Communities Committee

Report title:	Mobile Library Services - Feedback from the rural service delivery pilots
Date of meeting:	16 January 2019
Responsible Chief Officer:	Tom McCabe – Executive Director, Community and Environmental Services

Strategic impact

Norfolk is a rural, geographically dispersed county and consideration of rural service delivery is of key importance, particularly with respect to socially isolated and vulnerable groups.

The content of this report is reflective of the Council's strategic aspirations:

- Offering our help early to **prevent and reduce** demand for specialist services
- **Joining up** our work so that similar activities and services are accessible, **done once and done well**
- Being **business like** and making the best use of **digital technology** to ensure value for money
- Using evidence and data to **target our work** where it can make the most difference

Executive Summary

A report was presented to the Communities Committee on 4 July 2018 outlining proposed principles for rural library service delivery, proposed criteria for mobile route planning, and offering ideas for alternative service delivery trials such as pop up libraries.

This paper explores the outcomes of a trial of pop up libraries that took place in a number of rural locations in October/November 2018. It also explores the notion of libraries in other locations – namely public houses.

At its meeting on 10 October 2018, Communities Committee members requested an update relating to this work. In addition, the October Committee agreed an alternative approach to mobile libraries which will retain a county wide provision.

The key findings of the trial highlighted the following:

- **Feasibility**: the trial demonstrated that pop-up libraries are achievable and would work over time, but significant effort would need to go into the planning, delivery and marketing of the service to make it a success.

- **Cost:** there are significant additional costs involved in setting up "pop up" library offers – a basic calculation showed a cost of £12.25 per visit, which is more than double the existing cost of a mobile visit (£5.33). There is no additional funding or revenue budget available to support this cost increase.

- **Customer satisfaction:** pop-up libraries give opportunities to deliver an enhanced service not solely book lending, and as such feedback was overwhelmingly positive amongst those who attended.

Recommendations:
Members are recommended to:

1. **Acknowledge the results of the trial in relation to feasibility, cost and customer satisfaction.**

> 2. **Agree the pop-up concept is only pursued as part of a wider corporate agenda in targeted areas defined by having a local need. The library would be part of a wider offer.**
>
> 3. **Agree not to actively pursue implementing library offers into alternative premises at present due to lack of evidence of their success elsewhere and the agreed continuation of a county wide mobile library offer.**

1. Introduction

The pop-up library trial was proposed to assess the feasibility, cost and customer satisfaction of the pop-up library idea.

1.1 The trial took place in 5 locations in a three-week period in October/November 2018. The choice of location for each pop-up library took into account wi-fi availability, size and premises suitability. Norfolk Library and Information Service is grateful to the management of each location for offering their premises free of charge for the duration of the pilot and for working with us to deliver the pilot pop-up libraries.

1.2 The pop-up libraries were held in the following locations: Tivetshall and Old Buckenham on Wednesdays, Shipdham and Bradenham on Thursdays, and Pulham St Mary on Fridays. The trial made use of different venues including village halls (Tivetshall, Old Buckenham, Bradenham), a church (Shipdham) and a heritage centre and café (Pulham). Each pop-up library stayed for half a day.

1.3 The pilot pop-up libraries were organised and staffed by paid workers, and efforts were made to ensure that a basic book offer was augmented by a flexible programme of activities for early years (0 – 5-year olds), children and for older people to reduce social isolation. In addition, the Library Service engaged with partners to add further dimensions to the visits. 240 hours of paid staff time were utilised in organising and delivering the pilots. Negotiating the availability of spaces was the most time-consuming part of the pilot.

1.4 The delivery of a pop-up library involved a lot of manual handling, the use of a vehicle (which for the period was taken off other duties)

1.5 In addition to gathering the initial perceptions of participating customers, the three-week pilot gave the Library Service sufficient time to undertake a comprehensive assessment of the costs, time, effort and pitfalls involved in organising a network of pop-up libraries. Three weeks, however, is not long enough to encourage a regular clientele to visit the library and the temporary nature of the activity made the concept difficult to market.

