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# Combating racial discrimination in British public libraries: the role of the Quality Leaders Project

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## Abstract

Addresses a number of issues concerning racial discrimination in UK public libraries. It examines Black librarianship in the UK in 2001; records the development of the Quality Leaders Project which focuses on policy development, management and leadership issues in the context of Black workers and community needs; and discusses the potential contribution of this approach.

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## Introduction: the roots of the struggle

The Quality Leaders Project (QLP) for Black library and information workers emerged in response to the reality of UK library services to Black communities at two levels. The first being the poor quality of information services for Black communities: the second, the low status of Black information workers. At the root of both issues is the lack of power in the hands of Black people in the UK. The QLP forms, in a sense, part of the resistance of Black people against their situation and is an attempt to empower themselves. One manifestation of this was the struggle of the Black community after the brutal killing of Stephen Lawrence to bring the murderers to justice[1]. The QLP is one aspect of the struggle of Black information workers against their low status – the same struggle that has seen the emergence of the Diversity Council. It is expected that the Council will be established in 2002 as a Group of the Library Association. Working with the Black Caucus of the American Library Association, the Library Association invited Prof. Ismail Abdullahi of Clark Atlanta University to the UK as a facilitator. Under his guidance the idea of the Council emerged. It has membership of a growing number of organisations, including the African Caribbean Library Association, The Asian Librarians and Advisory Group, the Race and Class Group, SPICE, the Chinese Library Support Group and the Vietnamese Library Support Group.

However it is not correct to say that both of these struggles have only involved Black people. A large number of non-Black people are positive about the Black struggle and support the movement in many practical ways. It is one aspect of their support for human rights and real equality in society. This support has been crucial in a situation

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The paper incorporates material from several QLP reports and is therefore not all the author's work. Appreciation is recorded for the Hackney programme which provided the original ideas. Appreciation is also recorded for the input of Prof. Paul Joyce, former Director of the Management Research Centre at the University of North London, now at Nottingham Business School (Nottingham Trent University), who re-shaped the original rough ideas on QLP giving them a professional perspective with a cutting edge as an innovative project.



where the Black community and Black information workers are relatively powerless to influence official policies. It is a symptom of their situation that few Black people hold decision-making posts, hence their ability to influence policies within organisations is limited. They need to be able to rely on the support of all positive people, and this has helped to mainstream the fight against racism.

At the same time, their ability to influence policies would have been limited had it not been for the grassroots struggle of thousands of individuals organising their communities and setting agendas for change. Without a grassroots struggle, for example, the progress made in the Stephen Lawrence case would not have been possible.

### The origins of the Quality Leaders Project

So the QLP did not arise from a vacuum, but was the culmination of a long struggle that Black communities and information workers faced in the UK in order to address social injustice. While it is not within the scope of this paper to record the history of this struggle, a number of advances have been made in different parts of the country to introduce a relevant information service. Some of the initiatives in which the founders[2] of the QLP have been involved are recorded in the following documents:

- “The facts behind the Three Continents Liberation Collection” (Durrani, 1993).
- A report on Library Service for Black and Ethnic Minority Nationalities in the UK, prepared by Hackney Library’s Black and EM Worker’s Group as evidence for the review of UK public library service commissioned by the Department of National Heritage in 1994 (Library Service for Black and Ethnic Minority Nationalities in the UK, 1994).
- A report on community outreach and services to Black and minority ethnic nationalities for a review of Hackney Public Libraries (Durrani, 1995).
- “Black celebration in Hackney” (de Freitas, 1996).
- A background paper on the Black and Ethnic Minorities Workers’ Group at Hackney Libraries (Hackney Libraries Black Workers Group, 1995).

- Motions proposed by Shiraz Durrani and John Pateman at the Annual General Meeting of the Library Association 23 October 1996[3].
- An account of the work of the Black and Ethnic Minority Stock Group in Hackney Libraries (Durrani *et al.*, 1999).
- Issues concerning Black communities and information workers (Durrani, 1999a).
- An executive summary of the seminal UK research project on the public library and social exclusion (Muddiman *et al.*, 2001).

These positive developments were very successful while the key participants held positions of power, but were later killed off, one by one, by those who had always opposed such developments. It was a lack of political commitment at every level that ensured that they were not sustained. Indeed such negative forces also ensured the closure of the progressive *Hackney Library News* that had allowed the voice of Black workers to be heard for the first time. But this experience also indicated that progress was possible at two levels: to provide a service to Black communities that involves them and which they consider relevant to their needs; and empowering Black information workers whatever their position in a highly hierarchical library system suffering under institutional racism – provided there was political will to bring about a change in the power relationship.

### The emergence of the Quality Leaders Project

When a number of positive developments come together in one place at one time, it provides the energy to bring about a qualitative change in a situation and to start new programmes. This happened in 1998/99 when:

- A number of people who were active in Hackney now came together at Merton Libraries in a new climate following a change of government which introduced policies to address social exclusion.
- This group was also involved in the Library and Information Commission [4] (now Resource)-funded Project, “Open to All?” (Muddiman *et al.*, 2000). The project report included background papers on issues of race, class and resistance to ensure a relevant public service at a global level.

- The need to do something concrete about the pathetic situation was highlighted both by Roach and Morrison (1998) and the “Open to All?” research (Muddiman *et al.*, 2000). It was given a boost by working closely with Library and Information Commission (LIC) staff who were keen to support the new initiatives presented to them.
- One of the members of this group made important connections with the Management Research Centre of the University of North London as part of her MBA project.

As an outcome the Social Exclusion Action Planning Network and the QLP were set up. Attention now focuses on the development of the project from the initial idea in early 1999 to 2001 when it has been shown to be a viable way of addressing racial exclusion in the UK.

### The first steps

The Quality Leaders Project approach was used in Hackney in 1997–98 as part of the Transforming Hackney programme under Tony Elliston, the Chief Executive. The author participated in the project and saw this as a possible new approach which could be used to address institutional racism in the information field in the UK. This was expressed in the note sent to the QLP programme organiser in Hackney:

*Combating racism Quality Leaders Project*  
Andrew,

I have suggested the QL approach to the Library Association as part of an initiative in Social Exclusion. Are there any ethical/moral/patent/copyright/financial considerations in this? At one level it is “stealing” QL ideas from Hackney, at another it is spreading good practice (and not for financial gain, I might add!). do let me know if you think this is inappropriate. I will acknowledge the Hackney experience if the Project does not get off the ground.

The proposal we have presented to the Library Association is in two parts, one looking at socio-economic (class) issues and the other addresses issues of race. It is in the “combating racism” aspect that I am proposing the QL model. The proposal is in two parts:

- (1) Executive Briefing aimed at senior Library managers who will also be asked to give a commitment for Part (2) below.

- (2) QL-type project aimed at Black library workers. Each participant will be encouraged to prepare a concrete project proposal aimed (broadly) at “combating racism” in Libraries, in terms of service delivery and staffing matters. The aim is to move away from talking about racism and moving to address the real issues by empowering staff to redress the situation.

The participants will be supported at the centre (Library Association) and at work places by “active” sponsors.

The proposals are being discussed by the Library Association and if approved will be run by its London and Home Counties Branch. – Memo from Shiraz Durrani to Andrew Odgers, June 5, 1998.

The idea of the QLP took a concrete form when the background papers for the “Open to All?” projects were being written (see Durrani, 1999b, 2000). The time had arrived for action to address the poor service and powerlessness of Black workers. It became clear that there was much documentation about the need for change and good intentions, but very little action that could start addressing the problems. The author, who had previously been involved in the Quality Leaders initiative at Hackney Council, felt the time had come to use this methodology to address concerns among Black communities and Black workers. Various elements of the Hackney programme were adopted and redesigned to meet the changing needs evident at this time.

The first public airing of the ideas behind the QLP took place at an executive briefing held at the Library Association in June 1999 organised in association with The Association of London Chief Librarians (ALCL) (see Durrani, 1999). Session 3 focused on the significance of the Stephen Lawrence inquiry for public libraries and the elimination of institutional racism in libraries. There were 42 participants, both Black and white, and others had to be turned away due to limited accommodation. Each delegate received a race equality package, and it was obvious that many were not aware of the wide range of tools to help the planning process. They were asked for registrations of interest in the QLP, and feedback was taken to a meeting of the ACLC. The outcomes were reported to the LIC together with an outline proposal for a project.

## The original proposal for the Quality Leaders Project

The first proposal indicated that it was an attempt to eliminate institutional racism in public libraries. It noted the desire on the part of Black LIS workers to be fully involved in policy and service delivery from libraries.

Many members, heads of libraries and library managers wanted their service to address the needs of Black communities, and their Black staff to be as active as possible in every aspect of service delivery.

Yet the reality is that few Black LIS workers are in high posts where they can influence policies; the reality “on the ground” is that libraries have not developed appropriate services for Black communities. Roach and Morrison (1998) noted in their research findings:

Developments in race equality and ethnic diversity within public library services have been largely ad hoc and progress has been limited. There is no effective champion for race equality within the public library movement and future developments and progress are uncertain.

Public library services are one of a number of providers of information at the local level. Our study indicated that for many ethnic minority communities, the local network of ethnic minority community sector organisations is often more relevant and appropriate as an access point to information. Yet the work of many of these local community based providers is not sufficiently recognised and there is often a failure to ally the work of these agencies to the work undertaken by public libraries in order to ensure coherence and effectiveness of provision. Many of these community-based provisions are also seriously under-resourced.

Ethnic minorities are under-represented amongst staff within the public library service and there are few opportunities for ethnic minority citizens to influence service provision. The current uncertainties about, and potential demise of, special funding regimes such as the Home Office Section 11 programme could further weaken the link between public libraries and ethnic minorities.

Library managers and staff are often unclear about the most effective ways in which they can develop more inclusive service provisions. In many library services the experience of policy development, strategic planning, research, monitoring, performance review, public consultation, marketing and networking does not include a focus on ethnicity implications.

Professional attitudes and skills may present barriers to the development of positive relationships with ethnic minority communities. Professionally qualified staff may not have

acquired the requisite skills and capacities needed to establish effective links with local communities, or to engage communities in consultation about service needs, or to identify ethnically responsive service options, or to monitor and review services in an ethnically sensitive way. The specialist capacity within library services may also be under threat from reduced funding levels.

The first proposal for the QLP described a three-year pilot with three months preparatory work for planning, programming, and initial research. Careful attention was paid to the structure and management of a project that would:

- Be sponsored by an ALCL/LA partnership.
- Have a co-ordinating and management body with responsibilities to ensure the smooth functioning of the project. These would include training, research and administration. The project would be staffed through secondments from local library authorities.
- Invite contributions from experts from various fields at different stages of the project.
- Establish a Quality Leaders’ Forum.
- Form Action Sets (Quality Leaders working on common/similar projects).

