

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

Annual Assessment Report 2018/19

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 now meets all of the 12 core entitlements in full.

Of the 10 quality indicators which have targets, Bridgend achieved 7 in full, 1 in part and did not achieve 2.

Library services in Bridgend are delivered by Awen Cultural Trust on behalf of the local authority. The service has continued to build on its strengths in events and activities programming, and user surveys reflect well on its support for the health and well-being of local communities. A strong investment in staff development and training has ensured that the skills and knowledge necessary to continue to support effective service delivery have been retained, following the retirement of a number of experienced members of staff. It is also evident that the service is planning carefully for the allocation of available resources, and consulting with communities to ensure that developments meet their needs.

- All service points provide a full range of support for individual development, and for health and well-being. User surveys show greatly improved ratings for how the service supports these areas, and makes a difference to people's lives.
- Both formal and informal training levels show continuing improvement, although performance is still below the median for Wales.
- Attendance at events and activities organised by the library is now second highest in Wales per capita, reflecting the continuing focus on the service offer in this area. The positive impact of programming in areas such as the Summer and Winter Reading Challenges can also be seen in the increase in children's book issues.
- While PC provision has fallen on 2017/18, the service has recently undertaken a user survey into IT provision, the results of which will shape its investment strategy to ensure that facilities continue to meet community needs.
- Overall staff numbers have increased slightly in 2018/19; while the target for staff per capita is not achieved, the service continues to meet the requirements in terms of numbers of qualified staff (one of only six services to do so).
- Total revenue expenditure has fallen again and is below the median level. However, aggregate annual opening hours remain the highest in Wales.

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 meeting all 12 of the core entitlements in full, following the publication of its Library Plan 2017-2022, and submitted a very detailed and thorough response. The service is committed to the development of its Library spaces and Mobile delivery services, with a particular focus on ensuring that IT provision is fit for purpose. There is a strong emphasis on library programming, notably support for delivery of the Summer Reading Challenge, and the service continues to work with a range of partners, including providing management support for the Books4U scheme for south Wales.

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 does not 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	
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		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

Bridgend has maintained its performance in this second year of the sixth framework, with no significant change on 2017/18.

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 2017/18 or 2018/19. Rankings reflect the numbers of respondents, where 1 is the highest scoring authority.

Bridgend completed its adult user survey in November 2018; the children's survey is planned for completion in 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		60%	94%	97%
e) % of adults who think that the library has made a difference to their lives:	93%	4/15	38%	88%	95%
QI 5 b) % of attendees of training sessions who said that the training had helped them achieve their goals:	100%	=1/20	80%	97%	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 such case studies, alongside wider feedback from users:

- Coding and Minecraft Club – the extension of the original Coding Clubs to Minecraft and wider creative activities, enabling members to grow in confidence and develop new skills. For one child on the autistic spectrum, the new range of activities offered has supported him to socialise and try new things.
- Social Inclusion – supporting an individual facing issues of social isolation, unemployment and depression. Daily access to his local library, which offers extended opening hours (9am – 10pm) provides him with a warm, safe and supportive environment, and access to advice and resources that improve his well-being.
- Digital Discovery – weekly digital drop-in sessions and support from library staff enabling an individual new to the area to develop her CV and gain the skills and confidence to apply for jobs unaided.
- Learning at the Library – the impact of the range of learning opportunities and activities on offer at the library. For one retired individual, attending and supporting these activities has become a key part of her life, helping her to meet new people and develop new skills.

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 2018/19. 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. Figures from the first year of the sixth framework or relevant previous surveys have also been included for comparison. Indicators 'per capita' are calculated per 1,000 population unless otherwise noted.

Performance indicator	Rank	Lowest	Median	Highest	2017/18	
QI 1 Making a difference					[Framework 5]	
a) % of adults who think that using the library has helped them develop new skills	84%	5/15	24%	82%	96%	23%
c) health and well-being	87%	=3/15	33%	62%	94%	34%
d) enjoyable, safe and inclusive	99%	=2/15	90%	97%	100%	97%
QI 2 Customer satisfaction					[Framework 5]	
a) 'very good' or 'good' choice of books	n/a		81%	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		65%	91%	95%	
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	9.3	9.5	9.0
QI 5 User training						
a) attendances per capita	25	15/22	13	30	208	22
c) informal training per capita	85	20/22	15	199	433	75
QI 6 attendances at events per capita	549	2/22	91	295	689	520
QI 8 Library use ¹						
a) visits per capita	3,637	14/22	2,596	3,969	7,170*	2,909
b) virtual visits per capita	714	13/22	345	885	2,205	490
c) active borrowers per capita	193	4/22	58	150	251	177
QI 10 Welsh issues per capita ²	567	12/22	95	602	1,424	736
QI 11 Online access						
b) Computers per capita ³	8	16/22	5	10	14	10
c) % of available time used by the public	19%	18/22	14%	25%	63%	22%
QI 13 Staffing levels and qualifications						
(v) a) total volunteers	22	=16/21	3	30	214	18
b) total volunteer hours	783	17/21	90	1,477	9,806	1,018
QI 14 Operational expenditure						
a) total expenditure per capita	£9,715	17/22	£7,181	£12,145	£19,449	£10,014
b) % on staff,	69%	8/22	47%	62%	78%	71%
% on information resources	20%	2/22	8%	13%	21%	16%
% on equipment and buildings	2%	20/22	0.4%	4%	25%	4%
% on other operational costs	9%	17/22	0.3%	16%	37%	9%
c) capital expenditure per capita	£486	11/22	£0	£467	£8,829	£126
QI 15 Net cost per visit	£1.89	9/22	£1.18	£1.82	£2.52	£2.29
QI 16 Opening hours ⁴						
(iii) a) % hours unplanned closure of static service points	0.00%	=1/22	0.00%	0.00%	0.25%	0.00%
b) % mobile stops / home deliveries missed	0.00%	=1/20	0.00%	0.28%	7.99%	0.00%

