

## Executive summary

This is the fourteenth report in the LISU series. A number of changes have been introduced, to facilitate collection and comparison of many of the performance indicators being recommended by ASCEL for both public library services to children and schools library services. The response rates were rather better than those obtained last year, at 81% from the public library service and 88% from schools library services. 80% of returns were received electronically. Key findings to emerge from this year's survey are outlined below.

### Public library services to children

- ❖ Only one authority has no-one responsible for the day to day operations of the children's library service, and only one reported a vacancy in this senior position.
- ❖ It is estimated that there are around 580 professional children's librarians, with a further 110 in integrated public/schools library services. Data from Children's PLUS surveys carried out during the year by 53 authorities in England and Wales show that users overwhelmingly regard the staff as "OK" or "Good".
- ❖ UK public libraries had over 24 million children's books in stock in 2002-03, equivalent to 2.2 per child. 7.8 books were issued per resident child, and at the end of the year, over seven million were on loan. These figures show little change from last year.
- ❖ Around one quarter of resident children are estimated to be active borrowers. Data from the Children's PLUS surveys carried out during the year show that 63% of children on average who came to the library

looking for a book to borrow found something to take home.

- ❖ Around 3.5 million books were purchased during 2002-03, and total expenditure on materials for children amounted to over £17 million.
- ❖ Spending on library services for children is highest in London, at £3.37 per child, and lowest in Northern Ireland, at £1.20. Just over half of this is spent on staff, and 45% on materials, with a tiny proportion on specific activities and promotions for children.
- ❖ Eighty-four percent of service points have spoken word material available in the children's library, 49% music and 65% videos. Although 92% of authorities provide internet access for children, this is only available in 83% of service points. Slightly less – 82% – have PCs for children to use.
- ❖ Included once more this year is a table describing the extent of outreach services undertaken, both to schools and other groups including traveller children, ethnic minority groups and disabled or hospitalised children.

### Schools library services

- ❖ One service, in Scotland, was reported as having closed this year. Sixteen local authorities are now without formal provision for school library support.
- ❖ It remains the case that no two schools library services in the UK offer the same combination of services to the same range of schools. 95% offer book and resource information, 93% give

advice on policy and development planning, and 91% offer project loans, and OFSTED support. At the other extreme, just 11% offer a recording service.

- ❖ There are an estimated 310 professional librarians working in schools library services, with a further 110 in integrated public/schools library services. 90% of them are chartered librarians, and they spend almost 40% of their time giving advice.
- ❖ In England, there has been a further move towards direct funding from schools, with 87% of services obtaining their greatest slice of income from this source, compared to 81% last year and 75% the year before. In Scotland and Wales the LEA remains the chief funding source.
- ❖ An estimated 6.6 million LEA pupils in the UK are served by schools library services – 70% of the total. On

average, 89% of primary schools, 81% of special schools and 72% of secondary schools use services where these are available.

- ❖ Throughout the UK, schools library services are estimated to stock a total of 27 million items, 3.8 per pupil served. They acquired 2.2 million new items in 2002-03, and loaned some 18.0 million to schools, 2.5 per pupil served. These figures are all up on last year.
- ❖ Total spending was estimated at over £38 million, £5.41 per pupil served. Half was spent on staff, one third on materials, and the remainder on premises and other costs, including transport. Expenditure was highest in Northern Ireland, at over £10 per pupil, and lowest in the metropolitan districts, at £3.68 per pupil, on average.