

Welsh Public Library Standards 2017-2020: Swansea Council

Annual Assessment Report 2019/20

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

1 Executive summary

Swansea met all of the 12 core entitlements in full.

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

Swansea library service continues to perform well in many areas and service levels have broadly been maintained throughout the framework. Although opening hours have been revised and are now below the median level in Wales, the high levels of book issues suggest that this has not impacted on performance. Staffing levels have been realigned in relation to library performance and the service continues to work towards a sustainable library service. The promotion of Welsh language resources has resulted in improvements in this area and this remains a priority for the service. Although budgets have decreased, this is a trend seen in other services across Wales. Staffing levels have remained static since 2018/19, and although professional staffing levels remain low, the service has a clear vision and contributes effectively to a variety of Welsh Government priorities and strategic goals.

- There has been a decline in visitor figures, but an increase in adult and children's book issues since 2018/19. Children's book issues have increased by 12% since 2017/18 and figures in this area remain well above the median level. This is in contrast to the general trend in Wales.
- Electronic downloads, in line with the trend in Wales, have increased by 144% since 2017/18, reflecting changing behaviour amongst members.
- The acquisition of Welsh language materials was also affected by the budget cut in 2019/20, with a slight decrease in this area and the targets (QI 10) here have not been met throughout the framework.
- Staffing levels have broadly remained the same since 2018/19, but have decreased since 2017/18. Total staff per 10,000 remains above the median level in Wales.
- Aggregate annual opening hours have decreased by 12% since 2018/19 and the target is only just met.

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

Swansea continues to meet all 12 of the Core Entitlements in full. Swansea continues to work with a range of partners to provide access to a range of services, activities and resources. Enhancements to physical spaces remain a priority with building changes at Gorseinon and Clydach libraries in 2019/20 resulting in shared spaces with council services. The service continues to work closely with other library services, contributing to all-Wales e-resources initiatives, alongside the regional inter-lending consortia 'Books4U'. The service remains committed to staff development through the review and capture of training requirements.

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 Swansea 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	Not met
% of material budget spent on Welsh	x
<u>or</u> Spend on Welsh per capita	x
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	√

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

Swansea has maintained its performance in this third year of the sixth framework, with no significant change on 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.

Swansea completed its adult and children's survey in November 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:	94%	=5/19	60%	90%	97%
e) % of adults who think that the library has made a difference to their lives:	86%	=12/19	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. Swansea provided four such case studies:

- Support for former prisoners – the value of the collaboration between Swansea Central library and Swansea prison library to one individual. The public library provides an environment of safety and trust and a way to overcome risks and negative influences in the life of one member, previously incarcerated in HMPS Swansea.
- Llansamlet library book group – the impact of a successful book group. Positive testimony from a variety of individuals on the difference the book group has made to their lives. The group is well attended by people from diverse backgrounds. The group has led to support and friendships over a number of years for many of the group members, reducing loneliness, whilst sharing companionship.
- Boys from the beach – A collection of local beach photos from the 1950s. A collaborative project with the Oystermouth Historical Association. A display of photographs was created in the library, attracting new visitors and positively impacting on the mental health and wellbeing of the individual with dementia who shared the photographs.
- Health benefits of digital media – e-audio books as a cure for insomnia. An individual who has problems with insomnia discovered that listening to audio books from the

library helped her to relax and drift off to sleep. The individual was impressed with the range and diversity of titles on offer, ease of use and the fact it is a free service. Borrowbox has improved her health and wellbeing.

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 Swansea'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	61%	15/18	25%	75%	94%	61%
c) health and well-being	58%	=13/19	38%	69%	96%	58%
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	99%	=3/18	88%	97%	100%	99%
c) 'very good' or 'good' IT facilities	78%	=13/17	65%	85%	99%	78%
d) 'very good' or 'good' overall	99%	=2/18	85%	96%	100%	99%
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	3,762	12/22	2429	3987	6874	4,272
b) virtual visits per capita	924	11/22	239	909	2131	850
c) active borrowers per capita	175	6/22	78	145	244	185
QI 10 Welsh issues per capita ²	622	12/22	311	680	1468	557
QI 11 Online access						
b) Computers per 10,000	8	14/22	4	9	14	9
c) % of available time used by the public	29%	10/22	14%	30%	64%	33%
QI 14 Operational expenditure						
a) total expenditure per capita	£11,751	11/22	£7,260	£12,448	£23,333	£12,240
b) % on staff,	76%	=1/22	48%	61%	76%	75%
% on information resources	13%	=6/22	5%	13%	22%	14%
% on equipment and buildings	2%	=17/22	0%	8%	28%	3%
% on other operational costs	8%	17/22	1%	18%	35%	8%
c) capital expenditure per capita	£123	14/22	£0	£1,567	£13,027	£575
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

