Welsh Public Library Standards 2017-2020: Ceredigion County Council

Annual Assessment Report 2019/20

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

1   Executive summary

Ceredigion met 10 of the 12 core entitlements in full and failed to meet 2.

Of the 9 quality indicators which have targets, Ceredigion achieved 8 in full, and 1 in part.

Ceredigion has continued to perform well in some areas in 2019/20, with positive developments in terms of electronic resources in particular. Ceredigion remains in the top quartile in Wales with regard to adult and children's book issues, despite the fact that total revenue expenditure remains below the median in Wales. Ceredigion has also maintained its position in Wales with regard to the provision of Welsh language materials and Welsh issues. The service is one of only five services to meet the acquisitions target. There have been positive developments in a number of areas and an improvement in QI 9 (acquisitions) in 2019/20. As noted in the second year of the framework, formal user surveys have now not been undertaken for at least six years and the continued lack of a Strategy is disappointing.

- All major service points now provide the full range of support for individual development, and good support for health and well-being. Two case studies demonstrate the beneficial impact of the service.

- Although the number of visits to library premises has declined slightly, Ceredigion still remains above the median in Wales in this area.

- There has been a slight decline in adult book issues, but Ceredigion has reported the second highest loans per capita in Wales once again, and children's book issues have increased. It is also second in Wales for Welsh issues per capita (of the Welsh speaking population).

- One element of the acquisitions target (QI 9) is met, an improvement on the second year of the framework, due to an increase in titles within e-resource bundles. Ceredigion is only one of four authorities to meet this target.

- Staffing levels have been maintained at 2019/19 levels and Ceredigion continues to meet the requirements in terms of qualified staff (one of only four authorities now to do so). However it is noted that additional staffing is unlikely in the future.

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

Ceredigion is meeting 10 of the 12 core entitlements in full, and does not meet two. The position noted in 2017/18 and 2018/19 remains the same. There was no user consultation (CE 11) completed under the fifth framework. User surveys were planned for March and May 2020. These were cancelled due to Covid-19. As a result, there was no user consultation undertaken within the sixth framework. Ceredigion is one of only two authorities unable to complete both adult and children user surveys throughout the framework and this is disappointing as consultation with members is essential to inform the future direction of the service. CE 12 remains unmet as a library strategy is still under development. The authority notes that this will be impacted by the move to the All Wales LMS in 2020/21, reducing staff availability to develop a library strategy.

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 has a constituent target. Of the **nine** remaining targets for 2019-20, and Ceredigion is achieving 8 in full, and 1 in part.

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		Met in full
Acquisitions per capita	√	
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	√	
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 request 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	√	
QI 16 Opening hours per capita	√	Met in full

Ceredigion has maintained its performance in this third year of the sixth framework, with a slight improve in acquisitions. Ceredigion is one of only four local authorities to achieve 8 of the QIs in full and 1 in part.

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 6. Rankings reflect the numbers of respondents, where 1 is the highest scoring authority.

Ceredigion did not undertake an adult and children user survey in the fifth and sixth frameworks, one of two authorities not to do so. It is noted that plans this year were affected by Covid-19. It is important that the direction of the Service is informed by user feedback.

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%	90%	97%
e) % of adults who think that the library has made a difference to their lives:	n/a	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. Ceredigion provided two such case studies, although they were not as strong as examples from other authorities:

- Building sustainable communities – the concept of libraries as recycling centres. One member describes their renewed interest in the library and the importance of the library in relation to sustainable living, as they provide a way of sharing resources in the community.

- Tackling isolation – the role of the library in supporting one member of the community to participate in a reading club, hosted by the library, thus reducing isolation. The library provides a safe space for people to meet, and make new friends.

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 Ceredigion'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	n/a	25%	75%	94%	*n/a*
c) health and well-being	n/a	38%	69%	96%	*n/a*
d) enjoyable, safe and inclusive	n/a	90%	96%	100%	*n/a*
QI 2 Customer satisfaction					*[Framework 6]*
a) 'very good' or 'good' choice of books	n/a	78%	91%	99%	*n/a*
b) 'very good' or 'good' customer care	n/a	88%	97%	100%	*n/a*
c) 'very good' or 'good' IT facilities	n/a	65%	85%	99%	*n/a*
d) 'very good' or 'good' overall	n/a	85%	96%	100%	*n/a*
e) users aged 16 & under rating out of ten	n/a	8.0	9.1	9.5	*n/a*
QI 8 Library use[1]					
a) visits per capita	4,012*	*10/22*	2429	3987	6874	*4,187*
b) virtual visits per capita	1,183	*20/22*	239	909	2131	*1,197*
c) active borrowers per capita	157	*14/22*	78	145	244	*159*
QI 10 Welsh issues per capita[2]	1,134	*2/22*	311	680	1468	*1,106*
QI 11 Online access					
b) Computers per capita[3]	7	*18/22*	4	9	14	*7*
c) % of available time used by the public	28%	*11/22*	14%	30%	64%	*27%*
QI 14 Operational expenditure					
a) total expenditure per capita	£9,525	*16/22*	£7,260	£12,448	£23,333	*£10,467*
b) % on staff,	76%	*=1/22*	48%	61%	76%	*68%*
% on information resources	19%	*=3/22*	5%	13%	22%	*15%*
% on equipment and buildings	0%	*19/22*	0%	8%	28%	*5%*
% on other operational costs	5%	*20/22*	1%	18%	35%	*12%*
c) capital expenditure per capita	£0	*=22/22*	£0	£1,567	£13,027	*£0*
QI 16 Opening hours[4]					
(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	1.87%	*18/22*	0.00%	1.07%	5.41%	*7.99%*

