

Letter from schools/teachers/governors to Matt Hancock, Minister for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport

Deadline 2 February 2018 at 5pm to enquiries@culture.gov.uk

Barnet Library Services – Minded to Representations

As educators working in schools in Barnet, we strive every day to encourage literacy and learning, to enable children to reach their potential and become informed and creative members of society. We agree with *Libraries Deliver*, the policy document published by the Libraries Taskforce with the support of the DDCMS, that ‘libraries can have a critical role in helping people to realise their potential’ and that they and the librarians working in them ‘change lives through:

- promoting enjoyment in reading and other cultural and creative activities
- raising aspirations and building skills ...
- actively sharing information, encouraging people to engage with, co-create and learn from each other
- providing trusted and practical support and advice ...’

We applaud the Taskforce’s recognition that librarians not only encourage a love of reading, but also help build digital skills, organise cultural activities and offer a quiet space to study, and that libraries should be ‘safe, welcoming and accessible physical and virtual environments freely open to all’.

Currently, children in Barnet under the age of 15 (school year 11) are barred from the benefits of their local library most of the time unless accompanied by an adult. Even in Year 11, the crucial GCSE year, they must get their application certified by both their school and their parent/carer. These obstacles discourage library use and, of course, many children do not have an adult library card holder able to accompany them.

Our pupils and students of all ages desperately need and deserve independent and unrestricted access to the library service including: study space, computers, printed books and other materials, and the encouragement and guidance of trained librarians. Without this access and support, we are concerned that many children in Barnet will find it harder to reach their educational potential.

