Welsh Public Library Standards: Annual Reports 2021-22

Contents

Ministerial Foreword

The year 2021/22 saw public libraries in Wales recovering from the disruption of the pandemic. As public confidence grew in going into public spaces, libraries were able to resume more of their on-site services. However, for varied reasons, the speed of the resumption of services has varied between authorities.   Consequently, the extent to which services and user numbers have recovered is uneven and I did not consider that it was appropriate to ask services to report against the full framework of Welsh Public Library Standards.

This report represents a more focussed data collection exercise. Services have reported their performance against the Core Indicators of service provision as specified in Framework 6 of the Welsh Public Library Standards. The remainder of the report focusses on qualitative data collection. From the information which has been provided, I am pleased to see that as the pandemic receded, public libraries continued to support their local communities and contribute to Welsh Government priorities especially in relation to health and well-being.

Rebecca Evans MS

Minister for Finance and Local Government

Overview

For the period 2021/22, all services:

- reported on the 12 Core Entitlements of the WPLS (Table 1 summarises the extent to which all authorities met the Core Entitlements).
- reported their progress against six quality indicators of the WPLS (instead of the full 16), but they have not been tested on whether they met or failed to meet those quality indicators;
- provided a report of their strategic narrative and future direction;
- provided case studies showing the impact of the library services on their communities; and
- were invited to provide digital data. This requested information on 'Click and Collect', services; number of online sessions held; and the number of individuals who took part in online sessions.

This year's individual service reports are based on independent assessments of this information. In addition to the individual service reports, the independent assessors have provided a summary of the overall 'headlines' the for the period 2021/22:

Library use

- Active borrower numbers, having fallen almost universally during the first year of the pandemic began to recover. Nonetheless, speed of recovery varies greatly. In 2020/21 numbers fell in all services except one. In 2021/2022, these figures increased across Wales, with only three services not seeing an increase. The rises ranged from 7% to 172% but all remained below pre-pandemic levels.
- Adult issue numbers follow a similar pattern to active borrowers but again with wide variation between services. Between 2020/2021 numbers fell in all services, but in 2021/2022 have risen everywhere. The rises ranged from 43% to 600%, but only one service has returned to pre-pandemic levels.
- The pattern for children's issue is similar but with even greater variation. In 2020/21 numbers fell in all services, but in 2021/22 numbers rose everywhere. The rises ranged from 85% to 1,700%, but only two services have returned to pre-pandemic levels.
- Total e-issues have increased 212% on pre-pandemic levels. Overall, however there is an 88% decrease in e-issues between 2021-22 and the previous year perhaps as users were more able to access physical library stock. Six services have seen an increase in figures between 2020-21 and 2021-22 but remainder have decreased.

Wider themes

- The wide variation seen in the data on borrower numbers and issues is reflected more broadly in this year's reports, which show some library services recovering and thriving, others are continuing to find it more difficult more to emerge from the impact of the pandemic.
- The support for Welsh language was noticeably strong across many services.

- Hub models (co-locating libraries with other services) have been introduced in several services. The impact of this model of delivery needs to be monitored.
- National initiatives had wide take-up and appeared to have been well received, for example the Welsh Government-funded Winter of Wellbeing.
- Open Plus/Open+ models (enabling card-entry access outside of staffed hours) are increasingly being adopted either to extend opening hours, or to replace staffed hours.
- There were examples of new initiatives being launched over the year, even among services which were struggling with resources and staffing. Examples include the introduction of Borrowbox (e-Book and e-Audio), Makerspaces, 'library of things' (equipment lending), and initiatives to measure social value.
- The removal of fines, either permanently or as a pilot, seems to be a growing pattern, with the aim typically being to increase library use and reach new users.
- Some services were able to review their overall purpose and goals and published these as new strategies in the reporting period, but many are relying on work done pre-pandemic.
- Some services lacked current information on needs of residents and users, often because the pandemic had made it difficult to conduct user surveys. Wider data gathering about the needs of residents who do not currently use libraries is an area of weakness in some services.

Table 1

Core Entitlement	Fully met	Partially	Not met
1 Libraries in Wales will be free to join and open to all.	22	0	0
2 Libraries in Wales will ensure friendly, knowledgeable and qualified staff are on hand to help.	22	0	0
3 Libraries in Wales will provide access to a range of services, activities and high-quality resources in a range of formats to support learning, personal well-being and development, community participation, and culture and recreation.	22	0	0
4 Libraries in Wales will provide appropriate services, facilities and information resources for individuals and groups with special needs.	21	1	0
5 Libraries will provide appropriate safe, attractive and accessible physical spaces with suitable staffed opening hours.	21	1	0
6 Libraries in Wales will lend books for free and deliver free access to information, including online information resources available 24 hours a day.	20	2	0
7 Libraries in Wales will provide free use of the Internet and computers, including Wi-Fi.	21	0	1
8 Libraries in Wales will provide access to services, cultural activities and high-quality resources in the Welsh language.	22	0	0
9 Libraries in Wales will work in partnership to share catalogues and facilitate access to the resources of all Welsh libraries.	22	0	0
10 Libraries in Wales will work with a range of partners to promote and deliver services to new and diverse audiences, enabling more people to benefit from their services.	22	0	0
11 Libraries in Wales will regularly consult users to gather their views on the service and information about their changing needs.	17	4	1
12 Libraries in Wales will provide access to the library service's strategy, policies, objectives and vision, in print and online, in a range of languages appropriate for the community.	15	4	3

Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council (Aneurin Leisure Trust)

Overview and location

Blaenau Gwent library services were delivered by the Aneurin Leisure Trust. The service included six branches with 98% of residents living within 2.5 miles of a library.

Library service performance

Blaenau Gwent provided evidence that it had fully met all 12 core entitlements.

Core entitlement	Service self-assessment	Independent assessment
1 Libraries in Wales will be free to join and open to all.	Fully met	Fully met
2 Libraries in Wales will ensure friendly, knowledgeable and qualified staff are on hand to help.	Fully met	Fully met
3 Libraries in Wales will provide access to a range of services, activities and high quality resources in a range of formats to support learning, personal well-being and development, community participation, and culture and recreation.	Fully met	Fully met
4 Libraries in Wales will provide appropriate services, facilities and information resources for individuals and groups with special needs.	Fully met	Fully met
5 Libraries will provide appropriate safe, attractive and accessible physical spaces with suitable staffed opening hours.	Fully met	Fully met
6 Libraries in Wales will lend books for free and deliver free access to information, including online information resources available 24 hours a day.	Fully met	Fully met
7 Libraries in Wales will provide free use of the Internet and computers, including Wi-Fi.	Fully met	Fully met
8 Libraries in Wales will provide access to services, cultural activities and high quality resources in the Welsh language.	Fully met	Fully met
9 Libraries in Wales will work in partnership to share catalogues and facilitate access to the resources of all Welsh libraries.	Fully met	Fully met
10 Libraries in Wales will work with a range of partners to promote and deliver services to new and diverse audiences, enabling more people to benefit from their services.	Fully met	Fully met
11 Libraries in Wales will regularly consult users to gather their views on the service and information about their changing needs.	Fully met	Fully met
12 Libraries in Wales will provide access to the library service's strategy, policies, objectives and vision, in	Fully met	Fully met

print and online, in a range of languages appropriate for the community.		
Total - fully met	12	12
Total - partially met	0	0
Total - not met	0	0

Library use

Over the reporting year, the service had 31 active borrowers per 1,000 population, representing a 7% increase from the previous year. Adult book issues increased by 108% to 662 issues per 1,000 population, while children's book issues increased by 309% to 94 issues per 1,000 population. Click and Collect orders saw a reduction but customers still use the service. Blaenau Gwent also offers a home delivery service which includes books as well as specially designed equipment for the visually impaired.

No customer survey has been conducted since 2019, but one was planned for 2022/23. Blaenau Gwent engaged in the process of reinstating services from pre-pandemic, ensuring that there was constant risk assessment approved by the local authority health and safety department. This has meant that the service has been able to return to pre-pandemic delivery.

Highlights

The most significant development has been the merger of the Council's community hubs into libraries which has greatly increased footfall into all libraries and led to a major expansion of partnership initiatives. For example, the Regeneration Department of Blaenau Gwent Council has promoted local projects, funded digital screens for all libraries and have involved the service in the 'Shop Local' promotion.

Other highlights include:

- The library service has further strengthened partnership work through the provision of community hubs in all libraries, with an increasing range of face-to-face support for residents, including for Blue Badge applications and Cost of Living rebate schemes.
- In October 2021, a sports library project was launched in libraries open 30+ hours per week, where users could loan a range of sporting equipment from the library free of charge.
- Since September 2021, a range of activities have been re-introduced including Baby Yoga, Creative Writing Group, Inside Out Group (art for mental health) and many others.
- The service has worked with the local health board to provide mental health services where individuals can collect resource packs, as well as being part of the home delivery service.
- The 'Winter of Wellbeing' programme provided a range of free events for families, and the service delivered 29 events attended by 152 parents and 596 young people, allowing for re-engagement with young people in Blaenau Gwent post-pandemic.

Materials, Welsh language and overall spend

Blaenau Gwent showed a mixed picture in relation to materials. Although Blaenau Gwent ranked in the bottom quartile for materials spending per 1,000 population, the total materials expenditure increased over the year, 17% of the budget being spent on children's materials. This budget for children's books is in the first quartile of services nationally. In terms of Welsh language, Blaenau Gwent ranks in the top quartile for spending per 1,000 Welsh speakers. It ranked in the second quartile for the number of Welsh language issues and saw over a 1000% increase in Welsh language issues from the previous year.

In terms of outreach, Blaenau Gwent provided a home delivery service for residents who are unable to access the static libraries. Blaenau Gwent also provided a range of different services from health and wellbeing to life-long learning, Staff reported being regularly updated on new resources and opportunities at meetings.

Staffing

The total number of staff has remained the same since 2021. There is only one professional member of staff and job descriptions have been reviewed to create a new professional post. The new post holder is working towards a MCLIP qualification, and the operational manager already has a MCLIP qualification.

Digital data

Blaenau Gwent provided digital data including 'Click and Collect' statistics. As pandemic restrictions eased, Blaenau Gwent saw a reduction in use of their 'Call and Collect' services by 58%. However, they stated that people still enjoy the service for a variety of reasons, and they also provide home delivery service. Data on online sessions and individuals participating was not collected for 2022 but the service states that customers were asking for the return of in-person events. Some services remained online such as arts and crafts and Baby Yoga. On their website, Blaenau Gwent offers a range of services including e-books through Borrowbox, an online study resource and lists of the activities they provide.

Future plans

One of the main future plans of the service is the relocation of Abertillery Library to a new location as the project was delayed due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The service will also work to deliver local and national agendas, and community support remains a strong part of the service. With many staff due to retire, the service is planning a large recruitment drive which would see a replacement of half the workforce. It will be working with staff to use this recruitment as an opportunity to develop the service and seek grants from the Skills Priority Funding stream to recruit two new library development officers. Residents have been requesting earlier opening times for the libraries that are open part-time. It has been unable to do this yet, but is aiming to do so. Health and wellbeing will be embedded in the range of services that the libraries are providing, and it asserts that it remains committed to its ethos of creating positive impacts through physical and mental health.

Case studies

Aneurin Leisure Trust provided four case studies to illustrate the positive impact of the service including one on an individual suffering from long covid and one on how use of the library service helped a family new to the area to settle in and feel part of the community.

Bridgend County Borough Council – Awen Cultural Trust

Overview and location

Library services in Bridgend are delivered by Awen Cultural Trust. There are 11 libraries, as well as a home delivery service, and 99% of residents live within 2.5 miles of a library.

Library service performance

Awen provided evidence that showed it has fully met all 12 of the core entitlements.

Core entitlement	Service self-assessment	Independent assessment
1 Libraries in Wales will be free to join and open to all.	Fully met	Fully met
2 Libraries in Wales will ensure friendly, knowledgeable and qualified staff are on hand to help.	Fully met	Fully met
3 Libraries in Wales will provide access to a range of services, activities and high quality resources in a range of formats to support learning, personal well-being and development, community participation, and culture and recreation.	Fully met	Fully met
4 Libraries in Wales will provide appropriate services, facilities and information resources for individuals and groups with special needs.	Fully met	Fully met
5 Libraries will provide appropriate safe, attractive and accessible physical spaces with suitable staffed opening hours.	Fully met	Fully met
6 Libraries in Wales will lend books for free and deliver free access to information, including online information resources available 24 hours a day.	Fully met	Fully met
7 Libraries in Wales will provide free use of the Internet and computers, including Wi-Fi.	Fully met	Fully met
8 Libraries in Wales will provide access to services, cultural activities and high quality resources in the Welsh language.	Fully met	Fully met
9 Libraries in Wales will work in partnership to share catalogues and facilitate access to the resources of all Welsh libraries.	Fully met	Fully met
10 Libraries in Wales will work with a range of partners to promote and deliver services to new and diverse audiences, enabling more people to benefit from their services.	Fully met	Fully met
11 Libraries in Wales will regularly consult users to gather their views on the service and information about their changing needs.	Fully met	Fully met
12 Libraries in Wales will provide access to the library service's strategy, policies, objectives and vision, in print and online, in a range of languages appropriate for the community.	Fully met	Fully met
Total - fully met	12	12
Total - partially met	0	0

Total - not met	0	0

Library use

Over the reporting year, the service had 85 active borrowers per 1,000 population, representing a 23% increase from the previous year. Adult book issues increased by 229% to 1,224 issues per 1,000 population, while children's book issues increased by 834% to 831 issues per 1,000 population. Awen provides a home delivery service for their customers to aid those who are unable to come to the libraries. The service is not limited to those who are incapacitated by illness, age or disability, but also includes carers and young families.

Highlights

The service has been working to bring back services to pre-pandemic levels safely and carefully, as well as planning for the future with a new three-year strategy. Highlights of the past year include:

- The return of services while also abiding to safety and supporting staff. This includes supporting staff that need to isolate, special measures such as wearing FFP2 standard masks for home delivery, and supporting staff who would prefer to wear masks;
- Working to improve digital literacy. This includes providing support for users such as help to apply for a bus pass, and general help for those digitally excluded or who have little confidence in using devices. Public PCs have also helped with employment support;
- The 'Bounce and Rhyme' programme has given the opportunity for people who may otherwise feel isolated to meet, especially single mothers;
- At Porthcawl Library, the existing reading group was at capacity; therefore a new group was started, and the Library worked to get zoom meetings up for the group called The Bookies.

Materials, Welsh language and overall spend

Awen is in the second quartile for material spend per 1,000 population. 23% of this expenditure was on children's materials, for a population of which 17% are under 16 years old. This puts it in the top quartile for budget spent on children's resources, Awen has also invested in memory sticks with e-books downloaded that can be played on a Boombox (a portable speaker), allowing for greater accessibility to the service for those who are visually impaired.

Despite the difficulties of recovering from the pandemic, Awen has had over 33,000 people (children and adults) attend their events this past year, in both English and Welsh. These events have included Dungeons and Dragons, Carer Afternoons, Coding Clubs, and Knit and Natter

In terms of Welsh resources, the service has introduced three new bilingual Bounce and Rhyme sessions, as well as increased support for Bore Coffi (coffee morning)

sessions. A review of resources has identified the need for more Welsh language newspapers and magazines, including those for children. Currently, the service is in the bottom quartile for spending on Welsh language materials, with a spend of only 2%. The service, however, does rank in the median of the services for the number of issues per 1,000 Welsh speakers, and Welsh issues saw an increase of 577%, greater than that of overall issues.

Staffing

There are 15 members of staff with library-related qualifications and the operational manager of the library service holds a MCLIP qualification. All vacancies were filled by March 2022, and a new post of Heritage Manager, who oversees heritage work and local and family history resources, was added.

The time spent on staff training and development increased by 1.8% to 9.7% over the period. This training includes a three-month induction, training in first aid, Microsoft 365 and safeguarding. Staff are also encouraged to suggest courses that they are interested in, and feed back to the team for shared learning.

Digital data

Awen provided digital data including click and collect, online sessions held and number of individuals who viewed live/recorded sessions. Awen saw a reduction in all three measures of use of digital services, as well as e-issues over the period. In terms of 'Click and Collect', they saw a reduction of 61% from 2021 to 2022 and ranked in the median across the services for click and collect per 1,000 population. The service ranked in the top quartile for online sessions even though the number of online sessions reduced by 46%, and the individuals taking part reduced by 73%. This fall can partially be attributed to Awen moving away from online resources to focus on in-person services. However, it remains committed to reaching vulnerable groups through its online services and by the 'Books on Wheels' programme. The number of e-issues per 1,000 population reduced by 33% and is in the first quartile across the services. The service partially claims that this is due to a change in eMagazine provider and the difference between the supplier's calibration of issues.

