

Birthday Parties in Libraries Plan



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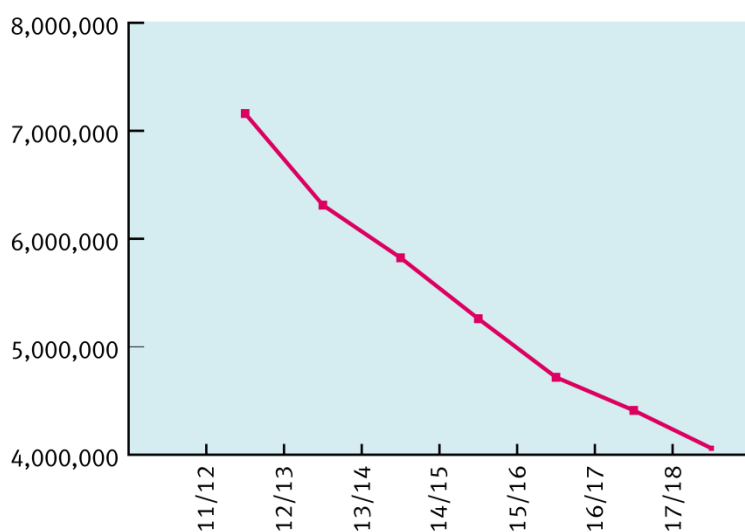
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Overview

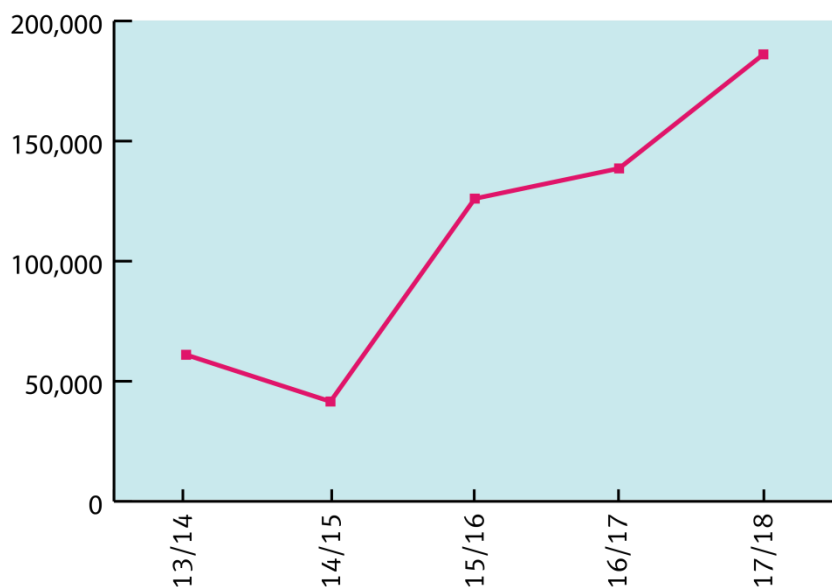
In 2015, the children's party market was estimated to be worth nearly £1.1bn with parents spending £135 on average on their child's party. However one in six parents admitted spending over £300 according to the website Netmums.

Essex libraries are in the process of developing a new strategy as it is seeing a reduced foot fall and book loan rate across the estate over the past seven years. On the other hand, demand for digital content from the Library service has increased. Please see graphs below.

Annual Book Loans (2011-2018)



Loans of eBooks, eAudio and eMagazines (2013 – 2018)



The Library Service aims to enter into the birthday party market by offering customers birthday party options not currently available in Essex. Three party formats aimed at 0-7-year olds have

been developed. The outcome that the service hopes to achieve is to attract new customers to libraries and remind current library users of the joy, socialization and learning opportunities that can be found in Essex libraries.

