



# The COSLA excellence AWARDS 2016

## APPLICATION FORM

Please refer to the '**2016 Guidance for Applicants**' before completing this application form.

The application form is split over four sections. It is up to you to decide the content and length of each section, but your application ***must not exceed three pages in total*** (excluding the cover pages).

Please ensure that your application covers the key criteria that we are looking for and is effectively presented. Any questions relating to your application or the submission process should be directed to [awards@cosla.gov.uk](mailto:awards@cosla.gov.uk) or 0131 474 9275.

The deadline for submission of entries is 5pm on FRIDAY 23 October 2015.

### Submitting Your Application Form

Please use our [online application portal](#) to submit this application form.

**PLEASE PROVIDE SOME DETAILS ABOUT YOUR APPLICATION:**

<b>CATEGORY APPLIED FOR</b>	Tackling Inequalities and Improving Health	
<b>PROJECT NAME</b> <i>(as you wish to see it published)</i>	VIP (Visually Impaired People) Service	
<b>LEAD ORGANISATION</b>	Edinburgh City Libraries	
<b>DEPARTMENT/TEAM</b>		
<b>PARTICIPANT NAMES OR PARTNER ORGANISATIONS</b>	Paul McCloskey	
<b>CONTACT NAME</b>	Jo McStay , Corporate Manager, Business Intelligence Service	
<b>CONTACT DETAILS</b>	<a href="mailto:Jo.McStay@edinburgh.gov.uk">Jo.McStay@edinburgh.gov.uk</a>	0131 529 7950
<b>CAN WE PUBLISH THIS APPLICATION FORM ON OUR WEBSITE?</b>	YES	

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

*In one short paragraph please describe this project is about, what it has achieved, and why it is delivering excellence.*

*Please note that we may use this summary for promotional purposes on our website and elsewhere.*

Edinburgh City Libraries VIP service, winner of the International Jodi Award, is an innovative new service which helps people who are blind or partially sighted to live independently. The service was designed by blind and partially sighted people and supports their information, learning and employment needs, while linking them to community initiatives and social activity. The impact of the service was immediate, resulting in over 150 people accessing library services, many of whom had never used libraries before, and the growth of new groups to combat social isolation.

**PLANNING**

*What is your project about, and why is it important? What are you aiming to achieve, and how does this fit with the bigger picture? Does it tackle the issues that matter most to your community or your organisation?*

Sight loss is predicted to double over the next two decades in Scotland, affecting almost 400 000 people. Edinburgh City Libraries VIP service is a service designed with citizens at its centre, targeting people who face challenges using libraries and their local services, using technology, specially trained staff and volunteer support to support independent living.

The project was developed in part to meet the ambition of the Scottish Government *Success In Sight* strategy 'to enhance the inclusion, participation and independence of blind and partially sighted people', while working towards implementation of a UK wide initiative to improve access to library services <http://readingsight.org.uk>.

Aims:

- Supporting inclusion, independence and participation of blind and partially sighted customers by offering high quality local access to library and council services.
- Signposting and linking citizens to support organisations.
- Developing confidence of people who are visually impaired through sensitive and skilled staff support and the use of new technology
- Meeting all the UK Six Steps to improving access to library services as agreed by Share the Vision and the Society of Chief Librarians and the ambition of the Scottish Vision Strategy
- Ensuring service is sustainable through incorporating assistive technology in upgraded public computer equipment, staff training and use of volunteers.

Effective user engagement and customer involvement lies at the heart of the service. The initial stages of project development involved key partners including RNIB Scotland, Guide Dog Scotland, Deaf Blind Scotland, Share the Vision and their members. The project was then designed by service users, using several consultation forums of existing and potential customers, to guide development of the project. This input allowed staff to address potential problems and practical solutions, supporting customers through change. The initial pilot library locations were decided by the customers themselves. In addition customers influence when classes and activities are held, test out new technology, evaluate the training and mentor others who are less experienced. A culture of continuous consultation with customers is ongoing to provide local teams with valuable insight to gauge progress and shape future initiatives.