Future plans

Under its new 2022-25 strategy, the service places social impact at the centre of all future plans, using milestones and SMART performance indicators to evaluate impact and change. Priorities for 2022/23 include the completion of Maesteg Town Hall development and the redevelopment of Pencoed library.

The service also aims to engage further with non-users and introduce a range of environmental initiatives including investigating the discontinuation of plastic book jackets, introducing non-plastic membership cards and the installation of solar panels and LED bulbs were possible.

The service will keep in discussion with customers and staff to evaluate events, activities, open hours, and the impact of the library plan.

Case studies

Awen provided three extensive case studies with images and quotes from library users to illustrate the good work across the service. These included the importance of digital services as a key way to promote reading for individuals who may otherwise struggle to access services, and how use of the space has contributed to wellbeing and productivity for a homeworker

Caerphilly

Overview and Location

Caerphilly library service is operated by Caerphilly County Borough Council and is comprised of 18 libraries with 98% of residents within 2.5miles of a library.

Library service performance

Caerphilly provided evidence that they fully met all 12 core entitlements.

Core entitlement	Service self-assessment	Independent assessment
1 Libraries in Wales will be free to join and open to all.	Fully met	Fully met
2 Libraries in Wales will ensure friendly, knowledgeable and qualified staff are on hand to help.	Fully met	Fully met
3 Libraries in Wales will provide access to a range of services, activities and high quality resources in a range of formats to support learning, personal well-being and development, community participation, and culture and recreation.	Fully met	Fully met
4 Libraries in Wales will provide appropriate services, facilities and information resources for individuals and groups with special needs.	Fully met	Fully met
5 Libraries will provide appropriate safe, attractive and accessible physical spaces with suitable staffed opening hours.	Fully met	Fully met
6 Libraries in Wales will lend books for free and deliver free access to information, including online information resources available 24 hours a day.	Fully met	Fully met
7 Libraries in Wales will provide free use of the Internet and computers, including Wi-Fi.	Fully met	Fully met
8 Libraries in Wales will provide access to services, cultural activities and high quality resources in the Welsh language.	Fully met	Fully met
9 Libraries in Wales will work in partnership to share catalogues and facilitate access to the resources of all Welsh libraries.	Fully met	Fully met
10 Libraries in Wales will work with a range of partners to promote and deliver services to new and diverse audiences, enabling more people to benefit from their services.	Fully met	Fully met
11 Libraries in Wales will regularly consult users to gather their views on the service and information about their changing needs.	Fully met	Fully met
12 Libraries in Wales will provide access to the library service's strategy, policies, objectives and vision, in print and online, in a range of languages appropriate for the community.	Fully met	Fully met
Total - fully met	12	12

Total - partially met	0	0
Total - not met	0	0

Library use

Over the reporting year, the service had 79 active borrowers per 1,000 population, representing a 172% increase from the previous year. Adult book issues increased by 178% to 636 issues per 1,000 population, while children's book issues increased by 431% to 409 issues per 1,000 population. Caerphilly also provides a home delivery service that is available to those registered and has been extended to those shielding, over the age of 70 or who have no access to digital services. 'Click and Collect' orders also increased over the year by 161%.

Highlights

The service is focused on wellbeing objectives and education, and the highlights of the year reflect these objectives:

- The Bookstart and Early Years scheme provides materials for free to parents of young children, and health checks for toddlers within the library service.
- The B4U inter-library lending scheme has been embedded as part of the service offered to residents and has 13 public library authorities signed up to it. The staff of Caerphilly library services are well versed in the system and the scheme allows for a greater range of books for the customers.
- The School Engagement Scheme has been started to support schools around three key themes: reading, information, and learning. Support includes help with comprehension, digital literacy, and vocabulary support.
- The service works with the Welsh Government to help support EU citizens get settled or pre-settled UK status as part of the EU Settlement Scheme.

Materials, Welsh language and overall spend

In terms of material spend per 1,000 population, Caerphilly is in the third quartile of the services. 22% of the materials budget is allocated to children's resources, putting it on the third quartile. Other investment into the service included new PCs with Windows and Microsoft licences, as well as a dedicated training budget to support staff with development (maintaining their longstanding pattern of high investment in public access to digital resources).

Welsh language resources saw a greater allocation from the overall budget, from 3% to 8% over the year. The service ranks top of the services in terms of spend per 1,000 Welsh speakers, but in the bottom quartile for Welsh language issues per 1,000 Welsh speakers. This low ranking may be due to fewer adult titles being available in Welsh than children's titles. The service collaborates with various partners to ensure the availability of Welsh language resources and that all the library service's promotional literature is bilingual.

Caerphilly offers a wide range of services which it promotes though hard copy, social media and the corporate communication team, who liaise with schools and community groups. The activities include coding clubs for children, homework clubs and Welsh reading groups.

Staffing

The customer care survey showed that 99% of customers thought that Caerphilly library service's customer care was either good or very good. The senior manager holds a formal qualification, and 8.6 posts are filled by staff with library-related qualifications, with more completing remote learning MA librarianship courses.

Caerphilly has worked to ensure ongoing staff development with its dedicated training budget. The service has also recently updated their induction manual and included mental health first aid. It supports staff who wish to complete online training in a range of different courses such as equalities training, British Sign Language, Welsh language learning and first aid.

Digital data

Caerphilly provided digital data including 'Click and Collect', online sessions held, and number of individuals who viewed live/recorded sessions. Caerphilly saw a 161% increase in its Click and Collect orders but the other digital data measures reduced. In 2022, Caerphilly ranked on the third quartile for 'Click and Collect' orders of the library services that submitted digital data. The number of online sessions dropped by 51% and individuals attending also dropped by 73%. E-issues per 1,000 population also reduced by 37% and remains in the bottom quartile. This may be due to changes in the reporting methodology for Overdrive. Caerphilly provides a home delivery service for those over 70, shielding or unable to access digital materials from home.

Future plans

Despite only fully returning to 'normal' service in October 2021, Caerphilly libraries have seen a significant increase in use. Caerphilly plans to collaborate with teachers, pupils and parents to support young residents in the area and wants to be a 'community anchor' to ensure the services are up to date, current and respected by residents. The service estimates that there will be savings and cost cutting that will have to be made because of the pandemic, cost of living crisis and other financial restrictions. However, the Council 'remains committed to delivering the best Public Library provision possible' and continues to measure its performance against the Welsh Public Library Standards.

Case studies

Caerphilly provided three extensive case studies with evidence from service users. This included a case study which showed the importance of library services offering and providing continuing access to free services, and how, through connections service users could build their confidence and knowledge to access digital services.

Cardiff

Overview and location

Cardiff hubs and library service comprises 20 libraries and one mobile library. The service is operated by Cardiff Council. 99% of residents are within 2 miles of a Library.

Library service performance

Cardiff provided evidence that showed it has fully met all 12 core entitlements.

Core entitlement	Service self-assessment	Independent assessment
1 Libraries in Wales will be free to join and open to all.	Fully met	Fully met
2 Libraries in Wales will ensure friendly, knowledgeable and qualified staff are on hand to help.	Fully met	Fully met
3 Libraries in Wales will provide access to a range of services, activities and high quality resources in a range of formats to support learning, personal well-being and development, community participation, and culture and recreation.	Fully met	Fully met
4 Libraries in Wales will provide appropriate services, facilities and information resources for individuals and groups with special needs.	Fully met	Fully met
5 Libraries will provide appropriate safe, attractive and accessible physical spaces with suitable staffed opening hours.	Fully met	Fully met
6 Libraries in Wales will lend books for free and deliver free access to information, including online information resources available 24 hours a day.	Fully met	Fully met
7 Libraries in Wales will provide free use of the Internet and computers, including Wi-Fi.	Fully met	Fully met
8 Libraries in Wales will provide access to services, cultural activities and high quality resources in the Welsh language.	Fully met	Fully met
9 Libraries in Wales will work in partnership to share catalogues and facilitate access to the resources of all Welsh libraries.	Fully met	Fully met
10 Libraries in Wales will work with a range of partners to promote and deliver services to new and diverse audiences, enabling more people to benefit from their services.	Fully met	Fully met
11 Libraries in Wales will regularly consult users to gather their views on the service and information about their changing needs.	Fully met	Fully met
12 Libraries in Wales will provide access to the library service's strategy, policies, objectives and vision, in print and online, in a range of languages appropriate for the community.	Fully met	Fully met
Total - fully met	12	12
Total - partially met	0	0
Total - not met	0	0

Library use

Over the reporting year, the service had 146 active borrows per 1,000 population, representing a 15% decrease from the previous year. Adult book issues increased by 250% to 843 issues per 1,000 population, while children's book issues increased by 1,747% to 1,330 issues per 1,000 population. 'Click and Collect' issues reduced by 28% which the service attributes to the removal of restrictions and return of in-person services.

Although Cardiff's mobile library service is currently suspended, it continued to provide a home delivery service for residents who are unable to reach the libraries due to illness, isolation, and post-operative care.

Highlights

- Recent refurbishments at the children's library at Cardiff's Central Library Hub, funded partially by Welsh Government, have included making the space more inclusive and supportive for residents living with neurodiversity.
- The Summer Reading Challenge, alongside providing free resources to children, has provided further opportunities for learning and support in literacy in Cardiff.
- Cardiff submitted an 'Age Friendly Action Plan' to the World Health Organisation to help deliver spaces that support an ageing population, and the application was successful.
- The service coordinated Welsh Government-funded events for the 'Winter of Wellbeing' programme for all 22 local authority library services across Wales. This supported the mental wellbeing of children and young people across Wales and led the campaign on behalf of the Society of Chief Librarians.

Materials, Welsh language and overall spend

The service was in the second quartile for expenditure per 1000 population. 24% of this budget was on children's materials, ranking Cardiff in the top quartile of services for spend on children's materials.

In terms of Welsh language resources, 6% of the overall budget was spent on Welsh materials which is consistent with the previous year. Cardiff ranks in the third quartile of the services in terms of spend per 1,000 Welsh speakers and top quartile for issues per 1,000 speakers. The service also works with Menter Caerdydd, an organisation that promotes the use of Welsh in Cardiff and has committed to deliver further Welsh language events.

Cardiff provides a range of different activities, with digital activities remaining popular post-pandemic. These are often hybrid events including gardening clubs, social groups, book groups, baby massage, rhyme times and author events. Visits to the website are three times higher than in 2019.

Staffing

Cardiff hubs and libraries service work as an integrated team and all new starters undertake library training as standard. Provision of staff training overall is high. There are 5.5 posts filled by staff with recognised library qualifications and other staff are working towards qualified status. The proportion of time spent by the service on training and development was 4.3% and included modules on safeguarding, social isolation, and poverty. There have also been opportunities to work with Public Health Wales for screening and low impact functional training (geared towards the prevention of bone fractures among older residents). All staff undertake dementia awareness training and customer service training.

Digital data

Cardiff provided digital data including 'Click and Collect', online sessions held and number of individuals who viewed live/recorded sessions. Although Cardiff saw a 28% reduction in 'Click and Collect' orders, it had an increase overall in digital activity participation. Cardiff remains strong on digital outreach with a 269% increase in the number of online sessions held, and a 457% increase on individuals attending from the previous year. Online sessions included a community cooking club during the pandemic which has continued. E-issues increased by 1% over the year and Cardiff ranked in the top quartile across all the Welsh services per 1,000 population. Cardiff provided a wide range of online e-resources, including e-books through the Borrowbox service and access to IELTS (International English Language Testing System) practice among other resources.

Future plans

Cardiff hubs and library service aims to continue to promote both physical and mental wellbeing, with plans for Health Hubs at several locations which will provide shared spaces for GP and clinic services. They are also working to provide mental health support to disadvantaged groups such as unpaid carers and people living with HIV. Digital resources will be developed further, and Cardiff plans to build on the success of the Reading Well programme. The hubs and library service also features significantly in plans by Cardiff Council's to join the World Health Organization's Global Network for Age Friendly Cities and Communities.

Case studies

Cardiff provided four case studies with evidence from library users. This included case studies which demonstrated that Cardiff Libraries are a welcoming non-judgemental space for people and families with a range of neurological needs and that the libraries help to provide welcoming spaces and reduce isolation through online cooking clubs that encouraged participants to cook together and share stories about recipes. These included positive feedback from users of the service.

Carmarthenshire

Overview and location

Library services in Carmarthenshire are delivered by Carmarthenshire County Council. The service has 14 branches and three mobile libraries, and a housebound service with 95% of residents living within three miles of a library.

Library service performance

Carmarthenshire library service provided evidence that showed it has fully met all 12 of the core entitlements.

Core entitlement	Service self-assessment	Independent assessment
1 Libraries in Wales will be free to join and open to all.	Fully met	Fully met
2 Libraries in Wales will ensure friendly, knowledgeable and qualified staff are on hand to help.	Fully met	Fully met
3 Libraries in Wales will provide access to a range of services, activities and high quality resources in a range of formats to support learning, personal well-being and development, community participation, and culture and recreation.	Fully met	Fully met
4 Libraries in Wales will provide appropriate services, facilities and information resources for individuals and groups with special needs.	Fully met	Fully met
5 Libraries will provide appropriate safe, attractive and accessible physical spaces with suitable staffed opening hours.	Fully met	Fully met
6 Libraries in Wales will lend books for free and deliver free access to information, including online information resources available 24 hours a day.	Fully met	Fully met
7 Libraries in Wales will provide free use of the Internet and computers, including Wi-Fi.	Fully met	Fully met
8 Libraries in Wales will provide access to services, cultural activities and high quality resources in the Welsh language.	Fully met	Fully met
9 Libraries in Wales will work in partnership to share catalogues and facilitate access to the resources of all Welsh libraries.	Fully met	Fully met
10 Libraries in Wales will work with a range of partners to promote and deliver services to new and diverse audiences, enabling more people to benefit from their services.	Fully met	Fully met
11 Libraries in Wales will regularly consult users to gather their views on the service and information about their changing needs.	Fully met	Fully met

12 Libraries in Wales will provide access to the library service's strategy, policies, objectives and vision, in print and online, in a range of languages appropriate for the community.	Fully met	Fully met
Total - fully met	12	12
Total – partially met	0	0
Total – not met	0	0

Library use

Over the reporting year, the service had 70 active borrowers per 1,000 population, representing a 32% increase from the previous year. Adult book issues increased by 134% to 1,517 issues per 1,000 population, while children's book issues increased by 119% to 606 issues per 1,000 population.

Highlights

The library service continues to restore all services to pre-pandemic levels and adapt to changing needs. Significant initiatives over the last year include:

- Carmarthenshire libraries have introduced an Open+ model at Newcastle Emlyn library (one of their community libraries). This has included the introduction of self-service vending machines and lockers for collecting reserved items, which has allowed users to access their library catalogue at a time convenient to them without the need to travel to the larger regional libraries. It is viewed as the catalyst for further innovation in the service.
- Carmarthenshire developed Makerspace services across its three regional libraries. These maker activities provide access to coding, digital media/manufacturing and 3D printing technologies that not only provide innovative and fun new services but can help build digital skills for the local community.
- Carmarthenshire continues to rebuild its in-person services while working to support a transition into a blended digital and physical offer.
- Through co-ordinated initiatives such as 'Flying Start' early years support, and by working together and sharing resources with other libraries and public services the service is able to achieve greater impact and develop local prosperity and wellbeing.
- As services have reopened, Carmarthenshire has worked to redevelop its physical offer and engagement while continuing to provide a strong virtual presence for those who need it.
- Carmarthenshire has played a significant role in delivering local health and wellbeing agendas across the last few years. In their role as community hubs, libraries offer non-clinical spaces where health and wellbeing groups can work with the community in a trusted and non-threatening venue. It offers a range of health-based information that is easily accessible to the community.

Materials, Welsh language and overall spend

Total expenditure on materials remains the same as the previous year, having slightly decreased in each of the four previous years. However, the service continues to invest in their resources, with the highest expenditure on materials across all Welsh services per 1,000 population. The service remains dedicated to keeping up-to-date reading materials despite cutbacks in budget over recent years.

Welsh language issues increased by 139% from last year and the service has the most Welsh language issues per 1,000 Welsh speakers. Carmarthenshire provide many Welsh language events, as well as encouraging staff to have Welsh language skills. However, in comparison to other services, its spend per 1,000 Welsh speakers remains low but this may point to careful and relevant selection of materials and a large existing Welsh collection.

There is a wide range of activities for users of all ages and different interests. Many were available online during 2021/22 and then gradually reintroduced in-person as public library buildings reopened.