One or more Black LIS workers (with or without formal qualifications) from each library authority would participate in a practical programme of projects which they would each develop in one of the following fields as it affects Black communities and staff:

- strategy/policy development, including contributing to Annual Library Plans[5];
- staff development;
- service initiatives;
- community development;
- eliminating social exclusion.

The project required:

- A commitment from each participating authority to the success of project.
- Each authority to provide a sponsor from senior managerial level to ensure success and provide individual support to Quality Leaders.
- Learning opportunities: formal training; coaching; on the job; secondment; job rotation; mentoring; shadowing; readings; projects; team work; networking; conferences and meetings.

- Programmes to be developed with the Library Association Professional Development section; LIS schools; local authorities training departments; Training and Education Councils; National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) programmes, and possibly, partnership with a university teaching department.
- Support from other bodies, e.g. the Commission for Racial Equality, Local Government Management Board, Community Development Foundation as well as the Library Association (e.g. Equal Opportunities Committee).
- ICT and community development approaches.
- Regular (monthly) meetings of Quality Leaders with more frequent action set meetings; bi-annual meetings of Quality Leaders and sponsors.
- Regular communications through publications and e-mails; development of a Web page.
- Regular conferences to present progress reports and to highlight new thinking and developments.

Funding would be sought:

- Participation charges from each participating authority from staff development and other funds.
- Material and staff time support from participating authorities.
- The LA and ACLC to contribute in kind.
- Approaches to the Library and Information Commission.
- Approaches to Home Office for funds from new Section 11 funding.

The anticipated outcomes would be:

- Quality Leaders Project graduates with recognised qualifications (accreditation at university, NVQ, local authority or LA professional levels) if possible, participation certificates which can count towards NVQs and professional qualifications.
- The development of competencies in strategic management and experience in providing a service considered relevant by Black communities.
- A bridge between theory and practice (e.g. best value; social exclusion; community development).
- Quality Leaders becoming a regional/national advisory body on Black LIS work;

- That the overall work of the project and individual projects would test whether theories are workable and can be used as models for national LIS work.
- A regular quarterly publication (paper and electronic) to focus on Black LIS sector.
- Long term: to improve the opportunity for Black LIS workers to reach senior managerial positions.
- Develop and implement relevant strategies and practices for services to Black communities.

The LIC was enthusiastic about the various ideas and provided the first breakthrough that the QLP needed, recommending some changes in the original submission.

### **Developing the proposal: the rationale for the methodology**

A second breakthrough gave the QLP its academic credibility without which it might have remained a traditional local authority initiative. This was the contact that Naila Durrani made with the University of North London. As part of her MBA studies which focused on the change process at Merton Library, and as a former Service Development Manager at Hackney Libraries, she had been closely involved in the earlier initiatives. She realised that the best future for the QLP was through an organic partnership with her supervisor, Prof. Paul Joyce of the Business Management Centre and his team who had been working on strategic change management in local authorities. She outlined the proposal and sought a partnership between the University of North London and Merton Libraries. This received a positive response. The initial QLP ideas were fine-tuned. At a meeting in December 1999 a revised proposal was agreed for a project: "Quality Leaders Project for Black LIS Workers: meeting the needs of communities and workers".

The central proposition was that the meeting of unrecognised or under recognised needs (new needs) requires new services, and new services require new skills and know-how (including new management know-how). The development of new services, new Black managers and the evaluation research by the Management Research Centre could be conceptualised in three stages.

## The three stages of the Quality Leaders Project

### Stage 1: feasibility study

A feasibility study was designed consisting of three case studies based on public library services in Merton, Birmingham, and Bradford. In each, three members of the Black community, one library professional, one senior manager in the library, and one Black library worker would be interviewed, and participate in a group interview.

The members of the Black community to be interviewed would include one frequent user of the library, one sporadic user, and one non-user. A snowballing technique would identify the three interviewees, for example, identify a frequent user by asking a library manager, and then, when interviewing the frequent user, asking them for the names of two friends one of whom is a sporadic user, and the other a non-user. The professional would be chosen on the basis of a reputation for know-how in designing services. The senior manager would be a manager controlling resources and a potential “sponsor” of new service developments. The Black library worker would be selected on the basis that they have the potential to be a Quality Leader in relation to service development.

The order of interviewing the six people in each case study would be important because there is a definite sequence and interdependence between the interviews. The focus and sequencing of the interviews was based on a methodology known as the Program Planning Model (PPM).

Interviews with the three members of the Black community would be based on problem exploration (downplaying the search for solutions at this stage), and focus on the problems they experienced in using the library service. From the non-user the interest lay in identifying the nature of the problems that have prevented them using library services. The interviews would identify a number of problems and interviewees would rate those that have the highest priority from their perspective. The interview would also ask, not just what are the problems, but why they are problems, in a bid to uncover the actual needs of the members of the Black community. The question is not so much “why does the problem exist?” as “why is solving this problem important for you?” The respondent

would be invited to answer along the lines of: “I would like this problem solved in order to . . .”

The interview with the library professional would take the point of view that the professional is recognised in his or her service as an expert on the design of library services. The interview invites the library professional to engage in problem solving, focusing on those having highest priority, and the associated needs identified in the three interviews with members of the Black community. The professional would recommend some two, or more, good ideas for developing the library service in order to solve each of the top priority problems identified. They would be asked what resources would be needed, and the resources already available for implementing the ideas. Once ideas for solutions and their resourcing have been discussed the interviewer challenges the library professional to recommend newer, more creative, solutions. Finally the professional is asked to recommend what, in their opinion, is the best solution for each of the top problems.

The interview with the senior manager would begin with a summary of the top problems and favoured solutions emerging from the preceding interviews. The senior manager is asked to review the problems and solutions and to identify what is acceptable, or unacceptable, or missing. They may be asked if they would veto any of the ideas for solutions and whether they would give in-principle support for any of the solutions proposed. They would be encouraged to consider creative solutions to resource constraints.

The potential Quality Leader is interviewed about any barriers to their participation in a six-month development project, career aspirations, and concerns about their current qualifications and capabilities. It would establish the baseline of his or her service know-how and management skills and qualifications. This would be very important for a later evaluation of the development project. If there is funding for the evaluation research they would be re-interviewed at the end of the development project to see how much their know-how and skills had increased as a result of the development project. The interview would not be equivalent to a full-scale assessment of management competence

or generate enough material for, say, NVQ assessment purposes. But the use of critical incident techniques within the interviews could enable some in-depth assessment of skills and know-how (Boyatzis, 1982).

The group interview would check that the ideas for new services are seen as a suitable response to the problems and needs identified by the community interviewees. It would also check that the new services are feasible from a professional point of view, that resources are available, or are likely to be available, from the viewpoint of senior management. The group interview would define acceptable and feasible local performance indicators and targets. It is critical that these are defined and are seen as being determined by the needs of the Black community. They are then used for monitoring and evaluation purposes during the implementation of new services (including through the use of pilots). These will be candidates for the best value performance plan and should clearly link to the needs and problems of the community. By developing local performance indicators/targets and including them in the best value performance plan, the new service for the Black community can be brought within the best value regime and its pressure for continuous improvement.

The data produced by the interviews would be rich and very closely related to service development issues. It was expected to have gaps and be messy and varying in detail, hence the analysis of the data would be difficult and interpretation complex.

A steering group would assist in preparing for data collection, interpreting results, and arriving at an initial idea of a new service based on the study. Tentatively, monthly meetings were proposed with the steering group.

During the analysis an attempt would be made to apply the concept of “degrees of strategic freedom” (Ohmae, 1982) to draw the data together and develop a vision of an innovative new service to better meet the needs of the Black community.

The outcomes of a feasibility study would be an initial vision or conceptual design for the new service based on the degrees of strategic freedom methodology. The next stage creates the initial vision and plans the operational processes, resources, and implementation steps needed for the new service.

During Stage 1 funding would be sought for evaluation research to be undertaken during Stage 2 – the development project.

### **Stage 2: development project**

This is a six-month project. A project team for the development of the new service would be established and include, or even be led, by a Quality Leader. The development team would develop the initial idea and amend it on the basis of a more thorough appraisal of the Black community’s needs and meticulous planning of operational processes, resources, and implementation steps. The team would appraise and correct the local best value performance indicators and targets suggested by the feasibility study. Then the team would need to confirm that the new service is the best value option by considering alternative ways of delivering the new service (procurement, partnership working), and by benchmarking the performance and cost parameters of the new service. This is essentially a cost-benefit exercise.

The output of the development stage would be a comprehensive proposal for service development ready for submission through the relevant channels for authorisation.

A critical assumption of this phase of the overall programme was that the development project is the vehicle for acquiring the know-how that a new service requires for its design and delivery, which is critical for meeting the “new needs” of the Black community. (The new needs might be simply hitherto ineffective needs that were not being addressed by existing library services.) The project team would be assembled with care. As well as Black library workers it should include experienced librarians and a senior member of library management. The team needs to be well resourced in terms of the part-time secondment of its members to work on the project (e.g. a day a week for six months?). The team, including the Quality Leader, debates new ideas, solves issues, visits other library services, and tests out ideas wherever possible.

The evaluation research would investigate the effectiveness of the development project in developing the capability and expertise of the Quality Leader, the robustness and suitability of the local best value performance indicator, and the quality of the comprehensive proposal for service

development. The purpose of the evaluation would be to establish the optimum conditions and strategies for using development projects to enable the occupational development of the Quality Leaders.

### **Stage 3: piloting the new service**

It is envisaged that the new service proposal would take at least two years to implement and require changes to procedures, structures, and staffing in the library service. Hence it would require a new manager for the service. The job description and person specification produced for this role would define the essential expertise required which would be quite distinctive and difficult to develop through formal or conventional training. It is assumed here that the development project and the role of the Quality Leader would be an effective means of developing this expertise. The standard management competencies (managing people, budgets, information, services) would be seen as being desirable, rather than essential, because these could be developed more easily through standard management training courses. Consequently, it might be planned that the new post-holder would be expected to undertake a conventional management training programme once appointed, unless they already held management qualifications.

The evaluation research would be carried out at intervals over the two years of the pilot. The factors that are critical in the development of a successful service and a successful new manager will be evaluated. It would also investigate how the new service was being implemented, and how technical and other difficulties were handled by the new manager in order to achieve as rapid as possible progress towards the target level of performance.

A proposal for the feasibility study was developed by Prof. Joyce which became the foundation of the QLP, and it was submitted to the LIC, see the Appendix. It was successful and the project commenced.

## **Stage 1**

### **Research findings – an overview**

The feasibility study was completed in March 2000.

It was evident that there was a need for more consultation with Black and Asian communities concerning the content and delivery of services they receive from local authority libraries. This needs to be based on a systematic approach to obtaining feedback from communities by libraries, as there was little evidence of consultation via direct links with community groups or the neighbourhood committees whose remit includes libraries, and user groups or panels within libraries.

