

Case study: global Christmas and Eid festival at Dewsbury library

What was the issue to address?

The library wanted to:

- ensure their services were utilised by all members of the community in Dewsbury
- promote their services to a wider audience and further enrich the relationship with existing members
- host events that would appeal to all communities by encouraging their active participation and reflecting their cultural backgrounds
- develop skills and confidence in delivering large-scale multicultural educational events
- increase their understanding of Islamic festivals and share that knowledge with the public
- promote positive images of people from different backgrounds, faiths and traditions getting on well to achieve an increased sense of pride and belonging to Dewsbury.

What did we do?

Libraries are one of the cornerstones of a thriving community providing an invaluable resource for lifelong learning and offering people of all ages and backgrounds the opportunity to experience new and inspiring ideas in a shared space and common place of gathering.

The Global Christmas event was one of five events that were taking place in Dewsbury Town Centre as part of a wider, 'Festive Fables' celebration. The community cohesion team, in partnership with Dewsbury Library, planned and delivered 2 successful events that aimed to:

- Celebrate diversity
- Bring people together and increase their sense of pride in belonging to Dewsbury
- Demonstrate that the library is a socially inclusive place where all people have equal access to information and advice.

Additionally, the cohesion team worked with ETKA, a local South Asian women's group to help train staff on Muslim culture and the Islamic festival of Eid. The community cohesion team also helped the library to host its first Eid celebration event.



What difference did we make?

- Over 1500 people attended each event – attracting an extra 500-700 visitors on the days that the events were held
- The audience and participants came from a large variety of backgrounds for example, Polish, African, South Asian, Middle Eastern, Irish and White British
- Evaluation forms revealed that the public believed this type of family friendly event brought people together
- Library staff felt empowered to plan and manage large scale multicultural or faith events in the future
- Library staff have been keen to build networks with local communities and try new methods to promote their services and extend their programme of educational activities and exhibitions.

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Kirklees community cohesion strategy



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What were the keys to our success?

- The library staff were enthusiastic and fully committed to trying new methods of increasing cultural awareness and social interaction between communities
- The library is a well-known educational service provider and a neutral place for people to access events - a perfect gateway to all communities
- The collaborative, multi agency partnerships between Dewsbury Library, the community cohesion team, Global Families and Westborough High School
- Community groups such as Global Families and artists who were involved in the events played a crucial role in showcasing their culture in an open and friendly way
- Library staff were committed to placing issues of social inclusion and equality at the core of their services
- The opportunity to access over a thousand people during the weekend was an unrivalled opportunity to engage with the public and further encourage more usage from under represented communities.

What are we doing next?

Dewsbury Library is planning a calendar of events and displays that will mark a series of faith and cultural celebrations throughout the year.

The cohesion team will be working with Batley and Huddersfield libraries to develop similar, socially inclusive events, offering guidance and support to other libraries across Kirklees.



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