

Welsh Public Library Standards: Annual Reports 2022-23

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Ministerial Foreword

2022-23 saw public libraries continuing to rebuild their services post pandemic. For this year's return I requested that services report against the full framework so that we could measure the extent of their recovery.

A strong theme coming from all reports is the support that libraries have provided to their communities during the cost of living crisis. From warm spaces, to providing advice and support, libraries are providing a valuable function as a community space and support service. This goes beyond the remit of the Core Entitlements.

I am also proud of the work that libraries do to support the mental health and wellbeing of their local communities, in particular combating loneliness and social isolation.

With the breadth of services on offer, it is no wonder that over 10% of the population are active library users – something that our public libraries should be proud of.

I recognise the current financial situation is impacting on the level of services that public libraries provide. Libraries are responding by adapting to these constraints, and it is important that they continue to provide a comprehensive and efficient library service to their communities.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rebecca Evans". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'R' and a trailing flourish.

Rebecca Evans MS

Minister for Finance and Local Government

Data Collection Process

For 2022-23, each service:

- Summarised their provision against the 12 core entitlements of the WPLS
- Recorded their achievements against the 16 quality indicators of the WPLS
- Provided a narrative report on future direction
- Provided a narrative report on the strategic context: how the library service is contributing to wider Welsh Government priorities and strategic goals
- Provided a narrative statement with an example of the impact of the service on individuals or groups.

Below is an infographic illustrating how Welsh Public Libraries serve their communities.

Welsh libraries continue to serve the population as the following compiled national figures show:

4,467,588 adult book issues
1.7 per head of 16+ population



3,105,764 children's book issues
5.7 per head of under 16 population



329,247 active borrowers
10.6% of the population



Annual Assessment Report 2022/2023

This report has been prepared based on information provided in Bridgend's annual return, impact statements and narrative report submitted to the Culture Division of the Welsh Government.

1. Executive summary

Bridgend met all of the 12 core entitlements in full. Of the 10 quality indicators which have targets, Bridgend achieved 5 in full and 2 in part. Two targets were not met and the final target is unknown as the service report that as a charitable trust they do not have access to the software to calculate this.

Bridgend continues to display a strong emphasis on library programmes, alongside staff development and continued partnership working with the local community, to ensure that the service remains resilient and continues to meet the needs of the community. The service also has a strong Welsh language offer in terms of staffing activities, despite not meeting the target for Welsh language acquisitions. Bridgend's commitment to community engagement and consultation is a significant strength and customers report high levels of satisfaction with the service. The service has identified a coherent set of priorities for the coming year and is taking steps to improve its digital and online provision, including improvements to its website and digital outreach provision.

- The service performs well in terms of customer satisfaction; 100% of adult user survey respondents rated the standard of customer care and the library overall as 'very good' or 'good' overall (Q12).
- Library events are well-attended; attendances at events per capita is in the top quartile of library authorities (Q16).
- The child's book stock is well-used; issues per capita are in the top quartile of Welsh library authorities (Q19).
- Professional development is well-supported; Bridgend is in the top quartile of library authorities for staff hours spent on training (Q113).

2. Performance against the standards

The standards framework comprises of core entitlements, quality indicators with targets, quality indicators with benchmarks and impact measures. Section 2 summarises achievements against these areas. A narrative assessment of the authority's performance is provided in Section 3.

2.1 Core entitlements

Bridgend reported meeting all of the 12 Core Entitlements in full through self-assessment, providing detailed and helpful commentary within the return on each area covered. The independent assessor agreed with the self-assessment.

2.2 Quality indicators with targets

There are 16 quality indicators (QIs), of which 10 have constituent targets. Of these, Bridgend is achieving 5 in full and 2 in part. Two targets were not met and the final target is unknown as the service report that as a charitable trust they do not have access to the software to calculate this.

| Quality Indicator | Met? | |
|--|--------------|---------------|
| QI 3 Support for individual development: | | Met in full |
| a) ICT support | √ | |
| b) Information literacy and skills training | √ | |
| c) E-government support | √ | |
| d) Reader development | √ | |
| QI 4 (a) Support for health and well-being | | Met in full |
| i) Book Prescription Wales scheme | √ | |
| ii) Better with Books/Reading Well scheme | √ | |
| iii) Designated health & well-being collection | √ | |
| iv) Information about healthy lifestyles and behaviours | √ | |
| v) Signposting to health & well-being services | √ | |
| QI 6 All static service points offer events/activities for users with special requirements | √ | Met in full |
| QI 7 Location of service points | Not provided | Unknown |
| QI 9 Up-to-date and appropriate reading material | | Not met |
| Acquisitions per capita | x | |
| <u>or</u> Materials spend per capita | x | |
| QI 10 Welsh Language Resources | | Not met |
| % of material budget spent on Welsh | x | |
| <u>or</u> Spend on Welsh per capita | x | |
| QI 11 Online access: | | Met in full |
| a) i) Public access to Internet | √ | |
| ii) Wi-Fi provision | √ | |
| QI 12 Supply of requests | | Partially met |
| a) % of requests satisfied within 7 days | √ | |
| b) % of requests satisfied within 15 days | x | |
| QI 13 Staffing levels and qualifications: | | Partially met |
| i) Staff per capita | x | |
| ii) Qualified staff per capita | √ | |
| iii) Head of service qualification/training | √ | |
| iv) CPD percentage | √ | |
| QI 16 Opening hours per capita | √ | Met in full |

2.3 Impact measures

The framework includes three indicators aimed at assessing the impact of library use on people's lives. These indicators do not have targets, and authorities were only

required to carry out user surveys for QI1 once over the original three-year period of the framework (2017-20). The summary figures (lowest, median and highest) are based on all authorities providing data in the 2022-23 return. Rankings reflect the numbers of respondents, where 1 is the highest scoring authority. However, it is important to bear in mind that some authorities have conducted surveys since 2020, whilst others report survey data from before the Covid pandemic. Some responses therefore reflect the situation several years ago, whilst others may have been affected by disruption during the pandemic period. As a result, there are limitations on the extent to which these data might be considered comparable.

Bridgend completed its adult and children’s user survey in March 2020.

| Performance indicator | | Rank | Lowest | Median | Highest |
|---|-----|-------|--------|--------|---------|
| QI 1 Making a difference | | | | | |
| b) % of young people who think that the library helps them learn and find things out: | 90% | =7/16 | 58% | 90% | 98% |
| e) % of adults who think that the library has made a difference to their lives: | 89% | 7/16 | 41% | 86.5% | 96% |
| QI 5 b) % of attendees of training sessions who said that the training had helped them achieve their goals: | 98% | =7/17 | 82% | 96% | 100% |

Authorities are also asked to provide an impact statement describing the impact which the library service has had on an individual or on a group of individuals during the year.

Bridgend provided an impact statement which referred to the value of the Books on Wheels service to people facing challenges reaching a static library. The service delivers books, CDs and audio books to customers, and assists customers with accessing other services including online resources and iPads. One customer living alone with deteriorating sight referred to the sense of well-being, increased confidence and comfort that listening to the wide range of audiobooks using the BoomBox service provided. She also looked forward to the visits from the library service and valued the contact and interaction with the library staff.

2.4 Quality indicators and benchmarks

The remaining indicators do not have targets but allow services to monitor and benchmark their performance over time, in comparison with other authorities. The following table summarises Bridgend’s position for 2022-23. Ranks are included out of 22, where 1 is the highest, and 22 the lowest scoring authority, unless stated otherwise. Indicators where fewer than 22 authorities supplied data are those where relevant data was not available from some authorities. Indicators ‘per capita’ are calculated per 1,000 population unless otherwise noted.

| Performance indicator | | Rank | Lowest | Median | Highest |
|--|--------|--------|--------|---------|---------|
| QI 1 Making a difference | | | | | |
| a) % of adults who think that using the library has helped them develop new skills | 66% | 11/16 | 24% | 69.5% | 90% |
| c) health and well-being | 55% | 10/16 | 35% | 66.5% | 94% |
| d) enjoyable, safe and inclusive | 97% | =8/16 | 93% | 97% | 100% |
| QI 2 Customer satisfaction | | | | | |
| a) 'very good' or 'good' choice of books | 99% | 1/16 | 80% | 91% | 99% |
| b) 'very good' or 'good' customer care | 100% | 1/17 | 92% | 98% | 100% |
| c) 'very good' or 'good' IT facilities | 99% | 1/16 | 65% | 86% | 99% |
| d) 'very good' or 'good' overall | 100% | =1/17 | 94% | 98% | 100% |
| e) users aged 16 & under rating out of ten | 9.3 | =8/16 | 8.0 | 9.3 | 9.7 |
| QI 5 User training | | | | | |
| a) attendances per capita | 7 | =13/22 | 1 | 10.5 | 222 |
| c) informal training per capita | 5 | 19/19 | 5 | 131 | 424 |
| QI 6 attendances at events per capita | 559 | 1/22 | 13 | 165 | 559 |
| QI 8 Library use | | | | | |
| a) visits per capita | 1,645 | 17/21 | 781 | 2,106 | 4,814 |
| b) virtual visits per capita | 468 | 14/22 | 124 | 537.5 | 7,979 |
| c) active borrowers per capita | 106 | =12/22 | 43 | 106.5 | 167 |
| QI 10 Welsh issues per capita | 52 | 12/22 | 13 | 53 | 864 |
| QI 11 Online access | | | | | |
| a) Computers per 10,000 | 4.46 | 20/22 | 3.32 | 7.99 | 16.99 |
| b) % of available time used by the public | 8% | 16/19 | 7% | 11% | 77% |
| QI 13 Staffing levels and qualifications ¹ | | | | | |
| (v) a) total volunteers | 36 | - | 0 | 8 | 256 |
| b) volunteer hours | 1,292 | - | 0 | 583.5 | 14,014 |
| QI 14 Operational expenditure | | | | | |
| a) total expenditure per capita | £9,828 | 14/21 | £6,726 | £11,476 | £27,330 |
| b) % on staff | 72% | 4/21 | 46% | 64% | 78% |
| % on information resources | 14% | 6/21 | 5% | 12% | 21% |
| % on equipment and buildings | 4% | =9/21 | 1% | 3% | 29% |
| % on other operational costs | 10% | 15/21 | 1% | 15% | 35% |
| c) capital expenditure per capita | £1,733 | 3/21 | -£479 | £145 | £2,865 |
| QI 15 Net cost per visit ² | £2.88 | 11/19 | £0.41 | £2.76 | £6.22 |
| QI 16 Opening hours ³ | | | | | |
| (iii) a) % hours unplanned closure of static service points | 0% | =1/22 | 0% | 0.05% | 0.95% |
| b) % mobile stops / home deliveries missed | 0% | =1/20 | 0% | 0% | 3.74% |

¹ Following discussion with the peer review group it was decided not to include rankings for volunteers as the implications of volunteer numbers are ambiguous.

² Rankings here have been reversed, so that 1 is the lowest scoring (best performing) authority.

³ Rankings here have been reversed, so that 1 is the lowest scoring (best performing) authority.

3. Analysis of performance

The core entitlements and quality indicators can be divided into four key areas. This section of the report outlines performance under these areas.

3.1 Meeting customer needs (QI 1-5)

Bridgend appreciates the importance of responding to customer needs, for example, using data from annual surveys to ensure post-Covid opening hours meet the needs of its communities and conducting research to help plan Pencoed's redevelopment. The service is at or above the median for customer satisfaction targets, including 100% of adult user survey respondents who rated the standard of customer care and the library overall as 'very good' or 'good' overall (QI2). As part of this responsive approach, it is noted that libraries within the Trust are allocated an annual budget to allow staff to respond to customer or staff feedback to improve small details of the library, such as comfy seating for Warm Welcome areas and providing pop-up travel cots. Both formal and informal training attendances per capita are below the median (QI5). However, this may be related to adjustments post-Covid, as noted by a number of library services this year. The percentage of attendees who said that the training had helped them achieve their goals is above the median. Bridgend is also above the median for the percentage of adults who think that the library has made a difference to their lives (QI1)

3.2 Access and use (QI 6-8)

Bridgend held almost 1,000 adult events and over 1,600 children's events during the year, as well as eight online events. These included new social activities introduced in response to the cost-of-living crisis. Attendances at events per capita is in the top quartile of library authorities (QI6). Whilst the number of visits per capita is below the median, the number of active borrowers per capita is around the median and child book issues per capita are in the top quartile of Welsh library authorities (QI8). Although virtual visits per capita is below the median, Bridgend reports an increase in the number of users, new users and sessions on its website, along with an increase in average session duration. Actions taken to stimulate this increase include: improved the Google Analytics tracking across the website; more regular updating of the website with news, events etc.; more pages added to the website; improved SEO; and the use of Google Ad campaigns.

3.3 Facilities and services (QI 9-12)

Bridgend did not meet the target for acquisition of reading materials (QI9). It is noted that the increased spend on children's stock in the previous year budget meant that the service moved some of this budget in 22-23 to satisfy the growing number of requests for eBooks and eAudiobooks. Although Bridgend has not met the target for budget spend on Welsh language resources, the number of Welsh issues per capita is close to the median (QI10), and the service is informed by the needs of customers in the purchase of Welsh language resources, including buying stock at the request of the Welsh Language Discussion Group.

Bridgend meets the targets for online provision, but it is below the median for computers per capita and available time that computers are in use (QI11). However, opening times were shortened for periods of 22-23 and fewer PCs were available as

the library readjusted following Covid. The service has extended its IT outreach provision, with the iPads for Carers scheme being extended to all those in need of at-home digital provision and a partnership with the Good Things Foundation to offer free data to those in need. Bridgend partially met the target for supply of requests (Q112). Its performance in this area was impacted by more requests than would be usual being supplied through inter library loan, whilst two libraries were closed for refurbishment/to facilitate a move.

3.4 Expertise and capacity (Q1 13-16)

Although the overall target for staff per capita was not achieved, Bridgend is above the median for this target (Q113). The percentage of operational expenditure allocated to staffing is above the median (Q114). All vacancies that arose during 22-23 were filled, and a part-time library assistant post was added to the structure. Furthermore, two library volunteers went on to employment with the service. Staff training and development continues to be a priority, with Bridgend implementing a comprehensive staff training programme and being in the top quartile of library authorities for staff hours devoted to training. By focusing on training in key library skills, the service reports a rise in staff confidence in dealing with queries and managing stock. Cost per visit is close to the median (Q115). Bridgend kept its Covid opening hours through 22-23. Following a period of consultation, new opening hours will be introduced in 23-24. The service did not experience any emergency closures or missed home deliveries (Q116).

4. Strategic context

As part of the return, authorities are asked to report on how the library service is contributing to wider Welsh Government priorities and strategic goals. Bridgend highlights its new Social Impact Objectives, namely:

- **To create better life chances** by engaging with more people, improving literacy and digital literacy, supporting reading for pleasure, promoting independence and reducing social isolation.
- **To create memorable and positive experiences** by offering space to the community that meets their needs, offers flexibility, is welcoming and safe, and able to host different activities.
- **To support social regeneration and improve wellbeing** by improving access to health information, reducing social isolation and improving the wellbeing of participants.
- **Increase life skills and opportunities** through formal and informal training. Have a positive impact on literacy and information literacy.
- **To reduce energy consumption** and reduce our impact on the environment.

5. Future direction

Reporting on the authority's future direction and plans for the library service over the following year, Bridgend refers to the service's 2022-25 Library Plan. The identified priorities for 2023-24 are:

- Develop a consistent wellbeing activity programme, working with staff and partners.

- Identify training opportunities for staff to deliver wellbeing-related sessions e.g. Mindfulness, Shared Reading.
- Introduce a social programme for BOW users to reduce isolation.
- Launch Friends panel to engage with children and young people over a longer period.
- Conduct user and non-user surveys around the offer for children and young people.
- Carry out programme of author visits for schools.
- Continue installation of LED bulbs and solar panels where possible.

In addition, Maesteg Town Hall is currently undergoing a large re-development that will house Maesteg Library as well as the Local and Family History collection.

6. Conclusion

Bridgend continues to display a strong emphasis on library programmes, alongside staff development and continued partnership working with the local community, to ensure that the service remains resilient and continues to meet the needs of the community. The service also has a strong Welsh language offer in terms of staffing activities, despite not meeting the target for Welsh language acquisitions. Bridgend's commitment to community engagement and consultation is a significant strength and customers report high levels of satisfaction with the service. The service has identified a coherent set of priorities for the coming year and is taking steps to improve its digital and online provision, including improvements to its website and digital

Annual Assessment Report 2022/2023

This report has been prepared based on information provided in Blaenau Gwent's annual return, impact statements and narrative report submitted to the Culture Division of the Welsh Government.

1. Executive summary

Blaenau Gwent met all of the 12 core entitlements in full. Of the 10 quality indicators which have targets, Blaenau Gwent achieved 7 in full and 2 in part. The remaining target was not met.

Customers of Blaenau Gwent Libraries clearly value their service; customer satisfaction is above the median for most indicators. The continued partnership work with key organisations remains a strength of the service and enables Blaenau Gwent to support the needs within communities and deliver appropriate activities. The service clearly makes efforts to engage with communities in innovative ways to respond to changing needs. The service is aware of the need to address issues around active membership and footfall and has funding for two new library development officers to help target this.

The service's annual report highlights several changes in the ways that members of the local community are engaging with libraries, in part likely related to the designation of libraries as 'community hubs'. Specifically, an increasing number of people spending longer periods of time in the library in response to the cost-of-living crisis, and changes in patterns of IT use with more customers bringing their own devices to use in the library.

Whilst the service meets the target for proportional Welsh language spend, the overall level of materials spend is a concern, especially as this has been an ongoing issue for Blaenau Gwent over a number of years. The fact that, for the first time in many years, the service is carrying no vacancies is hugely positive, although it is acknowledged that the service is still unable to meet the per capita staffing and qualified staff targets.

- 100% of adults surveyed said they experience the library as an enjoyable safe and inclusive space (Q11).
- There is a good level of IT provision; Blaenau Gwent is above the median for the number of computer devices available to the public (Q111).
- Although staff per capita remains below the target, for the first time in many years the service is carrying no vacancies (Q113).
- Blaenau Gwent did not report any unstaffed opening hours, unplanned closures of static service points or missed home deliveries (Q116).

2. Performance against the standards

The standards framework comprises of core entitlements, quality indicators with targets, quality indicators with benchmarks and impact measures. Section 2

summarises achievements against these areas. A narrative assessment of the authority's performance is provided in Section 3.

2.1. Core entitlements

Blaenau Gwent reported meeting all of the 12 Core Entitlements in full through self-assessment, providing detailed and helpful commentary where this varied from previous years. The independent assessor accepts the self-assessment based on assessments made in previous years.

2.2. Quality indicators with targets

There are 16 quality indicators (QIs), of which 10 have constituent targets. Of these, Blaenau Gwent is achieving 7 in full and 2 in part. The remaining target was not met.

| Quality Indicator | Met? | |
|--|------|---------------|
| QI 3 Support for individual development: | | Met in full |
| a) ICT support | √ | |
| b) Information literacy and skills training | √ | |
| c) E-government support | √ | |
| d) Reader development | √ | |
| QI 4 (a) Support for health and well-being | | Met in full |
| i) Book Prescription Wales scheme | √ | |
| ii) Better with Books/Reading Well scheme | √ | |
| iii) Designated health & well-being collection | √ | |
| iv) Information about healthy lifestyles and behaviours | √ | |
| v) Signposting to health & well-being services | √ | |
| QI 6 all static service points offer events/activities for users with special requirements | √ | Met in full |
| QI 7 Location of service points | √ | Met in full |
| QI 9 Up-to-date and appropriate reading material | | Not met |
| Acquisitions per capita | x | |
| <u>or</u> Materials spend per capita | x | |
| QI 10 Welsh Language Resources | | Met in full |
| % of material budget spent on Welsh | √ | |
| <u>or</u> Spend on Welsh per capita | - | |
| QI 11 Online access: | | Met in full |
| a) i) Public access to Internet | √ | |
| ii) Wi-Fi provision | √ | |
| QI 12 Supply of requests | | Partially met |
| a) % of requests satisfied within 7 days | √ | |
| b) % of requests satisfied within 15 days | x | |

| Quality Indicator | Met? |
|---|---------------|
| QI 13 Staffing levels and qualifications: | Partially met |
| i) Staff per capita | x |
| ii) Qualified staff per capita | x |
| iii) Head of service qualification/training | √ |
| iv) CPD percentage | √ |
| QI 16 Opening hours per capita | √ Met in full |

2.3. Impact measures

The framework includes three indicators aimed at assessing the impact of library use on people’s lives. These indicators do not have targets, and authorities were only required to carry out user surveys for QI1 once over the original three-year period of the framework (2017-20). The summary figures (lowest, median and highest) are based on all authorities providing data in the 2022-23 return. Rankings reflect the numbers of respondents, where 1 is the highest scoring authority. However, it is important to bear in mind that some authorities have conducted surveys since 2020, whilst others report survey data from before the Covid pandemic. Some responses therefore reflect the situation several years ago, whilst others may have been affected by disruption during the pandemic period. As a result, there are limitations on the extent to which these data might be considered comparable.

Blaenau Gwent completed its adult user survey in March 2023 and its children’s user survey in February 2023.

| Performance indicator | | Rank | Lowest | Median | Highest |
|---|-----|-------|--------|--------|---------|
| QI 1 Making a difference | | | | | |
| b) % of young people who think that the library helps them learn and find things out: | 94% | 4/16 | 58% | 90% | 98% |
| e) % of adults who think that the library has made a difference to their lives: | 96% | 1/16 | 41% | 86.5% | 96% |
| QI 5 b) % of attendees of training sessions who said that the training had helped them achieve their goals: | 98% | =7/17 | 82% | 96% | 100% |

Authorities are also asked to provide an impact statement describing the impact which the library service has had on an individual or on a group of individuals during the year.

Blaenau Gwent provided an impact statement which referred to the value customers derived from the Warm Spaces initiative and the associated activities which launched in October 2022. Customers struggling to pay their bills valued having a warm, safe and welcoming place to go which fostered companionship and well-being. They also enjoyed participating in activities such as Knit and Natter and Cuppa and Company sessions and benefitted from free access to WiFi and computers. One customer who had lost his job reported that, as well as valuing the warm space, the support he received from the library had contributed to him getting a new job and accommodation and reflected that “*without the library I think I would have ended up on the streets*”.

2.4. Quality indicators and benchmarks

The remaining indicators do not have targets but allow services to monitor and benchmark their performance over time, in comparison with other authorities. The following table summarises Blaenau Gwent's position for 2022-23. Ranks are included out of 22, where 1 is the highest, and 22 the lowest scoring authority, unless stated otherwise. Indicators where fewer than 22 authorities supplied data are those where relevant data was not available from some authorities. Indicators 'per capita' are calculated per 1,000 population unless otherwise noted.

| Performance indicator | | Rank | Lowest | Median | Highest |
|--|---------|--------|--------|---------|---------|
| QI 1 Making a difference | | | | | |
| a) % of adults who think that using the library has helped them develop new skills | 70% | 8/16 | 24% | 69.5% | 90% |
| c) health and well-being | 44% | =12/16 | 35% | 66.5% | 94% |
| d) enjoyable, safe and inclusive | 100% | =1/16 | 93% | 97% | 100% |
| QI 2 Customer satisfaction | | | | | |
| a) 'very good' or 'good' choice of books | 90% | 11/16 | 80% | 91% | 99% |
| b) 'very good' or 'good' customer care | 99% | =2/17 | 92% | 98% | 100% |
| c) 'very good' or 'good' IT facilities | 85% | 9/16 | 65% | 86% | 99% |
| d) 'very good' or 'good' overall | 97% | =10/17 | 94% | 98% | 100% |
| e) users aged 16 & under rating out of ten | 9.0 | =12/16 | 8.0 | 9.3 | 9.7 |
| QI 5 User training | | | | | |
| a) attendances per capita | 7 | =13/22 | 1 | 10.5 | 222 |
| c) informal training per capita | 131 | 10/19 | 5 | 131 | 424 |
| QI 6 attendances at events per capita | 161 | 13/22 | 13 | 165 | 559 |
| QI 8 Library use | | | | | |
| a) visits per capita | 2,084 | 13/21 | 781 | 2,106 | 4,814 |
| b) virtual visits per capita | 175 | 20/22 | 124 | 537.5 | 7,979 |
| c) active borrowers per capita | 79 | 18/22 | 43 | 106.5 | 167 |
| QI 10 Welsh issues per capita | 37 | 19/22 | 13 | 53 | 864 |
| QI 11 Online access | | | | | |
| a) Computers per 10,000 | 9.55 | 6/22 | 3.32 | 7.99 | 16.99 |
| b) % of available time used by the public | 11% | =9/19 | 7% | 11% | 77% |
| QI 13 Staffing levels and qualifications ⁴ | | | | | |
| (v) a) total volunteers | 9 | - | 0 | 8 | 256 |
| b) volunteer hours | 745 | - | 0 | 583.5 | 14,014 |
| QI 14 Operational expenditure | | | | | |
| a) total expenditure per capita | £10,093 | 13/21 | £6,726 | £11,476 | £27,330 |
| b) % on staff, | 70% | =5/21 | 46% | 64% | 78% |
| % on information resources | 9% | =16/21 | 5% | 12% | 21% |
| % on equipment and buildings | 3% | =11/21 | 1% | 3% | 29% |
| % on other operational costs; | 17% | 10/21 | 1% | 15% | 35% |
| c) capital expenditure per capita | £0 | =12/21 | -£479 | £145 | £2,865 |

⁴ Following discussion with the peer review group it was decided not to include rankings for volunteers as the implications of volunteer numbers are ambiguous.

| Performance indicator | | Rank | Lowest | Median | Highest |
|---|-------|-------|--------|--------|---------|
| QI 15 Net cost per visit ⁵ | £4.28 | 17/19 | £0.41 | £2.76 | £6.22 |
| QI 16 Opening hours ⁶ | | | | | |
| (iii) a) % hours unplanned closure of static service points | 0% | =1/22 | 0% | 0.05% | 0.95% |
| b) % mobile stops / home deliveries missed | 0% | =1/20 | 0% | 0% | 3.74% |

3. Analysis of performance

The core entitlements and quality indicators can be divided into four key areas. This section of the report outlines performance under these areas.