Black and Asian communities do experience benefits as a result of public library services, but they also have experienced problems in relation to them. In particular regarding the composition of stocks of books, music, and videos that have deficiencies in addressing the Black British experience. Problems emerged about the provision of library events for the Black and Asian communities, and customer care and service availability – but they may well be problems for all members of the community.

Book-fairs and other cultural events can raise general awareness about the library, establish contact with smaller booksellers that specialise in ethnic minority books, and are a way of generating more feedback from users.

Concerns emerged about the recruitment of Black and Asian library workers, and their promotion within library services. Equal opportunity employment initiatives can produce benefits for the Black users of library services, but it was noted that almost two decades have passed since such policies had been introduced in some parts of local government.

Some evidence emerged about the feasibility of service developments and employment initiatives as perceived by managers and professionals in the library services covered by this study.

On the basis of the findings it was concluded that the idea of using the QLP looked feasible. There appears to be scope to better exploit library resources and tailor solutions to the present deficiencies in the value of services for local Black communities. This is important in terms of achieving the goals of social inclusion. The QLP programme, if effectively implemented, would be more than a worthwhile endeavour to better meet the needs of communities. The challenge of developing new services should

help to develop Black managers who can champion new services.

It was considered that the QLP should now move to the next two phases. Two challenging areas were identified for development projects. It was felt critical, if momentum is to be maintained, that the commitment of top management be translated into a process that provides for fast paced development, and a strong evaluation framework, to ensure that lessons learnt in the development phase are recognised and disseminated.

### **The experience of using the methodology**

The research design was followed quite closely in practice. Data collection was based on semi-structured interviews conducted in each of the three local authority library areas. On average, these tape-recorded interviews lasted between 45 minutes and one hour, and were conducted with:

- three members of the Black community;
- one library professional;
- one senior manager in the library;
- one Black library worker.

A group interview was also undertaken after the six interviews, but the levels of attendance were highly variable. Nine interviews were conducted within Merton libraries. Seven of these were with staff and users of Mitcham Library, both white and African-Caribbean. There was also a brief telephone discussion with a non-user (African-Caribbean origin), and an interview with the Raynes Park library manager. A focus group was also organised, which was attended by a senior library manager, two library assistants, and Asian and African-Caribbean frequent users.

Five interviews were conducted within Birmingham libraries with staff and users of the Central Library involving white, Asian and an African-Caribbean persons. A focus group was organised but only attended by the library staff.

Six interviews were held within Bradford libraries involving staff of both the central and local libraries, and users of the Central Library involving those of white, Asian, Arabian and African-Caribbean origin. All staff and one library user (African-Caribbean origin) attended a focus group.

In selecting members of the Black community to interview, the original aim was to identify one each of frequent, sporadic, and non-users of library services. However, there

were some significant delays in data collection because of the need to follow a sequence of interviews based on the Program Planning Model (PPM) method. Typically, the main impediment was the search for non-users (or lapsed users) and sporadic users of library services.

Due to the short duration of the feasibility study, the project relied heavily on the assistance of senior staff in each local authority in order to obtain the consent of Black library users to be interviewed. The library staff pointed to difficulties in identifying non-users and sporadic users. Two of the library services preferred their users not to be contacted directly by the project researcher, to prevent a perception of “cold calling”. Hence the selection of interviewees relied on the knowledge and contacts already established by library staff. The third authority provided a list of lapsed users to contact, but these had either moved or declined to be interviewed. Where possible a snowballing technique was employed. Only in one case was contact made with a non-user through a frequent user, but during a brief telephone conversation, the request for an interview was declined. The technique was, however, of some use in identifying other frequent users. For these reasons interviews with members of the Black community mainly involved frequent and sporadic users.

### **Feedback from users**

Members of the public have many reasons for using library services including borrowing books, videos, and cassettes; seeking information; and reading periodicals. The problems of users cluster around three issues: alignment of library stocks with their preferences and interests, Black events, and customer care.

The alignment of book and other stocks with preferences and interests of sections of the Black community was a problem. An African-Caribbean user expressed dissatisfaction with the collection of Black interest books provided by the library and noted:

Within the library, if you are specifically looking at Black, African, African-Caribbean, there is just a small selection, which is just like a shelf. This is where you have Black literature which is mostly fiction (African-Caribbean, professional).

Concerns were also expressed about the numbers of Black books purchased. A frequent user noted:

[With] Black authors, some may not be famous because people have not started buying their books. Perhaps if libraries were prepared to buy their books they would become famous. Sure, they have books by Toni Morrison but it depends how much they buy. If you look at a popular book, say in the Black section, they will order just one book. But say if you have the equivalent white book, there would be seven.

Furthermore, there is a call for less fiction, with the user noting:

Sometimes I am looking for factual books, whatever interests I have at the point in time.

In terms of children's books, the lack of role models for Black children in the literature was of concern, a frequent user noted:

It is a wider issue when you look at the lack of role models. I cannot think of any, at least when you are talking about pre-school. Well, I suppose in the *TeleTubbies*, *La-la* or whatever, the green one, is supposed to be Black, the stupid one. Hence the wider connotations among Black children, so most Black children may not want to identify with that one because it is stupid. There are things to do with Black children, but say you are looking at something that would be specific to a Black child, I cannot think of anything.

Some concerns were also expressed about the Asian collection:

I think instead of always having Western authors, sometimes when you do have an occasional eastern author, there is only 1 in a 100 of the publications. But I think that the author should be put in the library because I think the Asians will definitely read that, because they look at it and say yes he is from our own home country, even though it is in English. If an Eastern Publication hits the headlines it should be put into the library. Purely to even out the balance (Asian, professional, retired).

In terms of Black music collections, one frequent user argued that this tended to be rather one-sided:

There is not that much of an emphasis on Black music. You have popular Black music, because we are in the charts. Because if they are going to do some sort of statistical information about music and Black artistes we will do quite well. You are going to have your Whitney Houston's and Puff Daddy, because we are quite well represented in popular music. But if you would like to go into the library and pick up something from Gregory Isaac you are not going to get it. Maybe you will get it now because of the *Night Nurse* advert, and adverts have that effect. You will only get the popular stuff (African-Caribbean, professional).

This frequent user also pointed to the lack of Black videos in the library, suggesting that the selection could be wider.

There was a perception by one user that the quality of a library collection depends on the ethnicity of the ethnic minority librarian, as follows:

On whether the books reflect the multi-ethnic nature of the area, well it varies because it had tended to depend on who they employed. At one time there was a whole heap of Asian material and this is what I think the reason for that was. I was quite aware that there have been specialist librarians who had responsibility for work with all ethnic minorities, but because she was Asian there was great representation. There were lots of newspapers, magazines, loads of books and it was constantly advertised when you walked in [the] library that she was the specialist librarian.

This refers to the previous ethnic minority librarian who has since retired, and was not replaced. Another member of staff, of Asian origin, deals with these collections on a part-time basis.

On the basis of this study, however, it seems possible that library services vary significantly in their matching of ethnic community preferences, or that individual service users vary a great deal in terms of the yard sticks they apply to evaluate what is available. In contrast to some of the negative comments above, one person commented:

I am quite happy with [the music collection]. I go to [another] library as well, but it is actually better than [that] library. This is surprising because [it] is a bigger city. This has got a very good music section, all round really, for whatever you are into. Quite up to date as well.

He also added:

They have also got quite a good section which is not Black mainstream, it is indigenous African and Caribbean. This may be traditional. Or it may use the more Western approach like *Fela Kuti* or *Youssou N'Dor*. They are pretty well stocked up. And quite a good section on reggae.

The user's comments suggest that this section was quite well patronised by Black users:

I would say it is better patronised by Black people than any other part of the library. Even though you do not see an abundance of Black people going in, I would definitely say there are more going in.

This last comment may suggest that a library service that succeeds in catering for the needs of the Black community will be well rewarded in terms of use of the services.

One of the frequent users interviewed wanted more books on the Black British experience. This was a very specific deficiency in the books available in the library:

It is good that there is a Black focus section, but a lot of the books are really literature and fiction. When I say that it would be good if there were more books that related to the Black experience, I mean a lot of the books that are in the library on racism are good in some senses. But they reflect the times at which they were written, they do not really get to the heart of the problem (African-Caribbean, professional).

On asking how the literature could more closely “get to the heart of the problem”, the user replied:

Really, we need to look at our own Black British experience. Obviously it is helpful, and important to look at the American experience. There are parallels, but there are also quite a lot of historical differences. We need to see more Black authors and scholars here. There needs to be a body of literature by Black people here, rather than reading about Americans.

Furthermore:

[A favourite book] was quite a good book. It went to the core of the problem, it went into the historical reasons why Black people, whether we are African or Caribbean, have a distorted picture of ourselves, through TV, books and so on. It presented the true history, which has been kept under cover. But I do not think the book had more than two editions.

Another problem identified was the number and the design and implementation of events relevant to the Black community. One person responded:

There need to be events, people should be brought in. There used to be a Black book fair, the last time it ran was 1990. Black booksellers came with various books, many of which you could not actually get here. That brought more Black people in, visibly more Black people over those three or four days that it actually ran. We need specific events, external things, people being brought in . . .

Another user said:

Say for instance if the library is putting on a “Black event,” which happened recently. It was not really a Black event but it was targeted at Black people. The literature was sort of hidden behind things, it was not that as soon as you walked into the library you knew what was happening (African-Caribbean, professional).

A third problem was customer care. The scale of this problem seemed to differ, with serious complaints being made in one case, and few complaints being made in relation to

standards of customer care in another case. It appeared to be a general problem of customer care, rather than one of racism.

In terms of levels of customer service I do not think I am well treated, and I do not think it is a race thing. I think they need to be trained in inter-personal skills . . . I think they treat everyone badly (African-Caribbean, professional).

The user went on to comment:

But I think it is a historical thing. The hostilities of staff are not aimed at you as a Black person; I have seen how they treat white people. Generally in . . . [the] library, it is the kind of place where you as the customer are always wrong. They do not know about customer service.

Furthermore, these difficulties are not a feature of all staff, as the user describes:

I do not think that it is the majority [of staff who are rude], because there are new staff coming into the library who work much shorter hours. I think it is those long-term ones, the full-time contract ones [that are the problem]. But the short-term ones, and those that are part-time, they are different, and the younger ones. The problem is with the older lot who have been there for a long-time.

On being asked to describe particular examples of this behaviour, the user outlined the following:

I remember going in there for a [Black interest] book. Oprah Winfrey made it into a film, “Beloved.” I could not find it on the shelf. So I went in to ask, and the person at the desk made a comment, “Well what do you expect, I doubt that it would be here”. It was implied that it was a [Black interest] book, so someone had stolen it. Not that it could simply have been misplaced.