Staffing

The service ranks in the top quartile for qualified staff per 1,000 population though it has seen a reduction in library-qualified full-time equivalent (FTE) posts from 3.3 to 2.7 over the last reporting year. Staff continue to be encouraged to take part in continuous personal development such as leadership and management courses. Additionally, Carmarthenshire County Council has developed a Learning Portal where staff take part in key essential courses online including Data Protection, Mental Health in the Workplace, Whistleblowing and Welsh Language awareness.

Digital

Carmarthenshire provided minimal digital data on 'Click and Collect', online sessions held and number of individuals who viewed digital content. Whilst e-issues per 1,000 population remained flat over the period, Carmarthenshire remain in the top quartile across the services for e-issues provided through the Borrowbox service. Meanwhile, the service saw a large reduction from the previous year in other digital delivery data, which it attributes to reintroducing physical offers and scaling back on digital, such as the phasing out of 'request and collect' at the end of summer 2021. Online sessions were held during the pandemic, but the frequency and attendance of sessions has dropped in 2022 and they ranked eighth for individual participation per 1,000 people compared to other library services.

Future plans

The makerspace services introduced at Carmarthenshire's three regional libraries are viewed as an innovative offer that will play a significant role in future plans. The evolution of the service is considered important in ensuring that the library continues to attract new users from a community with dynamic needs. The introduction of the Open+ model will also support new and existing customers to continue to have access to materials in a safe and convenient manner. These services help to preserve the smaller community libraries, but Carmarthenshire is now looking for further opportunities to expand Open+.

Case studies

Carmarthenshire provided four case studies including quotes from library users. These included the ongoing partnership to support carers, especially young carers and how the decision to re-locate Newcastle Emlyn Library to a new location in the town provided the opportunity to take a modern and refreshing new approach to developing services in the area.

Ceredigion

Overview and locations

Library services in Ceredigion are operated by Ceredigion County Council. The service operates five branches and three mobile libraries, a housebound service, and an additional community-managed library in New Quay. 81% per cent of the population live within three miles or a 15-minute public transport journey from a library.

Library service performance

Ceredigion provided evidence showing that they had fully met 10 of the 12 core entitlements and did not meet two (CE11 and CE12). The unmet core entitlements relate to not consulting library users on their views of the service and not producing a library strategy.

Core entitlement	Service self-assessment	Independent assessment
1 Libraries in Wales will be free to join and open to all.	Fully met	Fully met
2 Libraries in Wales will ensure friendly, knowledgeable and qualified staff are on hand to help.	Fully met	Fully met
3 Libraries in Wales will provide access to a range of services, activities and high quality resources in a range of formats to support learning, personal well-being and development, community participation, and culture and recreation.	Fully met	Fully met
4 Libraries in Wales will provide appropriate services, facilities and information resources for individuals and groups with special needs.	Fully met	Fully met
5 Libraries will provide appropriate safe, attractive and accessible physical spaces with suitable staffed opening hours.	Fully met	Fully met
6 Libraries in Wales will lend books for free and deliver free access to information, including online information resources available 24 hours a day.	Fully met	Fully met
7 Libraries in Wales will provide free use of the Internet and computers, including Wi-Fi.	Fully met	Fully met
8 Libraries in Wales will provide access to services, cultural activities and high quality resources in the Welsh language.	Fully met	Fully met
9 Libraries in Wales will work in partnership to share catalogues and facilitate access to the resources of all Welsh libraries.	Fully met	Fully met
10 Libraries in Wales will work with a range of partners to promote and deliver services to new and diverse audiences, enabling more people to benefit from their services.	Fully met	Fully met

11 Libraries in Wales will regularly consult users to gather their views on the service and information about their changing needs.	Not met	Not met
12 Libraries in Wales will provide access to the library service's strategy, policies, objectives and vision, in print and online, in a range of languages appropriate for the community.	Not met	Not met
Total – fully met	10	10
Total – partially met	0	0
Total – not met	2	2

Library use

Over the reporting year, the service had 99 active borrowers per 1,000 population, representing a 15% decrease from the previous year. Adult book issues increased by 173% to 1,598 issues per 1,000 population, while children's book issues increased by 182% to 562 issues per 1,000 population. It is in the third quartile of services for numbers of e-issues, offering resources such as magazines, theory tests and encyclopaedias. On top of their static library service, Ceredigion operate a homebound delivery service and mobile libraries which visit every four weeks.

Highlights

The service has committed to contribute to Welsh Government priorities and its wellbeing goals, including working towards improving health and reducing inequalities. Some details of its contributions include:

- The service holds IT classes and 'jobs clubs' where unemployed people are helped to find work and taught how to use computers and the internet. The service's IT survey showed that 29% of computer usage was for job searches and applications, with a further 18% used for creating or updating CVs.
- The service is part of the all-Wales bibliotherapy scheme, where clinical professionals prescribe books in order to boost healthier living in the wider sense. It has developed its support for those living with dementia over the year.
- It held a series of talks and events, including the annual T Llew Jones lecture which it intends to run again next year. It worked with community groups such as Merched y Wawr and the Women's Institute.

Materials, Welsh language and overall spend

Ceredigion work very closely with other library authorities in Wales, purchasing the majority of materials through book purchasing consortia. The total materials expenditure saw a significant increase on the previous year and Ceredigion is in the top quartile for expenditure per 1000 population. 19% of the budget is spent on children's materials. It is in the top quartile for materials spend.

The service is one of the highest performing in terms of Welsh language book issues per 1,000 Welsh speakers and the percentage of the materials budget spent on Welsh language stock increased slightly this year. This allows the service to cater for

the large Welsh-speaking population and reinforces the service's work to promote bilingualism from a young age.

It supports the Bookstart scheme, ensuring that all babies and toddlers have access to books, and supports adult literacy initiatives. It has an extensive local history collection which contains over 8,000 items.

Staffing

Ceredigion has a high level of qualified staff with 0.7 full-time equivalent (FTE) staff per 10,000 population holding relevant qualifications. Staff are encouraged to participate in training and to share best practice. Reflecting the high proportion of Welsh-speaking residents, all staff are bilingual and promote the use of Welsh.

Digital data

Specific data for 'Click and Collect' was not available as this data has been migrated into its overall reservation services. The number of online sessions decreased by 57% from the previous year and the number of individuals attending reduced by 63%. The information on digital data is limited. However, via its website Ceredigion offers a large range of e-resources, including e-books and other content through Borrowbox. It has a range of materials including links to the Oxford English and Spanish dictionaries. E-issues increased by 16% per 1,000 population.

Future plans

The service is continuing to recover from Covid, but there is still some way to go. Book loans are slowly rising but the service is looking to accelerate its recovery by offering more services that people want and attracting new customers. The service was not able to hold events until the last two months of the reporting year.

Over this reporting year, Ceredigion did not implement any fees or charges. However, due to having to meet Council income targets, these will be reintroduced next year. It is looking into abolishing fines in the medium to long term.

Case studies

Ceredigion provided two case studies, including one on how the service supported a user with limited mobility.

Conwy

Overview and location

Library services in Conwy are operated by Conwy County Borough Council. The service includes five static branches, one combined home and mobile service, and five community managed libraries. 89% of the population live within three miles or a 15-minute public transport journey from a library.

Library service performance

Conwy provided evidence that it fully met all 12 core entitlements.

Core entitlement	Service self-assessment	Independent assessment
1 Libraries in Wales will be free to join and open to all.	Fully met	Fully met
2 Libraries in Wales will ensure friendly, knowledgeable and qualified staff are on hand to help.	Fully met	Fully met
3 Libraries in Wales will provide access to a range of services, activities and high quality resources in a range of formats to support learning, personal well-being and development, community participation, and culture and recreation.	Fully met	Fully met
4 Libraries in Wales will provide appropriate services, facilities and information resources for individuals and groups with special needs.	Fully met	Fully met
5 Libraries will provide appropriate safe, attractive and accessible physical spaces with suitable staffed opening hours.	Fully met	Fully met
6 Libraries in Wales will lend books for free and deliver free access to information, including online information resources available 24 hours a day.	Fully met	Fully met
7 Libraries in Wales will provide free use of the Internet and computers, including Wi-Fi.	Fully met	Fully met
8 Libraries in Wales will provide access to services, cultural activities and high quality resources in the Welsh language.	Fully met	Fully met
9 Libraries in Wales will work in partnership to share catalogues and facilitate access to the resources of all Welsh libraries.	Fully met	Fully met
10 Libraries in Wales will work with a range of partners to promote and deliver services to new and diverse audiences, enabling more people to benefit from their services.	Fully met	Fully met
11 Libraries in Wales will regularly consult users to gather their views on the service and information about their changing needs.	Fully met	Fully met
12 Libraries in Wales will provide access to the library service's strategy, policies, objectives and	Fully met	Fully met

vision, in print and online, in a range of languages appropriate for the community.		
Total – fully met	12	12
Total – partially met	0	0
Total – not met	0	0

Library use

Over the reporting year, the service had 91 active borrowers per 1,000 population, representing a 69% increase from the previous year. Adult book issues increased by 107% to 831 issues per 1,000 population, while children's book issues increased by 250% to 364 issues per 1,000 population.

Following the lifting of pandemic restrictions, in-person events have returned and are well attended, and visits to the libraries increased in each quarter. Call and collect services are still offered. The service has seen a year-on-year customer shift towards the use of e-resources, and this has reflected continued investment in this collection. The service advocates for greater availability of Welsh language material across digital platforms.

Highlights

Conwy Libraries continued to support a number of national and regional strategies relating to literacy, health and wellbeing, older people, digital inclusion and the prevention of poverty. Highlights for the year include:

- During pandemic-related restrictions, Conwy provided a range of digital opportunities, including storytimes and a '24 days of Christmas advent calendar' on social media featuring book choices and videos on seasonal crafts. In-person events have now resumed and these are well attended.
- The Reading Well for Mental Health scheme has been identified as a priority area within the service's Transformation Agenda. This scheme is operated in partnership with Denbighshire Library services and includes engaging and partnering with community navigators to enable them to support their clients.
- New libraries at Conwy Culture Centre and Llanrwst Library at Glasdir have been well received, with Conwy being particularly busy. The new building at Llanrwst has a large purpose-built children's library, reflecting the need to reach out to a young audience.

Materials, Welsh language and overall spend

Reflecting significant capital investment including into book stock, expenditure on materials increased on the previous year, putting it in the top quartile. 21% of this was spent on children's materials. These materials also included accessible resources such as large print books, as well as audio and downloadable material. Access to materials has been bolstered by membership of the Library Management System for Wales allowing access to catalogues from across the six North Wales counties. The service has maintained its commitment to expenditure on Welsh language materials and is in the top half of services for expenditure on and issues of

Welsh language materials. The service has a dedicated marketing budget and plan, which has been focused on increasing the service's social media presence. This focus on promotion is central to the local authority's new Culture Strategy.

Staffing

Conwy has 6.9 full-time equivalent (FTE) staff with library qualifications, putting it in the top quartile of services for the number of qualified staff. Alongside this, recruitment was undertaken for frontline level staff, increasing the total number of FTE staff to 2.9 per 10,000 population. A number of the service's staff are engaged in professional or academic courses, and Conwy County Borough Council Tourism Ambassador training is being offered to staff.

A staff training budget is provided with training opportunities including mental first aid, digital skills, and shared reading facilitation to deliver reading groups to support emotional wellbeing. Staff are trained to deal with difficult situations and safeguarding concerns that may arise in libraries.

Digital

Conwy provided digital data including 'Click and Collect', online sessions held and number of individuals who viewed live/recorded sessions. 'Click and Collect' orders reduced by 77% over the year, however this partly reflects missing data in the transition of library systems. In terms of online engagement, storytime videos have had large audiences; however the number of online sessions held in the period has reduced by 49% and the number of individuals participating overall fell by 86%. As with other services, this reflects a shift back to face-to-face services following the pandemic. Meanwhile, social media outreach has increased due to an increase in content posting. In terms of e-issues, there has been a decrease of 50%, but it is in the third quartile for issues per 1000 population. Conwy offers a wide range of resources, including driving theory exam practice and free online courses on a range of topics.

Future plans

In autumn 2021, Conwy County Borough Council produced a new five-year Library and Information Service strategy setting a new strategic direction. Priorities include supporting the Conwy Culture Strategy through providing cultural activities and working with health and social care to explore libraries' role in supporting health and wellbeing. The draft strategy proposed to relocate Colwyn Bay library into the Council's central offices. However, in response to community feedback, which strongly favoured retaining the library in its current building, funding has been obtained to redevelop the library as a community hub.

As part of the service's recovery from the pandemic, it will continue to engage with those who became more isolated during lockdowns. The mobile service is running again and staff are available to chat to people to help them to feel more connected. The service aims to engage further with job seekers to help them to find employment. This is part of a wider strategic aim to enhance libraries as community hubs where customers can access a wide range of services.

Case studies

Conwy provided five case studies, including quotes from library users. This included how the service provides digital services in all locations and how it has responded to the needs of people from the LGBTQ+ community.

Denbighshire

Overview and location

Libraries in Denbighshire are delivered by Denbighshire County Council. The service consists of eight static branches and a housebound delivery service, with 88% of residents living within 2.5 miles or a 10-minute public transport journey from a library. Denbighshire libraries operate a 'one stop shop' model which means the public use libraries to access other Council services in addition to library services.

Library service performance

Denbighshire provided evidence that showed it had met all 12 of the core entitlements.

Core entitlement	Service self-assessment	Independent assessment
1 Libraries in Wales will be free to join and open to all.	Fully met	Fully met
2 Libraries in Wales will ensure friendly, knowledgeable and qualified staff are on hand to help.	Fully met	Fully met
3 Libraries in Wales will provide access to a range of services, activities and high quality resources in a range of formats to support learning, personal well-being and development, community participation, and culture and recreation.	Fully met	Fully met
4 Libraries in Wales will provide appropriate services, facilities and information resources for individuals and groups with special needs.	Fully met	Fully met
5 Libraries will provide appropriate safe, attractive and accessible physical spaces with suitable staffed opening hours.	Fully met	Fully met
6 Libraries in Wales will lend books for free and deliver free access to information, including online information resources available 24 hours a day.	Fully met	Fully met
7 Libraries in Wales will provide free use of the Internet and computers, including Wi-Fi.	Fully met	Fully met
8 Libraries in Wales will provide access to services, cultural activities and high quality resources in the Welsh language.	Fully met	Fully met
9 Libraries in Wales will work in partnership to share catalogues and facilitate access to the resources of all Welsh libraries.	Fully met	Fully met
10 Libraries in Wales will work with a range of partners to promote and deliver services to new and diverse audiences, enabling more people to benefit from their services.	Fully met	Fully met
11 Libraries in Wales will regularly consult users to gather their views on the service and information about their changing needs.	Fully met	Fully met
12 Libraries in Wales will provide access to the library service's strategy, policies, objectives and vision, in	Fully met	Fully met

print and online, in a range of languages appropriate for the community.		
Total – fully met	12	12
Total – partially met	0	0
Total – not met	0	0

Library use

Over the reporting year, the service had 124 active borrowers per 1,000 population, representing a 70% increase from the previous year. Adult book issues increased by 93% to 1,013 issues per 1,000 population, while children's book issues increased by 202% to 592 issues per 1,000 population. Denbighshire saw particular success in issues of e-materials, where it was in the top quartile of services for e-issues per 1,000 population. Over the year, Denbighshire libraries were able to increase opening hours, as the service continues its recovery from the effects of the pandemic.

The service retained its order and collect and home delivery services. Over the year, the home delivery service saw an increase in use of 19%. Part of the accessibility of the library service is that membership is also offered to those with no fixed address.

Highlights

Denbighshire Libraries carried out a number of activities which have had a positive impact on the wellbeing of the county's residents. Highlights of these activities are:

- An investment project to upgrade and improve public access IT facilities which began in summer 2021. All public PCs have been replaced with new devices and new self-service printers and scanners have been installed. Broadband connection to Rhyl Library has been improved. A cloud printing and online booking facility will be operational by 2022/23.
- Libraries are a key partner in Denbighshire County Council's project which aims to identify how the council can reduce digital exclusion. As part of this project, Denbighshire Libraries purchased portable devices, which have been used to support customers on the library floor, including demonstrating e-resources and apps.
- Denbighshire Libraries provide access to the full range of Reading Well schemes which provides support for dementia, adult mental health, and children's mental health and emotional wellbeing. A project funded by the Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board has sought to embed Reading Well into primary care practice. Working with Conwy Libraries and Public Health Wales, this project was reshaped to reach customers as services started to re-open.

Materials, Welsh language and overall spend

Denbighshire is in the bottom quartile of services for spend on materials per 1,000 population, although the proportion it directs towards children's materials, 24%, is

among the highest nationally. The catalogue is shared between the North Wales authorities, with stock lent between libraries across the region.