3.1. Meeting customer needs (QI 1-5)

The service performs well with regard to Making a Difference (QI1), with responses above the median for most measures. For Customer Satisfaction (QI2), the service is at or around the median for most measures. Blaenau Gwent reports changing use over the year in response to the cost-of-living crisis, with an increasing number of people spending long periods of time in the library, saving money on energy bills and accessing free services, including refreshments. Although the QI1 indicator for adults finding helpful information for health and wellbeing is below the median, QI4 is met in full and the service is clearly making efforts to support customers' wellbeing through a variety of activities and other provision. Brynmawr and Tredegar Libraries are designated as well-being hubs, and the service provides Cuppa and Company sessions and working in partnership with Aneurin Bevan University Health Board to promote health and well-being activities. This year has seen an increasing number of new partners using libraries to engage with the community. This has enabled the service to deliver new activities to new audiences, including working with 'Business in Focus' to deliver live music workshops.

3.2. Access and use (QI 6-8)

Although Blaenau Gwent is below the median for library visits and active borrowers per capita (QI8), footfall and issues are increasing, indicating that customers are returning following the pandemic. The service notes a trend towards users who may not be active members accessing libraries for information, activities, social events, warm spaces etc. Attendance per capita at events was close to the median (QI6). There was also an increase in the number of community loans and visits to residential homes over the year, as well as an extension of home delivery services. Whilst both adults' and children's issues per capita are below the median for Welsh authorities, over 22/23 the number of BorrowBox borrowers increased by one third. Although virtual visits per capita is below the median (QI8), Blaenau Gwent reports strong engagement with the library's social media presence, particularly Facebook.

3.3. Facilities and services (QI 9-12)

Blaenau Gwent is below the median for materials spend and number of acquisitions per capita, and does not meet the target for this indicator (QI9). However, the service

⁵ *Rankings here have been reversed, so that 1 is the lowest scoring (best performing) authority.*

⁶ *Rankings here have been reversed, so that 1 is the lowest scoring (best performing) authority.*

has improved performance against the Welsh language spend target (QI10) over 22/23; this includes Welsh language learning materials such as board games and study aids. It is anticipated that this will help the service to increase the number of Welsh issues per capita. Although the target for Supply of Requests (QI12) was only partially met, this is due to requests from the regional inter lending scheme, Books4U not being included. If the Books4U requests were included, the service reports that the target of 15 days would have been met.

Blaenau Gwent is above the median for the number of computer devices available to the public (QI11) and the service reports that, during 22/23, IT usage has been increasing month on month. However, there has been a change in usage patterns: the number of users has increased, but time spent on PCs is considerably lower as users are accessing machines for different purposes, e.g. checking emails, printing. There is also a marked increase in the number of users bringing in their own devices. Furthermore, the promotion of IT services outside of the building has been extended, including a partnership with the National Databank through the Good Things Foundation to distribute free data sims to people in need. A review of ICT facilities and services is planned for 23/24.

3.4. Expertise and capacity (QI 13-16)

Although the figure for both overall and qualified staff per capita remain below the target (QI13), for the first time in many years the service is carrying no vacancies. The proportion of operational expenditure allocated to staffing is above the median (QI14). Five new members of staff were appointed to permanent positions, with some libraries having a complete new team. Blaenau Gwent reports this has had a positive impact on performance and customer service. Blaenau Gwent did not report any unstaffed opening hours, unplanned closures of static service points or missed home deliveries (QI16).

4. Strategic context

As part of the return, authorities are asked to report on how the library service is contributing to wider Welsh Government priorities and strategic goals. Blaenau Gwent reports on a range of services relevant to the goals of the Well-being of Future Generations Act, including cohesive communities, health, prosperity, equality and environmental issues. Supporting local residents with the cost-of-living crisis has been a key priority for Blaenau Gwent. With the closure of the main council offices (Civic Centre) and the transition to all face-to-face council enquiries now being delivered at libraries, through the provision of community hubs, library buildings are increasingly seen as the 'go-to' venue for anyone in need, including food bank referrals, fuel vouchers, cost of living advice, period products and warm packs.

Other activities have included a new Citizens Advice Service was with weekly drop-in sessions being delivered in all libraries and the roll-out of the Warm Spaces campaign in all libraries. Support for jobseekers has continued to be a core aspect of library service provision, working closely with colleagues in Adult Community Learning. The service's sim card project, working with The Good Things Foundation and the National Data Bank, helps bridge the digital divide and prevent data poverty within the community.

5. Future direction

Reporting on the authority's future direction and plans for the library service over the following year, Blaenau Gwent intends to build upon the success of community hub provision to expand its approach to partnership work. The plan to re-locate Abertillery Library to a new town centre location will be a main focus for the coming year. The service is working closely with the regeneration department to secure additional funding which, if successful, will transform Trinity Chapel, into a modern, vibrant library and community adult education centre. Funding has been secured to recruit two new library development officers from the Skills Priority Funding stream to help target active membership and footfall. In addition, a review of the ICT provision is planned for 23/24, specifically an improved Wi-Fi solution to meet the diverse needs of the community, including streaming, video conferencing etc.

6. Conclusion

Customers of Blaenau Gwent Libraries clearly value their service; customer satisfaction is above the median for most indicators. The continued partnership work with key organisations remains a strength of the service and enables Blaenau Gwent to support the needs within communities and deliver appropriate activities. The service clearly makes efforts to engage with communities in innovative ways to respond to changing needs. The service is aware of the need to address issues around active membership and footfall and has funding for two new library development officers to help target this.

The service's annual report highlights several changes in the ways that members of the local community are engaging with libraries, in part likely related to the designation of libraries as 'community hubs'. Specifically, an increasing number of people spending longer periods of time in the library in response to the cost-of-living crisis, and changes in patterns of IT use with more customers bringing their own devices to use in the library.

Whilst the service meets the target for proportional Welsh language spend, the overall level of materials spend is a concern, especially as this has been an ongoing issue for Blaenau Gwent over a number of years. The fact that, for the first time in many years, the service is carrying no vacancies is hugely positive, although it is acknowledged that the service is still unable to meet the per capita staffing and qualified staff targets.

Annual Assessment Report 2022/2023

This report has been prepared based on information provided in Caerphilly's annual return, impact statements and narrative report submitted to the Culture Division of the Welsh Government.

1. Executive summary

Caerphilly met all of the 12 core entitlements in full. Of the 10 quality indicators which have targets, Caerphilly is achieving 7 in full and 1 in part. Two targets were not met.

Caerphilly libraries are clearly busy and valued by the local community. Visitors per capita remains comparatively high and Caerphilly is in the top quartile of Welsh library authorities for attendances at library events per capita. The targeted spending on children's stock in the previous year appears to have had an impact; children's issues have risen notably and are above the median per capita. The service has noted changes in user habits, such as greater use of wi-fi and apps being preferred over the library website. Although it is anticipated that the move to a Community Hub model will help to ease staffing difficulties, the staffing situation in Caerphilly is a concern. The large number of single staffed service points limit the service's ability to offer a wide range of services in areas such as IT support. In such circumstances, the service should be proud of its ability to continue to provide reader development programmes and keep all libraries open in cases of sickness and emergency leave. In the coming year, it is important that Caerphilly returns to conducting regular user surveys, possibly alongside other forms of customer consultation, to ensure that services are meeting customer needs effectively.

- User training is highly rated; 99% of attendees said that the training had helped them achieve their goals (Q15).
- Library events are popular with users; Caerphilly is in the top quartile of Welsh library authorities for attendances at events per capita (Q16).
- The library service is well-supported within local communities; Caerphilly is in the top quartile of Welsh library authorities for visits per capita (Q18).
- Children's issues have risen notably and are above the median per capita (Q18).
- There is a good level of IT provision; the service is above the median for number of computers per capita (Q11).

2. Performance against the standards

The standards framework comprises of core entitlements, quality indicators with targets, quality indicators with benchmarks and impact measures. Section 2 summarises achievements against these areas. A narrative assessment of the authority's performance is provided in Section 3.

2.1. Core entitlements

Caerphilly reported meeting all 12 of the Core Entitlements in full through self-assessment, providing detailed and helpful commentary within the return on each area covered. The independent assessor agreed with the self-assessment.

2.2. Quality indicators with targets

There are 16 quality indicators (QIs), of which 10 have constituent targets. Of these, Caerphilly is achieving 7 in full and 1 in part. Two targets were not met.

| Quality Indicator | Met? | |
|--|------|---------------|
| QI 3 Support for individual development: | | Met in full |
| a) ICT support | √ | |
| b) Information literacy and skills training | √ | |
| c) E-government support | √ | |
| d) Reader development | √ | |
| QI 4 (a) Support for health and well-being | | Met in full |
| i) Book Prescription Wales scheme | √ | |
| ii) Better with Books/Reading Well scheme | √ | |
| iii) Designated health & well-being collection | √ | |
| iv) Information about healthy lifestyles and behaviours | √ | |
| v) Signposting to health & well-being services | √ | |
| QI 6 all static service points offer events/activities for users with special requirements | √ | Met in full |
| QI 7 Location of service points | √ | Met in full |
| QI 9 Up-to-date and appropriate reading material | | Not met |
| Acquisitions per capita | X | |
| <u>or</u> Materials spend per capita | x | |
| QI 10 Welsh Language Resources | | Met in full |
| % of material budget spent on Welsh | √ | |
| <u>or</u> Spend on Welsh per capita | - | |
| QI 11 Online access: | | Met in full |
| a) i) Public access to Internet | √ | |
| ii) Wi-Fi provision | √ | |
| QI 12 Supply of requests | | Not met |
| a) % of requests satisfied within 7 days | X | |
| b) % of requests satisfied within 15 days | X | |
| QI 13 Staffing levels and qualifications: | | Partially met |
| i) Staff per capita | x | |
| ii) Qualified staff per capita | x | |
| iii) Head of service qualification/training | √ | |
| iv) CPD percentage | √ | |
| QI 16 Opening hours per capita | √ | Met in full |

2.3. Impact measures

The framework includes three indicators aimed at assessing the impact of library use on people’s lives. These indicators do not have targets, and authorities were only required to carry out user surveys for QI1 once over the original three-year period of the framework (2017-20). The summary figures (lowest, median and highest) are based on all authorities providing data in the 2022-23 return. Rankings reflect the numbers of respondents, where 1 is the highest scoring authority. However, it is important to bear in mind that some authorities have conducted surveys since 2020, whilst others report survey data from before the Covid pandemic. Some responses therefore reflect the situation several years ago, whilst others may have been affected by disruption during the pandemic period. As a result, there are limitations on the extent to which these data might be considered comparable.

Caerphilly completed its adult user survey in May 2019. Due to the COVID pandemic, the adult survey due to take place during May 2021 was postponed and will now run in October/November 2023. A children’s user survey was completed in November 2022.

| Performance indicator | | Rank | Lowest | Median | Highest |
|---|-----|--------|--------|--------|---------|
| QI 1 Making a difference | | | | | |
| b) % of young people who think that the library helps them learn and find things out: | 58% | 16/16 | 58% | 90% | 98% |
| e) % of adults who think that the library has made a difference to their lives: | 41% | =15/16 | 41% | 86.5% | 96% |
| QI 5 b) % of attendees of training sessions who said that the training had helped them achieve their goals: | 99% | =5/17 | 82% | 96% | 100% |

Authorities are also asked to provide an impact statement describing the impact which the library service has had on an individual or on a group of individuals during the year.

Caerphilly provided an impact statement emphasising the value derived from intergenerational activities that take place at Newbridge Library. Elderly customers, including those with dementia and their carers, are invited to participate in Toddler Time sessions interacting with Toddler Group members and library staff. They benefit by being in a safe inclusive space; taking part in stimulating and pleasurable activities; having social contact; and an increased sense of optimism. One customer remarked *“we love coming downstairs to the library. It helps us feel part of daily local life and definitely puts a smile on our face and a spring in our step....”*

2.4. Quality indicators and benchmarks

The remaining indicators do not have targets but allow services to monitor and benchmark their performance over time, in comparison with other authorities. The following table summarises Caerphilly’s position for 2022-23. Ranks are included out of 22, where 1 is the highest, and 22 the lowest scoring authority, unless stated otherwise. Indicators where fewer than 22 authorities supplied data are those where relevant data was not available from some authorities. Indicators ‘per capita’ are calculated per 1,000 population unless otherwise noted.

| Performance indicator | | Rank | Lowest | Median | Highest |
|--|---------|--------|--------|---------|---------|
| QI 1 Making a difference | | | | | |
| a) % of adults who think that using the library has helped them develop new skills | 25% | 15/16 | 24% | 69.5% | 90% |
| c) health and well-being | 38% | 15/16 | 35% | 66.5% | 94% |
| d) enjoyable, safe and inclusive | 99% | =4/16 | 93% | 97% | 100% |
| QI 2 Customer satisfaction | | | | | |
| a) 'very good' or 'good' choice of books | 94% | =4/16 | 80% | 91% | 99% |
| b) 'very good' or 'good' customer care | 99% | =2/17 | 92% | 98% | 100% |
| c) 'very good' or 'good' IT facilities | 91% | =3/16 | 65% | 86% | 99% |
| d) 'very good' or 'good' overall | 98% | =5/17 | 94% | 98% | 100% |
| e) users aged 16 & under rating out of ten | 9.5 | =5/16 | 8.0 | 9.3 | 9.7 |
| QI 5 User training | | | | | |
| a) attendances per capita | 10 | 12/22 | 1 | 10.5 | 222 |
| c) informal training per capita | 33 | 16/19 | 5 | 131 | 424 |
| QI 6 attendances at events per capita | 274 | 4/22 | 13 | 165 | 559 |
| QI 8 Library use | | | | | |
| a) visits per capita | 2,640 | 3/21 | 781 | 2,106 | 4,814 |
| b) virtual visits per capita | 451 | 15/22 | 124 | 537.5 | 7,979 |
| c) active borrowers per capita | 107 | =10/22 | 43 | 106.5 | 167 |
| QI 10 Welsh issues per capita | 41 | =17/22 | 13 | 53 | 864 |
| QI 11 Online access | | | | | |
| a) Computers per 10,000 | 8.69 | 10/22 | 3.32 | 7.99 | 16.99 |
| b) % of available time used by the public | 9% | =13/19 | 7% | 11% | 77% |
| QI 13 Staffing levels and qualifications ⁷ | | | | | |
| (v) a) total volunteers | 4 | - | 0 | 8 | 256 |
| b) volunteer hours | 178 | - | 0 | 583.5 | 14,014 |
| QI 14 Operational expenditure | | | | | |
| a) total expenditure per capita | £15,557 | 4/21 | £6,726 | £11,476 | £27,330 |
| b) % on staff, | 57% | 19/21 | 46% | 64% | 78% |
| % on information resources | 10% | 15/21 | 5% | 12% | 21% |
| % on equipment and buildings | 29% | 1/21 | 1% | 3% | 29% |
| % on other operational costs; | 3% | 20/21 | 1% | 15% | 35% |
| c) capital expenditure per capita | £0 | =12/21 | -£479 | £145 | £2,865 |
| QI 15 Net cost per visit ⁸ | £0.41 | 1/19 | £0.41 | £2.76 | £6.22 |
| QI 16 Opening hours ⁹ | | | | | |
| (iii) a) % hours unplanned closure of static service points | 0.58% | 21/22 | 0% | 0.05% | 0.95% |
| b) % mobile stops / home deliveries missed | 0% | =1/20 | 0% | 0% | 3.74% |

⁷ Following discussion with the peer review group it was decided not to include rankings for volunteers as the implications of volunteer numbers are ambiguous.

⁸ Rankings here have been reversed, so that 1 is the lowest scoring (best performing) authority.

⁹ Rankings here have been reversed, so that 1 is the lowest scoring (best performing) authority.

3. Analysis of performance

The core entitlements and quality indicators can be divided into four key areas. This section of the report outlines performance under these areas.

3.1. Meeting customer needs (QI 1-5)

Caerphilly libraries have a strong focus on supporting mental health and wellbeing; library service supports many partners, including a Specialist Eating Disorder Group, Integrated Autism Groups and a Baby Massage group (QI4). All 18 libraries offered hot drinks and refreshments as part of the Warm Spaces campaign and the service secured grant funding to open Llanbradach Library for an extra day for a 10-week period to help residents struggling with the cost-of-living crisis. Hub libraries at Bargoed, Blackwood, Caerphilly and Risca facilitate Meet, Greet & Signposting sessions for the Polish and Ukrainian Family Liaison Officers. Despite 11 of the 18 libraries now being single staffed, the service has continued to provide reader development programmes and activities for both adults and children (QI3).

In partnership with a number of organisations, the library delivers '1-2-1' support in digital literacy through First Click, Digital Friday and Community Education sessions. Attendance at pre-arranged user training is around the median, and 99% of attendees said that the training had helped them achieve their goals (QI5). Informal training attendance is below the median and the challenges of offering intense IT support in single-staffed locations and the reductions in partner digital course provision are both noted.

The service performs well in terms of Customer Satisfaction (QI2) in the most recent survey, but performance for Making a Difference (QI1) was below the median for the majority of measures. It is important that Caerphilly conducts an adult user survey in 2023 as planned – and if necessary engages in further customer consultation - to explore potential reasons for this discrepancy.

3.2. Access and use (QI 6-8)

Caerphilly ran over 5,000 events over the year and is in the top quartile of Welsh library authorities for attendances at events per capita (QI6). Despite reporting a decline in library visitors this year, Caerphilly is in the top quartile of Welsh library authorities for visits per capita. The service reports an increase in the number of active borrowers, and this is close to the median (QI8). Children's issues have risen notably and are above the median per capita. Whilst it has witnessed a rise in use, Caerphilly is below the median for virtual visits (QI8). However, the library reports that many residents now turn to apps such as Pori and Borrowbox instead of visiting the library webpages to gain access.

3.3. Facilities and services (QI 9-12)

Caerphilly does not meet the target for acquisition of reading materials (QI9). However, the materials spend per capita is above the median and the service is in the top quartile of library authorities for the proportion of expenditure on children's resources. Although Caerphilly meets the target for proportion of spend on Welsh language resources, Welsh language issues per capita are below the median (QI10).

The service reports that children's Welsh titles account for the majority of expenditure and loans.

The service is above the median for number of computers per capita (Q11), although the number has reduced as the library service was required to update all its PCs. Greater use of wi-fi and a decrease in static PC use suggest that more customers are using their own devices in libraries. Caerphilly has not met the standard for supply of requests (Q12). This was possibly impacted by library refurbishments and temporary library closures.

3.4. Expertise and capacity (Q1 13-16)

Caerphilly does not meet the target for staff or qualified posts per capita (Q13). During 2019/2020, due to budget reductions, the library service undertook a second staff realignment process. A further six library service points became single staffed, making a total of 11 out of 18. Three professional posts were deleted from the structure and one professional post added, with the post holder currently undertaking professional librarianship study. In addition, the service is carrying a number of fixed-term posts due to an anticipated budget reduction. The percentage of the operational expenditure allocated to staff is below the median (Q15). Whilst the level of library staff is not expected to increase, the service anticipates that the move to a Community Hub model will help to ease staffing difficulties. Caerphilly has not experienced disruption to home delivery services, but the percentage of unplanned closure of static services is above the median due to an arson attack at Llanbradach Library and a water supply issue at New Tredegar Library (Q16).

4. Strategic context

As part of the return, authorities are asked to report on how the library service is contributing to wider Welsh Government priorities and strategic goals. Caerphilly draws attention to the library service's contribution to the following strategies:

- **'Prosperity for All: the national strategy' key theme 'Ambitious and Learning'** – for example, a new school engagement programme around the key themes of Reading, Information and Learning to help support schools to empower and enhance pupils' performance in areas such as vocabulary, comprehension, problem solving, digital and information literacy awareness.
- **'Prosperity for All: the national strategy' key theme 'Prosperous and Secure'** – for example, the library service supports partners including Bridges into Work and Inspire into Work.
- **'Prosperity for All: the national strategy' key theme 'Healthy and Active'** – for example, the library service fully commits to the following health-related schemes: Books on Prescription Scheme / Reading Well with Dementia / Reading Well for Mental Health / Reading Well for Children / Reading Well for Teens / Empathy Lab / Iechyd Da.
- **'Prosperity for All: the national strategy' key theme 'United and Connected'** – for example, the service actively supports Welsh Reading Groups and the Welsh Scrabble Club.

5. Future direction

Reporting on the authority's future direction and plans for the library service over the following year, Caerphilly refers to the 2020 – 2022 Caerphilly Library Service Strategy and Action Plan, which designates the library service as a 'community anchor' and frontline service working to ensure economic, educational and digital recovery post Covid. This strategy sets out the following targets:

1. Libraries continue to support children, young adults, and families.
2. Support the Caerphilly borough community through the Cost of Living crisis.
3. ICT / Digital support and upgrade for workforce and library service developments.
4. Library building developments.
5. Library Stock Resources & Collection Management.

The library service is governed by the Local Authority's Medium Term Financial Plan 2019-2023. No library service saving proposals were identified during 2021/22 or 2022/23, but the service acknowledges that the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, the cost-of-living crisis and other financial restrictions may affect library services moving forward and further financial constraints are possible up to March 2025.

6. Conclusion

Caerphilly libraries are clearly busy and valued by the local community. Visitors per capita remains comparatively high and Caerphilly is in the top quartile of Welsh library authorities for attendances at library events per capita. The targeted spending on children's stock in the previous year appears to have had an impact; children's issues have risen notably and are above the median per capita. The service has noted changes in user habits, such as greater use of Wi-Fi and apps being preferred over the library website. Although it is anticipated that the move to a Community Hub model will help to ease staffing difficulties, the staffing situation in Caerphilly is a concern. The large number of single staffed service points limit the service's ability to offer a wide range of services in areas such as IT support. In such circumstances, the service should be proud of its ability to continue to provide reader development programmes and keep all libraries open in cases of sickness and emergency leave. In the coming year, it is important that Caerphilly returns to conducting regular user surveys, possibly alongside other forms of customer consultation, to ensure that services are meeting customer needs effectively.

Annual Assessment Report 2022/2023

This report has been prepared based on information provided in Cardiff's annual return, impact statements and narrative report submitted to the Culture Division of the Welsh Government.

1. Executive summary

Cardiff met all of the 12 core entitlements in full. Of the 10 quality indicators which have targets, Cardiff is achieving 9 in full and 1 in part.

Cardiff continues to perform strongly in most areas. The service delivers a wide range of activities and services to support its diverse communities and, in particular, it has continued its strong commitment to health and wellbeing. This is recognised by library customers who feel the library makes a difference in terms of skills development and health and wellbeing. The service is strong in children's provision and also in the provision of user training and events that cater for a wide range of audiences. There is an awareness of changing patterns of library engagement, for example, in relation to digital provision. The service is committed to partnership working as part of its libraries and hubs model. Whilst the overall level of staffing and professional leadership meet the targets, the low level of professional staffing remains a concern.

