

Welsh Public Library Standards 2017-2020: Rhondda Cynon Taf

Annual Assessment Report 2019/20

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

1 Executive summary

Rhondda Cynon Taf met all of the 12 core entitlements in full.

Of the 9 quality indicators which have targets, Rhondda Cynon Taf achieved 5 in full, 1 in part and did not achieve 3.

Rhondda Cynon Taf has witnessed improvement in a few areas in 2019/20, particularly in various aspects of library usage, against the general trend. Although usage figures largely remain below the median in Wales the increases have been a welcome improvement. The ongoing development of community hubs has also resulted in improved facilities and services for members through the relocation of three libraries, bringing more activities and partnerships to the library service. The planned development of Treorchy library should result in further improvements to performance in the future. However, as noted in 2018/19, the overall low resourcing of the service continues to be a limiting factor.

- The service has seen an increase in a number of aspects of usage including: active borrowers; library members; adult and children book issues, website visits and electronic downloads. Physical visits had increased by February 2020. Despite the welcome increases the service is in the bottom quartile for many elements of usage.
- Electronic downloads have increased by 70% since 2017/18, in line with the trend across Wales.
- Investment in and promotion of Welsh language materials has seen a pleasing increase in issues, and QI 10 continues to be met, reflecting an improvement since 2017/18.
- Performance in relation to supply of requests (QI 12) has unfortunately suffered because of Covid-19 and Rhondda Cynon Taf is one of six services not to meet the targets in this area in 2019/20. This is a shame for the service which had worked hard in previous years to achieve the target.
- Rhondda Cynon Taf, along with most other library services in Wales, does not meet the total staffing level target or the professional level target. However, it is investing in its staff through support for qualifications and it is hoped that the professional target might be met in future years.

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

Rhondda Cynon Taf continues to meet all 12 of the Core Entitlements in full, with no significant changes since 2018/19.

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 Rhondda Cynon Taf achieved 5 in full, 1 in part and did not achieve 3 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	x Not met

Rhondda Cynon Taf has maintained its performance in this third year of the sixth framework, with improvements in expenditure on Welsh language materials since 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. 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.

Rhondda Cynon Taf completed its adult and children's user survey in September/October 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:	96%	=6/19	60%	90%	97%
e) % of adults who think that the library has made a difference to their lives:	90%	=3/19	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. Rhondda Cynon Taf provided two such case studies:

- Digital Fridays – An initiative in Rhondda Cynon Taf libraries to help individuals with their IT skills. This is a service which supports those individuals who need help or advice with an IT problem. One member describes the positive impact this service had on his digital capabilities.
- Craft in the Library – the re-location of Mountain Ash library and the impact on a 'Knit and Natter' group. The new community hub provides a modern and relaxing environment. The use of the space by other community groups has resulted in members of the 'Knit and Natter' group engaging with the wider community, improving their wellbeing and impacting positively on their social life.

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 Rhondda Cynon Taf'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	75%	11/18	25%	75%	94%	75%
c) health and well-being	58%	=13/19	38%	69%	96%	58%
d) enjoyable, safe and inclusive	97%	=7/19	90%	96%	100%	97%
QI 2 Customer satisfaction					[Framework 6]	
a) 'very good' or 'good' choice of books	92%	6/18	78%	91%	99%	92%
b) 'very good' or 'good' customer care	99%	=3/18	88%	97%	100%	99%
c) 'very good' or 'good' IT facilities	88%	=10/17	66%	85%	99%	88%
d) 'very good' or 'good' overall	97%	=10/18	85%	96%	100%	97%
e) users aged 16 & under rating out of ten	9.5	=1/19	8.0	9.1	9.5	9.5
QI 8 Library use ¹						
a) visits per capita	2,968	19/22	2429	3987	6874	3,044
b) virtual visits per capita	615	15/22	239	909	2131	481
c) active borrowers per capita	78	22/22	78	145	244	58
QI 10 Welsh issues per capita ²	565	14/22	311	680	1468	458
QI 11 Online access						
b) Computers per 10,000	7	17/22	4	9	14	8
c) % of available time used by the public	21%	=16/22	14%	30%	64%	22%
QI 14 Operational expenditure						
a) total expenditure per capita	£9,832	15/22	£7,260	£12,448	£23,333	£9,434
b) % on staff,	72%	4/22	48%	61%	76%	76%
% on information resources	13%	=6/22	5%	13%	22%	14%
% on equipment and buildings	2%	=17/22	0%	8%	28%	2%
% on other operational costs	13%	=15/22	1%	18%	35%	8%
c) capital expenditure per capita	£511	10/22	£0	£1,567	£13,027	£300
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%	7.01%

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

Rhondda Cynon Taf completed its user surveys for adults and children in autumn 2018, with continuing high levels of customer satisfaction. There have been no changes in support for individual development throughout the framework, with all aspects being met. All static libraries continue to provide support for health and wellbeing, with an increase in the health information partnerships and mental awareness activities since 2018/19. All staff have received dementia friendly training and every branch has a dementia champion.

