

# Welsh Public Library Standards 2017-2020: Swansea

## Annual Assessment Report 2018/19

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

### 1 Executive summary

Swansea now meets all of the 12 core entitlements in full.

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

Swansea library service has broadly maintained its performance in the second year of the sixth framework, with notable strengths in events and activities programming. There is evidence of decline in other areas of service usage however, a trend also seen in other services across Wales. Expenditure on the service has been maintained, indicative of the support that it attracts from across the authority, with prioritised investment in the materials budget (although the targets here are still not met). Levels of staffing remain low, but requirements for professional support have been reviewed, and overall performance here is affected by the high number of vacancies the service is carrying, which inevitably impacts on staff capacity to promote and deliver services, a potential factor in areas of declining use. The development and publication of a new Service Plan 2018-21 sees the core entitlement here now met, providing a framework for service delivery going forward.

- All service points provide a full range of support for individual development and support for health and well-being, has been extended in 2018/19. 99% of adults rated services as 'very good' or 'good' overall.
- Take-up of formal training has fallen slightly and remains comparatively low; numbers helped by informal training have risen, and are above the median level.
- Attendance at library events and activities has continued to improve, and is now the fourth highest per capita in Wales. While usage generally remains well above the median level, numbers have continued to decline in most areas.
- Targets for overall acquisitions and for materials in the Welsh language are still not met, although the service has increased its investment in both areas.
- Overall staff numbers have fallen, with the service carrying a number of vacant posts, but there has been a small improvement in the level of professional staffing, with a review of staffing needs seeing a rise in the number of posts requiring qualifications. Professional staff levels are still among the lowest in Wales, limiting service capacity.
- Total revenue expenditure has been maintained, with the average per capita investment in library services just above 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

Swansea is now meeting all of the 12 core entitlements in full, with the development and publication of its Service Plan 2018-21. While CE 6 is fully awarded again in 2018/19 it is noted that there are published charges for items reserved within Wales but outside the regional inter-lending scheme and for items new to stock; it is understood that these charges are not routinely applied but some clarification of the published charging policy in this area would be appropriate for users. The service continues to address all other areas effectively, working with a range of partners to promote and deliver services, including support for all-Wales e-resource initiatives. Users are consulted about services and proposed changes, and a new audience engagement tool is being implemented to better gather customer feedback.

## 2.2 Quality indicators with targets

There are 16 quality indicators (QIs), of which ten have constituent targets. Of these, Swansea 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	✓	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	
<u>or</u> Materials spend per capita	x	
QI 10 Welsh Language Resources		Not met
% of material budget spent on Welsh	x	
<u>or</u> 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	x	

iii) Head of service qualification/training	✓	
iv) CPD percentage	✓	
QI 16 Opening hours per capita	✓	Met in full

Swansea 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.

Swansea completed its user surveys of adults and children in November 2018. 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:	94%	7/13	60%	94%	97%
e) % of adults who think that the library has made a difference to their lives:	86%	=10/15	38%	88%	95%
QI 5 b) % of attendees of training sessions who said that the training had helped them achieve their goals:	94%	=13/20	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. Swansea provided four such case studies:

- Local Libraries – the value of her local library to one young mother, a newcomer to the area from a European background. The library helped her overcome feelings of isolation, make friends and become part of the community; she was able to find out about local services, access resources, and engage in activities with her son.
- Community Commemoration – a community library hosting a Centenary display commemorating local men who died during WWI. The library held poppy making and poetry workshops to contribute to the display, and hosted the Remembrance Service with over 150 guests from the community, armed forces and local schools. The library was commended for its support in bringing different generations of the community together, and for the learning opportunities provided to local schools.
- Family History – the impact of family history surgeries held in community libraries by library staff. A stay-at-home mum looking to re-enter the workplace, had lacked confidence to succeed at job interviews. Interested in family history she began to attend the surgeries, but with low expectations of her abilities. The surgeries proved to her that her IT skills were good, and discoveries about her family helped change her outlook on life, improving her confidence and sense of self-worth.
- Craft Group – the impact of a weekly jewellery craft group, launched by a library customer in her local library. A self-sustaining group, it makes good use of library resources and space to support activities, reaching out to people of all ages.

Attendees learn new skills, but also benefit from the social contact, building confidence and self-esteem, in a safe and welcoming library environment.

