

Welsh Public Library Standards 2017-2020: Ceredigion

Annual Assessment Report 2018/19

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

1 Executive summary

Ceredigion met 10 of the 12 core entitlements in full, and did not meet 2.

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

Ceredigion has continued to perform well in some areas in 2018/19, with positive developments in terms of core user figures in particular. The impact of reduced staffing capacity on other areas of performance is however very clear, with notable reductions to beneficial services such as training. Formal user surveys have not now been completed for at least five years, contributing to the apparent lack of a strategic framework for service delivery, with the review of strategy and policy referenced in 2017/18 still not completed. Careful consideration needs to be given to the overall resourcing of the service, and to its strategic priorities, to ensure that it can plan effectively and utilise available resources to best effect in delivering for its users and communities.

- All major service points provide the full range of support for individual development, and good support for health and well-being, however it is noted that provision is becoming more challenging at the service's smaller branches due to staff capacity.
- A focus on the core service has seen dividends in terms of core library use (QI 8), with performance improved or maintained in almost all areas. Adult loans per capita remain notably high, and the service deserves some credit for its work in these areas.
- In contrast, delivery of activities such as training has been particularly affected by capacity issues, with attendance at formal training now among the lowest in Wales.
- Although overall acquisitions targets are not met, the service continues to achieve the requirements in relation to Welsh language provision, with resulting good performances in terms of Welsh language issues, which are among the highest in Wales.
- Overall staffing levels have fallen further in 2018/19 with the loss of four full-time equivalent posts. The pressure this has placed on strategic planning and the delivery of activities and services is particularly evident in this year's return.
- Aggregate annual opening hours have been maintained at 2017/18 levels, and Ceredigion's offer here continues to be among the best in Wales.
- While total revenue expenditure has increased slightly in 2018/19, this largely relates to increased staffing costs and in other areas budgets have fallen; expenditure per capita remains 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

Ceredigion is meeting 10 of the 12 core entitlements in full, and does not meet two. The position with regard to user consultation (CE 11) is long standing, with no user surveys completed under the fifth framework or within the first two years of the sixth. It is noted that there are plans to hold both adult and children's user surveys in 2019/20. With its library strategy still under development CE 12 is also not met. In 2017/18 CE10, working with partners to promote and deliver services, was noted as an area of weakness, but planned improvements to social media provision have been delivered, with positive benefits for the service, and this area is now fully met. In all cases the evidence provided as the basis for the self-assessment lacks depth; fuller consideration of how the authority meets the entitlements would provide greater assurance that the service is working appropriately in all areas.

2.2 Quality indicators with targets

There are 16 quality indicators (QIs), of which ten have constituent targets. Of these, Ceredigion is achieving 7 in full, 1 in part, and does not achieve 2.

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	Met in full
% of material budget spent on Welsh	✓
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

Ceredigion no longer meets QI 6, with events for users with special requirements only provided at four of its five main service points. This reflects both constraints on staff capacity, and the small / rural nature of the population served by some branches. In 2018/19, to ensure consistency between authorities and to reflect individual service performance, centrally procured e-resources were also excluded from reporting against acquisitions for QI 9 at the assessment stage. This has impacted on Ceredigion's performance in this area and as a result the standard is 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 2017/18 or 2018/19. Rankings reflect the numbers of respondents, where 1 is the highest scoring authority.

Ceredigion has not yet undertaken its user surveys for the sixth framework, and did not complete a user survey within the fifth framework. Capacity issues are cited as impacting on plans to compete the adult survey in 2018/19, and it is noted that the service now intends to complete both its surveys (adult and children) in 2019/20. This issue is also impacting on the service's ability to meet the core entitlements; user consultation needs to be clearly planned if the service is to fulfil the requirement in the third year of the framework as intended. As it stands the service lacks validated user feedback to inform its future development. Similar capacity issues are cited in relation to reporting against QI 5 and the evaluation of the service's training offer. While a figure is reported it is noted that the sample surveyed did not meet the minimum required to be statistically accurate.

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:	n/a	38%	88%	95%
QI 5 b) % of attendees of training sessions who said that the training had helped them achieve their goals:	80%	20/22	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. Ceredigion again provided two such case studies; it is notable that these reflect on the delivery of core services, rather than specific initiatives or targeted project work.

- Information Resources – the value of the library and library staff in helping one individual access and use library resources.
- Supporting Employment – the role of the library in supporting a single parent to develop her CV and search for jobs online, enabling her to gain in confidence and find suitable employment.

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 Ceredigion'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	n/a		24%	82%	96%	n/a
c) health and well-being	n/a		33%	62%	94%	n/a
d) enjoyable, safe and inclusive	n/a		90%	97%	100%	n/a
QI 2 Customer satisfaction						[Framework 5]
a) 'very good' or 'good' choice of books	n/a		81%	91%	98%	n/a
b) 'very good' or 'good' customer care	n/a		93%	99%	100%	n/a
c) 'very good' or 'good' IT facilities	n/a		65%	91%	95%	n/a
d) 'very good' or 'good' overall	n/a		93%	97%	99%	n/a
e) users aged 16 & under rating out of ten	n/a		8.5	9.3	9.5	n/a
QI 5 User training						
a) attendances per capita	16	20/22	13	30	208	32
c) informal training per capita	137	=14/22	15	199	433	136
QI 6 attendances at events per capita	91	22/22	91	295	689	91
QI 8 Library use ¹						
a) visits per capita	4,187	9/22	2,596	3,969	7,170*	4,028
b) virtual visits per capita	1,197	7/22	345	885	2,205	317
c) active borrowers per capita	159	9/22	58	150	251	158
QI 10 Welsh issues per capita ²	1,106	4/22	95	602	1,424	1046
QI 11 Online access						
b) Computers per capita ³	7	19/22	5	10	14	7
c) % of available time used by the public	27%	10/22	14%	25%	63%	50%