A significant amount, 13%, of the materials budget is spent on Welsh language materials, with the service in the top quartile for both expenditure and issues. This stock is available in all libraries, with more stock available in those communities with a high proportion of Welsh speakers. The high expenditure on Welsh language materials and number of issues suggests this stock is meeting the needs of Denbighshire's communities.

The service has promoted use through the return of its in-person events and its continued promotion of reading challenges. The number of participants for in-person activities has been kept low in order to help participants feel safe.

Staffing

Denbighshire is in the top half of services for qualified staff per 10,000 population. Staff are encouraged to continue their learning and 1.7% of staff time was spent on development. There is mandatory e-learning and staff also undertook training to develop their digital and communication skills. Staff are also encouraged to pursue formal educational qualifications.

Training topics include Makaton and autism awareness, digital safety, Ask and Act (domestic violence), climate change, manual handling, first aid, and use of the new NetLoan system. Furthermore, staff are encouraged to develop their Welsh language skills, and 56% of staff are already bilingual.

Digital data

Denbighshire saw a decrease across digital data metrics except for e-issues per 1,000 population which increased. 'Click and Collect' orders reduced by 71% which the service attributes to people returning to their in-person services. In terms of online sessions and individuals attending, these decreased too from the previous year, by 74% and 84% respectively, although there is continued use of Facebook live session and many 'catch up later' options. E-issues per 1,000 population increased by 15% and the service remains in the top quartile. Denbighshire provides an extensive set of online resources, including resources in Ukrainian. This growth in e-resources is attributed to support from the Welsh Government and the National Library of Wales.

Future plans

The future plans of the library service are steered by the Library Strategy 2019-22 and the 2022/23 Service Business Plan. These set out a number of developments including: delivering events to encourage re-engagement with the library; addressing children's development, including through working with education partners; and ensuring equity of access for all.

The service is seeking to develop its health and wellbeing offer, continuing its work with Public Health Wales and the Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board. Following the improvements to public IT facilities, a cloud printing and online booking

facility will be operational next year. As the current strategy comes to an end, the service will work with the Council to update and replace it.

Case studies

Denbighshire provided two very extensive case studies with images and quotes to illustrate their work. This detailed the extensive work done to provide activities for children via the Welsh Government-funded Winter of Wellbeing initiative and the continued work with authors, including in festivals such as Gwyl Rhuthun and the Denbigh Midsummer Festival.

Flintshire

Overview and location

Library services in Flintshire are operated by Aura Leisure and Libraries Limited, a charitable non-profit organisation. The service consists of six static branches, one mobile service and a housebound delivery service. 83% of residents live within 2.5 miles, or a 10-minute public transport journey, of a library.

Library service performance

Aura Wales presented evidence that Flintshire had fully met all 12 of the core entitlements. The independent assessment is that they have fully met 11 core entitlements and partially met one. CE12 was assessed as partially met as, despite a library strategy forming part of the 2018-23 Aura Business Plan, this was not retrievable from the Aura website, nor was a version available in Welsh.

Core entitlement	Service self-assessment	Independent assessment
1 Libraries in Wales will be free to join and open to all.	Fully met	Fully met
2 Libraries in Wales will ensure friendly, knowledgeable and qualified staff are on hand to help.	Fully met	Fully met
3 Libraries in Wales will provide access to a range of services, activities and high quality resources in a range of formats to support learning, personal well-being and development, community participation, and culture and recreation.	Fully met	Fully met
4 Libraries in Wales will provide appropriate services, facilities and information resources for individuals and groups with special needs.	Fully met	Fully met
5 Libraries will provide appropriate safe, attractive and accessible physical spaces with suitable staffed opening hours.	Fully met	Fully met
6 Libraries in Wales will lend books for free and deliver free access to information, including online information resources available 24 hours a day.	Fully met	Fully met
7 Libraries in Wales will provide free use of the Internet and computers, including Wi-Fi.	Fully met	Fully met
8 Libraries in Wales will provide access to services, cultural activities and high quality resources in the Welsh language.	Fully met	Fully met
9 Libraries in Wales will work in partnership to share catalogues and facilitate access to the resources of all Welsh libraries.	Fully met	Fully met
10 Libraries in Wales will work with a range of partners to promote and deliver services to new and diverse audiences, enabling more people to benefit from their services.	Fully met	Fully met
11 Libraries in Wales will regularly consult users to gather their views on the service and information about their changing needs.	Fully met	Fully met

12 Libraries in Wales will provide access to the library service's strategy, policies, objectives and vision, in print and online, in a range of languages appropriate for the community.	Fully met	Partially met
Total – fully met	12	11
Total – partially met	0	1
Total – not met	0	0

Library use

Over the reporting year, the service had 73 active borrowers per 1,000 population, representing a 62% increase from the previous year. Adult book issues increased by 139% to 629 issues per 1,000 population, while children's book issues increased by 300% to 432 issues per 1,000 population.

In a survey of library users, over 90% found that libraries were an enjoyable place to visit and had a good environment and services. For those unable to visit library branches, the service offers a mobile library covering rural and isolated areas, as well as a home delivery service. All of the service's libraries are open at least five times a week from 9am to 5pm.

Highlights

Flintshire libraries hosted a number of successful events over the reporting year, with an increasing number of these in-person following the easing of Covid-19 restrictions. Some highlights include:

- Through the Summer Reading Challenge, the service was able to engage around 3,000 children, with over 2,500 children completing the challenge. This involved working with schools, local play schemes and an arts centre in Mold to encourage children to read and improve their literacy skills.
- Once Covid-19 restrictions were eased, face-to-face activities returned to the library, with a focus on young children and families. Consultation with partners in Early Years and the Health Board found that a lack of face-to-face contact had had a negative impact on the development of children aged 0-3. Therefore, social opportunities such as rhyme times were prioritised.
- The library service hosted various events for older people, those living with dementia, and their carers. This includes a weekly Sporting Memories session where attendees can meet to talk and share memories of sporting events and personalities. Some events are carried out in collaboration with Home Instead Senior Care and Mold Dementia Friendly Communities.

Materials, Welsh language and overall spend

Flintshire is in the top quartile for materials spend per 1000 population. 17% was spent on children's resources, putting it in the first quartile nationally. Flintshire is in the top quartile in terms of expenditure on Welsh language materials per 1,000 population, but issues of Welsh language materials are in the bottom quartile. Flintshire Libraries are committed to promoting Welsh language and culture,

providing material in a variety of formats and holding Welsh conversation classes at three of its libraries.

The service partners with the other North Wales authorities to share stock and other resources. This includes accessible resources such as audio-visual and large print stock. The service provides a text reader device called a C-Pen. This helps those with visual impairments and can also be used to translate English to other languages. Each library also has a local studies collection, with a larger central collection held at Mold library.

Staffing

Flintshire is in the bottom quartile for numbers of staff and qualified staff per 10,000 population. Staff are encouraged to train throughout the year and have completed training on: tweeting in Welsh; cyber safety; reader engagement and development; speech, language and communication skills; Makaton basics; autism awareness; dementia friends; safeguarding; and mental health first aid. New starters are also offered the opportunity to join the funded Library, Information and Archives Services level 3 qualification. Staff at all branches deliver IT training to customers using content from Learn My Way.

Digital data

Flintshire did not record digital data apart from e-issues which increased by 1%. It offered a range of digital resources through Borrowbox, and had links to a Welsh language magazine. Books and CDs can be reserved online, and the digital loan scheme is available to provide older people with digital assistance to help alleviate isolation.

Future plans

As the service continues its recovery from the effects of the pandemic, it is seeking to increase the number of in person events in its libraries. Over the last reporting year, the service completed a project to measure the social value. It estimated that for every £1 invested in the service, £8.75 of social value is created through local economic and social benefits, and costs to public spending avoided in other areas. Over the coming year, it intends to apply the methodology to other areas of the service to demonstrate its value to customers and communities.

Case studies

Flintshire provided four extensive case studies including examples from users. This included how they supported a new mum to feel less isolated and introduced her new son to books and the special services offered to older people, those living with dementia and their carers as part of the extensive health and wellbeing offer.

Gwynedd

Overview and locations

Library services in Gwynedd are delivered by Cyngor Gwynedd. The service includes 13 branches and a housebound service, with 80% of residents living within three miles of a library.

Library service performance

Gwynedd provided evidence that showed it had fully met all 12 of the core entitlements.

Core entitlement	Service self-assessment	Independent assessment
1 Libraries in Wales will be free to join and open to all.	Fully met	Fully met
2 Libraries in Wales will ensure friendly, knowledgeable and qualified staff are on hand to help.	Fully met	Fully met
3 Libraries in Wales will provide access to a range of services, activities and high quality resources in a range of formats to support learning, personal well-being and development, community participation, and culture and recreation.	Fully met	Fully met
4 Libraries in Wales will provide appropriate services, facilities and information resources for individuals and groups with special needs.	Fully met	Fully met
5 Libraries will provide appropriate safe, attractive and accessible physical spaces with suitable staffed opening hours.	Fully met	Fully met
6 Libraries in Wales will lend books for free and deliver free access to information, including online information resources available 24 hours a day.	Fully met	Fully met
7 Libraries in Wales will provide free use of the Internet and computers, including Wi-Fi.	Fully met	Fully met
8 Libraries in Wales will provide access to services, cultural activities and high quality resources in the Welsh language.	Fully met	Fully met
9 Libraries in Wales will work in partnership to share catalogues and facilitate access to the resources of all Welsh libraries.	Fully met	Fully met
10 Libraries in Wales will work with a range of partners to promote and deliver services to new and diverse audiences, enabling more people to benefit from their services.	Fully met	Fully met

11 Libraries in Wales will regularly consult users to gather their views on the service and information about their changing needs.	Fully met	Fully met
12 Libraries in Wales will provide access to the library service's strategy, policies, objectives and vision, in print and online, in a range of languages appropriate for the community.	Fully met	Fully met
Total - fully met	12	12
Total - partially met	0	0
Total - not met	0	0

Library use

Over the reporting year, the service had 120 active borrowers per 1,000 population, representing a 107% increase from the previous year. Adult book issues increased by 122% to 980 issues per 1,000 population, while children's book issues increased by 212% to 469 issues per 1,000 population.

The service only runs static service points with no mobile library vehicles now in use but a free delivery service that has 100% reach of residents is provided. In addition, Gwynedd libraries has the second highest 'Click and Collect' requests across all Welsh library services.

Highlights

Some significant actions across the last year include:

- 87 activity sessions for children were delivered (online and in person) with 747 children attending. These sessions varied in nature from creating podcasts with young people in the Ogwen Valley to running music sessions. The service commissioned a family reading programme and has set up a 'library of things' in partnership with a local partner which lends items aimed at families and children.
- Gwynedd continued to co-ordinate the national scheme for Welsh language large print books with Y Lolfa to produce large print versions of books specifically for Welsh libraries.
- Pwllheli library was successfully renovated, and increased its opening hours from 31 to 43.
- Gwynedd continue to be a member of the LINC inter-lending scheme between public library authorities and further and higher education colleges in North Wales.

Materials, Welsh language and overall spend

Gwynnedd ranked second in terms of materials spend per 1000 population. 18% of its budget was spent on children's resources, the median for all services.

Ensuring digital resources are available in Welsh is among Gwynedd libraries' priorities. Welsh language issues per 1,000 Welsh speakers is one of the highest in Wales, and Gwynedd continues to try to improve its Welsh language resources as

well as playing a national leadership role in developing the provision of Welsh language materials in libraries. The percentage of materials expenditure on Welsh materials has increased by 2% on the previous year and it is in the third quartile for spend per 1000 population. Gwynedd place significant emphasis on supplying resources which reflect the needs of communities. Stock is frequently reviewed and rotated in consultation with staff in each service area and in 2021/22, it supplied 2,528 bilingual literacy packs to families in order to promote books and reading.

Staffing

Although there has been a slight reduction in staffing in 2021/22, the position will be reviewed in 2022/23. The service has put a lot of effort into improving the digital offer including employing a new digital and learning officer who supports other staff on a daily basis. Gwynedd libraries have also taken part in a pilot scheme run by Digital Communities Wales to improve front-line staff's digital skills and knowledge. It has plans to continue to improve the development offer to staff in the near future.

Digital

Whilst Gwynedd provided minimal digital data including on 'Click and Collect', online sessions held, and number of individuals who viewed live or recorded sessions, it was the only library service to increase all its digital data metrics from the previous year. 'Click and collect' services increased by 11%, and the home delivery service can be booked through the website. It is in the top quartile for 'Click and Collect' services. In terms of online sessions, Gwynedd offered digital sessions focusing on children's services including Story Time, Rhyme Time, and Online Story and Craft.

Future plans

Gwynedd libraries plan to rebuild its service offer to match pre-pandemic levels. It is hoped that the removal of fines in 2021 will continue to help in increasing library use as financial challenges escalate in the coming months. Gwynedd are looking to develop a new library plan in 2022/23, this work having been on hold since 2020. This will develop and agree on future priorities that will meet community needs and ensure a surviving and thriving library service for the near future.

An internal training plan for library staff is intended to support the development of their service offer and efficiency. It has received a Capital Transformation Fund grant which will be used to improve the libraries in Penygroes and the Ogwen Valley during the next year, with a plan to establish a new Petha (Library of Things) service at three libraries, and create a VR hub in Penygroes, and a wellbeing garden in Bethesda.

Case studies

Gwynedd provided four case studies including quotes from users. This included the impact of the pilot scheme from Digital Communities Wales focusing on essential digital skills and the success of the Welsh-medium 'Stori a Chân' (Story and Song) sessions for children under 5.

Isle of Anglesey

Overview and location

Library services on the Isle of Anglesey are delivered by the Isle of Anglesey County Council. 60% of the population of Anglesey live within three miles of one of the five static libraries and 30% of households are within 0.25 miles of a mobile stop. The mobile library visits 110 locations on a regular timetable.

Library service performance

The Isle of Anglesey provided evidence that it fully met 10 of the core entitlements and partially met two. The independent assessor agreed with this assessment. The two core entitlements that were not fully met are CE11 and CE12; CE11 was assessed as partially met as the last user survey was in February 2017, which is outside the criteria period, but it has conducted another consultation. CE12 was partially met because although there is a strategy in place for 2017-22, it is not possible to access it online in either English or Welsh.

Core entitlement	Service self-assessment	Independent assessment
1 Libraries in Wales will be free to join and open to all.	Fully met	Fully met
2 Libraries in Wales will ensure friendly, knowledgeable, and qualified staff are on hand to help.	Fully met	Fully met
3 Libraries in Wales will provide access to a range of services, activities and high-quality resources in a range of formats to support learning, personal well-being and development, community participation, and culture and recreation.	Fully met	Fully met
4 Libraries in Wales will provide appropriate services, facilities and information resources for individuals and groups with special needs.	Fully met	Fully met
5 Libraries will provide appropriate safe, attractive, and accessible physical spaces with suitable staffed opening hours.	Fully met	Fully met
6 Libraries in Wales will lend books for free and deliver free access to information, including online information resources available 24 hours a day.	Fully met	Fully met
7 Libraries in Wales will provide free use of the Internet and computers, including Wi-Fi.	Fully met	Fully met
8 Libraries in Wales will provide access to services, cultural activities and high-quality resources in the Welsh language.	Fully met	Fully met
9 Libraries in Wales will work in partnership to share catalogues and facilitate access to the resources of all Welsh libraries.	Fully met	Fully met
10 Libraries in Wales will work with a range of partners to promote and deliver services to new and	Fully met	Fully met

diverse audiences, enabling more people to benefit from their services.		
11 Libraries in Wales will regularly consult users to gather their views on the service and information about their changing needs.	Partially met	Partially met
12 Libraries in Wales will provide access to the library service's strategy, policies, objectives, and vision, in print and online, in a range of languages appropriate for the community.	Partially met	Partially met
Total - fully met	10	10
Total - partially met	2	2
Total - not met	0	0

Library use

Over the reporting year, the service had 66 active borrowers per 1,000 population, representing a 22% increase from the previous year. Adult book issues increased by 43% to 828 issues per 1,000 population, while children's book issues increased by 85% to 371 issues per 1,000 population.

Anglesey continued to offer free access to PCs and Wi-Fi for residents in all libraries. Staff have assisted with IT issues over the phone and email, as well as supporting people to access their online resources and software such as Zoom. Face-to-face ICT courses were not available during the reporting period.

The service has begun to introduce some promotional activities through social media, such as the introduction of a Facebook page and some presence on the local authority's social media. There was evidence of strong partnership working to increase library use, especially in education through coding sessions provided to five schools.