¹ figures for co-located services are marked with an asterisk; performances for these services are likely to reflect higher footfall, and will not therefore be directly comparable with stand-alone library provision ² per 1,000 Welsh speaking resident population; figures from 2017/18 reports corrected following a calculation error ³ per 10,000 resident population ⁴ 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 with the first year of the sixth framework (2017/18).

3.1 Meeting customer needs (QI 1-5)

Bridgend completed its adult user survey for QI 1 in November 2018 with greatly improved ratings for how the service supports skills development, health and well-being, and makes a difference to people's lives. Surveys of customer satisfaction with library facilities and resources are due to take place in July 2019, and the children's survey is planned for March 2020. All static libraries continue to provide a full range of support for individual development and good support for health and well-being. There has been continuing improvement in attendance levels for both formal and informal training provision, although overall performance remains 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 and activities for users with special requirements at all static libraries. The service continues to focus strongly on its activity and events programming, with attendance levels rising further in 2018/19, and overall performance now second highest in Wales per capita. Both physical and virtual visits increased in 2018/19, as did numbers of active borrowers. Library membership has fallen following an exercise to delete out of date records, and adult books issues have also continued to fall. The positive impact of library programming around the Summer Reading Challenge and associated activities can however be seen in the increased level of children's book issues, which are now at the median level. There has also been a strong increase in e-resources usage.

3.3 Facilities and services (QI 9-12)ⁱ

The materials budget was protected in 2018/19, with an increase in the per capita spend, although the figure for overall acquisitions has continued to fall, and neither target is met. The service notes that any changes in acquisition strategy are supported by data taken from the LMS and user feedback, and that there is confidence that stock meets community needs. Proportionate investment in Welsh language material has fallen slightly, and remains below target levels. PC provision has also fallen, as have usage levels; the service has recently conducted a user survey into IT provision, the results of which will shape its investment strategy over the coming year. Performance in relation to supply of requests continues to improve, with both targets here met.

3.4 Expertise and capacity (QI 13-16)

Overall staff numbers have increased slightly in 2018/19; while the overall target for staff per capita is not achieved, the service continues to meet the requirements in terms of numbers of qualified staff (one of only six services to do so). The service also continues to invest heavily in staff training and development, responding to the need to upskill new staff as a number of experienced team members reached retirement age. Numbers of volunteers have risen again, although the contributed hours have fallen in this year, with a total of 22 volunteers each providing an average of around 35 hours to the service.

Total revenue expenditure has fallen slightly on 2017/18, with expenditure per capita remaining below the median level. Aggregate annual opening hours have however been maintained, with the average per capita still the highest in Wales. There were no reported unstaffed opening hours or missed mobile library stops, and any unplanned service closures were only in response to adverse weather conditions.

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 and aims of the Trust are noted as reflecting the priorities and goals set out in several Welsh Government strategies. The way in which the service engages with local communities to ensure that development takes account of long-term needs is also highlighted. Specific examples are given of how service priorities align with wider strategic policies, notably in promoting literacy, the digital skills agenda, and well-being.

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 wider vision for the service is laid out in the Library Plan (2017-22) which has now been published. Key priorities for the coming year are identified, notably developing the Mobile service and extending its offer to include more housebound people. Preparations for Maesteg library to move into the redevelopment of the Town Hall, are noted, with a focus this year on detailed planning for the layout and character of the new space. The decision has also been made to eliminate fines from 2019/20; the impact of this development will be seen in next year's return.

6 Conclusion

Library services in Bridgend are delivered by Awen Cultural Trust on behalf of the local authority. The service has continued to build on its strengths in events and activities programming, and user surveys reflect well on its support for the health and well-being of local communities. A strong investment in staff development and training has ensured that the skills and knowledge necessary to continue to support effective service delivery have been retained, following the retirement of a number of experienced members of staff. It is also evident that the service is planning carefully for the allocation of available resources, and consulting with communities to ensure that developments meet their needs.

ⁱ E-resources purchased through centrally-funded subscriptions have been excluded from acquisitions figures for Q1 9 in 2018/19 to ensure that the standard accurately reflects individual authority strategy, investment and performance. In some cases this has impacted on achievement against the standard in comparison with 2017/18. CIPFA Statistics Returns continue to include figures for centrally-procured resources.