**Design:** A service plan was drawn up, based on consultation feedback from customers and potential customers. The plan included modest investment in equipment to meet specific needs and in staff training and equipment. Most changes required no investment and the majority of training was offered free by partner organisations. Staff learned to rethink how the library could be made more welcoming and accessible to people affected by sight loss.

**DELIVERING**

*How have you carried out your project? How did you ensure that this was done effectively? What are you doing to continue to improve?*

**Implementation:** The programme was launched immediately following consultation at those libraries selected by focus groups. Organisations such as Guide Dogs Scotland, Share the Vision and RNIB Scotland, as well as their members, were involved in developing staff training and in suggesting equipment. It was important to develop activity at places where people were already meeting and a reading group for visually impaired people was set up at the RNIB centre (in addition to library based groups).

**Testing:** Customers were fully involved in testing of the concept at three pilot libraries, and are inputting to the project as it develops and contributing to accessibility improvements eg: new signage at Central Library.

A key strength of the project is the use of 28 local library Champions - one for each library - driving the service forward in their team, training staff and linking up customers to services in the locality. Jim McKenzie, the Libraries VIP Champion, has personal experience of sight loss and brings this knowledge to benefit staff & volunteer training, while helping to build customer confidence and trust.

The use of new technology has been a key way to engage customers with the service, encouraging people to try mobile devices out for the first time, including cutting edge assistive technology in the refreshed public computing network and extending the library service downloadable audio and eBook service.

The refreshed public computing network will include built in assistive technology on all computers which supports long term sustainability. Much work has gone into early intervention, in collaboration with NHS Lothian sight clinic and RNIB Scotland. Information on the library service is included in referrals to newly diagnosed patients as a way to support them, and provide training and tools to prevent isolation. News of degenerative sight loss can come as a shock, but early referral to the library gives hope by offering people options for finding out information and accessing services. This enables those with degenerating sight loss to maintain the ability to take part in their local community. By supporting each other through group work with library volunteers they develop new networks and contacts with shared experiences and opportunities for social activities such as reading groups and quiz nights.

**Evaluation:** A fortnightly evaluation meeting is held with Champions to provide ongoing monitoring and evaluation. In addition to one to one feedback from customers, a monthly social event is held in order to gather customer feedback about the new service. Performance indicators were established and progress is reported to the Council Culture and Sport Committee and as part of reporting on Council Coalition Pledges.

#### INNOVATION & LEADING PRACTICE

*Why is your project innovative? How is it helping to prepare for the future? What is happening to help other organisations benefit from your approach?*

The innovative approach lies in

- involving blind and partially sighted people in developing and shaping the new service
- the strategic approach across all libraries, with a Library Service Champion as well as a local champion in each team;
- the use of new technology which has encouraged people to try this out for the first time
- building in sustainability through staff training, peer learning, volunteering and including assistive technology as part of the core build in the refreshed public computing network.

Partnership with RNIB Scotland online skills programme will significantly expand the project to encompass people with sensory loss. The collaborative approach across the Council has sparked a joint initiative with Health and Social Care to extend the project to benefit people with profound sensory loss following stroke. Following a presentation to the Parliamentary Cross Party Group on Visual Impairment, reciprocal visits between local authorities such as Inverclyde are being arranged to learn from each other and develop a community of best practice.

The population of people affected by sight loss is predicted to increase and demand for these

services is likely to grow. As the service is delivered locally by library staff it is inherently sustainable as it is part of day to day library business. Ongoing staff training will help support sustainability as will use of volunteers and peer supporters through the RNIB.

**RESULTS & IMPACT**

*What impact are you having, or expect to have? Are you delivering what you set out to achieve? How are you measuring this?*

This initiative empowers citizens to take more control by opening up their world, reinforcing their entitlement to services, helping them grow in confidence to take a more active part in their local community and feel included. In partnership with RNIB Scotland evaluation is underway to measure specific learning outcomes and impacts for people using the service.