Highlights

The service continues to work towards being an inclusive service that contributes towards wider Welsh Government priorities and goals. Highlights from 2021/22 include:

- Social and demographic information is analysed regularly to shape the Library Service Strategy and create a relevant service that meets local need.

- The school library service supports primary age children and teachers through the provision of curriculum-based project packs and reading for pleasure classroom sets.

- The service encourages young people to visit the library through activities such as coding sessions.

- Anglesey libraries supported the local economy by providing opportunities for skills and workforce development, providing business information and advice.

Materials, Welsh language, and overall spend

The service, in collaboration with the education department, prioritised services to children over this period and this is reflected in the proportion of materials expenditure spent on younger users. Including the school library service spend, the materials expenditure for this return period was in the second quartile and 28% of this was spent on children, the highest across all services. Overall, it acquired many more items and there was a 135% increase in materials compared with the last return period.

The library service ensures that its resources budget is used to provide high-quality resources in a wide range of formats including Welsh language, large print and e-books. It continued to deliver resources to people's homes via doorstep delivery. Anglesey has the second highest proportion of Welsh speakers out of all service areas and 16% of the budget is spent on Welsh material, which is a 3% increase from the last return. It ranked in the top quartile for Welsh issues per 1000 speakers. It promoted the use Welsh materials as part of general displays and standalone promotions.

It has a full range of impact-focused activities to meet community need, including Welsh learner activities, digital skills sessions and activities for children that are integrated with the school library service.

Staffing

The total number of staff has increased but Anglesey library service remains below the total staffing level standard at 2.47 FTE per 10,000 population, and the continued effects of vacant posts which were noted in the previous reporting period have continued to affect capacity. Posts were left vacant due to retirements and the pandemic. Recruitment to ensure that the minimum standards are met needs to be a priority going forward. Four members of staff hold professional qualifications, including the library service manager. This equates to 0.55FTE per 10,000 population. The service is committed to training staff and staff complete training in a range of areas such as customer care, data protection, and the Welsh language. The service does not have a dedicated training budget, but training needs are identified during the appraisal process which feeds into the departmental and corporate training budget where funds are allocated for the year. There is no recent user survey data, although customer care is said to be a priority within the authority.

Digital data

The Isle of Anglesey did not record digital data except for e-issues per 1,000 population, making comparisons with previous years not possible. It is suggested that this is down to the inability to collect robust data, but as this is not an issue for other services, this is another area the service should consider progressing. In terms of e-issues, the service saw a decrease of 63%, and went from ranking in the top quartile to the second quartile. There is a new digital newspaper service and e-

reading was strengthened with additional investment from the Welsh Government for Borrowbox.

Future plans

The service is aware of challenges associated with re-introducing large in-person events such as Rhyme Time sessions in the Covid-19 recovery period. There is a large demand for such activities, but capacity is an issue. In the future, the service aims to enhance its offer through engagement with partners.

Anglesey library service continues to be committed to the vision and core aims outlined in the Isle of Anglesey County Council Library Service Strategy 2017-22 while also having Covid-19 recovery as a central pillar of their work. The impact of the pandemic means that the service plans to focus on the health and wellbeing offer within Anglesey libraries, as well as their online presence to increase their reach.

One major priority is filling the vacant posts to help develop the service and to reduce pressure on staff. A fully filled staffing structure will build resilience and allow the service to fully reopen and refocus the library service post-Covid-19.

Case studies

The Isle of Anglesey provided three case studies with quotes from library users to illustrate their work. This included the benefits of retaining 'Call and Collect' to support vulnerable users continue to access services during the recovery from the pandemic and work with schools to promote the Welsh Language Technology Action Plan where 140 children from five schools participated in Coding Sessions, using Lego WeDo, and Scratch.

Merthyr Tydfil – WellbeingMerthyr

Overview and location

Merthyr Tydfil libraries are delivered on behalf of Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council by WellbeingMerthyr (previously Merthyr Tydfil Leisure Trust). They have five static library service points as well as a home library service with 88% of the population living within 2.5 miles of a library.

Library service performance

WellbeingMerthyr provided evidence showing that it had fully met all 12 of the core entitlements. The independent assessment agreed that it had fully met all 12 core entitlements.

Core entitlement	Service self-assessment	Independent assessment
1 Libraries in Wales will be free to join and open to all.	Fully met	Fully met
2 Libraries in Wales will ensure friendly, knowledgeable, and qualified staff are on hand to help.	Fully met	Fully met
3 Libraries in Wales will provide access to a range of services, activities and high-quality resources in a range of formats to support learning, personal well-being and development, community participation, and culture and recreation.	Fully met	Fully met
4 Libraries in Wales will provide appropriate services, facilities and information resources for individuals and groups with special needs.	Fully met	Fully met
5 Libraries will provide appropriate safe, attractive, and accessible physical spaces with suitable staffed opening hours.	Fully met	Fully met
6 Libraries in Wales will lend books for free and deliver free access to information, including online information resources available 24 hours a day.	Fully met	Fully met
7 Libraries in Wales will provide free use of the Internet and computers, including Wi-Fi.	Fully met	Fully met
8 Libraries in Wales will provide access to services, cultural activities and high-quality resources in the Welsh language.	Fully met	Fully met
9 Libraries in Wales will work in partnership to share catalogues and facilitate access to the resources of all Welsh libraries.	Fully met	Fully met

10 Libraries in Wales will work with a range of partners to promote and deliver services to new and diverse audiences, enabling more people to benefit from their services.	Fully met	Fully met
11 Libraries in Wales will regularly consult users to gather their views on the service and information about their changing needs.	Fully met	Fully met
12 Libraries in Wales will provide access to the library service's strategy, policies, objectives, and vision, in print and online, in a range of languages appropriate for the community.	Fully met	Fully met
Total – fully met	12	12
Total – partially met	0	0
Total – not met	0	0

Library use

Over the reporting year, the service had 60 active borrowers per 1,000 population, representing a 122% increase from the previous year. Adult book issues increased by 191% to 1,568 issues per 1,000 population, while children's book issues increased by 104% to 237 issues per 1,000 population. Electronic downloads have fallen, perhaps because libraries are reopening, and physical stock has become more available.

The service usually conducts consultations every year with its users, but this did not happen this year due to the pandemic. They are keen to gather data in other ways and have customer feedback cards at all sites.

Highlights

Over the last year, WellbeingMerthyr continued to support its communities and its highlights included:

- All fines have been removed as fines are often a barrier to use.
- The Home Links service provided a vital service for housebound borrowers. In addition to the specially chosen selections, it offers boxes of browsing stock from which customers can choose extra books.
- It worked with local partners to strengthen their Welsh language offer and have Welsh speaking staff who deliver activity.
- It offered carer loans for those who may need longer loan periods.

Materials, Welsh language and overall spend

The spend on materials has seen a 67% increase on the previous year and is in the second quartile. 21% of the budget was spent on children's resources, a significant increase on the previous year's figure of 7%.

The service reported that whilst there is a low proportion of Welsh speakers in the area, Welsh is 'slowly growing' and its ability to run bilingual activities has it believes has contributed to the increase in Welsh-language issues, especially for junior stock. However, the service's spend on Welsh stock remained very low at 3%. (It still ranks in the bottom quartile on Welsh issues per 1,000 Welsh speakers.

It puts inclusivity at the forefront of the service and offer adaptive technology on PCs in all buildings and have adaptive signage and services such as hearing loops.

Merthyr has retained a hybrid model (digital and physical) for activities over 2021/22 and reported that it ran a variety of safe face-to-face events.

Staffing

The majority of user compliments that the service receives are about the staff and how welcoming they are. However, one of the ongoing issues the service has is with the low level of qualified librarians. Despite only having two members of staff with library-related qualifications, it highlights the value of frontline staff who are enthusiastic and capable of providing an excellent service.

Only 0.6% of time over the past year was spent on staff training. This may reflect the fact that the service has a comparatively small staff team. This is an area that could be examined with a view to improve the amount of time spent on staff training.

Digital data

Merthyr Tydfil ranked highly across the services in all measures per 1,000 population but data from 2020/21 is not available for a comparison, except for e-issues. In terms of 'Click and Collect' per 1,000 population, it was in the top quartile in 2021/22 across the library services. It was also in the top half of the services for online sessions and the number of individuals taking part. Live sessions included using Facebook and YouTube to livestream events such as quizzes. The number of e-issues per 1,000 population decreased by 33% from the previous year. E-books are mainly in recreational fiction or nonfiction categories, but it does offer other e-resources such as study aids. Customers can renew and reserve items online and the opening times for libraries are easily accessible on the website in both Welsh and English.

Future plans

Although restrictions have eased, the service have still faced difficulties in maintaining safety measures while reintroducing its offer. It has continued the strong online offer whilst running more face-to-face activities. The lack of social interaction, particularly among young children born during lockdown and older isolated adults, has been the driver for such activities.

Additionally, it proposes to focus on young people and incorporate the 'Best Start in Life' priority as it encourages more participation in activities and skill development.

WellbeingMerthyr anticipate challenges in the coming years around increasing energy costs and reductions to the management fee received from the Council, but it will continue to work with partners to best support the community. An updated library strategy, which it is currently working on, will help the library service achieve the goals it has set out.

Case studies

Merthyr Tydfil provided four extensive case studies illustrated with pictures and quotes. These included one on weekly 'scrapbooking' sessions funded as part of the Winter of Wellbeing; and one about activities for 'Elmer Day' organised by Andersen Press, who publish the Elmer books, where there is storytelling for children and parents on themes such as inclusivity, friendship, and tolerance.

Monmouthshire

Overview and location

Monmouthshire Library Service is operated by Monmouthshire County Council. It has six service points across the local authority area and 73% of the population live 2.5 miles or under from a library. All six libraries are now merged with customer services and are known as Community Hubs. It also includes a housebound service.

Library service performance

Monmouthshire provided evidence showing it had fully met all 11 of the core entitlements and partially met one. CE11 was partially met because user consultation was incomplete due to the impacts of Covid-19. The independent assessment agreed with the self-assessment.

Core entitlement	Self-assessment	Independent assessment
1 Libraries in Wales will be free to join and open to all.	Fully met	Fully met
2 Libraries in Wales will ensure friendly, knowledgeable, and qualified staff are on hand to help.	Fully met	Fully met
3 Libraries in Wales will provide access to a range of services, activities and high-quality resources in a range of formats to support learning, personal well-being and development, community participation, and culture and recreation.	Fully met	Fully met
4 Libraries in Wales will provide appropriate services, facilities and information resources for individuals and groups with special needs.	Fully met	Fully met
5 Libraries will provide appropriate safe, attractive, and accessible physical spaces with suitable staffed opening hours.	Fully met	Fully met
6 Libraries in Wales will lend books for free and deliver free access to information, including online information resources available 24 hours a day.	Fully met	Fully met
7 Libraries in Wales will provide free use of the Internet and computers, including Wi-Fi.	Fully met	Fully met
8 Libraries in Wales will provide access to services, cultural activities and high-quality resources in the Welsh language.	Fully met	Fully met
9 Libraries in Wales will work in partnership to share catalogues and facilitate access to the resources of all Welsh libraries.	Fully met	Fully met
10 Libraries in Wales will work with a range of partners to promote and deliver services to new and diverse audiences, enabling more people to benefit from their services.	Fully met	Fully met
11 Libraries in Wales will regularly consult users to gather their views on the service and information about their changing needs.	Partially met	Partially met

12 Libraries in Wales will provide access to the library service's strategy, policies, objectives, and vision, in print and online, in a range of languages appropriate for the community.	Fully met	Fully met
Total – fully met	11	11
Total – partially met	1	1
Total – not met	0	0

Library use

Over the reporting year, the service had 102 active borrowers per 1,000 population, representing a 73% increase from the previous year. Adult book issues increased by 371% to 938 issues per 1,000 population, while children's book issues increased by 946% to 638 issues per 1,000 population. It was in the top quartile for e-issues per 1,000 of the population at 814 issues.

Highlights

The library service continues to work towards restoring all services to pre-pandemic levels. Significant initiatives over the last year include:

- The Reading Well for children booklist looked at a range of conditions including autism, attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD), dyslexia, and physical disabilities.
- A new Community Hub in Abergavenny was opened with Council enquiries on the ground floor and the library upstairs.
- Community learning is based in four Community Hubs – Caldicot, Chepstow, Monmouth and Usk. The wider range of lifelong learning opportunities included computers, languages, English and maths, art and craft, English for speakers of other languages (ESOL), and many others.
- The home delivery service worked in partnership with Sight Cymru to deliver audiobooks downloaded to memory sticks, to be listened to via Boomboxes. The outreach officer began a pilot which enabled elderly and/or visually impaired customers who have no internet access to borrow tablets with pre-loaded audiobooks.

Materials, Welsh language and overall spend

The service ranked in the top quartile for materials spend per 1000 population. 11% of budget was expenditure on children's resources, this was the minimum across all services.

Only 1% of the budget was spent on Welsh language resources and the service ranked in the lowest quartile for spend for Welsh language materials and number of Welsh issues per 1000 Welsh speakers. However, the service reported It was keen to improve its commitment to the Welsh language and had a focus on resources for learners, despite being in an area with relatively few Welsh speakers. It offered Welsh classes in the libraries and worked with Cymraeg I Blant to offer story and rhyme sessions. There were local history collections in all hubs.

Staffing

Sharing knowledge and expertise is seen as vital in Monmouthshire to continue to develop its customer service. The service has 2.9 full-time equivalent (FTE) posts out of a total of 14.2 held by staff with formal library qualifications, but this does not include the service manager. Each member of staff has an annual appraisal which offers two-way feedback about the development of the service, with the emphasis on continuing professional development. There is no specific training budget, yet staff still get access to training opportunities, with 0.8% of staff time spent on development and training.

Digital data

Whilst the library service has a good collection of e-resources such as links to driving theory test help, eBooks, and resources through Borrowbox and online request and collect, Monmouthshire only provided the number of 'Click and Collect' requests and e issues (see above for e issues) in its digital data return. Monmouthshire saw a decrease of 14% in Click and collect orders from the previous year, putting the service in the bottom quartile for the year. It aims to expand its Digital Lending Library in the future.

Future plans

Monmouthshire's current library service strategy ended in 2022 and it plans to begin producing a new strategy in light of Monmouthshire County Council's aims and the post Covid-19 situation. It intends to refurbish Caldicot Community Hub with two new classrooms and to improve reader development and the book display. The Digital Lending Library will be developed, with a pilot scheme for people facing digital exclusion. Across all of these plans the service will continue to work collaboratively with wider partners.

Case studies

Monmouthshire provided three extensive case studies with quotes from many different users. These included on activities for children, young people and families through the Welsh Government-funded Winter of Wellbeing scheme and examples of wider activities the Library Service provides to support local communities.

Neath Port Talbot

Overview and location

Neath Port Talbot library service is operated by Neath Port Talbot Council and has eight static service points with one mobile library and a housebound service, plus six community-managed libraries. 90% of the population live within 2.5 miles of a library.

Library service performance

Neath Port Talbot provided evidence that it had fully met all 12 of the core entitlements. The independent assessment confirmed that it had fully met all of the core entitlements.

Core entitlement	Service self-Assessment	Independent assessment
1 Libraries in Wales will be free to join and open to all.	Fully met	Fully met
2 Libraries in Wales will ensure friendly, knowledgeable, and qualified staff are on hand to help.	Fully met	Fully met
3 Libraries in Wales will provide access to a range of services, activities and high-quality resources in a range of formats to support learning, personal well-being and development, community participation, and culture and recreation.	Fully met	Fully met
4 Libraries in Wales will provide appropriate services, facilities and information resources for individuals and groups with special needs.	Fully met	Fully met
5 Libraries will provide appropriate safe, attractive, and accessible physical spaces with suitable staffed opening hours.	Fully met	Fully met
6 Libraries in Wales will lend books for free and deliver free access to information, including online information resources available 24 hours a day.	Fully met	Fully met
7 Libraries in Wales will provide free use of the Internet and computers, including Wi-Fi.	Fully met	Fully met
8 Libraries in Wales will provide access to services, cultural activities and high-quality resources in the Welsh language.	Fully met	Fully met
9 Libraries in Wales will work in partnership to share catalogues and facilitate access to the resources of all Welsh libraries.	Fully met	Fully met
10 Libraries in Wales will work with a range of partners to promote and deliver services to new and diverse audiences, enabling more people to benefit from their services.	Fully met	Fully met

11 Libraries in Wales will regularly consult users to gather their views on the service and information about their changing needs.	Fully met	Fully met
12 Libraries in Wales will provide access to the library service's strategy, policies, objectives, and vision, in print and online, in a range of languages appropriate for the community.	Fully met	Fully met
Total – fully met	12	12
Total – partially met	0	0
Total – not met	0	0

Library use

Over the reporting year, the service had 96 active borrowers per 1,000 population, representing a 78% increase from the previous year. Adult book issues increased by 110% to 968 issues per 1,000 population, while children's book issues increased by 215% to 346 issues per 1,000 population. The use of electronic downloads also remained high.