Another incident related to public access to planning applications:

There was a planning application across the road from where I live, and it would have implications for my house. I wanted to see the plan. It said go to [the] Library. I work so I am not going to get there till the evening. I got there at 6.30. What was [the response]? “No, you cannot see it, because the person who has the key has gone home.” I think that is not good enough. The advertisement says, “go to [the] Library.” It does not say “go to [the] library before this time, because after that the person with the key would have gone home.” So she [member of library staff] decided that she was not going to bend over backwards, to get this plan out of the filing cabinet. It is just general rudeness.

A fourth problem was accessibility to the library. This was a major concern for a frequent user of the library service:

I am not happy [with opening hours] either. Those library hours were made when society was

different. Society has moved on, and [the] libraries have not. Opening at 9.30! Libraries need to be considering opening at 8.30. I do not know of any of the Borough libraries that have a drop off service when they are closed. Every other borough I have ever worked in, if I have a video or book and I wanted to push that through a letter box I could do that, you can't do that [here]. [These] libraries close one day a week. You know in this day and age I expect a public service to be opened for a good chunk of the time, and also opening on Sundays.

Libraries in the area did have a drop-off service, however both the frequent users who attended the focus group were unaware of this. The senior library manager present did concede that this was partly the library's fault, for not marketing these facilities.

A fifth problem was identified which other users caused. A user complained about levels of noise in the library as follows:

I think improvements are going to be very difficult because [the] library is very limited in space. If you want a quiet reading room for the reference section, students and newspapers generally occupy it, and I think what might be preferable is to keep newspaper reading away from the reference section. The only thing I find irritating in [the library] is that there is no separation of newspapers from serious reference work. This is not something that I have expressed to anyone because I do not go and do any serious reading [here] (Asian, professional, retired).

The problem was seen as amenable to staff intervention:

It [the noise that the kids make] depends on who is on duty, because in some cases the kids can run around and do whatever as long as they do not disturb those in the reference section (Asian, retired professional).

### Ideas for service development

Four ideas emerged:

- (1) *Restructuring stocks through changed procurement policies.* The providers of library services need to be more proactive in identifying what the Black community needs and wants and then ensuring that stocks of books, music, and videos reflect these needs and wants.
- (2) *Events as an important service-user interface mechanism.* There is a need for a programme of events through which books, music, and video resources are organised around themes or topics to create an unfolding set of opportunities for local Black and Asian communities.

Instead of concentrating only on attracting members of the Black and ethnic minorities to the library buildings to make use of the stocks, these stocks can be deployed through events to bring out their relevance and utility. This is analogous to the use of popular and high profile exhibitions in an art gallery to increase public attendance levels, rather than the traditional emphasis on year-round displaying of a gallery's collection for the benefit of its current clientele. Such events might involve partnerships with booksellers and libraries in other local authorities (again, just as exhibitions in art galleries depend on works of art loaned by other galleries).

- (3) *Staff development.* Training and staff development activities generally could be used to develop the capacity of library services for empowering the Black and ethnic communities in their use of library services, and in influencing the continuous improvement of the services.
- (4) *Recruiting and promoting more Black staff.* This might be a critical implementation factor for improving the matching of services to the Black and ethnic communities' needs and improving customer care to them.

### Feasibility issues

It is possible to improve the match between the book and other stocks and the needs (preferences, interests) of ethnic minority communities. In one library service it was acknowledged that the situation had been better in the past.

The Black collection was very nicely done by X who used to work here, who did a lot of events with Black people, enjoyed doing that and was successful as well.

However concerns were expressed that the ability to restructure stocks might be constrained by the situation in terms of booksellers:

I think the problem with declining interest, is that the books for Asians could be better targeted. What we need is more non-fiction. The main problem at the moment is the booksellers. They cannot seem to provide the kinds of books that users want. Not everybody wants to read frivolous novels. This is my personal viewpoint. You very rarely find any non-fiction books. If you find any health books they are ten or fifteen years old. What you want is more books on health, more books on childcare, more books on

religion, cookery, and fashion. These are the things that will take their interest. This is how they will borrow, but unfortunately that has not happened (Asian, library manager).

Obviously the librarians are totally dependent on these book sellers. There are not that many of them, there are certainly more of them than there used to be. There will be lots and lots of fiction, but not non-fiction. Even if they do provide non-fiction it is poetry. How many people will even come to borrow English poetry? So that is a problem here.

It is not clear how much of a constraint booksellers are. There was a view that the supply of books by booksellers was becoming less of a constraint.

When the system was set up you just got what the booksellers gave you. But the opportunities are better now. If you look hard enough you will find more booksellers to provide you with a variety, but it is difficult.

The feasibility of responding to the request for more Black videos could also be constrained by availability issues, but at least one manager thought it was worth trying to stock them.

... This is just an opinion. Black people will watch English movies quite a lot. Also it is difficult to get Black movies. I do not even know if we will succeed in getting any, and if we did, whether it would be popular. But it is an idea worth experimenting with. To be quite honest I have not seen any of these even in Commercial video shops (Asian, library manager).

The success of attempts to restructure book and video stocks does depend, however, on library services finding out what sections of the Black community want. At least one manager believed it was feasible to do more than they were currently doing to find out more. Mechanisms for the library services (in at least one of the three cases) to consult and involve ethnic minority communities appear to be underdeveloped or ineffective. A frequent Black user noted:

I am not aware of any user forum or committee. There is no dialogue with the library, unless something has been developed which I have not seen. The only reason why I got involved in this is because I made a complaint about the library service, and then X got into contact with me, talking about solutions (African-Caribbean, professional).

Some feedback occurs through social events held in the library, as a Black library worker noted:

We had an event on the X, we call it the Family Event. All the performers were mostly Black. We

had a problem with that because, mostly the catering and entertainment was said to be only for Black people, not really for other people. So 75 to 80 people turned up. X came and addressed the meeting, and people had an opportunity to come and talk to him and express their views about the books. We even bought some books from some of the entertainers. I think through the events we can get the feedback as well, and also if people write to him he will reply directly (Asian, library worker).

In one service, staff perceptions about modes of feedback from users to the library also centred on the role of an ethnic minority librarian:

In terms of getting feedback from ethnic minorities on a regular basis, we have been unfortunate in that in 1998 our ethnic minority librarian retired. She was not replaced for quite a while. Nevertheless we have an ethnic minority library assistant, although this is not really her job, it is 17.5 hours a week. Her job is predominantly with the Asian books (Asian, library manager).

### Outreach services

There is some outreach work being done, but it is important that the necessary resources (expertise and time) are available for all sections of the ethnic minority community. This may be a problem at the present time. A member of staff noted:

I haven't done as much outreach work with the Black community (as the Asian). I do go and see them, help them, with books and other things. I tell them what is going on in [local authority area]. X and Y started things with Black people so I do not really want to take over. X did a lot of work with them (Asian, Black library worker).

### Customer care

The idea of staff development to improve customer care was endorsed by one manager. As a basis for raising awareness of the need for better customer care and cultural sensitivity among staff, an Asian library manager pointed to the need for clearer dissemination of the Macpherson and other reports on race-relations in the UK within the Council:

In terms of dissemination of the Macpherson report within the council I do not think people have been attending enough courses here. Some people might denigrate the idea because you cannot suddenly become a wonderful person in a one-day course. But I think that is the first step forward, people should be asked to go to more courses. There might be a feeling of, "do you think I am a racist, is that why you are sending me on that course?", but it is not so. It should be

almost compulsory, I think all members of staff should attend courses, which discuss this issue.

### Staff recruitment

The need for greater recruitment from non-white communities identified by an Asian library manager:

I think there should be more staff [non-white] who are not necessarily in just senior positions but at different levels in career. Although I do not think it is a drawback, nevertheless I am the only senior person in . . . libraries who is in a position like this, except for X who is more senior than me. I think it would be nice to have more people at my level (Library manager).

Recent appointments of Black managers into one of the library services seem to have improved the customer care situation, with the user noting:

If you had asked me this before X came to the library, I would have been very negative. But for the short time X has been there, he has had an impact on them, and I think recently they have got an Asian manager, Y. I think they have impacted [positively] on the blatant rudeness in the library.

### Conclusions

There is concern about the lack of equal employment opportunities within public library services. Acknowledging that “institutional racism does exist in our profession,” the Chief Executive of the Library Association reported that out of over 20,000 personal members, only 1.2 per cent – i.e. 286 individual members – were of African, Caribbean, or Asian background. Also worrying, he revealed that only three Black members earned over £27,000 (Khan, 2000).

There is also concern about the match between services provided by public libraries and the needs of Black people. It was anticipated that with the introduction of best value reviews and annual performance plans in 2000, it was very likely that that service provision to the Black community will gain visibility and receive greater management attention and commitment.

The QLP is an initiative that addresses both the problem of value for the Black community and equal employment opportunities within the library services, and it does so within a best value framework. The key proposition of this initiative is that the meeting of unrecognised or under-recognised needs (new needs) requires new services, and new

services require new skills and know-how (including new management know-how).

Is it time to challenge the assumptions we make about how to achieve equality in service delivery and the assumptions that are implicit in the strategies we use to bring about equal employment opportunities? Challenging existing assumptions now could produce better value for the public and break some of the current sense of stagnation in the movement towards equality of employment opportunities.

The main assumption and principles of the QLP have been affirmed. The assumption is that development projects are critical for developing the new know-how that a new service requires for its design and delivery. The five key principles that inform the Quality Leaders Project are:

- (1) The need for each service to tailor service improvements to exploit its distinctive resources as well as the public's requirements, rather than blind copying of other library services' initiatives.
- (2) The need for the top managers of the service to provide the quality of leadership skills and commitment to make the success of development projects more likely.
- (3) The need to expand the experience and managerial expertise of Black and Asian library employees through the activities generated by development projects.
- (4) The need for the top managers to win the support of all sections of the library staff, and not just the managers and professionals who have an existing commitment and sympathy to greater equality in services and employment.
- (5) The need for the learning and growth of capability developed during development projects to be recognised within the organisation and become the basis of increased responsibilities for Black and Asian managers and staff.

The most important finding that emerged was the relative absence of management objections to developing new services on the grounds of resource availability. This no doubt reflects the management perception that the new performance management systems currently being introduced throughout local government are challenging existing patterns of activities and the existing effectiveness in the use of resources.

Consequently, developing services that offer more value to the Black community is seen as possible in a highly fluid situation that has been created.

It must also be noted that there was some managerial openness to experimentation with services and stock procurement policies.

Critically there was some evidence that where libraries had succeeded in providing stocks of interest to Black library users that the library (or rather a particular section of its services) had attracted higher levels of use by Black people. Likewise special events for the Black community were known to have worked in the past in terms of attracting large numbers into the library.

Paradoxically, a negative finding – that mechanisms for consulting and involving the Black community were under-developed – also suggests that the QLP is feasible. It shows that there is an under-utilised approach to correlating services and activities in public service libraries with the needs of the Black community.

