to work together on these.

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What is advocacy?

There are lots of long-winded definitions but basically:

Advocacy is getting people to say positive things about your library

To quote Alec Coles, former Director of Tyne & Wear Archives & Museums:

“Advocacy is anything and everything you do that persuades people to support your work. It is about making friends and influencing people and building a groundswell of support.”

How is advocacy different to marketing?

In marketing/public relations you are telling people about your wonderful service.

In advocacy, other people are telling their friends, families, colleagues or associates about your wonderful service.

This third party endorsement lends credibility to your message.

Who are these people?

Stakeholders (another ambiguous term)

“Any individual or group who can affect or is affected by the achievement of the organisation’s objectives.”

(Freeman, 1984)

Your Stakeholders might include...

- Library users (individuals and groups)
- Library staff
- Politicians/Elected Members – councillors, MPs, AMs
- Council officers/academic staff
- Funders
- Partners
- Local media
- Neighbours
- Local businesses
- Anyone else you can think of...

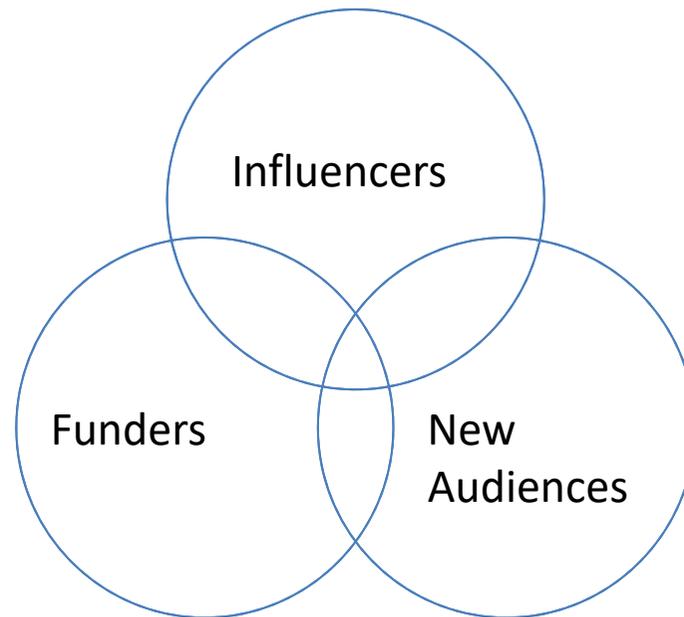
Who are your KEY stakeholders?

- In a public library arena, arguably the most important people to influence are your local elected members
- In academic or institutional libraries it may be academics who can act as the strongest advocates for your service

TASK ONE

- Make a comprehensive list of your stakeholders
- This should be a list of actual named groups or individuals not just a generic list
- Arrange them into groups (see diagram on next slide)
 - Influencers
 - Funders
 - New audiences

TASK ONE



Some stakeholders will fit into more than one circle – the point at which these intersect will show your key stakeholders with the centre point showing the most important of these stakeholders who could be the strongest advocates.

Why do it?

Most library staff already advocate for their library service without calling it 'advocacy'.

It helps you to communicate what you do, why you do it and how it is of **value** – culturally, socially and economically.

In the current climate of funding and staff cuts it is more important than ever to keep putting out positive messages about why libraries make a difference, why they are important and why people should support them.

We are still struggling to demonstrate the value and relevance of libraries in today's society – so more advocacy is required!

Campaigning

In some organisations advocacy is planned and delivered at a high level by senior staff – chief executives, directors, heads of service. This may include writing letters to politicians, lobbying, etc.

Often the communications or marketing team will be involved, especially if there is an advocacy “campaign” - there may be a launch event, campaign hashtag, celebrity support and an intense period of activity such as Libraries Week showcasing all the things libraries do to make society a better place and communities more resilient.

Local Advocacy

Libraries need to continually advocate for themselves at a local level.

Of course you should take part in national or local focussed campaigns but use this impetus to generate on-going advocacy.

Statistics, surprising facts and local examples work best and they can also then be used by those higher up and by the communications team in their advocacy plans – they will be grateful you gave them the information!