2. Evaluation of the pop-up libraries

2.1 As part of the pilot, pop-up libraries in Suffolk were visited, for advice and for set up help. Suffolk Libraries originally ran a pilot in 3 locations across Suffolk. Only one library (Shotley) from the original pilot continues to run and this has recently been joined by another in Rushmere. Pop up libraries in Suffolk offer customers opportunities to take part in a range of activities for children and adults, alongside the opportunity to borrow books and to use computers. The pop-up libraries in Suffolk have not replaced mobile library visits and the mobile library continues to visit many locations in both Shotley and Rushmere.

2.2 The pop-up library in Shotley has recently joined forces with the local district council's face to face information service which visits on a weekly basis. While the other pop up library in the Rushmere area of north east Ipswich is jointly funded by

the district council with contributions from a local county councillor's locality budget. The cost of delivering a weekly 3-hour pop-up at the Ransome's Community Centre is over £16k per year.

2.3   This benchmarking gave the popup pilot a framework to compare the Norfolk trial sites against.

2.4   The overall use of the pop-up libraries in the 5 locations is set out below

Location	Visitors				New Members		Book Issues		Book Returns	
	Adult	Child	Under 5s	Total	Adult	Child	Adult	Child	Adult	Child
Tivetshall	24	4	4	32	2	6	5	30	2	
Old Buckenham	22	20		42			17	48	20	7
Shipdham	22	4	2	28	6	7	9	5	1	
Bradenham	14	1		15	1		5	3	3	
Pulham St Mary	10	3	3	16			1	16	1	
Total	**92**	**32**	**9**	**133**	**9**	**13**	**32**	**72**	**25**	**7**

2.5   The visitor information can be seen by week and by site in the table below.
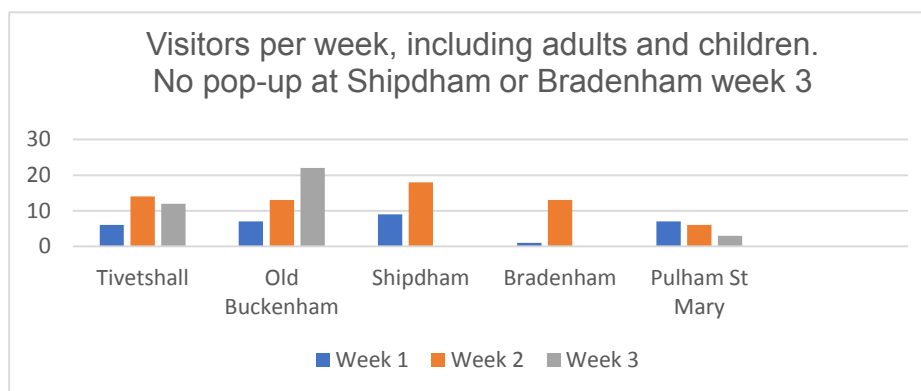
2.6   In some locations there was an increase in visitors as the pop-ups got established in that location and the word spread. Most visitors were either customers of static libraries or new users. The pop-up pilot was not particularly used by existing mobile library customers.

2.7   Old Buckenham was the most popular pop-up library but this may have been because the local primary school visited for weeks 2 and 3. Overall week 2 appears to have been the most successful regarding visitor numbers. At Bradenham in week 2, the increase in visitors is attributable to a local history talk that the library service organised. At Shipdham there was a Church coffee morning running at the same time as the pop-up.

Appendix 1 gives more information about the pop-up in each location.

2.8   Visitors to the pop-up libraries were asked to complete an evaluation survey. The results are set out below:

- 50% of visitors enjoyed the pop-up library
- 50% of visitors thought the pop-up library added to the cultural activities of their neighbourhood
- 60% of visitors indicated that the pop-up library helped them feel part of their community
- 50% of visitors thought the pop-up library had a good selection of books
- 85% of visitors thought the pop-up library was a good idea

Customers also gave feedback on the type and amount of library books available as part of the pop up. Workers delivering the pop up gathered information about the genres favoured by customers in each location.

2.9   The planning and delivery of the trials cost £2,883 of staff time for the 8 sessions. We spent £1,402 on equipment. This can be reused within the service. The transport costs were relatively low as we used an existing vehicle. However, for a regular long term service additional costs, including IT costs, would need to be factored in to the budget.

Using the staff delivery time and transport costs alone gave a cost per visitor for the pilot of £12.25. For comparison the cost per visitor for a mobile library in Norfolk last year was £5.33.

