

Welsh Public Library Standards 2017-2020: Caerphilly County Borough Council

Annual Assessment Report 2019/20

This report has been prepared based on information provided in Caerphilly's annual return, case studies and narrative report submitted to the Culture and Sport Division of the Welsh Government.

1 Executive summary

Caerphilly met all of the 12 core entitlements in full.

Of the 9 quality indicators which have targets, Caerphilly achieved 7 in full, 1 in part and did not achieve 1.

Caerphilly has continued to deliver effectively against the standards framework in 2019/20 with only one target unmet. The performance of the service in this final year of the sixth Framework has been impacted by staff capacity in some areas, with 5 library service points single staffed and a reduction in the resource budget. A review of community loans was undertaken by Caerphilly in order to effectively plan future lending which has resulted in a decrease in adult and children's book issues. The service also noted a decrease in staffing in February 2020. The impact of this reduction in staffing will be evident in the short term. It is difficult to envisage how Caerphilly will continue to meet its statutory obligations with further staffing cuts. A number of CCBC service reviews are currently being undertaken and a number of changes will be considered. Careful planning will be needed to ensure that libraries in Caerphilly can continue to offer the services needed by the local community. The impact of funding constraints on service capacity and delivery is something the authority should continue to consider carefully. Despite pressures, the service may wish to consider focusing on the promotion of resources in libraries in Caerphilly, particularly in relation to resources for children and young adults. Forward planning and a strong emphasis on staff development and training has ensured that the service remains resilient and has performed well despite a number of challenges.

- Caerphilly completed its adult user survey in May 2019. There has been an increase in three of the four categories in the adult survey results compared to the previous survey undertaken in May 2017.
- A fall in the number of active borrowers, alongside a decrease in adult and children book issues is contrasted with increases in library membership and a strong increase in e-resource usage.
- A reduction in the resource budget, alongside the move to the All-Wales LMS has resulted in Caerphilly not meeting the acquisitions per capita (QI 9) target for the first time. However, the service continues to meet the targets for provision of materials in the Welsh language, and supply of requests.
- Caerphilly's PC provision is still among the highest per capita in Wales, but usage levels have continued to fall as the number of individuals with their own devices accessing Wi-Fi in libraries increases.
- The overall target for staff per capita is not achieved and is now below the median level. Budget constraints have impacted on performance here. There continues to be a strong focus on training and professional development for staff.

- Caerphilly was able to provide full information on service expenditure in 2019/20, with the overall revenue budget amongst the highest per capita 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. The assessment has been limited to some degree by the fact that local authorities were only asked to comment on any changes to the previous year's return, alongside additional commentary on of partially/not met core entitlements.

2.1 Core entitlements

Caerphilly has met all of the 12 of the Core Entitlements in full. Caerphilly continues to support its members through the Library Service Strategic Action plan for 2017-20. Priorities include, staff skills, developing the provision of materials in print and digital format and improving customer care. A new plan is currently being drafted for the 2020-22 period.

2.2 Quality indicators with targets

There are 16 quality indicators (QIs), of which ten have constituent targets. Due to the impact of Covid-19, three quality indicators have been removed for the 2019/20 reporting year, five, six and fifteen, of which number six had a constituent target. Of the **nine**, remaining targets for 2019-20, Caerphilly achieved 7 in full, 1 in part and did not achieve 1 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 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		Met in full
% of material budget spent on Welsh	√	
<u>or</u> Spend on Welsh per capita	√	
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	√	
QI 16 Opening hours per capita	√	Met in full

Caerphilly has broadly maintained its performance in this third year of the sixth framework. Although QI 9 was met in full in 2017/18 and partially met in 2018/19, this is not met in 2019/20, partly due to changes in reporting, a reduction in the materials budget, and the transition period to the new LMS. The target for public access to the internet continues to be 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. However, this measure has been affected by Covid-19 and some authority plans to undertake a survey in the first quarter of 2020 were cancelled. The summary figures (lowest, median and highest) are therefore based on those authorities indicating they

completed their user survey during framework six. Rankings reflect the numbers of respondents, where 1 is the highest scoring authority.

Caerphilly completed its adult user survey in May, 2019; and the children’s survey in July 2018.

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:	60%	19/19	60%	90%	97%
e) % of adults who think that the library has made a difference to their lives:	41%	19/19	41%	85%	99%

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. Caerphilly provided four case studies:

- Risca Library IT support – library staff have effectively supported a library member in their job search following redundancy. Digital exclusion remains high in the Caerphilly borough and the computing and printing facilities in the library enabled the individual concerned to search for jobs with help from library staff, resulting in an extremely positive impact on the mental health and well-being of the library user.
- Health and wellbeing – Dementia Care – the role of the library in supporting residents with dementia in Caerphilly. One of the projects run at all eighteen libraries are *Memory Bags*, which are loaned to carers or customers living with dementia. This scheme enables residents and members to benefit from the positive effects of reminiscence. This service helps to connect family members and provides support to the carers of those individuals living with dementia.
- Welsh Language provision - The library service currently supports two Welsh Reading Groups held at Caerphilly Library and a Welsh Scrabble Club held at Risca Library. The libraries provide a safe learning environment for those members learning Welsh to develop their language skills. The Welsh language print and digital resources within the libraries are also highlighted as helping to improve the confidence of learners.
- Blackwood Library – positive influence of jigsaws in a library – Jigsaws have proven mental health benefits and also have a great social benefit. This club has brought together different sectors of the community and has helped to combat loneliness and isolation amongst members. Participants have improved their social, communication and problem solving skills.