- Cardiff ranks in the top quartile of library authorities for adults who feel the library makes a difference in terms of skills development, and health and wellbeing (Q11).
- User training is highly rated; 100% of attendees of training sessions said that the training had helped them achieve their goals (Q15).
- Cardiff is in the top quartile of library services for number of visits and virtual visits per capita (Q18).
- Children's resources are a priority for the service; it is in the top quartile of library services for % materials budget children's resources (Q19).
- Cardiff is the only Welsh library authority to meet the target for staff levels per capita (Q113).

2. Performance against the standards

The standards framework comprises of core entitlements, quality indicators with targets, quality indicators with benchmarks and impact measures. Section 2 summarises achievements against these areas. A narrative assessment of the authority's performance is provided in Section 3.

2.1 Core entitlements

Cardiff reported meeting all of the 12 Core Entitlements in full through self-assessment, providing helpful commentary. The independent assessor agreed with the self-assessment.

2.2 Quality indicators with targets

There are 16 quality indicators (QIs), of which 10 have constituent targets. Of these, Cardiff is achieving 9 in full and 1 in part.

| Quality Indicator | Met? | |
|--|------|---------------|
| QI 3 Support for individual development: | | Met in full |
| a) ICT support | √ | |
| b) Information literacy and skills training | √ | |
| c) E-government support | √ | |
| d) Reader development | √ | |
| QI 4 (a) Support for health and well-being | | Met in full |
| i) Book Prescription Wales scheme | √ | |
| ii) Better with Books/Reading Well scheme | √ | |
| iii) Designated health & well-being collection | √ | |
| iv) Information about healthy lifestyles and behaviours | √ | |
| v) Signposting to health & well-being services | √ | |
| QI 6 all static service points offer events/activities for users with special requirements | √ | Met in full |
| QI 7 Location of service points | √ | Met in full |
| QI 9 Up-to-date and appropriate reading material | | Met in full |
| Acquisitions per capita | √ | |
| <u>or</u> Materials spend per capita | - | |
| QI 10 Welsh Language Resources | | Met in full |
| % of material budget spent on Welsh | √ | |
| <u>or</u> Spend on Welsh per capita | - | |
| QI 11 Online access: | | Met in full |
| a) i) Public access to Internet | √ | |
| ii) Wi-Fi provision | √ | |
| QI 12 Supply of requests | | Met in full |
| a) % of requests satisfied within 7 days | √ | |
| b) % of requests satisfied within 15 days | √ | |
| QI 13 Staffing levels and qualifications: | | Partially met |
| i) Staff per capita | √ | |
| ii) Qualified staff per capita | x | |
| iii) Head of service qualification/training | √ | |
| iv) CPD percentage | √ | |
| QI 16 Opening hours per capita | √ | Met in full |

2.3 Impact measures

The framework includes three indicators aimed at assessing the impact of library use on people's lives. These indicators do not have targets, and authorities were only required to carry out user surveys for QI1 once over the original three-year period of the framework (2017-20). The summary figures (lowest, median and highest) are

based on all authorities providing data in the 2022-23 return. Rankings reflect the numbers of respondents, where 1 is the highest scoring authority. However, it is important to bear in mind that some authorities have conducted surveys since 2020, whilst others report survey data from before the Covid pandemic. Some responses therefore reflect the situation several years ago, whilst others may have been affected by disruption during the pandemic period. As a result, there are limitations on the extent to which these data might be considered comparable.

Cardiff completed its adult and children's user survey in September 2022.

| Performance indicator | | Rank | Lowest | Median | Highest |
|---|------|--------|--------|--------|---------|
| QI 1 Making a difference | | | | | |
| b) % of young people who think that the library helps them learn and find things out: | 93% | =5/16 | 58% | 90% | 98% |
| e) % of adults who think that the library has made a difference to their lives: | 78% | =13/16 | 41% | 86.5% | 96% |
| QI 5 b) % of attendees of training sessions who said that the training had helped them achieve their goals: | 100% | =1/17 | 82% | 96% | 100% |

Authorities are also asked to provide an impact statement describing the impact which the library service has had on an individual or on a group of individuals during the year.

Cardiff provided an impact statement which focussed on the experience of a customer with declining health facing the prospect of increased social isolation following the death of his wife. He reflected on the value of participating in various events taking place in Community Hubs and in the community. These activities included a trip to the National Botanical Gardens of Wales, walking trips and playing games at weekly gatherings at the Powerhouse Hub in Llanederyn. These activities have contributed to his sense of wellbeing, camaraderie and engagement with the wider community.

2.4 Quality indicators and benchmarks

The remaining indicators do not have targets but allow services to monitor and benchmark their performance over time, in comparison with other authorities. The following table summarises Cardiff's position for 2022-23. Ranks are included out of 22, where 1 is the highest, and 22 the lowest scoring authority, unless stated otherwise. Indicators where fewer than 22 authorities supplied data are those where relevant data was not available from some authorities. Indicators 'per capita' are calculated per 1,000 population unless otherwise noted.

| Performance indicator | | Rank | Lowest | Median | Highest |
|--|---------|--------|--------|---------|---------|
| QI 1 Making a difference | | | | | |
| a) % of adults who think that using the library has helped them develop new skills | 89% | 2/16 | 24% | 69.5% | 90% |
| c) health and well-being | 94% | 1/16 | 35% | 66.5% | 94% |
| d) enjoyable, safe and inclusive | 96% | 13/16 | 93% | 97% | 100% |
| QI 2 Customer satisfaction | | | | | |
| a) 'very good' or 'good' choice of books | 80% | 16/16 | 80% | 91% | 99% |
| b) 'very good' or 'good' customer care | 92% | 17/17 | 92% | 98% | 100% |
| c) 'very good' or 'good' IT facilities | 69% | 15/16 | 65% | 86% | 99% |
| d) 'very good' or 'good' overall | 95% | =15/17 | 94% | 98% | 100% |
| e) users aged 16 & under rating out of ten | 8.0 | 16/16 | 8.0 | 9.3 | 9.7 |
| QI 5 User training | | | | | |
| a) attendances per capita | 222 | 1/22 | 1 | 10.5 | 222 |
| c) informal training per capita | 253 | 6/19 | 5 | 131 | 424 |
| QI 6 attendances at events per capita | 271 | 5/22 | 13 | 165 | 559 |
| QI 8 Library use | | | | | |
| a) visits per capita | 4,814 | 1/21 | 781 | 2,106 | 4,814 |
| b) virtual visits per capita | 7,979 | 1/22 | 124 | 537.5 | 7,979 |
| c) active borrowers per capita | 107 | =10/22 | 43 | 106.5 | 167 |
| QI 10 Welsh issues per capita | 247 | 5/22 | 13 | 53 | 864 |
| QI 11 Online access | | | | | |
| a) Computers per 10,000 | 8.87 | 8/22 | 3.32 | 7.99 | 16.99 |
| b) % of available time used by the public | 10% | =11/19 | 7% | 11% | 77% |
| QI 13 Staffing levels and qualifications ¹⁰ | | | | | |
| (v) a) total volunteers | 256 | - | 0 | 8 | 256 |
| b) volunteer hours | 6,836 | - | 0 | 583.5 | 14,014 |
| QI 14 Operational expenditure | | | | | |
| a) total expenditure per capita | £27,330 | 1/21 | £6,726 | £11,476 | £27,330 |
| b) % on staff, | 65% | 10/21 | 46% | 64% | 78% |
| % on information resources | 5% | 21/21 | 5% | 12% | 21% |
| % on equipment and buildings | 24% | 2/21 | 1% | 3% | 29% |
| % on other operational costs; | 5% | 19/21 | 1% | 15% | 35% |
| c) capital expenditure per capita | £2,865 | 1/21 | -£479 | £145 | £2,865 |
| QI 15 Net cost per visit ¹¹ | £1.29 | 3/19 | £0.41 | £2.76 | £6.22 |
| QI 16 Opening hours ¹² | | | | | |
| (iii) a) % hours unplanned closure of static service points | 0.004% | 9/22 | 0% | 0.05% | 0.95% |
| b) % mobile stops / home deliveries missed | 0.17% | 14/20 | 0% | 0% | 3.74% |

¹⁰ Following discussion with the peer review group it was decided not to include rankings for volunteers as the implications of volunteer numbers are ambiguous.

¹¹ Rankings here have been reversed, so that 1 is the lowest scoring (best performing) authority.

¹² Rankings here have been reversed, so that 1 is the lowest scoring (best performing) authority.

3. Analysis of performance

The core entitlements and quality indicators can be divided into four key areas. This section of the report outlines performance under these areas.

2.1 Meeting customer needs (QI 1-5)

Cardiff ranks in the top quartile of library authorities for adults who feel the library makes a difference in terms of skills development and health and wellbeing (QI1). The service has pursued the development of a number of innovative wellbeing-related initiatives, including digital screens displaying health and wellbeing information; translation of Cancer Research UK videos into community languages; incorporating physical activity into story times; a sports library loaning equipment; and physical activities for older people (QI4).

User training attendance was in the top quartile and 100% of attendees of training sessions said that the training had helped them achieve their goals (QI5). Cardiff delivers a programme of training opportunities including into work training; support for Council tenants; and adult education programmes for employability and leisure. However, despite positive results in other areas, the service is below the median for customer satisfaction measures (QI2); Cardiff is rated less positively compared to other services for measures including IT facilities and book choice, although it still scored highly.

2.2 Access and use (QI 6-8)

Cardiff is in the top quartile of library services for number of visits and virtual visits per capita. It is also above the median for active borrowers per capita (QI8). Whilst physical visits have still not returned to pre-pandemic levels, virtual visits have increased markedly. Children's book issues have risen and the service is in the top quartile for children's issues per capita. The demand for digital reading materials also continues to rise rapidly. The newly refurbished Rhiwbina Hub, launched in January 2023, highlights the library service's focus on the provision of vibrant, community spaces. Event attendance is above the median (QI6). A programme of events and activities for adults has been delivered through the Community Hubs over the last twelve months, focusing on tackling social isolation and loneliness. Partner organisations make use of Hubs/Libraries as venues for the delivery of well-being activities. The service also offers a comprehensive children's events programme, with activities across the age range.

2.3 Facilities and services (QI 9-12)

Cardiff continues to ensure that the children's collections are prioritised with an increase in budget allocation in recent years. The service is in the top quartile of library services for percentage of material budget allocated to children's resources (QI9). Welsh language issues per capita are well above the median (QI10). The service has been working with a new Welsh language selector and this in part has resulted in the improvement of collections. Improvements have been made to the LGBTQ+ Welsh collections, with support from Paned o Gê. Cardiff is in the top quartile of services for requests supplied within 7 and 14 days (QI12).

The number of PCs per capita is above the median (Q111). There has been a reduction in usage of public PCs, which is attributed to more customers bringing their own devices and accessing the free WiFi facilities. Recent introductions to the IT service include WiFi printing and a signing video app which allows deaf customers to communicate directly with interpreters.

2.4 Expertise and capacity (Q1 13-16)

Cardiff is the only Welsh library authority to meet the target for staff levels per capita. However, whilst qualified leadership has remained in place, it is below the median for the number of qualified staff per capita (Q113). Cardiff is well above the median for the number of volunteers and volunteer hours. This year has seen the recruitment of a community volunteer manager and a community volunteer mentor with the aim of expanding the reach and impact of the community volunteer programme. There have been low levels of service interruption over the last year (Q116). Cardiff reports that the issues experienced mainly relate to staff sickness and traffic causing late opening. The service is in the top quartile of library authorities for operational expenditure (Q114). However, Cardiff has one of the lowest net cost per visit figures (Q115).

4. Strategic context

As part of the return, authorities are asked to report on how the library service is contributing to wider Welsh Government priorities and strategic goals. Cardiff reports that the service continues to play a key role in the strategic commitments of the Strategy for an Ageing Nation. Hubs provide community spaces where older people can meet, connect, learn and maintain a sense of purpose, as well as access activities that can support them to stay healthy and independent. The service delivers a community programme for older people that aims to tackle loneliness and reduce social isolation. Children are supported to meet their potential through the provision of learning and literacy support, and through the delivery of a free events programme that aims to inspire and support STEM skill development. Welsh culture and language ambitions are supported through Welsh language collections and activity programmes. The service continues work with partners to develop health engagement programmes to support the building of a Healthier Cardiff, including acting as a channel for public health information, peer support groups, partner activities and prevention programmes.

5. Future direction

Reporting on the authority's future direction and plans for the library service over the coming year, wellbeing is a key focus for Cardiff as it works with partners to deliver projects, including bibliotherapy and Start Well, Live Well and Age Well. The service will also contribute to cultural wellbeing and develop collections that align to individual communities to ensure that all customers can identify with the book collections within their local Hub/Library. Collection planning will be key as the service works to meet the expectations of customers, including monitoring shifting customer trends in relation to physical and digital books.

6. Conclusion

Cardiff continues to perform strongly in most areas. The service delivers a wide range of activities and services to support its diverse communities and, in particular, it has continued its strong commitment to health and wellbeing. This is recognised by library customers who feel the library makes a difference in terms of skills development and health and wellbeing. The service is strong in children's provision and also in the provision of user training and events that cater for a wide range of audiences. There is an awareness of changing patterns of library engagement, for example, in relation to digital provision. The service is committed to partnership working as part of its libraries and hubs model. Whilst the overall level of staffing and professional leadership meet the targets, the low level of professional staffing remains a concern.

Carmarthenshire

Correction notice

Following publication of the final report, an inaccuracy in the data provided for the number of static services open 10+ hours was discovered. The correct number is 11, whilst the report states 12. The correct data means that QIs 3,4 & 6 are in fact met, not unmet as detailed in the report. In the executive summary the statement: “Carmarthenshire met all of the 12 core entitlements in full. Of the 10 quality indicators which have targets, Carmarthenshire is achieving **5 in full and 1 in part. Four targets were not met**” should be revised with the following “Carmarthenshire met all of the 12 core entitlements in full. Of the 10 quality indicators which have targets, Carmarthenshire is **achieving 8 in full and 1 in part. 1 target is not met.**”

Annual Assessment Report 2022/2023

This report has been prepared based on information provided in Carmarthenshire's annual return, impact statements and narrative report submitted to the Culture Division of the Welsh Government.

1. Executive summary

Carmarthenshire met all of the 12 core entitlements in full. Of the 10 quality indicators which have targets, Carmarthenshire is achieving 5 in full and 1 in part. Four targets were not met.

Carmarthenshire is performing well in many areas. Its services are rated highly by both adults and children and the library collaborates with partner organisations to encourage new users to the library. Despite the number of active borrowers being below the median, adult and children's book issues, as well as Welsh language issues per capita, were in the top quartile of Welsh library authorities. However, the temporary closure of Cross Hands Library impacted on the service's ability to meet a number of targets this year. It is noted the library service is working with the authority and local organisations to relocate the library, although no information is available about a potential reopening date. Carmarthenshire is exploring self-service options to help to extend opening hours in rural areas.

- 100% of adults surveyed experience the library as enjoyable, safe and inclusive (Q11).
- The service is valued by customers; 100% of customers surveyed rated the service 'very good' or 'good' overall (Q12).
- The service performs well for book issues; Both adult and children's book issues per capita in Carmarthenshire are in the top quartile of Welsh library authorities (Q18).
- Carmarthenshire is in the top quartile of library services for materials spend per capita (Q19).
- Carmarthenshire is in the top quartile of library services for the number of qualified staff per capita (Q113).

2. Performance against the standards

The standards framework comprises of core entitlements, quality indicators with targets, quality indicators with benchmarks and impact measures. Section 2 summarises achievements against these areas. A narrative assessment of the authority's performance is provided in Section 3.

2.1 Core entitlements

Carmarthenshire reported meeting all 12 of the Core Entitlements in full through self-assessment, providing detailed and helpful commentary within the return on each area covered. The independent assessor agreed with the self-assessment.

2.2 Quality indicators with targets

There are 16 quality indicators (QIs), of which 10 have constituent targets. Of these, Carmarthenshire is achieving 5 in full and 1 in part. Four targets were not met.

| Quality Indicator | Met? | |
|--|------|---------------|
| QI 3 Support for individual development: | | Not met |
| a) ICT support | X | |
| b) Information literacy and skills training | X | |
| c) E-government support | X | |
| d) Reader development | X | |
| QI 4 (a) Support for health and well-being | | Not met |
| i) Book Prescription Wales scheme | X | |
| ii) Better with Books/Reading Well scheme | X | |
| iii) Designated health & well-being collection | X | |
| iv) Information about healthy lifestyles and behaviours | X | |
| v) Signposting to health & well-being services | X | |
| QI 6 all static service points offer events/activities for users with special requirements | X | Not met |
| QI 7 Location of service points | √ | Met in full |
| QI 9 Up-to-date and appropriate reading material | | Met in full |
| Acquisitions per capita | √ | |
| <u>or</u> Materials spend per capita | √ | |
| QI 10 Welsh Language Resources | | Met in full |
| % of material budget spent on Welsh | √ | |
| <u>or</u> Spend on Welsh per capita | - | |
| QI 11 Online access: | | Met in full |
| a) i) Public access to Internet | √ | |
| ii) Wi-Fi provision | √ | |
| QI 12 Supply of requests | | Met in full |
| a) % of requests satisfied within 7 days | √ | |
| b) % of requests satisfied within 15 days | √ | |
| QI 13 Staffing levels and qualifications: | | Partially met |
| i) Staff per capita | x | |
| ii) Qualified staff per capita | √ | |
| iii) Head of service qualification/training | √ | |
| iv) CPD percentage | √ | |
| QI 16 Opening hours per capita | X | Not met |

2.3 Impact measures

The framework includes three indicators aimed at assessing the impact of library use on people's lives. These indicators do not have targets, and authorities were only required to carry out user surveys for QI1 once over the original three-year period of the framework (2017-20). The summary figures (lowest, median and highest) are based on all authorities providing data in the 2022-23 return. Rankings reflect the

numbers of respondents, where 1 is the highest scoring authority. However, it is important to bear in mind that some authorities have conducted surveys since 2020, whilst others report survey data from before the Covid pandemic. Some responses therefore reflect the situation several years ago, whilst others may have been affected by disruption during the pandemic period. As a result, there are limitations on the extent to which these data might be considered comparable.

Carmarthenshire completed its adult and children’s user survey in February 2023.

| Performance indicator | | Rank | Lowest | Median | Highest |
|---|-----|------|--------|--------|---------|
| QI 1 Making a difference | | | | | |
| b) % of young people who think that the library helps them learn and find things out: | 95% | 3/16 | 58% | 90% | 98% |
| e) % of adults who think that the library has made a difference to their lives: | 91% | 6/16 | 41% | 86.5% | 96% |
| QI 5 b) % of attendees of training sessions who said that the training had helped them achieve their goals: | 99% | 5/17 | 82% | 96% | 100% |

Authorities are also asked to provide an impact statement describing the impact which the library service has had on an individual or on a group of individuals during the year.

Camarthenshire provided an impact statement which reported on the success and subsequent roll out of a pilot project ‘iPads at the Bedside’. The pilot, led by the Hywel Dda Trust, sought to provide patients on the Mynydd Mawr Ward at the Prince Phillip Hospital with an iPad for communication and entertainment purposes during their medium-long term rehabilitation. Carmarthenshire Libraries, keen to deliver smart IT services to library customers, joined the project to support the digital offering providing two key online resources including audio materials. The successful pilot resulted in an expansion of the service across the Hywell Dda network with hundreds of new library registrations being recorded weekly and ongoing support provided by Carmarthenshire Libraries. Patients are reported to have benefitted from the service with feedback from those involved in the project including: *“I am very grateful for all the advice and help received from the Library and I am positive the patients have had benefit from these services past, present and future.”*

2.4 Quality indicators and benchmarks

The remaining indicators do not have targets but allow services to monitor and benchmark their performance over time, in comparison with other authorities. The following table summarises Carmarthenshire’s position for 2022-23. Ranks are included out of 22, where 1 is the highest, and 22 the lowest scoring authority, unless stated otherwise. Indicators where fewer than 22 authorities supplied data are those where relevant data was not available from some authorities. Indicators ‘per capita’ are calculated per 1,000 population unless otherwise noted.

| Performance indicator | | Rank | Lowest | Median | Highest |
|--|---------|--------|--------|---------|---------|
| QI 1 Making a difference | | | | | |
| a) % of adults who think that using the library has helped them develop new skills | 86% | 3/16 | 24% | 69.5% | 90% |
| c) health and well-being | 71% | 6/16 | 35% | 66.5% | 94% |
| d) enjoyable, safe and inclusive | 100% | =1/16 | 93% | 97% | 100% |
| QI 2 Customer satisfaction | | | | | |
| a) 'very good' or 'good' choice of books | 97% | 2/16 | 80% | 91% | 99% |
| b) 'very good' or 'good' customer care | 99% | =2/17 | 92% | 98% | 100% |
| c) 'very good' or 'good' IT facilities | 87% | =7/16 | 65% | 86% | 99% |
| d) 'very good' or 'good' overall | 100% | =1/17 | 94% | 98% | 100% |
| e) users aged 16 & under rating out of ten | 9.7 | =1/16 | 8.0 | 9.3 | 9.7 |
| QI 5 User training | | | | | |
| a) attendances per capita | 11 | =10/22 | 1 | 10.5 | 222 |
| c) informal training per capita | 151 | 8/19 | 5 | 131 | 424 |
| QI 6 attendances at events per capita | 166 | 11/22 | 13 | 165 | 559 |
| QI 8 Library use | | | | | |
| a) visits per capita | 1,777 | 16/21 | 781 | 2,106 | 4,814 |
| b) virtual visits per capita | 956 | 6/22 | 124 | 537.5 | 7,979 |
| c) active borrowers per capita | 48 | 21/22 | 43 | 106.5 | 167 |
| QI 10 Welsh issues per capita | 864 | 1/22 | 13 | 53 | 864 |
| QI 11 Online access | | | | | |
| a) Computers per 10,000 | 15.62 | 3/22 | 3.32 | 7.99 | 16.99 |
| b) % of available time used by the public | 7% | =17/19 | 7% | 11% | 77% |
| QI 13 Staffing levels and qualifications ¹³ | | | | | |
| (v) a) total volunteers | 13 | - | 0 | 8 | 256 |
| b) volunteer hours | 708 | - | 0 | 583.5 | 14,014 |
| QI 14 Operational expenditure | | | | | |
| a) total expenditure per capita | £18,165 | 3/21 | £6,726 | £11,476 | £27,330 |
| b) % on staff, | 60% | =17/21 | 46% | 64% | 78% |
| % on information resources | 13% | =7/21 | 5% | 12% | 21% |
| % on equipment and buildings | 4% | =9/21 | 1% | 3% | 29% |
| % on other operational costs; | 23% | =4/21 | 1% | 15% | 35% |
| c) capital expenditure per capita | -£479 | 21/21 | -£479 | £145 | £2,865 |
| QI 15 Net cost per visit ¹⁴ | £4.68 | 18/19 | £0.41 | £2.76 | £6.22 |
| QI 16 Opening hours ¹⁵ | | | | | |
| (iii) a) % hours unplanned closure of static service points | 0.05% | =11/22 | 0% | 0.05% | 0.95% |
| b) % mobile stops / home deliveries missed | 0.94% | 16/20 | 0% | 0% | 3.74% |

¹³ Following discussion with the peer review group it was decided not to include rankings for volunteers as the implications of volunteer numbers are ambiguous.

¹⁴ Rankings here have been reversed, so that 1 is the lowest scoring (best performing) authority.

¹⁵ Rankings here have been reversed, so that 1 is the lowest scoring (best performing) authority.

3. Analysis of performance

The core entitlements and quality indicators can be divided into four key areas. This section of the report outlines performance under these areas.

3.1 Meeting customer needs (QI 1-5)

Carmarthenshire libraries are rated highly by customers; survey feedback indicates that the service is above the median for all Making a difference (QI1) and Customer satisfaction (QI2) indicators. It is ranked particularly highly by users aged 16 and under (rating out of ten); adults who experience the library as enjoyable, safe and inclusive; and customers rating the service 'very good' or 'good' overall. Due to the temporary closure of Cross Hands Library, Carmarthenshire did not meet the targets for Support for individual development (QI3) or Support for health and wellbeing (QI4) as the number of sites where support was available was reduced to 11. Attendance at user training and informal training per capita is above the median and 99% of attendees said that the training had helped them achieve their goals (QI5). Collaborations with internal council departments and organisations such as The Scarlets, Fusion, Communities For Work+, Spice and Town Councils allows the service to reach and communicate with individuals who may not have used the library before.

