

Welsh Public Library Standards 2017-2020: Powys

Annual Assessment Report 2018/19

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 7 in full, 1 in part and did not achieve 2.

Powys library service continues to deliver well for its dispersed communities, with improvements across a number of areas, evidenced by a thorough and detailed return. Opening hours have been maintained, and the service has extended its provision in terms of training, events and activities, and in the development of shared reading services. The contribution of partners and volunteers is however integral to these developments. Proportionally expenditure on materials is still very low, but the service has improved its investment in Welsh language resources, enabling achievement of the standard here, and also now meets the requirements in relation to supply of requests. There remain indications that budgets may reduce, with a service review and public consultation planned for 2019/20, feeding in to the development of a revised service strategy, and the implementation of new delivery models. Careful account will need to be taken of how any changes to the current delivery infrastructure will impact on Powys' more rural communities, and their access to a full range of library services.

- All service points provide full support for individual development, and support for health and well-being has been extended in 2018/19. Customer satisfaction is generally strong with 94% of adults rating the library as 'good' or 'very good' overall.
- Attendance at formal training sessions has more than doubled, although performance here remains below the median level for Wales.
- Attendance at events and activities has also increased on 2017/18, however average attendance figures are still among the lowest per capita in Wales.
- Library use has improved in some areas and declined in others; adult borrowing levels remain comparatively high, and the service continues to perform well in relation to take-up of electronic resources.
- Expenditure on resources remains proportionally among the lowest in Wales, but improved investment in Welsh language materials has enabled achievement of QI 10 in 2018/19. Powys is also now meeting the targets for supply of requests (QI 12).
- Staffing levels have fallen slightly on 2018/19, but Powys continues to meet the stipulated target for qualified staff, one of only six authorities now to do so. The service continues to benefit strongly from the contribution of its volunteers.

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 continues to meet 11 of the 12 core entitlements in full, and partially meets CE6, where charges are applied for inter-library loans from other authorities in Wales (reflecting the costs involved with no regional ILL scheme covering the county). Continuing work with a wide range of partner organisations and volunteers enables access to services, activities and resources. A service review and public consultation has taken place in 2019/20, and this will feed in to the development of a revised service strategy.

2.2 Quality indicators with targets

There are 16 quality indicators (QIs), of which ten have constituent targets. Of these, Powys is achieving 7 in full, one in part and 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	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

Powys has improved its performance on 2017/18, with the requirements for Welsh language resources (QI 10) and supply of requests (QI 12) now fully 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.

Powys completed its user survey for adults in November 2018 and is planning to complete its young people's survey in autumn 2019. The service was again unable to report figures for user evaluation of its training offer, citing staff capacity and the high 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	60%	94%	97%
e) % of adults who think that the library has made a difference to their lives:	88%	8/15	38%	88%
QI 5 b) % of attendees of training sessions who said that the training had helped them achieve their goals:	n/a	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. Powys provided four such case studies:

- The Reading Offer – the impact of 'Book Bingo', a reader development activity for adults, which was held across all libraries to encourage parents to join in with the Summer Reading Challenge. For one reader it was an opportunity to try new genres, and engage with local history, literature and language – a great literary adventure.
- The Digital Offer – the benefits of the support provided by the library for one individual using library resources to seek employment. Library staff helped her with her CV, and with using the computer and printing facilities; having a 'professional' CV boosted her confidence and helped her succeed at interview.
- The Health Offer – a project to set up shared reading sessions, with external funding enabling the training of staff / volunteers to hold sessions in libraries, community venues and people's homes. A number of groups have been established and contact made with partner organisations, targeting support for people living with dementia.
- The Cultural Offer – the well-being benefits of an initiative at one local library to open on Christmas morning and invite the community in. Over sixty people attended, many of them older people with no family locally – for one attendee the opportunity to gather with friends and neighbours, made their day.

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 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	68%	10/15	24%	82%	96%	76%
c) health and well-being	57%	=11/15	33%	62%	94%	69%
d) enjoyable, safe and inclusive	97%	=7/15	90%	97%	100%	99%
QI 2 Customer satisfaction						[Framework 5]
a) 'very good' or 'good' choice of books	81%	14/14	81%	91%	98%	74%
b) 'very good' or 'good' customer care	95%	13/14	93%	99%	100%	90%
c) 'very good' or 'good' IT facilities	78%	=10/13	65%	91%	95%	
d) 'very good' or 'good' overall	94%	=12/14	93%	97%	99%	95%
e) users aged 16 & under rating out of ten	n/a		8.5	9.3	9.5	8.8
QI 5 User training						
a) attendances per capita	24	=16/22	13	30	208	11
c) informal training per capita	93	18/22	15	199	433	98
QI 6 attendances at events per capita	153	20/22	91	295	689	97
QI 8 Library use ¹						
a) visits per capita	4,042	10/22	2,596	3,969	7,170*	4,065
b) virtual visits per capita	1,367	5/22	345	885	2,205	1,346
c) active borrowers per capita	165	7/22	58	150	251	147
QI 10 Welsh issues per capita ²	780	9/22	95	602	1,424	512
QI 11 Online access						
b) Computers per capita ³	11	6/22	5	10	14	9
c) % of available time used by the public	17%	=20/22	14%	25%	63%	19%
QI 13 Staffing levels and qualifications						
(v) a) total volunteers	128	3/21	3	30	214	113
b) total volunteer hours	3,500	4/21	90	1,477	9,806	2,490
QI 14 Operational expenditure						
a) total expenditure per capita	£13,570	8/22	£7,181	£12,145	£19,449	£15,749
b) % on staff,	58%	15/22	47%	62%	78%	49%
% on information resources	8%	22/22	8%	13%	21%	8%
% on equipment and buildings	2%	18/22	0.4%	4%	25%	5%
% on other operational costs	32%	4/22	0.3%	16%	37%	37%
c) capital expenditure per capita	£2,095	6/22	£0	£467	£8,829	£699
QI 15 Net cost per visit	£1.39	=17/22	£1.18	£1.82	£2.52	£1.52

