

THE USE OF THE KING'S FUND BUILDING

A report by Ros Levenson

April 2002

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INTRODUCTION

TERMS OF REFERENCE

In February 2002, the King's Fund commissioned Ros Levenson to undertake a review the use of King's Fund buildings and its 'universal services' in terms of benefit to a variety of stakeholders, including staff, in relation to the achievement of the King's Fund's Corporate Strategy and against cost. For the purposes of this work, universal services were defined as the King's Fund library, bookshop, café, catering and conferencing. In particular, it was suggested that the views of internal and external stakeholders would be sought on how and when the building was used, including questions about Saturday opening (minimal or extended hours), Sunday opening and the hours of weekday opening.

It was suggested that the views might be sought of a range of people including King's Fund staff, NHS and social care managers, voluntary organisations (including King's Fund grant-funded organisations), regeneration agencies, opinion formers and policy makers.

While every effort was made to adhere strictly to the terms of reference set for this consultancy, it quickly became clear that it was impossible for stakeholders to contemplate the future use of the King's Fund building without also thinking and talking about how they saw the future development of the King's Fund itself. Indeed, group discussions (rather than individual interviews) expressed many concerns about a perceived lack of direction for the King's Fund, which they felt should be the key issue to be determined.

A further contextual issue had been identified at the outset, but continued to arise throughout discussions with internal stakeholders: the possible tension between the need to rein in King's Fund expenditure and the desire to broaden the range of people with whom the King's Fund has a relationship. Broadly, although there was a spirited minority defence of elitism, most people fervently wished for the King's Fund to be less elitist and more accessible to disadvantaged groups, but they were concerned about the probable financial implications of striving for the latter.

Virtually everyone was realistic about the financial imperatives that formed part of the backdrop to this review. Some people proposed ways of making savings, including looking at the way building operations are run (e.g. more insulation to reduce heating bills; natural ventilation to reduce energy bills), changing the way materials are used (e.g. double-sided printing and copying to reduce paper usage). Some people pointed to what they saw as unreasonable levels of expenditure on items such as mobile phone bills and personal expenses. However, there were no financial magic bullets in sight, and it was recognised throughout that the review had to contend with real, inescapable dilemmas.

It should be noted that at the outset of this review it was decided by the Chief Executive of the King's Fund that it was inappropriate for this review to look at the option of vacating the Cavendish Square building, and moving to somewhere cheaper (the so-called "Neasden option"). Consequently, this was not raised or pursued with those who took part in interviews and discussions. It does, however, remain a legitimate issue for discussion.

METHODOLOGY

This work was to be conducted and written up in 6-8 days over a period of approximately 7 weeks. Since speedy access to interviewees was essential, and many of the interviewees had extremely full diaries, it was decided to be pragmatic in the choice of methods used to access people's views. A mixture of telephone interviews, face-to-face interviews, discussion groups and a brief analysis of documents took place (See Appendix 1 for details) Some interviewees were approached directly, as they were clearly identified as key people. These included some King's Fund staff, voluntary sector contacts with links to large networks of voluntary organisations and recipients of Millennium Awards, identified by the King's Fund Grants Unit. Other internal (King's Fund) interviewees came forward as a result of an email invitation to all staff. The discussion at the staff group and the discussion with library staff was set up with the help of Liz James. A short questionnaire was given to Saturday library users on two successive Saturdays in February/March, with the help of Lynette Cawthra. (See Appendix 2 for details).

How this report is set out

In section one, this report sets out the views of those who contributed to the review under a number of headings, including:

- Use of conference rooms
- The library
- The bookshop
- The café
- The conservatory
- Office space

In section two, specific issues around extended opening (evening and weekends) are discussed in relation to all of the above.

In section three, themes which emerged across the various headings are discussed.

SECTION ONE

Use of conference rooms

This section looks at the views of a range of internal and external stakeholders about the use of conference rooms at the King's Fund. In all, there are 16 rooms (12 main rooms, able to be used as 16). Most are in the main building and two are in A block. Internal users make up 70% of the bookings and external users 30%. Of the internal users, Education, Leadership and Development (ELD) take up 50% of the conference rooms. Internal users have access to room hire as a free good, whereas external users pay for rooms.

The tension between internal and external users

One of the common observations was that demand for rooms frequently exceeds supply. On average, conference staff take two enquiries per day that they cannot meet due to non-availability of suitable rooms on the required date. Internal users also find that it is not always possible to make the bookings that they require, particularly if they are running a topical or reactive event that has a short lead-in time.

Lack of policy on room bookings

Internal users and the support staff who service them feel that there is no policy on how to balance the needs of internal and external users, nor on how to balance competing needs from internal users. This lack of policy - or perceived lack of policy - plays out in several ways:

- There is no clarity on the optimal balance between internal and external bookings; these are driven by income targets, rather than by an *a priori* decision about what the King's Fund is trying to achieve.
- Several internal users suspect that other internal users get preferential treatment or more advantageous booking arrangements; the tension between ELD and other internal users is the most visible aspect of this problem (see below)
- Support staff feel that from time to time they are pressurised by senior staff to bend rules to accommodate particular events (even though they are not necessarily sure whether there are rules, or what they are)
- There is occasional ill-feeling when pressure is brought by senior King's Fund staff to dislodge an existing booking in order to accommodate a major internally booked event
- Adverse effect on staff morale: both senior management staff and more junior operational staff attributed low staff morale to lack of clarity and "changing goal posts" in relation to the use of conference rooms.

As one staff member said:

I would like more guidance on how to prioritise internal/external users - do they want us to make money, make more money or to service internal users? We just need to know

Another person observed:

Nothing is impossible but the goal posts keep moving and we don't know what the current thinking is or whether it will stick

ELD and room bookings

ELD are the major internal bookers of conference rooms. As a rule, they block-book second floor rooms for most of the year and in the last 4 months, they have also booked substantial amounts of 1st floor and lower ground floor accommodation, thus reportedly reducing the income of Conference section by £100k.