Build Relationships

The key to successful advocacy is to build positive, sustainable relationships with your stakeholders.

- Ensure they have good experiences
- Give them bitesize nuggets of information - easily remembered statistics, facts and figures – that they can recall and share with others
- Demonstrate how libraries are relevant to them, their colleagues or their constituents.
- Engage with them regularly but don't overwhelm them.
- Where possible, turn critics into advocates for your library service.

Gathering information

As mentioned, one of the key elements of good advocacy is knowing the figures :

- How many members do you have?
- What is the split between adults and children?
- How many books/digital resources do you have?
- How many visits are made weekly/annually to your library/libraries?
- You should already be collecting this information either for local use or for submitting to national bodies.
- The key is to begin to **USE THE DATA** to benefit your cause locally.

Interesting facts

- If possible create imagery to highlight the facts/figures because a visual image can often be recalled more easily.
- Is there a quirky way of representing the data?
- Take a look at the following infographic created for Welsh Libraries, which brings all the key statistics for 2014-15 together in one place and includes some 'surprise' elements too.

WELSH LIBRARIES

13,640,050

Visits were made to Welsh public libraries

The equivalent of filling the Millennium Stadium over

183^{times}

DIGITAL DELIGHT

DOWNLOAD FOR FREE:

25,000 e-books

Over 200 top e-zines

OVER **2.3 MILLION**

ENQUIRIES WERE ANSWERED BY LIBRARY STAFF

Search engines can't smile!

OVER **HALF A MILLION** ACTIVE BORROWERS

LIBRARIES ARE FREE TO JOIN TOO

OVER 11.1 MILLION BOOKS

BORROWED FROM PUBLIC LIBRARIES IN WALES FOR FREE!

LAID END TO END THESE WOULD STRETCH FROM SNOWDON TO THE SAHARA DESERT!

Did you know?

LIBRARIES COST ON AVERAGE JUST **5p** PER  PER DAY TO RUN = 35p PER WEEK = LESS THAN A  OF CRISPS OR A PINT OF 

Welsh people used over **1.6 MILLION HOURS** of free computer access in libraries

ONLY 15%

OF OVER 65s HAVE ACCESS TO THE INTERNET AT HOME

Source: ageuk.org.uk/cymru

TRY IT YOURSELF!

"EARLY RETIREMENT MEANT LESS MONEY, BUT MORE TIME TO READ - I JOINED THE LIBRARY AND MADE A NOTE OF THE COVER PRICE OF EACH BOOK BORROWED - MY TOTAL 'SPEND' HAS NOW REACHED OVER £1000!"

TASK TWO

- Collate some facts and figures about your individual library or library service.
- Can these be represented visually?
- Work with your in-house design team, use free online software or make use of existing talent in your team!

Remember any figures used will need to be verified and updated annually!

Matching Corporate Priorities

- Do you know what your organisation's key corporate priorities are?
- Have you read your organisation's latest strategic plan?
- Do you have any ideas on how your library service can deliver on or contribute to these corporate priorities?

THINK OUTSIDE THE BOX!

Suggestions

- XXXX children have taken part in the Summer Reading Challenge which maintains their reading standards throughout the summer holidays (*educational standards*)
- Our library has worked with XX community groups over the past year (*community cohesion, tackling poverty, adult social care*)
- The job centre refers XX people to the library every week (*employability, tackling poverty*)
- Statistics prove that students who use the library attain better grades (*academic goals*)

TASK THREE

- List your organisation's key priorities or print out a copy of the plan and write your ideas and opportunities to contribute all over it!
- Think about how your library service is or could be supporting these priorities.
- Examples might include:
 - Employment/Skills
 - Educational Standards
 - Cohesive Communities
 - Social Care
 - Tackling Poverty
 - Digital Inclusion

Getting your colleagues on board

One of the keys to successful advocacy is ensuring everyone on the team is singing from the same hymn sheet... or infographic!

This is true for both ongoing generic advocacy as well as campaign specific messages.