3.2 Access and use (QI 6-8)ⁱⁱ

Rhondda Cynon Taf continues to meet the target for easy access to service points, with 13 static service points open 10+ hours per week. Although there has been a slight decrease in the total number of visits to library premises in 2019/20, the service attributes this to reduced visits in March 2020 and then the closure of libraries due to Covid-19. Visitor figures in February 2020 were higher than figures for the same period in 2019. The service has seen an increase in a number of other areas: active borrowers; library members; adult and children book issues, website visits and electronic downloads. The service notes that the increase in active borrowers can be attributed to the fact that members selecting online titles via the catalogue are now included in the active borrowers list. Electronic downloads have increased by 70% since 2017/18, in line with the trend across Wales.

3.3 Facilities and services (QI 9-12)ⁱⁱⁱ

The materials budget has decreased slightly in 2019/20, however the Service notes that due to the impact of Covid-19, stock ordered in February and March did not arrive before libraries closed and as a result, invoices were not processed, resulting in a lower level of expenditure reported in 2019/20. The materials budget has decreased by 13% since 2017/18 and the service is one of seventeen authorities who have not met the acquisitions target (QI 9) in 2019/20. The percentage of materials expenditure for children has remained the same at 15%. There has been a decrease in the expenditure on Welsh language materials but QI 10 continues to be met, reflecting an improvement since 2017/18, which through promotion and more targeted purchases has seen a pleasing increase in Welsh language book issues. There has been a very slight decrease in PC provision and usage, with usage below the median level in Wales. Performance in relation to supply of requests (QI 12) has declined and Rhondda Cynon Taf is one of six services not to meet the targets in this area in 2019/20. The service notes that the relocation of three branches may be a contributory factor, along with Covid-19. Missing this target this year will be disappointing for the service as it had worked hard to achieve it in recent years.

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

Staff numbers remain below the median in Wales and neither staffing target is met. There have been no changes to the number of qualified staff in post. However, the service

continues to support two members of staff to complete distance learning studies, to augment professional staffing levels. The service retains qualified leadership.

Total revenue expenditure has increased slightly on 2018/19 and has decreased by only 0.8% since 2017/18. Expenditure per capita remains below the median level. Aggregate annual opening hours have increased by 1.7% since 2017/18 and remain just below the target level (QI 16). Rhondda Cynon Taf is one of seven services who have not met this target in 2019/20. There were no reported unstaffed opening hours, unplanned service closures, or missed mobile library stops.

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. Rhondda Cynon Taf continues to report on its contribution to the Welsh Government's cross-cutting themes outlined by Welsh Government. This includes, prosperous and secure, healthy and active, ambitious and learning and united and connected. It is noted that the wider vision for the service is laid out in the Library Plan (2019-21). In 2019/20, three libraries in Rhondda Cynon Taf were relocated into community hubs. This has enabled libraries to work more effectively with partners to promote library services and hold more activities and events, leading to greater engagement with the community. The service notes their participation in the 'Living Well in Wales' campaign which involved libraries delivering activities relating to dementia, dyslexia and inclusion, successfully impacting on the health and wellbeing of the community.

5 Future direction

Reporting on the authority's future direction and plans for the library service over the following year, Rhondda Cynon Taf notes a commitment to continue to support the council's development of community hubs, particularly the development of a cultural hub at Treorchy library. Other priorities identified in the library strategy include: improving the ICT offer; developing new models of service delivery; developing the skills of staff; providing more learning opportunities and ensuring the home delivery service meets customer needs and expectations. As with all services in Wales, Covid-19 has impacted on how members are engaging with online library services and Rhondda Cynon Taf, along with all services in Wales will be considering how they need to adapt to meet changing customer expectations.

6 Conclusion

Rhondda Cynon Taf has witnessed improvements in a few areas in 2019/20, particularly in various aspects of library usage, against the general trend. Although, usage figures largely remain below the median in Wales the increases have been a welcome improvement. The ongoing development of community hubs has also resulted in improved facilities and services for members through the relocation of three libraries, bringing more activities and partnerships to the library service. The planned development of Treorchy library should also result in further improvements to performance in the future. However, as noted in 2018/19, the overall low resourcing of the service continues to be a limiting factor.

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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.*