

Welsh Public Library Standards 2017-2020: Newport City Council

Annual Assessment Report 2019/20

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

1 Executive summary

Newport met all of the 12 core entitlements in full.

Of the 9 quality indicators which have targets, Newport achieved 6 in full, 1 in part and did not achieve 2.

Library services in Newport have broadly been maintained throughout the framework. However, the decrease in professional staffing levels is a concern in a service which records the lowest overall staffing levels in Wales. The focus on the neighbourhood hub model has the potential to impact positively on opening hours and community engagement and developments in this area will be key to service provision in the future. The case studies provided illustrate the positive impact the libraries in Newport have on members of the local community; helping to reduce health, social and economic inequalities. An improvement to staffing would help to increase this impact.

- All static libraries continue to provide a full range of support for individual development, and good support for health and well-being.
- There has been a decline in active borrowers and library members respectively, of 31% and 29% since 2017/18.
- Electronic downloads have witnessed an increase of 39% since 2017/18, which is reflective of changing customer habits across Wales and the impact of the pandemic.
- Expenditure on children's resources has been maintained and is above the median in Wales, and perhaps a contributory factor in the increase in the number of children's issues.
- Overall staff numbers have decreased slightly in 2019/20, with the removal of one professional post from the structure. The overall target for staff per capita (QI 13) is not achieved and staff numbers per capita is still the lowest 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

Newport continues to meet all 12 of the Core Entitlements in full. There have been no significant changes since 2018/19. The service continues to use community profiles for each of its libraries to inform planning.

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 Newport achieved 6 in full, 1 in part and did 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 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	x Not met

Newport has maintained its performance in this third year of the sixth framework, with no changes since 2018/19.

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.

Newport completed its adult and children’s user surveys in March, 2018. A survey planned for March 2020 was cancelled due to Covid-19. User surveys in Newport are usually undertaken on a biennial basis, although for the purpose of assessment, once during the three year framework is sufficient.

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:	92%	10/19	60%	90%	97%
e) % of adults who think that the library has made a difference to their lives:	85%	14/19	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. Newport provided three such case studies:

- Autism Friendly – Autism friendly sessions delivered in the library. This is a service which supports children who are autistic. The importance of these sessions on one young child and his family, is illustrated. The activities are a confidence booster for the child and a gentle introduction to the library environment.
- Neighbourhood Hub East – the first community hub in Newport. The importance of the hub for a young family new to the area, supporting literacy skills and improving confidence. The library has also provided an environment where the family can improve both their social and personal development.
- Digital and social exclusion – a project to combat digital and social exclusion. Digital devices have been loaned to housebound customers in Newport as part of this project. Staff provided a taster session and these library members now have access to a range of digital library resources, which impacts positively on their wellbeing and mental health.

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 Newport'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	66%	=13/18	25%	75%	94%	66%
c) health and well-being	49%	17/19	38%	69%	96%	49%
d) enjoyable, safe and inclusive	96%	=12/19	90%	96%	100%	96%
QI 2 Customer satisfaction						[Framework 6]
a) 'very good' or 'good' choice of books	91%	=7/18	78%	91%	99%	91%
b) 'very good' or 'good' customer care	97%	=13/18	88%	97%	100%	97%
c) 'very good' or 'good' IT facilities	79%	12/17	66%	85%	99%	79%
d) 'very good' or 'good' overall	95%	14/18	85%	96%	100%	95%
e) users aged 16 & under rating out of ten	9.2	=13/19	8.0	9.1	9.5	9.2
QI 8 Library use ¹						
a) visits per capita	2,429	22/22	2429	3987	6874	2,596
b) virtual visits per capita	744	12/22	239	909	2131	672
c) active borrowers per capita	85	21/22	78	145	244	119
QI 10 Welsh issues per capita ²	351	20/22	311	680	1468	337
QI 11 Online access						
b) Computers per 10,000	4	22/22	4	9	14	5
c) % of available time used by the public	30%	=8/22	14%	30%	64%	29%
QI 14 Operational expenditure						
a) total expenditure per capita	£7,260	22/22	£7,260	12,448	£23,333	£7,181
b) % on staff,	57%	15/22	48%	61%	76%	58%
% on information resources	19%	=3/22	5%	13%	22%	19%
% on equipment and buildings	17%	3/22	0%	8%	28%	16%
% on other operational costs	6%	19/22	1%	18%	35%	7%
c) capital expenditure per capita	£0	=22/22	£0	£1,567	£13,027	£1,646
QI 16 Opening hours ³						
(iii) a) % hours unplanned closure of static service points	0.00%	=1/22	0.00%	0.23%	3.96%	0.05%
b) % mobile stops / home deliveries missed	0.00%	=1/22	0.00%	1.07%	5.41%	n/a