Highlights

Highlights from the 2021/22 return period included:

- Extensive consultation to scope a new project to create a Makerspace in Port Talbot Library involving staff, library users, schools and colleges, artists, digital experts and designers.
- Permanent removal of fines for overdue items.
- 2021 saw the library service's most successful Summer Reading Challenge programme and a well-attended adult learners' week.
- Staff worked with colleagues in Child Development, Think Family Partnership, Neath Port Talbot Schools and Neath Port Talbot theatres to deliver Welsh Government-funded Winter of Wellbeing activities.
- A Social Media and Promotions group was set up in 2021 to work on various campaigns, marketing and the promotion of libraries. The group proactively worked with colleagues in NHS library services to deliver resources and library messages to staff and patients in local hospitals.

Materials, Welsh language and overall spend

Neath Port Talbot is in the bottom quartile for material spend per 1000 population. 18% of the budget is spent on children's resources which is the median for all services.

Welsh language stock selection policy is reviewed annually, and it changed its supply arrangements in 2021 to partner with a new local supplier to better meet local needs. 7% of the materials budget was spent on Welsh language items, a 4% increase from the previous return period. It is in the third quartile for acquisitions per 1000 Welsh speakers, and the median for issues per 1000 Welsh speakers. It worked with the Books Council of Wales and its reading groups, and introduced Welsh language song and rhyme time with Menter Iaith.

Staffing

The service has 7.5 full-time equivalent (FTE) posts filled by staff with library-related qualifications including the service manager. In addition, three main libraries all have a professionally qualified senior librarian. During 2021/22 Neath Port Talbot resumed face-to-face staff training sessions alongside maintaining opportunities for virtual training and staff spent 0.7% of their time on training. This is less than the previous year due to challenges around sickness, Covid-19 and having to concentrate on keeping branches open. Courses included diversity training, safeguarding, and first aid. Staff have annual performance appraisals to ensure that they are maximising their potential and these ensure the training courses being completed are relevant. The library service has a training budget to ensure that staff are able to continue their professional development. Many staff members enhanced their skills during the reporting period and are now better qualified.

Digital data

Neath Port Talbot provided digital data including online sessions held and number of individuals who viewed live/recorded sessions. It stopped collecting usage data on 'Click and Collect' orders in 2022, however the service remains operational. It provided 56 online sessions during the period which included live school sessions with participants, but the exact number of people is unknown due to large class sizes and attendance not being recorded. Other online content was provided through Facebook and YouTube. In terms of e-issues per 1,000 population, there was a 25% increase, moving its position up into the third quartile this year. Neath Port Talbot provided online health and well-being workshops for Council staff, using online stock on Borrowbox. It provided e-resources including Press Reader which gives access to 7,000 UK and international newspapers and magazines, and instant translation in up to 18 languages.

Future plans

Many of the recommendations from the 2019 Library Review have been implemented and continue to form the basis of future plans including an enhanced, more adaptable mobile library service that will be able to serve more communities and a refurbished home delivery service that will deliver improvements to some of the most vulnerable residents. A major proposal from the 2019 Review was a new central library for Neath. This is now nearing completion as part of Neath's town centre regeneration and was due to open in the autumn of 2022 but will now open early in 2023.

It intends to publish a new Library Strategy in 2023. Port Talbot Library will be developed into a Makerspace.

Case studies

Neath Port Talbot provided four extensive case studies with illustrative user feedback, including how the Service contributes to improving the well-being of children, young children and adults, and can help make people more independent and contribute to the community.

Newport

Overview and location

Library services in Newport are delivered by Newport City Council. The service includes nine branches with 97% of residents living within 2.5 miles of a library, and one independent community library. The service does not currently offer a mobile service.

Library service performance

The service provided evidence showing that it had fully met 11 of the 12 core entitlements, and the independent assessment agreed. The service partially met CE12 as the most recent published strategy covers 2017-20, although it advised that plans are now in place to produce a new strategy.

Core entitlement	Service self-assessment	Independent assessment
1 Libraries in Wales will be free to join and open to all.	Fully met	Fully met
2 Libraries in Wales will ensure friendly, knowledgeable and qualified staff are on hand to help.	Fully met	Fully met
3 Libraries in Wales will provide access to a range of services, activities and high quality resources in a range of formats to support learning, personal well-being and development, community participation, and culture and recreation.	Fully met	Fully met
4 Libraries in Wales will provide appropriate services, facilities and information resources for individuals and groups with special needs.	Fully met	Fully met
5 Libraries will provide appropriate safe, attractive and accessible physical spaces with suitable staffed opening hours.	Fully met	Fully met
6 Libraries in Wales will lend books for free and deliver free access to information, including online information resources available 24 hours a day.	Fully met	Fully met
7 Libraries in Wales will provide free use of the Internet and computers, including Wi-Fi.	Fully met	Fully met
8 Libraries in Wales will provide access to services, cultural activities and high quality resources in the Welsh language.	Fully met	Fully met
9 Libraries in Wales will work in partnership to share catalogues and facilitate access to the resources of all Welsh libraries.	Fully met	Fully met
10 Libraries in Wales will work with a range of partners to promote and deliver services to new and diverse audiences, enabling more people to benefit from their services.	Fully met	Fully met

11 Libraries in Wales will regularly consult users to gather their views on the service and information about their changing needs.	Fully met	Fully met
12 Libraries in Wales will provide access to the library service's strategy, policies, objectives and vision, in print and online, in a range of languages appropriate for the community.	Partially met	Partially met
Total - fully met	11	11
Total - partially met	1	1
Total - not met	0	0

Library use

Over the reporting year, the service had 30 active borrowers per 1,000 population, representing a 20% increase from the previous year. Adult book issues increased by 169% to 466 issues per 1,000 population, while children's book issues increased by 682% to 297 issues per 1,000 population. The service had 203 members per 1000 population, a decrease on the previous year. In response, the service created a re-engagement plan with a widely publicised loan and book amnesty combined with a programme of events and activities.

Highlights

- During 2021/22 the library service worked with the Reading Agency and StoryFutures Academy on the Story Trails project. This was an immersive storytelling experience to explore the untold stories from the past, particularly from diverse cultures of the cities. Newport focused on the history of the Afro-Caribbean community within the old dock area of Pillgwenlly. This highlighted the important role of this community in the development of the music scene in Newport.
- The service had consistent collaboration with Mudiad Meithrin, a voluntary organisation who specialise in provision of Welsh-medium early years education. Through this it provided numerous Welsh language rhyme times and baby yoga sessions.
- The Ringland History group started in March 2022 after two years of disruption. The group used library space to host guest speakers to talk about historical events.

Materials, Welsh language and overall spend

Materials expenditure increased on the previous year, putting it in the second quartile nationally. 23% was spent on children's resources which is in the top quartile nationally. However the number of children's issues per 1000 population is in the bottom quartile. This suggests that the stock may not be meeting user needs, or there is a lack of awareness in the community. The service provides a range of different events which aim to reflect its community. This has a particular focus on children, with story clubs and coding clubs on offer given the relatively low number of issues of children's books.

Welsh language expenditure remained at 4%, reflecting the small proportion of Welsh speakers in the area but still putting spend per 1,000 Welsh speakers in in the top quartile nationally. However, given the number of issues per 1,000 is in the bottom quartile this suggests the Welsh language materials may not be meeting user needs. It focused Welsh language effort on learners and children, through its collaboration with Mudiad Meithrin.

The service holds a Community Languages collection within the Central and Pillgwernlly libraries, reflecting the multi-ethnic communities those two libraries serve. The Central Library holds a large local studies collection of over 50,000 items reflecting the rich history, culture and geography of Newport and Gwent.

Opening hours are based on feedback from users and are covered by fully trained staff.

Staffing

Total staff count remained the same as 2020/21 including eight staff with library-related qualifications. Staff per 10,000 population is in the bottom quartile of services but the number of qualified staff per 10,000 is in the top half. Staff training covered digital skills and there was active encouragement of continuous profession development, which was monitored by managers.

Digital data

Newport provided digital data including 'Click and Collect', online sessions held and number of individuals who viewed live/recorded sessions. The service saw a reduction in all its digital data measures from the previous year. In terms of 'Click and Collect' orders, take-up reduced by 51% over the period. It offered home delivery service for those who are vulnerable, and planned to relaunch the Reading Friends scheme for those who are isolated and need support. In terms of online sessions, the service saw an 80% reduction in sessions over the year and individuals attending dropped by 19%. In terms of e-issues per 1,000 population, it saw a reduction of 2% in their service but compared to other services, it increased its ranking from the bottom quartile to the middle. E-resources such as e-books were available via Borrowbox.

Future plans

Having only recently merged library services with neighbourhood hubs, a subsequent corporate restructure has now decided that the library service will go back to being a distinct service. Libraries will be part of a team within the Regeneration Department which contains adult community learning and community regeneration. This should enable collaboration and help the library service make more impact.

A new library strategy will be developed in 2022/23 and this will be informed by the overdue user survey. The survey will help the library service review its current offer and understand how it needs to adapt to changing needs. Additionally, in response to comparatively low children's book issues compared to the rest of Wales, the services will continue to develop its programmes aimed at younger people which should help the service recover readership.

Case studies

Newport provided three case studies with quotes and examples, including on digital literacy sessions for adults and children and the Ringland History Group - and 'alternative history group', sharing unknown stories on histories that people think they know.

Pembrokeshire

Overview and location

Library services in Pembrokeshire were delivered by Pembrokeshire County Council. The service included 12 branches and one mobile service, with four of these being community-managed libraries. 81% of residents live within three miles of a library or within 0.25 miles of a mobile library stop.

Library service performance

Pembrokeshire library service submitted evidence showing it fully met all the core entitlements. The independent assessment agreed.

Core entitlement	Service self-assessment	Independent assessment
1 Libraries in Wales will be free to join and open to all.	Fully met	Fully met
2 Libraries in Wales will ensure friendly, knowledgeable and qualified staff are on hand to help.	Fully met	Fully met
3 Libraries in Wales will provide access to a range of services, activities and high quality resources in a range of formats to support learning, personal well-being and development, community participation, and culture and recreation.	Fully met	Fully met
4 Libraries in Wales will provide appropriate services, facilities and information resources for individuals and groups with special needs.	Fully met	Fully met
5 Libraries will provide appropriate safe, attractive and accessible physical spaces with suitable staffed opening hours.	Fully met	Fully met
6 Libraries in Wales will lend books for free and deliver free access to information, including online information resources available 24 hours a day.	Fully met	Fully met
7 Libraries in Wales will provide free use of the Internet and computers, including Wi-Fi.	Fully met	Fully met
8 Libraries in Wales will provide access to services, cultural activities and high quality resources in the Welsh language.	Fully met	Fully met
9 Libraries in Wales will work in partnership to share catalogues and facilitate access to the resources of all Welsh libraries.	Fully met	Fully met
10 Libraries in Wales will work with a range of partners to promote and deliver services to new and diverse audiences, enabling more people to benefit from their services.	Fully met	Fully met
11 Libraries in Wales will regularly consult users to gather their views on the service and information about their changing needs.	Fully met	Fully met

12 Libraries in Wales will provide access to the library service's strategy, policies, objectives and vision, in print and online, in a range of languages appropriate for the community.	Fully met	Fully met
Total - fully met	12	12
Total – partially met	0	0
Total – not met	0	0

Library use

Over the reporting year, the service had 49 active borrowers per 1,000 population, representing a 26% increase from the previous year. Adult book issues increased by 212% to 928 issues per 1,000 population, while children's book issues increased by 415% to 345 issues per 1,000 population.

It retained the 'Order and Collect' service that was established during the pandemic, although the number using this service has reduced significantly. It continued to hold regular events in the largest libraries, including Baby Rhyme Time, and worked in collaboration with Bookstart to facilitate the distribution of Bookstart packs from libraries for the first time.

Highlights

Highlights for the reporting period included:

- Through the service's annual Make a Difference (MAD) survey, 99.6% of respondents considered their library was an enjoyable, safe and inclusive place to visit.
- The service with Hywel Dda Health Board began the process of applying for the Silver Investors in Carers Award. The library staff undertook appropriate training and are gathering evidence of relevant activities.
- The introduction of Open Plus self-service technology was intended to give users access to libraries outside regular opening times and release staff capacity for other tasks. Open Plus was first introduced in June 2021 at one branch, but take-up was slower than planned due to the pandemic. At the time of reporting, the new service still only had 41 registered users who had made 820 transactions during Open Plus hours, around 10% of the total transactions at the branch where it has been introduced.

Materials, Welsh language and overall spend

The total materials expenditure decreased by 12.8% on the previous year. The service is at the minimum for expenditure per 1000 population. 13% of materials budget was spent on children's resources. This is in the bottom quartile nationally. The number of items acquired has also reduced from 11,367 in 2020/21 to 9,686 in 2021/22.

They have maintained 4% of this spend on Welsh language materials; however, they rank in the bottom quartile for materials spend per 1,000 Welsh speakers and in the second quartile for issues per 1,000 Welsh speakers. The service makes effort to

select materials according to usage and continues to engage with Welsh language groups to raise awareness of the offer.

Staffing

The total number of staff has increased slightly on the previous year. The number of professionally qualified staff has decreased from 7.1 in the previous year to 5.9 in the reporting period.

The service encourages staff to learn Welsh by financially supporting them to take Welsh language lessons. There is a concerted effort to upskill staff with a dedicated training budget, and the number of hours dedicated to training has increased slightly in the past year. The March 2022 Making a Difference (MAD) user survey suggested that more than 99% of customers believe the standards of customer care is 'good' or 'very good'. The service ranks in the top half nationally in terms of qualified staff per population.

In the newly re-located Neyland library, they offer an 'Open Plus' self-service system that allows customers the option of accessing the library outside of normal opening hours. This has been risk assessed with an induction for customers signing up. They are intending to bring this model into two more libraries across the next years. The introduction of Open Plus technology, alongside recruitment of volunteers, represents an important part of the overall strategy of the library service.

Digital data

Pembrokeshire provided minimal digital data. The service does not have data on online session usage or individuals attending The service's 'Click and Collect' orders reduced by 85% and it ranked in the bottom quartile across the services. E-issues per 1,000 population fell by 30% from the previous year and is in the bottom quartile nationally. The service recognised its website is not easy to navigate and advised it has plans to improve it.

Future plans

Pembrokeshire is rebuilding its service following the impact of Covid-19, with its main priority being to restore in-person use. It is investigating the removal of fines to see if this can encourage new and returned users. The service reported a strong record in targeted engagement and feedback which it is looking to build on. Following the completion of its risk assessment on services, it will be looking to reintroduce many of the partnership activities that have been limited over the past few years and look to improve Welsh language resources. Its application for Welsh Government capital funding will enable improvement of library spaces at Narberth Library.

In summer 2022, the service will finally exhibit works as part of the Masterpiece Tour by the painter Degas at Glan yr Afon Library in Haverfordwest on loan from the National Gallery and in partnership with the National Gallery, the National Library of Wales, and local schools.

Pembrokeshire provided two extensive case studies with examples from service users including the relocation of Neyland Library in a new 'hub' with a sports hall, bar and social club, Town Clerks Office and rooms for community use; and opportunities for children and young people to reengage and try new things post pandemic as part of the Winter of Well Being initiative.

Powys

Overview and location

Powys Library Service is run by Powys County Council. It has 18 static libraries of which three are community-managed libraries with access to the catalogue, and one is volunteer-run without access to the catalogue. 76% of residents live within 2.5 miles of a library.

Library service performance

Powys submitted evidence to show that its service fully met eight of the core entitlements and partially met four. The independent assessment considered that Powys fully met 10 of the core entitlements and partially met two (CE6 and CE12). The independent assessment found that CE6 was partially met due to user charges for requesting items sourced from within Wales as well as not being part of an inter-library lending scheme. CE12 was assessed as partially met as the most recent library strategy is out of date, although Powys reported that it was working on a new cultural strategy.