3.2 Access and use (QI 6-8)

Carmarthenshire is below of median for number of visits and active borrowers per capita (QI8). Despite this, the service reports that adult and children book issues continue to increase compared to 2021/22 as people return to using libraries after the pandemic. Both adult and children's book issues per capita in Carmarthenshire are in the top quartile of Welsh library authorities. In addition, the service is above the median for virtual visits per capita. The temporary closure of Cross Hands Library impacted on Carmarthenshire's ability to meet the target for QI6. Overall, however, attendances at events per capita were around the median. The services offers a wide range of events, including Makerspace sessions and a 'Warm Winter Welcome Club'.

3.3 Facilities and services (QI 9-12)

Carmarthenshire is in the top quartile of library services for materials spend per capita (QI9). The service has continued its investment in Welsh language materials, and Welsh issues per capita Welsh speaker are in the top quartile of library authorities (QI10). The service is above the median for the number of computers per capita, but in the bottom quartile for the percentage of available time used by the public (QI11). This is likely to be due, in part, to the fact that the service is currently unable to report usage hours of the 110 ipads/ hublets (self-service tablets). Organisations providing IT courses, job search support, CV writing sessions only returned to libraries towards the end of the year, so usage figures are expected to increase next year.

3.4 Expertise and capacity (QI 13-16)

Whilst Carmarthenshire is in the top quartile of library services for the number of qualified staff per capita, it does not meet the target for overall staffing levels, with

staff per capita being around the median (Q13). Carmarthenshire does not currently meet the target for staffed opening hours per capita (Q16) as a result of the temporary closure of Cross Hands branch library, along with changes to mobile routes. The library service is working with the authority and local organisations to relocate the library to a suitable new location. Self-service library options in Newcastle Emlyn Library allow members of the public to access library books out of normal library staff working hours. However, due to changes to buildings access and opening hours after the pandemic, both St. Clears Library and Llandeilo library have not returned to allowing access to users during unstaffed hours.

4. Strategic context

As part of the return, authorities are asked to report on how the library service is contributing to wider Welsh Government priorities and strategic goals.

Carmarthenshire reports that key milestones over the last year have seen the service support and improve mental health and wellbeing; bridge the digital divide; tackle social isolation; reduce inequalities; encourage resilience; and better equip individuals in terms of future challenges. Specific examples include the following:

- The “Warm Welcome Space” project linked with the Welsh Government Well Being of Future Generations Act - ‘A Wales of Cohesive Communities’ – libraries offer a safe, neutral place within the community which provides opportunities for people to connect with each other.
- Makerspace services offered at regional libraries support the Welsh Government digital strategy, mission 2 statement “Equip people with the motivation, access, skills and confidence to engage with an increasingly digital world, based on their needs”.
- Working with the Reading Agency, Carmarthenshire held several events to help tackle isolation and loneliness, supporting Wellbeing objectives by working with partners such as Social Prescribing.

5. Future direction

Reporting on the authority’s future direction and plans for the library service over the following year, Carmarthenshire highlights a number of innovative developments, although there is limited detail provided. The service draws attention to the importance of Community Libraries, especially to residents who may be unable or reluctant to travel to the regional libraries. In order to continue to support local provision, Carmarthenshire is exploring self-service solutions, building on the success of its first fully self-service library in Newcastle Emlyn to help preserve smaller community libraries and facilitate longer opening hours in rural areas. The service also notes the emergence of Artificial Intelligence which is likely to impact on library services in the future. In addition, it draws attention to the evolution of Makerspace activities across the service to support creative and innovative individuals.

6. Conclusion

Carmarthenshire is performing well in many areas. Its services are rated highly by both adults and children and the library collaborates with partner organisations to encourage new users to the library. Despite the number of active borrowers being

below the median, adult and children's book issues, as well as Welsh language issues per capita, were in the top quartile of Welsh library authorities. However, the temporary closure of Cross Hands Library impacted on the service's ability to meet a number of targets this year. It is noted the library service is working with the authority and local organisations to relocate the library, although no information is available about a potential reopening date. Carmarthenshire is exploring self-service options to help to extend opening hours in rural areas.

Annual Assessment Report 2022/2023

This report has been prepared based on information provided in Ceredigion's annual return, impact statements and narrative report submitted to the Culture Division of the Welsh Government.

1. Executive summary

Ceredigion met 10 of the 12 core entitlements in full. Of the 10 quality indicators which have targets, Ceredigion is achieving 7 in full and 1 in part. Two targets have not been met.

Ceredigion is performing well in a number of areas. The number of active borrowers per capita is above the median, as are the number of adult book and e-issues issues per capita. However, children's provision is a concern: the service is below the median for the proportion of expenditure on children's materials and children's book issues per capita. The lack of events and activities for those with special requirements and low attendance at events overall is another area that will require attention over the coming months. Whilst Ceredigion performs comparatively well in terms of the number of professional posts per capita, overall staffing levels are a concern, although it is yet to be seen what changes result from the forthcoming departmental reorganisation. Ceredigion does not meet Core Entitlements 11 or 12, but consultation with users and development of library strategy will give the service a stronger sense of its future direction. The limited detail available in the commentary accompanying the return from Ceredigion impacted on the independent assessor's ability to provide a full picture of activity within this library service.

- User training is highly rated; 100% of attendees said that user training had helped them achieve their goals (Q15).
- Library stock is well used; the number of active borrowers per capita is above the median, as is the number of adult book issues per capita (Q18).
- The Welsh language collection is well used; the service is in the top quartile for Welsh language issues per capita (Q10).
- Ceredigion is in the top quartile of library authorities for qualified staff per capita and is one of only three services to meet the target for this measure (Q13).

2. Performance against the standards

The standards framework comprises of core entitlements, quality indicators with targets, quality indicators with benchmarks and impact measures. Section 2 summarises achievements against these areas. A narrative assessment of the authority's performance is provided in Section 3.

2.1. Core entitlements

Ceredigion reported meeting 10 of the Core Entitlements in full through self-assessment, providing some limited commentary within the return. The independent assessor agreed with the self-assessment. CE12 was not met, but the service is now

looking at developing the full range of library strategies. CE11 was also not met as the service has not consulted users during this Framework period, although it intends to do so next year.

2.2. Quality indicators with targets

There are 16 quality indicators (QIs), of which 10 have constituent targets. Of these, Ceredigion is achieving 7 in full and 1 in part. Two targets have not been met.

| Quality Indicator | Met? | |
|--|------|---------------|
| QI 3 Support for individual development: | | Met in full |
| a) ICT support | √ | |
| b) Information literacy and skills training | √ | |
| c) E-government support | √ | |
| d) Reader development | √ | |
| QI 4 (a) Support for health and well-being | | Met in full |
| i) Book Prescription Wales scheme | √ | |
| ii) Better with Books/Reading Well scheme | √ | |
| iii) Designated health & well-being collection | √ | |
| iv) Information about healthy lifestyles and behaviours | √ | |
| v) Signposting to health & well-being services | √ | |
| QI 6 all static service points offer events/activities for users with special requirements | x | Not met |
| QI 7 Location of service points | √ | Met in full |
| QI 9 Up-to-date and appropriate reading material | | Met in full |
| Acquisitions per capita | √ | |
| <u>or</u> Materials spend per capita | √ | |
| QI 10 Welsh Language Resources | | Met in full |
| % of material budget spent on Welsh | √ | |
| <u>or</u> Spend on Welsh per capita | - | |
| QI 11 Online access: | | Met in full |
| a) i) Public access to Internet | √ | |
| ii) Wi-Fi provision | √ | |
| QI 12 Supply of requests | | Not met |
| a) % of requests satisfied within 7 days | x | |
| b) % of requests satisfied within 15 days | x | |
| QI 13 Staffing levels and qualifications: | | Partially met |
| i) Staff per capita | x | |
| ii) Qualified staff per capita | √ | |
| iii) Head of service qualification/training | √ | |
| iv) CPD percentage | √ | |
| QI 16 Opening hours per capita | √ | Met in full |

2.3. Impact measures

The framework includes three indicators aimed at assessing the impact of library use on people’s lives. These indicators do not have targets, and authorities were only required to carry out user surveys for Q11 once over the original three-year period of the framework (2017-20). The summary figures (lowest, median and highest) are based on all authorities providing data in the 2022-23 return. Rankings reflect the numbers of respondents, where 1 is the highest scoring authority. However, it is important to bear in mind that some authorities have conducted surveys since 2020, whilst others report survey data from before the Covid pandemic. Some responses therefore reflect the situation several years ago, whilst others may have been affected by disruption during the pandemic period. As a result, there are limitations on the extent to which these data might be considered comparable.

Ceredigion has not included user survey results in this year’s return. It plans to consult next year.

| Performance indicator | | Rank | Lowest | Median | Highest |
|---|--------------|-------|--------|--------|---------|
| Q1 1 Making a difference | | | | | |
| b) % of young people who think that the library helps them learn and find things out: | Not provided | - | 58% | 90% | 98% |
| e) % of adults who think that the library has made a difference to their lives: | Not provided | - | 41% | 86.5% | 96% |
| Q1 5 b) % of attendees of training sessions who said that the training had helped them achieve their goals: | 100% | =1/17 | 82% | 96% | 100% |

Authorities are also asked to provide an impact statement describing the impact which the library service has had on an individual or on a group of individuals during the year.

Ceredigion provided an impact statement which focussed on the experience of a customer who was in a distressed state and needed to use a computer to upload photographs to a website but was finding it difficult to do so. A member of library staff offered support to the man and helped him to upload the photographs and get a receipt email. This example demonstrates how the library can provide digital support as well as offering a unique neutral, free service at the point of need which could not be found elsewhere in the locality.

2.4. Quality indicators and benchmarks

The remaining indicators do not have targets but allow services to monitor and benchmark their performance over time, in comparison with other authorities. The following table summarises Ceredigion’s position for 2022-23. Ranks are included out of 22, where 1 is the highest, and 22 the lowest scoring authority, unless stated otherwise. Indicators where fewer than 22 authorities supplied data are those where relevant data was not available from some authorities. Indicators ‘per capita’ are calculated per 1,000 population unless otherwise noted.

| Performance indicator | | Rank | Lowest | Median | Highest |
|--|--------------|--------|--------|---------|---------|
| QI 1 Making a difference | | | | | |
| a) % of adults who think that using the library has helped them develop new skills | Not provided | - | 24% | 69.5% | 90% |
| c) health and well-being | Not provided | - | 35% | 66.5% | 94% |
| d) enjoyable, safe and inclusive | Not provided | - | 93% | 97% | 100% |
| QI 2 Customer satisfaction | | | | | |
| a) 'very good' or 'good' choice of books | Not provided | - | 80% | 91% | 99% |
| b) 'very good' or 'good' customer care | Not provided | - | 92% | 98% | 100% |
| c) 'very good' or 'good' IT facilities | Not provided | - | 65% | 86% | 99% |
| d) 'very good' or 'good' overall | Not provided | - | 94% | 98% | 100% |
| e) users aged 16 & under rating out of ten | Not provided | - | 8.0 | 9.3 | 9.7 |
| QI 5 User training | | | | | |
| a) attendances per capita | 5 | 17/22 | 1 | 10.5 | 222 |
| c) informal training per capita | 156 | 7/19 | 5 | 131 | 424 |
| QI 6 attendances at events per capita | | | | | |
| | 13 | 22/22 | 13 | 165 | 559 |
| QI 8 Library use | | | | | |
| a) visits per capita | 781 | 21/21 | 781 | 2,106 | 4,814 |
| b) virtual visits per capita | 818 | 8/22 | 124 | 537.5 | 7,979 |
| c) active borrowers per capita | 133 | 5/22 | 43 | 106.5 | 167 |
| QI 10 Welsh issues per capita | | | | | |
| | 290 | 3/22 | 13 | 53 | 864 |
| QI 11 Online access | | | | | |
| a) Computers per 10,000 | 6.23 | 18/22 | 3.32 | 7.99 | 16.99 |
| b) % of available time used by the public | 10% | =11/19 | 7% | 11% | 77% |
| QI 13 Staffing levels and qualifications¹⁶ | | | | | |
| (v) a) total volunteers | 0 | - | 0 | 8 | 256 |
| b) volunteer hours | 0 | - | 0 | 583.5 | 14,014 |
| QI 14 Operational expenditure | | | | | |
| a) total expenditure per capita | £10,341 | 12/21 | £6,726 | £11,476 | £27,330 |
| b) % on staff, | 77% | 2/21 | 46% | 64% | 78% |
| % on information resources | 21% | =1/21 | 5% | 12% | 21% |
| % on equipment and buildings | 1% | =20/21 | 1% | 3% | 29% |
| % on other operational costs; | 1% | 21/21 | 1% | 15% | 35% |
| c) capital expenditure per capita | £0 | =12/21 | -£479 | £145 | £2,865 |

¹⁶ Following discussion with the peer review group it was decided not to include rankings for volunteers as the implications of volunteer numbers are ambiguous.

| Performance indicator | | Rank | Lowest | Median | Highest |
|---|-------|--------|--------|--------|---------|
| QI 15 Net cost per visit ¹⁷ | £6.22 | 19/19 | £0.41 | £2.76 | £6.22 |
| QI 16 Opening hours ¹⁸ | | | | | |
| (iii) a) % hours unplanned closure of static service points | 0.14% | =15/22 | 0% | 0.05% | 0.95% |
| b) % mobile stops / home deliveries missed | 2.39% | 18/20 | 0% | 0% | 3.74% |

3. Analysis of performance

The core entitlements and quality indicators can be divided into four key areas. This section of the report outlines performance under these areas.

3.1. Meeting customer needs (QI 1-5)

Ceredigion meets the targets for Support for individual development (QI3) and Support for health and wellbeing (QI4). The service works closely with the council's Health and Well Being officer and is developing more partnerships with other council and national bodies to increase its service offer e.g. providing free period products and green bags for garden waste. Ceredigion is above the median for informal training per capita (QI5). It is below the median for attendance at formal user training, but 100% of those who did attend said that the training had helped them achieve their goals. The service reports that it has been difficult to attract users to training events this year, with some sessions getting zero attendance. However, training videos on the library's Facebook page have been popular. It is important that Ceredigion consults with users in the coming year as planned to ensure that services are meeting customer needs (QI1/2).

3.2. Access and use (QI 6-8)

The number of active borrowers per capita is above the median, as is the number of adult book issues per capita (QI8). The service was, however, below the median for children's book issues per capita. Virtual visits per capita were also above the median. The service reports that electronic downloads continue to be popular and Ceredigion is in the top quartile of library authorities for e-issues per capita. Although visits per capita are below the median for Welsh library authorities, the service notes that visitor figures only record people who have used a computer, or issued or returned a book; they do not include people who have entered the building for another reason. Ceredigion did not meet the target for events and activities for those who have special requirements, and attendance at events per capita is in the bottom quartile of library authorities (QI6).

3.3. Facilities and services (QI 9-12)

Ceredigion is the top quartile of library authorities for spend per capita (QI9). However, the service reports that this level of spend is due to the inclusion of Pressreader and Newsbank, as well as an overspend on the resource budget this year. It is also worth noting that children's budget accounted for just 12%, placing Ceredigion below the median of library authorities for this measure. The service was

¹⁷ Rankings here have been reversed, so that 1 is the lowest scoring (best performing) authority.

¹⁸ Rankings here have been reversed, so that 1 is the lowest scoring (best performing) authority.

in the top quartile for Welsh language issues per capita and Ceredigion meets the target for spending on Welsh language materials (Q110).

Ceredigion was below the median for online access measures (Q111), but ongoing social distancing rules reducing number of hours available during the year may have contributed to lower levels of access. The service did not meet the target for supply of requests (Q112). However, this may be partially due to the fact that, like a number of authorities, Ceredigion continued with the practice introduced during Covid of automatically pushing due dates forward, overriding any requests.

3.4. Expertise and capacity (Q1 13-16)

Although Ceredigion is in the top quartile of library authorities for qualified staff per capita, it did not meet the target for overall levels of staffing (Q113). The service reports being nine posts below being able to meet the standard. This includes a vacant post following a professional postholder's retirement that is unlikely to be filled as a post in the future. Ceredigion performs below the median for unplanned closure of static service points and mobile stops/home delivery services missed (Q116). Operational expenditure is slightly below the median (Q114), but the service has one of the highest net cost per visit figures (Q115).

4. Strategic context

As part of the return, authorities are asked to report on how the library service is contributing to wider Welsh Government priorities and strategic goals. Ceredigion provided a number of examples to illustrate how it contributes. A selection of these are highlighted below.

- **A prosperous Wales:** job clubs in most libraries; developing the library's role to provide support for Universal Credit; providing easy access to the public to use Ceredigion's housing register.
- **A Healthier Wales:** access to self-help and bibliotherapy; agent for Wireless for the Blind.
- **A more equal Wales:** IT classes; Bookstart; summer reading scheme.
- **A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language:** all staff are fully bilingual (Welsh/ English); equal marketing of English and Welsh language materials; storytimes and book groups in both languages.
- **A globally responsible Wales:** book purchasing consortia and digital/e-book consortia.

5. Future direction

Reporting on the authority's future direction and plans for the library service over the following year, Ceredigion provided a brief account, commenting that the wider department will be re-structured next year and it was not yet known what effect this will have on the library service. The current lack of library strategy, policies, objectives and vision (Core Entitlement 12) also inhibits the service's ability to plan for the future effectively. Plans for the coming year include the reintroduction of fees and charges (suspended during Covid) to meet council income targets, whilst looking into the possibility of abolishing fines, in the medium to long term. This obviously has potential implications for service provision to economically disadvantaged customers.

The service also hopes to build on the number of events held, although this is acknowledged to be difficult with current staffing levels.

6. Conclusion

Ceredigion is performing well in a number of areas. The number of active borrowers per capita is above the median, as are the number of adult book and e-issues issues per capita. However, children's provision is a concern: the service is below the median for the proportion of expenditure on children's materials and children's book issues per capita. The lack of events and activities for those with special requirements and low attendance at events overall is another area that will require attention over the coming months. Whilst Ceredigion performs comparatively well in terms of the number of professional posts per capita, overall staffing levels are a concern, although it is yet to be seen what changes result from the forthcoming departmental reorganisation. Ceredigion does not meet Core Entitlements 11 or 12, but consultation with users and development of library strategy will give the service a stronger sense of its future direction. The limited detail provided in the commentary accompanying the data from Ceredigion impacted on the independent assessor's ability to provide a full picture of activity within this library service.

Annual Assessment Report 2022/2023

This report has been prepared based on information provided in Conwy's annual return, impact statements and narrative report submitted to the Culture Division of the Welsh Government.

1. Executive summary

Conwy met all of the 12 core entitlements in full. Of the 10 quality indicators which have targets, Conwy achieved 9 in full and 1 in part.

Conwy continues to perform well and remains above the median in a number of areas, in particular with regard to IT provision and Welsh language provision. The strong commitment to health and wellbeing, in particular mental health, is evident along with many beneficial external partnerships. Conwy reports a shift towards digital engagement, with increasing numbers of website visits and electronic downloads, as well as customers bringing their own devices to use in libraries. The service is keen to promote Welsh language resources (physical and online) and activities (e.g. storytimes, community learning). One-quarter of materials expenditure is on stock for children and there has been an increase in loans to children as a percentage of physical loaned items. Whilst Conwy shows evidence of a strong commitment to staff development, the significant challenges of a reduction in staffing, and in the number of professional staff, are noted.

- Conwy library service has continued in its strategic aim to extend the CCBC Libraries as Community Hubs model, enabling the service to contribute to key national priorities around poverty, literacy, older people, digital access and loneliness and isolation.
- Whilst there has been a decline in library members and active borrowers, the number of visits to the library website and digital downloads have increased; virtual visits per capita are well above the median (Q18).
- Pre-pandemic engagement in user sessions was achieved in 2022-23 and attendance at both formal and informal user training is above the median (Q15).
- Although qualified leadership remains in place and the service demonstrates a strong commitment to staff development, staffing targets are not being met (Q113).

2. Performance against the standards

The standards framework comprises of core entitlements, quality indicators with targets, quality indicators with benchmarks and impact measures. Section 2 summarises achievements against these areas. A narrative assessment of the authority's performance is provided in Section 3.

2.1. Core entitlements

Conwy reported meeting all 12 of the Core Entitlements in full through self-assessment, providing detailed and helpful commentary within the return on each area covered. The independent assessor agreed with the self-assessment.

2.2. Quality indicators with targets

There are 16 quality indicators (QIs), of which 10 have constituent targets. Of these, Conwy is achieving 9 in full and 1 in part.

| Quality Indicator | Met? | |
|--|------|---------------|
| QI 3 Support for individual development: | | Met in full |
| a) ICT support | √ | |
| b) Information literacy and skills training | √ | |
| c) E-government support | √ | |
| d) Reader development | √ | |
| QI 4 (a) Support for health and well-being | | Met in full |
| i) Book Prescription Wales scheme | √ | |
| ii) Better with Books/Reading Well scheme | √ | |
| iii) Designated health & well-being collection | √ | |
| iv) Information about healthy lifestyles and behaviours | √ | |
| v) Signposting to health & well-being services | √ | |
| QI 6 All static service points offer events/activities for users with special requirements | √ | Met in full |
| QI 7 Location of service points | √ | Met in full |
| QI 9 Up-to-date and appropriate reading material | | Met in full |
| Acquisitions per capita | √ | |
| <u>or</u> Materials spend per capita | - | |
| QI 10 Welsh Language Resources | | Met in full |
| % of material budget spent on Welsh | √ | |
| <u>or</u> Spend on Welsh per capita | - | |
| QI 11 Online access: | | Met in full |
| a) i) Public access to Internet | √ | |
| ii) Wi-Fi provision | √ | |
| QI 12 Supply of requests | | Met in full |
| a) % of requests satisfied within 7 days | √ | |
| b) % of requests satisfied within 15 days | √ | |
| QI 13 Staffing levels and qualifications: | | Partially met |
| i) Staff per capita | x | |
| ii) Qualified staff per capita | x | |
| iii) Head of service qualification/training | √ | |
| iv) CPD percentage | √ | |
| QI 16 Opening hours per capita | √ | Met in full |

2.3. Impact measures

The framework includes three indicators aimed at assessing the impact of library use on people’s lives. These indicators do not have targets, and authorities were only required to carry out user surveys for QI1 once over the original three-year period of the framework (2017-20). The summary figures (lowest, median and highest) are based on all authorities providing data in the 2022-23 return. Rankings reflect the numbers of respondents, where 1 is the highest scoring authority. However, it is important to bear in mind that some authorities have conducted surveys since 2020, whilst others report survey data from before the Covid pandemic. Some responses therefore reflect the situation several years ago, whilst others may have been affected by disruption during the pandemic period. As a result, there are limitations on the extent to which these data might be considered comparable.

Conwy completed its adult and children’s user survey in November 2018. The service was scheduled to complete a user survey in autumn 2022. However, it was agreed with Head of Service, Cabinet Member and Culture Division Welsh Government colleagues that this would not be conducted as planned due to imminent changes to the WPLS framework.

| Performance indicator | | Rank | Lowest | Median | Highest |
|---|-----|-------|--------|--------|---------|
| QI 1 Making a difference | | | | | |
| b) % of young people who think that the library helps them learn and find things out: | 90% | =7/16 | 58% | 90% | 98% |
| e) % of adults who think that the library has made a difference to their lives: | 87% | 8/16 | 41% | 86.5% | 96% |
| QI 5 b) % of attendees of training sessions who said that the training had helped them achieve their goals: | 96% | =9/17 | 82% | 96% | 100% |

Authorities are also asked to provide an impact statement describing the impact which the library service has had on an individual or on a group of individuals during the year.

Conwy provided a case study of Colwyn Bay Knit and Natter Group which is described as contributing to forging community recovery and social opportunities; empathy and economic support; and understanding and support for those living with dementia. The group came into being at the end of 2022 when people were feeling the impact of the increasing cost of living, including rapidly increasing energy costs. Conwy Libraries Warm Welcome initiative provided drinks, snacks and somewhere warm and welcoming to spend time. Using donated wool and needles, the group of 12 regular attendees have created hats, gloves and scarves to be given free to anyone who needs them as well as Fiddle Muffs for a local dementia day care centre.