3.   Libraries in alternative premises

3.1   During the pilot period alternatives to mobile library visits were also investigated. Pub is the hub, a not for profit organisation of specialist advisors for communities and licensees who are thinking of broadening their range of services. Pub is the hub encourages communities, licensees, pub owners, breweries and the private sector to work together to match community priority needs with additional services which can be provided by the local pub and a good licensee. Pub is the hub is in the receipt of a one-off grant from Norfolk County Council Adult Social Services and Economic Development to widen the activities of public houses in the county to improve their viability and to enhance service delivery.

3.2   Pub is the hub has been active in Cornwall, working alongside the Cornwall Library Service and local licensees to develop micro libraries. 17 micro libraries are operating in public houses in the County. The micros libraries were set up in response to the reduction of the mobile fleet from five to one vehicle. In 2014 in Cornwall each mobile stop cost the Council £39. Our estimated cost in Norfolk for 2017-18 was £17 per stop.

3.3   A micro library is a browsing collection of approximately 200 books which include fiction, non-fiction and children's books, to give a flavour what is available from the wider library service. Customers are expected to self-serve and record the books they borrow using a manual honesty system.

3.4   A public computer at the venue enables customers to view the library catalogue as well as other online library services available to them as library members including requesting books online. The computer also allows users to interact with a wide range of Cornwall Council services via the website.

3.5   The library stock in a micro library is managed by a Community Library and Information Assistant who visits each month to check the stock, deliver requested books and exchange stock. Cornwall currently has no plans to set up any new micro

libraries. This activity would be additional to existing activity in Norfolk, and therefore would represent additional staffing and resource cost.

3.6   Project costs to set up the micro libraries in Cornwall were shared between the county council, pub is a hub and the licensee/brewery. No revenue costs or evaluation of the effectiveness of micro libraries has been provided by Cornwall County Council. There are no statistics available on the use or customer satisfaction with the service.

4.   Conclusion

4.1   The pilot pop-up library programme enabled the library service to assess the potential use of pop-up libraries in Norfolk. Pop-up libraries were trialled in 5 locations

4.3   In the main, pop-up libraries were well received by the customers that used them. The libraries were successful in attracting customers who had not used libraries before or who already were customers of branch libraries.

4.4   While use of the pop-up libraries was low, our experience showed that there was potential to grow an audience. This would probably be a new audience. Our experience demonstrated that the regularity of a pop-up library would be a key factor in its success, as would proximity to other local services such as schools and working alongside partners (public sector and VCSE) who also need to reach out into rural areas. This experience was echoed on a visit to a pop-up library in Shotley, Suffolk.

4.5   Using the experience of the pilot, we have been able to estimate the costs of setting up and delivering a pop-up library service. The costs below do not include book stock, IT costs, equipment costs, marketing, management costs or depreciation. The figures quoted below do not represent the recovery of full costs.

Item	Cost per visit	Comments
Venue Hire - Half Day	£ 40	Generally, Village Halls charge between £7 & £10 per hour. The Pennoyer Centre at Pulham would have been £83 for half a day.
Staff costs -	£ 93	One member of staff preparation and service delivery
Equipment	£ 10	IT and small sundry costs
Transport	£ 40	vehicle operating and fuel costs
Total weekly	£ 183	
Total estimated annual cost	£ 9,516	This would be for a weekly half day visit in line with the Suffolk model.

4.6   The pop-up concept, would be a significant additional cost for Norfolk Library and Information Service and therefore it would not be viable to deliver this within existing resources.

4.7   The recommendation would be that the pop-up concept is only pursued as part of a wider corporate agenda in targeted areas defined by having a local need. The

library would be part of a wider offer. Any such project would need suitable resources allocated to it.

5. Issues, risks and innovation

5.1   At its meeting in October 2018 the Communities Committee agreed the operating budget for the mobile library service. It agreed that all mobile library stops would be monthly from April 2018, and that as result two mobile libraries would be removed from the fleet and £100k saved.

5.2   Pop-up libraries take an innovative approach to rural service delivery and therefore it is important that they are properly planned and evaluated. This pilot proved a concept but highlighted the expense of the operating model.

6. Financial Implications

6.1   The current cost for a mobile library per day is £221 and on average a mobile library will visit 13 stops in day and would normally visit 3 villages. Therefore, the annual cost of a mobile library service to these communities would be £2,873.

