Welsh Public Library Standards 2017-2020: Powys

Annual Assessment Report 2017-18

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

1 Executive summary

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

Of the 10 quality indicators which have targets, Powys achieved 5 in full, 1 in part and failed to achieve 4.

The geographical extent of the county, serving a dispersed population across a largely rural landscape, presents unique issues for Powys library service. The continued emphasis on front-line delivery, which has seen opening hours extended, and good support for professional staffing are to be commended, and the service is making effective use of partnerships and volunteers to maintain and develop its offer to its communities. There are however a number of areas of decline evident in Powys' performance in 2017-18, with falling usage figures, reductions in acquisitions, and a drop in both take-up and supply of requests for specific items. Preparations to migrate to the all-Wales Library Management System may well have been influential on three of these indicators, and some improvement may therefore be anticipated in the second year of the framework. At the same time, there are indications that budgets may reduce in the coming years, with the potential to impact further on service investment and performance.

- All service points provide a full range of support for individual development, and for health and well-being. Powys submitted a range of case studies demonstrating the beneficial impact of the service.

- Attendance at pre-arranged training sessions had reduced significantly, with the average per capita now one of the lowest in Wales.

- Attendance at events and activities has also declined, and the need to target resources to support communities more generally, means that Powys provides activities / events for those with special requirements at less than half its libraries.

- There has been a general decline in usage, with visitor numbers, book issues and numbers of active borrowers all lower than in 2016-17. Electronic resources are however well used, with average downloads per capita the third highest in Wales.

- Expenditure on resources is proportionally among the lowest in Wales, and neither of the acquisitions targets have been met in 2017-18. Performance in relation to supply of requests has also declined, reflecting in part preparations for migration to the all-Wales LMS.

- Staffing levels have fallen in 2017-18, and overall staffing target is not achieved; Powys is one of the few authorities to continue to meet the requirements for levels of qualified staff.

- Aggregate opening hours have increased, with the average per capita now the second highest in Wales, reflecting the service's strong support for front-line delivery.

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

Powys is meeting 11 of the 12 core entitlements in full, and partially meeting one, CE6, where charges are made for inter-library loans from other authorities in Wales. It is noted that this reflects the costs involved in obtaining such items, with no regional ILL scheme covering Powys. The service is now a member of the all-Wales LMS, which facilitates catalogue sharing, and places a strong emphasis on service promotion. An annual marketing plan is in place, with effective use made of social media / local news websites.

2.2 Quality indicators with targets

There are 16 quality indicators (QIs), of which ten have constituent targets. Of these, Powys is achieving 5 in full, one in part and is failing to achieve 4 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	x	Not met
QI 7 Location of service points	✔	Met in full
QI 9 Up-to-date and appropriate reading material		Not met
Acquisitions per capita	x	
or Materials spend per capita	x	
QI 10 Welsh Language Resources		Not met
% of material budget spent on Welsh	x	
or 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		Not met
a) % of requests satisfied within 7 days	x	
b) % of requests satisfied within 15 days	x	

Quality Indicator	Met?	
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 the proportion of the materials budget allocated to Welsh language resources no longer achieved.

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.

Powys indicated their user surveys will be carried out during autumn 2018 (adult) and autumn 2019 (children). The service was also unable to report figures for user evaluation of its training offer, due to staff capacity and the number of events run by external partners.

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:	n/a	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. Powys provided a range of such case studies although in some instances stronger evidence could have been provided of the impact of these activities on participants:

- The Learning Offer – highlighting library service benefits for students and researchers, noting how the Access to Research online resource is particularly well used.

- The Digital Offer – demonstrating how the service is encouraging new skills and ways of working, with regular coding sessions at Brecon Library, and a specific 'Girls Who Code' event designed to increase the number of girls participating.

- The Health Offer – providing and showcasing well-being opportunities, working in partnership with other groups (PAVO, Powys Dyslexia Support Group), and through the development of its own 'Wellness' collections.

- The Cultural / Reading Offer – highlighting the benefits of the Bookstart promotion, as part of the Baby's First Shapes pilot scheme.

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 Powys' 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%	76%
c) health and well-being	n/a		33%	65%	95%	69%
d) enjoyable, safe and inclusive	n/a		90%	98%	100%	99%
QI 2 Customer satisfaction						
a) 'very good' or 'good' choice of books	n/a		88%	91%	98%	74%
b) 'very good' or 'good' customer care	n/a		93%	99%	100%	90%
c) 'very good' or 'good' IT facilities	n/a		74%	86%	94%	
d) 'very good' or 'good' overall;	n/a		93%	97%	99%	95%
e) users aged 16 & under rating out of ten	n/a		8.5	9.1	9.2	8.8
QI 5 User training						
a) attendances per capita	11	21/22	10	32	238	34
c) informal training per capita	98	18/22	15	199	473	98
QI 6 attendances at events per capita	97	20/22	82	228	684	122
QI 8 Library use						
a) visits per capita	4,065	11/22	2,501	4,047	7,014	4,316
b) virtual visits per capita	1,346	4/22	243	866	2,211	1,410
c) active borrowers per capita	147	14/22	100	154	229	157
QI 10 Welsh issues per capita*	78	9/22	4	68	663	
QI 11 Online access						
b) Computers per capita^	9	14/22	5	9	14	10
c) % of available time used by the public	19%	20/22	14%	27%	67%	32%
QI 13 Staffing levels and qualifications						
(v) a) total volunteers	113	3/21	3	31	196	78
b) total volunteer hours	2,490	5/21	40	1,346	11,939	438
QI 14 Operational expenditure						
a) total expenditure per capita	£15,749	4/21	£7,047	£11,915	£17,771	£14,817
b) % on staff,	49%	18/21	44%	63%	75%	54%
% on information resources	8%	19/21	4%	13%	25%	8%
% on equipment and buildings	5%	8/21	0%	4%	20%	8%
% on other operational costs;	37%	1/21	0%	18%	37%	29%
c) capital expenditure per capita	£699	7/20	£0	£338	£17,432	£341