The conclusion is that, in terms of the next stages of the project, there is most scope for progress in relation to two of the problems for Black users. These are the problems of better alignment of stock and increasing the number and quality of special events. These indicate important areas for possible service developments, but they need more elaboration and precision. Issues of customer care and availability may prove to have specific implications for service developments to Black and Asian communities, but it seems likely that improvements in services in these areas could benefit all groups of users.

While recognising the importance of training and employment issues, it is hypothesised that service developments might provide the most effective set of conditions for real and sustainable progress. In other words, training and employment options should be integrated within service developments for the Black and Asian communities.

To sum up, the idea of the QLP looks feasible. There appears to be scope to better exploit library resources and tailor solutions to the present deficiencies in the value of services for local Black communities, which is important in terms of achieving the goals of social inclusion. The QLP programme, if effectively implemented, will be more than a worthwhile endeavour to better meet needs

of communities. The challenge of developing new services should help to develop Black managers who can champion new services.

## Stage 2

### Development projects – methodology

The aim for Stage 2 was to develop and evaluate the Quality Leaders approach by providing a description of the approach adopted, and an evaluation of its effectiveness in terms of both the management development of the Quality Leaders and the quality of service proposal developed during the development period. A pro forma for a comprehensive and high quality proposal and plan would be developed. Ideally, the project would benefit from the involvement of between four and 12 local authorities to allow systematic cross-case comparisons to be made with respect to the development projects, local factors, and implementation factors.

Two challenging areas for development projects had been identified and it was critical to maintain the momentum produced in Stage 1, and Stage 2 was scheduled for no more than six months. It was proposed that a part-time project team for the development of a new service would be established and led by a Black member of staff who had potential for development. The development team would develop the initial idea and amend it on the basis of a more thorough appraisal of the Black community's needs and meticulous planning of operational processes, resources, and implementation steps. It would also appraise and correct the local best value performance indicators and targets suggested by the feasibility study. As a result, the team would need to confirm that the new service is the best value option by considering alternative ways of delivering the new services (procurement, partnership working) and by benchmarking the performance and cost parameters of the new service. This is essentially a cost-benefit exercise. The output of the development stage would be a comprehensive proposal for service development ready for submission through the relevant channels for authorisation.

In Stage 2, evaluation focused on three topics:

- (1) the effectiveness of the development project(s) in developing capability and expertise in the Quality Leader(s);
- (2) the robustness and suitability of local best value performance indicators (BVPI); and
- (3) the quality of the proposals and plans for service development.

The following methods of evaluation were identified as being appropriate for Stage 2:

- critical incident interviews;
- behavioural assessment rating scales to be completed by Quality Leaders and others;
- 360-degree appraisal;
- interviews with “experts” from outside the local authority on their evaluation of the best value performance indicators (BVPIs);
- evaluation of the BVPIs against normative criteria (e.g. Audit Commission Guidelines);
- evaluation of service development plans using general criteria;
- an interview with external “experts” to establish if they think the service development plan is of a high quality.

#### **Commitment required from the local authority**

Participating authorities would make the following commitments for Stage 2:

- To secure the formal support of key council members and library service managers for the local authority library service to participate in the QLP and pilot enhanced or new library services for the Black community.
- To participate in a meeting involving library service heads or their assistants from the participating local authorities. The first purpose of the meeting is to define their responsibilities in sponsoring the projects within their own authorities. Then the meeting would set success criteria for the projects and a timetable for the six-month projects, and agree the nature of an event at the end to share experiences and identify the key lessons.
- To form a team to carry out the project and provide an adequate budget to allow members of the team to be seconded on a part-time basis (e.g. 40–50 days each during the six-month period).
- To fund a six-month part-time secondment for a Black library worker to

carry out the role of project leader for the team, and for the sponsor within the library service to provide mentoring and support to that individual throughout the six-month period.

- To make the project a part of any formal programme of best value developments or initiatives within the local authority. To prepare for the introduction of one or more new local performance indicators for library services (linked to the needs of the Black community) within the council’s best value performance plan.

#### **Organising the development project**

This would be located within a formal project management framework. The person in charge being the Quality Leader, who is a Black library or information worker with potential for development. Their responsibility is to see the project through to a successful conclusion.

The Quality Leader is responsible for establishing, convening and leading a part-time development team charged with the development of a new service based upon the results of a consultation process with the Black community. The role of the team is to carry out activities specified by the Quality Leader in consultation with team members, the mentor and sponsor.

It is vital if this process is to work in the context of the pressured realities of organisational life and demands being made on members of the team, that each Quality Leader is supported by two key people from within his or her organisation: a project sponsor and a mentor.

The project sponsor provides a warrant and authorisation for actions that the Quality Leader wishes to take, including the setting up of the development team. Holding a senior position, such as head of the service, or at least at directorate level, they can facilitate working across the directorate, and other directorates.

The mentor provides day-to-day support, guidance and coaching to the Quality Leader, should be in a managerial role, and able to provide guidance about organisational systems and processes, managing people and teams and practical advice about project management. Specifically a major component of the learning and development of the Quality Leader is based upon the technique of

behavioural role modelling. The mentor should be an appropriate and suitable role model for the Quality Leader. Contact with other senior managers during meetings and other activities also provides an opportunity for such modelling to take place and provides a broader understanding of how things are dealt with in the home authority, as well as a context for service development.

For the Quality Leader to succeed, strong and clear management commitment to the development project must be provided. In addition to the project sponsor, a small budget will be required to cover some of the direct costs of the development project. Management commitment must also ensure that the Quality Leader's time is freed up to work on the project, and that the development team are given suitable direction (from the project sponsor where necessary) about their involvement in the project. This commitment is symbolised by each participating authority signing up to a written set of conditions before embarking on the QLP.

It is important that communication and reporting channels are established at the beginning of the project, and it is suggested that the line of communication and reporting in relation to the project runs from Quality Leader, through mentor to project sponsor.

The learning and service development aspects of the QLP are inherently intertwined in the structure of the QLP programme. This follows a fixed scheme consisting of six key areas in a specific order: QLP induction, project management, consultation, best value and performance, service design and service implementation planning.

The QLP induction, occurs at the start project, introduces and explains the QLP, and indicates the expectations to be made upon the various stakeholders. In particular, the Quality Leaders are introduced to the notion of leading the project team and the range of negotiation and persuasion skills which are going to be required. They are also sensitised to the skills they should be trying to develop. It is emphasised that it is important for the Quality Leader to take responsibility for their own learning and development through activities such as attending the formal learning sessions, reading the provided texts, acquiring and reading supplementary material and maintaining a learning log book.

A critical assumption is that the experience of the Quality Leaders in leading the team will be more effective in developing distinctive and valuable sets of know-how and expertise which are particularly suited to service development and innovation, but which are difficult to acquire and successfully transfer through conventional training formats. Other, more general management competencies can be developed through supplementary conventional training.

The first formal learning session focuses on project management. Each session has two parts. First, a presentation by the session leader of approximately 15 minutes duration followed by a discussion focusing on the issues that the Quality Leaders wish to pursue. Second, a facilitated action learning session. This part of the session is supported by an action planning chart which specifies the concern and the date it was raised, the preferred course of action for dealing with it, the date when the issue was resolved or reprioritised and the outcome (i.e. what happened to the concern). It is used throughout all of the learning sessions to track the development of both the projects and the Quality Leaders' learning.

During the facilitated action learning sessions, each Quality Leader identifies their top six concerns and rates them in order of importance. The session devotes considerable time to defining and clarifying each of the concerns, engaging other Quality Leaders as co-consultants. The Quality Leader indicates their preference for handling the concern and reports back at the next forum any action taken and the consequences of the action. At subsequent sessions, the Quality Leader is asked if the concern was still rated number one, or whether it was appropriate to turn to another concern and deal with that in a similar way.

Following learning sessions, the Quality Leader writes up their learning log, identifies what needs to be done before the next session, and who will be enrolled on to the team to carry out specific tasks or provide specialist input or knowledge. They also consult appropriate reference material, using two texts supplied at the start of the project as a starting point, but gathering additional material and writing up notes from this material in their learning log.

The formal training sessions, consisting of the presentations, discussions and action learning sessions, together with the learning logs, action planning charts and reading materials provide the formal components of the QLP learning and development framework. It is supplemented by on-the-job experience during the period of the development project. The approach is therefore one of learning by doing, however this “secondment” model of development is supplemented by the behavioural role modelling approach provided by the mentor. This is well suited to the development of leadership skills (Barker, 2001). It provides a framework whereby the phenomenological experience of leadership occurs during the action, prior to the application of existing knowledge gained through conventional approaches to training and development, such as that embodied within a managerial competencies framework.

Subsequent learning sessions deal with consultation, best value performance, service design and implementation planning, acting as signposts along the trajectory which their projects and learning travel. Both take place firmly within the context of the requirements of the project, as determined ultimately by the results of the consultation process. There are, however, certain specifications with respect to each of these components.

In relation to consultation, the Quality Leader must provide satisfactory evidence that a rigorous consultation process has yielded valid results. This will involve providing a well-reasoned and argued rationale: who was consulted, using which method etc. It should be supported with appropriate evidence, including reference to previous or existing consultations. The result must be clearly presented in the context of current service provision, and with due regard to the strategic priorities of the local authority.

In relation to best value and performance targets, the Quality Leader must demonstrate that they have incorporated the main components of best value into their ideas for service development and need to show that they have provided a balanced judgement which is relevant to users. Thus performance indicators need to be developed in relation to the potential new service. They must be easy to understand, easy to collect, and be both

challenging and realistic, and consider costs, efficiency, quality and access.

In designing a new service, the results of the consultation exercise must be fed into existing and developing ideas about how to meet the newly identified need from within a best value framework. This will involve evaluating alternative ideas for service provision through such activities as benchmarking performance and cost parameters and considering the feasibility, timeliness and acceptability to stakeholders and considering different modes of delivery such as procurement and partnership working and engaging in cost-benefit analyses. Hence service development ideas would have undergone a process by which the “4 or 5 Cs” of best value (consult, challenge, compare, compete (and collaborate)) have been incorporated into the process of service design.

In relation to service implementation planning, the Quality Leader must develop a formal proposal suitable for submission to a committee for consideration and authorisation. It will contain detailed implementation plans including budgets and specifications of operational processes and procedures and identify alignment with council policies, strategic goals and priorities. It also includes a detailed description of the service, a rationale in terms of the needs of the community and an estimate of the numbers of public likely to use or benefit from the new service.

The end of the six-month development period is marked by a formal “End of Development Project Event” where each Quality Leader presents their service proposal to an audience consisting of the Advisory Group and the Heads of Library Service of the participating local authorities. It is evaluated according to the overall quality of the proposal, the likelihood of implementation, and the best value performance target, and feedback is provided to the Quality Leader and their Head of Library Service.