6.2   The estimated annual cost of a pop up library provision is £9,516, when compared to the existing cost of the mobile library service it is not considered to be a cost effective delivery model for the library service alone.

6.3   To change the mobile library service offer completely would not generate enough revenue savings to pay for a popup equivalent based on the pilots.

Recommendations:

Members are recommended to:

1. **Acknowledge the results of the trial in relation to feasibility, cost and customer satisfaction.**

2. **Agree the pop-up concept is only pursued as part of a wider corporate agenda in targeted areas defined by having a local need. The library would be part of a wider offer.**

3. **Agree not to actively pursue implementing library offers into alternative premises at present due to lack of evidence of their success elsewhere and the agreed continuation of a county wide mobile library offer**

Officer Contact

If you have any questions about matters contained in this paper, get in touch with:

|			
Officer name:	Jan Holden	**Tel No.:**	01603 228910
Email address:	janet.holden@norfolk.gov.uk		

Pop-Up Library pilot – further information

Tivetshall

Whilst at Tivetshall the parish council ran a pop-up café alongside the pop-up library. As a result visitors to the café engaged with the library. One lady's feedback was that she liked 'meeting different people and browsing books'; when asked if there were any improvements we could make she responded with: 'like it as it is'.

The pop-up library offered an opportunity for other agencies to join with Libraries to deliver information and activities locally

We welcomed Carers Matter Norfolk on 24th October, and the Norfolk Reading Pathway on 31st October. The Carers Matter activity included "Norfolk Rocks" rock painting for children. The Norfolk Reading Pathway had some interest and one lady was able to get some help with her literacy. We also welcomed the Job Club Coordinator from Harleston Information Centre to our visit on 7th November. Visitors did not engage with this as much as hoped, but one lady did stay and speak to the coordinator to find out what was on offer and to explore volunteering options.

Tivetshall Breakdown - visitors
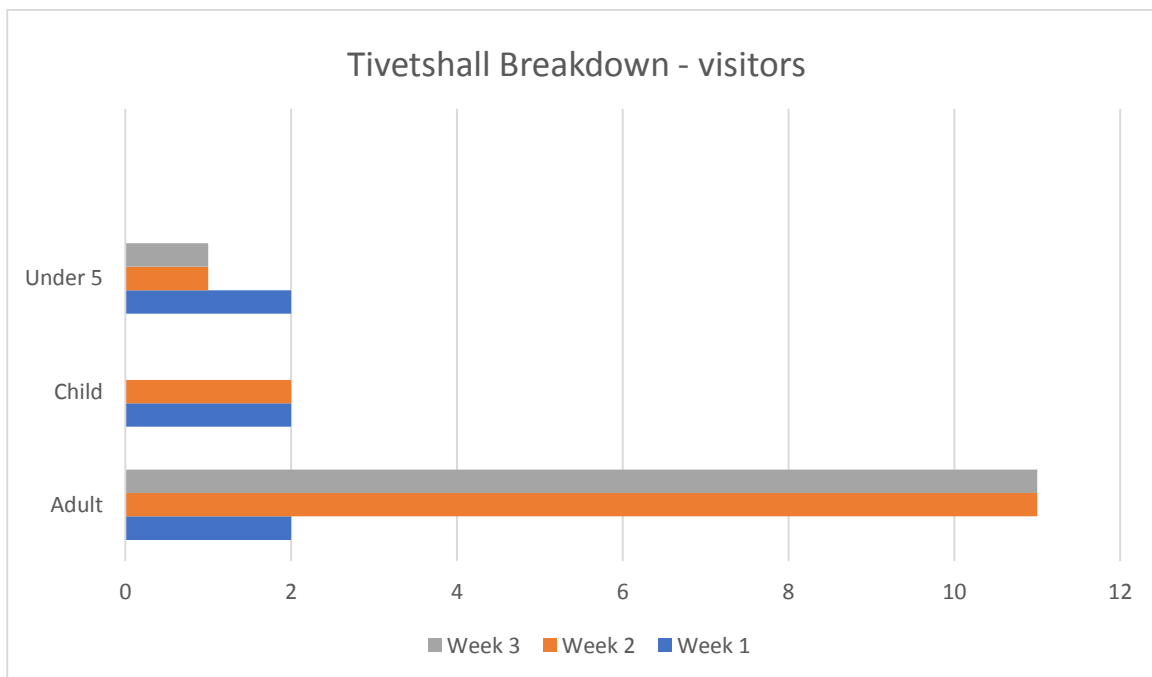
Overall at Tivetshall, the main visitors we welcomed were adults, however this is potentially because at the same time as the pop-up there was a preschool running at the school. If looking to run another pop-up we would visit on a different day.