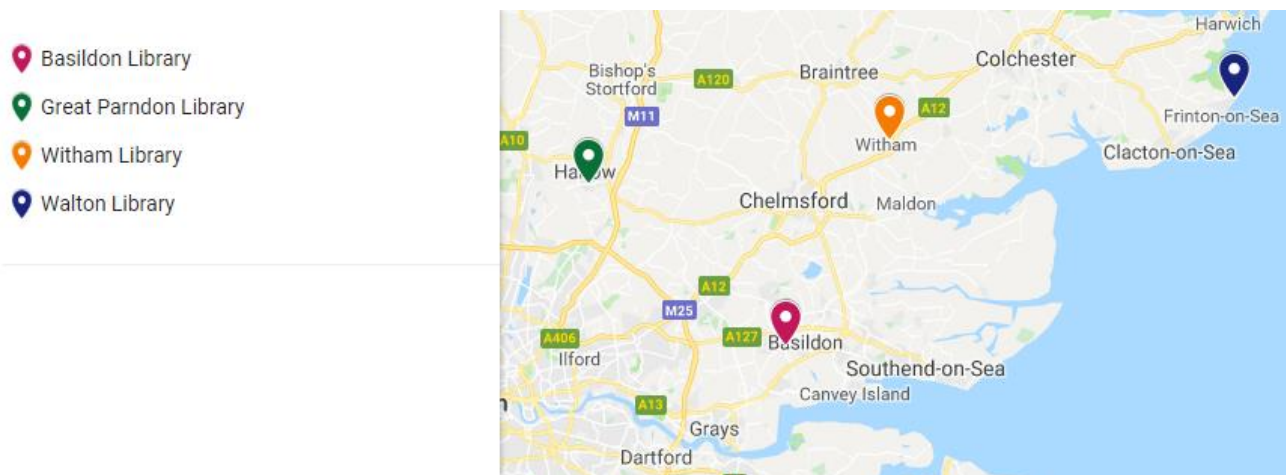
The idea of hosting birthday parties in libraries is not new, but it is uncommon particularly in local authority libraries. Library Service is not aware of any local authority in England offering any of their libraries as a birthday party venue currently but is aware that one local authority in Scotland and one in New Zealand offer this service. The two local authorities are:

1. Hastings in New Zealand; and
2. South Lanarkshire in Scotland

The Library Operations team are championing the idea of offering this service across ECC library network. The team recently completed a mini trial with a small group of 5-7-year olds and the trial went well. The feedback provided by participants and the delivery team was very encouraging and has been used to refine the programme and timing of birthday party activities to be trialled in the next phase.

The second phase of the project is to trial the concept on a commercial basis in four libraries located across Essex County. In selecting the locations, the variation in demographic, social and environmental factors have been taken into consideration. The trial will seek to get intelligence on the delivery format, the local population and how the concept stands against competition. The results will help to shape the birthday party format before it is extended to other Essex libraries.

The trial locations are:



The next phase of the project will include existing and new offerings as follows:

- **Rhyme time party for 0-3 year olds:** Has been developed from the existing rhyme time programme
- **Interactive story Party for 3-5 year olds:** Has been developed using existing communication packs aimed at young people and adults with learning disabilities
- **Pirate party for 4-7 year olds:** Recently developed and was part of the first phase mini trial
- **Enchanted forest party for 4-7 year olds:** Adaptation of the first phase pirate mini trial.

Objectives

- To attract / encourage new and returning users to the service i.e. to increase library usage
- Encourage reading at a young age and enhance Library Service offer
- To develop a new chargeable event that will generate additional revenue to fund service improvements
- To test the concept at four diverse locations across the county
- To prove the viability of Birthday Parties in Libraries Project and manage risk
- To identify deficiencies that need to be eliminated and improvements that can be made before the project is rolled out
- To gather intelligence on and develop a pricing strategy before further roll out of the programme.
- Data gathering to inform the development and improvement of party activities, format and delivery and rollout to more ECC libraries

Policy context

- Libraries are continuing to help create great places to grow up, live and work and to help people get the best start and age well.
- Developing more chargeable events support the priority to transform the council to achieve more with less / limit cost and drive growth in revenue.
- The current draft library strategy included exploring additional sources of funding for our services including from chargeable events.
- One of our ambitions in the draft library strategy is to reach new communities and bringing in new customers. We see this activity as one of many that will fulfil this ambition.