Opinions about the nature and value of ELD's programmes was sharply divided, ranging from intense approbation to extreme cynicism. However, there was a general consensus that the reputation of the King's Fund was closely bound up with ELD's record on providing prestigious programmes, especially for senior and top managers. Very few people wished to envisage a King's Fund bereft of ELD, though many wished to see it change and play a fuller part in the life and identity of the King's Fund, rather than maintaining its perceived aloofness and elitism. Whatever people's individual views about ELD, virtually everyone was concerned about the impact of its room booking practices on the wider activities of the King's Fund.

In addition to the high level of demand by ELD for conference rooms, there were some specific factors that impacted on other internal users.

(i) For its Top Managers Programme (TMP) ELD takes the view that its particular psycho-dynamic approach requires not only that it is largely held in the King's Fund building, but that it must have the same rooms each day in order provide consistent boundaries and a safe environment for reflection. While the senior staff in ELD hold this requirement to be very important, their conviction is not shared by others. Almost without exception, this rigid requirement was viewed (sometimes in ribald and earthy terms!) as precious, outmoded, indefensible and unnecessary - a view shared by two interviewees who had happily completed the similarly psychodynamic Senior Managers Programme (SMP)

(ii) There was a range of views on the importance - or otherwise - of holding ELD programmes (other than TMP) within the King's Fund building itself. SMP, for example, generally commences with a week in the King's Fund building, but has other periods elsewhere e.g. in hotels. The Executive director of ELD referred to the "magic dust" conferred by attending the King's Fund building. Interviewees who had attended programmes shared this view to some extent, but somewhat less strongly. They appreciated the King's Fund building, and were very aware of its status, but they were happy for the King's Fund "brand" (as one termed it) to permeate to other locations after an initial programme module at the King's Fund.

In any case, it appeared that the "magic dust" fell in only one direction. People who had attended ELD programmes felt that they had benefited from the King's Fund aura, but that they had not participated in the King's Fund or utilised the building very much (apart from the library) beyond actual attendance at their specific programme. They had almost never networked beyond their own programme. Indeed, one person observed:

SMP was a self contained experience - we were not encouraged to mix. I was not even sure if we were "allowed" to talk to people you know who you might bump into. It feels like a retreat.

- (iii) While block-booking was tolerated by other internal users and understood to be essential if programmes were to be offered at the King's Fund, both internal users and support staff complained that ELD tended to block-book in excess of their needs and sometimes failed to cancel the rooms that were surplus to their requirements, thus depriving other potential users of available rooms. Several people favoured a penalty charge for internal users who abused the booking process in this manner.
- (iv) As discussed above, there were concerns about the optimum balance of ELD room booking and other internal and external users' needs. On the one hand, it was felt that the "top people" who came to the King's Fund for ELD programmes conferred enormous prestige on the King's Fund itself. On the other hand, it was felt that this very factor with its concomitant advantages also contributed to a culture of elitism and exclusiveness.

ELD generally

Apart from the issue of how ELD uses conference rooms, it was evident that the relative importance of ELD within the overall activities and profile of the King's Fund is still hotly debated. While it is beyond the scope of this review to analyse this in detail, it may be helpful in so far as it is relevant to the use of the King's Fund building in the longer term to present without further comment some of the views expressed by ELD and about ELD by others.

- ELD sees itself as a focal point of the King's Fund.
- There is a symbiotic relationship between King's Fund and ELD - people come on to ELD programmes due to the King's Fund's reputation, which in turn largely (or partly - depending on one's point of view) derives from ELD
- ELD is a major contributor to King's Fund funds - although some would argue that that is not so if the true costs of their overheads are taken into account
- The future market for ELD is uncertain - it may be stable, it may increase its market share or it may suffer from external competition.
- NHS funding favours senior staff, so even if ELD is willing and able to provide more leadership development for other staff, they are unlikely to be able to afford it. ELD is interested in reaching out more to social services, although one interviewee in a London social services department was adamant that ELD's current prices would make it impossible for most social services managers to attend their programmes.
- To a limited extent, ELD already plays a part in other programmes aimed at different levels e.g. Millennium Award recipients' development, support to some King's Fund programmes and activities.
- It is important for ELD to operate in London from the King's Fund premises. However, the alternative view was also expressed i.e. why use scarce space in central London to run educational programmes?
- ELD is widely perceived by others as "as a law unto themselves" and "spending money for the sake of it"

- While ELD is seen to contribute to the King's Fund's national and international reputation, it is not seen as wholly germane to the King's Fund's London focus.

Does it matter who books King's Fund rooms?

There was a general view that those external clients who could afford to book King's Fund rooms were either NHS /health-related organisations or occasionally commercial or academic organisations. Within the conference and catering staff there seemed to be only a mild level of interest in who the clients were. Several seemed to see themselves as committed to providing excellent customer care, but they were not very engaged in thinking about who the customers were. More detailed discussion of this issue seemed to reveal a sense of disengagement among some support staff, borne of a perceived sense of their own powerlessness and marginalisation. However, this seemed capable of being turned around if the support staff felt that they knew "the rules" and could act consistently in pursuance of them.

A more difficult conundrum was whether there are significant gains to the King's Fund (in other than financial terms) in hiring rooms to external users. As discussed below, meeting in the King's Fund does appear to be advantageous for some groups and it would certainly be convenient and pleasant for many more to do so. However, the question was posed: does booking a room constitute having a relationship with the King's Fund? Do groups and/or the King's Fund get more out of it than nice rooms and a hiring fee, respectively? As things stand at present, the answer is almost certainly that they do not do so to a significant extent. It is possible for a group to book rooms and have little knowledge of the King's Fund or contact with other people using the building. Most people in the King's Fund - and especially those who favour broadening its reach to disadvantaged and excluded groups - would want to develop a relationship with groups that was more than one of provider of conference services and client. This would require some fundamental changes that are discussed elsewhere in this report.

