

EXECUTIVE REPORT

Survey of Visitors to British Archives

19 January 2005

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PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1 To inform Members of the findings of the 2004 visitor survey conducted at Teesside Archives.

BACKGROUND

2 Introduction

The user survey is a national survey managed by the Institute of Public Finance (IPF) on behalf of the National Council on Archives Public Services Quality Group (PSQG). The survey was conducted over one week in ????. The analysis of results is performed by IPF and is provided as a comparison against regional and national results.

- 3 The survey allows self-comparison with the national average to find out where it is doing well and where there is scope for improvement. The survey is designed to understand the profile of archive user and gauge views on the services provided. Other areas investigated are customer care, services available and the issue of the measuring the wider cultural and economic role of archives in the community. The national visitors survey supplies an important body of evidence in evaluating services and assessing priorities with an impact on a range of agendas. Following the establishment of regional archive councils in England and devolved governments for the home countries, the survey report in 2001 included a regional breakdown of the survey results and a breakdown of the upper quartile benchmarks to assist local authorities in the Best Value / CPA process.

4 Overview of results

It should be noted that this survey is as with all surveys a snapshot of use and provides indicative results. The weighting and national comparison ensures the validity for use in service planning.

Teesside Archives scored highly on the satisfaction rating of visitors on customer care, well above the national and regional ratings.

100% found service overall to be very good or good

92.4% find the staff helpful and friendly

69.2% stated document delivery to be very good

Ratings were lower for visitor (33%) and ICT (16%) facilities were rated as those most requiring improvement.

The increase in interest in family history is shown with 89% of visitors using the service for this purpose although 11% were using the information gained for formal educational purposes.

Visitor demographics:

- 71% are aged 55 and over
- 38% have been using Teesside Archives for more than five years
- 57% visitors are male
- 100% visitors state ethnic background as white
- 25% of visitors travel by public transport when visiting
- 48% used local services including food outlets
- 8% used overnight accommodation

5 Implications

The survey identifies the same key issues as the inspection reports. That the service offered is highly regarded but there is a need for improvement in visitor facilities and in expanding the range of users.

The economic impact of archives is often missed but many users obviously use other local services including hotels, restaurants and tourist attractions. 13% of visitors intended to stay in the area for up to a week.

The age range and diversity of those using the service probably reflects the time consuming nature of family history as a hobby. The recent BBC TV coverage has certainly boosted visitor numbers in general and interest from ethnic groups. The recent day school for Archives Awareness Month highlighted the importance of immigration to the building of the Tees Valley. However, the limited demographic range shown by the survey reinforces the need for the outreach/educational worker recommended by the inspection as well as a marketing budget/programme.

OPTION APPRAISAL/RISK ASSESSMENT

- 6 The survey contains much useful information to be used by the service when planning future activities.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

7 There are no immediate or new financial implications arising from this report.

Ward Implications

8 There are no ward implications arising from this report

Legal Implications

9 There are no legal implications arising from this report

RECOMMENDATIONS

10 That members note the survey results and their use in future planning,

REASONS

11 The recommendation is supported for the following reason

- a) The survey is nationally recognised and externally validated.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

PSQG results

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