

Welsh Public Library Standards 2017-2020: Wrexham

Annual Assessment Report 2017-18

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

1 Executive summary

Wrexham met 9 of the 12 core entitlements in full, partially met 2, and failed to meet 1.

Of the 10 quality indicators which have targets, Wrexham achieved 4 in full, 4 in part and failed to achieve 2.

Budget pressures remain a constraint on service development, but the maintenance of budget levels in 2017-18 has enabled performance to be largely sustained, with improvements in a number of areas. Increases in the number of people visiting the library are for example evident, although overall usage remains low in comparative terms. The service has experienced a sustained period of reshaping and change; the development of a Library Service Strategy, and a continued period of financial and structure stability will be integral to consolidating performance and enabling improvement.

- Wrexham provided three case studies demonstrating the impact of the service. 80% of adults surveyed think that the library has made a difference to their lives.
- Attendance at pre-arranged training sessions has decreased by over 44%, with a similar decline in numbers for informal training, reversing the gains made in 2016-17.
- There has been an encouraging increase in the number of visits to the library, attendance at library events and activities, and book issues, although service usage levels are still below the Welsh average in general.
- Although the overall acquisitions targets have not been met, expenditure on children's resources and items in the Welsh language has increased and Wrexham is now meeting the targets for acquisition of Welsh language resources.
- Completion of the planned roll-out of Wi-Fi across all service points, together with upgrades / reviews of PC provision to better reflect customer usage, will be a welcome development.
- Overall staff levels have fallen further in 2017-18 and are now among the lowest in Wales, with professional staffing below the median level.
- There has been a small increase in aggregate opening hours, but Wrexham's offer here is still among the lowest in Wales, and fails to meet the stipulated target.

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

Wrexham is meeting 9 of the 12 core entitlements in full, partially meeting 2, and fails to meet one. Opening hours remain below the target set in QI 16 despite a welcome increase on 2016-17, and the service has yet to complete its roll-out of Wi-Fi provision across all static libraries. While the service has plans to develop and publish a Library Service Strategy, this has yet to be completed.

2.2 Quality indicators with targets

There are 16 quality indicators (QIs), of which ten have constituent targets. Of these, Wrexham is achieving 4 in full, 4 in part and is failing to achieve 2 of the indicators.

Quality Indicator	Met?
QI 3 Support for individual development:	Partially met
a) ICT support	x
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
or Materials spend per capita	x
QI 10 Welsh Language Resources	Met in full
% of material budget spent on Welsh	✓
or Spend on Welsh per capita	✓
QI 11 Online access:	Partially met
a) i) Public access to Internet	✓
ii) Wi-Fi provision	x
QI 12 Supply of requests	Partially met
a) % of requests satisfied within 7 days	✓
b) % of requests satisfied within 15 days	x
QI 13 Staffing levels and qualifications:	Partially met
i) Staff per capita	x
ii) Qualified staff per capita	x
iii) Head of service qualification/training	✓
iv) CPD percentage	✓

QI 16 Opening hours per capita	x	Not Met
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When compared with the last year of the fifth framework, increased investment has enabled achievement of QI 10 which is now met in full. However, last year Wrexham provided ICT support in all static service points, so QI 3 remains only partially 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.

Wrexham carried out an adult user survey in November 2017 and intends to conduct a children's survey in either autumn 2018 or spring 2019.

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:	80%	6/7	38%	90%	95%
QI 5 b) % of attendees of training sessions who said that the training had helped them achieve their goals:	75%	17/17	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.

Wrexham provided three such case studies:

- Code Club – a weekly after school computer coding club providing a unique learning opportunity for participants (aged 9-13); promoting the library and its facilities to the children and their families; encouraging additional visits and use of the library.
- Syrian Families – bespoke weekly story time sessions supporting the families with their English Language learning; helping them learn about day-to-day life in the UK; widening library membership.
- Lite Arted – monthly art sessions for adults (following a one-off workshop); improving well-being; encouraging additional visits and use of the library service.

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 Wrexham'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:	63%	6/7	24%	83%	94%	
c) health and well-being	62%	5/7	33%	65%	95%	
d) enjoyable, safe and inclusive	90%	7/7	90%	98%	100%	
QI 2 Customer satisfaction						
a) 'very good' or 'good' choice of books	91%	4/7	88%	91%	98%	
b) 'very good' or 'good' customer care	93%	7/7	93%	99%	100%	
c) 'very good' or 'good' IT facilities	74%	6/6	74%	86%	94%	
d) 'very good' or 'good' overall;	93%	7/7	93%	97%	99%	
e) users aged 16 & under rating out of ten	n/a		8.5	9.1	9.2	
QI 5 User training						
a) attendances per capita	61	6/22	10	32	238	110
c) informal training per capita	15	22/22	15	199	473	31
QI 6 attendances at events per capita	200	13/22	82	228	684	149
QI 8 Library use						
a) visits per capita	2,690	20/22	2,501	4,047	7,014	2,632
b) virtual visits per capita	571	15/22	243	866	2,211	602
c) active borrowers per capita	131	17/22	100	154	229	111
QI 10 Welsh issues per capita*	73	11/22	4	68	663	
QI 11 Online access						
b) Computers per capita^	14	2/22	5	9	14	14
c) % of available time used by the public	17%	21/22	14%	27%	67%	19%
QI 13 Staffing levels and qualifications						
(v) a) total volunteers	n/a		3	31	196	n/a
b) total volunteer hours	n/a		40	1,346	11,939	n/a
QI 14 Operational expenditure						
a) total expenditure per capita	£11,907	12/21	£7,047	£11,915	£17,771	£11,074
b) % on staff,	58%	14/21	44%	63%	75%	58%
% on information resources	11%	13/21	4%	13%	25%	13%
% on equipment and buildings	11%	5/21	0%	4%	20%	5%
% on other operational costs;	20%	8/21	0%	18%	37%	24%
c) capital expenditure per capita	n/a		£0	£338	£17,432	£0
QI 15 Net cost per visit	£2.24	4/21	£1.24	£1.82	£2.41	£3.27
QI 16 Opening hours#						
(iii) a) % hours unplanned closure of static service points	1.28%	21/21	0.00%	0.02%	1.28%	0.1%
b) % mobile stops / home deliveries missed	1.49%	14/20	0.00%	0.35%	11.24%	1.3%