Although many people thought that making rooms available was a good way of drawing people into the King's Fund, there was also a view that the King's Fund had already gone too far in renting out the facilities and could never be as efficient as a commercial conference space. The logic of this position was to give top priority to King's Fund internal users, including ELD.

Room booking and the voluntary sector

There was a general view amongst voluntary sector interviewees that the King's Fund offered wonderful facilities for conference and meeting rooms, but that they were expensive. Interestingly, an assumption that rooms would not be affordable was often made without any specific knowledge of tariffs. Cheaper meeting space e.g. at the London Voluntary Sector Resource Centre (LVSRC), Friends House, Mary Ward Centre or Britannia Street, came to mind as more likely to be booked by voluntary organisations.

There was a great deal of support from internal and external stakeholders for reserving an allocation of rooms (either a certain number of bookings, or specific days/times) for groups/organisations that were unable to afford the King's Fund's

usual tariff. This was seen to be feasible only if it was part of an explicit strategy to attract in and support certain kinds of groups who had been historically excluded. Within current practice, those groups would usually be unable to find a free date even if they could afford the price of the room, so a major change would be necessary to facilitate the use of conference rooms by such groups.

Many people favoured a sliding scale for small charities and community groups, or for groups that worked in furtherance of a King's Fund priority. The current reduction offered to charities was seen as too inflexible by some. There was also a lot of sympathy for groups supported by King's Fund grants, as few could afford to promote their work by meeting at the King's Fund.

However, internal stakeholders were very aware that a policy change of this nature would exacerbate, rather than relieve, the King's Fund's financial situation. For some, this was not seen as an insuperable problem, and some people were willing to face up to radical change in order to secure a change of direction. Others feared that reducing prices to some external users would reduce King's Fund income and thereby jeopardise other King's Fund activities and jobs.

Several people referred to the fairly lucrative Saturday bookings made by the Institute of Cultural Research, which also result in sales from the bookshop. There was some confusion about whether such bookings were appropriate for the King's Fund.

The price of room hire was by no means the only obstacle for external users. All external users might experience non-availability, but some potential external users simply did not know that they might be able to hire rooms. This is hardly surprising, as external room hire is not systematically marketed, as there are rooms available to external bookers relatively rarely. Word of mouth is sufficient to inform a more than adequate supply of users who can afford the prices and thus enable King's Fund income targets to be met.

Some Millennium Award recipients were interviewed and in all cases they liked the premises greatly and felt privileged to be able to attend events at the King's Fund. However, generally, they were unaware that the King's Fund rooms could be booked by external users including the organisations with which they were involved. A typical comment was:

Most local groups would want local venues, but it depends what they are doing. For some groups it is better to have a local meeting in a church hall. Sometimes they want central venues. If they want to invite speakers etc., it's just the right place.

Other voluntary organisations, including umbrella organisations like the Long-term Medical Conditions Alliance (LMCA), the Council for Ethnic Minority Voluntary Organisations (CEMVO) and the Neurological Alliance were able to reflect the views of their networks about King's Fund conference rooms and other King's Fund facilities. While they all liked the rooms very much, some specific observations were made on factors that limited their appeal or accessibility. These included:

- A perception that the booking process was too bureaucratic. The CEMVO spokesperson felt that rooms were not easy to book. Information about rooms was not easily available and once a booking is requested, the King's Fund requires immediate confirmation, which can put groups off.
- Having to book a long way in advance did not suit the needs of a number of voluntary organisations
- Current opening hours were not entirely satisfactory for all voluntary organisations. In particular, Saturdays might be useful for AGMs and awaydays, but groups had sometimes received mixed messages about whether the King's Fund did or did not hire out rooms on Saturdays. If they did, the room hire was not fully supported with audio-visual and catering support. (see section 2).
- Disabled access was thought by most groups to be very good (except for the usual central London problems of parking). However, the Neurological Alliance noted that although the building was wheelchair accessible, one of their members had telephoned to find out if there was a fold-up wheelchair on site and was told that there was not one available. Car parking was a particular problem for this group especially when the space for disabled parking was out of commission during building works. They had found that the King's Fund was not helpful about this on the phone. The problem was compounded by the lack of disabled access to the (very expensive) car park in Cavendish Square.

Discussions with the voluntary sector made one thing very clear. The often expressed view that voluntary organisations and community groups do not wish to meet in well appointed premises is a myth. Prestigious venues confer credibility and respectability on small charitable/voluntary organisations. The health-related nature of the King's Fund and its reputation for independence are perceived as enormous benefits to groups. At most, there are one or two rooms in the King's Fund that are seen as somewhat too formal, but generally meetings held at the King's Fund enable community and voluntary sector groups to attract eminent speakers and to "punch above their weight". Certainly, many groups hold local meetings in support of local activities and a central London location would not be appropriate to their needs. However, many pan-London and umbrella organisations would dearly love to enjoy the "magic dust" of the King's Fund and all its facilities, but they cannot afford to do so or are deterred by the booking process or the limited availability of rooms. Detailed market research would be necessary to quantify the demand.

The Library

Much of the discussion in recent months has centred on the library's opening hours and in particular in whether it is sensible to continue with Saturday opening, and indeed, whether a late evening would be helpful. Interviews and discussions for this review addressed those issues, (which are discussed in section 2) but also ranged more widely, considering the nature and role of a library based at the King's Fund. Although conclusions and personal opinions ranged from the very radical (why have a library at the King's Fund at all?) to the conservative (retain the status quo in every respect), there was a very broad agreement that the King's Fund library has many enormously positive attributes.

Although the idea of amalgamating with other libraries (e.g. the Royal College of Nursing (RCN) library) was discussed in a positive manner by some of the more

senior staff, there was an overwhelming feeling from other internal and external stakeholders that this would damage the King's Fund significantly. Those library users who use the King's Fund at present because they cannot access suitable material elsewhere do not feel that they would be able to gain access to professional bodies' libraries. The voluntary sector (see below) struggles at times to feel at ease in the King's Fund library and would certainly feel more excluded from other libraries, even if they were actually allowed to use them, which is by no means certain.