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

QI 13 Staffing levels and qualifications						
(v) a) total volunteers	30	11/21	3	30	214	25
b) total volunteer hours	1,000	16/21	90	1,477	9,806	40
QI 14 Operational expenditure						
a) total expenditure per capita	£10,467	15/22	£7,181	£12,145	£19,449	£10,183
b) % on staff,	68%	9/22	47%	62%	78%	66%
% on information resources	15%	5/22	8%	13%	21%	16%
% on equipment and buildings	5%	8/22	0.4%	4%	25%	6%
% on other operational costs	12%	14/22	0.3%	16%	37%	12%
c) capital expenditure per capita	£0	=17/22	£0	£467	£8,829	£1,331
QI 15 Net cost per visit	£1.54	16/22	£1.18	£1.82	£2.52	£1.85
QI 16 Opening hours ⁴						
(iii) a) % hours unplanned closure of static service points	0.00%	=1/22	0.00%	0.00%	0.25%	0.41%
b) % mobile stops / home deliveries missed	7.99%	20/20	0.00%	0.28%	7.99%	11.24%

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)

As previously noted, Ceredigion is yet to complete its user surveys within the current framework. All static libraries open over 10 hours continue to provide the full range of support for individual development, and health and well-being are relatively well-supported, although it is stated that provision is becoming more challenging at the service's smaller branches. Removal of fines for disabled users and carers is nevertheless a welcome development. Attendance levels at pre-arranged user training have fallen considerably in 2018/19 and are now among the lowest in Wales, and while it appears that the numbers helped by means of informal training have been maintained, performance here is also below the median level.

3.2 Access and use (QI 6-8)

Ceredigion continues to meet the target for easy access to service points, but has been unable to provide an events programme for users with special requirements at all its main service points in 2018/19, and as a result QI 6 is not met. Attendance at events and activities otherwise has broadly been maintained at 2017/18 levels, although attendance per capita is now the lowest in Wales. A focus on the core service has seen dividends in terms of other areas of usage however, with performance improved or maintained in almost all areas. The new website has seen a more than three-fold increase in the number of virtual visits, and there has been a substantial rise in the number of children's book issues and electronic downloads. Despite a small fall in adult issues, Ceredigion continues to perform well, with adult loans per capita still the second highest in Wales.

3.3 Facilities and services (QI 9-12)ⁱ

The materials budget has fallen again in 2018/19, and with centrally purchased e-resources excluded from assessment of the acquisitions per capita (QI 9) figure the target here is not achieved. The service continues to meet the requirements in relation to Welsh language provision however, with an attendant increase in Welsh issues, which remain among the highest in Wales. PC provision has been maintained at 2017/18 levels, with usage (at 27%) dropping to just above the median level from 50% in the previous reporting year. The impact of Wi-Fi on usage is noted as a potential factor here, as is a change to the reporting mechanism, with figures reflecting a full-year count from the new booking system. The service continues to meet the targets for supply of requests, despite not being part of a regional inter-library loan scheme – as in previous years, pre-publication requests, (estimated at 10% of the total), are excluded from the return.

3.4 Expertise and capacity (QI 13-16)

Overall staffing levels have fallen further in 2018/19 with the apparent loss of four full-time equivalent posts. The pressure this has placed on the delivery of services is particularly evident in this year's return, particularly in terms of training and other activities. While the authority continues to meet the requirements in terms of qualified staff (one of only six authorities now to do so), there is a note of warning that the need to make further savings may affect this position in the future. Qualified leadership is in place, and the service continues to meet the target for time allocated to professional development, although only a small percentage of this is noted as being library-specific. Volunteer numbers have increased with 30 volunteers each contributing around 33 hours to the service.

Total revenue expenditure on the service has risen slightly in 2018/19, reflecting the influence of a recent pay award on staff costs. Revenue expenditure per capita overall remains below the median level. Aggregate annual opening hours have been maintained at 2017/18 levels, and performance here is still among the highest in Wales. Mechanical problems and staff illness have continued to impact on the provision of the mobile library service, but it is hoped that these issues have now been resolved.

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. Ceredigion continues to report on how the library service contributes to the goals of the Well-being of Future Generations Act; supporting lifelong learning; providing access to resources for job seekers; delivering services to support health and well-being; and with a strong commitment to Welsh language provision. An update to the commentary to reflect on how developments and delivery in 2018/19 support these areas would have been appropriate.

5 Future direction

Reporting on the authority's future direction and plans for the library service over the following year, Ceredigion notes continuing uncertainties over budgets and staffing, which meant that in 2018/19 the decision was taken to focus on the core service. While this has delivered some improvements in usage figures it has impacted on achievement elsewhere. It is hoped to build on the successes of 2018/19 and to target areas such as training and

events programming in the coming year. The service is looking at relocating a non-statutory library service point in Newquay, and will also be seeking external funding to refresh the library environment in other locations. Plans to develop the service's customer contact role as part of the council's integrated service model are also referenced.

6 Conclusion

Ceredigion has continued to perform well in some areas in 2018/19, with positive developments in terms of core user figures in particular. The impact of reduced staffing capacity on other areas of performance is however very clear, with notable reductions to beneficial services such as training. Formal user surveys have not now been completed for at least five years, contributing to the apparent lack of a strategic framework for service delivery, with the review of strategy and policy referenced in 2017/18 still not completed. Careful consideration needs to be given to the overall resourcing of the service, and to its strategic priorities, to ensure that it can plan effectively and utilise available resources to best effect in delivering for its users and communities.

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.