2.4. Quality indicators and benchmarks

The remaining indicators do not have targets but allow services to monitor and benchmark their performance over time, in comparison with other authorities. The following table summarises Conwy’s position for 2022-23. Ranks are included out of 22, where 1 is the highest, and 22 the lowest scoring authority, unless stated otherwise. Indicators where fewer than 22 authorities supplied data are those where

relevant data was not available from some authorities. Indicators 'per capita' are calculated per 1,000 population unless otherwise noted.

| Performance indicator | | Rank | Lowest | Median | Highest |
|--|------------|--------------|-----------|------------|------------|
| QI 1 Making a difference | | | | | |
| a) % of adults who think that using the library has helped them develop new skills | 82% | 5/16 | 24% | 69.5% | 90% |
| c) health and well-being | 74% | =4/16 | 35% | 66.5% | 94% |
| d) enjoyable, safe and inclusive | 97% | =8/16 | 93% | 97% | 100% |
| QI 2 Customer satisfaction | | | | | |
| a) 'very good' or 'good' choice of books | 91% | =8/16 | 80% | 91% | 99% |
| b) 'very good' or 'good' customer care | 98% | =9/17 | 92% | 98% | 100% |
| c) 'very good' or 'good' IT facilities | 95% | 2/16 | 65% | 86% | 99% |
| d) 'very good' or 'good' overall | 97% | =10/17 | 94% | 98% | 100% |
| e) users aged 16 & under rating out of ten | 9.0 | =12/16 | 8.0 | 9.3 | 9.7 |
| QI 5 User training | | | | | |
| a) attendances per capita | 31 | 4/22 | 1 | 10.5 | 222 |
| c) informal training per capita | 310 | 4/19 | 5 | 131 | 424 |
| QI 6 attendances at events per capita | 141 | 14/22 | 13 | 165 | 559 |
| QI 8 Library use | | | | | |
| a) visits per capita | 2,106 | 11/21 | 781 | 2,106 | 4,814 |
| b) virtual visits per capita | 4,382 | 2/22 | 124 | 537.5 | 7,979 |
| c) active borrowers per capita | 128 | 7/22 | 43 | 106.5 | 167 |
| QI 10 Welsh issues per capita | 133 | 7/22 | 13 | 53 | 864 |
| QI 11 Online access | | | | | |
| a) Computers per 10,000 | 16.99 | 1/22 | 3.32 | 7.99 | 16.99 |
| b) % of available time used by the public | 18% | 3/19 | 7% | 11% | 77% |
| QI 13 Staffing levels and qualifications¹⁹ | | | | | |
| (v) a) total volunteers | 30 | - | 0 | 8 | 256 |
| b) volunteer hours | 1,230 | - | 0 | 583.5 | 14,014 |
| QI 14 Operational expenditure | | | | | |
| a) total expenditure per capita | £15,123 | 6/21 | £6,726 | £11,476 | £27,330 |
| b) % on staff, | 73% | 3/21 | 46% | 64% | 78% |
| % on information resources | 11% | =12/21 | 5% | 12% | 21% |
| % on equipment and buildings | 1% | =20/21 | 1% | 3% | 29% |
| % on other operational costs; | 15% | 11/21 | 1% | 15% | 35% |
| c) capital expenditure per capita | £666 | 5/21 | -£479 | £145 | £2,865 |

¹⁹ Following discussion with the peer review group it was decided not to include rankings for volunteers as the implications of volunteer numbers are ambiguous.

| Performance indicator | | Rank | Lowest | Median | Highest |
|---|-------|--------|--------|--------|---------|
| QI 15 Net cost per visit ²⁰ | £1.91 | 6/19 | £0.41 | £2.76 | £6.22 |
| QI 16 Opening hours ²¹ | | | | | |
| (iii) a) % hours unplanned closure of static service points | 0.05% | =11/22 | 0% | 0.05% | 0.95% |
| b) % mobile stops / home deliveries missed | 0% | =1/20 | 0% | 0% | 3.74% |

3. Analysis of performance

The core entitlements and quality indicators can be divided into four key areas. This section of the report outlines performance under these areas.

3.1. Meeting customer needs (QI 1-5)

Conwy completed its user surveys of adults and children in November 2018, in the second year of the sixth framework, with positive results. Of course, much has changed since 2018, but 2022-23 has seen a return to full in-person service, with story times, IT sessions and reading groups etc. re-started. Pre-pandemic engagement in user sessions was achieved in 2022-23 and there was an increase in the number of people who said attendance helped them achieve their goals (QI5).

The Reading Well for Mental Health scheme is a priority area within the Transformation Agenda, and this is reflected in the fact that Conwy is ranked above the median for the percentage of adults who have found helpful information for health and wellbeing (QI1). Conwy has further developed partnerships with neighbouring library services, Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board (BCUHB), the Public Health team and local Age Connects to raise awareness of the Reading Well for Mental Health (Books on Prescription) scheme. In partnership with the Vulnerable People Service, the library service developed a space within Colwyn Bay Library to establish a Mental Wellness Recovery College. Colwyn Bay Library's The Reading Friends sessions have offered a space for older children to reconnect after the impact of Covid 19 and many of the children's parents stay during the sessions to connect with other parents.

3.2. Access and use (QI 6-8)

The library service has continued in its strategic aim to extend the CCBC Libraries as Community Hubs model and is undertaking a review of community-assisted libraries and the services they offer to smaller communities. User attendance at events is reported to have returned to near pre-pandemic levels, although it is below the median (QI6). Whilst Conwy reports a decline in library members and active borrowers, the number of active borrowers per capita remains above the median (QI8). The number of visits to the library website has increased and there is a shift from AV issues towards downloads, resulting in a notable increase in use of this service. There has also been a marked increase in loans to children as a percentage of physical loaned items. Summer Reading Challenge engagement increased in 2022 as the library combined the SRC activity programme with WG-funded Snac a Stori sessions, providing a lunch alongside the library session.

²⁰ Rankings here have been reversed, so that 1 is the lowest scoring (best performing) authority.

²¹ Rankings here have been reversed, so that 1 is the lowest scoring (best performing) authority.

3.3. Facilities and services (Q1 9-12)

Conwy has increased the proportion of materials expenditure on stock for children (Q19). Other areas of focus include digital and physical audio formats; and collections to support the cost-of-living crisis. There has been a marked increase in customers who bring their own device and use library space to work, resulting in a reduced use of publicly accessible computers. The service has therefore reduced the number of PCs in libraries (although this remains in the top quartile of library services (Q11)), and, through funding from Conwy Education Services, improved WiFi capacity in partnership with Grwp Llandrillo Menai. Conwy has also extended the range of online resources.

With funding from WG and working with Archives, Arts and Museum, the authority has developed a new website for cultural services, providing a range of Welsh language material for all ages. Furthermore, Welsh language issues per capita are above the median (Q10). Other Welsh language provision includes weekly bilingual story time; the promotion of Welsh culture and literature to young people; and providing rooms for hire for community learning. Library staff informally support Welsh learners at Llandudno and Abergele Library with a 'Reading Friends' programme - an activity and chat session for Welsh learners to practice their new language in an informal setting.

3.4. Expertise and capacity (Q1 13-16)

Following a staff restructure in 2018/19 due to financial pressure there has been a significant reduction in professional staffing, and staffing levels remain below the target figure (Q13), despite being above the median for the percentage of operational budget allocated to staffing (Q14). The service has funded four Foundation Degree courses for frontline staff for service succession planning. Four staff completed the Level 5 Cultural Heritage Higher Apprenticeship and another three are newly registered. The service is above the median for proportion of staff time allocated to training (Q13). A further programme of training is planned to coincide with the delivery of the new Library and Information Strategy. There have been changes since 2018-19 to the opening hours in some community libraries, whilst opening hours at Llanrwst Library, Glasdir have been increased for a two-year pilot period (to full time) following the move to the new building. The service meets the opening hours target (Q16). A new Mobile Library vehicle has resulted in notable improvements in service provision and no mobile stops were missed this year.

4. Strategic context

As part of the return, authorities are asked to report on how the library service is contributing to wider Welsh Government priorities and strategic goals. The ongoing development of Libraries as Community Hubs has remained core to Conwy's mission, enabling the service to contribute to key national priorities around poverty, literacy, older people, digital access and loneliness and isolation. To offer access to key support during the cost of living crisis, Conwy has established all libraries as Safe Spaces; worked to develop a Warm Welcome initiative; and run summer holiday 'snack and story' sessions, as well as continuing to work with partners to support digital skills, digital inclusion and employability. Conwy is actively participating in the work of Digital Communities Wales. The service has also

collaborated with the aims of the Conwy Culture Strategy to deliver musical performances, dance and arts workshops in library spaces. Activity in partnership with Creu Conwy has contributed to the aims of a Wales of Cohesive Communities, a Wales of Thriving Culture and Welsh Language and Wales 2050.

5. Future direction

Reporting on the authority's future direction and plans for the library service over the following year, Conwy references its Library and Information Strategy. The service is progressing its Libraries as Community Hubs model and has submitted a strategic funding application for Shared Prosperity Funding to fund an additional fixed term post to support the hubs roll-out, as well as a capital fund for digital infrastructure and transformation across all library sites. It is noted that financial challenges continue to be a serious concern for the service. Shared Prosperity Funding will protect elements of core service provision over the next 12 to 18 months, but the current budgetary shortfall faced by the Local Authority in 2024/5 could impact service delivery depending upon the outcome of a council-wide budgetary review that is currently underway. Conwy continues to focus on libraries as therapeutic landscapes, developing stronger links with health and social care and looking at new referral pathways through the Recovery College framework. The service has the Authority-wide function of Age Friendly Communities, employing a post to help review, develop and embed Age Friendly working, including the development of home and mobile library services.

6. Conclusion

Conwy continues to perform well and remains above the median in a number of areas, in particular with regard to IT provision and Welsh language provision. The strong commitment to health and wellbeing, in particular mental health, is evident along with many beneficial external partnerships. Conwy reports a shift towards digital engagement, with increasing numbers of website visits and electronic downloads, as well as customers bringing their own devices to use in libraries. The service is keen to promote Welsh language resources (physical and online) and activities (e.g. storytimes, community learning). One-quarter of materials expenditure is on stock for children and there has been an increase in loans to children as a percentage of physical loaned items. Whilst Conwy shows evidence of a strong commitment to staff development, the significant challenges of a reduction in staffing, and in the number of professional staff, are noted.

Annual Assessment Report 2022/2023

This report has been prepared based on information provided in Denbighshire's annual return, impact statements and narrative report submitted to the Culture Division of the Welsh Government.

1. Executive summary

Denbighshire met all of the 12 core entitlements in full. Of the 10 quality indicators which have targets, Denbighshire is achieving 8 in full and 2 in part.

Denbighshire performs well in a number of areas, in particular in relation to access, with attendance at events, visits per capita and active borrowers all being above the median. The service also performs well for e-issues and demonstrates an awareness of the changing demands on IT provision in libraries. Denbighshire demonstrates a commitment to the provision of both children's and Welsh language resources, and also shows a commitment to meeting the needs of young people within its future development plans. Whilst Denbighshire is currently performing well and has well-considered plans for its short-term future direction, there are concerns about how the service will be able to respond in the medium term if the forecast cuts to library services in 2024-25 come to fruition. In this context, it is especially important that the service conducts user surveys in 2023-2024 or 2024-25 to ensure that library provision is meeting the needs of customers.

- User training is popular amongst library users; attendance at both formal user training and informal training are above the median (Q15).
- Libraries are well-used; visits per capital and virtual visits per capita are both above the median and the number of active borrowers per capita is in the top quartile of Welsh library services (Q18).
- Welsh language provision is well-supported, especially children's materials; Denbighshire is in the top quartile of library authorities for the proportion of the materials budget devoted to Welsh language resources (Q110).
- Denbighshire is performing better than the median for unplanned closure of static service points and no mobile stops or home delivery services were missed (Q116).

2. Performance against the standards

The standards framework comprises of core entitlements, quality indicators with targets, quality indicators with benchmarks and impact measures. Section 2 summarises achievements against these areas. A narrative assessment of the authority's performance is provided in Section 3.

2.1. Core entitlements

Denbighshire reported meeting all 12 of the Core Entitlements in full through self-assessment, providing helpful commentary where there have been changes from the previous year. The independent assessor agreed with the self-assessment.

2.2. Quality indicators with targets

There are 16 quality indicators (QIs), of which 10 have constituent targets. Of these, Denbighshire is achieving 8 in full and 2 in part.

| Quality Indicator | Met? | |
|--|------|---------------|
| QI 3 Support for individual development: | | Met in full |
| a) ICT support | √ | |
| b) Information literacy and skills training | √ | |
| c) E-government support | √ | |
| d) Reader development | √ | |
| QI 4 (a) Support for health and well-being | | Met in full |
| i) Book Prescription Wales scheme | √ | |
| ii) Better with Books/Reading Well scheme | √ | |
| iii) Designated health & well-being collection | √ | |
| iv) Information about healthy lifestyles and behaviours | √ | |
| v) Signposting to health & well-being services | √ | |
| QI 6 all static service points offer events/activities for users with special requirements | √ | Met in full |
| QI 7 Location of service points | √ | Met in full |
| QI 9 Up-to-date and appropriate reading material | | Met in full |
| Acquisitions per capita | √ | |
| <u>or</u> Materials spend per capita | - | |
| QI 10 Welsh Language Resources | | Met in full |
| % of material budget spent on Welsh | √ | |
| <u>or</u> Spend on Welsh per capita | - | |
| QI 11 Online access: | | Met in full |
| a) i) Public access to Internet | √ | |
| ii) Wi-Fi provision | √ | |
| QI 12 Supply of requests | | Partially met |
| a) % of requests satisfied within 7 days | X | |
| b) % of requests satisfied within 15 days | √ | |
| QI 13 Staffing levels and qualifications: | | Partially met |
| i) Staff per capita | x | |
| ii) Qualified staff per capita | x | |
| iii) Head of service qualification/training | √ | |
| iv) CPD percentage | √ | |
| QI 16 Opening hours per capita | √ | Met in full |

2.3. Impact measures

The framework includes three indicators aimed at assessing the impact of library use on people's lives. These indicators do not have targets, and authorities were only

required to carry out user surveys for Q11 once over the original three-year period of the framework (2017-20). The summary figures (lowest, median and highest) are based on all authorities providing data in the 2022-23 return. Rankings reflect the numbers of respondents, where 1 is the highest scoring authority. However, it is important to bear in mind that some authorities have conducted surveys since 2020, whilst others report survey data from before the Covid pandemic. Some responses therefore reflect the situation several years ago, whilst others may have been affected by disruption during the pandemic period. As a result, there are limitations on the extent to which these data might be considered comparable.

Denbighshire completed its adult user survey in November 2018 and its children’s user survey in February 2020. No full survey was undertaken in 22-23 as it is anticipated that a survey will be conducted as part of the work to develop a new Library Strategy.

| Performance indicator | | Rank | Lowest | Median | Highest |
|---|--------------|--------|--------|--------|---------|
| Q1 1 Making a difference | | | | | |
| b) % of young people who think that the library helps them learn and find things out: | 87% | 12/16 | 58% | 90% | 98% |
| e) % of adults who think that the library has made a difference to their lives: | 78% | =13/16 | 41% | 86.5% | 96% |
| Q1 5 b) % of attendees of training sessions who said that the training had helped them achieve their goals: | | | | | |
| | Not provided | - | 82% | 96% | 100% |

Authorities are also asked to provide an impact statement describing the impact which the library service has had on an individual or on a group of individuals during the year.

Denbighshire provided an impact statement concerning a man who had retired early and is living with dementia. Having a thirst for knowledge and wanting to continue learning for pleasure and to keep mentally stimulated, he visited to library to see what it could offer, accompanied by his wife. The couple found the environment to be inclusive and welcoming and appreciated the staff members skills in communicating with someone with dementia. The wide range of online and physical resources were also valued; *“it’s such an incredibly helpful and interesting resource – I feel privileged to have access to it”*. The library provides a place he feels comfortable visiting and which respects his independence. It is also filled with resources he finds stimulating and which are available for free and include a digital offer which he can access at home whenever he wants.

2.4. Quality indicators and benchmarks

The remaining indicators do not have targets but allow services to monitor and benchmark their performance over time, in comparison with other authorities. The following table summarises Denbighshire’s position for 2022-23. Ranks are included out of 22, where 1 is the highest, and 22 the lowest scoring authority, unless stated otherwise. Indicators where fewer than 22 authorities supplied data are those where relevant data was not available from some authorities. Indicators ‘per capita’ are calculated per 1,000 population unless otherwise noted.

| Performance indicator | | Rank | Lowest | Median | Highest |
|--|---------|--------|--------|---------|---------|
| QI 1 Making a difference | | | | | |
| a) % of adults who think that using the library has helped them develop new skills | 55% | 13/16 | 24% | 69.5% | 90% |
| c) health and well-being | 44% | =12/16 | 35% | 66.5% | 94% |
| d) enjoyable, safe and inclusive | 93% | =14/16 | 93% | 97% | 100% |
| QI 2 Customer satisfaction | | | | | |
| a) 'very good' or 'good' choice of books | 82% | 15/16 | 80% | 91% | 99% |
| b) 'very good' or 'good' customer care | 96% | 16/17 | 92% | 98% | 100% |
| c) 'very good' or 'good' IT facilities | 65% | 16/16 | 65% | 86% | 99% |
| d) 'very good' or 'good' overall | 94% | 17/17 | 94% | 98% | 100% |
| e) users aged 16 & under rating out of ten | 9.3 | =8/16 | 8.0 | 9.3 | 9.7 |
| QI 5 User training | | | | | |
| a) attendances per capita | 18 | 7/22 | 1 | 10.5 | 222 |
| c) informal training per capita | 424 | 1/19 | 5 | 131 | 424 |
| QI 6 attendances at events per capita | 230 | 7/22 | 13 | 165 | 559 |
| QI 8 Library use | | | | | |
| a) visits per capita | 2,495 | 6/21 | 781 | 2,106 | 4,814 |
| b) virtual visits per capita | 633 | 10/22 | 124 | 537.5 | 7,979 |
| c) active borrowers per capita | 155 | 2/22 | 43 | 106.5 | 167 |
| QI 10 Welsh issues per capita | 203 | 6/22 | 13 | 53 | 864 |
| QI 11 Online access | | | | | |
| a) Computers per 10,000 | 10.52 | 4/22 | 3.32 | 7.99 | 16.99 |
| b) % of available time used by the public | 13% | 7/19 | 7% | 11% | 77% |
| QI 13 Staffing levels and qualifications ²² | | | | | |
| (v) a) total volunteers | 9 | - | 0 | 8 | 256 |
| b) volunteer hours | 978 | - | 0 | 583.5 | 14,014 |
| QI 14 Operational expenditure | | | | | |
| a) total expenditure per capita | £13,589 | 7/21 | £6,726 | £11,476 | £27,330 |
| b) % on staff, | 63% | =13/21 | 46% | 64% | 78% |
| % on information resources | 9% | =16/21 | 5% | 12% | 21% |
| % on equipment and buildings | 9% | 4/21 | 1% | 3% | 29% |
| % on other operational costs; | 20% | =7/21 | 1% | 15% | 35% |
| c) capital expenditure per capita | £336 | =6/21 | -£479 | £145 | £2,865 |
| QI 15 Net cost per visit ²³ | £2.56 | 9/19 | £0.41 | £2.76 | £6.22 |
| QI 16 Opening hours ²⁴ | | | | | |
| (iii) a) % hours unplanned closure of static service points | 0.04% | 10/22 | 0% | 0.05% | 0.95% |
| b) % mobile stops / home deliveries missed | 0% | =1/20 | 0% | 0% | 3.74% |

²² Following discussion with the peer review group it was decided not to include rankings for volunteers as the implications of volunteer numbers are ambiguous.

²³ Rankings here have been reversed, so that 1 is the lowest scoring (best performing) authority.

²⁴ Rankings here have been reversed, so that 1 is the lowest scoring (best performing) authority.

3. Analysis of performance

The core entitlements and quality indicators can be divided into four key areas. This section of the report outlines performance under these areas.

3.1. Meeting customer needs (QI 1-5)

Denbighshire meets the targets for Support for individual development (QI3) and health and well-being (QI4), with the service displaying a strong commitment to community well-being. Talking Points returned fully to all libraries in 22-23. Delivered via a partnership between Adult Social Care, the third sector and libraries, it provides a face-to-face opportunity for people to have a conversation about maintaining an independent life and accessing local support and activities. Libraries are embedded in the authority's Age Friendly and Dementia Friendly strategies and action plans. Attendances at both formal user training and informal training are above the median for library services (QI5). Most reported indicators for Making a difference (QI1) and Customer satisfaction (QI2) are below the median. However, these results relate to library provision pre-Covid and it is important that the service conducts further surveys in 2023-24 or 2024-25 to ensure that library provision is meeting the needs of customers.

3.2. Access and use (QI 6-8)

Attendance at events is above the median (QI6), as are visits per capita and virtual visits per capita (QI8). The number of active borrowers per capita is in the top quartile of Welsh library services (QI8). Borrowing was higher than in 21-22 and Denbighshire performs particularly well in terms of e-issues, which are in the top quartile of library services.

3.3. Facilities and services (QI 9-12)

Denbighshire shows a strong commitment to children's provision, with 25% of its materials being spent on children's resources (QI9). Denbighshire is in the top quartile of library authorities for the proportion of the materials budget devoted to Welsh language resources and it is above the median for Welsh language issues per capita Welsh speakers (QI10). The service reports that 71% of issues of Welsh language material were for children's books - with only two bookshops in the county, the local library is the main source of Welsh language books for children. Although indicators relating to online access are above the median (QI11), Denbighshire reports that usage of public access ICT is at a much lower level than pre-Covid, reflecting the general trend of people having their own devices. The service only partially met the target for supply of requests following a reduction of its internal delivery system due to budget pressures (QI12).

3.4. Expertise and capacity (QI 13-16)

Denbighshire does not meet the targets for overall staffing or qualified staff per capita (QI13). However, it is worth noting that the fact that most libraries in the service are one stop shops, and the majority of frontline, supervisory and managerial staff spend approx. 50% of their time on their Customer Services roles therefore only 50% of the staffing level is reported as library provision. Opening hours have now returned to pre-Covid levels, with the exception of a reduction of half a day each at

Ruthin and Denbigh Libraries due to budget pressures. Denbighshire is performing better than the median for unplanned closure of static service points, and no home delivery services were missed (Q116).

4. Strategic context

As part of the return, authorities are asked to report on how the library service is contributing to wider Welsh Government priorities and strategic goals. The following are amongst the examples provided by Denbighshire.

- **Better Mental Health:** access to the full range of Reading Well schemes and work with partners to raise awareness of the schemes.
- **Skills and Employability:** Working Denbighshire, the council's employability service, uses library facilities to meet with their clients and support people with digital skills and job search.
- **Digital:** library staff offer help to get online and to develop basic digital skills; libraries are a key partner in Denbighshire's digital inclusion programme, working closely with Cwmpas.
- **Early Years & Literacy:** weekly Bookstart Rhymetimes develop young children's language, learning and social skills; Summer Reading Challenge helps children aged 4-12 develop their love of reading for pleasure and choosing independently.
- **Support for wellbeing:** Home Library Service provides a personalised service to individuals who cannot access their local library due to disability, illness or caring responsibilities; Talking Points are community-led information sessions where citizens meet with health and social care staff, third sector support services and peers, to have a person-centred conversation about their health and wellbeing needs.
- **Cymraeg:** library provision is central to Denbighshire's Welsh in Education Strategic Plan. Bookstart Rhymetimes introduce many families to Welsh. The Summer Reading Challenge is fully bilingual.

5. Future direction

Reporting on the authority's future direction and plans for the library service over the following year, the library service refers to Denbighshire's Corporate Plan, and in particular the 23-24 theme A Better Connected Denbighshire, where libraries are seen as the key point of delivery of activity to reduce digital exclusion. Activities and developments in the 2023-24 Service Business plan include:

- Upgrading and modernising IT facilities
- Providing facilities and opportunities for digital skills learning
- Developing the scheme to lend digital devices to the public and distribute National Databank free sim cards to people in data poverty
- Supporting library staff to update digital skills
- Providing free access to a range of digital resources for reading and learning
- Delivering a programme of activities and events for children and adults to support engagement and wellbeing and to combat social isolation and loneliness

- Updating the Library Strategy in the light of the new Corporate Plan and Welsh Government's Culture Strategy.

Other areas of development include:

- Collaboration with Denbighshire Youth Service to pilot open access youth provision at libraries
- Participating in the forthcoming all-Wales collaborative re-tendering process for a new digital platform and Library Management System
- Contributing to the council's Welsh in Education Strategic Plan to support children and young people's Welsh language skills in the community
- Further developing library facilities as flexible, adaptable and safe spaces to facilitate support services and to enable people to engage socially with each other.

However, the Council is facing a budget shortfall in 2024-25 so the expectation is that the library service will be subject to severe cuts.