Why the library is valued

- It has a unique and varied collection including journals, books, government and NHS documents, "grey" material and useful statistics; other libraries are more clinical - the King's Fund library is the only one with a focus on organisation, management and evaluation of health services
- Staff are extremely helpful to internal and external users
- A lot of library users have already tried everywhere else and the King's Fund can help where no other source is available
- While much material is available on the Internet, some of the distinctive aspect of the King's Fund's collection (many of the journals, material from local groups etc.) will probably never be available online.
- The King's Fund is the window of the King's Fund and is closely bound up with its reputation and public image
- The library is very important to the work of some King's Fund staff

Need for more publicity

There was also a large measure of agreement that the library is not as well known as it might be, particularly by people who come to the King's Fund building for other purposes. Several people commented that more information could be disseminated about the library, emphasising that it is free and open to the public. It was also suggested that when people attend the King's Fund for other purposes, they should be introduced to the library and given information about it. Surprisingly, in spite of its location, it was not always noticed by new visitors to the King's Fund. There was some anecdotal evidence to suggest that people noticed the bookshop and mistook it for the library. This may indicate that there is scope to consider re-locating the library within the King's Fund building - an option that might also enable an extension of the café and other open space on the ground floor.

The library and the voluntary sector

Voluntary sector people were mixed in their views on how useful the library is/would be to them, but this is an area for potential change and outreach.

A senior health and social care policy officer in the voluntary sector said:

These days voluntary organisations are mainly online, so I can direct them to information online rather than them having to travel to a library. But do people use libraries less or just use the Internet more? People value short summaries rather than original documents.

In contrast, a Millennium Award recipient, working in a poorly resourced office noted:

[We] can't access information easily through the Internet - we have poor computer systems

On the whole, most interviewees who commented felt that the library could serve the voluntary sector to a greater extent than at present. In order to maximise its impact on that sector, it would be helpful if it developed in the following three areas:

- An increase in the library's resources to help voluntary organisations identify funding sources.
- Obvious availability of basic information on health and social care services and policy
- Liaison with Grants Unit to anticipate the information needs of funded organisations

As the voluntary sector encompasses a wide range of organisations, large and small, it is evident that their needs for information and library services vary. Some groups are highly professionalised and specialise in health and/or social care and could probably navigate around the specialist health library without assistance. Others are less well resourced and need assistance. While the assistance given at present was highly commended, it has also been suggested that in order to use the library effectively, some groups would need training and induction for its staff and/or volunteers in order to equip them with both skills and confidence to use the library. In particular, many Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) groups are generic, rather than health specialists, and may need initial support in making full use of the library.

The library's eclectic collection, and in particular its "grey" material and statistics were valued greatly by voluntary sector people. Overall, the impression was that the library is useful to the voluntary sector and can be made even more relevant to their needs and accessible to their staff, trustees and volunteers.

Students and the library

Many of the library's users are students, on formal courses of study at undergraduate or post graduate level, or as part of work-related projects. The King's Fund library has a special relationship with the University of North London (UNL) whose students on health and community studies courses receive induction in the library as part of a formal paid agreement between the King's Fund library and UNL. This arrangement works very well and is much appreciated by UNL and the students. Other students using the library were equally appreciative of the library and its helpful staff. It is evident that students using the library make little use of other parts of the King's Fund building, although some use the café and the bookshop. They usually do not realise that they may use the conservatory, or that they may use the café for informal meetings. They rarely come into contact with people who work in the King's Fund or who are attending King's Fund events.

Many of UNL's students are Black women, and many of them have links to communities and organisations that might well forge long-term future relationships

with the King's Fund. The same is true of many other library users, and arguably, more could be done to introduce library users to the wider range of King's Fund activities. Library staff note that if the King's Fund becomes part of a student's awareness at the outset of their career, it may be the start of a long and mutually beneficial relationship.

King's Fund staff and the library

Staff use the King's Fund library - if at all - in different ways, as would be expected in line with diverse roles and responsibilities. In 2001, staff enquiries accounted for 13.82% of total library enquiries. Those staff who were interviewed in this review and who used the library found it very helpful. The library plays an important role in supporting King's Fund staff who do not have time to do all their own research. The liaison librarian scheme works well.

The library provides a loan service to ELD's flagship courses. ELD's attitude to the library can best be described as ambivalent. While the library service to ELD's programmes is appreciated, it sees most of the library's books as irrelevant to ELD function. Nevertheless, ELD's executive director also says the loss of the library would be significant and asserts that if it were removed, it could "cause the house of cards to collapse".

Clearly the nature of staff use of the library depends to some extent on the priorities given to various aspects of the King's Fund's work in future. Nevertheless, almost all staff concluded that an on-site library was essential.

The library and social services

The library is little used by social services personnel (1.44% of enquiries in 2001). The demise of the National Institute of Social Work (NISW) library might indicate a niche for expansion in this area and the library has aspirations in this direction. However, the small amount of anecdotal evidence from this review suggests that social service senior staff in London have a rather hazy awareness of the King's Fund (except through its publications, which are valued) and they may feel that they cannot usually afford the time to travel to central London to use its resources. This is a "chicken and egg" situation in so far as social services do not usually see the King's Fund as central to their world; but it is not central to their world because it is largely NHS-oriented. Closer collaboration and the development of Primary Care Trusts (PCTs) may alter this landscape and have implications for how social services staff may wish to use the King's Fund building and its facilities.

The library's opening hours

Currently the library is open on Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays from 9.30 - 5.30; on Wednesdays from 11.00 - 5.30; on Saturdays from 9.30 - 5.00. Arguments for and against change are discussed in section two.

Disabled access

The King's Fund library has zoom text and other disability equipment, but this is used very rarely. It is possible that the availability of these facilities is not widely known by disability organisations.