There are always going to be staff who are more engaging, outgoing and natural advocates but it is a good idea to ensure that all staff involved with the library service, from care-takers to mobile library staff, are aware of how they can advocate and why it is important.

Encouraging positivity, showing the value of the library service and their work will stimulate a more positive vibe and empower staff to share this with those that they come into contact with.

Crib Sheets

When taking part in local library campaign or national initiative...

- If possible create a crib sheet - one side A4 max - to share with all staff (don't forget anyone – mobile/remote/part-time/unmanned/co-located services)
- This should include the aims/objectives, target audience/s and key messages as well as any hashtags, logos, channels to be used.
- Ensure all promotional materials, social media posts, etc. incorporate the key messages and relevant hashtags and logos
- Do a new crib sheet for each campaign – Libraries Week, Summer Reading Challenge, Harry Potter Book Week, Freshers' Week
- Additionally have your 'annual' crib sheet/infographic for use in between campaigns
- Display these sheets in staff areas, on the back of toilet doors, next to the kettle, etc.
- Include non-library staff where relevant such as in co-located services where library users and non-users will come into contact with them.

Elevator 'pitch'

This could equally be in a taxi or on a date ...
anywhere you might be asked 'where do you
work?'

Please don't respond with 'I just work in a library'

Let people know some of the amazing things you
and your library service do and bring in the stats
and surprise elements, be enthusiastic about your
job and full of positivity.

Challenge negativity

So you've told someone you work in a library and they come back with the response... 'People don't really use libraries now do they?' (Grrrrr!)

This is when you need your stats...

- XXX people use our library every day, coming to rhyme time, using computers, borrowing books, etc.
- In addition XXX remotely access our resources every day/week/month to read magazines, e-books, audio-books, etc.

Challenge negativity again

After you've bamboozled them with your amazing statistics and they still come back with 'well I don't use the library' ...

...now is the time to ask some questions to find out a bit more about them and see if you can match a service to their situations/interests, etc.

DEMONSTRATE THE RELEVANCE OF THE LIBRARY TO THEM!

True Example

- Sky Engineer comes to fix a fault
- Asks about householder's job... she works for libraries
- He comments on the fact no-one uses them
- She bites her tongue, smiles and asks him what his hobbies are.
- He says he's really into Cycling and Mountain Biking
- She smiles again, and says I suppose you get all the magazines and everything, cycling is so popular these days.
- Yep he says
- She comes back with....so have you checked out the free e-magazine offer we have, shows him the bike magazines on her iPad, gives him a promotional card and tells him how much he could save a year..... Boom!
- He has to come back a week later – he can't wait to tell her he's joined the library along with his partner and their teenage daughter and told all his cycling and mountain biking friends! The mother and daughter have told their friends... and so the ripple in the pond has spread much wider
- **Result! New members, new audience, new advocates!**

TASK FOUR

- Write an elevator or taxi pitch
- Include some statistics
- Add in a surprising fact
- Work out some average savings people might make by using the library

Remember this can be tweaked to suit your audience's interests to make it relevant to them.

Elected Members

As previously mentioned, in a public library setting, elected members are possibly the most important target audience libraries can advocate to.

Elected members are key stakeholders able to influence budgets and make decisions.

Elected members also have great potential to become advocates for your service.

But in order to reach this stage you need to do your homework...

Detective Work

- Get to know your local elected members.
- Not just the lead member whose remit includes libraries.
- Find photographs so you can recognise them if they come into the library.
- Learn more about what their portfolios cover.
- What are their interests?
- What is their family situation?
- Are they library members?
- Are they on Twitter or other channels?
- Which elected members have libraries in their wards?

TASK FIVE

Mapping exercise...

- Map your elected members against your council's corporate priorities
- Map your libraries against your elected members constituencies/wards
- Map your elected members interests/hobbies against your library services.
- Identify some initial targets (this might only be one person) and prepare some statistics and information that is relevant to them.
- If you are in an academic or health setting you can do a similar exercise for subjects or individual academics/medical staff.

Engaging with Elected Members

So now you know all about them what are you going to do with this information?