* 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)

Wrexham conducted an adult user survey during November 2017. Overall, 63% of adults think that the library has helped them develop new skills and 93% rate the library as 'good' or 'very good'. Training to improve literacy, numeracy, information literacy and digital skills is now offered across all service points, although four libraries do not now offer basic ICT support; this is attributed to budget cuts. Health and well-being is well supported and the target here has been achieved. Attendances at pre-arranged training sessions have however decreased by over 44%, and there is a similar decline in the numbers reported as being helped by informal training, reversing the gains made in 2016-17.

3.2 Access and use (QI 6-8)

Wrexham continues to meet the target for easy access to service points, and is one of seven library services reporting an increase in visits to library premises in 2017-18, although the average number of visits per capita is still among the lowest in Wales. Attendance at library events and activities has also increased; this combined increase in people visiting the library is encouraging after the decline reported in 2016-17. Virtual visits have fallen again, in common with most other services, reflecting the increasing preference for access via social media, and Wrexham are investigating ways to record these social media statistics. Book issues have also increased, and levels of audio-visual issues / electronic downloads remain strong, although service usage levels are still below the Welsh average in general.

3.3 Facilities and services (QI 9-12)

The impact of budget pressures on the book fund remains evident, with further reductions in the materials budget in 2017-18, and Wrexham is one of thirteen authorities not meeting the overall acquisitions targets. Expenditure on children's resources and items in the Welsh language have however increased and Wrexham is now meeting the targets for acquisition of Welsh language resources. The high level of PC provision at Wrexham, coupled with the general trend across most of Wales of increased Wi-Fi usage, means that PC usage levels are particularly low. The intention to ensure Wi-Fi access is available in all service points, together with planned upgrades / reviews of PC provision to better reflect customer usage is a welcome action in this area. Wrexham is one of five library services not achieving the target for the proportion of requests satisfied within fifteen days. The approach to reporting under QI 12 should also be reviewed, as the figures for 2017-18 only reflect performance in quarter 4 of the year.

3.4 Expertise and capacity (QI 13-16)

Overall staff levels have fallen further in 2017-18 as the reshaping of the service has continued, and although qualified staff numbers have been maintained they are still below the median per capita for Wales. Staffing targets in these areas are not met, with overall staffing among the lowest in Wales. Qualified leadership is in place, and performance against the target for staff training / professional development has improved, with both

these elements met. Wrexham is now the only authority in Wales where volunteers do not contribute to the work of the service, although it is noted that the introduction of a library volunteering programme is under consideration.

Total revenue expenditure has increased slightly on 2016-17, and is close to the median level for Wales as a whole. Income has also increased by over 86%, after falling significantly in the previous year. It is encouraging that investment in the service has been maintained and even increased in 2017-18, after the significant decline in the budget in the last year of the fifth framework.

There has been a small increase in aggregate opening hours, but Wrexham's offer here is still among the lowest in Wales, and fails to meet the stipulated target. The unplanned closures of static libraries reflected power failure during building works at one branch, with vehicle issues resulting in a small number of missed mobile library stops.

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. Wrexham reported on a range of contributions to the WCBC Council Plan 2017-2022, and to Welsh Government priorities including: encouraging people to learn; supporting people to achieve their potential; working with partners to make Wrexham a safe place; enabling access to leisure and cultural activities; and contributing to well-connected and sustainable communities.

5 Future direction

Reporting on the authority's future direction and plans for the library service over the following year, Wrexham noted the continuing challenge to deliver a visible, viable and sustainable public library service. The opportunities of new technologies were highlighted, with self-service kiosks to be piloted in two libraries, and consideration of how tablet technology can be utilised to improve the library offer to homelink customers. Investment in the service to ensure that it meets public expectations, including remodelling / rebranding of Wrexham Library, and a scoping exercise for new mobile provision, were also noted developments.

6 Conclusion

Budget pressures remain a constraint on service development, but the maintenance of budget levels in 2017-18 has enabled performance to be largely sustained, with improvements in a number of areas. Increases in the number of people visiting the library are for example evident, although overall usage remains low in comparative terms. The service has experienced a sustained period of reshaping and change; the development of a Library Service Strategy, and a continued period of financial and structure stability will be integral to consolidating performance and enabling improvement.