The bookshop

The bookshop aims to provide a book selling service for internal and external users at the King's Fund. It is a specialist resource like no other, but being so specialist it is difficult to make significant amounts of money. While it does generate income for the King's Fund, if its overheads were taken into account, including the value of central London retail space, this would most probably not be the case. However, it is well liked and appreciated by King's Fund staff and by visitors to the King's Fund. Users are one third library users, one third people attending King's Fund courses and programmes and one third previous users coming in specially to buy books.

It is open on Mondays to Fridays from 9.30 to 5.30 and on Saturdays from 10.30 to 4.30. Most Saturday customers are library users and there is a clear view that if the library was closed on Saturdays, there would be no reason for the bookshop to be open on Saturdays. Further issues around the bookshop's opening hours are discussed in section 2.

The bookshop makes sustained efforts to tie in its activities with other activities in the King's Fund. The bookshop works closely with the library and they promote each other. Staff try to stock books on the ELD list that is given to the library. They try to anticipate the book-buying needs of conference participants, and in the case of the (non-health-related) Institute of Cultural Research, they usually sell quite a lot of books, albeit on subjects that are slightly outside the usual range of King's Fund stock e.g. "pop-psychology". The bookshop receives scheduling information from Conferences on a weekly/monthly basis, but this is not always terribly informative in terms of details of speakers, invitees and subject matter. In general, the bookshop staff perceive custom from conference participants to be hit-and-miss, but if they do come over the threshold, they spend significant amounts of money.

Interviewees liked the bookshop if they knew about it, but people who were not regular users of the King's Fund tended not to know what it was or when it was open. There is evidently scope to publicise the bookshop more widely to non-traditional King's Fund users and potential new users.

The café

Like the bookshop, the café was very well liked by people who knew about it. However, in spite of its prominent position on the ground floor, new visitors to the King's Fund did not necessarily realise that they were welcome to use it as an informal meeting place. People who attended the building for other specific purposes (e.g. meetings, library) sometimes knew and sometimes did not know when the café was open and whether they were welcome to use it. More publicity about the café should be disseminated across London's health and social care organisations, both statutory and voluntary. The café was seen as a particularly attractive resource for

unfunded and small organisations in London who may wish to meet colleagues there. More thought could be given on how café users can be made aware of other King's Fund activities and facilities.

The café is also well used and well liked by staff, some of whom prefer to obtain food and drink from the café rather than a lunch in the restaurant.

The café cannot be seen in isolation from other King's Fund facilities. It is useful for library users and it is a welcoming space that draws potential customers towards the bookshop. Indeed, on Saturdays when the café is closed but the bookshop is open, the closed café area appears to be "a chasm" that is slightly awkward to breach.

Other issues around the café's opening hours are discussed in section 2.

The Conservatory

All the views on the conservatory from external users (or potential users) of the King's Fund amounted to the same thing. It is a pleasant space, but few people know what it is there for. Even people who have used it while attending events at the King's Fund (including ELD programmes) do not usually know that it can be freely accessed unless a specific event is in progress.

For both the conservatory and the café, and to a lesser extent the library too, the issue is not only one of publicity and information. It is also a matter of giving *permission* for people to feel that they may use it and that it is their space. For all its inclusive good intentions, the King's Fund may have underestimated the unusual nature of having access to pleasant, free space in central London. Even when people know it is there, they sometimes fail to think of themselves as worthy users.

Catering/ the King's Fund restaurant

The quality of the King's Fund in-house catering was liked by the great majority of interviewees. Internal users sometimes took it for granted or preferred to obtain sandwiches from the café, and several staff were indifferent to the continued provision of hot lunches on site (senior staff were much less enthusiastic about restaurant lunches than more junior staff). Some staff valued the restaurant for the opportunities it afforded to meet team colleagues over lunch, although few thought that the restaurant facilitated informal contact with colleagues outside their own immediate team.

External users who had had lunch in the King's Fund restaurant were impressed by the quality and choice it offered.

Other comments about catering and the King's Fund restaurant included:

- Catering for King's Fund events is essential but does not have to be in-house (two comments)
- The restaurant is not used much outside of lunch times and could be more widely used throughout the day (several)

- ELD sees restaurant lunches as essential for its clients; it also requires dinners at the King's Fund about twice a week but these need not be catered in house
- The restaurant is an economical way of serving lunches to conferences - buffets use more staff
- The cost of catering is usually not affordable for voluntary organisations even if room hire is within their reach

Office space

It was not thought to be feasible to conduct a comprehensive review of the use of King's Fund office space within the terms of reference and the time available. Nor would it have made sense to do so in advance of some firmer direction about future King's Fund priorities and staffing levels. Nevertheless, a possible decanting from A block had been widely rumoured and was raised by several (mostly senior) staff.

The main comments made about the use of King's Fund office space were as follows:

- Having people in 2 buildings mean you tend not to bump into people
- There is a virtual split in the 2 buildings between support staff and policy staff; this affects communication and collaborative working.
- If decanting from A block leads to a lot of people moving in to the 3rd floor of the main building, there is a risk of overcrowding and the necessity for more hot-desking etc. Much of the King's Fund's work requires data and literature collection and some projects may run for a year or two. If conditions for the project based researchers deteriorate it may be harder to recruit them

SECTION 2 - OPEN ALL HOURS?

*Do I
have?*

In this section, issues and concerns about opening hours for the King's Fund building are discussed. Detailed work has been conducted on the cost-benefits of Saturday opening in the December 2001 *Conference and Catering Review* conducted by David Bewers. It is beyond the scope of this current paper to examine the assumptions and calculations made in that review. Rather, this section examines the views of stakeholders on what they would like, and the likely impact of retaining the status quo or making changes in terms of the King's Fund's impact.

Unfortunately, there was very little consensus on this issue. Staff views varied, as did the views of external stakeholders. If there was a unifying theme it was that it would be better to go for "all or nothing". The present compromise where the building was open, but not fully used was not sensible. This view applied particularly to Saturday opening and to a much lesser extent to extended evening use of the building's conference rooms.