6. Conclusion

Denbighshire performs well in a number of areas, in particular in relation to access, with attendance at events, visits per capita and active borrowers all being above the median. The service also performs well for e-issues and demonstrates an awareness of the changing demands on IT provision in libraries. Denbighshire demonstrates a commitment to the provision of both children's and Welsh language resources, and also shows a commitment to meeting the needs of young people within its future development plans. Whilst Denbighshire is currently performing well and has well-considered plans for its short-term future direction, there are concerns about how the service will be able to respond in the medium term if the forecast cuts to library services in 2024-25 come to fruition. In this context, it is especially important that the service conducts user surveys in 2023-24 or 2024-25 to ensure that library provision is meeting the needs of customers.

Annual Assessment Report 2022/2023

This report has been prepared based on information provided in Flintshire's annual return, impact statements and narrative report submitted to the Culture Division of the Welsh Government.

1. Executive summary

Flintshire met all of the 12 core entitlements in full. Of the 10 quality indicators which have targets, Flintshire is achieving 8 in full and 2 in part.

Flintshire performs well in a number of areas, including number of acquisitions and Welsh language acquisitions. Its children's issues and event attendance data is another positive feature of the service. In recent years, the service has focused on health and wellbeing, and provision for children and young people. It has introduced a number of new initiatives in these areas and it has clear plans to continue to develop these services in the forthcoming year. As the last user surveys were undertaken in 2018, it is important that surveys are undertaken as planned in 2023 to inform the development of these initiatives. Flintshire has also taken steps to upgrade digital provision and would appear to be relatively well-resourced in this area. Staffing levels are a concern, but the service demonstrates a commitment to staff development.

- The library service is introduced a number of initiatives designed to support Health and Wellbeing and tackle food poverty in Flintshire (Q14).
- Library events are popular amongst members of local communities; the service is above the median for attendance at events per capita (Q16).
- Welsh language provision is well-supported; Flintshire is in the top quartile of library authorities for the spend on Welsh language materials per capita Welsh speaker (Q110).
- Flintshire displays a commitment to professional development; it is above the median for percentage of staff time dedicated to training (Q113).

2. Performance against the standards

The standards framework comprises of core entitlements, quality indicators with targets, quality indicators with benchmarks and impact measures. Section 2 summarises achievements against these areas. A narrative assessment of the authority's performance is provided in Section 3.

2.1. Core entitlements

Flintshire reported meeting all 12 of the Core Entitlements in full through self-assessment, providing detailed and helpful commentary within the return on each area covered. The independent assessor agreed with the self-assessment.

2.2. Quality indicators with targets

There are 16 quality indicators (QIs), of which 10 have constituent targets. Of these, Flintshire is achieving 8 in full and 2 in part.

| Quality Indicator | Met? | |
|--|------|---------------|
| QI 3 Support for individual development: | | Met in full |
| a) ICT support | √ | |
| b) Information literacy and skills training | √ | |
| c) E-government support | √ | |
| d) Reader development | √ | |
| QI 4 (a) Support for health and well-being | | Met in full |
| i) Book Prescription Wales scheme | √ | |
| ii) Better with Books/Reading Well scheme | √ | |
| iii) Designated health & well-being collection | √ | |
| iv) Information about healthy lifestyles and behaviours | √ | |
| v) Signposting to health & well-being services | √ | |
| QI 6 all static service points offer events/activities for users with special requirements | √ | Met in full |
| QI 7 Location of service points | √ | Met in full |
| QI 9 Up-to-date and appropriate reading material | | Met in full |
| Acquisitions per capita | √ | |
| <u>or</u> Materials spend per capita | - | |
| QI 10 Welsh Language Resources | | Met in full |
| % of material budget spent on Welsh | √ | |
| <u>or</u> Spend on Welsh per capita | - | |
| QI 11 Online access: | | Met in full |
| a) i) Public access to Internet | √ | |
| ii) Wi-Fi provision | √ | |
| QI 12 Supply of requests | | Partially met |
| a) % of requests satisfied within 7 days | x | |
| b) % of requests satisfied within 15 days | √ | |
| QI 13 Staffing levels and qualifications: | | Partially met |
| i) Staff per capita | x | |
| ii) Qualified staff per capita | x | |
| iii) Head of service qualification/training | √ | |
| iv) CPD percentage | √ | |
| QI 16 Opening hours per capita | √ | Met in full |

2.3. Impact measures

The framework includes three indicators aimed at assessing the impact of library use on people's lives. These indicators do not have targets, and authorities were only required to carry out user surveys for QI1 once over the original three-year period of the framework (2017-20). The summary figures (lowest, median and highest) are based on all authorities providing data in the 2022-23 return. Rankings reflect the

numbers of respondents, where 1 is the highest scoring authority. However, it is important to bear in mind that some authorities have conducted surveys since 2020, whilst others report survey data from before the Covid pandemic. Some responses therefore reflect the situation several years ago, whilst others may have been affected by disruption during the pandemic period. As a result, there are limitations on the extent to which these data might be considered comparable.

Flintshire completed its adult and children’s user survey in November 2018. The next survey is planned for October 2023.

| Performance indicator | | Rank | Lowest | Median | Highest |
|---|--------------|-------|--------|--------|---------|
| QI 1 Making a difference | | | | | |
| b) % of young people who think that the library helps them learn and find things out: | 90% | =7/16 | 58% | 90% | 98% |
| e) % of adults who think that the library has made a difference to their lives: | 86% | 9/16 | 41% | 86.5% | 96% |
| QI 5 b) % of attendees of training sessions who said that the training had helped them achieve their goals: | Not provided | - | 82% | 96% | 100% |

Authorities are also asked to provide an impact statement describing the impact which the library service has had on an individual or on a group of individuals during the year.

Flintshire provided an impact statement which referred to its wellbeing offer, with approximately 100 people accessing formal support and 190 taking part in wellbeing activities each month. This includes providing a warm welcome space and offering hot food and drinks. Members of the library team achieved their Food Safety qualification so that they can cook the food in the community kitchen. This has created an enhanced sense of community, with individuals being able to be in company as well as offering a place where organisations such as Communities for Work and the Salvation Army can offer informal support and signposting. One individual example of impact included a family who were new to the area experiencing a warm supportive environment and getting support to find employment and voluntary work as well as taking part in library-based activities and making new friends. Another example concerned a homeless man who became a member of the library and accessed computers and other resources which led to him getting one to one advice through the Wellbeing Hub as well as finding employment and permanent accommodation.

2.4. Quality indicators and benchmarks

The remaining indicators do not have targets but allow services to monitor and benchmark their performance over time, in comparison with other authorities. The following table summarises Flintshire’s position for 2022-23. Ranks are included out of 22, where 1 is the highest, and 22 the lowest scoring authority, unless stated otherwise. Indicators where fewer than 22 authorities supplied data are those where relevant data was not available from some authorities. Indicators ‘per capita’ are calculated per 1,000 population unless otherwise noted.

| Performance indicator | | Rank | Lowest | Median | Highest |
|--|--------------|--------|--------|---------|---------|
| QI 1 Making a difference | | | | | |
| a) % of adults who think that using the library has helped them develop new skills | 83% | 4/16 | 24% | 69.5% | 90% |
| c) health and well-being | 79% | 3/16 | 35% | 66.5% | 94% |
| d) enjoyable, safe and inclusive | 99% | =4/16 | 93% | 97% | 100% |
| QI 2 Customer satisfaction | | | | | |
| a) 'very good' or 'good' choice of books | 91% | =8/16 | 80% | 91% | 99% |
| b) 'very good' or 'good' customer care | 99% | =2/17 | 92% | 98% | 100% |
| c) 'very good' or 'good' IT facilities | 91% | =3/16 | 65% | 86% | 99% |
| d) 'very good' or 'good' overall | 97% | =10/17 | 94% | 98% | 100% |
| e) users aged 16 & under rating out of ten | 9.3 | =8/16 | 8.0 | 9.3 | 9.7 |
| QI 5 User training | | | | | |
| a) attendances per capita | 7 | =13/22 | 1 | 10.5 | 222 |
| c) informal training per capita | 125 | 12/19 | 5 | 131 | 424 |
| QI 6 attendances at events per capita | 211 | 10/22 | 13 | 165 | 559 |
| QI 8 Library use | | | | | |
| a) visits per capita | 2,090 | 12/21 | 781 | 2,106 | 4,814 |
| b) virtual visits per capita | 494 | 12/22 | 124 | 537.5 | 7,979 |
| c) active borrowers per capita | 98 | =15/22 | 43 | 106.5 | 167 |
| QI 10 Welsh issues per capita | 51 | 13/22 | 13 | 53 | 864 |
| QI 11 Online access | | | | | |
| a) Computers per 10,000 | 9.35 | 7/22 | 3.32 | 7.99 | 16.99 |
| b) % of available time used by the public | 7% | =17/19 | 7% | 11% | 77% |
| QI 13 Staffing levels and qualifications ²⁵ | | | | | |
| (v) a) total volunteers | 70 | - | 0 | 8 | 256 |
| b) volunteer hours | 583 | - | 0 | 583.5 | 14,014 |
| QI 14 Operational expenditure | | | | | |
| a) total expenditure per capita | £7,923 | 20/21 | £6,726 | £11,476 | £27,330 |
| b) % on staff, | 70% | =5/21 | 46% | 64% | 78% |
| % on information resources | 21% | =1/21 | 5% | 12% | 21% |
| % on equipment and buildings | 3% | =11/21 | 1% | 3% | 29% |
| % on other operational costs; | 6% | 18/21 | 1% | 15% | 35% |
| c) capital expenditure per capita | £0 | =12/21 | -£479 | £145 | £2,865 |
| QI 15 Net cost per visit ²⁶ | Not provided | - | £0.41 | £2.76 | £6.22 |
| QI 16 Opening hours ²⁷ | | | | | |
| (iii) a) % hours unplanned closure of static service points | 0 | =1/22 | 0% | 0.05% | 0.95% |
| b) % mobile stops / home deliveries missed | 2.37 | 17/20 | 0% | 0% | 3.74% |

²⁵ Following discussion with the peer review group it was decided not to include rankings for volunteers as the implications of volunteer numbers are ambiguous.

²⁶ Rankings here have been reversed, so that 1 is the lowest scoring (best performing) authority.

²⁷ Rankings here have been reversed, so that 1 is the lowest scoring (best performing) authority.

3. Analysis of performance

The core entitlements and quality indicators can be divided into four key areas. This section of the report outlines performance under these areas.

3.1. Meeting customer needs (QI 1-5)

Flintshire meets the targets for Support for individual development (QI3) and for health and well-being (QI4). 2022-23 saw the reintroduction of a full programme of activities and events designed to support people's overall health and wellbeing, including jigsaw clubs, craft and chat, mindfulness art sessions and quizzes etc. The service has introduced a number of new interventions aimed at encouraging library use amongst children and young people. 'Fit, Fed and Read' ran in the Easter and Summer holidays of 2022. The programme is designed to support Health and Wellbeing and tackle food poverty in Flintshire. Many of the children and families who took part were not regular library users. Two science and technology sessions ran in each branch as part of the 2022 Summer activities programme, delivered by external providers. Flintshire was below the median for attendance per capita at both formal and informal training (QI5).

3.2. Access and use (QI 6-8)

Flintshire holds a range of events, including author visits, a Family Arts Festival in partnership with Theatr Clwyd, STEM workshops, Lego clubs, mindfulness art sessions, ICT courses and employability sessions. The service is above the median for attendance at events per capita (QI6). Flintshire is slightly below the median for visits and virtual visits per capita (QI8). The service is also below the median for active borrowers per capita, but issues of children's books per capita are above the median.

3.3. Facilities and services (QI 9-12)

Flintshire meets the target for number of acquisitions per capita and it is above the median for materials spend per capita (QI9). In addition, it is in the top quartile of library authorities for the spend on Welsh language materials per capita. It is close to the median for issues of Welsh language materials per capita (QI10). Flintshire partially meets the target for supply of requests as the target for supply within 7 days is not met (QI12).

Flintshire is above the median for the number of PCs per capita. However, public access computers are not particularly well-used and it is in the bottom quartile for the percentage of available time used by the public (QI11). This is likely to be, in part, due to the fact that the service does not have data for the usage of laptops, tablets etc. that account for around 70% of available devices. The service has made a number of improvements to IT provision, including the upgrade of public access Wi-Fi, upgraded Wi-Fi aboard the mobile library, wireless printing and a Digital Loan Scheme.

3.4. Expertise and capacity (QI 13-16)

Flintshire is in the bottom quartile of library authorities for both overall staffing per capita and qualified staff per capita (QI13). However, it does retain a qualified

operational manager and shows a commitment to staff professional development, being above the median for percentage of staff time dedicated to training. Operational expenditure per capita is below the median (Q114). The service meets the target for opening hours per capita, but is below the median for missed mobile stop/home deliveries.

4. Strategic context

As part of the return, authorities are asked to report on how the library service is contributing to wider Welsh Government priorities and strategic goals. Flintshire's return highlights participation in the Welsh Government funded 'Living Well in Wales' programme which supports people's health and wellbeing in four areas: Places to Connect; Age Well with Welsh Libraries: Dip into Reading; Growing Together (supporting the development of babies and young children). The service also draws attention to the Summer Reading Challenge activities; Adult Community Learning programme; digital loan scheme; and cultural and creative activities and experiences.

5. Future direction

Reporting on the authority's future direction and plans for the library service over the following year, Flintshire describes how its focus over the forthcoming 12 months will be on developing the role libraries play in supporting health and wellbeing, through services, resources and sites. Alongside continuing Warm Welcome hubs; reading; and activities and events to connect people and tackle social isolation and loneliness, the service will be working to promote the benefits of library use for speech and language development in babies and young children, as well as the literacy and communication skills of children and young people. The service is a stakeholder in the new Place Making plans currently underway in Flintshire, which will support town centre regeneration and community wellbeing.

6. Conclusion

Flintshire performs well in a number of areas, including number of acquisitions and Welsh language acquisitions. Its children's issues and event attendance data is another positive feature of the service. In recent years, the service has focused on health and wellbeing, and provision for children and young people. It has introduced a number of new initiatives in these areas and it has clear plans to continue to develop these services in the forthcoming year. As the last user surveys were undertaken in 2018, it is important that surveys are undertaken as planned in 2023 to inform the development of these initiatives. Flintshire has also taken steps to upgrade digital provision and would appear to be relatively well-resourced in this area. Staffing levels are a concern, but the service demonstrates a commitment to staff development.

Annual Assessment Report 2022/2023

This report has been prepared based on information provided in Gwynedd's annual return, impact statements and narrative report submitted to the Culture Division of the Welsh Government.

1. Executive summary

Gwynedd met all of the 12 core entitlements in full. Of the 10 quality indicators which have targets, Gwynedd is achieving 8 in full and 2 in part.

Gwynedd Library Service performs well in many areas, including active borrowers, acquisitions and issues, in particular of Welsh language materials and adult books. The service is clearly highly committed to the promotion of Welsh language and culture through its resources and activities and its provision is particularly strong in this area. In addition, Gwynedd is engaged in a number of innovative activities, including the creation of a Library of Things. There are some gaps in the data provided in Gwynedd's return. Providing a fuller set of data in the coming years, including full adult and child user surveys during the three-year cycle contained in the guidance, will help shape a more comprehensive assessment of Gwynedd's performance.

- User training is rated highly; 100% of attendees of training sessions who said that the training had helped them achieve their goals (Q15).
- The service is above the median for virtual visits and for active borrowers per capita (Q18).
- The service performs strongly in terms of issues; is in the top quartile of library authorities for adult book issues per capita and above the median for children's issues and e-issues per capita (Q18).
- Gwynedd meets the target for acquisitions spend per capita and is in the top quartile of library authorities for this measure (Q19).
- Welsh language stock is well-used; issues per capita Welsh speaker are in the top quartile of library authorities (Q110).

2. Performance against the standards

The standards framework comprises of core entitlements, quality indicators with targets, quality indicators with benchmarks and impact measures. Section 2 summarises achievements against these areas. A narrative assessment of the authority's performance is provided in Section 3.

2.1. Core entitlements

Gwynedd reported meeting all 12 of the Core Entitlements in full through self-assessment, providing detailed and helpful commentary within the return on each area covered. The independent assessor agreed with the self-assessment.

2.2. Quality indicators with targets

There are 16 quality indicators (QIs), of which 10 have constituent targets. Of these, Gwynedd is achieving 8 in full and 2 in part.

| Quality Indicator | Met? | |
|--|--------------|---------------|
| QI 3 Support for individual development: | | Met in full |
| a) ICT support | √ | |
| b) Information literacy and skills training | √ | |
| c) E-government support | √ | |
| d) Reader development | √ | |
| QI 4 (a) Support for health and well-being | | Met in full |
| i) Book Prescription Wales scheme | √ | |
| ii) Better with Books/Reading Well scheme | √ | |
| iii) Designated health & well-being collection | √ | |
| iv) Information about healthy lifestyles and behaviours | √ | |
| v) Signposting to health & well-being services | √ | |
| QI 6 all static service points offer events/activities for users with special requirements | √ | Met in full |
| QI 7 Location of service points | √ | Met in full |
| QI 9 Up-to-date and appropriate reading material | | Met in full |
| Acquisitions per capita | √ | |
| <u>or</u> Materials spend per capita | √ | |
| QI 10 Welsh Language Resources | | Met in full |
| % of material budget spent on Welsh | √ | |
| <u>or</u> Spend on Welsh per capita | - | |
| QI 11 Online access: | | Met in full |
| a) i) Public access to Internet | √ | |
| ii) Wi-Fi provision | √ | |
| QI 12 Supply of requests | | Partially met |
| a) % of requests satisfied within 7 days | X | |
| b) % of requests satisfied within 15 days | √ | |
| QI 13 Staffing levels and qualifications: | | Partially met |
| i) Staff per capita | x | |
| ii) Qualified staff per capita | x | |
| iii) Head of service qualification/training | √ | |
| iv) CPD percentage | Not provided | |
| QI 16 Opening hours per capita | √ | Met in full |

2.3. Impact measures

The framework includes three indicators aimed at assessing the impact of library use on people's lives. These indicators do not have targets, and authorities were only required to carry out user surveys for QI1 once over the original three-year period of the framework (2017-20). The summary figures (lowest, median and highest) are

based on all authorities providing data in the 2022-23 return. Rankings reflect the numbers of respondents, where 1 is the highest scoring authority. However, it is important to bear in mind that some authorities have conducted surveys since 2020, whilst others report survey data from before the Covid pandemic. Some responses therefore reflect the situation several years ago, whilst others may have been affected by disruption during the pandemic period. As a result, there are limitations on the extent to which these data might be considered comparable.

Gwynedd completed its adult user survey (providing responses to a limited number of questions) in 2022-23. No information is provided regarding a children's user survey.

| Performance indicator | | Rank | Lowest | Median | Highest |
|---|--------------|-------|--------|--------|---------|
| QI 1 Making a difference | | | | | |
| b) % of young people who think that the library helps them learn and find things out: | Not provided | - | 58% | 90% | 98% |
| e) % of adults who think that the library has made a difference to their lives: | Not provided | - | 41% | 86.5% | 96% |
| QI 5 b) % of attendees of training sessions who said that the training had helped them achieve their goals: | 100% | =1/17 | 82% | 96% | 100% |

Authorities are also asked to provide an impact statement describing the impact which the library service has had on an individual or on a group of individuals during the year. Gwynedd provided an impact statement on the role that the service plays in promoting awareness of Welsh culture and the use of the Welsh language, in order to support and reflect national identity and culture. In addition to working with Bangor University to enable them to run Welsh Language Learning courses in Gwynedd Libraries buildings free of charge, the library service is supporting Welsh learners through the establishment of an informal discussion group to practise conversation in Welsh. In 2022/23, in consultation with Bangor University's Welsh for Adults tutor co-ordinator, a 'Cuppa and Chat' scheme was developed at Barmouth, Cricieth and Caernarfon Libraries. The 'Cuppa and Chat' sessions at Cricieth Library are mainly aimed at learners (Foundation level upwards). The group has around seven members, most of which attend regularly. Sessions cover a range of different topics and content, including stories and poems, and emphasise the use of print and digital library resources. Positive feedback from one group member included: *"The session is informal and relaxed, which encourages us all to get involved and have a go, even if we are unsure"*.

2.4. Quality indicators and benchmarks

The remaining indicators do not have targets but allow services to monitor and benchmark their performance over time, in comparison with other authorities. The following table summarises Gwynedd's position for 2022-23. Ranks are included out of 22, where 1 is the highest, and 22 the lowest scoring authority, unless stated otherwise. Indicators where fewer than 22 authorities supplied data are those where relevant data was not available from some authorities. Indicators 'per capita' are calculated per 1,000 population unless otherwise noted.

| Performance indicator | | Rank | Lowest | Median | Highest |
|--|--------------|--------|--------|---------|---------|
| QI 1 Making a difference | | | | | |
| a) % of adults who think that using the library has helped them develop new skills | Not provided | - | 24% | 69.5% | 90% |
| c) health and well-being | Not provided | - | 35% | 66.5% | 94% |
| d) enjoyable, safe and inclusive | Not provided | - | 93% | 97% | 100% |
| QI 2 Customer satisfaction | | | | | |
| a) 'very good' or 'good' choice of books | Not provided | - | 80% | 91% | 99% |
| b) 'very good' or 'good' customer care | 98% | =9/17 | 92% | 98% | 100% |
| c) 'very good' or 'good' IT facilities | Not provided | - | 65% | 86% | 99% |
| d) 'very good' or 'good' overall | 98% | =5/17 | 94% | 98% | 100% |
| e) users aged 16 & under rating out of ten | Not provided | - | 8.0 | 9.3 | 9.7 |
| QI 5 User training | | | | | |
| a) attendances per capita | 2 | =19/22 | 1 | 10.5 | 222 |
| c) informal training per capita | Not provided | - | 5 | 131 | 424 |
| QI 6 attendances at events per capita | | | | | |
| | 64 | 21/22 | 13 | 165 | 559 |
| QI 8 Library use | | | | | |
| a) visits per capita | Not provided | - | 781 | 2,106 | 4,814 |
| b) virtual visits per capita | 872 | 7/22 | 124 | 537.5 | 7,979 |
| c) active borrowers per capita | 143 | 3/22 | 43 | 106.5 | 167 |
| QI 10 Welsh issues per capita | | | | | |
| | 461 | 2/22 | 13 | 53 | 864 |
| QI 11 Online access | | | | | |
| a) Computers per 10,000 | 7.52 | 13/22 | 3.32 | 7.99 | 16.99 |
| b) % of available time used by the public | Not provided | - | 7% | 11% | 77% |
| QI 13 Staffing levels and qualifications²⁸ | | | | | |
| (v) a) total volunteers | 0 | - | 0 | 8 | 256 |
| b) volunteer hours | 0 | - | 0 | 583.5 | 14,014 |
| QI 14 Operational expenditure | | | | | |
| a) total expenditure per capita | £19,150 | 2/21 | £6,726 | £11,476 | £27,330 |
| b) % on staff, | 46% | 21/21 | 46% | 64% | 78% |
| % on information resources | 12% | =9/21 | 5% | 12% | 21% |
| % on equipment and buildings | 7% | =5/21 | 1% | 3% | 29% |
| % on other operational costs; | 35% | 1/21 | 1% | 15% | 35% |
| c) capital expenditure per capita | £145 | 11/21 | -£479 | £145 | £2,865 |

²⁸ Following discussion with the peer review group it was decided not to include rankings for volunteers as the implications of volunteer numbers are ambiguous.

| Performance indicator | | Rank | Lowest | Median | Highest |
|---|----------------------------|-------|--------|--------|---------|
| QI 15 Net cost per visit ²⁹ | Not provided ³⁰ | - | £0.41 | £2.76 | £6.22 |
| QI 16 Opening hours ³¹ | | | | | |
| (iii) a) % hours unplanned closure of static service points | 0% | =1/22 | 0% | 0.05% | 0.95% |
| b) % mobile stops / home deliveries missed | 0% | =1/20 | 0% | 0% | 3.74% |

3. Analysis of performance

The core entitlements and quality indicators can be divided into four key areas. This section of the report outlines performance under these areas.

3.1. Meeting customer needs (QI 1-5)

Gwynedd reports that five satisfaction survey exercises were conducted in 2022-2023, although these only covered two of the Customer satisfaction indicators (QI2). For customer care and overall satisfaction, Gwynedd is performing at the median level. No data is available in relation to Making a difference (QI1). The service achieves the targets for Support for individual development (QI3) and health and well-being (QI4) in full. Examples from Gwynedd's comprehensive description of health and well-being support include: the Warm Welcome offer, developed in response to the cost-of-living crisis; a partnership with Grŵp Llandrillo Menai to hold Meditation/ Mindfulness sessions at Caernarfon Library; a new well-being garden at Dyffryn Ogwen Library; and Booktrust Cymru's Storytime Pilot scheme which aims to reach hard-to-reach families.