Core entitlement	Service self-assessment	Independent assessment
1 Libraries in Wales will be free to join and open to all.	Fully met	Fully met
2 Libraries in Wales will ensure friendly, knowledgeable and qualified staff are on hand to help.	Partially met	Fully met
3 Libraries in Wales will provide access to a range of services, activities and high quality resources in a range of formats to support learning, personal well-being and development, community participation, and culture and recreation.	Fully met	Fully met
4 Libraries in Wales will provide appropriate services, facilities and information resources for individuals and groups with special needs.	Fully met	Fully met
5 Libraries will provide appropriate safe, attractive and accessible physical spaces with suitable staffed opening hours.	Fully met	Fully met
6 Libraries in Wales will lend books for free and deliver free access to information, including online information resources available 24 hours a day.	Partially met	Partially met
7 Libraries in Wales will provide free use of the Internet and computers, including Wi-Fi.	Fully met	Fully met
8 Libraries in Wales will provide access to services, cultural activities and high quality resources in the Welsh language.	Fully met	Fully met
9 Libraries in Wales will work in partnership to share catalogues and facilitate access to the resources of all Welsh libraries.	Fully met	Fully met

10 Libraries in Wales will work with a range of partners to promote and deliver services to new and diverse audiences, enabling more people to benefit from their services.	Fully met	Fully met
11 Libraries in Wales will regularly consult users to gather their views on the service and information about their changing needs.	Partially met	Fully met
12 Libraries in Wales will provide access to the library service's strategy, policies, objectives and vision, in print and online, in a range of languages appropriate for the community.	Partially met	Partially met
Total – fully met	8	10
Total – partially met	4	2
Total – not met	0	0

Library use

Over the reporting year, the service had 97 active borrowers per 1,000 population, representing a 41% increase from the previous year. Adult book issues increased by 136% to 955 issues per 1,000 population, while children's book issues increased by 295% to 383 issues per 1,000 population. This was despite a long-term pattern of below average spending.

The mobile library service no longer operated, with Powys working on a Mobile Transformation programme to try and implement other outreach methods for residents who are housebound. The service was working with volunteers to make doorstep deliveries to isolated customers.

Highlights

Highlights for the reporting period included:

- Powys supported its rural communities through free access to technology and an iPad lending scheme. This played an important role as some residents only have access to poor broadband and Wi-Fi. The service therefore supported education, job-seeking and small businesses through these ICT provisions.
- The Reading Well collection of books continued to be promoted and expanded. A grant from Powys Teaching Health Board's Charitable Fund enabled the service to purchase four sets of 50 books about cancer which a Macmillan cancer support professional recommended.
- Virtual sessions such as Story Time, Lego Club and Dungeons and Dragons remained, with the aim to reintroduce more in-person activities.
- Welsh-speaking staff and fully bilingual signs meant that Powys created a more equitable environment for its Welsh-speaking residents.

Materials, Welsh language and overall spend

Powys' expenditure on materials grew by 35.5% over the year which meant it was able to acquire more items for the libraries. This increase raised it from the bottom quartile in the previous year to the second quartile in this reporting period. 16% of

the materials expenditure was on children's resources, which is in the bottom quartile nationally.

The service spent 5% of its budget on Welsh language materials which was 1% less than the previous year, although in real terms the Welsh materials budget actually increased. The service ranked in the second quartile of services for spend on Welsh language materials and issues. The service aims to return to holding Welsh language classes in person along with Welsh Rhyme and Story Times.

Staffing

There has been an increase in full-time equivalent (FTE) staff, and other staff have a range of qualifications including one member studying for a Masters in Business Administration and another who has recently completed an ILM Level 5 Higher Apprenticeship in Leadership and Management. The service has been without a Principal Librarian due to a secondment but, the Principal Librarian is due to return in April 2023. The pandemic provided the opportunity for staff to meet virtually, which helped remove previous geographical or logistical constraints. It has also meant that the service has been able to do quarterly county-wide Branch Librarian meetings.

The service provides induction training for all members of staff and any additional training as required. Following the successful bid to the Covid Recovery Fund, staff had access to new digital equipment and received digital training in Squarespace, Canva and Facebook. Access to external training is encouraged as is the sharing of learning from individual training.

Digital data

Powys provided digital data including 'Click and Collect' and online sessions. It was in the third quartile for e-issues per 1000 population. Click and Collect orders saw a reduction of 72%. On the website, Powys provided access to online orders, renewing of books and checking of the reference library. They provided e-resources such as e-books, magazines and borrowing iPads. A Digital Presence Group has been created focused on delivering the online strategy and new website.

Future plans

Powys County Council was prioritising the reinstatement of services post-pandemic. The most recent library service strategy was due to be updated in 2019/20 but was not. There is now a plan to produce a five-year Cultural Services Strategy for 2022-27. A Powys Cultural Services Digital Strategy has already been completed in 2021/22 and there is now a Digital Presence group which is intended to improve digital communication across all areas of cultural services. StoriPowys, a new website for the library service and other cultural services, was near completion at the time Powys submitted its evidence.

Case studies

Powys provided two case studies including how a user had access to technology for the first time via the iPad Lending Scheme and another on how a user enhanced his digital skills using the Scheme.

Rhondda Cynon Taf

Overview and location

Rhondda Cynon Taf Library Service is run by Rhondda Cynon Taf Borough Council. The service consisted of 13 libraries and a home delivery library service. 93% of residents lived within 2.5 miles of a library.

Library service performance

Rhondda Cynon Taf provided evidence that it fully met all the core entitlements. The independent assessment agreed with this assessment.

Core entitlement	Service self-assessment	Independent assessment
1 Libraries in Wales will be free to join and open to all.	Fully met	Fully met
2 Libraries in Wales will ensure friendly, knowledgeable and qualified staff are on hand to help.	Fully met	Fully met
3 Libraries in Wales will provide access to a range of services, activities and high quality resources in a range of formats to support learning, personal well-being and development, community participation, and culture and recreation.	Fully met	Fully met
4 Libraries in Wales will provide appropriate services, facilities and information resources for individuals and groups with special needs.	Fully met	Fully met
5 Libraries will provide appropriate safe, attractive and accessible physical spaces with suitable staffed opening hours.	Fully met	Fully met
6 Libraries in Wales will lend books for free and deliver free access to information, including online information resources available 24 hours a day.	Fully met	Fully met
7 Libraries in Wales will provide free use of the Internet and computers, including Wi-Fi.	Fully met	Fully met
8 Libraries in Wales will provide access to services, cultural activities and high quality resources in the Welsh language.	Fully met	Fully met
9 Libraries in Wales will work in partnership to share catalogues and facilitate access to the resources of all Welsh libraries.	Fully met	Fully met
10 Libraries in Wales will work with a range of partners to promote and deliver services to new and diverse audiences, enabling more people to benefit from their services.	Fully met	Fully met
11 Libraries in Wales will regularly consult users to gather their views on the service and information about their changing needs.	Fully met	Fully met
12 Libraries in Wales will provide access to the library service's strategy, policies, objectives and vision, in print	Fully met	Fully met

and online, in a range of languages appropriate for the community.		
Total - fully met	12	12
Total - partially met	0	0
Total - not met	0	0

Library use

Over the reporting year, the service had 60 active borrowers per 1,000 population, representing a 37% decrease from the previous year. Adult book issues increased by 135% to 747 issues per 1,000 population, while children's book issues increased by 662% to 495 issues per 1,000 population. The customer satisfaction survey (2022) showed that 99% of users rated the service as good or very good.

Highlights

Highlights in this reporting period included:

- The service is committed to helping its residents improve their digital skills and offers free access to ICT and 24/7 access to a range of digital resources. It worked with Communities for Work Plus and Job Clubs to improve the job prospects of residents.
- The development of community hubs with libraries located in them has enabled citizens to access a range of services all in one place and enabled library staff to work closely with community co-ordinators to signpost users and target support.
- The service provided a range of schemes to help with health and wellbeing including 'Better with Books' and 'Reading Well – Dementia and Mental Health'. The Welsh Government-funded Winter of Wellbeing campaign held 36 events with 316 children attending.
- Treorchy Library was a partner in the Business Improvement District (Love Treorchy) initiative to help boost the profile of the town and provided space for events for Love Treorchy. Treorchy Library developed as a cultural hub in collaboration with the local theatre.

Materials, Welsh language and overall spend

Rhondda Cynan Taff budget on materials increased slightly on the previous year. It was in the second quartile for materials spend per 1000 population. 15% was spent on children's resources putting it in the bottom quartile nationally.

The service spent 4% of its budget on Welsh language materials, and is in the second quartile for spend on Welsh materials and issues per 1000 Welsh speakers. Rhondda Cynon Taf aimed to promote its Welsh language stock and increase the number of Welsh language events offered to get borrowing back to pre-pandemic levels. Downloads of Welsh language titles increased from 341 to 456 from the previous years.

Three area libraries opened 49 hours a week including Saturday morning and one late evening every week. The branch libraries developed a cluster model to ensure that in each area there is a library open six days a week.

The service worked with external organisations and other Council departments to provide more activities for children in English and Welsh. Activities included book clubs, dementia groups and sign language groups.

Staffing

The number of full-time employees increased due to the appointment of a Heritage Project Coordinator. 10 members of staff currently have recognised library-related qualifications, including the operational manager. Two staff members are currently working towards a professional qualification.

The number of staff hours dedicated to online training increased from the previous year. The service has a budget to fund training, excluding funding of the professional qualifications and in house training, and courses to improve Welsh language are encouraged. Regular meetings were held with staff and managers to identify best practice.

Digital data

Rhondda Cynon Taf provided digital data including 'Click and Collect', online sessions held and number of individuals who viewed live/recorded sessions. The service saw a reduction in its digital data figures, except for individuals participating in online sessions which increased. Click and Collect reduced by 60% on the previous year, but it was in the top quartile nationally. E-issues reduced by 7% on the previous year and it was in the bottom quartile nationally. The service had to remove some content due to publishers setting limits to the time content could remain online. Whilst the number of online sessions reduced by 28%, individuals participating in the online sessions increased by 11%. The service provided e-resources, such as a children's library, the ability to reserve and renew items and searching of catalogues. The service claimed that the online offer is deliberately broad including free online music, an online language learning programme which is available in over 110 languages, and online resources which support mental health.

Future plans

Rhondda Cynon Taf's priorities are to continue to build back the audience that was using the service pre-pandemic, to develop the cultural Hub at Treorchy alongside the Parc and Dare Theatre and to monitor the balance of digital and physical resources in the library. The service is also aiming to increase investment in its digital collections, adding three new collections to its online resources, as well as spending additional funds on e-books and e-audiobooks.

Case studies

Rhondda Cynon Taf provided three case studies with quotes from users. This included one on non-traditional use of library services as a safe space where users can get advice and referrals to other services; and one on "Peoples Library Wales" which had human books to illustrate lived experience and challenge biases.

Swansea

Overview and location

Library services in Swansea were delivered by Swansea Council. The service included 17 branches and one home delivery vehicle, with 96% of residents living within 2.5 miles of a library.

Library service performance

Swansea provided evidence that it fully met all 12 core entitlements. The independent assessment agreed.

Core entitlement	Service self-assessment	Independent assessment
1 Libraries in Wales will be free to join and open to all.	Fully met	Fully met
2 Libraries in Wales will ensure friendly, knowledgeable and qualified staff are on hand to help.	Fully met	Fully met
3 Libraries in Wales will provide access to a range of services, activities and high quality resources in a range of formats to support learning, personal well-being and development, community participation, and culture and recreation.	Fully met	Fully met
4 Libraries in Wales will provide appropriate services, facilities and information resources for individuals and groups with special needs.	Fully met	Fully met
5 Libraries will provide appropriate safe, attractive and accessible physical spaces with suitable staffed opening hours.	Fully met	Fully met
6 Libraries in Wales will lend books for free and deliver free access to information, including online information resources available 24 hours a day.	Fully met	Fully met
7 Libraries in Wales will provide free use of the Internet and computers, including Wi-Fi.	Fully met	Fully met
8 Libraries in Wales will provide access to services, cultural activities and high quality resources in the Welsh language.	Fully met	Fully met
9 Libraries in Wales will work in partnership to share catalogues and facilitate access to the resources of all Welsh libraries.	Fully met	Fully met
10 Libraries in Wales will work with a range of partners to promote and deliver services to new and diverse audiences, enabling more people to benefit from their services.	Fully met	Fully met
11 Libraries in Wales will regularly consult users to gather their views on the service and information about their changing needs.	Fully met	Fully met
12 Libraries in Wales will provide access to the library service's strategy, policies, objectives and vision, in	Fully met	Fully met

print and online, in a range of languages appropriate for the community.		
Total – fully met	12	12
Total – partially met	0	0
Total – not met	0	0

Library use

Over the reporting year, the service had 167 active borrowers per 1,000 population, representing a 30% increase from the previous year. Adult book issues increased by 600% to 2,505 issues per 1,000 population, while children's book issues increased by 1470% to 2,073 issues per 1,000 population.

Membership meanwhile reduced by over 4,500, though some of this can be attributed to heavy data cleansing. Overall, Swansea libraries saw a strong return of its physical offer with electronic downloads and 'Click and Collect' both reducing as physical issues increased impressively.

Highlights

Highlights for the year included:

- The service worked with the Good Things Foundation on the 'Everyone Connected' initiative to distribute free personal devices and data to those in data poverty.
- The service continued to support and promote the Reading Well for Mental Health schemes in all libraries and supported the Education Programmes for Patients (EPP) service, who provided a variety of free self-management courses for people living with long-term health conditions and for carers.
- The service worked towards the de-colonisation of its collections. This included the use of Collection HQ to monitor the diversity of stock and work on making the stock across the libraries represents Black, Asian and minority cultures as well as the LGBTQIA+ community.
- The service removed library fines temporarily – this will continue into 2022/23.

Materials, Welsh language and overall spend

The service's material expenditure has returned to previous level after a 25% overall reduction in 2020/21. The service placed in the top quartile in terms of book budget and in the third quartile for materials spend per 1,000 population. 18% of materials spend was on children's resources, the service placed in the median across Wales. The high number of both children and adult book issues suggest the current stock is popular and is a based on a good selection of new materials.

The percentage of spend on Welsh language resources decreased, but the actual spend per 1,000 population increased, with the service in the third quartile nationally in terms of issues per Welsh speaker. The service used social media to promote their Welsh language content and continued to build relationships with Welsh language primary schools to help support pupils.

Despite some issues related to Covid-19 remaining, the service provided a range of events to both children and adults, with over 33,000 people attending. Events included regular rhyme times, coding clubs and carer afternoons as well as newer initiatives such as hosting the Kurdish All Wales Association to provide a space for their work in supporting Black, Asian and minority communities.

Staffing

The service ranked in the top quartile for total staff per 10,000 population but for library-qualified staff it was in the bottom quartile. The service acknowledged the need to build library qualifications and staff training and was taking steps to address this, including supporting a cohort of staff to complete 'Digital Champions' training.

Digital data

Swansea provided digital data including click and collect and the number of online sessions held. 'Click and Collect' orders reduced by 69%, and e-issues by 20%, although the service ranked in the third quartile for both these services nationally. Online sessions increased by 628% but this large increase was partially due to the new use of a social media management platform that provided more data on activity and engagement than the previous year. The service provided online renewals and item requests, and links to wellbeing, business support and newspapers.

Future plans

Swansea Council's libraries showed many positive signs of recovery. The increase in borrowers and issues suggest much of the hard work in bringing users back to libraries has worked. Over the course of 22/23, the plan to build on its recovery by continuing to build relationships with schools in the local area to bring in new users, host a new Cultural Community Coordinator to develop partnership working and impact across the wider cultural sector, and continue to be prominent in delivering digital inclusion priorities.

A major challenge and opportunity on the horizon is the planned move of Swansea Central Library to a new location supported by Welsh Government Transforming Towns and Transformation Capital Grants funding, and UK Government Levelling Up funding.

Case studies

Swansea provided four case studies including stories from library users. This included activities by of local volunteers in the Kurdish All Wales Association delivering free Kurdish classes for children aged 6-8 years and the improved relationship between Penlan Library and a local Welsh-language school.

Torfaen

Overview and locations

Library services in Torfaen were delivered by the Torfaen County Borough Council. The service included three branches and one home delivery vehicle, with 97% of residents living within 2.5 miles of a library.

Library service performance

Torfaen provided evidence they had met all 12 core entitlements. The independent assessment agreed.