Feedback from Partners:

Job Club Coordinator, Harleston Information Centre – visited 7th November

'I thought that the pop up I attended in Tivetshall was very successful. I think it worked well alongside the community café and would imagine that setup would work well going forward as it brings the community together to socialise as well as being able to engage with the library services and activities. The Harleston Jobs Club has funding to deliver pop ups in

South Norfolk until January 2020, therefore we would be keen to work in partnership with Norfolk Libraries until this date, we would then need to review the service.'

Old Buckenham

Our visits to Old Buckenham were different to the others – we had a variety of older members of the community visit on the first week and stay for the 3 hours we were there 'mardling'. We were also visited by a mum and child who had come over while dad was asleep. They sat in the children's section and did some reading together. Mum mentioned that she did not have a car so could not get to a static library. They visited on the third week too.

Our next 2 visits saw the primary school pop over with some children who had their own library cards. Their feedback said they would like it to become a regular feature, possibly once a month.

Old Buckenham breakdown - visitors

Legend: Under 5 (grey), Child (orange), Adult (blue)
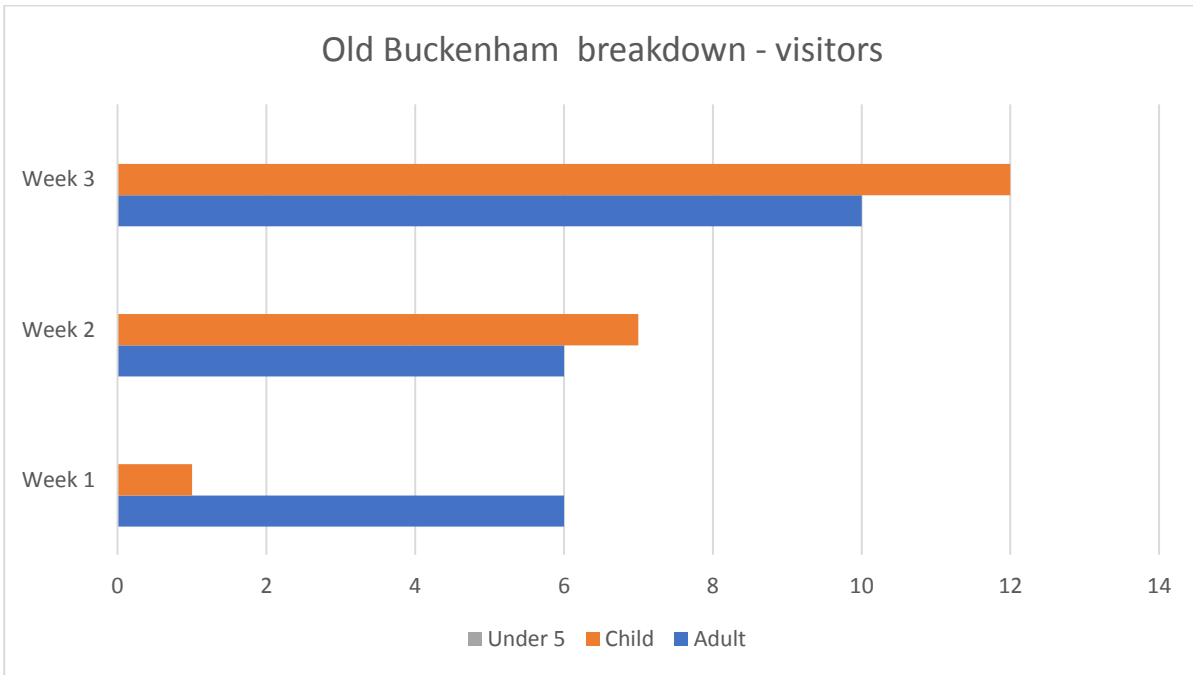
Overall Old Buckenham was successful because we invited the primary school to bring over any children with library cards; in week 2 we welcomed around 5 children and their teacher whilst week 3 saw us welcome around 11 children and more teachers. Each week saw the same adults visit. From the feedback, one lady mentioned that she enjoyed the pop-up library because it meant she could return her books without driving to Attleborough. Much feedback focussed on the 'social interaction' possible with the pop-up and the 'friendly atmosphere'.