Gwynedd is below the median for user training attendance (although it is noted that third party sessions held in libraries are not included) and no data is provided for informal training. The service is in the top quartile of Welsh library authorities for the percentage of attendees of training sessions who said that the training had helped them achieve their goals (QI5).

3.2. Access and use (QI 6-8)

Events and activities offered include Lego BricQ; Mama G sessions; Soup and Craft; and Cuppa and Chat for those learning Welsh. However, event attendance per capita at Gwynedd is in the bottom quartile of library authorities (QI6). No information is available for visits per capita. However, the service is above the median for virtual visits and for active borrowers per capita (QI8). Furthermore, the service is in the top quartile of library authorities for adult book issues per capita, and above the median for children's issues and e-issues per capita. In addition to more conventional types of loans, Gwynedd has transformed the interior space of Penygroes Library, creating a VR corner, along with space for the Things (Library of Things) project in Penygroes and Bethesda, where the service will be working with Benthylg to provide a service borrowing everyday items to reduce waste and cost of living.

²⁹ Rankings here have been reversed, so that 1 is the lowest scoring (best performing) authority.

³⁰ Gwynedd provided a figure for cost per online visit, but as physical visits were not included, this is not comparable with other services.

³¹ Rankings here have been reversed, so that 1 is the lowest scoring (best performing) authority.

3.3. Facilities and services (QI 9-12)

Gwynedd meets the target for acquisitions spend per capita and is in the top quartile of library authorities for this measure (QI9). It also comfortably meets the target for percentage of materials budget allocated to Welsh language resources, and issues per capita Welsh speaker are in the top quartile of library authorities (QI10).

Gwynedd is below the median for public PCs per capita, but no data is provided for available time used (QI11) so it is not possible to comment on levels of demand. The service is in the process of switching to a new PC management system so this data should be available in the future. The 7-day target for supply of requests is not met, but the service comfortably achieves the 15-day target (QI12).

3.4. Expertise and capacity (QI 13-16)

Gwynedd does not meet the target for staffing per capita, although it is in the top quartile of library authorities for this measure (QI13). Similarly, it does not meet the target for qualified staff per capita, although it is also above the median for this measure. Gwynedd has a qualified operational manager, but no data is provided about the percentage of staff time spent on professional development. There are no volunteers at Gwynedd libraries. Gwynedd meets the target for opening hours (QI16).

4. Strategic context

As part of the return, authorities are asked to report on how the library service is contributing to wider Welsh Government priorities and strategic goals. Examples of the ways in which Gwynedd Libraries contribute to local and national Government priorities including the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 include the following:

- One to one Digital Support sessions offered in libraries and at home to support those who need help using digital technology
- Moving to electric vehicles, and providing a free on-demand library service to the home
- Providing opportunities for Welsh learners to benefit from sessions such as 'Cuppa and Chat' to practise their Welsh
- Supporting Welsh as the language of the household by encouraging the sharing of Welsh rhymes and songs
- Library of Things loan provision which reinforces the Welsh Government's priorities in terms of their Circular Economy Strategy.

5. Future direction

Reporting on the authority's future direction and plans for the library service over the following year Gwynedd refer to their Libraries Plan – Living Libraries 2023-28, which sets out a vision for the next five years. The library service is committed to developing the goals in the areas of Reading; Health and Well-being; Welsh Language and Culture; and Information and Digital. The service will continue to develop partnerships, specifically with the Circular Economy Network and Grŵp Llandrillo Menai in the context of community education and the Library of Things. Nationally, Gwynedd will lead on obtaining a Library Management System for Welsh

Libraries that will improve quality and access to library resources and services across the board.

6. Conclusion

Gwynedd Library Service performs well in many areas, including active borrowers, acquisitions and issues, in particular of Welsh language materials and adult books. The service is clearly highly committed to the promotion of Welsh language and culture through its resources and activities and its provision is particularly strong amongst Welsh library authorities. In addition, Gwynedd is engaged in a number of innovative activities, including the creation of a Library of Things. There are some gaps in the data provided in Gwynedd's return. Providing a fuller set of data in the coming years, including full adult and child user surveys during the three-year cycle contained in the guidance, will help shape a more comprehensive assessment of Gwynedd's performance. It is acknowledged that there has been disruption due to Covid and variation in the precise reporting required over the last few years but providing a fuller set of data in the coming years, including full adult and children's user surveys, will assist in the production of a more comprehensive assessment of Gwynedd's performance.

Annual Assessment Report 2022/2023

This report has been prepared based on information provided in Anglesey's annual return, impact statements and narrative report submitted to the Culture Division of the Welsh Government.

1. Executive summary

Anglesey meets 10 of the 12 core entitlements in full and 2 in part. Of the 10 quality indicators which have targets, Anglesey is achieving 8 in full and 2 in part.

Anglesey performs comparatively well in several areas, including the number of acquisitions, the service's support for children's and Welsh language materials being particularly noted. Although attendance at events and training sessions is below the median, the service is clearly making efforts to extend its provision and encourage people to return to libraries post-pandemic. The comparatively high number of virtual visits per capita is noted and suggests ongoing changes in patterns of service use. The service has faced some challenges, in particular with regard to its IT provision. However, it is to be praised for its prioritisation of staff development, despite continuing to carry vacant posts. The service should prioritise conducting user surveys in the near future to help inform its future direction and to make its strategy available, thus allowing it to fully meet Core Entitlements in these areas. It would also be helpful to highlight how library services contribute specifically to the council plan for 2023-28.

- Anglesey's online provision is well-used; the service performs in the top quartile of library services for virtual visits per capita (QI8).
- Efforts are made to maintain stock levels; the service is in the top quartile of library authorities for number of items acquired per capita (QI9).
- Welsh language provision is well-supported by the service and well-used by local communities; the service is in the top quartile for Welsh language issues and Welsh language materials account for 15% of the materials budget (QI10).
- The service demonstrates a strong commitment to staff training with 4.6% of staff hours being dedicated to professional development (QI13).

2. Performance against the standards

The standards framework comprises of core entitlements, quality indicators with targets, quality indicators with benchmarks and impact measures. Section 2 summarises achievements against these areas. A narrative assessment of the authority's performance is provided in Section 3.

2.1. Core entitlements

Anglesey reported meeting 10 of the 12 Core Entitlements in full and meeting the remaining two Core Entitlements in part through self-assessment. The independent assessor accepts the self-assessment based on assessments made in previous years. In the case of CE11, it is noted that, whilst user panels take place, a formal user survey has not been run in recent years. In the case of CE12, documents are available in print, but the 2023-28 strategy is in development and there is no online link provided.

2.2. Quality indicators with targets

There are 16 quality indicators (QIs), of which 10 have constituent targets. Of these, Anglesey is achieving 8 in full and 2 in part.

| Quality Indicator | Met? |
|--|---------------|
| QI 3 Support for individual development: | Met in full |
| a) ICT support | √ |
| b) Information literacy and skills training | √ |
| c) E-government support | √ |
| d) Reader development | √ |
| QI 4 (a) Support for health and well-being | Met in full |
| i) Book Prescription Wales scheme | √ |
| ii) Better with Books/Reading Well scheme | √ |
| iii) Designated health & well-being collection | √ |
| iv) Information about healthy lifestyles and behaviours | √ |
| v) Signposting to health & well-being services | √ |
| QI 6 all static service points offer events/activities for users with special requirements | √ Met in full |
| QI 7 Location of service points | √ Met in full |
| QI 9 Up-to-date and appropriate reading material | Met in full |
| Acquisitions per capita | √ |
| <u>or</u> Materials spend per capita | - |
| QI 10 Welsh Language Resources | Met in full |
| % of material budget spent on Welsh | √ |
| <u>or</u> Spend on Welsh per capita | - |
| QI 11 Online access: | Met in full |
| a) i) Public access to Internet | √ |
| ii) Wi-Fi provision | √ |
| QI 12 Supply of requests | Partially met |
| a) % of requests satisfied within 7 days | X |
| b) % of requests satisfied within 15 days | √ |

| Quality Indicator | Met? |
|---|---------------|
| QI 13 Staffing levels and qualifications: | Partially met |
| i) Staff per capita | x |
| ii) Qualified staff per capita | x |
| iii) Head of service qualification/training | √ |
| iv) CPD percentage | √ |
| QI 16 Opening hours per capita | √ Met in full |

2.3. Impact measures

The framework includes three indicators aimed at assessing the impact of library use on people's lives. These indicators do not have targets, and authorities were only required to carry out user surveys for QI1 once over the original three-year period of the framework (2017-20). The summary figures (lowest, median and highest) are based on all authorities providing data in the 2022-23 return. Rankings reflect the numbers of respondents, where 1 is the highest scoring authority. However, it is important to bear in mind that some authorities have conducted surveys since 2020, whilst others report survey data from before the Covid pandemic. Some responses therefore reflect the situation several years ago, whilst others may have been affected by disruption during the pandemic period. As a result, there are limitations on the extent to which these data might be considered comparable.

Anglesey has not completed adult or children user surveys throughout the framework period. A survey is planned for 2023-24.

| Performance indicator | Rank | Lowest | Median | Highest | |
|---|--------------|--------|--------|---------|------|
| QI 1 Making a difference | | | | | |
| b) % of young people who think that the library helps them learn and find things out: | Not provided | - | 58% | 90% | 98% |
| e) % of adults who think that the library has made a difference to their lives: | Not provided | - | 41% | 86.5% | 96% |
| QI 5 b) % of attendees of training sessions who said that the training had helped them achieve their goals: | 82% | 17/17 | 82% | 96% | 100% |

Authorities are also asked to provide an impact statement describing the impact which the library service has had on an individual or on a group of individuals during the year. The Isle of Anglesey provided an impact statement detailing the Rhannu Rhigwn sessions: Welsh Language Rhyme Time sessions for babies and pre-school children. The sessions are held weekly in two libraries and are led by the Children and Young People Librarian in partnership with Health Visitors and Cymraeg I Plant. The sessions are popular with both Welsh speaking families and those families who are not first language Welsh. The sessions provide a neutral, fun space for parents to learn and improve Welsh, as well as developing social interaction and confidence.

2.4. Quality indicators and benchmarks

The remaining indicators do not have targets but allow services to monitor and benchmark their performance over time, in comparison with other authorities. The following table summarises Anglesey's position for 2022-23. Ranks are included out of 22, where 1 is the highest, and 22 the lowest scoring authority, unless stated

otherwise. Indicators where fewer than 22 authorities supplied data are those where relevant data was not available from some authorities. Indicators 'per capita' are calculated per 1,000 population unless otherwise noted.

| Performance indicator | Rank | Lowest | Median | Highest | |
|--|--------------|--------|--------|---------|---------|
| QI 1 Making a difference | | | | | |
| a) % of adults who think that using the library has helped them develop new skills | Not provided | - | 24% | 69.5% | 90% |
| c) health and well-being | Not provided | - | 35% | 66.5% | 94% |
| d) enjoyable, safe and inclusive | Not provided | - | 93% | 97% | 100% |
| QI 2 Customer satisfaction | | | | | |
| a) 'very good' or 'good' choice of books | Not provided | - | 80% | 91% | 99% |
| b) 'very good' or 'good' customer care | Not provided | - | 92% | 98% | 100% |
| c) 'very good' or 'good' IT facilities | Not provided | - | 65% | 86% | 99% |
| d) 'very good' or 'good' overall | Not provided | - | 94% | 98% | 100% |
| e) users aged 16 & under rating out of ten | Not provided | - | 8.0 | 9.3 | 9.7 |
| QI 5 User training | | | | | |
| a) attendances per capita | 2 | =19/22 | 1 | 10.5 | 222 |
| c) informal training per capita | 11 | 17/19 | 5 | 131 | 424 |
| QI 6 attendances at events per capita | 120 | 16/22 | 13 | 165 | 559 |
| QI 8 Library use | | | | | |
| a) visits per capita | 1,425 | 18/21 | 781 | 2,106 | 4,814 |
| b) virtual visits per capita | 2,386 | 3/22 | 124 | 537.5 | 7,979 |
| c) active borrowers per capita | 106 | =12/22 | 43 | 106.5 | 167 |
| QI 10 Welsh issues per capita | 263 | 4/22 | 13 | 53 | 864 |
| QI 11 Online access | | | | | |
| a) Computers per 10,000 | 6.38 | 17/22 | 3.32 | 7.99 | 16.99 |
| b) % of available time used by the public | Not provided | - | 7% | 11% | 77% |
| QI 13 Staffing levels and qualifications³² | | | | | |
| (v) a) total volunteers | 6 | - | 0 | 8 | 256 |
| b) volunteer hours | 300 | - | 0 | 583.5 | 14,014 |
| QI 14 Operational expenditure | | | | | |
| a) total expenditure per capita | £12,519 | 10/21 | £6,726 | £11,476 | £27,330 |
| b) % on staff, | 64% | 11/21 | 46% | 64% | 78% |
| % on information resources | 11% | =12/21 | 5% | 12% | 21% |
| % on equipment and buildings | 3% | =11/21 | 1% | 3% | 29% |
| % on other operational costs; | 22% | 6/21 | 1% | 15% | 35% |
| c) capital expenditure per capita | £1,672 | 4/21 | -£479 | £145 | £2,865 |

³² Following discussion with the peer review group it was decided not to include rankings for volunteers as the implications of volunteer numbers are ambiguous.

| Performance indicator | | Rank | Lowest | Median | Highest |
|---|-------|-------|--------|--------|---------|
| QI 15 Net cost per visit ³³ | £2.28 | 7/19 | £0.41 | £2.76 | £6.22 |
| QI 16 Opening hours ³⁴ | | | | | |
| (iii) a) % hours unplanned closure of static service points | 0.17% | 17/22 | 0% | 0.05% | 0.95% |
| b) % mobile stops / home deliveries missed | 3.74% | 20/20 | 0% | 0% | 3.74% |

3. Analysis of performance

The core entitlements and quality indicators can be divided into four key areas. This section of the report outlines performance under these areas.

3.1. Meeting customer needs (QI 1-5)

Anglesey meets the targets for support for individual development (QI3) and health and well-being (QI4) in full. The service has not completed adult or children user surveys throughout the framework, but a survey is planned for 2023-24. Anglesey is in the bottom quartile of library authorities for attendance at both formal and informal user training, and for the percentage of attendees who said that the training had helped them achieve their goals (QI5). The return notes that pre-arranged user training sessions have significantly decreased compared with pre-pandemic years. This is due in part to a lack of demand, but also a shift to events and activities rather than formal training sessions. Formal user training was provided to a number of schools. However, demand is reported to be increasing for informal help particularly with completing online forms, scanning documents and job searching.

3.2. Access and use (QI 6-8)

Anglesey has increased the number of activities this year as part of post-Covid recovery plans. This includes Health Visitor sessions, Paned a Sgwrs sessions, Rhyme Time, Brownies, creative writing workshops, craft sessions, outreach work, and a large World Book Day event. However, attendance at events in Anglesey libraries are below the median (QI6). Anglesey reports a rise in visitors to its premises as confidence returns post-Covid. However, the service is below the median for visits per capita (QI8). Nevertheless, despite reporting a decrease on the previous year, Anglesey performs in the top quartile of library services for virtual visits per capita, demonstrating that the changing patterns of library use due to the pandemic appear to be continuing. The number of active borrowers per capita is close to the median and demonstrates an increase on last year. The service is also close to the median for both adult and children's book issues per capita. Call and collect packs, introduced due to Covid, are now a permanent offer and can be received on their own or in conjunction with browsing and personal borrowing. Demand for electronic resources continues to increase.

3.3. Facilities and services (QI 9-12)

Anglesey meets the target for number of acquisitions and is in the top quartile of library authorities for number of items acquired per capita (QI9). It demonstrates a

³³ *Rankings here have been reversed, so that 1 is the lowest scoring (best performing) authority.*

³⁴ *Rankings here have been reversed, so that 1 is the lowest scoring (best performing) authority.*

strong commitment to children's resources with 28% of the resources budget being spent on children's resources. It also prioritises Welsh language resources, which account for 15% of the materials budget (Q110). As a library service with a high proportion of Welsh speaking resident population, Anglesey purchases multiple copies of many titles. There has been an increase in issues of Welsh language materials, and the service is in the top quartile of library authorities for this indicator. The service has encountered significant IT hardware and network problems this reporting year and a significant amount of hardware has been unusable. Anglesey is below the median for number of PCs per capita (Q111). The service anticipates that planned changes in IT provision will restore the number of PCs and provide resilience and security to the system. The service has partially met the indicator for supply of requests (Q112). Anglesey reports a dramatic increase in the number of requests made since pre pandemic times and the 7-day target has proved challenging in terms of transport and logistics.

3.4. Expertise and capacity (Q1 13-16)

Although Anglesey does not meet the target for overall staffing levels, it is in the top quartile of library authorities for this measure (Q113). The library service has carried vacant posts through this pandemic period, but these have been recruited during 2022-23 with the exception of one FTE professional post and a part-time Library Assistant. However, the service reports that the effects of the vacant posts on capacity as events and activities have ramped up is evident. Anglesey demonstrates a strong commitment to staff training, with 4.6% of staff hours being dedicated to professional development. Unplanned closures and missed mobile stops/home deliveries are above the median figure (Q116). The service has experienced staffing shortages this year which has resulted in an inability to open branches on a small number of occasions.

4. Strategic context

As part of the return, authorities are asked to report on how the library service is contributing to wider Welsh Government priorities and strategic goals. Anglesey highlighted its contributions to learning; reading and literacy; community wellbeing; skills and regeneration; digital inclusion and participation; health and well-being; cultural identity; and poverty.

- **Learning** – supporting informal learning and those completing formal qualifications throughout all life stages from Books for Babies to IT advice targeted at an older generation. Adult Community Education and the schools library service sit within the library.
- **Reading and literacy** – books targeted at children, young people and adults with low literacy levels; working with partners to deliver sessions in basic skills.
- **Community wellbeing** - assisting third sector organisations and other partners to promote their services to the public.
- **Skills and economic regeneration** –opportunities for skills and workforce development; business information provision; and drawing residents into the towns and villages to make use of local shops and businesses.

- **Digital inclusion and participation** – expansion and promotion of the Digital Library offer to reflect an increase in demand and continued investment in the all-Wales Borrowbox service of downloadable e-books and e-audio.
- **Health and Well Being** – libraries run promotions with the aim of reducing isolation and loneliness.
- **Cultural identity** –the library runs or facilitates several Welsh language and Welsh learners reading groups.
- **Poverty**– providing free access to books, resources, the internet and digital skills courses, as well as a WarmSpace through the winter months.

5. Future direction

Reporting on the authority’s future direction and plans for the library service over the following year, the service refers to the Isle of Anglesey Council Plan (2023 to 2028), which focuses on supporting “residents’ welfare, wellbeing and quality of life, whilst striving to create a better future”. However, the return does not indicate how this relates to library services specifically.

6. Conclusion

Anglesey performs comparatively well in several areas, including the number of acquisitions, the service’s support for children’s and Welsh language materials being particularly noted. Although attendance at events and training sessions is below the median, the service is clearly making efforts to extend its provision and encourage people to return to libraries post-pandemic. The comparatively high number of virtual visits per capita is noted and suggests ongoing changes in patterns of service use. The service has faced some challenges, in particular with regard to its IT provision. However, it is to be praised for its prioritisation of staff development, despite continuing to carry vacant posts. The service should prioritise conducting user surveys in the near future to help inform its future direction and to make its strategy available, thus allowing it to fully meet Core Entitlements in these areas. It would also be helpful to highlight how library services contribute specifically to the council plan for 2023-28.

Annual Assessment Report 2022/2023

This report has been prepared based on information provided in Merthyr Tydfil's annual return, impact statements and narrative report submitted to the Culture Division of the Welsh Government.

1. Executive summary

Merthyr Tydfil met all of the 12 core entitlements in full. Of the 10 quality indicators which have targets, Merthyr Tydfil is achieving 9 in full and 1 in part.

Merthyr Tydfil libraries are well-used and supported by the local community. Whilst borrowing figures are comparatively low, the number of visits and attendance at events and training are all high. The service describes how it uses local social and demographic data to inform the development of activities and events, and it appears that this is having a positive impact. The service makes concerted efforts to reach community members who may not be regular library users. It is anticipated the investment in children's and Welsh language materials will encourage more borrowing as more people return to the library post-Covid. Merthyr Tydfil deserves recognition for its efforts to support local communities, in partnership with a variety of other organisations. It has strong links to services including education and health and wellbeing. Long term pressures on staffing, and resourcing in general, are a concern, however, and the service acknowledges that this situation is unlikely to improve in the next few years. In such an environment, it would be helpful to link plans for the service's future direction more explicitly to the national and local priorities.

- User training is well-attended; attendance at both formal and informal user training is above the median (Q15).
- Library events are popular amongst members of local communities; attendance at events per capita is above the median (Q16).
- Libraries are well-supported; Merthyr Tydfil is above the median for number of visits per capita (Q18).
- There is a high demand for digital provision; Merthyr Tydfil is close to the median for PCs available per capita but is in the top quartile for percentage of allocated time taken up by users (Q11).
- There have been no emergency or unplanned closures or missed home deliveries (Q16).

2. Performance against the standards

The standards framework comprises of core entitlements, quality indicators with targets, quality indicators with benchmarks and impact measures. Section 2 summarises achievements against these areas. A narrative assessment of the authority's performance is provided in Section 3.

2.1. Core entitlements

Merthyr Tydfil reported meeting all 12 of the Core Entitlements in full through self-assessment, providing detailed and helpful commentary within the return on each area covered. The independent assessor agreed with the self-assessment.

2.2. Quality indicators with targets

There are 16 quality indicators (QIs), of which 10 have constituent targets. Of these, Merthyr Tydfil is achieving 9 in full and 1 in part.

| Quality Indicator | Met? | |
|--|------|---------------|
| QI 3 Support for individual development: | | Met in full |
| a) ICT support | √ | |
| b) Information literacy and skills training | √ | |
| c) E-government support | √ | |
| d) Reader development | √ | |
| QI 4 (a) Support for health and well-being | | Met in full |
| i) Book Prescription Wales scheme | √ | |
| ii) Better with Books/Reading Well scheme | √ | |
| iii) Designated health & well-being collection | √ | |
| iv) Information about healthy lifestyles and behaviours | √ | |
| v) Signposting to health & well-being services | √ | |
| QI 6 all static service points offer events/activities for users with special requirements | √ | Met in full |
| QI 7 Location of service points | √ | Met in full |
| QI 9 Up-to-date and appropriate reading material | | Met in full |
| Acquisitions per capita | √ | |
| <u>or</u> Materials spend per capita | - | |
| QI 10 Welsh Language Resources | | Met in full |
| % of material budget spent on Welsh | √ | |
| <u>or</u> Spend on Welsh per capita | - | |
| QI 11 Online access: | | Met in full |
| a) i) Public access to Internet | √ | |
| ii) Wi-Fi provision | √ | |
| QI 12 Supply of requests | | Met in full |
| a) % of requests satisfied within 7 days | √ | |
| b) % of requests satisfied within 15 days | √ | |
| QI 13 Staffing levels and qualifications: | | Partially met |
| i) Staff per capita | x | |
| ii) Qualified staff per capita | x | |
| iii) Head of service qualification/training | √ | |
| iv) CPD percentage | √ | |
| QI 16 Opening hours per capita | √ | Met in full |

2.3. Impact measures

The framework includes three indicators aimed at assessing the impact of library use on people’s lives. These indicators do not have targets, and authorities were only required to carry out user surveys for QI1 once over the original three-year period of the framework (2017-20). The summary figures (lowest, median and highest) are based on all authorities providing data in the 2022-23 return. Rankings reflect the numbers of respondents, where 1 is the highest scoring authority. However, it is important to bear in mind that some authorities have conducted surveys since 2020, whilst others report survey data from before the Covid pandemic. Some responses therefore reflect the situation several years ago, whilst others may have been affected by disruption during the pandemic period. As a result, there are limitations on the extent to which these data might be considered comparable.