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

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

Newport completed its adult and children's user surveys in March 2018. A survey planned for March 2020 was cancelled due to Covid-19. User surveys are usually undertaken on a biennial basis in Newport. All static libraries continue to provide a full range of support for individual development, and good support for health and well-being. There has been a slight change in 2019/20 and the sessions held by MIND in 2018/19 in Newport library were not offered in the 2019/20 reporting year. However, the Reading Well offer has been maintained.

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. Newport continues to meet the target for easy access to service points. As with all services in Wales, visitor figures have been affected by Covid-19 and there is a slight decline in this area. However, physical visits remain the lowest per capita in Wales. There has also been a decline in active borrowers and library members respectively, of 31% and 29% since 2017/18. Although there has been a decline in adult book issues, there has been a rise in children's issues and electronic downloads. Electronic downloads have witnessed an increase of 39% since 2017/18, which is reflective of changing customer habits across Wales and the impact of the pandemic.

3.3 Facilities and services (QI 9-12)ⁱⁱⁱ

Expenditure on materials has increased slightly 2018/19 and is above the median level in Wales. However, due to price variations the acquisition of physical items actually decreased marginally and still remains below target levels. QI 9 (acquisitions) remains unmet. Newport is one of seventeen authorities who have not met the acquisitions target (QI 9) in 2019/20. Expenditure on children's resources has been maintained and is above the median in Wales, and perhaps a contributory factor in the increase in the number of children's issues. Investment in Welsh language resources has been maintained and the target for QI 10 (Welsh language resources) has continued to be met. Performance in relation to Welsh issues is below the median in Wales. The requirements for the supply of requests (QI 12) have continued to be met and PC provision has declined slightly. Current usage remains broadly the same at (30%) since 2017/18.

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

Overall staff numbers have decreased slightly in 2019/20, with the removal of one professional post from the structure. The overall target for staff per capita (QI 13) is not achieved and staff numbers per capita is still the lowest in Wales. The total number of professional staff per 10,000 remains slightly above the median in Wales and qualified leadership is in place.

There has been an increase in revenue expenditure in 2019/20 and this has improved by 3% since 2017/18. As in the first two years of the framework the average investment in library services per capita remains in the bottom quartile in Wales. There has been an increase in opening hours due to the opening of the East hub in January 2020. QI 16

(opening hours) remains unmet and performance is considerably below the median level 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. Newport continues to report on the alignments between its Library Strategy 2017-2020 and wider Welsh Government priorities. A continuing priority is reading and literacy, with Newport successfully offering a range of events and activities for children. The narrative also shows how the service is contributing to the strategic areas of digital inclusion and health wellbeing, with a continuing commitment to offer a range of classes and activities to support the development of the digital skills of its members.

5 Future direction

As with all services in Wales, Covid-19 has impacted on how members are engaging with library services across Wales. This has predominantly affected usage of online services and Newport, along with all services in Wales will be considering how they need to adapt to meet changing customer expectations. A new library strategy will be developed in 2021. As noted in 2018/19, there will be a continued focus on the development of the neighbourhood hub model. The first hub opened in Ringland in January 2020 and anecdotal evidence suggests that the library service played a key role in attracting residents to the building, who were then signposted to the other support services available. The new model has the potential to offer a range of opportunities for the library service.

6 Conclusion

Library services in Newport have broadly been maintained throughout the framework. However, the decrease in professional staffing levels is a concern in a service which records the lowest overall staffing levels in Wales. The focus on the neighbourhood hub model has the potential to impact positively on opening hours and community engagement and developments in this area will be key to service provision in the future. The case studies provided illustrate the positive impact the libraries in Newport have on members of the local community; helping to reduce health, social and economic inequalities. An improvement to staffing would help to increase this impact.

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.