Conference rooms and extended hours

Conference rooms are not routinely hired out on Saturdays (though for a 6 month periods last year they were available for hire). Nevertheless, conference rooms are in fact used 10-15 times per year, and staffing has been rostered on a voluntary basis. Staff get time off in lieu (TOIL) but would prefer overtime as they are too busy to take TOIL.

Most staff did not have an ideological commitment or opposition to Saturday opening. They would support it:

- If it proved to be based on sound financial projections
- If it were staffed and managed properly (ad hoc arrangements with existing staff would not be suitable for regular extended opening)
- If there was clarity of policy and practice
- If it was seen to be part of a strategic approach to developing the King's Fund's activities

In addition, the level of support would increase if Saturday opening was targeted at or shown to benefit groups with whom the King's Fund wished to foster a relationship, or groups whom the King's Fund wished to assist. Some people were doubtful that Saturday opening would increase the King's Fund's reach to different people and groups. If it did not do so, extended opening should be seen as a purely financial consideration. There was also some support for a trial period of full Saturday opening, although it was acknowledged that a fairly lengthy trial would be indicated.

Some people felt that there was no evidence of great demand for extended hours, and occasional out of hours usage could be staffed on a voluntary basis. However, most people were uneasy at the uncertainty and inconsistency this generated, and preferred a choice between stark alternatives. It was noted that Saturday use of conference rooms at present is not supported by a full catering service. This would be necessary if a comprehensive Saturday use of rooms was envisaged, and appropriate staff would have to be put in place.

As one person conceded:

[We] can do anything if we put the right staff numbers and management arrangements in place.

It was also noted that true demand was unknown as room hire, in particular, is not marketed externally in a systematic or targeted manner. There were some tentative indications that voluntary organisations would like to hold awaydays on Saturdays and committee meetings in the evening. Whether they could afford to do so remains a big issue.

There was some concern about needing weekend access to offices for IT maintenance from time to time.

Library opening hours

As might be expected, a large proportion of current library users are happy with the library's opening hours just as they are. This is not surprising, as the library's opening times are, by definition, accessible to those who currently use them. Given the opportunity for a late evening, some people who use the library by day, and some who visit the King's Fund for other purposes, might be mildly interested in using it during extended weekday hours, but there was no great clamour for an extension during weekday evenings.

There was much more passion about Saturday opening, both from King's Fund staff and from library users. Library staff believe that closing the library would be "a disaster". Saturday users are also very keen on the library being open on Saturdays. (See Appendix 2 for more information about the views of Saturday users).

In 2001, 698 people used the library on Saturdays. During the first two months of 2002, 165 people had used the library on Saturdays, i.e. 37 more than in the corresponding months of 2001. Judging by library staff impressions, and corroborated by the questionnaire completed by 31 Saturday library users (see Appendix 2), over 60% of Saturday users would not be able to use the library during the week if it were to be closed on Saturday. A minority of Saturday users (9 out of our sample of 31, i.e. just under 30%) used the library 6 or more times in the past year. However, the nature of Saturday use of the library differs from weekday use, with a number of people coming for most of the day to work intensively on projects or pieces of research. Some people travel a considerable distance to use the library on Saturdays and could not do so during the week.

If the King's Fund's future direction forged stronger relationships with other constituencies e.g. community and voluntary organisations, or social services, it is also possible that some (especially voluntary organisations) might welcome Saturday access. Some of the people interviewed for this review commented that trustees and staff of voluntary organisations might find it difficult to travel to central London during weekday working hours. The unknown factor is whether the library can be relevant and enticing enough to attract significant numbers of additional users on Saturdays. As things stand at present, Saturday opening is extremely valuable to those

who use it. In person-hours, they represent a significant and disproportionate amount of overall library usage. It is not clear that there is an enormous amount of additional untapped demand for Saturday opening above and beyond the steady stream of enthusiastic Saturday users who already avail themselves of Saturday opening.

While staff freely admit that they like Saturday opening for administrative reasons, it is very clear that they view those factors as relatively insignificant compared to the service-delivery arguments for Saturday opening. If the library was not open on Saturdays, staff would miss the flexibility and the opportunity to catch up with some tasks, but that is very much a secondary consideration. Staff assert that Saturday closure might result in them having to consider some restrictions on access from stacks, and possibly the might be less time for collation of statistics etc. but their overall ability to deliver a service would not be fundamentally affected.

Other comments made about library opening hours include:

- If the library closed on Saturdays, there would be no point in having bookshop or café open either
- Saturday opening could attract more out of London visitors; Saturday opening also good for shoppers; evenings would attract people who work in London
- There is no demand for Sunday opening

One of the big issues seems to be that the library and bookshop are open, but the café is not, while conference facilities are sometimes in operation and sometimes not. All of these services/facilities should be considered together, as extended use of the building as a whole might have a knock-on effect on library and bookshop usage too.

Bookshop opening hours

The bookshop's Saturday trade is largely dependent on other parts of the building being in use, and Saturdays are good days for the bookshop's takings. Customers come from the library, and from conferences and events if they are held on Saturdays. It has been noted above that the café being closed on Saturdays may deter people from approaching the bookshop.

There was little enthusiasm amongst interviewees for substantially longer opening hours, except that a short period after the library closes might be helpful to people as they leave the library. When the bookshop has occasionally been kept open late for special events, it has usually not been worth it.

There is no demand for the bookshop to be open on Sundays.

Café opening hours

Many people would favour extended hours for the café. In particular, most people felt that if other facilities in the building were to be open on Saturdays, the café should also be open. It is reported that people do ask at reception if the café is open on Saturdays. Some (unquantified) also indicate that they would like it to open earlier so that they could have informal breakfast meetings there. The afternoon closing time could also be extended, but the main concern about the latter end of the day is that the

café apparently often runs out of food considerably before closing time, so it is effectively closed for food items much earlier than its actual closing time.