Core entitlement	Service self-assessment	Independent assessment
1 Libraries in Wales will be free to join and open to all.	Fully met	Fully met
2 Libraries in Wales will ensure friendly, knowledgeable and qualified staff are on hand to help.	Fully met	Fully met
3 Libraries in Wales will provide access to a range of services, activities and high quality resources in a range of formats to support learning, personal well-being and development, community participation, and culture and recreation.	Fully met	Fully met
4 Libraries in Wales will provide appropriate services, facilities and information resources for individuals and groups with special needs.	Fully met	Fully met
5 Libraries will provide appropriate safe, attractive and accessible physical spaces with suitable staffed opening hours.	Fully met	Fully met
6 Libraries in Wales will lend books for free and deliver free access to information, including online information resources available 24 hours a day.	Fully met	Fully met
7 Libraries in Wales will provide free use of the Internet and computers, including Wi-Fi.	Fully met	Fully met
8 Libraries in Wales will provide access to services, cultural activities and high quality resources in the Welsh language.	Fully met	Fully met
9 Libraries in Wales will work in partnership to share catalogues and facilitate access to the resources of all Welsh libraries.	Fully met	Fully met
10 Libraries in Wales will work with a range of partners to promote and deliver services to new and diverse audiences, enabling more people to benefit from their services.	Fully met	Fully met
11 Libraries in Wales will regularly consult users to gather their views on the service and information about their changing needs.	Fully met	Fully met
12 Libraries in Wales will provide access to the library service's strategy, policies, objectives and	Fully met	Fully met

vision, in print and online, in a range of languages appropriate for the community.		
Total – fully met	12	12
Total – partially met	0	0
Total – not met	0	0

Library use

Over the reporting year, the service had 77 active borrowers per 1,000 population, representing a 108% increase from the previous year and ranking the service in the second quartile nationally. Adult book issues increased by 103% to 648 issues per 1,000 population, while children's book issues increased by 301% to 365 issues per 1,000 population. The pandemic had increased the use of the Borrowbox service. Although the number of e-issues decreased slightly, e-issues per 1,000 population were maintained in the second quartile this year, even after libraries reopened for physical lending.

Highlights

Highlights included:

- Welsh Government-funding for the Winter of Wellbeing enabled the delivery of high-quality events for local children. These included creative writing sessions, storytelling sessions and digital story workshops among others, which 753 Torfaen children attended across three libraries.
- A new partnership with Bron Afon Social Housing resulted in collaborative outreach activity with Cwmbran families and the Blaenavon Healthy Partnership scheme. The event held for the Community Assist Information Day resulted in 79 interactions with lapsed and non-library members.
- Digital skills acquired by staff through the Estyn Allan project enabled a continuing programme of online activities, including the popular Rhyme Time 'Jukebox' sessions, and improved digital Summer Reading Challenge promotions to local schools.

Materials, Welsh language and overall spend

Torfaen is in the bottom quartile for materials spend per 1000 population. However, 17% was spent on children's resources, putting it on the first quartile. Children's issues per 1000 population increased 400% on the previous year from 91 to 365.

The service ranked in the bottom quartile for Welsh language issues per 1,000 population and only 2% of materials spend was on Welsh language materials. Although Welsh materials spend is low, senior staff reported working hard to promote their Welsh resources and services, which are incorporated into children's offers.

The service saw a temporary reduction in open hours across all its libraries in January 2022, but in person activities have increased. The ending of Covid-19 restrictions saw the reintroduction of 'in person' groups such as baby Rhyme Time, Story and Craft sessions, Knit and Natter, and reading groups (all but the Knit and Natter group were run digitally during the Covid-19 period of the previous year.) The

re-establishment of connections with schools through outreach was believed to have contributed to increased children's issues.

Staffing

The service has one of the lowest levels of staff and library-qualified staff nationally at 1.44FTE per 10,000 population. This includes four part-time library assistants and two part-time professional posts which were vacant with the proposal to combine into a full-time professional post going forward. The service acknowledges difficulties in staff development, specifically senior staff, but are proposing to provide more opportunities in 2022/23. Staff hours spent in training had however increased significantly over the last year with Torfaen Council offering a programme of health and wellbeing training to staff.

Digital data

Torfaen provided digital data including the number of online sessions held and individuals that took part in live or recorded sessions, but not 'Click and Collect' due to apparent difficulties in capturing reliable data. Both the number of online sessions and individuals participating decreased over the year. In terms of e-issues, there was a decrease of 18% from the previous year, which was attributed to the return to in-person borrowing and the high take up during the pandemic. Torfaen is in the second quartile for e-issues nationally. Their website provided access to a range of online resources including e-books and help for health and wellbeing and explained details of library charges. The service has committed to making 'Click and Collect' part of the core offer going forward.

Future plans

Torfaen reports having an uncertain period ahead. The decision to reduce opening hours is temporary but is set to remain in place while the service 'reflect[s] on the transformation proposed in the Library Strategy and on the long-term effects of Covid on the service'.

The co-location of the service with Citizens Advice Bureau, Gateway Credit Union Service, and the Council's customer service are opportunities to increase use and impact. New partnerships have been established with housing and health agencies and the service plans to keep developing outreach to new audiences.

Case studies

Torfaen provided four extensive case studies including quotes. These included on a new partnership with Bron Afon and activities delivered via the Winter of Wellbeing programme for children and young people.

Vale of Glamorgan

Overview and locations

Library services in the Vale of Glamorgan are operated by the Vale of Glamorgan Council. The service consists of four static branches, five community-supported libraries and a volunteer-led home library service. 94% of residents live within 2.5 miles or a 10-minute public transport journey of a library. There is also one independent community library.

Library service performance

The Vale of Glamorgan submitted evidence that it had fully met all 12 of the core entitlements. The independent assessment was that the service had fully met 10 of the core entitlements, partially met one (CE11), and did not meet one (CE12). CE11 was assessed as partially met as, despite consultation taking place for the Makerspace at Penarth Library, no evidence was provided of service-wide consultation or user surveys. CE12 was assessed as not met as the service does not currently have a strategy in place.

Core entitlement	Service self-assessment	Independent assessment
1 Libraries in Wales will be free to join and open to all.	Fully met	Fully met
2 Libraries in Wales will ensure friendly, knowledgeable and qualified staff are on hand to help.	Fully met	Fully met
3 Libraries in Wales will provide access to a range of services, activities and high quality resources in a range of formats to support learning, personal well-being and development, community participation, and culture and recreation.	Fully met	Fully met
4 Libraries in Wales will provide appropriate services, facilities and information resources for individuals and groups with special needs.	Fully met	Fully met
5 Libraries will provide appropriate safe, attractive and accessible physical spaces with suitable staffed opening hours.	Fully met	Fully met
6 Libraries in Wales will lend books for free and deliver free access to information, including online information resources available 24 hours a day.	Fully met	Fully met
7 Libraries in Wales will provide free use of the Internet and computers, including Wi-Fi.	Fully met	Fully met
8 Libraries in Wales will provide access to services, cultural activities and high quality resources in the Welsh language.	Fully met	Fully met
9 Libraries in Wales will work in partnership to share catalogues and facilitate access to the resources of all Welsh libraries.	Fully met	Fully met
10 Libraries in Wales will work with a range of partners to promote and deliver services to new and diverse audiences, enabling more people to benefit from their services.	Fully met	Fully met

11 Libraries in Wales will regularly consult users to gather their views on the service and information about their changing needs.	Fully met	Partially met
12 Libraries in Wales will provide access to the library service's strategy, policies, objectives and vision, in print and online, in a range of languages appropriate for the community.	Fully met	Not met
Total – fully met	12	10
Total – partially met	0	1
Total – not met	0	1

Library use

Over the reporting year, the service had 84 active borrowers per 1,000 population, representing a 71% increase from the previous year. Adult book issues increased by 120% to 696 issues per 1,000 population, while children's book issues increased by 436% to 407 issues per 1,000 population.

After re-opening its doors following the easing of pandemic restrictions, the Vale of Glamorgan's libraries were re-establishing themselves as a community meeting place, contributing to the wellbeing of their communities. All measures of use including website visits have increased with the exception of electronic downloads. As well as its in-person service returning, volunteers enabled the Vale of Glamorgan to continue its housebound delivery service.

Highlights

Over the course of the reporting year, Vale of Glamorgan libraries carried out a number of improvements to their facilities. Highlights of this work included:

- Launching a 'Makerspace' at Penarth Library with equipment available for creating and editing projects supported by Welsh Government Capital Transformation Funding. The resources available included: editing and creating software for music, images and products; a 3D printer; laser cutters for wood, metal, plastic and card; and printers for T-shirts.
- Updating public PC equipment. Following this and an earlier refresh in 2020, all PCs now run Windows 10 and are no more than 18 months old. It also re-launched their successful iPad loan scheme.
- The Friends of Penarth Library provided a makeover for an eco-garden attached to the Library, to be used for storytelling and children's activities. Other libraries have garden areas that can be used in similar ways.

Materials, Welsh language and overall spend

Vale of Glamorgan was in the top quartile of services for both capital and revenue expenditure and was in the third quartile for materials expenditure per 1,000 population. 14% was spent on children's resources putting it in the bottom quartile nationally. Membership of the Books4U scheme allowed free access to books across libraries in south east Wales. The service provided access to academic research, with the Access to Research link available on the libraries' PCs.

Vale of Glamorgan was in the third quartile of services for spend on Welsh language resources. It ranked in the second quartile for issues per 1000 Welsh speakers. While a range of resources were purchased, books and resources for children and young learners were particularly popular and were promoted by staff and tutors. The service has recruited bilingual staff and staff are supported to learn Welsh at work.

The service provided accessible resources such as large print books, audiobooks and assistive technology. The stock included a dementia-friendly collection of books and all staff have had dementia awareness training. There was also a book group for people with visual impairments held monthly at Penarth Library.

Staffing

Staff numbers were high in comparison with other services, with the Vale of Glamorgan in the top quartile for both the total number of staff and library-qualified staff per 10,000 population. Libraries are led by a team of seven professionally qualified managers who attend regular development opportunities. The service has a training budget for specialist library skills and for generic training such as customer care and health and safety. Over the reporting year 0.6% of staff time was spent in training and development. This was slightly reduced on the previous year, but was due to staff completing their mandatory training during the pandemic.

Digital data

Vale of Glamorgan provided digital data on various areas. The use of 'Click and Collect' fell by 25% and e-issues also reduced by 25% but was in the third quartile for services nationally. The online offer was comprehensive, offering a range of online services, including information on where there are warm spaces in the area, easy access to information on fees, multicultural services and other online services, including wellbeing information from Dewis Cymru. Use of online resources were strong, including subscription services such as Ancestry. Over the reporting year, the service purchased a subscription to Press Reader, allowing users to access newspapers and magazines. It also offered a tablet loaning service.

Future plans

Following the success of the Makerspace at Penarth Library, the service secured a Welsh Government Transformation Fund grant to provide a similar service at Barry Library. Work will begin in 2022/23 and the service will be tailored to local users and organisations.

The service will continue to focus on recovery from the effects of the pandemic. The service hopes to build on the monthly increases in library use, aiming for a full return to pre-pandemic levels. The service hopes that new staff, including the new library manager, will build on strong foundations and bring fresh ideas to the service.

Case studies

Vale of Glamorgan provided three extensive case studies including stories from users. This included a partnership with Taff Housing to support children of Afghan refugees and the involvement of a young service user in the design of the Makerspace at Penarth Library.

Wrexham

Overview and locations

Library services in Wrexham are delivered by Wrexham County Borough Council. The service includes 10 branches, one mobile, one home library delivery vehicle, and one community managed library. 92% of residents live within 2 miles of a library.

Library service performance

Wrexham provided evidence that showed it had fully met four of the 12 core entitlements, partially met seven and did not meet one. The independent assessment is that the service had fully met eight of the core entitlements, partially met two and did not meet two. The un-met core entitlements relate to a lack of public-access ICT equipment (CE7) and having a service strategy which has not been published in final form (CE12), although we are advised it will be published soon.

Core entitlement	Service self-assessment	Independent assessment
1 Libraries in Wales will be free to join and open to all.	Partially met	Fully met
2 Libraries in Wales will ensure friendly, knowledgeable and qualified staff are on hand to help.	Fully met	Fully met
3 Libraries in Wales will provide access to a range of services, activities and high quality resources in a range of formats to support learning, personal well-being and development, community participation, and culture and recreation.	Fully met	Fully met
4 Libraries in Wales will provide appropriate services, facilities and information resources for individuals and groups with special needs.	Partially met	Partially met
5 Libraries will provide appropriate safe, attractive and accessible physical spaces with suitable staffed opening hours.	Partially met	Partially Met
6 Libraries in Wales will lend books for free and deliver free access to information, including online information resources available 24 hours a day.	Partially met	Fully Met
7 Libraries in Wales will provide free use of the Internet and computers, including Wi-Fi.	Not met	Not met
8 Libraries in Wales will provide access to services, cultural activities and high quality resources in the Welsh language.	Fully met	Fully met
9 Libraries in Wales will work in partnership to share catalogues and facilitate access to the resources of all Welsh libraries.	Partially met	Fully met
10 Libraries in Wales will work with a range of partners to promote and deliver services to new and	Fully met	Fully met

diverse audiences, enabling more people to benefit from their services.		
11 Libraries in Wales will regularly consult users to gather their views on the service and information about their changing needs.	Partially met	Fully met
12 Libraries in Wales will provide access to the library service's strategy, policies, objectives and vision, in print and online, in a range of languages appropriate for the community.	Partially met	Not met
Total – fully met	4	8
Total – partially met	7	2
Total – not met	1	2

Library use

Over the reporting year, the service had 62 active borrowers per 1,000 population, representing a 41% increase from the previous year. Adult book issues increased by 67% to 903 issues per 1,000 population, while children's book issues increased by 257% to 450 issues per 1,000 population.

Highlights

The service continues to focus on reaching new users and supporting the most vulnerable and has developed a new strategy. Despite resource constraints, it has delivered a number of innovative services across the last year including:

- In partnership with Citizen Advice Bureau and Community Councils it reintroduced the 'CAB (Citizens Advice Bureau) Outreach Sessions' in Cefn Mawr and Rhos Libraries. This has enabled individuals, residents and communities to access impartial confidential advice on any topic including employment, benefits, debt and money. The success has meant that the outreach sessions will continue to be offered in 2022/23.
- Delivery of environmental art workshops, craft workshops with young carers, and a health and wellbeing roadshow as part of the Welsh Government-funded Winter of Wellbeing for young people.

Materials, Welsh language and overall spend

Wrexham's book budget increased by 27% on the previous year and it is in the third quartile for materials spend per 1000 population. 16% of the materials budget was spent on children's resources, putting it in the bottom quartile nationally.

Welsh language issues per 1,000 Welsh speakers places the service in the third quartile of services in Wales, and it continued to deliver a breadth of Welsh language services that were promoted through a number of Welsh language organisations. This is despite comparatively low spend on Welsh resources of 2% of materials budget, suggesting that selection of resources remains strong, and materials remain up to date and relevant.

Due to budget and resourcing pressures, the opening hours of the library services reduced. Despite this, the service continued to provide a good level of service accessibility. Its HomeLink/housebound library service is available county-wide for all housebound customers and for paid and unpaid carers.

Staffing

Wrexham had 1.7FTE staff per 10,000 population, 0.28FTE professionally qualified staff per 10,000 population and 3.8FTE professional staff putting it in the bottom quartile nationally for these measures. Resource constraints have had a significant impact on staffing levels, and the service showed little evidence of work on staff development and progression. However, the service appears to have managed to maintain a good standard of customer care; 93% of adults think the standard of customer care by staff is 'very good' or 'good' according to their satisfaction survey, despite continued reduction of staffing levels.

Digital

Wrexham provided 'Click and Collect' and e-issues digital data. The service faced difficulties in reporting due to staff shortages, and it heavily reduced the provision of online services after restrictions eased in September 2021. Its digital offer was significantly affected by the lack of ICT equipment provision. In terms of e-issues per 1,000 population, Wrexham saw a decrease of 33% from the previous year and is now in the bottom quartile nationally. Whilst 'Click and Collect' saw a reduction of 62% from the previous year, the service remained in the third quartile nationally. Strategic aims include providing services for communities who live farthest from libraries through outreach library services.

Future plans

Wrexham were aware of the challenges that low budgets and low staffing bring, and the ongoing pressure on current council budgets. It remains committed to developing a resilient service that meets the needs of local communities. A new strategy was being developed that promises to develop a platform the service can build on to improve. By the summer of 2022, Wrexham was planning to pilot a new 'Public Access to Computers Offer'. Once all issues are resolved this offer will be rolled out to all branch libraries. This will enable each library to offer a programme of informal and formal training sessions to meet the needs of their local individuals and communities.

The service was also considering how it could continue to consult with users, having found this to be more difficult following the impact of Covid-19. Additionally, it hopes the relocation of Contact Wrexham (planned for 2022/23) and Wrexham Archives (planned for 2023/24) to Wrexham City Library will improve and enhance the library offer to residents, visitors and communities. It aims to consider all options in terms of relocation of other services, organisations and/or businesses into library buildings to reach more users, improve the offer and customer experience.

Case studies

Wrexham provided two case studies with images to illustrate the work undertaken during the Winter of Wellbeing and on Citizen Advice Bureau Outreach sessions.