## 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 Swansea'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	61%	13/15	24%	82%	96%	65%
c) health and well-being	58%	=9/15	33%	62%	94%	54%
d) enjoyable, safe and inclusive	96%	=11/15	90%	97%	100%	97%
QI 2 Customer satisfaction						[Framework 5]
a) 'very good' or 'good' choice of books	91%	=6/14	81%	91%	98%	91%
b) 'very good' or 'good' customer care	99%	=3/14	93%	99%	100%	99%
c) 'very good' or 'good' IT facilities	78%	=10/13	65%	91%	95%	
d) 'very good' or 'good' overall	99%	=1/14	93%	97%	99%	99%
e) users aged 16 & under rating out of ten	9.5	=1/13	8.5	9.3	9.5	9.0
QI 5 User training						
a) attendances per capita	24	=16/22	13	30	208	25
c) informal training per capita	239	11/22	15	199	433	215
QI 6 attendances at events per capita	427	4/22	91	295	689	398
QI 8 Library use <sup>1</sup>						
a) visits per capita	4,272	6/22	2,596	3,969	7,170*	4,342
b) virtual visits per capita	850	12/22	345	885	2,205	1,047
c) active borrowers per capita	185	6/22	58	150	251	196
QI 10 Welsh issues per capita <sup>2</sup>	557	13/22	95	602	1,424	553
QI 11 Online access						
b) Computers per capita <sup>3</sup>	9	14/22	5	10	14	8
c) % of available time used by the public	33%	=4/22	14%	25%	63%	33%
QI 13 Staffing levels and qualifications						
(v) a) total volunteers	28	=13/21	3	30	214	36
b) total volunteer hours	1,706	9/21	90	1,477	9,806	1,802
QI 14 Operational expenditure						
a) total expenditure per capita	£12,240	11/22	£7,181	£12,145	£19,449	£11,915
b) % on staff,	75%	4/22	47%	62%	78%	73%
% on information resources	14%	8/22	8%	13%	21%	14%
% on equipment and buildings	3%	15/22	0.4%	4%	25%	3%
% on other operational costs	8%	18/22	0.3%	16%	37%	10%
c) capital expenditure per capita	£575	9/22	£0	£467	£8,829	£534

QI 15 Net cost per visit	£1.88	10/22	£1.18	£1.82	£2.52	£1.80
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%	0.00%
b) % mobile stops / home deliveries missed	0.00%	=1/20	0.00%	0.28%	7.99%	0.00%

<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 <sup>4</sup> 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)

Swansea completed its user surveys of adults and children in November 2018, with continuing high levels of customer satisfaction, although ratings for IT provision (at 78%) are lower than for other areas. It is noted that a planned upgrade to public access PCs in 2019/20 should improve the customer experience here. Reported views on how the service supports skills development and health and well-being remain comparatively lower, but 99% of adults still rated the library as 'very good' or 'good' overall. All static libraries continue to provide a full range of support for individual development, and the range of health and well-being services has been extended in 2018/19, with targets here both achieved. Attendance at formal user training has again fallen slightly and remains comparatively low, however numbers helped by informal training have improved, and performance here is still above the median level.

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

Swansea 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 continued to improve, and is now the fourth highest per capita in Wales. While usage figures generally remain well above the median level, user numbers have continued to decline in most areas, a trend seen in other authorities across Wales. The service does however report improved performances in virtual visits and electronic downloads, as is the case in most other Welsh services.

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

Expenditure on materials has been prioritised, and is reflected in higher numbers of direct acquisitions, although the targets here are still not met. The service has also continued to improve its investment in Welsh language resources as planned, although performance again remains below the stipulated requirements. It is noted that the service will be reviewing its promotion of these resources to see how usage might be improved, before committing to further increases in expenditure. Swansea continues to meet the requirements in terms of supply of requests, although at a lower level than previously. PC provision and ICT usage have both been maintained, with usage levels among the highest in Wales, reflecting the continued need for good quality IT infrastructure in communities with low levels of personal access.

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

While posts on the staffing establishment remain at 2017/18 levels, the high number of

vacancies being carried by the service (as part of wider council policy) has reduced actual staffing provision in 2018/19. Numbers of professional staff have increased slightly, with a review of staffing seeing a rise in the number of posts requiring library qualifications, but performance here remains among the lowest per capita in Wales, and neither staffing target is met. Qualified leadership is in place, and the service has continued to improve its performance in terms of staff development / training. The value of volunteers in supporting paid staff and specific projects is noted, although management capacity in this area prevents further expansion; the overall volunteer contribution has fallen slightly in 2018/19, with some 28 individuals each providing over 60 hours to the service.

Total revenue expenditure has been maintained at similar levels to 2017/18, taking into account cost increases in staffing, with the average per capita investment in library services just above the median level. Aggregate annual opening hours have also been maintained and continue to meet the target set.

## 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. Swansea's narrative again focuses on the service's contribution to the Welsh Government's cross-cutting themes: *Prosperous and Secure*, enabling people to access resources to develop new skills and gain employments; *Healthy and Active*, supporting mental health and well-being, addressing loneliness and social isolation; *Ambitious and Learning*, supporting young people to make the most of their potential; and *United and Connected*, working with partners, supporting digital inclusion and Welsh language provision.

## 5 Future direction

Reporting on the authority's future direction and plans for the library service over the following year, Swansea highlights its revised and updated library service priorities, as set out in its new Service Plan 2018-21, noting the integral role of partnerships, and participation in national initiatives and campaigns. Working locally, the service will investigate the potential of hub models for delivery, and work with stakeholders to ensure services are sustainable. Some further reflection on development priorities over the next year would have strengthened the narrative here.

## 6 Conclusion

Swansea library service has broadly maintained its performance in the second year of the sixth framework, with notable strengths in events and activities programming. There is evidence of decline in other areas of service usage however, a trend also seen in other services across Wales. Expenditure on the service has been maintained, indicative of the support that it attracts from across the authority, with prioritised investment in the materials budget (although the targets here are still not met). Levels of staffing remain low, but requirements for professional support have been reviewed, and overall performance here is affected by the high number of vacancies the service is carrying, which inevitably impacts on staff capacity to promote and deliver services, a potential factor in areas of declining use. The development and publication of a new Service Plan 2018-21 sees the core entitlement here now met, providing a framework for service delivery going forward.

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<sup>i</sup> 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.