We welcomed Carers Matter Norfolk to our pop-up on 24th October. Time was spent reminiscing with visitors about the history of the village and the war.

On week 3 the gentleman who had visited each week, said that he did not know what he was going to do on a Wednesday afternoon now because the pop up had provided him with a place to come to and get out of the house.

No photos taken at Old Buckenham but Old Buckenham primary school posted these on their twitter feed:

Photos on Old Buckenham blog post:

Shipdham

Shipdham was a successful pop up, especially in terms of welcoming new library users. During our visit on 25th October, a lady and her 3 children visited; she mentioned upon arriving that they were going to spend the day at home, but she saw our post on social media and thought they would come and do crafts together at the pop up library. They stayed for over 2 hours, signed herself and her children up as members, having never used a library before, and borrowed some books. In her words it was 'perfect' and had she had a car she would have followed us to Bradenham for the pop-up there.

Week 2 of the Shipdham pop-up was at the same time as their parish coffee morning – this was successful as we had good interest and footfall but the amount of space available to offer the pop-up was reduced. Feedback echoed this suggesting that it may be 'nice to separate coffee morning and pop-up library – especially if we want to introduce children to the library.' One feedback highlights the pop-up library provided 'the opportunity to reconnect with the library service.'
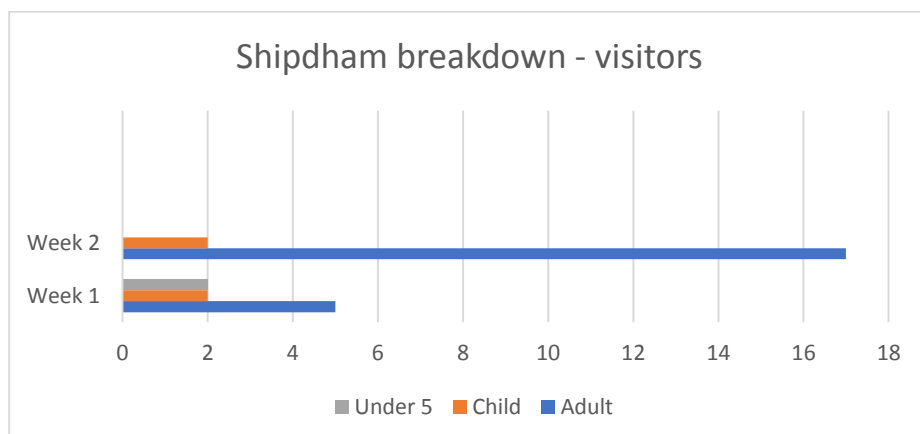

Shipdham breakdown - visitors

Shipdham Vicar:

'The set up was excellent and you used the space well. I feel the community enjoyed it, although I was disappointed at numbers. The range of activities was just right, but not sure it worked as well with the coffee morning because of the space available and do wonder if the younger parents/carers preferred not to come to the coffee morning.'

Any improvements: Better advertising and contacting local clubs more

Bradenham

Our first week at Bradenham saw 1 mum and child come and take part in our Lego activity and to borrow some books. Our second week there was busier because we had a talk running by the curator of Gressenhall Museum.