2.4 Quality indicators and benchmarks

Whilst Covid-19 restrictions remain challenging to all library services in Wales, staff resilience, professionalism and care for the community they serve has been outstanding. Although digital services have increased, we know from evidence provided that customers are missing their library services. They are missing the staff, browsing the shelves, IT provision, community spaces and groups such as knit and natter. The importance of the library as a physical place and the impact on the wellbeing of their customers through interaction with library staff cannot be underestimated.

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 Caerphilly's position for 2019/20. 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 second 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	2018/19
QI 1 Making a difference						[Framework 6]
a) % of adults who think that using the library has helped them develop new skills	25%	18/18	25%	75%	94%	24%
c) health and well-being	38%	19/19	38%	69%	96%	33%
d) enjoyable, safe and inclusive	99%	=2/19	90%	96%	100%	99%
QI 2 Customer satisfaction						[Framework 6]
a) 'very good' or 'good' choice of books	94%	5/18	78%	91%	99%	94%
b) 'very good' or 'good' customer care	99%	=3/18	88%	97%	100%	99%
c) 'very good' or 'good' IT facilities	91%	=5/17	65%	85%	99%	92%
d) 'very good' or 'good' overall	98%	=5/18	85%	96%	100%	99%
e) users aged 16 & under rating out of ten	9.4	=3/19	8.0	9.1	9.5	9.4
QI 8 Library use ¹						
a) visits per capita	3,596	14/22	2429	3987	6874	3606
b) virtual visits per capita	434	17/22	239	909	2131	509
c) active borrowers per capita	205	3/22	78	145	244	209
QI 10 Welsh issues per capita ²	493	16/22	311	680	1468	685
QI 11 Online access						
b) Computers per 10,000	14	1/22	4	9	14	14
c) % of available time used by the public	17%	20/22	14%	30%	64%	18%
QI 14 Operational expenditure						
a) total expenditure per capita	£17,965	3/22	£7,260	£12,448	£23,333	£17.369
b) % on staff,	49%	=20/22	48%	61%	76%	49%
% on information resources	8%	20/22	5%	13%	22%	11%
% on equipment and buildings	28%	1/22	0%	8%	28%	25%
% on other operational costs	16%	=11/22	1%	18%	35%	15%
c) capital expenditure per capita	£0	=22/22	£0	£1,567	£13,027	£0
QI 16 Opening hours ³						
(iii) a) % hours unplanned closure of static service points	0.00%	=1/22	0.00%	0.23%	3.96%	0.00%
b) % mobile stops / home deliveries missed	0.00%	=1/22	0.00%	1.07%	5.41%	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 ²per 1,000 Welsh speaking resident population 1,000

³ 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 and second year of the sixth framework (2017/18 and 2018/19).

3.1 Meeting customer needs (QI 1-5)ⁱ

Caerphilly completed its adult user survey in May 2019. There has been an increase in three of the four categories in the adult survey results compared to the previous survey undertaken in May 2017. The percentage of adults who consider the library a safe and inclusive space remains above the median in Wales. However, the impact indicators (skills development / health and well-being) remain below the median in Wales. There has also been a very slight decline in the percentage of adults who think that IT facilities are very good or good. The service notes that it is not always able to meet the online and technological level of expectation from its customers. A children's survey, undertaken in July 2018 shows an increase in the average rating of ten awarded by users aged 7-16, from 9.3 in 2016/17 to 9.4 in 2019/20. It is noted that there is an excellent range of resources for young people and children in Caerphilly. However, the large decrease in children's issues, noted below, suggests that these resources are not being fully utilised.

3.2 Access and use (QI 6-8)ⁱⁱ

Library usage has also been impacted by the closure of all libraries on March 20th 2020 due to Covid-19. Caerphilly continues to meet the target for easy access to service points, with 18 branches serving its local communities. The total number of visits to library premises has decreased by 0.3% since 2018/19 but 16% across the framework. It is likely that this figure would have exceeded the figure from 2018/19 if libraries had not closed on March 20th. Other usage indicators show a mixed picture, with a decrease of 6% in the number of active borrowers since 2017/18, alongside a 12% decrease in adult book issues and a 51% decrease in children's book issues. This is despite a 7% increase in library members. It is noted that no children or adult stock transactions have been included from 16th March due to the move to the All-Wales library management system. Furthermore, other factors which have affected issues include a staff restructure, resulting in the removal of two full time community librarian posts. A stock editing programme has been undertaken but this would be expected to impact positively on borrowing. An important element of the work undertaken by these professional library posts included work with children and young people and this has undoubtedly had a negative impact in this area and demonstrates the importance of professional library staff. In the first two years of the sixth framework performances were among the highest per capita in Wales, children's issues are now just above the median for Wales. There has continued to be a strong increase in e-resource usage.