Project calendar

Milestones	Target date (2019)	Notes
Develop 4 Birthday Party Programmes	5 th April	
Create Pricing Structure	10 th April	
Develop Party in a Box Kit for Delivery Staff	1 st June	
Complete EQIA & CMA for Chief Officer Clearance	3 rd June	
Commence Advertising Parties	3 rd June	
Train Staff to Facilitate Birthday Parties	12 th June	
Phase 2 – Commence Trial in 4 libraries	Autumn	
Project Delivery review - 2mths after trial commences	Winter	
Project Delivery Review - 4mths after trial commences	Winter	
End of Phase 2 Review - 6mths after trial commences	Spring 2020	

Costing and Charging Strategy

Age Group	Group Size	Proposed Charge Per Child	Party Duration
Age 0 – 3 Rhyme Time Party	8 - 20	£6.50 (Party charge from £45.60)	1 hour session
Age 3 – 5 Interactive Story (suitable for children with learning disabilities)	8 - 20	£7.50 (Party charge from £54.75)	1 ¼ hour session
Age 5 – 7 Pirate Party	14 - 20	£12 (Party charge from £165)	2 hour session
Age 5 – 7 Enchanted Forest Party	14 - 20	£12 (Party charge from £165)	2 hour session

The minimum party charge covers the costs of library staff, library room / space hire for the duration of each party, cleaning, administration and the cost of materials where applicable. We plan on implementing one charge across the Essex Library network but will review this on completion of the planned 6 month trial.

Please refer to the document titled 'Charging Statement for Birthday Parties Held in Libraries' for more information on the charges in the table above.

Training and Quality Assurance Plan

The Phase 2 four party programme has been put together from a combination of party ideas tested with a small group of 5-7 year olds during the mini trial and ideas developed from intelligence gathered during the trial and from analyzing trial data. It is proposed that at the start of July, the teams tasked with facilitating Birthday Parties in libraries meet to finalize and agree the format for each group. The two team members that put the programme together will train Library staff that will deliver the programme in the 4 libraries:

- Wendy Clark parties for 0-3 and 3-5 year olds; and
- Jonathon Cole parties for 5-7 year olds

Both Wendy and Jonny will be available to advice, help and assist as required during the six-month trial period and with all project reviews. They will also attend sessions at host locations to ensure consistency across all party sites.

Feedback and review process

These procedures set out broad guidelines for the preparation and conduct of collecting data during the next phase of the project and what is to be included in the programme review.

The purpose of the 6 month review is:

- To facilitate a self-assessment of the programme by Customer Revenue Optimisation
- To provide an opportunity for the overall evaluation of the programme, with a range of inputs and analyses including feedback from customers (parents and participants), wider library users, and employees
- To offer recommendation on how to continue to develop the programme.

Key success criteria

- Deliver 24 - 48 parties in 6 months in line with the academic calendar (September – February 19). This timescale will allow one to two months to promote the new offering alongside the summer reading challenge which has an increased young person footfall across the library estate
- Deliver the new parties to over 288 - 576 young people (Average 12 children per party)
- Gain feedback forms from 75% of parties delivered
- Receive less than 24 negative comment forms other library users.

End of trial 6 months review

The end of trial report will show if key success criteria has been met. The report is not limited to just this set of metrics and will include the following:

- The cost to deliver to ensure we have accounted for every part appropriately
- Physical impact on the library sites to include any increased wear and tear and cleaning
- Impact on staff to deliver
- Suggested improvements on improving the programme.

The report will also include information on impact and benefits the programme has delivered using both qualitative and quantitative research.

During the trial there will be three surveys/information gathering systems in place which will gain feedback from

- Children participating (adapted library children's event survey)
- Organisers (feedback form will be sent to party organisers)
- Wider library users (the library service has a system in place to collect comments from users. This system will be used to collect feedback from users who are in the building at the same time of a party).

Qualitative information will be collected by library staff during parties, and from two visits which each location will receive. The visits will also gauge quality and consistency across the host sites.