Bradenham breakdown - visitors
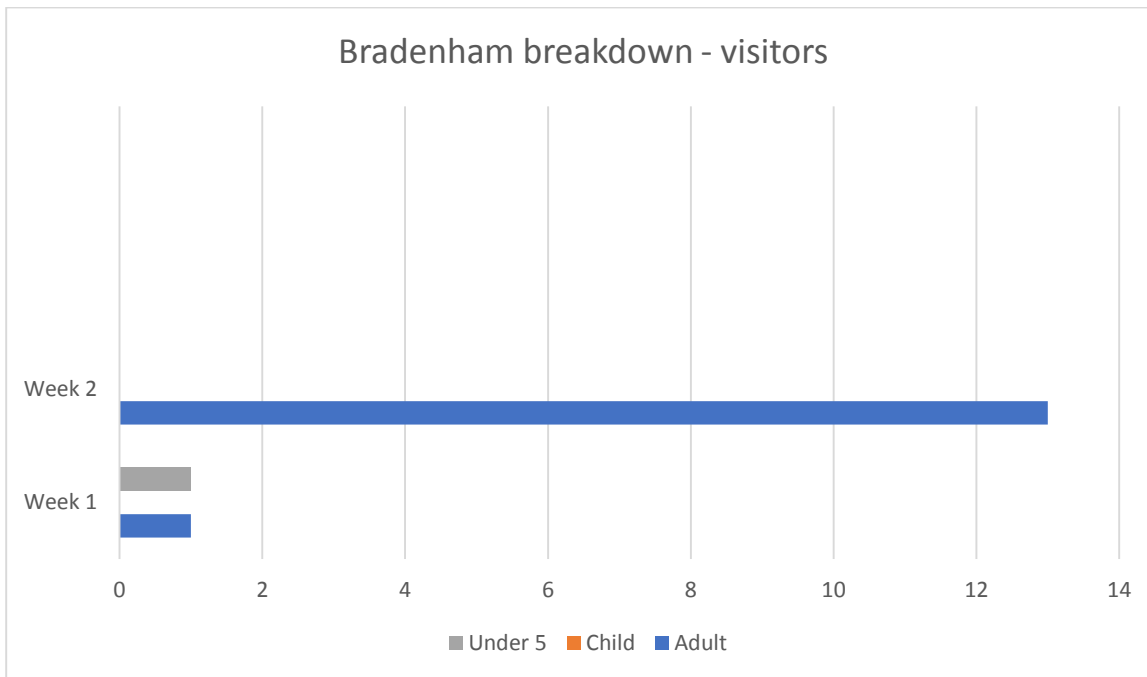
Overall Bradenham was not a successful pop-up. Week attracted visitors because a local history talk was organised.

- 'My wife and I came over from Watton for a talk by Megan Dennis and 'discover' the library.'
- 'Meeting people, selection of books, and a very interesting talk.'
- 'The talk was very interesting; the subject unusual.'

One lady signed up at the pop-up and had reserved a book to be collected at the pop-up

Feedback from partners:

Megan Dennis, curator at Gressenhall, visiting Bradenham to give a talk 01.11: 'The pop-up library was great opportunity to engage with a new audience and share parts of our collection with those not able to get to the museum. The library enabled us to engage with rurally isolated communities and the enthusiasm and interest from participants was fantastic.'
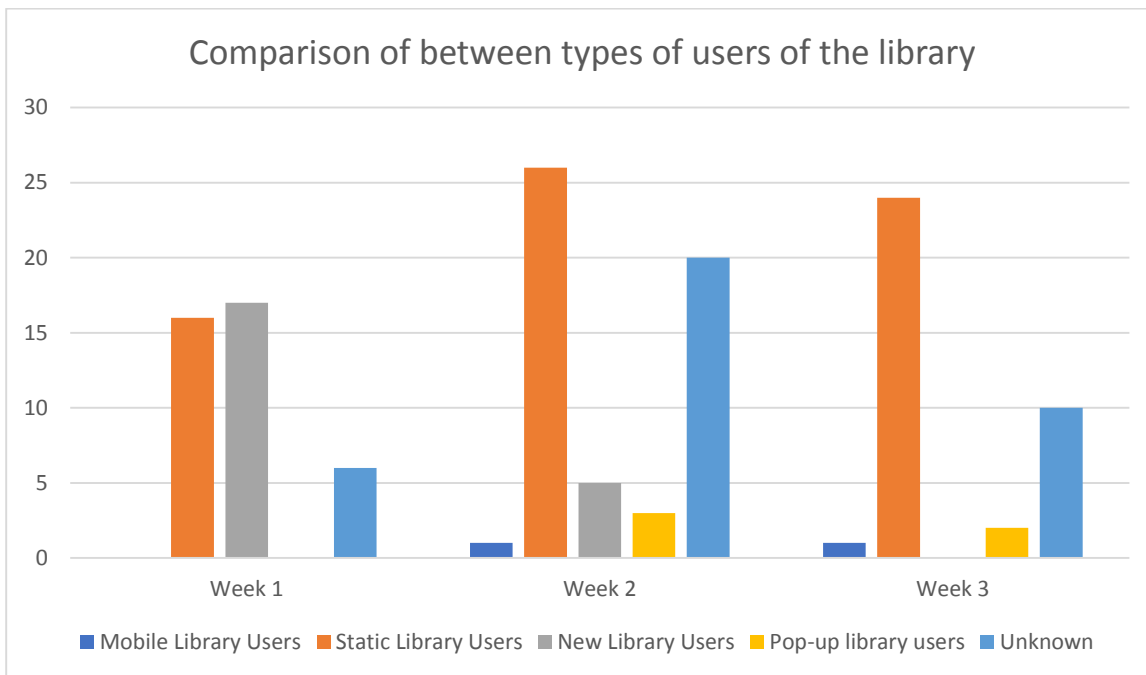
Pulham St Mary
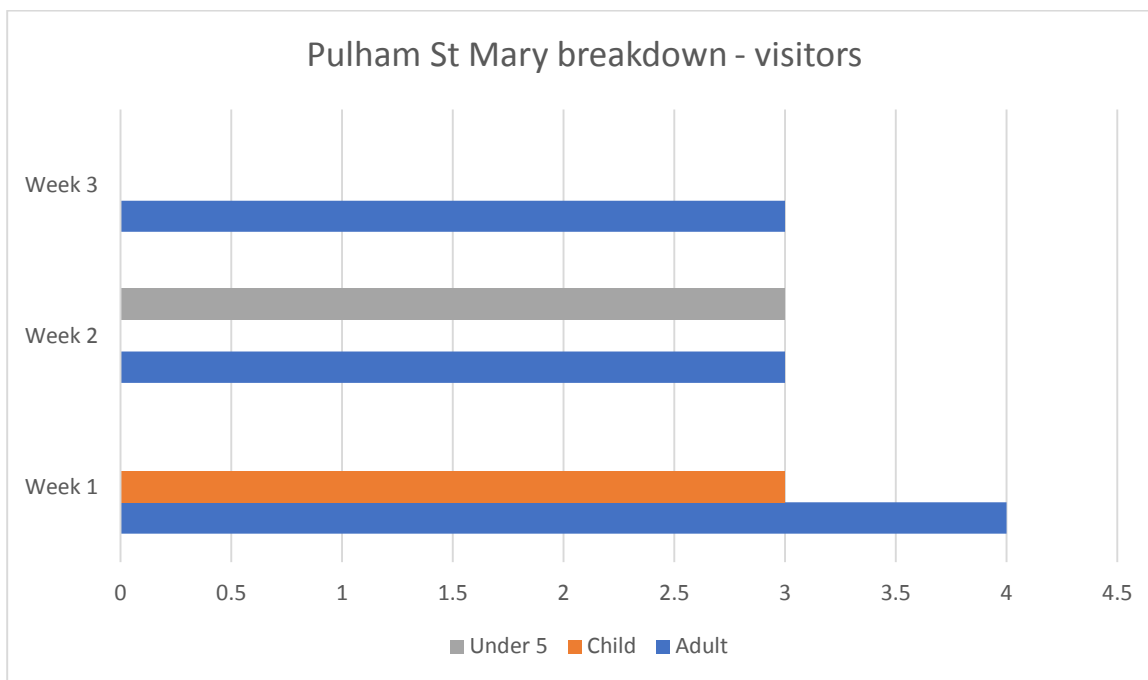
Overall Pulham was different to the others – based at the Pennoyer centre we were an 'add on' to the café. Most visitors to the café popped in to look but continued to their tables for their coffee.

Nonetheless one visitor was impressed by the activities we were offering: 'Lovely activities for children. Reading stories outside of the child's normal book collection.' And 'The boys loved drawing on the white rocks – great idea!' and followed up saying that the visit was perfect.

Comparison between types of library users

Comparison of between types of users of the library

Legend: Mobile Library Users · Static Library Users · New Library Users · Pop-up library users · Unknown

This graph approximates how many different library customers used the pop-up. The majority appear to be static library users, such as one lady at Old Buckenham who mentioned the pop-up saved her going to Attleborough to take her books back. We had one gentleman visit Old Buckenham on week 2 and week 3 who usually visited the mobile library but lately had not been able to visit due to mobility problems. We found that those who signed up as members of week 1 visited week 2 and week 3 to borrow books and use the space.