### **Evaluation**

The approach selected was a formative, utilisation-focused evaluation (Patton, 1998) with a specific concern with responsiveness (Legge, 1984). It covered only those stakeholders most closely involved in the development project. The main aim was to

provide an overall assessment of the management development that had occurred for each of the Quality Leaders and the quality of the service proposal developed.

This was achieved in three ways. First, gathering feedback from the Quality Leaders and other stakeholders involved in the project. Second, using a performance metric in the form of a behaviourally anchored rating scale (BARS) administered at the end of the project. Third, identifying the lessons learnt during the pilot in terms of the current operational strengths and potential areas of weakness of the programme.

### Outcomes

Quality Leaders reported that they had developed significantly over the course of the development project that was supported by the mentors in both cases. Thus, the overall evaluation from the main stakeholders in the project was positive and one of the most notable ways was in the confidence of the Quality Leaders.

The Quality Leaders considered the most beneficial aspects were to be taken away from existing responsibilities to devote time to the learning process, and the completely new tasks they were being asked to perform and manage during the project.

Another valuable element was meeting a range of people with whom they would not otherwise have been in contact. The behavioural role modelling (BRM) elements built into the design of the programme were clearly experienced by the Quality Leaders. They reported learning from these models, including ways of behaving such as selling and presenting their ideas to others, but also gaining factual information and knowledge e.g. what other local authorities are doing, and processes and procedures within their own authority.

With respect to the gathering of information about what other local authorities were doing, it was reported that this knowledge was transferred to the practical development projects during benchmarking activities. This provided clear evidence of the transfer of learning from the learning situation to the practical work situation. Participants reported that they had applied knowledge, skills and attitudes developed throughout the course and relating to each of the learning sessions in their development projects, so it would

appear that the QLP is particularly effective in transferring of learning encountered in more conventional training and development approaches.

One of the negative learning outcomes identified, but which had not been foreseen, was a negative attitude change with respect to the degree of criticism of the “home” local authority of the Quality Leader. This was expressed in terms of the increased vision that had been gained through access and exposure to the management systems, structures and processes that operate in the authority and an appreciation of the problems with these.

An important aspect of the “development through innovation” model which had a demonstrable effect relates to mechanisms for the promotion of BME library workers. One participant reported that they had applied for a more senior position and overcome the first hurdle of getting to the interview stage, which was attributed directly to participation in the QLP.

The Quality Leaders reported that they had developed a wide array of knowledge, skills and attitudes as a result of participation in the scheme. Specifically mentioned were:

- time management;
- the development of a strategic mindset;
- a greater understanding of policy developments such as best value;
- a better knowledge of ICT;
- presentation and negotiation skills;
- acquiring and using information;
- commitment and motivation;
- a willingness to take on responsibility; and
- general social skills involved in talking with such a wide range of people, ranging from senior managers to socially excluded potential library users.

Commenting on the learning themes addressed in each of the Learning Sessions, it was felt that all were useful, but some more than others. To some extent this validates the QLP approach implying that the participant already possessed the appropriate knowledge, but had not had the opportunity to apply it, suggesting that there was some other reason that the organisation was not benefiting from this person’s existing expertise. The QLP ensured that the participant had an opportunity to use pre-existing skills which were being under-utilised and, conversely, that the organisation was given the opportunity to benefit from them.

Quality Leaders and mentors were also asked to complete a BARS in order to assess the managerial competencies of the participants post-scheme. The particular scale used was selected due to its focus upon project leadership with a concern for performance as this was felt to be most relevant as an outcome measure in relation to competencies developed through the QLP. As is usual in respect of both upward and downward appraisals, respondents rated themselves higher than their mentors, but the degree of difference was relatively small (averaging approximately minus 20 per cent) and the ratings generally indicated fairly high levels of this particular set of management competencies. A pre-post scheme comparison could not be made, as the scales were not administered pre-scheme, however, as they are behaviourally anchored they do constitute a valid outcome measure in an absolute sense.

#### **Design, operational difficulties and successes**

Overall the participants felt that the overall design of the scheme was very good, covering relevant issues in a compelling and motivating way. They felt that it could be extended to a wider cross-section of people. In one of the local authorities, it had been used with other groups involved in different development activities.

Concern was expressed about the recruitment and selection process involving both Quality Leaders and the local authorities. It was expressed in a number of ways, one being the pressures and demands placed upon the Quality Leaders. They were asked to achieve a great deal, including managing a rigorous consultation exercise, managing their own learning, managing the development team, designing a service and its implementation, and winning over people and changing attitudes within their local authorities and in the community. The participants in the pilot study handled these pressures well, but concerns were raised about the possibility that other participants on future QLP schemes may not be able to deal with the responsibility and pressure so well. This needs to be taken into account at the recruitment stage. Had more authorities participated, then co-learning during the learning sessions could have been enhanced with more Quality Leaders.

Concern was also expressed around a number of issues related to time. They ranged from the length of the project – six months was considered to be too short a time period to achieve high quality outcomes – to the amount of time devoted to the projects by the Quality Leaders, which ranged from full time to two days per week.

The Quality Leaders encountered difficulties when they attempted to engage members of the development team, which were not successfully overcome in some cases. Problems revolved around the nature of the project and a feeling that it was socially exclusive being aimed at only one particular community. On the whole, the operation of the development team was not a success and the Quality Leaders themselves ended up doing most of the work involved in the projects, rather than managing the team doing this work. While this was not the original intention of the project, it was felt that getting involved in actually carrying out the various tasks themselves was also a valuable learning experience.

The Quality Leaders voiced negative opinions about the lack of certainty of outcomes following the six-month development project. In particular there was no guarantee that the project would be implemented, or that there would be any lasting change in the organisation, or indeed that they would see any advancement in their careers. The fact that none of these outcomes could be guaranteed was raised by the Quality Leaders suggesting that they had put overly high expectations on the QLP programme. The expectations of participants in the programme need to be more closely managed and the scheme should not be “over sold” to potential participants, and a comprehensive “exit strategy” for the Quality Leaders should be developed. Further concerns were raised about the potential negative effects should the service proposals not go ahead, primarily about the credibility of the Quality Leaders within their organisations and the credibility of the organisation within the community. This suggests that the expectations of others in the organisation and the community also need to be managed.

The induction for the pilot schemes took place rather informally and extended into the first learning session. Participants reported that they found the prospect of starting the

scheme very daunting, suggesting that a more structured and better induction is needed. Other stakeholders, such as the mentors and sponsors would also have benefited from a more thorough induction. They reported not always being sure exactly what they should be doing. There were several examples of confusion, or lack of clarity, about a number of basic elements of the scheme such as precisely who the mentor and sponsor were.

The action planning tool that was used in the second part of the learning sessions was not always rigorously maintained throughout the project which had a negative impact. It related to a general concern around communications and reporting, both in terms of managing the QLP itself, and within the development projects in each of the authorities. It was suggested that a more active role in managing the QLP and communications could be taken by an independent body, such as the management research centre.

### **Service development proposals emerging from the projects**

Service proposals were prepared by each of the Quality Leaders, which is an important output criterion which the authorities have achieved, but they needed further work before they would be suitable for submission to the council.

Each of the ideas for service development, it was felt, were developed in a rather too internally focused way and then later “checked out” with the community, rather than stemming directly from consultation about what the community wanted. The QLP approach suggests that consultation occurs before the development of ideas for a new service and results from the outcome of those consultations, rather than the outcome of consultations merely providing supportive evidence for a previously developed idea. The reasons for this are not clear, however this issue would need to be addressed by incorporating a greater emphasis on the necessity to be more outward looking in developing service proposals. An example of the inward-looking focus is the staff development programme suggested in one of the proposals, and to what extent this would offer a new or enhanced service to the Black community.

There was evidence in the proposals of considering different options, conducting an options appraisal and incorporating elements of best value, however, neither of the proposals seemed to follow the precise model of service development to that alluded to in the original design. This model was, however, not fully specified in the original design; indeed one of the outcomes of the original pilot which was initially discussed was the development of a pro forma for a service development proposal, however this was subsequently dropped from this pilot phase due to budgetary restrictions. This could be incorporated into any future development of the QLP.

Concerning the quality of evidence presented relating to the results of the consultation process; there was some divergence between the two reports. One report provided perhaps a little too much information, while the other not quite enough detail. However, the reports were of an acceptable standard concerning the quality of evidence, argumentation and implementation issues, albeit that they each had strengths and corresponding weaknesses in different areas. The extent to which these reports could be developed into fully formed service proposals is therefore something which will require further emphasis and development in subsequent modifications to the QLP.

### **Conclusions**

The learning experienced by the Quality Leaders spanned the continuum of knowledge (e.g. best value), skills (e.g. leadership) and attitudes (e.g. confidence) and so the project can be judged to have been a success with respect to these three traditional measures of training efficacy.

There was also strong evidence of transfer between the learning that was occurring and the work setting of the Quality Leaders. However it was evident that the co-learning which occurred in this pilot fell somewhat short of what had been expected. This was attributed primarily to the low numbers of authorities recruited on to the pilot. It had implications for the quality of co-learning that could have been developed in the action learning sessions, which in turn impacted upon the added value of the model over and above that which could have been provided

through a more traditional training programme in conjunction with a secondment.

Concerning this added value dimension, the key areas which were identified correspond to the specific and unique elements of the QLP approach which were inherently built in to the design of the scheme. Three key areas were identified:

- (1) the nature of the on-the-job learning (i.e. a focus upon the development of a new service, rather than simply some sort of placement within an existing service);
- (2) the quality of learning transfer that occurred (due, presumably, to the transfer vehicle provided by the structured format of the learning sessions and the action planning tool that was adopted);
- (3) the range of learning variables that were covered (spanning the entire range of skills, knowledge and attitudinal variables and the considerable number of specific development areas within each of these components).

While a number of concerns were raised concerning the implementation of the QLP, these were generally of an operational nature and would be easily rectified by following the specifications more closely. It was suggested that the production of a QLP manual would aid this process and this is strongly recommended.

There was clear evidence that the QLP was effective in developing the Black library workers who took part in the scheme. The QLP can therefore be recommended as an effective way of developing Black library workers. It was also strongly felt that the QLP could be extended to the development of different groups in different areas, and a piloting of the extension of the QLP in this way would be encouraged.

There was clear evidence that the QLP has the potential to develop the services offered by the authorities that took part in the pilot. However, as the service development proposals have not yet been formally put to the authorities concerned, no clear assertion can be made in this respect, which is the subject of the third phase of the QLP. Given the success of the second stage, it is recommended that the QLP proceed on to the third stage.

### Stage 3

#### Proposals

Stages 1 and 2 have been completed at the time of writing and Stage 3 is being developed.

Stage 3 would last approximately two years and the evaluation would focus on three topics:

- (1) factors that are critical in the development of a successful service and a successful new manager;
- (2) how the new service was being implemented;
- (3) how difficulties were handled by a new manager to achieve the target level of performance.