3.3 Facilities and services (QI 9-12)ⁱⁱⁱ

A reduction in the resource budget, alongside the move to the All-Wales LMS has resulted in Caerphilly not meeting the acquisitions per capita (QI 9) target for the first time. Caerphilly is one of seventeen authorities who have not met the acquisitions target (QI 9) in 2019/20. The materials budget has decreased by just over 31% since 2017/18 and the figure for overall acquisitions has decreased by 43%. However, the service notes that last year's figure included centrally purchased subscription items and as a result the figures are not comparable.

The percentage of materials expenditure for children has decreased by 2% to 24% due to the reduction in the resource budget. The expenditure on Welsh language materials remains the same and is still among the highest per capita in Wales. However, despite this expenditure, Welsh language issues are well below the median in Wales. The service is

still achieving the requirements for supply of requests, despite a slight decrease in requests available within 7/15 calendar days. Caerphilly's PC provision is still among the highest per capita in Wales, but usage has fallen in 2019/20. This is a trend seen across Wales as more users access Wi-Fi from their own devices, leading to the service installing Wi-Fi printing in its hub libraries.

3.4 Expertise and capacity (QI 13-16)^{iv}

During 2019 / 2020, due to budget reductions, the library service undertook a second staff realignment process. A further 5 library service points have now become single staffed, making a total of 11 of 18 libraries that are now single staffed service points. As a result, staff numbers have decreased by 17% since 2017/18 and it is noted that two professional community librarian posts have also been removed from the service along with a senior libraries manager post.

The overall target for staff per capita is not achieved and is now below the median level. The total number of staff identified as holding recognised qualifications has reduced by 30% and is now at the median level for Wales. It is noted that when the return was submitted there were vacant posts within the staffing structure. There continues to be a strong focus on training and professional development for staff.

The overall revenue budget remains amongst the highest per capita in Wales. Despite the decrease in staffing, opening hours remain the same and continue to meet the target set. During 2019 / 2020, the LibraryLink Housebound Delivery service has enrolled more customers to the service.

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. Caerphilly has provided a comprehensive overview of the link between library activities and Caerphilly Council and Welsh Government strategies. The breadth of impact on a variety of wellbeing outcomes, such as poverty, social isolation and health and wellbeing is noted. Specific examples are given of how service priorities align with wider strategic policies, notably in supporting learning, social inclusion and health and wellbeing.

5 Future direction

Reporting on the authority's future direction and plans for the library service over the following year, it is noted that Caerphilly is working towards the publication of a new Strategic plan for the service from 2020. The service intends to build on its success as a 'community anchor' to the residents of Caerphilly by ensuring its services remain current and relevant to communities. It is noted that a new School engagement programme has been developed and there are aspirations to support schools to empower and enhance pupils' performance. It is also noted that Caerphilly libraries are fully committed to improving health and wellbeing in Caerphilly through a variety of partnerships.

6 Conclusion

Caerphilly has continued to deliver effectively against the standards framework in 2019/20 with only one target unmet. The performance of the service in this final year of the sixth

Framework has been impacted by staff capacity in some areas, with 5 library service points single staffed and a reduction in the resource budget. A review of community loans was undertaken by Caerphilly in order to effectively plan future lending which has resulted in a decrease in adult and children's book issues. The service also noted a decrease in staffing in February 2020. The impact of this reduction in staffing will be evident in the short term. It is difficult to envisage how Caerphilly will continue to meet its statutory obligations with further financial cuts. A number of CCBC service reviews are currently being undertaken and a number of changes will be considered. Careful planning will be needed to ensure that libraries in Caerphilly can continue to offer the services needed by the local community. The impact of funding constraints on service capacity and delivery is something the authority should continue to consider carefully. Despite pressures, the service may wish to consider focusing on the promotion of resources in libraries in Caerphilly, particularly in relation to resources for children and young adults. Forward planning and a strong emphasis on staff development and training has ensured the service remains resilient and has performed well despite a number of challenges.

ⁱ *Due to Covid-19, local authorities were only asked to report any change in provision since the last reporting year for Q1 3&4.*

ⁱⁱ *Due to Covid-19, Q1 5&6 were removed for the 2019/20 reporting year.*

ⁱⁱⁱ *E-resources purchased through centrally-funded subscriptions have been included in the acquisitions figures for Q1 9 in 2019/20. Each authority has added 201 to their total acquisitions from centrally funded subscriptions. CIPFA Statistics Returns continue to include figures for centrally-procured resources.*

^{iv} *Due to Covid-19, Q1 15 was removed for the 2019/20 reporting year, alongside training and volunteer hours.*