



Hampshire County Council

Discovery Centre programme:
regenerating libraries
and transforming communities

The Discovery Centre Programme: is an ambitious £31 million investment scheme with developments in towns across Hampshire with programmes scheduled to 2014. The pilot project is the £2.5 million Gosport Discovery Centre, which opened on 2 March 2005. Its evaluation will be the focus of the Cultural Pathfinder and will inform the future development of the Discovery Centre programme in Hampshire.

The Discovery Centre concept was born from our departmental objective, to give the people of Hampshire an improved quality of life, by providing full access to improved services and facilities. Discovery Centres are new, community-focused facilities that will be transformational in the way we deliver a wide range of services including: libraries; museums; community spaces; exhibition space; public IT facilities; partners, such as Tourist Information Centres, Citizens Advice Bureaux, Youth Services and other businesses: local organisations: local authority partners; and community group partners.

This delivery model will offer an exciting way for more people to use a wide range of services through a single location. It will also enable us to widen our audience base, to include traditional non-user groups, and address the shared priorities of improving the quality of life for children, young people, families at risk and older people, while having a positive impact in creating safer and stronger communities and promoting the economic vitality of the locality.

Hampshire County Council's long-term strategy is to deliver a network of 'Discovery Centres' serving towns across Hampshire. With Gosport now open and Winchester Cultural Centre due to begin this year, funding is now being sought for projects at Havant, Basingstoke and Andover, among others.

In the future, the scheme may extend to include Andover, Fareham, Eastleigh and Horndean. Discovery Centres will remain part of the library network and will work closely with other local libraries, to ensure that services are integrated.

The Gosport context

The borough of Gosport is one of the most densely populated urban areas in southern England with a population of approximately 76,500 occupying on a small peninsula, which divides the Solent and Portsmouth harbour. It is an area of deprivation and high unemployment, while suffering from a decline in job opportunities in the defence industries. Gosport's working population has a poor skills base, low educational achievement, and a local economy in transition from previous MOD trades and land ownership. There are isolated pockets of social deprivation, deteriorating housing and significant numbers receiving state benefits.

The county council recognises that the piecemeal agenda for tackling these issues is not sufficient and that a cohesive and cooperative approach is required, by working together with partners on a local regeneration and revitalisation agenda for the town.



The 'Discovery Centre' concept, of multi-service delivery through a single location, will be developed at Gosport through the new integrated library and museum. It will incorporate: an IT learning suite; a Young People's zone; a fully equipped, flexible and multi-functional performance space; dedicated e-resource facilities; a lifelong learning zone; and meeting facilities equipped and resourced, by community groups and partners.

The Gosport Discovery Centre Manager, the library development team and the Museum's Education Service with a network of partners will deliver a coordinated programme of community focused outreach activities. The shared local studies library and museum space provides digitised resources accessible through

the People's Network and targeted to Key Stage Three. The Discovery Centres are a genuine example of cross-domain working.

Objectives and outcomes

Two key objectives for the Discovery Centre programme are:

- to enrich community life
- to enable personal growth for individuals

A number of key outcomes and outputs have been identified for the local community.

for end-user communities:

- create a learning community ie, basic skills, lifelong learning, ICT, literacy
- qualifications gained, vocational training signup, users gaining employment

for end-user individuals:

- achievement of personal aims
- monitor satisfaction levels, progress and development through consultation and feedback

internally focused outputs:

- increase participation and reach within the community
- increase footfall, online visits, monitor postcodes of users

Strategic context

Hampshire's experience of the declining use of traditional services is mirrored nationally. This response is a radical transformation of the way services should be delivered in future. Discovery Centres will be tailored to the local community, based on extensive consultation. Services will be developed in partnership with existing and new service partners.

The Gosport Discovery Centre will provide a transferable model of innovation and good practice within Hampshire and nationally, to reverse the decline in library use. The Cultural Pathfinder programme reflects the aim of the Discovery Centre programme: to provide evidence of the importance of cultural services in delivering overall strategic objectives in local government.



For further information please contact:

Chris Edwards
Discovery Centre Programme Manager
Tel: 01962 826703
Email: Chris.Edwards@hants.gov.uk

Helen Wheeler
Policy Manager
Tel: 01962 845444
Email: helen.wheeler@hants.gov.uk
Website: <http://www.discoverycentres.co.uk/gosport/>