So the focus of this stage is the implementation of a service proposal developed during Stage 2. It involves changes to procedures, structures, and staffing in the library service. A manager for the new service would be required, and the job description and person specification produced for this role would define the essential know-how or expertise required.

The QLP will test the assumption that development projects involving Black staff will be more effective in developing distinctive and valuable sets of know-how and expertise. These new services are less likely to need standardised management competencies e.g. managing people, budgets etc. that are more easily acquired through conventional training. But the capabilities developed through development projects are harder to acquire using traditional training formats and are consequently more valuable.

In summary, the QLP can be seen as an expression of the idea of a “learning council” and might offer much more to Black and Asian staff than off-the-job training courses in management. And this happens within a project which can deliver better value to the public.

Benefits gained by public library services by participating in the QLP participation in the Quality Leaders programme offer several benefits to library services. First, it provides opportunities for faster learning about how to better meet the needs of the Black community, because it will be supported by systematic and timely evaluation, as well as by co-learning with partner library services. Second, it offers a way of enhancing the

internal capacity of public library services through service development, rather than through conventional training courses. Consequently, harder to acquire capabilities – only really available through learning by doing – should accrue, providing there is a readiness to learn within a library service.

The second stage offers a specific benefit. This is undertaking an initiative that is also a response to best value. The aim of Stage 2 is to develop a local best value performance indicator(s) as well as to take concepts for enhanced or new services (from the feasibility study) and turn them into well worked out proposals. It is envisaged that these local best value performance indicators will be included in the annual performance plan. They will need to be derived from an understanding of the needs of the Black community (or communities) so that performance will be linked in an obvious way to meeting those needs. This feature of the work of a development team will locate a proposal for enhanced, or new, services in the mainstream of local authority activities. It will also ensure that the enhanced, or new, services engage with best value arrangements within authorities to ensure continuous improvement.

### **Disseminating the findings of the feasibility study**

With an increasing focus on evidence-based practice it is of increasing importance to cascade the experience gained from the QLP. One feature of the project has been the dissemination of information and sharing of the outcomes. A press release was widely distributed in April 2000 under the heading “Innovation in library services: working for social inclusion” which raised awareness of the issues within the profession.

This part of the process has been assisted by the activities of the Social Exclusion Action Planning Network that produces a newsletter, organises conferences and provides training programmes – both general and in-house. In addition the QLP has an advisory group and a growing e-mail network of contacts. One ILS school has added a lecture to a module on national information planning involving a major player in the project.

### **The future of the QLP**

During the first two stages some key points were identified which would assist the future development of the QLP.

There is need for a strong central co-ordinating body or person. This can be a nominated person from a participating authority who would be seconded for the project, or through an external recruitment. One of the tasks of this post would be to set up a strong communications network.

The Quality Leaders would benefit from more exposure to new ideas, experiments, experiences, and readings from the academic and political world – outside the authorities, as well as from outside library and information service. The co-ordinator post described above can ensure that this happens.

One idea for enhancing the scheme would be to set up regular seminars with invited guests from government, local and academic world. These could also use films, arts and drama to expand horizons and a “recommended reading list” could be maintained which could expand upon the provided texts to include articles, films etc. for all-round development.

Since the project is a “Black” project, there is a need for a module/component on combating racism, taking on board ideas, experiences, history, resistance etc. of racism. This would provide a supportive structure and network in combating racism and connect with Black organisations, e.g. Diversity Council, and the Social Exclusion Action Planning Network.

It was felt that the project could benefit from more of a “community outlook” element in the programme which would also encapsulate greater and more formal community involvement in the project work.

The issue of some sort of formal accreditation had been discussed at various stages throughout the project and it is possible that it may be able to incorporate connections with the Library Association Chartership programme, NVQs and a professional development programme. QLP “graduates” could thereby earn formally recognised credits for entering these and other programmes.

It was felt that there is a continuing need for a strong and consistent presence of the University of North London Management

Research Centre (MRC) in all aspects of the project, especially in maintaining constant contact with QLs, sponsors, etc.

In order to aid the development of robust performance measures for Quality Leader performance, it was felt that a six-month evaluation of performance and progress would be beneficial. This could be built upon to provide a regular and formal response and feedback from sponsors, Quality Leaders and other stakeholders (e.g. the local community, advisory group).

The role of Advisory Group as an on-going support could be strengthened.

### The way ahead

With the completion of Stage 2, the two pilot authorities – Birmingham and Merton – are considering the implementation of the project proposals developed by their Quality Leaders. This would lead to moving to Stage 3.

At the same time, discussions have been taking place with Resource to extend the project to a national one. A meeting was held on 19 July 2001 when Resource indicated that they were definitely interested in supporting QLP. The Stage 2 report by the MRC was due to be taken to a meeting of Resource board members on 31 July – with the aim of getting QLP into the Resource action plan. A proposal is being prepared for submission to Resource which will allow up to 20 organisations to take part in round 2 of the QLP based on the recommendations of the two reports prepared by the MRC. The proposal will include extending the QLP to include archives, museums, and galleries in keeping with the remit of Resource.

Concurrently connections are being developed with the museum sector. The Museum Association runs a similar scheme which provides bursaries for traineeships for Black museum workers. The European Social Fund and the Paul Hamlyn Foundation fund the scheme.

“Our work so far (in partnership with the Museums Association) has been to develop positive action traineeships with museums whereby the trainee gains ‘on-the-job’ experience whilst studying for the PGDip/MA in Museum Studies with us. We are currently running with two Birmingham museums in their Art and History Curator’s Departments.

We have also offered positive action bursaries for students to undertake the course full time in one year – we had one student in the pilot year and two this year just gone, with two more to begin in September. These have been run with the Museums Association who gained funding from the Paul Hamlyn Foundation. We are currently exploring funding channels to continue both strands of this work and to try and widen it out to other university training providers” (Sandell, 2001).

Another relevant project is the Sharing Museum Skills Scheme, funded by the Millennium Commission. It provides grants for individuals working and volunteering in museums, archives and library special collections to be seconded to other museums, archives and libraries. The aim of the scheme is to provide professional development for the individual and to improve the quality of archives, museums, and library special collections for their users. This is an opportunity to create links with and to find out about other museums, archives and libraries in the UK.

### Reflections on the QLP experience

While it is perhaps too early to pass a final judgement on the success, or otherwise, of the QLP, it is possible to look at the issues it attempts to address and to summarise the experience.

The QLP needs to be seen in the context of a number of recent reports which highlight issues around management, effective leadership in general, in local authorities and in libraries, as well as issues of social and racial exclusion. What emerges from these recent concerns is the need to find solutions to problems which, if not addressed, can lead to major social and management failures. The QLP, in its first two stages, has already begun to address some of these concerns which include the need for dynamic leadership in the public library service.

Public libraries will need dynamic leadership to expand their role and seize opportunities that are emerging ... those who run public libraries will require fresh vigour and enthusiasm ... the avant-garde public library should be in the hands of efficient, pragmatic managements. The library community and the elected members who control services must look for managers,

specialists and professionals with exceptional capabilities. Authorities will need individuals who are aware of the service ethic and who fully recognise the social, economic and political significance of their work (Aslib, 1995).

In *Recruit, Retain and Lead*, Usherwood *et al.* (2001) report the findings of a major project into human resources in the public library sector:

The question of how to find the public library leaders for tomorrow was raised throughout the present study. The general consensus was that there was a lack of leadership in the public library profession, and no identified way in which a new generation of leaders might be fostered . . . The indications are that the public library service may not only have to identify and cultivate its future leaders but may also need to modify the organisational culture in which they operate.

The issue of effective leadership has been discussed by Alimo-Metcalfe (n.d.).

There is a warning contained in these findings, namely that the current, almost obsessive attention being paid to managerial competencies (which are increasingly adopted in UK organisations, including those in the public sector), focus primarily on Transactional Leadership components.

A common phrase in the organisational literature is, “what gets measured, gets the attention”. We are therefore in grave danger of preparing organisations to cope with the ever-increasing demands of change (with fewer staff) by emphasising management, which seeks stability and order.

The very ingredient which will enable organisations to survive in such an environment, namely Transformational Leadership, which by its nature is more elusive and more complex, is in danger of being smothered by the fact that we are promoting Transactional Leadership at the expense of Transformational.

The challenges, therefore, are to ensure that local government organisations scrutinise their human resource policies and practices, management and leadership development interventions, and their organisational development strategies, to ensure that transformational qualities and characteristics become implicit within them. Any strategy is, after all, only as strong as its weakest link.

The consequences of not embracing these challenges are potentially disastrous to such a people-intensive service in both human and financial terms (Alimo-Metcalfe, n.d.).

## Black leadership in the information sector

The effects of institutional racism in British society in general, and in the information field, are well documented. Roach and Morrison (1998), the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry (Great Britain, Home Office, 1999), *Open to All?* (Muddiman *et al.*, 2000) as well as various reports from the Social Exclusion Unit and the Department of Culture, Media and Sport (1999) have highlighted the need for change to ensure fair and equal treatment for Black communities and information workers. Yet few initiatives exist to address the need to have more Black people in position of power from where they can influence policies. In the absence of Black managers and leaders as is the case in the USA, there are no Black organisations which can provide collective leadership to fill this vacuum until the situation changes. Perhaps the Diversity Council can play this role if allowed to develop. One of the bases for starting the QLP was that librarianship and information education provided by the universities had contributed little in creating new Black managers and leaders. The same can be said of management training schemes.

It is in this context that one needs to see the QLP. Some positive developments can be mentioned:

- The very fact that such an initiative has emerged at all in the information field is indeed an important achievement. A number of favourable conditions have created objective conditions for such a move, and a few individuals and organisations have taken advantage of these external conditions to create the “QLP model”.
- A connection has been made between public libraries and the academic world through a very productive work relationship between the various components of the QLP. Most useful has been the link with the Business Management Centre of the University of North London (BMC).
- Efforts are now being made to extend co-operation to related fields, such as museums.
- Stronger connections are being made in Birmingham and Merton with local Black communities. In the case of Merton, the

extensive consultation by the Quality Leader (Michael Junor) has created a much more favourable community perception of the library service. This has been reinforced by discussions at the community consultation forum, the Library and Arts Forum with Ethnic Minorities (LIFE). This positive perception and image is reflected in the community contributions to the first issue of *Merton ReachOut*.