- Start small - don't expect to target everyone at once.
- Liaise with neighbouring libraries to ensure you aren't targeting the same person at the same time.
- Identify opportunities to invite them into the library or to furnish them with information relevant to their area of work/interest.
- If you want your local MP or AM to attend check their diaries in advance (you can email them) and plan a visit to suit their schedule.

This process can work with other key stakeholders too – if you are in an academic library setting you could target some of the academics in the same way.

Examples

- School visits – pick a visit from a local school with great teachers, invite the Lead Member for Education, your local councillors and the even the Council’s Head of Education) this gives an opportunity for third party endorsement from the teaching staff and pupils. Get the Mayor to present the Summer Reading Challenge Medals/Prizes.
- Dementia Awareness/MIND/MacMillan – any sessions delivered in libraries by partners, invite Lead Member, local Councillors and Head of Service for Adult Social Care – again a great opportunity for third party endorsement from the partner organisations.
- Rhyme Time with a mums/dads from a variety of ethnicities and backgrounds – invite the Lead Members and Heads of Service for Communities, community cohesion, children’s services, etc, make it a social occasion with refreshments – if you can’t afford them will the local supermarket sponsor them? Thereby bringing in another potential advocate!
- Job Club – some local job-seekers, some representatives from employment organisations (DWP, Job Centre, etc) as before invite the relevant councillors, members and staff – encourage job centre staff to tell them how many referrals they week, what difference it makes to job-seekers opportunities and if any of the job-seekers themselves are willing to get involved give them the chance to speak to the visitors (more third party endorsement)

Be prepared...

If you are going to have visits from elected members, whether local councillors or members of government, it is important to prepare well.

- It is not always necessary to have a special event, just your normal groups, visits, activities can be enough or hang the invites onto one of the National Awareness Days/Weeks.
- Brief all staff – make sure everyone knows who is attending, knows a little bit about them and find an up to date photo!
- Think about what key messages and statistics you want to get across.
- And crucially, what do you want them to do with this information following their visit?

Be prepared...

- Inform the council communications team – ask them to invite the press or send along someone to take photos – if this doesn't happen can a member of staff take some (don't forget consent forms).
- If the elected member/MP/AM is not a library member then sign them up on the day – make sure you have everything ready in advance so it is not too time-consuming.
- Give them something to take away – a nice library bag, some statistics/infographics, make the contents relevant to their role/interests and personalise it. For example, if they have young children include information about activities relevant to their ages.

Follow it up...

- If you have your own library social media then post photos from the event, “nice to have @Cllr.... as a new library member”, etc. – if you have a generic or campaign hashtag make sure this is used #love(place-name)libraries.
- Using the hashtag enables you to collate all the relevant social media posts and save them to use as evidence in future.
- If the press office send out a photo, media release or social media post, share these too.
- Don't just do this as a one off – keep inviting the member/s to different events, continue to tag him/her in social media posts and regularly send him/her relevant information – ***but don't bombard or harass them!***

Be SMART

Make sure your advocacy plans are SMART

- **Specific** – who, what, when, where, how and why?
- **Measurable** – how will you know if it was successful, what metrics are you going to use?
- **Achievable** – don't set yourselves up to fail, that is why it is often easier to look at what you do regularly and build advocacy into that activity rather than having a new standalone event, what skills, budget, time, resources do you need?
- **Relevant** – how does it fit into corporate priorities, what does it deliver on?
- **Timely** – set a target date for the plan.

TASK SIX

- Create a calendar of opportunities for advocacy using national and local campaigns and **RELEVANT** awareness days/weeks
- Pick one of the opportunities and create an advocacy plan around it including SMART objectives where possible.
 - Think about an event/activity/group that regularly takes place in the library that matches with the calendar opportunity
 - Who might you invite (stakeholders) – elected members, MPs, corporate colleagues, partner organisations, press?
 - What corporate priorities would it hit?
 - What key messages do you want to send out?
 - What statistics could you use?
 - ***This doesn't need to be long-winded – one side of A4 should be sufficient!***

Other Stakeholders

Who else could you target to advocate for your library service?