[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 1,000 [3] per 10,000 resident population [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 and second year of the sixth framework (2017/18 and 2018/19).

3.1 Meeting customer needs (QI 1-5)[i]

As previously noted, Ceredigion did not complete its children and adult user surveys within the current framework. It is noted that the user surveys planned were cancelled due to Covid-19. All static libraries open over 10 hours continue to provide the full range of support for individual development, and health and well-being are well supported. There has been an increase in the number of book clubs offered.

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. Ceredigion has continued to meet the target for easy access to service points, which has remained consistent since the first year of the framework. Although the number of visits to library premises has declined slightly, Ceredigion still remains above the median in Wales in this area. There has also been a decline in the number of active borrowers and the members per capita remain below the median in Wales. The total number of external visits to the library's website has seen a large increase since 2017/18, with visits almost tripling in this time period. Children's book issues have also increased by 25% since the first reporting year of the framework. Although, there has been a slight decline in adult book issues, but Ceredigion has reported the second highest loans per capita in Wales once again. There has been a substantial rise of 230% in electronic downloads, with Ceredigion now in the top quartile in Wales.

3.3   Facilities and services (QI 9-12)[iii]

One element of the acquisitions target (QI 9) is met (number of items acquired per capita), an improvement on the second year of the framework. Ceredigion is one of five authorities who have met the acquisitions target (QI 9) in 2019/20. The items acquired has increased by 56% since 2017/18, although the service notes that this is due to the number of e-resources acquired. The service continues to be reliant on donations (although these are not included in the WPLS reporting). The number of Welsh language issues has continued to increase with the service recording the second highest level of Welsh language issues per capita in Wales. It continues to meet the target for expenditure on Welsh items. PC provision has been maintained at 2017/18 and 2018/19 levels. PC usage has increased slightly but remains below the median in Wales. The service continues to meet the targets for supply of requests, despite not being part of a regional inter-library loan scheme. Deliveries in this area have been increased by the service, resulting in a very positive increase in this area.

3.4   Expertise and capacity (QI 13-16)[iv]

Staffing levels have been maintained at previous levels and Ceredigion continues to meet the requirements in terms of qualified staff (one of only four authorities now to do so). Total staffing does not meet the target and it is noted that additional staffing is unlikely in the future. Qualified leadership remains in place. Total revenue expenditure on the service has decreased slightly in 2019/20 and by 7% since 2017/18. Expenditure is below the median in Wales, with Ceredigion in the bottom quartile in Wales in this area. Aggregate annual opening hours have been maintained at 2017/18 and 2018/19 and performance here is still among the highest in Wales.

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 reported on how the library service contributes to the goals of the Well-being of Future Generations Act in a number of ways. Examples provided include the contribution of the service to a more prosperous Wales through its provision of lifelong learning; to a resilient Wales through its provision of Council service; to a healthier Wales through its support of individuals with dementia and to a more equal Wales by reducing digital inequality through

its IT provision. The service continues to note a strong commitment to Welsh language provision.

5 Future direction

The service notes that the authority's future direction and plans are uncertain due to the impact of Covid-19. Ceredigion noted in 2017/18 that a full revision of strategies and policies was being undertaken. Unfortunately, this has been impacted by Covid-19 in 2019/20. Plans to join the All-Wales LMS were put on hold over summer 2020 due to Covid-19 and it is hoped that this would be realised in December 2020.The future direction of the service is not clear from the narrative, but it noted that financial pressures are likely to impact on electronic resources given the lower use rates. It is noted that the estate has been fully modernised and there will be a focus on ensuring that the libraries remain a safe, attractive and accessible physical space to all.

6 Conclusion

Ceredigion has continued to perform well in some areas in 2019/20, with positive developments in terms of electronic resources in particular. Ceredigion remains in the top quartile in Wales with regard to adult and children's book issues, despite the fact that total revenue expenditure remains below the median in Wales. Ceredigion has also maintained its position in Wales with regard to the provision of Welsh language materials and Welsh issues. The service is one of only five services to meet the acquisitions target. There have been positive developments in a number of areas and an improvement in QI 9 (acquisitions) in 2019/20. As noted in the second year of the framework, formal user surveys have now not been undertaken for at least six years and the continued lack of a Strategy is disappointing.

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

[ii] *Due to Covid-19, QI 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 QI 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, QI 15 was removed for the 2019/20 reporting year, alongside training and volunteer hours.*