

Welsh Public Library Standards 2017-2020: Powys County Council

Annual Assessment Report 2019/20

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

1 Executive summary

Powys met 10 of the 12 core entitlements in full, one in part and did not meet 1.

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

Powys library service has submitted a comprehensive return, which demonstrates how library services in Powys continue to work collaboratively with a number of partners to deliver a quality library service. Although there has been a decline in usage in some areas, Powys' performance in the majority of areas remains above the median level in Wales, and children's issues have risen. Proportionally expenditure on materials is still very low, but does not appear to have affected Powys' delivery of effective services, as evidenced by a variety of groups and activities for individuals across Powys. The service continues to deliver against Welsh Government priorities and strategic goals. There remain concerns regarding the sustainability of the service. However, the move towards a community hub model has the potential to positively impact on the performance in the coming years.

- There has been a marginal reduction in library members since 2017/18 and this can partly be attributed to a data cleanse undertaken in March 2020. Members per capita are below the median in Wales.
- There has been an increase of 8% in children's book issues since 2017/18 and the service has actively promoted this area. E-resource usage has risen and remains high, and promotion in this area is a strength of the library service
- Investment in Welsh language resources has reduced since 2018/19, but remains 16% above the total expenditure in 2017/18 and the target (QI 10) is met.
- Aggregate annual opening hours have been maintained in 2019/20, with the average per capita the second highest 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

Powys meets 10 of the 12 core entitlements in full, one in part and does not meet CE12 without a library strategy currently in place. CE 12 was met in the first two years of the current framework but is unmet during 2019/20 as the strategy was due to be revised and the work towards new delivery models has not been completed. 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) continues to be partially met. There have been improvements to CE 1 with online joining now in place and the request for proof of address has been removed.

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 Powys 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	Not met
a) % of requests satisfied within 7 days	x
b) % of requests satisfied within 15 days	x

Quality Indicator	Met?
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

Powys has broadly maintained its performance in this third year of the sixth framework. QI 12, met in 2018/19, is unmet in 2019/20 as targets were affected by Covid-19 in March 2020.

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.

Powys completed its adult user survey in November, 2018, and the children's survey in October 2019.

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:	85%	17/19	60%	90%	97%
e) % of adults who think that the library has made a difference to their lives:	88%	10/19	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. Powys provided four such case studies:

- Clean up and recycle – a collaborative litter picking initiative. Caru Cymru, Powys library Service and Waste Management have worked together to help Keep Wales tidy. Litter picking kits can be borrowed from the library. This is a way of bringing people together and has a variety of social benefits and the added value of impacting positively on the local environment.
- Inclusion, diversity and community based learning – the benefits of the library for a family new to Wales. Library staff helped a family to improve their English language skills, alongside helping them to find out more about their local area. This boosted their confidence and helped them to make new friends.
- Health and wellbeing – the benefits to the community of a variety of activities at Ystradgynlais library. A number of groups have been established, ranging from a gardening club to a dungeons and dragons role-playing group. These groups have had a very positive impact on the wellbeing of individuals in the community, preventing social isolation and encouraging people to become members of the library.

- Dementia Project – the benefits of an initiative in which stories are read aloud to a group of elderly people. The importance of two members of the community who play an active and valuable role in bringing the enjoyment of stories and poetry to people with dementia but also to those who are lonely and isolated.

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 Powys'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	68%	12/18	25%	75%	94%	n/a
c) health and well-being	57%	15/19	38%	69%	96%	n/a
d) enjoyable, safe and inclusive	97%	=7/19	90%	96%	100%	n/a
QI 2 Customer satisfaction						[Framework 6]
a) 'very good' or 'good' choice of books	81%	17/18	78%	91%	99%	n/a
b) 'very good' or 'good' customer care	95%	16/18	88%	97%	100%	n/a
c) 'very good' or 'good' IT facilities	78%	=13/17	65%	85%	99%	n/a
d) 'very good' or 'good' overall	94%	15/18	85%	96%	100%	n/a
e) users aged 16 & under rating out of ten	9.4	1/15	8.0	9.1	9.5	n/a
QI 8 Library use ¹						
a) visits per capita	4,007*	11/22	2429	3987	6874	4,042
b) virtual visits per capita	1,607	3/22	239	909	2131	1,367
c) active borrowers per capita	152	9/22	78	145	244	165
QI 10 Welsh issues per capita ²	614	13/22	311	680	1468	780
QI 11 Online access						
b) Computers per 10,000	10	6/22	4	9	14	11
c) % of available time used by the public	17%	=20/22	14%	30%	64%	17%
QI 14 Operational expenditure						
a) total expenditure per capita	£10,960	12/22	£7,260	£12,448	£23,333	£13,570
b) % on staff,	59%	=11/22	48%	61%	76%	58%
% on information resources	9%	=18/22	5%	13%	22%	8%
% on equipment and buildings	2%	=17/22	0%	8%	28%	2%
% on other operational costs	29%	5/22	1%	18%	35%	32%
c) capital expenditure per capita	£1,106	7/22	£0	1,567	£13,027	£2,095
QI 16 Opening hours ³						
(iii) a) % hours unplanned closure of static service points	0.01%	17/22	0.00%	0.23%	3.96%	0.17%
b) % mobile stops / home deliveries missed	5.41%	22/22	0.00%	1.07%	5.41%	2.03%