Other council departments...

- Get to know who is who
- Where they are based
- What communities/audiences they serve
- What areas of the organisation's plan they deliver on
- Think of ways to engage with them
- How you can support them to achieve their aims
- How could they support your library service

Neighbours

What companies, organisations or individuals are based in your community who might become advocates for the library service?

- Local businesses
- Local shops
- Local healthcare providers – opticians, doctors
- Local community groups
- Local schools

Don't overwhelm them...

Think about what information and services would be most relevant to them which they could then tell their customers about e.g. do opticians know you have large print and audio books available for free...

Engaging with neighbours

You could approach this in two ways:

- Starting small and target individual neighbours
- Or hold a 'meet the neighbour' event in your library inviting everyone to attend including local elected members, businesses, organisations, community groups, even local media.
- Potentially hang it off an awareness day or local campaign.
- It will really depend on your individual/local circumstances, space, capacity, permissions and confidence!

TASK SEVEN

- Compile a list of your neighbours
- Think about how you might engage with them
 - Face to face visits
 - Existing networks
 - Social media
 - Dropping something through their door
 - Linking into local/national campaign
 - Special event

Local media

In most cases local media have been very supportive of libraries and advocated strongly in challenging times.

But... it is important that you make sure they have the best and most accurate information and make the statistics and facts relevant to their readers.

Demonstrate to readers that don't use the library why it is important to keep it open because other people in the community use it regularly – it might be their neighbour, their grandchild, their best friend's dad...

Most local news is now consumed online and local media are hungry for content – work with your comms/press team and provide interesting info – events, photographs (ensuring consent has been obtained), video is one of the most engaging ways to connect with media and to get your key messages across, similarly most media outlets seem to love a good list – 10 things you can do in your library, the most checked-out books for the last month, etc.

Example news story...



Royalty Free Image <https://www.pexels.com/photo/depth-of-field-photography-of-woman-in-pastel-color-sleeveless-shirt-and-white-sunhat-788567/>

How would you like to save £1000 this year?

Mary Jones, aged 67, lives in Oldtown in North Wales.

She has been a member of the library service for many years, nearly all her life in fact.

*In 2017 alone she borrowed 61 books - saving over **£970** – goodness knows how much she has saved over the years!*

This could be a standalone press release, form the basis for a poster, social media posts, could be a video interview with Mary and would stick in people’s minds.

Other opportunities to advocate

- Use the advocacy posters and resources available from CILIP – but use them **outside of the library** – don't preach to the converted!
- Think of you library as a business and attend local networking events, giving out information relevant to both the business community and individuals.
- Could your mobile library (if you still have one?!) stop in at the local business park or attend a conference, local festival, etc.
- If you organisation holds well-being events make sure the library is in the forefront of this event on an equal footing with leisure centres, blood pressure checks, etc.

More ideas...

- As mentioned above health and wellbeing of the workforce is a massive priority at the moment – could you offer immediate library membership to new employees at your council?
- Can you do a presentation/give information packs out as part of their induction process?
- Could you do something similar with other large employers in your vicinity – health boards, manufacturers, call centres, etc.?

FINAL TASK

Have a mad half hour and throw as many off the wall ideas for advocacy as you can down on a flipchart or post it notes and then pick one (or more) to try out!

Keep them all for future reference.

I would love to know what you do!

Summing up...

- Advocacy is important
- Everyone is responsible for it
- Know what your key messages are and target your message to your audience
- Record positive stories and share with your managers and corporate comms team
- Prove how you deliver on corporate priorities, with evidence of impact
- Use statistics and data and localise them
- Have a surprise or 'did you know' element
- Prepare an elevator/taxi 'pitch'
- Link your services to corporate priorities
- Cultivate relationships and make "friends" both within the council and externally

And finally...

- This may seem like a mammoth task, but you are all doing a lot of this already.
- Break it down into small manageable chunks
- Use a calendar to identify opportunities
- Have a look at what other organisations (not just libraries) are doing to advocate – museums do a lot and have some great online toolkits that you can get some ideas from.

Get in touch...

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