While it is possible that the café would not take a great deal of money during extended hours, it is seen as an enhancement of the King's Fund's generally welcoming environment.

SECTION 3 - GENERAL OBSERVATIONS AND RECURRENT THEMES

In this section, some of the recurrent themes that emerged across the interviews and discussions are considered.

What is the King's Fund for?

Internal and external stakeholders readily interpreted questions about the use of the King's Fund building as a proxy for the question: what is the King's Fund for? Different views and vested interests naturally led to diverse answers. Some of the comments are reproduced below (in approximate descending order of how frequently the point was made):

The building is intrinsic to King's Fund's reputation

A key King's Fund role is [to be] a resource

We do too much work for the "important people" - the balance could be redressed a bit. There are varied methods of communication with the important people, e.g. short publications, website etc.

Need to put a percentage on the King's Fund's various roles, e.g. policy and development, grants, ELD, customers and contacts, R&D and dissemination activities

Need a corporate view on priorities before use if building is decided. No point just doing longer hours - need to be more of a resource, have more cross-marketing and reach other key groups

More commercial customers could lose the King's Fund its identity and focus

There is a need for a place for tomorrow's leaders

[There is] support for more emphasis on traditional grant giving role like Rowntree, more like a traditional charitable foundation) - this would result in having little earnings in relation to charitable income and would result in a huge downsizing

Overall, the clear message was that the King's Fund had to be clear about its strategy, and realistic about what it could do within its available cash resources. While the King's Fund might want to do everything, it had to be strategic and clear about priorities, and use the building in furtherance of explicit aims. One person who had attended an SMP programme and had also attended meetings at the King's Fund over a long period observed:

The King's Fund seems to reinvent itself periodically as though it does not know what it supposed to be doing. There seems to be a lot of politics going on.

But in the Chief Executive's words:

The King's Fund is there to make a difference to the health of Londoners - so in which areas can it do that and how?

How the King's Fund building is perceived

The King's Fund building is liked and appreciated by people by all walks of life. Only staff take it for granted! Comments from external stakeholders were overwhelmingly positive, and included:

Super building, very welcoming - cosy, with a smile

Excellent facilities

Excellent location (several)

Everyone is helpful

It is neutral and safe

It is prestigious

However, there was a cluster of less positive comments about the King's Fund's exclusivity (some saw this as the flip-side of being prestigious) which need to be heard in planning future use of the building. Such comments included:

Building is accessible but is still an exclusive place

It's the ambience and reputation rather than the facilities and this contributes to prestige and privilege. You think of yourself as having made it - it is elitist, but people aspire to go there. But if you haven't done it yet, it can feel exclusive

Design of the building does not encourage casual mixing

Some groups need "permission" to use the space and consider themselves worthy of it

Seen as cliquey? Rarefied, elitist. Wider use would alter this and make it less clubby

Signage, including welcome signs, could be better

However, it should be remembered that some people have long memories and some perceptions of exclusivity may be based on experiences from the past. One person recalled how she was regularly assumed to be a courier when she visited the King's Fund at Camden, due to her leather attire!

Another issue that emerged was the tendency for people to come to the building for a single purpose - the library, an ELD programme or a meeting - and to be too busy or reluctant to deviate from that purpose. As a Millennium Award recipient said:

We don't come often and we come from a long way, so we just want to get there and get away again at the end of the day

Another person said:

When we come to the building for a course, we are not sure what others are there for and whether they have time to talk.

While better marketing and publicity might address this issue to a certain extent, it may be difficult to make rapid inroads into long established patterns of building usage.

Lack of corporate identity

One of the striking observations in conducting a number of interviews over a short period of time was that there was a worrying lack of corporate identity. One person described King's Fund staff as "working within their own silos" and there was much evidence to confirm this. It is mentioned here because it has an impact on how the building is used. For example, at times, it appeared that conference and catering staff do not feel fully part of King's Fund. They see themselves as running businesses within the King's Fund, but this is confusing for them as the rules keep changing about what the business is supposed to do. It is possible that the morale of some staff will improve now that they are on permanent contracts, as this appears to have impeded a sense of corporate identity.

There were also some pockets of low staff morale. Some staff felt that they were "leaned on by powerful people" to vary the use of the building e.g. for room use or catering. One manager observed:

Staff feel like second class citizens - expected to work miracles at the last minute - and they do.

This lack of common purpose and corporate identity must be implicated in the inadequate sharing of information on who is using the building and the allegedly poor state of the King's Fund's databases. One person stated:

We need to make sure our databases are better - ELD need to share their databases with other people. There is a historic federalism in the King's Fund and people are keen on keeping their own contacts. This leads to mixed messages so one week we invest in primary care and next week in public health.

The fragmentation within the King's Fund limits opportunities for cross-marketing and synergy. This deficit is also perceived by external stakeholders, one of whom (from the voluntary sector) noted:

We have a lot of contact with conference staff but nothing else - not even promotion of the café

At times, ELD appears to be perceived as an organisation within an organisation, with its own rules and practices. As we have seen, this impacts on room bookings and room utilisation, and possibly limits opportunities for collaboration within the King's Fund.

It was somewhat alarming to observe that the ghosts of Palace Court and Albert Street still walked the King's Fund corridors. Some people still had an identity that reflected one or other of the King's Fund's former buildings, and this too almost certainly affects sharing, collaboration and an approach to using the King's Fund building in new ways.

Finally, the lack of corporate spirit was exemplified by polarised views on the King's Fund Open Day. Rhetoric about inclusivity was thought to have been undermined by what many staff saw as an elitist approach to planning the Open Day. The compilation of an "A list" database for the Open Day was said by some to be a missed opportunity to widen the impact of King's Fund on other groups and encourage them to use it in future.

Publicity and marketing

Future use of the building needs to reflect a clear direction and set of priorities for the King's Fund; whatever that direction may be, there are many messages from internal and external stakeholders about publicity and marketing. The following comments are interesting.