- Support from Resource and the Library Association has been crucial in ensuring that the project takes off.
- The use of the Advisory Group provides an internal checking mechanism to ensure that broader ideas, experiences and view-points are incorporated in the policy-making and planning process.
- The QLP programme has been informed by extensive local government experiences available from the Business Management Centre. They also bring experiences of academic work as well as various government contracts which ensure that the current thinking at the highest level is incorporated in the design of the QLP programmes.
- The QLP has also benefited from the close links of key players with national initiatives, e.g. *Open to All?*, the Diversity Council, the Social Exclusion Action Planning Network, as well as with government initiatives (e.g. Libraries for All) and policy work in the Library Association (Social Inclusion Policy Action Group).
- The Social Exclusion Planning Network regularly reports on the developments in the QLP in its monthly newsletter. The Network and the QLP have also held joint conferences addressing issues of social and racial exclusion. The Network has now been commissioned to produce the quarterly *QLP News* which has helped to give a higher profile to the project as well as reaching out to Black communities and information workers.
- The pilot stage 2 brought together perhaps the largest library authority in the UK (Birmingham) and one of the smaller London authorities (Merton). The different experiences, resources and staffing structures provided a useful

backdrop for ensuring that the QLP was able to meet diverse needs.

- QLP reports are regularly submitted to Merton's Joint Consultative Committee for Ethnic Minorities and so get higher profile locally as well as being recorded in the national LARRIE database. They are similarly submitted to the Library Association's Equal Opportunities Subcommittee on which the QLP now has a regular representative.

Progress has been made to achieve recognition of the needs of Black communities in using British public libraries, provide equal opportunity to Black library and information workers, and develop leaders. The QLP has developed an action research and learning model that can be adapted for use in other information and library situations. The struggle is not over yet.

## Notes

- 1 Stephen Lawrence, a black teenager, was murdered in London in April 1993. Public concern led to a government inquiry on matters arising, particularly to identify the lessons to be learned for the investigation and prosecution of racially motivated crime. It raised public consciousness about the more general and worrying issue of institutional racism. To date no successful prosecution has been brought against the killers.
- 2 Among the people active on the project with Shiraz Durrani are John Pateman, John Vincent, Naila Durrani, Prof. Paul Joyce, Dean Bartlett and Geoff Mills.
- 3 Motions proposed at the Library Association's Annual General Meeting held on 23 October 1996:

### Motion 8

Due notice having been given in accordance with bylaw 61, the following motion will be presented: "Issues of race and class are as relevant and important to the library community as they are to society at large. A well-attended meeting of the Black library workers held at the LA in April revealed that the Association needs to be proactive in its recruitment of these workers and those who are already members should be encouraged to be more involved in LA activities. We therefore call upon this AGM to recommend to Council: (1) that the LA establishes a formal Black library Workers Group, which will have the same status (capitation, Council members, etc., as other LA groups); that the LA organises an annual conference for Black library Workers; (3) that the Black library Workers Group is allocated a regular column in the Library Association Record or quarterly supplements to the LAR. The contents of this column/supplement will be edited

by the Equal Opportunities Sub-Committee.”  
Proposed: Mr Shiraz Durrani (Mbr No. 0039636)  
Seconded: Mr John Pateman (Mbr No. 0032146).

#### Motion 9

Due notice having been given in accordance with bylaw 61, the following motion will be presented: “Public library research indicates there is a link between social class, deprivation and library usage. We therefore call upon this AGM to recommend to Council: (1) that social class is included in the LA’s Equal Opportunity Statement and supporting literature; (2) that the LA issue a guidance note on social class, similar to those on sexual orientation, older people, etc.; (3) that the LA commission further research into the usage and non-usage of libraries by social class.” Proposed: Mr John Pateman (Mbr No. 0032146) Seconded: Mr Shiraz Durrani (Mbr No. 0039636) (see *Library Association Record*, 1996).

- 4 In 2000 the Library and Information Commission was replaced by another government body – Resource – a strategic agency working with, and for, museums, archives and libraries.
- 5 Since 1998 local authorities have been required to prepare Annual Library Plans by the Department of Culture, Media and Sport. From 2000 local authorities were required to deliver all their services to a standard which covers both cost and quality, by the most economic, efficient and effective means. (see Favret, 2000).

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## Appendix. The revised proposal

The application was entitled “Quality Leaders Project for Black Library and Information Workers – Feasibility Study”.

### Aims and objectives

The Association of London Chief Librarians, the London Borough of Merton and The Management Research Centre at the University of North London propose to conduct a three-month research project which aims to examine how the role and influence of Black library workers in the development of library services for the Black community can be enhanced. The proposed project has both a research component and a development component.

With respect to the research component, the project aims to gain an understanding of how the numerous stakeholders involved in the provision and consumption of library services view existing provision to the Black community. It further aims to identify realistic improvements in this provision that these stakeholders would like to see happen. The results from this component will then inform the development component.

At the development component, the project will go on to identify possible ways in which service provision could be improved and possible development opportunities for Black library workers. It is proposed that these two aspects of the development component of the project are closely dovetailed and achieved through the design of a potential development programme known as the Quality Leaders Project (QLP).

The key aim of the project is thus to conduct a feasibility study of the QLP within the context of the research component. The QLP itself is aimed at developing Black library managers.

The outcomes of the research would therefore consist of:

- a report outlining the research findings;
- a feasibility study aimed at developing the precise nature and evaluating the feasibility of the QLP;
- a funding proposal for the QLP which can be used to apply for funds from the Home Office post-Section 11 scheme and from various European funds.

### Methodology

It is proposed that these research objectives and outputs be achieved by using multiple methods, concentrating predominantly upon interviews with various stakeholders. The main method of data collection will, therefore, be in-depth, semi-structured interviews which will be used in conjunction with more anthropological methods such as observations, focus groups, the collection of a number of relevant documents relating to the case and the use of field notes. All of the interviews and field notes will be partially transcribed and other sources of textual information, including relevant documentation, will be scanned into the computer. The data will be analysed using qualitative analysis software.

Data will be gathered from three different sites across the UK, one in London, one in the Midlands and one in North England. In each site, interviews would be conducted with key stakeholders. These stakeholders are identified as library managers, potential QLP “sponsors”, potential QLP “trainees”, other library staff, library users from the Black community. It is proposed to conduct a focus group with three Black library users (we include “Asian” in the term “Black”) from each site and a one-to-one interview with one of each of the other stakeholders at each site, making a total of 21 interviewees and 12 interviews and three focus groups. Interviews and focus groups would be approximately one hour long.

The questioning within the interviews would create a baseline in terms of the existing service processes. We would ask service users, and professionals/managers what actually happens at the moment. And of course we would ask about their satisfaction with the current service. The study would then partially follow a service enhancement model. Thus interviews with service users would explore the needs of service users (what they want and why they want it). Then professionals and managers in the library service would be asked about the “degrees of freedom” in service delivery (Ohmae, 1982). This would enable us to identify the variables that influence the value of the services to library users (e.g. building, skills of library staff, the range and depth of books of interest to users, Internet facilities, etc.). Finally we would also make use of a “programme planning rationale”. This involves interviewing service users to identify

the problems they have with the current services and their priorities. Interviews with professional library staff could follow on and explore how service users' problems and priorities could be addressed. This includes looking at ideas for service developments. The professionals could be asked about new types of solutions to the problems and priorities of the service users. Interviews with senior managers (who have to sponsor change and find resources) could follow on and look for possible objections to ideas of professionals in terms of resource constraints and strategic goals of the service (Delbecq and Van de Ven, 1976).

With respect to how management development opportunities would be identified and evaluated on the basis of this service enhancement basis, there are two possible approaches:

- (1) develop the managers who can then develop the new services; or
- (2) identify the service development vision for the Black community and then identify the management development opportunities that are created thereby.

We would be adopting the second approach. The identification of new service users' needs and thus service developments and enhancements will imply new capabilities amongst the managers and professionals of the library service. This will imply management development objectives and we could then comment on the management development goals that might be set and how Black professionals might be developed as managers on the basis of them.

### Timeliness

The project aims to address various elements that emerged from the Roach and Morrison (1998) research. Specifically the following research finding and recommendation are relevant:

- *Research finding.* Ethnic minorities are under-represented among staff within the public library service and there are few opportunities for ethnic minority citizens to influence service provision.
- *Recommendation.* Invest new resources which will enable public library services to develop innovative and effective programmes for involving ethnic minority citizens in the library planning process. At the same time a nationally co-ordinated

positive action training programme should be established in order to facilitate the increased recruitment of professionally qualified ethnic minorities throughout the public service.

The two components of the QLP address the above concerns. In the long term, the QLP will not only enable lack library workers to gain valuable experience in developing their own projects, it will also enable Black communities to be actively involved in the library planning process.

### Benefits

Following the publication of the Roach and Morrison (1998) research and the *Macpherson Report* (Great Britain, Home Office, 1999), all local library authorities are seeking new ways of addressing the concerns around the position of Black library workers in the workforce and in the provision of services to Black communities. This is demonstrated in their Annual Library Plans. There can be a lot of wastage in resources if each authority tries to find its own solution. It is far better to embark on national or regional projects which can benefit all. In addition such an approach can provide valuable benefits by pooling ideas. The QLP can be seen as one such co-operative approach.

The level of interest in finding an appropriate solution was indicated by the fact that over 60 participants applied for the Executive Briefing on Monday 28 June 1999 at The Library Association on "The Significance Of The Stephen Lawrence Inquiry For Public Libraries". The concept of the "Quality Leaders Project for Black Library and Information Workers" was launched at the Briefing and there was a great interest among participants. Already about ten library London authorities have indicated an interest in participating in the project, with about 25 potential Quality Leaders identified.

There is reason to believe that there is a similar interest throughout the country as became obvious at the Library conference, Institutional Racism; stamping it out in Libraries at the LA on 12 November 1999. Acknowledging that "institutional racism does exist in our profession", Bob McKee revealed that out of over 20,000 personal members of the LA, only 1.2 per cent – i.e. 286 individual members – were of African, Caribbean or Asian background. He also

revealed that only three Black members earned over £27,000. The QLP is the first such project to seek possible practical solution to the various challenges.

#### **Deliverables**

A written report for the commission will be produced at the end of the project and time has been allowed in the projection.

#### **Dissemination**

A follow-up executive briefing meeting will be held at the completion of the project to make the results available to a wider community.

This will be sponsored by the ALCL and the London and Home Counties Branch of the LA and will be held at the LA.

Articles for the *Library Association Record*, *Public Library Journal* as well as for management journals will be written, giving the results as well as the experience of the project.

#### **Timescale and starting date**

The project timetable will be:

- *December 1999*. Recruit and induct research worker, design the interview protocol, arrange and conduct interviews and focus groups with key stakeholders.
- *January 2000*. Complete interviews/focus groups; transcribe and analyse data.
- *February 2000*. Complete analysis; write up research report; prepare funding proposal.
- *March 2000*. Executive Briefing and release of reports.

#### **The costs**

Note on costing:

Merton will sub-contract the research project to the Management Research Centre, University of North London as consultants employed to conduct the research for a fixed fee. The fees will be £9,985 for the whole project.

Additional contributions will be in the form of staff time from the organisations of the advisory panel. In addition, Merton will provide additional support in staff time, co-ordinating work etc. for the project.