QI 15 Net cost per visit	£1.52	*15/21*	£1.24	£1.82	£2.41	*£2.44*
QI 16 Opening hours#						
(iii) a) % hours unplanned closure of static service points	0.61%	*18/21*	0.00%	0.02%	1.28%	*0.00%*
b) % mobile stops / home deliveries missed	4.79%	*19/20*	0.00%	0.35%	11.24%	*0.13%*

* 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)

Powys has yet to conduct its user surveys; it is noted that these are due to be carried out in autumn 2018 and 2019. All static service points provide full support for individual development, and good support for health and well-being, with targets here both achieved. Attendance at formal training sessions has however reduced significantly, with the average per capita now one of the lowest in Wales, although the numbers helped by means of informal training is broadly similar to 2016-17.

3.2   Access and use (QI 6-8)

Powys continues to meet the target for easy access to service points, with 16 libraries open 10+ hours per week, serving a dispersed population over a large rural area. Powys is however one of only three library authorities not providing events / activities for users with special requirements in all its libraries; a reflection of the need to target support at communities more generally. Attendance at events and activities has also decreased significantly, with average attendance figures among the lowest per capita in Wales. Visits to library premises, virtual visits, book issues, and numbers of active borrowers have also declined, although adult borrowing levels (including Welsh language loans) remain comparatively high. In contrast, library membership has increased, and electronic resources are well used, with average downloads per capita the third highest in Wales.

3.3   Facilities and services (QI 9-12)

Although the materials budget increased in 2017-18, Powys' spend, as a proportion of its overall revenue budget is, at 8%, still among the lowest in Wales, and neither of the acquisitions targets are met as a result. The impact of the transition to the all-Wales LMS may have been a contributory factor here, as stock purchase had to be halted for a period to allow for migration to the new system. Expenditure on Welsh language materials has also fallen below the 4% threshold and this target is no longer met. Spending on resources for children has however broadly been maintained, reflecting service priorities in this area. PC provision has fallen slightly, and usage levels continue to fall, in common with many other authorities, with the increasing use of Wi-Fi facilities. There has been a notable drop (by over 40%) in the number of requests made for specific items during the year, and performance in fulfilling these requests has also decreased to a level where QI 12 is not met. In part this is attributed to the transfer to the all-Wales LMS, which affected purchase of in demand titles for a period of two months.

3.4 Expertise and capacity (QI 13-16)

Overall staff levels have fallen further in 2017-18, and the staffing target is not achieved, although Powys continues to meet the stipulated target for qualified staff, one of only seven authorities to do so. Qualified leadership is in place, and the service still meets the requirements for staff training / development, if at a slightly lower level. Both numbers of volunteers, and the volunteer contribution to the service have increased markedly; the authority notes its increased reliance on volunteers as staffing levels have reduced, and how their contribution enables the service to deliver more for its communities.

Total revenue expenditure on the service has increased on 2016-17 and is now the fourth highest in Wales, although the majority of the increase relates to operational costs other than staffing and materials. Aggregate opening hours have also increased, with the average per capita now the second highest in Wales. This reflects both the introduction of unstaffed opening hours (utilising volunteers) at three smaller libraries, and an extension to the opening hours at Llandrindod Library.

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. Powys reports on its contribution to the Welsh Government's cross-cutting strategies: Prosperous and Secure, contributing to the poverty agenda through the provision of local access to a range of free services; Healthy and Active, working in partnership with other organisations, and through Book Prescription Wales; Ambitious and Learning, providing a wealth of learning opportunities; and United and Connected, providing services to all through its network of libraries and mobile library service.

5 Future direction

Reporting on the authority's future direction and plans for the library service over the following year, Powys highlighted the challenging financial environment in which it operates, with the possibilities that further budget cuts will be required over the next five years. In response, the service is working hard to explore all avenues for joint working, including multi-agency use of library facilities, building on the success of work in 2017/18 with Community Connectors, and the Cambrian Credit Union. New income streams are also being explored, with support from the Carnegie Library Lab project.

6 Conclusion

The geographical extent of the county, serving a dispersed population across a largely rural landscape, presents unique issues for Powys library service. The continued emphasis on front-line delivery, which has seen opening hours extended, and good support for professional staffing are to be commended, and the service is making effective use of partnerships and volunteers to maintain and develop its offer to its communities. There are however a number of areas of decline evident in Powys' performance in 2017-18, with falling usage figures, reductions in acquisitions, and a drop in both take-up and supply of requests for specific items. Preparations to migrate to the all-Wales Library Management System may well have been influential on three of these indicators, and some improvement may therefore be anticipated in the second year of the framework. At the same time, there are indications that budgets may reduce in the coming years, with the potential to impact further on service investment and performance.