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 16 Opening hours ⁴						
(iii) a) % hours unplanned closure of static service points	0.17%	=20/22	0.00%	0.00%	0.25%	0.61%
b) % mobile stops / home deliveries missed	2.03%	16/20	0.00%	0.28%	7.99%	4.79%

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)

Powys completed its user survey for adults in November 2018 and is planning to complete its young people's survey in autumn 2019. Satisfaction rates remain generally strong, with particular improvement in the rating for IT provision (up from 45% in 2015 to 78%); 94% of adults think the library is 'good' or 'very good' overall. All static service points continue to provide full support for individual development, and good support for health and well-being, with an extension of provision for shared reading groups in particular. Attendance at formal training sessions has more than doubled in 2018/19, although still below the median level for Wales, and take-up of informal training remains at a similar level.

3.2 Access and use (QI 6-8)

Powys continues to meet the target for access to service points, with 16 libraries open 10+ hours per week serving its dispersed population. It remains, however, one of a small number of library authorities not able to provide events / activities for users with special requirements in all these libraries. The service aims for inclusivity, but the difficulties of providing such support over a large number of small library service points, particularly for sparsely populated rural authorities, is acknowledged. While attendance at events and activities has increased on 2017/18, average attendance figures are still among the lowest per capita in Wales. Visits to library premises, adult book issues, and library membership have also fallen, although adult borrowing levels remain comparatively strong. In contrast, website use, numbers of active borrowers, and children's loans have all increased, as has use of electronic resources (a trend seen across Wales) with average downloads per capita notably high, reflecting well on promotional work in this area.

3.3 Facilities and services (QI 9-12)ⁱ

There has been an apparent decline in materials expenditure on 2017/18, however this is noted as reflecting issues with year-end financial reporting, and the service believes that actual expenditure was broadly maintained. The proportion of the budget spent on materials remains notably low in comparison with other authorities however, and the targets here are still not met. Increased investment in Welsh language resources has enabled achievement of QI 10 in 2018/19, with an associated rise in Welsh language issues, and expenditure on materials for children has also improved, in line with noted service priorities. Figures for PC provision are higher, as the service reports on a wider range of PC facilities not included in last year's return, but usage levels continue to fall, a trend seen elsewhere as increasing use is made of Wi-Fi provision. Issues with supply of requests have been resolved in 2018/19, and the targets here are now met, enabling achievement of QI 12.

3.4 Expertise and capacity (QI 13-16)

Staffing levels have fallen slightly on 2018/19, but Powys continues to meet the stipulated target for qualified staff, one of only six authorities now to do so. Qualified leadership is in place, and the service is also meeting the requirements for staff training / development. Numbers of volunteers and volunteer hours have continued to rise, with recruitment here supporting delivery of shared reading sessions for people living with dementia.

Total revenue expenditure on the service has decreased, but this appears largely to relate to operational costs other than staffing and materials. Aggregate opening hours have broadly been maintained, with performance meeting the stipulated requirements.

4 Strategic context

As part of the return authorities are asked to report on how the library service contributes to wider Welsh Government priorities and strategic goals. Powys continues to report on its contribution under the Welsh Government's cross-cutting themes, referencing a range of established services and initiatives: supporting employment opportunities and access to services (*Prosperous and Secure*); working with partners to support health and well-being, including new Reading Well for Dementia provision in 2018 (*Healthy and Active*); providing learning opportunities for all ages (*Ambitious and Learning*); and continuing to provide access to all through its network of libraries and mobile services (*United and Connected*).

5 Future direction

Reporting on the authority's future direction and plans for the library service over the following year, Powys continues to highlight the challenges of the financial context in which it operates, with an emphasis on joint working within the council and with third sector and community partners. The likelihood of further restructuring and streamlining of services to meet budget requirements is however noted. The service continues to explore new income streams, and is also looking at the potential to move to trust status. Elsewhere in the return, reference is made to the completion of a service review and public consultation during 2019/20, which will inform development of a revised service strategy and implementation of new delivery models from 2021.

6 Conclusion

Powys library service continues to deliver well for its dispersed communities, with improvements across a number of areas, evidenced by a thorough and detailed return. Opening hours have been maintained, and the service has extended its provision in terms of training, events and activities, and in the development of shared reading services. The contribution of partners and volunteers is however integral to these developments. Proportionally expenditure on materials is still very low, but the service has improved its investment in Welsh language resources, enabling achievement of the standard here, and also now meets the requirements in relation to supply of requests. There remain indications that budgets may reduce, with a service review and public consultation planned for 2019/20, feeding in to the development of a revised service strategy, and the implementation of new delivery models. Careful account will need to be taken of how any changes to the current delivery infrastructure will impact on Powys' more rural communities, and their access to a full range of library services.

ⁱ 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.