

# Welsh Public Library Standards 2017-2020: Monmouthshire

## Annual Assessment Report 2018/19

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

### 1 Executive summary

Monmouthshire met 11 of the 12 core entitlements in full, and did not meet 1.

Of the 10 quality indicators which have targets, Monmouthshire achieved 5 in full, 2 in part and did not achieve 3.

Monmouthshire library service continues to operate as part of the merged Community Hub and Libraries offer for the county, alongside adult learning services. Fuller commentary in this year's return demonstrates how this approach is impacting on the service, although there are still some aspects where additional clarification could have been provided.

There are welcome improvements in some areas of library use, and in expenditure on library materials, although in some other areas performance has declined. Reductions in overall staffing levels have affected achievement under QI 13 and opening hours (QI 16) have also now fallen below the target level. Some improvements are anticipated however with the forthcoming launch of the Abergavenny Hub, and a library service strategy is under development to inform the future strategic direction of the service.

- All service points continue to provide a full range of support for individual development, and good support for health and well-being. The service achieved an overall rating of 9.4 out of 10 for its services from younger users.
- Revisions to reporting of training attendance under QI 5 have seen a fall in apparent performance in 2018/19.
- Attendance at library events and activities has risen in 2018/19 as the service reports against all activities provided by the merged service. Library use in some other areas has also increased, with Monmouthshire recording one of the highest levels of physical visits per capita in Wales.
- There has been a welcome recovery in investment in overall acquisitions and Welsh language materials, although budget constraints continue to be a factor, and performances are below the stipulated levels. Further improvements are anticipated.
- Overall staffing levels have fallen pending the launch of the Abergavenny Hub, but professional staff numbers have continued to rise; in neither case are the targets for QI 13 currently met.
- Revisions to the hours for the home delivery service mean that aggregate annual opening hours (QI 16) have also fallen below the target level in 2018/19.

### 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

Monmouthshire is meeting 11 of 12 core entitlements in full, and strategy development is in progress to enable achievement of CE12 in 2019/20, although until this is complete CE12 remains unmet. Commentary is provided demonstrating how the service is addressing the requirements of other core entitlements. A wide range of services are provided working with partners and through the merged service with Community Learning, with most of the library service points also operating as Community Hubs.

## 2.2 Quality indicators with targets

There are 16 quality indicators (QIs), of which ten have constituent targets. Of these, Monmouthshire is achieving 5 in full, 2 in part and does not achieve 3 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		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	x	
iv) CPD percentage	✓	
QI 16 Opening hours per capita	x	Not met

There have been some reductions in Monmouthshire’s overall performance compared to 2017/18. The service just misses the target for percentage of requests met within 15 days, and as a result QI 12 is only partially met in 2018/19. Reductions in overall staffing levels have affected achievement in terms of staff per capita (QI 13) and opening hours (QI 16) have also now fallen below the target level.

## 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.

Monmouthshire completed its children’s survey in autumn 2018 as planned, with its survey of adults due for completion in autumn 2019. While a figure is reported for QI 5 b) below, 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:	90%	=9/13	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:	93%	=16/20	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. Monmouthshire provided four such case studies:

- Chatterbooks – the benefits of membership of a Chatterbooks group (a Reading Agency initiative to provide children’s reading groups). Working with volunteers a weekly Chatterbooks group has commenced in Abergavenny Library. Volunteer feedback refers to the benefits of the group in developing the children’s reading interest and engaging them in a wide range of learning and fun activities.
- Heart of the Community – the importance of the library for one young mother, filmed for Libraries Week talking about the range of resources and services on offer in her local Community Hub. Activities and resources for families with young children are highlighted, together with the opportunity to socialise for both children and Mums.
- Home Delivery Service – the vital ‘life-line’ provided by the Home Delivery Service for customers who due to ill health, frailty or mobility issues cannot visit their local library in person. Testimony from two service users highlights the beneficial impact on quality of life, providing access to resources such as talking books, and valued social contact with service staff.
- Writing Competition – the impact of a library-run 500 words writing competition for children on one young boy with M.E. who can no longer attend school, and whose visits to the library are limited by his illness. The competition re-engaged him with writing, and winning runner up boosted his self-esteem; focusing on writing has given him a new direction, and allowed him to become part of a community.

## 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 Monmouthshire'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%		
c) health and well-being	n/a	33%	62%	94%	30%	
d) enjoyable, safe and inclusive	n/a	90%	97%	100%		
QI 2 Customer satisfaction					[Framework 5]	
a) 'very good' or 'good' choice of books	n/a	81%	91%	98%	79%	
b) 'very good' or 'good' customer care	n/a	93%	99%	100%	97%	
c) 'very good' or 'good' IT facilities	n/a	65%	91%	95%		
d) 'very good' or 'good' overall	n/a	93%	97%	99%	93%	
e) users aged 16 & under rating out of ten	9.4	=4/13	8.5	9.3	9.5	9.1
QI 5 User training						
a) attendances per capita	24	=16/22	13	30	208	84
c) informal training per capita	86	19/22	15	199	433	128
QI 6 attendances at events per capita	307	10/22	91	295	689	191
QI 8 Library use <sup>1</sup>						
a) visits per capita	4,645*	3/22	2,596	3,969	7,170*	4,614
b) virtual visits per capita	395	18/22	345	885	2,205	465
c) active borrowers per capita	150	11/22	58	150	251	145
QI 10 Welsh issues per capita <sup>2</sup>	326	19/22	95	602	1,424	154
QI 11 Online access						
b) Computers per capita <sup>3</sup>	10	8/22	5	10	14	10
c) % of available time used by the public	22%	14/22	14%	25%	63%	26%
QI 13 Staffing levels and qualifications						
(v) a) total volunteers	39	9/21	3	30	214	50
b) total volunteer hours	1,057	15/21	90	1,477	9,806	1,346
QI 14 Operational expenditure						
a) total expenditure per capita	£15,525	4/22	£7,181	£12,145	£19,449	£15,242
b) % on staff,	73%	5/22	47%	62%	78%	74%
% on information resources	11%	18/22	8%	13%	21%	8%
% on equipment and buildings	3%	16/22	0.4%	4%	25%	3%
% on other operational costs	13%	13/22	0.3%	16%	37%	15%
c) capital expenditure per capita	£43	16/22	£0	£467	£8,829	£473
QI 15 Net cost per visit	£2.52	1/22	£1.18	£1.82	£2.52	£2.40