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

Powys completed its user survey for adults in November 2018 and carried out its young people's survey in October 2019. All static service points continue to provide full support for individual development, and good support for health and well-being, with grant funded projects to support people living with dementia and to help people to manage their blood pressure, in particular.

3.2 Access and use (QI 6-8)ⁱⁱ

Powys has continued to meet the target for access to service points throughout the framework. Powys has 16 libraries open 10+ hours per week and there have been no changes since 2017/18. A decline in visits to library premises, active borrowers and adult issues is attributed to significant impact of Covid-19 during late Feb and March 2020. However, adult book issues remain comparatively strong. There has been a marginal reduction in library members since 2017/18 and this can mainly be attributed to a data cleanse undertaken in March 2020. Members per capita are below the median in Wales. There has been an increase of 8% in children's book issues since 2017/18 and the service has actively promoted this area. Website use has also increased, alongside the number of electronic downloads. Average downloads per capita are the second highest in Wales and have increased by 130% since 2017/18. This is a real strength of the service.

3.3 Facilities and services (QI 9-12)ⁱⁱⁱ

The materials budget has broadly been maintained since 2018/19 and the proportion of the budget spent on materials remains below the median in Wales. The acquisitions (QI 9) targets continue to be unmet in line with seventeen other services in Wales. Investment in Welsh language resources has reduced since 2018/19, but remains 16% above the total expenditure in 2017/18 and the target (QI 10) is met. PC provision and usage levels have broadly remained the same, in common with other authorities. The supply of requests (QI 12) has not been met and the service attributes this to the impact of Covid-19.

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

Overall staff numbers have decreased in 2019/20 and it is noted that this is as a result of an internal restructure, with library staff at Welshpool library now part of the museum service staffing structure as part of a merged museum library service. The overall target for staff per capita is not achieved, and is below the median level. The total number of staff identified as holding recognised qualifications has also decreased due to an internal transfer and retirement of one qualified member of staff. The target for qualified staff is no longer met. Qualified leadership is in place.

Total revenue expenditure has fallen slightly on 2018/19 and has decreased by 30% since 2017/18. Expenditure per capita is below the median level. Aggregate annual opening hours have remained the same, with the average per capita the second highest in Wales. There has been a small increase in the number of missed mobile library stops and home deliveries.

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. The service reports on its contribution to "Prosperity for all: taking Wales forward". This includes, prosperous and secure, healthy and active, ambitious and learning and united and connected. The service notes the importance of intergenerational dementia singing groups for members, alongside a free family swim voucher to all children completing the summer reading challenge, both impacting successfully on the health and wellbeing of the community. The service also offers a range of learning activities, ranging from local studies research

sessions to a coding club at Y Gear. Powys successfully aligns with a wide variety of strategic goals.

5 Future direction

Reporting on the authority's future direction and plans for the library service over the following year, Powys highlights the impact of austerity on the service, particularly in light of Covid-19. The council is considering community hub models for wider service delivery and there is an intention for libraries in Powys to be at the heart of any development. There remains a continued commitment to joint working with a variety of partners. The re-development of the current library strategy will be essential in providing future direction. As with all services in Wales, there will be a need to consider the delivery of traditional library services in an online environment, whilst at the same time continuing to meet the needs of all members of the community. The service continues to explore new income streams, in light of continuing financial challenges.

6 Conclusion

Powys library service have submitted a comprehensive return, which demonstrates how library services in Powys continue to work collaboratively with a number of partners to deliver a quality library service. Although there has been a decline in usage in some areas, Powys' performance in the majority of areas remains above the median level in Wales, and children's issues have risen. Proportionally expenditure on materials is still very low, but does not appear to have affected Powys' delivery of effective services, as evidenced by a variety of groups and activities for individuals across Powys. The service continues to deliver against Welsh Government priorities and strategic goals. There remains concerns regarding the sustainability of the service and staffing levels. However, the move towards a community hub model has the potential to impact positively on the performance in the coming years.

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.