Welsh Public Library Standards 2017-2020: Bridgend (Awen Cultural Trust)

Annual Assessment Report 2017-18

This report has been prepared based on information provided in Bridgend's annual return, case studies and narrative report submitted to the Museums, Archives and Libraries Division of the Welsh Government.

1 Executive summary

Bridgend met 11 of the 12 core entitlements in full, and partially met 1.

Of the 10 quality indicators which have targets, Bridgend achieved 7 in full, 1 in part and failed to achieve 2.

Library services in Bridgend are delivered by Awen Cultural Trust on behalf of the local authority. The service had continued to perform well in this first year of the sixth framework, particularly in terms of its engagement with the local community, and the wide range of activities and events it offers. The decision to reduce the materials budget is however disappointing; although careful planning around the allocation of available funds is apparent this has affected performance against the standards, and if continued could have a greater negative impact in future years. The implementation of a staff restructure is also noted, the outcomes of which will begin to be reported in 2018-19.

- All service points provide a full range of support for individual development, and for health and well-being. Four case studies demonstrate the positive impact of the service on individuals from the community.

- Both formal and informal training levels have increased, although performance is still below the median for Wales.

- Attendance at events and activities organised by the library remain high, reflecting the quality and diversity of the service offer. Usage levels, in terms of physical visitors, and numbers of library members and active borrowers have also increased.

- Reductions in the materials budget mean that the overall acquisitions target is no longer met. Careful planning to maximise use of available funds is however evident with ring-fencing of the requests budget helping ensure QI 12 is still achieved.

- Overall staff numbers have fallen slightly in 2017-18; the full impact of the noted staff restructure is yet to be seen, with an increase in qualified staff filling posts where their qualification is cited as ancillary to their experience and skills.

- Total revenue expenditure has fallen slightly on 2016-17, with expenditure per capita below the median level.

2 Performance against the standards

The standards framework comprises of core entitlements, quality indicators with targets, quality indicators with benchmarks and impact measures. Section 2 summarises achievements against these areas. A narrative assessment of the authority's performance is provided in Section 3.

2.1 Core entitlements

Bridgend is meeting11 of the 12 core entitlements in full, and partially meeting one. CE12 will be fully met once the Library Strategy is ratified and published online. The service is committed to supporting learning, development, literacy and wellbeing and this shapes the focus of planned activity throughout the year. There is a strong emphasis on staff development and partnership working to promote and deliver services, and the service is itself the lead partner for the regional Books4U scheme.

2.2 Quality indicators with targets

There are 16 quality indicators (QIs), of which ten have constituent targets. Of these, Bridgend is achieving 7 in full, one in part and is failing to achieve 2 of the indicators.

Quality Indicator	Met?	
QI 3 Support for individual development:		Met in full
a) ICT support	✔	
b) Information literacy and skills training	✔	
c) E-government support	✔	
d) Reader development	✔	
QI 4 (a) Support for health and well-being		Met in full
i) Book Prescription Wales scheme	✔	
ii) Better with Books scheme	✔	
iii) Designated health & well-being collection	✔	
iv) Information about healthy lifestyles and behaviours	✔	
v) Signposting to health & well-being services	✔	
QI 6 all static service points offer events/activities for users with special requirements	✔	Met in full
QI 7 Location of service points	✔	Met in full
QI 9 Up-to-date and appropriate reading material		Not met
Acquisitions per capita	x	
<u>or</u> Materials spend per capita	x	
QI 10 Welsh Language Resources		Not met
% of material budget spent on Welsh	x	
<u>or</u> Spend on Welsh per capita	x	
QI 11 Online access:		Met in full
a) i) Public access to Internet	✔	
ii) Wi-Fi provision	✔	
QI 12 Supply of requests		Met in full
a) % of requests satisfied within 7 days	✔	
b) % of requests satisfied within 15 days	✔	
QI 13 Staffing levels and qualifications:		Partially met
i) Staff per capita	x	
ii) Qualified staff per capita	✔	
iii) Head of service qualification/training	✔	
iv) CPD percentage	✔	

QI 16 Opening hours per capita	✔	Met in full

There is a slight change on the last year of the fifth framework, with the target for materials spend per capita (QI 9) no longer met.

2.3   Impact measures

The framework includes three indicators aimed at assessing the impact of library use on people's lives. These indicators do not have targets, and authorities are only required to carry out user surveys for QI 1 once over the three-year period of the framework. The summary figures (lowest, median and highest) are therefore based on those authorities indicating they completed their user survey during this first year of the framework. Rankings reflect the numbers of respondents, where 1 is the highest scoring authority.

Bridgend indicated that an adult user survey is planned for November 2018, and children's survey for March 2020.