Local groups don't know [the King's Fund] is there. I didn't know about it till I did the course myself - getting the Millennium Grant was a way in for me

Local libraries could carry information about the King's Fund and what it does. It could also advertise in the Voice and in civic centres and town halls.

Haven't seen much about how you can use the building and what it is available for.

They should do more proactive marketing when you book an event - e.g. suggest that you can use conservatory etc.

Could have a specific open day inviting community/BME/disability groups to see the building's facilities

Need more information on what is available at the King's Fund so I can pass it on to other organisations

People get information quite piecemeal - e.g. may be invited to a meeting on regeneration, but no-one links that into marketing about the library, bookshop etc.

IN CONCLUSION

There was realistic engagement with the issues about how the King's Fund building might be used differently in future. While specific ideas varied, the consensus was that building usage must follow on from clarity of purpose, in the context of a stronger corporate identity within the King's Fund. There was much support for reducing elitism and widening the use of the building by more grass-roots organisations, although the importance of continuing to be seen as a credible meeting place for policy makers, opinion formers and managers was also rated highly.

Generally, internal stakeholders were open-minded about extending opening hours, and with the exception of strong support from library staff for Saturday library opening, most views would be swayed by economic factors. There remains a need for detailed market research to see if the indications in this review of a potential wider use on Saturdays by different groups would in fact take place, given proactive marketing and a differential pricing strategy. However, the strong message is that change should be decisive, and backed up, where necessary, by appropriate staffing and managerial support.

APPENDIX 1 - LIST OF PEOPLE WHO CONTRIBUTED TO THE REVIEW

Personal interviews

David Bewers - Assistant Director of Resources, King's Fund
Vic Buckley - Receptionist, King's Fund
Lynette Cawthra - Information and Library Services manager, King's Fund
Kerry Dalton - Senior Resources Manager, King's Fund
Rebecca Degener - Bookshop, King's Fund
Michelle Dixon - Directorate of Corporate Affairs
Gary Herman - Catering Manager, King's Fund
John Howard - Head of Corporate Services, King's Fund
Frank Jackson - Executive Director of Resources, King's Fund
David Knowles - Executive Director, Leadership Development, King's Fund
Steve Manning - Acting Director Grants, King's Fund
Carla Morris - Head of bookshop, King's Fund
Julia Neuberger - Chief Executive, King's Fund
Edward Roberts, Assistant Director (adult services), Newham Social Services.
Sandra Sanger - Office Services Manager, King's Fund
Rebecca Smith - Conference Services, King's Fund

Senior managers who had attended ELD programmes x 2

Library users x 3

Discussion groups

Library staff (9 people)
Staff meeting (30 people)

Telephone interviews

Andy Bell - Head of Public Affairs, King's Fund
Jane Belman - Health policy officer - London Voluntary Service Council (LVSC)
Lindsey Bennister - Long-term Medical Conditions Alliance (LMCA) (small groups officer)
Daisy Byaruhanga - Millennium Award recipient
Helen Caton - Consultant to Grants Unit, King's Fund
Steve Gillam - Programme Director, King's Fund
Musa Hersi - Millennium Award recipient
Bernadette Igboaka - Millennium Award recipient
Valerie James - Fellow, Leadership Development, King's Fund
Mercy Jeyasingham - Consultant to Grants Unit, King's Fund / NICE partners council member
David Jones - Senior Grants Officer, King's Fund
Nikki Joule - Neurological Alliance
Belinda Pratten - Lecturer, University of North London
Balraj Sandhu - Council for Ethnic Minority Voluntary Organisations (CEMVO)
John Shakeshaft - Millennium Award recipient

Comments received by email

Karen Jochelson, King's Fund
Rebecca Rosen - Fellow, King's Fund

Questionnaire to Saturday library users

32 questionnaires received

Documents reviewed

Draft report on the future of King's Fund publications) by Andy Bell and Michelle Dixon)
Publication Review - presentation of qualitative research findings (Gabriel Ashworth Market Consultancy and Research)
King's Fund Corporate Strategy 2002-2004
Programme brochure and other material from Education and Leadership Development, King's Fund
Operational Plan, King's Fund, 2002
Conference and catering review - King's Fund December 2001
King's Fund conference clientele reports 2001-2
Table of Saturday visitors to King's Fund library 2001-2002 to date
King's Fund Library summary by assistance type, 2001

APPENDIX 2 - QUESTIONNAIRE TO SATURDAY LIBRARY USERS
(Number of questionnaires = 31)

1. Which of the following categories best describes you?¹

NHS	15
Non-profit	1
Commercial	1
Part time student	4
Academic	1
Social services	1
Local government	0
Overseas	1
Librarian	0
Full time student	7
Central government	0
Other	1

2. For what main purpose are you using the library today?²

Work related	10
Study (at what level?)	24
Of which	
undergraduate	10
Masters degree	7
MBA	2
PhD	1
Post grad diploma (NHS management scheme)	2
Post grad diploma (other)	2
London leadership programme	1
Commercial	0
Other (specify)	0

3. Is this your first visit?

Yes	8
No	22
No answer	1

4. If you have used the King's Fund library before, please tick the days on which you have done so³

Monday	8
Tuesday	7
Wednesday	8
Thursday	8
Friday	8
Saturday	20

¹ Number of responses exceeds number of respondents due to one non-response and one respondent giving a multiple answer

² Numbers do not add up to 31 as some respondents stated their purpose was work but then gave details of study, and some gave two main purposes e.g. work and study

³ Several respondents had used the library on more than one day

5. In the last year how often have you used this library on a Saturday?

Not specified	1
Once	3
Twice	1
3 times	2
4 times	4
5 times	1

More i.e.

6 times	2
8 times	2
10+ times	1
12 times	1
15+ times	3

6. If it wasn't open on Saturdays....

Would you use it on other days of the week during current opening hours?

Yes	12 (of which 2 said "with difficulty")
No	19

Would you use it if it was open late one evening?

Yes	20
No	10
No answer	1