The preventative approach has been measured in a number of ways. Training on audio use of Google and Siri allows people to access vital support information on health e.g. NHS 24, link to phone services such as nearest doctor or dentist, using automated phone dialling to connect them with the surgery. Accessing services in this way independently boosts confidence. Early referral to the service from Edinburgh's Eye Pavilion helps people find out information and access services

Principal outcomes:

- People are much more confident using technology, sharing their learning with others, becoming more skilled in using library/ council services independently. This includes service users now leading groups and having a peer mentoring role sharing their skills.
- Over 150 people have joined the library as a result of increased signposting to the service.
- 25 people have been referred to the service by the Eye Pavilion.
- Three new reading groups established for VIP customers, attended by over 30 people with sight loss every month
- 9 regular ICT support classes also take place across the city every fortnight
- People are benefitting from links to information, advice and support through the project eg: being able to 'read' (scan) food labels at home to prepare a family meal, being able to use bus and train Apps to make travel much easier.
- The project won the International Jodi Award in May for 'best use of technology to widen access to information, learning, collections and creativity for disabled people'.

**Testimonials**

'It gives me the opportunity to meet new people, keep up-to-date with new technology and get out and about'. **Willie Gibson**

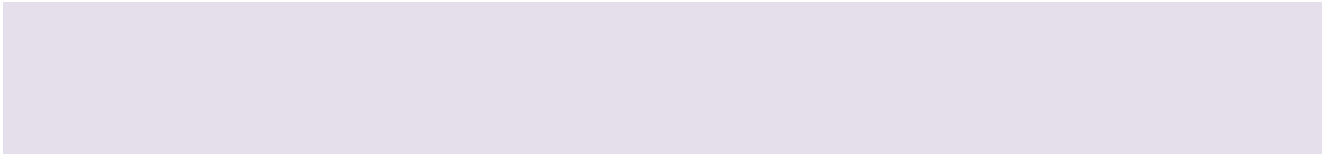
'your implementation of the Six Steps Scheme is unique in terms of both the approach you have adopted and its breadth and depth. No other library service in Scotland has taken such a holistic approach, nor achieves such positive results. We have been especially impressed by the development of your service at a strategic and service delivery level, by your engagement with blind and partially sighted people, how you have worked to ensure the new initiatives are customer focused and led and most significantly are sustainable'. **John Legg - Director RNIB Scotland**

'You are strongest in section 4 of the 6 steps. Very few have access for sight impaired on all PCs to the level you have plus having your booths for speech software is rare (Glasgow is only other place which may have this I think). A champion in every library is also quite unique (as opposed to every authority)'. **Shona Hill - Team Leader Library Support (Falkirk Community Trust) and Share the Vision Board Member**

'I am a regular attendee at an iPad users group and an audio book group both run by the library. Whilst the book group is great for widening my literary horizons, it is the iPad sessions that have impacted most on my daily life. I am now able to take control of what I read, purchase or research independently'. **Douglas Tait (retired)**

'Activities such as iPad user groups and audio book groups for visually impaired people can be a lifeline. Provision in local libraries has opened up the service to many who find travelling difficult'.

**Jean Pringle (Group Leader Edinburgh & SE Scotland Macular Degeneration Society)**



*Please limit your application to 3 pages or less and use font size 11 or greater*

## NEXT STEPS

- ✓ *Have you answered the criteria set out in the guidance?*
- ✓ *Is your application form 3 pages or less. (Anything more, including appendices, will be automatically rejected)*
- ✓ *Has your application form been authorised by an appropriate person?*
- ✓ *Have you indicated whether you wish the application form to be published?*
- ✓ *Have you provided details for someone we can contact about your application?*

## SUBMITTING YOUR APPLICATION

**PLEASE SUBMIT YOUR APPLICATION BY 23 OCTOBER 2015 USING OUR [ONLINE APPLICATIONS PORTAL](#):**

[CLICK HERE TO SUBMIT  
YOUR APPLICATION FORM](#)