Performance indicator	*Rank*	Lowest	Median	Highest
QI 1 Making a difference				
b) % of young people who think that the library helps them learn and find things out:	n/a	73%	94%	97%
e) % of adults who think that the library has made a difference to their lives:	n/a	38%	90%	95%
QI 5 b) % of attendees of training sessions who said that the training had helped them achieve their goals:	99% *2/17*	75%	98%	100%

Authorities are also asked to provide up to four case studies describing the impact which the library service has had on an individual or on a group of individuals during the year. Bridgend provided four wide-ranging case studies, highlighting:

- Dementia Support – a joint programme with the Leisure Centre for dementia sufferers and their carers; a swimming session is followed by refreshments and craft activities led by library staff, including the production of 'memory books' (personalised scrapbooks). Carers find support and dementia sufferers have regained confidence and improved communication / social skills.

- Improving Literacy – a partnership with a local school to work with identified pupils to support them to engage with stories and storytelling. Creative writing sessions fed into the creation of a simple animation. The children developed new skills, and were positively engaged with reading, and with the library and its staff.

- Employment Support – work experience scheme set up with local Job Centres for Digital Work Placements to support library users to engage with digital resources. Several participants have since obtained employment, one within the library sector.

- Safe Space – library staff support a range of activities for children, including Makerspace 'Coding and Creating' sessions, an informal Friday 'youth club' and a seasonal Gardening Club – children and families feel the library is 'their space' and the clubs are supporting social learning and engaging younger people with the library.

2.4   Quality indicators and benchmarks

The remaining indicators do not have targets, but allow services to monitor and benchmark their performance over time, in comparison with other authorities. The following table

summarises Bridgend's position for 2017-18. Ranks are included out of 22, where 1 is the highest, and 22 the lowest scoring authority, unless stated otherwise. Indicators where fewer than 22 authorities supplied data are those where relevant data was not available to some authorities. Where possible, figures from the last year of the fifth framework have also been included for comparison; however, in some cases a change in definition or the introduction of additional measures makes comparisons impractical. Indicators 'per capita' are calculated per 1,000 population unless otherwise noted.

Performance indicator		Rank	Lowest	Median	Highest	2016/17
QI 1 Making a difference						
a) % of adults who think that using the library has helped them develop new skills:	n/a		24%	83%	94%	23%
c) health and well-being	n/a		33%	65%	95%	34%
d) enjoyable, safe and inclusive	n/a		90%	98%	100%	97%
QI 2 Customer satisfaction						
a) 'very good' or 'good' choice of books	n/a		88%	91%	98%	91%
b) 'very good' or 'good' customer care	n/a		93%	99%	100%	99%
c) 'very good' or 'good' IT facilities	n/a		74%	86%	94%	
d) 'very good' or 'good' overall;	n/a		93%	97%	99%	97%
e) users aged 16 & under rating out of ten	n/a		8.5	9.1	9.2	9.0
QI 5 User training						
a) attendances per capita	22	16/22	10	32	238	19
c) informal training per capita	75	20/22	15	199	473	60
QI 6 attendances at events per capita	520	3/22	82	228	684	489
QI 8 Library use						
a) visits per capita	2,909	18/22	2,501	4,047	7,014	2,753
b) virtual visits per capita	490	16/22	243	866	2,211	851
c) active borrowers per capita	177	7/22	100	154	229	162
QI 10 Welsh issues per capita*	60	13/22	4	68	663	
QI 11 Online access						
b) Computers per capita^	10	11/22	5	9	14	10
c) % of available time used by the public	22%	16/22	14%	27%	67%	24%
QI 13 Staffing levels and qualifications						
(v) a) total volunteers	18	16/21	3	31	196	14
b) total volunteer hours	1,018	14/21	40	1,346	11,939	903
QI 14 Operational expenditure						
a) total expenditure per capita	£10,014	16/21	£7,047	£11,915	£17,771	£10,588
b) % on staff,	71%	5/21	44%	63%	75%	72%
% on information resources	16%	5/21	4%	13%	25%	17%
% on equipment and buildings	4%	10/21	0%	4%	20%	1%
% on other operational costs;	9%	18/21	0%	18%	37%	10%
c) capital expenditure per capita	£126	13/20	£0	£338	£17,432	£209
QI 15 Net cost per visit	£2.29	3/21	£1.24	£1.82	£2.41	£2.72

QI 16 Opening hours#						
(iii) a) % hours unplanned closure of static service points	0.00%	*1/21*	0.00%	0.02%	1.28%	0.00%
b) % mobile stops / home deliveries missed	0.00%	*1/20*	0.00%	0.35%	11.24%	0.00%

* per Welsh speaking resident population

^per 10,000 resident population

 # Rankings here have been reversed, so that 1 is the lowest scoring (best performing) authority.

3   Analysis of performance

The core entitlements and quality indicators can be divided into four key areas. This section of the report outlines performance under these areas, and compares this performance (where applicable) with the final year of the fifth framework (2016-17).