<sup>1</sup> 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 <sup>2</sup> per 1,000 Welsh speaking resident population; figures from 2017/18 reports corrected following a calculation error <sup>3</sup> per 10,000 resident population

QI 16 Opening hours <sup>4</sup>						
(iii) a) % hours unplanned closure of static service points	0.00%	=1/22	0.00%	0.00%	0.25%	n/a
b) % mobile stops / home deliveries missed	4.38%	18/20	0.00%	0.28%	7.99%	1.24%

<sup>4</sup> Rankings here have been reversed, so that 1 is the lowest scoring (best performing) authority.

It is acknowledged that service costs (QI 14 and 15) now relate to the merged library and adult learning service, and are not directly comparable with other library authorities.

### 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)

Monmouthshire completed its children's survey in autumn 2018 as planned, achieving an overall rating of 9.4 out of 10 for its services from younger users, with the adult user survey due for completion in autumn 2019. All static libraries continued to provide a full range of support for individual development, and good support for health and well-being, although limitations on capacity has seen a reduction in service at some branches. Both formal and informal training levels have fallen considerably in 2018/19, reflecting revisions to reporting to focus on training provided by the library service; clearer trends on performance in this area should emerge in due course.

#### 3.2 Access and use (QI 6-8)

Monmouthshire continues to meet the target for easy access to service points, and offers events / activities for users with special requirements at all static libraries. Attendance at library events and activities has risen in 2018/19 as the service reports against all activities provided by the merged council, library and community learning services. Library use in some other areas has also increased, with Monmouthshire continuing to record one of the highest levels for physical visits per capita in Wales, reflecting the integrated provision provided through Hub service points. Website use has in contrast continued to decline, and there has been a small drop in the number of adult book issues. The service notes that work to refresh its website is in hand, and should increase visits going forward.

#### 3.3 Facilities and services (QI 9-12)<sup>i</sup>

There has been a welcome increase in materials expenditure in 2018/19, as the issues with purchase systems reported in 2017/18 have been resolved. The number of items acquired has more than doubled as a result, although performance overall still does not meet the target levels, as budget constraints remain a limiting factor. Further improvements are anticipated with the launch of the Abergavenny Hub and expansion at Gilwern Library. The authority has also improved its investment in Welsh language materials, while performance here remains the lowest in Wales it is noted that the authority is committed to further improvement in this area, and is already targeting provision for Welsh learners. PC provision has been maintained, with a small drop in usage levels (a trend seen across most library authorities). The service now fails to meet the target for supply of requests within 15 days, although the 7 day target is still met; delayed publications and high demand are noted as influential on performance here.

### **3.4 Expertise and capacity (QI 13-16)**

Overall staffing levels have fallen below the target level in 2018/19 despite reflecting staffing across Hub functions; voluntary reductions in hours are noted as a factor here, with further appointments anticipated for later in the year with the launch of the Abergavenny Hub. Professional staffing has continued to increase, although still below the median level, with the Head of Service (who does not hold a library qualification) able to draw on the expertise of professional library colleagues. Volunteer numbers and hours have both fallen in 2018/19; staff capacity is noted as a limiting factor here.

Total revenue expenditure for the merged service has increased, but aggregate opening hours have fallen below the target level in 2018/19, reflecting changes to delivery of home library services; over 4% of home deliveries were noted as being missed over the year.

## **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. Monmouthshire reports on the continued implementation of its Hub approach to provision of council, library and adult learning services, integrating a range of community support. The narrative highlights how the library element of provision aligns with the Well-being Goals and the Welsh Government's Prosperity for All strategy: providing inclusive, free access to public information and services; delivering services that promote health and well-being; supporting literacy development from an early age; and providing cultural enrichment, helping to build stronger more resilient communities.

## **5 Future direction**

Reporting on the authority's future direction and plans for the library service over the following year, Monmouthshire notes continued work with colleagues within the council and external partners to develop the service through its Community Hubs and Libraries model. Extended arrangements for continuing services at Gilwern Library are also now in place until 2021. Recent developments, such as the refreshed Home delivery service will be monitored going forward, with services for children identified as a continuing focus for library provision. The library strategy under development will hopefully provide a focus for consolidating recent achievements and identifying areas for further improvement.

## **6 Conclusion**

Monmouthshire library service continues to operate as part of the merged Community Hub and Libraries offer for the county, alongside adult learning services. Fuller commentary in this year's return demonstrates how this approach is impacting on the service, although there are still some aspects where additional clarification could have been provided. There are welcome improvements in some areas of library use, and in expenditure on library materials, although in some other areas performance has declined. Reductions in overall staffing levels have affected achievement under QI 13 and opening hours (QI 16) have also now fallen below the target level. Some improvements are anticipated however with the forthcoming launch of the Abergavenny Hub, and a library service strategy is under development to inform the future strategic direction of the service.

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<sup>i</sup> E-resources purchased through centrally-funded subscriptions have been excluded from acquisitions figures for QI 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.