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

Swansea completed its user surveys of adults and children in November 2018, with continuing high levels of customer satisfaction. A planned upgrade to public access PCs noted in 2018/19 is now complete, except for one School site and a further survey is planned in 2021. All static libraries provide a full range of support for individual development and good support for health and well-being with all core and additional targets here achieved. Established reading groups have increased by 50% since 2018/19

and all have been encouraged to 'read aloud'. During 2019/20, Swansea Libraries have made strides towards the service becoming Autism Friendly. Swansea Central library is working towards the NAS Autism Friendly reward. Furthermore, a number of staff have received training in this area.

3.2 Access and use (QI 6-8)ⁱⁱ

Swansea continues to meet the target for easy access to service points. There has been a decline in visitor figures, possibly due to the reduction in opening hours, but an increase in adult and children's book issues since 2018/19. Children's book issues have increased by 12% since 2017/18 and figures in this area remain well above the median level. It is noted that due to a data cleanse of inactive users, membership figures have dropped, alongside the number of active borrowers. Electronic downloads, in line with the trend in Wales have increased by 144% since 2017/18, reflecting changing behaviour amongst members. The service additional reports strong engagement on social media.

3.3 Facilities and services (QI 9-12)ⁱⁱⁱ

The materials budget has decreased by 4% since 2017/18, however the figure for overall acquisitions has risen, although neither target is met. Swansea is one of seventeen authorities who have not met the acquisitions target (QI 9) in 2019/20. The Service notes that the budget was affected by an in year reduction to funds due to a need to make savings. The library service appears to have avoided this having a detrimental effect on usage, partly due to careful stock management principles and applying their professional expertise. Swansea's expenditure per capita is above the median level in Wales in this area. The acquisition of Welsh language materials was also affected by the budget cut in 2019/20, with a slight decrease in this area and the targets (QI 10) here have not been met throughout the framework. Swansea is one of 5 services who have not met this target. Usage figures of Welsh language stock have improved since 2017/18 and the service notes that it is committed to promoting the Welsh language and outlined a number of initiatives which have led to the increase in loans. Performance in the supply of requests has broadly been maintained and targets in this area continue to be met. PC provision and ICT usage have both declined, reflective of the increasing preference of individuals to use their own devices with an increase in Wi-Fi logins and usage.

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

Staffing levels have broadly remained the same since 2018/19, but have decreased since 2017/18. Total staff per 10,000 remains above the median level in Wales. There have been no changes to professional staffing levels since 2018/19. In common with the majority of services in Wales, Swansea is not meeting targets in this area (QI 13). Qualified leadership is in place.

Total revenue expenditure has decreased since 2018-19 due to an in-year budget cut, and the per capita investment in library services is just below the median level. Aggregate annual opening hours have decreased by 12% since 2018/19 and although the target (QI 16) continues to be met, opening hours are now below the median level in Wales. An opening hours review impacted this area in 2019/20.

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. Swansea's narrative demonstrates how the service contributes to Welsh Government's programme, Taking Wales Forward 2016 – 2021. This includes a delivery of books to housebound customers, sheltered housing and nursing homes, impacting positively on their health and wellbeing (*Health and Active*). The service has also been working with Empathy Lab and schools on building young people's empathy skills (*Ambitious and learning*). Other areas noted, included that of *Prosperous and Secure* (supporting the development of new skills) and *United and connected* (developing Welsh language provision and digital inclusion).

5 Future direction

Reporting on the authority's future direction and plans for the library service over the following year, Swansea notes that the service continues to work with its revised and updated library plan for 2018-21. Key priority areas include increasing opportunities to become more inclusive; continuing work with local Schools and inspiring a love of reading throughout Swansea. The service will continue to work collaboratively with a wide variety of partners, and there will be a focus on developing digital services and improving staff skills, confidence and further use of digital tools in light of changing customer expectations following Covid-19.

6 Conclusion

Swansea library service continues to perform well in many areas and service levels have broadly been maintained throughout the framework. Although opening hours have been revised and are now below the median in Wales, the high levels of book issues suggest that this has not impacted on performance. Staffing levels have been realigned in relation to library performance and the service continues to work towards a sustainable library service. The promotion of Welsh language resources has resulted in improvements in this area and this remains a priority for the service. Although budgets have decreased, this is a trend seen in other services across Wales. Staffing levels have remained static since 2018/19, and although professional staffing levels remain low, the service has a clear vision and contributes effectively to a variety of Welsh Government priorities and strategic goals.

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.