3.1   Meeting customer needs (QI 1-5)

Bridgend has yet to conduct its user surveys, which are planned for November 2018 (adult), and March 2020 (children). All static libraries provide a full range of support for individual development, and good support for health and well-being, with improvements in attendance at formal training sessions and in the numbers helped by informal training. A partnership with Communities First to provide scheduled IT support is a noted area of success, although overall performance on user training is still below the median for Wales.

3.2   Access and use (QI 6-8)

Bridgend continues to meet the target for easy access to service points, and offers events / activities for users with special requirements at all static libraries. With a wide-ranging activity programme on offer, attendance levels here have continued to increase, and service performance remains the third highest in Wales per capita. Bridgend is also one of only seven library services to record an increase in visitor numbers, and numbers of both active borrowers and library members have also risen on 2016-17. There has been a drop in virtual visits, attributed to the changeover to a stand-alone website, and book issues have also fallen, with performance here below the median level.

3.3   Facilities and services (QI 9-12)

The decision was taken to reduce the book fund in 2017-18 and this has inevitably impacted on performance, with the target for acquisitions per capita no longer met. Careful consideration has evidently been given to the implications of this reduction for users, with the reduced spend on children's stock reflecting heavy investment in previous years, and a more considered approach taken to acquisition of adult non-fiction titles. Proportionate investment in Welsh language materials has increased slightly, but is still below the target levels. PC provision is maintained at 2016-17 levels, with a replacement programme ongoing to ensure that the IT infrastructure is fit for purpose. Usage levels have however decreased, in common with experience in other authorities, and the service attributes this to increased IT literacy levels. Performance in relation to supply of requests has improved, with both targets here met, reflecting well on the decision to ring-fence the request budget.

3.4   Expertise and capacity (QI 13-16)

Overall staff numbers have reduced slightly in 2017-18, and it is noted that the impact of a staff restructure will be seen in the second year of the framework. The overall target for staff per capita is not achieved, although reporting of numbers of qualified staff enables

this requirement to be met. The total number of staff identified as holding recognised qualifications has in fact risen, with a recruitment focus on skills and expertise that support community needs, although only one position (compared to 10 in the previous year) is specifically identified as requiring a qualified incumbent. The service has also invested heavily in staff training / development in 2017-18, one of only two authorities to meet the requirements at such a high level. Bridgend have also increased their use of volunteers, with a total of 18 each providing an average of almost 57 hours.

Total revenue expenditure has fallen slightly on 2016-17, with expenditure per capita below the median level. Aggregate annual opening hours have however broadly been maintained, with the average per capita still the highest in Wales. There were no reported unstaffed opening hours, unplanned service closures, or missed mobile library stops, with plans in place to extend the home delivery service in 2018-19.

4   Strategic context

As part of the return authorities are asked to report on how the library service is contributing to wider Welsh Government priorities and strategic goals. The purpose of the Trust, to 'Make people's lives better', is noted as aligning with the themes of several Welsh Government strategies. Specific examples are given of how the service contributes to the cross-cutting themes: Prosperous and Secure, supporting the digital agenda; Healthy and Active, through collections and activities that promote health and well-being; Ambitious and Learning, enabling community learning, and promoting use of the Welsh language; and United and Connected, providing accessible and inclusive services and facilities that bring communities together.

5   Future direction

Reporting on the authority's future direction and plans for the library service over the following year, it is noted that the Trust has a Five year Library Plan (2017-2022), with strategic priorities focused on developing new library spaces, children's literacy, the digital skills agenda, and enhancing well-being. Continued investment in library spaces is identified as central to delivery of the strategy, with plans to redevelop some sites, and explore options for co-location. The service intends to build on its successful programme of activities for children, with investment in staff development noted as integral to delivery here, and in supporting the service's digital offer, and work on well-being. Partnerships, with local and government agencies are also identified as key to successful delivery.

6   Conclusion

Library services in Bridgend are delivered by Awen Cultural Trust on behalf of the local authority. The service had continued to perform well in this first year of the sixth framework, particularly in terms of its engagement with the local community, and the wide range of activities and events it offers. The decision to reduce the materials budget is however disappointing; although careful planning around the allocation of available funds is apparent this has affected performance against the standards, and if continued could have a greater negative impact in future years. The implementation of a staff restructure is also noted, the outcomes of which will begin to be reported in 2018-19.