Merthyr Tydfil has not undertaken a survey for this period, although a survey results from March 2020 were reported last year. Surveys will be revamped and redesigned and will start again on a yearly cycle during 2023.

| Performance indicator | | Rank | Lowest | Median | Highest |
|---|--------------|-------|--------|--------|---------|
| QI 1 Making a difference | | | | | |
| b) % of young people who think that the library helps them learn and find things out: | Not provided | - | 58% | 90% | 98% |
| e) % of adults who think that the library has made a difference to their lives: | Not provided | - | 41% | 86.5% | 96% |
| QI 5 b) % of attendees of training sessions who said that the training had helped them achieve their goals: | 92% | 14/17 | 82% | 96% | 100% |

Authorities are also asked to provide an impact statement describing the impact which the library service has had on an individual or on a group of individuals during the year. Merthyr Tydfil provided an impact statement focusing on free Maternal Journal sessions at Aberfan Library. In response to increased isolation and mental health issues following the pandemic, the library service, in collaboration with Soul Creative Circle, ran weekly sessions focussed on journalling. This provided a safe space to share ideas, socialise and connect with others in order to enhance confidence, self-esteem and wellbeing. The initial sessions were fully booked with 12 attendees and their success has resulted in continued funding for more sessions to meet demand. Participants reported positive experiences including *“the library is so warm and welcoming and the activities are soothing but also strangely insightful – I have had a lot of fun and feel so much better for coming”*.

2.4. Quality indicators and benchmarks

The remaining indicators do not have targets but allow services to monitor and benchmark their performance over time, in comparison with other authorities. The following table summarises Merthyr Tydfil’s position for 2022-23. Ranks are included out of 22, where 1 is the highest, and 22 the lowest scoring authority, unless stated otherwise. Indicators where fewer than 22 authorities supplied data are those where relevant data was not available from some authorities. Indicators ‘per capita’ are calculated per 1,000 population unless otherwise noted.

| Performance indicator | | Rank | Lowest | Median | Highest |
|--|--------------|--------|--------|---------|---------|
| QI 1 Making a difference | | | | | |
| a) % of adults who think that using the library has helped them develop new skills | Not provided | - | 24% | 69.5% | 90% |
| c) health and well-being | Not provided | - | 35% | 66.5% | 94% |
| d) enjoyable, safe and inclusive | Not provided | - | 93% | 97% | 100% |
| QI 2 Customer satisfaction | | | | | |
| a) 'very good' or 'good' choice of books | Not provided | - | 80% | 91% | 99% |
| b) 'very good' or 'good' customer care | Not provided | - | 92% | 98% | 100% |
| c) 'very good' or 'good' IT facilities | Not provided | - | 65% | 86% | 99% |
| d) 'very good' or 'good' overall | Not provided | - | 94% | 98% | 100% |
| e) users aged 16 & under rating out of ten | Not provided | - | 8.0 | 9.3 | 9.7 |
| QI 5 User training | | | | | |
| a) attendances per capita | 132 | 2/22 | 1 | 10.5 | 222 |
| c) informal training per capita | 306 | 5/19 | 5 | 131 | 424 |
| QI 6 attendances at events per capita | | | | | |
| | 215 | 9/22 | 13 | 165 | 559 |
| QI 8 Library use | | | | | |
| a) visits per capita | 2,242 | 9/21 | 781 | 2,106 | 4,814 |
| b) virtual visits per capita | 1,919 | 4/22 | 124 | 537.5 | 7,979 |
| c) active borrowers per capita | 68 | 20/22 | 43 | 106.5 | 167 |
| QI 10 Welsh issues per capita | | | | | |
| | 13 | 22/22 | 13 | 53 | 864 |
| QI 11 Online access | | | | | |
| a) Computers per 10,000 | 8.15 | 11/22 | 3.32 | 7.99 | 16.99 |
| b) % of available time used by the public | 77% | 1/19 | 7% | 11% | 77% |
| QI 13 Staffing levels and qualifications³⁵ | | | | | |
| (v) a) total volunteers | 1 | - | 0 | 8 | 256 |
| b) volunteer hours | 30 | - | 0 | 583.5 | 14,014 |
| QI 14 Operational expenditure | | | | | |
| a) total expenditure per capita | £8,051 | 19/21 | £6,726 | £11,476 | £27,330 |
| b) % on staff, | 64% | =11/21 | 46% | 64% | 78% |
| % on information resources | 21% | =1/21 | 5% | 12% | 21% |
| % on equipment and buildings | 2% | =16/21 | 1% | 3% | 29% |
| % on other operational costs; | 13% | 13/21 | 1% | 15% | 35% |
| c) capital expenditure per capita | £0 | =12/21 | -£479 | £145 | £2,865 |

³⁵ Following discussion with the peer review group it was decided not to include rankings for volunteers as the implications of volunteer numbers are ambiguous.

| Performance indicator | | Rank | Lowest | Median | Highest |
|---|-------|-------|--------|--------|---------|
| QI 15 Net cost per visit ³⁶ | £1.64 | 5/19 | £0.41 | £2.76 | £6.22 |
| QI 16 Opening hours ³⁷ | | | | | |
| (iii) a) % hours unplanned closure of static service points | 0% | =1/22 | 0% | 0.05% | 0.95% |
| b) % mobile stops / home deliveries missed | 0% | =1/20 | 0% | 0% | 3.74% |

3. Analysis of performance

The core entitlements and quality indicators can be divided into four key areas. This section of the report outlines performance under these areas.

3.1. Meeting customer needs (QI 1-5)

The return for Merthyr Tydfil describes how the local area has suffered with deteriorating mental health amongst communities during and following lockdown, and this has formed a significant part of the service's forward planning. There are strong links with partners in the local Health and Wellbeing Forum and with leisure and NERS (National Exercise Referral Scheme), making it easier to signpost to schemes such as the joint care programme. The development of co-located service points in leisure centres is part of the library's work to engage with non-traditional users. Whilst Merthyr Tydfil meets the targets for support for individual development (QI3) and health and well-being (QI4), the service reports difficulty facilitating shared reading in its service points having lost some key staff over the pandemic who had undergone training to deliver these groups. Attendance at both formal and informal user training is above the median (QI5).

3.2. Access and use (QI 6-8)

Merthyr Tydfil is above the median for attendance at events per capita (QI6) and number of visits per capita (QI8). The service reports that physical visits have grown significantly, especially through the winter period when libraries experienced large increases in visits after advertising warm hub provision. In response to the cost of living crisis, the service also works with local providers to provide pet food banks and uniform swaps in libraries. Although virtual visits per capita are reported to have fallen from levels reached during the pandemic, Merthyr Tydfil is in the top quartile of library authorities for this indicator. However, the service is below the median for active borrowers per capita, as well as for adult, children's and e-issues per capita.

3.3. Facilities and services (QI 9-12)

Merthyr Tydfil meets the target for number of acquisitions per capita and has increased its expenditure on children's materials, which accounts for 20% of the materials budget (QI9). The service offers a variety of additional loans to schools, care givers, carers, home educated children and others. The service also forms part of a new literacy steering group set up to tackle the additional pressures that have been put on children and their attainment during the pandemic. Despite being in the top quartile of library authorities for spend on Welsh language materials per capita,

³⁶ Rankings here have been reversed, so that 1 is the lowest scoring (best performing) authority.

³⁷ Rankings here have been reversed, so that 1 is the lowest scoring (best performing) authority.

issues of Welsh language resources remain low (Q110), but Merthyr Tydfil reports that this is increasing, especially for children's items. The majority of library activities are now delivered bi-lingually and the library is a partner in the local 'Shwmaeronment' Welsh Language festival. Merthyr Tydfil is close to the median for PCs available per capita, but it is in the top quartile for percentage of allocated time taken up by users (Q111). In addition, the service notes that, as people have changed the way they use internet services, they are seeing an increase in the number of users of WiFi.

3.4. Expertise and capacity (Q1 13-16)

Merthyr Tydfil does not meet the targets for overall staffing and qualified staff per capita (Q113). Furthermore, the service reports that, with pressures on budgets there may well be changes regarding staffing in the future which will not be positive. In addition, it is noted that volunteers have only recently started to return to library services and are significantly below the levels they were pre-pandemic. There have been no emergency or unplanned closures or missed home deliveries (Q116). However, the library reports that opening hours have reduced with one library still not reopened post COVID and further reductions in opening hours are likely.

4. Strategic context

As part of the return, authorities are asked to report on how the library service is contributing to wider Welsh Government priorities and strategic goals. Merthyr Tydfil identified impacts in relation to a number of objectives, concluding:

- **Protect, re-build and develop our services for vulnerable people** - e.g. equipping people with skills in literacy, IT literacy and numeracy
- **Push towards a million Welsh speakers, and enable our tourism, sports and arts industries to thrive** - e.g. bilingual events and activities
- **Make our cities, towns and villages even better places in which to live and work** - having local branch services in addition to larger spaces feeds into the Whole System Approach being advocated across Cwm Taf Health Board in tackling wellbeing and health related issues
- **Build a stronger, greener economy as we make maximum progress towards decarbonisation** - e.g. the development of green space behind the library on waste land to be used for events and activities
- **Lead Wales in a national civic conversation about our constitutional future, and give our country the strongest possible presence on the world stage** - when the Talking Shop closed, many of the patrons moved to the library space where they were able to continue the conversations around democracy and life in general.

5. Future direction

Reporting on the authority's future direction and plans for the library service over the following year, Merthyr Tydfil notes that there is still a significant amount of work to be done to bring the level of usage back into pre-pandemic levels. Furthermore, as costs have risen significantly, while funding has not, there are likely to be some service reductions in the next year. The service acknowledges that it faces a very uncertain time moving forward/ Merthyr Tydfil will continue to work to the strategic

direction set through WPLS and local priorities, focusing on literacy, IT literacy and access; however, limited detail was provided in the return to link these aims with local and national contexts.

6. Conclusion

Merthyr Tydfil libraries are well-used and supported by the local community. Whilst borrowing figures are comparatively low, the number of visits and attendance at events and training are all high. The service describes how it uses local social and demographic data to inform the development of activities and events, and it appears that this is having a positive impact. The service makes concerted efforts to reach community members who may not be regular library users. It is anticipated the investment in children's and Welsh language materials will encourage more borrowing as more people return to the library post-Covid. Merthyr Tydfil deserves recognition for its efforts to support local communities, in partnership with a variety of other organisations. It has strong links to services including education and health and wellbeing. Pressures on staffing, and resourcing in general, are a concern, however, and the service acknowledges that this situation is unlikely to improve in the next few years. In such an environment, it would be helpful to link plans for the service's future direction more explicitly to the national and local priorities.

Annual Assessment Report 2022/2023

This report has been prepared based on information provided in Monmouthshire's annual return, impact statements and narrative report submitted to the Culture Division of the Welsh Government.

1. Executive summary

Monmouthshire met all of the 12 core entitlements in full. Of the 10 quality indicators which have targets, Monmouthshire is achieving 5 in full and 1 in part. Three QIs were not met and no data was provided to assess the remaining indicator.

Monmouthshire performs comparatively well in terms of access and library use: it is above the median for visits; active borrowers; and both children's and adult issues per capita. It has formed partnerships with local organisations, offers a range of events to cater for the local community, and makes efforts to engage with people who may not be regular library users. However, the service is clearly under financial pressure and is experiencing budget cuts, impacting on resources and staffing. Although the service does meet all 12 of the Core Entitlements in full, it is only currently achieving 5 of the 10 QIs with constituent targets in full. The service is cognisant of these pressures and appears to be doing its best to serve the needs of its community in difficult circumstances.

- There is high demand for informal training; Monmouthshire is in the top quartile of library authorities for number of users attending informal training (Q15).
- Libraries are well supported by members of local communities; Monmouthshire is above the median for visits per capita and active borrowers per capita (Q18).
- The service performs well for book issues; both children's and adult issues per capita are above the median (Q18).
- Public access computers are well-used; the service is above the median for percentage of available time computers are used (Q111).

2. Performance against the standards

The standards framework comprises of core entitlements, quality indicators with targets, quality indicators with benchmarks and impact measures. Section 2 summarises achievements against these areas. A narrative assessment of the authority's performance is provided in Section 3.

2.1. Core entitlements

Monmouthshire reported meeting all 12 of the Core Entitlements in full through self-assessment, providing detailed and helpful commentary within the return on each area covered. The independent assessor agreed with the self-assessment.

2.2. Quality indicators with targets

There are 16 quality indicators (QIs), of which 10 have constituent targets. Of these, Monmouthshire is achieving 5 in full and 1 in part. Three QIs were not met and no data was provided to assess the remaining indicator.

| Quality Indicator | Met? | |
|--|--------------|---------------|
| QI 3 Support for individual development: | | Met in full |
| a) ICT support | √ | |
| b) Information literacy and skills training | √ | |
| c) E-government support | √ | |
| d) Reader development | √ | |
| QI 4 (a) Support for health and well-being | | Met in full |
| i) Book Prescription Wales scheme | √ | |
| ii) Better with Books/Reading Well scheme | √ | |
| iii) Designated health & well-being collection | √ | |
| iv) Information about healthy lifestyles and behaviours | √ | |
| v) Signposting to health & well-being services | √ | |
| QI 6 all static service points offer events/activities for users with special requirements | √ | Met in full |
| QI 7 Location of service points | Not provided | - |
| QI 9 Up-to-date and appropriate reading material | | Not met |
| Acquisitions per capita | x | |
| <u>or</u> Materials spend per capita | x | |
| QI 10 Welsh Language Resources | | Met in full |
| % of material budget spent on Welsh | √ | |
| <u>or</u> Spend on Welsh per capita | - | |
| QI 11 Online access: | | Met in full |
| a) i) Public access to Internet | √ | |
| ii) Wi-Fi provision | √ | |
| QI 12 Supply of requests | | Not met |
| a) % of requests satisfied within 7 days | X | |
| b) % of requests satisfied within 15 days | X | |
| QI 13 Staffing levels and qualifications: | | Partially met |
| i) Staff per capita | x | |
| ii) Qualified staff per capita | x | |
| iii) Head of service qualification/training | X | |
| iv) CPD percentage | √ | |
| QI 16 Opening hours per capita | x | Not met |

2.3. Impact measures

The framework includes three indicators aimed at assessing the impact of library use on people’s lives. These indicators do not have targets, and authorities were only required to carry out user surveys for Q11 once over the original three-year period of the framework (2017-20). The summary figures (lowest, median and highest) are based on all authorities providing data in the 2022-23 return. Rankings reflect the numbers of respondents, where 1 is the highest scoring authority. However, it is important to bear in mind that some authorities have conducted surveys since 2020, whilst others report survey data from before the Covid pandemic. Some responses therefore reflect the situation several years ago, whilst others may have been affected by disruption during the pandemic period. As a result, there are limitations on the extent to which these data might be considered comparable.

Monmouthshire completed its adult user survey in March 2023 and its children’s user survey in October 2022.

| Performance indicator | | Rank | Lowest | Median | Highest |
|---|-----|--------|--------|--------|---------|
| Q1 1 Making a difference | | | | | |
| b) % of young people who think that the library helps them learn and find things out: | 82% | =13/16 | 58% | 90% | 98% |
| e) % of adults who think that the library has made a difference to their lives: | 83% | 12/16 | 41% | 86.5% | 96% |
| Q1 5 b) % of attendees of training sessions who said that the training had helped them achieve their goals: | 91% | 15/17 | 82% | 96% | 100% |

Authorities are also asked to provide an impact statement describing the impact which the library service has had on an individual or on a group of individuals during the year. Monmouthshire provided three impact statements relating to different aspects of the service. For parity, the independent assessor has selected one to include in this report.

An overarching aim of the library service is to help the people of Monmouthshire live happier and healthier lives and this includes reducing loneliness and isolation. Monmouthshire provides a Home Delivery Service that delivers books in all formats to customers who cannot visit their local library because of frailty, mobility problems or ill health. This includes vulnerable and lonely customers who also benefit from the interaction with visiting staff. For some customers the service is considered a ‘lifeline’. One customer remarked: *“I was so upset when I couldn’t read because of the loss of my sight. I felt that if I couldn’t read, I’d want to die. But then the Home Delivery service came to my rescue”*.

2.4. Quality indicators and benchmarks

The remaining indicators do not have targets but allow services to monitor and benchmark their performance over time, in comparison with other authorities. The following table summarises Monmouthshire’s position for 2022-23. Ranks are included out of 22, where 1 is the highest, and 22 the lowest scoring authority, unless stated otherwise. Indicators where fewer than 22 authorities supplied data are those where relevant data was not available from some authorities. Indicators ‘per capita’ are calculated per 1,000 population unless otherwise noted.

| Performance indicator | | Rank | Lowest | Median | Highest |
|--|--------|--------|--------|---------|---------|
| QI 1 Making a difference | | | | | |
| a) % of adults who think that using the library has helped them develop new skills | 53% | 14/16 | 24% | 69.5% | 90% |
| c) health and well-being | 46% | 11/16 | 35% | 66.5% | 94% |
| d) enjoyable, safe and inclusive | 97% | =8/16 | 93% | 97% | 100% |
| QI 2 Customer satisfaction | | | | | |
| a) 'very good' or 'good' choice of books | 87% | 13/16 | 80% | 91% | 99% |
| b) 'very good' or 'good' customer care | 98% | =9/17 | 92% | 98% | 100% |
| c) 'very good' or 'good' IT facilities | 70% | 14/16 | 65% | 86% | 99% |
| d) 'very good' or 'good' overall | 96% | 14/17 | 94% | 98% | 100% |
| e) users aged 16 & under rating out of ten | 9.3 | =8/16 | 8.0 | 9.3 | 9.7 |
| QI 5 User training | | | | | |
| a) attendances per capita | 1 | =21/22 | 1 | 10.5 | 222 |
| c) informal training per capita | 318 | 3/19 | 5 | 131 | 424 |
| QI 6 attendances at events per capita | 164 | 12/22 | 13 | 165 | 559 |
| QI 8 Library use | | | | | |
| a) visits per capita | 3,416 | 2/21 | 781 | 2,106 | 4,814 |
| b) virtual visits per capita | 365 | 17/22 | 124 | 537.5 | 7,979 |
| c) active borrowers per capita | 136 | 4/22 | 43 | 106.5 | 167 |
| QI 10 Welsh issues per capita | 41 | =17/22 | 13 | 53 | 864 |
| QI 11 Online access | | | | | |
| a) Computers per 10,000 | 7.83 | 12/22 | 3.32 | 7.99 | 16.99 |
| b) % of available time used by the public | 14% | =5/19 | 7% | 11% | 77% |
| QI 13 Staffing levels and qualifications ³⁸ | | | | | |
| (v) a) total volunteers | 26 | - | 0 | 8 | 256 |
| b) volunteer hours | 584 | - | 0 | 583.5 | 14,014 |
| QI 14 Operational expenditure | | | | | |
| a) total expenditure per capita | £8,411 | 18/21 | £6,726 | £11,476 | £27,330 |
| b) % on staff, | 57% | =19/21 | 46% | 64% | 78% |
| % on information resources | 12% | =9/21 | 5% | 12% | 21% |
| % on equipment and buildings | 17% | 3/21 | 1% | 3% | 29% |
| % on other operational costs; | 14% | 12/21 | 1% | 15% | 35% |
| c) capital expenditure per capita | £0 | =12/21 | -£479 | £145 | £2,865 |
| QI 15 Net cost per visit ³⁹ | £1.47 | 4/19 | £0.41 | £2.76 | £6.22 |
| QI 16 Opening hours ⁴⁰ | | | | | |
| (iii) a) % hours unplanned closure of static service points | 0.34% | =18/22 | 0% | 0.05% | 0.95% |
| b) % mobile stops / home deliveries missed | 0% | =1/20 | 0% | 0% | 3.74% |

³⁸Following discussion with the peer review group it was decided not to include rankings for volunteers as the implications of volunteer numbers are ambiguous.

³⁹ Rankings here have been reversed, so that 1 is the lowest scoring (best performing) authority.

⁴⁰ Rankings here have been reversed, so that 1 is the lowest scoring (best performing) authority.

3. Analysis of performance

The core entitlements and quality indicators can be divided into four key areas. This section of the report outlines performance under these areas.

3.1. Meeting customer needs (QI 1-5)

As five of Monmouthshire's service points operate as council services enquiry points, staff have contact with a wide range of visitors and have an opportunity to engage with, and showcase the library service to, a high proportion of the community. Monmouthshire achieves the median for Welsh library authorities for customer care and users aged 16 and under rating out of ten (QI2). However, for the other measures in this indicator, it is below the median. It is also below the median for Making a difference (QI1), with the exception of adults experiencing the library as enjoyable, safe and inclusive, for which it achieves the median. Whilst the service is below the median for attendance at user training, it is in the top quartile of library authorities for numbers attending informal training (QI5). Support for health and well-being (QI4) is partially met because the service does not offer Better with Books. However, in 2022/23, Monmouthshire introduced its first Death Positive Collections - adult and junior.

3.2. Access and use (QI 6-8)

Monmouthshire is close to the median for attendance at events (QI6). Close partnerships have been formed with local bookshops, authors, community groups etc to generate interest in activities. Activities for users with special requirements include a Ukrainian conversation group, Welsh baby classes including yoga and massage, Cuppa & Connect (to combat loneliness) and Women's Aid. Monmouthshire is above the median for visits per capita and active borrowers per capita (QI8). Both children's and adult issues per capita are also above the median. The service is below the median for virtual visits per capita and the service acknowledges a downturn in this area, perhaps in part due to a return to a fuller face-to-face service as well as the introduction of the PORI App (which is not included in the statistics).

3.3. Facilities and services (QI 9-12)

Monmouthshire does not meet the target for acquisitions and it is in the bottom quartile of library authorities for materials spend per capita (QI9). The service reports that it has experienced a 10% reduction in budget allocation in the reporting period. However, Monmouthshire does meet the target for proportion of spend on Welsh language materials, with the percentage spend increasing since last year (QI10). The number of Welsh language issues per capita Welsh speaker is below the median, but it is noted that the number of Welsh speakers in Monmouthshire is not large, so the library focuses on resources for Welsh learners. The library anticipates that, with the introduction of further Welsh language courses, increased investment will be made in this area of resource. Monmouthshire is close to the median for the number of PCs available per capita and the percentage of available time public access computers are used is above the median (QI11). The service did not meet the target for supply of requests (QI12) and acknowledges this is an area for service improvement, but points out that its performance is affected by a reduced capacity to circulate stock amongst its facilities due to budget pressures.

3.4. Expertise and capacity (Q1 13-16)

Monmouthshire does not meet the target for overall staffing per capita and is in the bottom quartile of library services for this measure (Q113). It is also below the median for qualified staff per capita and does not have a qualified operational manager in place. The service does, however, meet the target for the proportion of staff time allocated to training. It is also worth noting that operational expenditure is in the bottom quartile of library authorities and the percentage allocated to staffing is also below the median (Q114). Monmouthshire does not meet the target for opening hours per capita (Q116). The service is reviewing its service points and anticipates expanding service availability where there are options to make small adjustments to opening hours. However, ongoing budgetary pressures make extending opening hours problematic. Although the percentage of unplanned closure hours is above the median for static services, Monmouthshire has not experienced any missed home delivery services.

4. Strategic context

As part of the return, authorities are asked to report on how the library service is contributing to wider Welsh Government priorities and strategic goals.

Monmouthshire highlights the service's contribution to physical and mental wellbeing, for example, via the Home Delivery service which provides planned contact, a conversation and access to appropriate reading materials. The library service also contributes to the move to decarbonisation: Community Hubs have been fitted with solar panels and retrofitted with LED lighting and the library offers Carbon Literacy training. Lifelong learning is supported, for example, via the Bookstart scheme, Summer Reading Challenges and class visits.

5. Future direction

Reporting on the authority's future direction and plans for the library service over the following year, Monmouthshire notes that budget pressures have been felt across the service area, with a 50% reduction in purchasing budget for 2023-24 and reduction of staffing across the service in front line positions, as well as in back-office functions. The service's future direction is informed by the need to mitigate these pressures. This includes:

- Where possible moving home delivery customers to digital devices to minimise spend on large print and enable them, where possible, to self-select titles via Borrow Box
- Improve the service's digital presence - both web and social media - to drive footfall and issues
- Improve the digital offer, e.g. installation of up-to-date software on all public PCs and introduction of Wi-Fi printing
- Work with internal and external stakeholders to expand reach and engage with new users.

6. Conclusion

Monmouthshire performs comparatively well in terms of access and library use: it is above the median for visits; active borrowers; and both children's and adult issues

per capita. It has formed partnerships with local organisations, offers a range of events to cater for the local community, and makes efforts to engage with people who may not be regular library users. However, the service is clearly under financial pressure and is experiencing budget cuts, impacting on resources and staffing. Although the service does meet all 12 of the Core Entitlements in full, it is only currently achieving 5 of the 10 QIs with constituent targets in full. The service is cognisant of these pressures and appears to be doing its best to serve the needs of its community in difficult circumstances.

Annual Assessment Report 2022/2023

This report has been prepared based on information provided in Neath Port Talbot's annual return, impact statements and narrative report submitted to the Culture Division of the Welsh Government.

1. Executive summary

Neath Port Talbot met all of the 12 core entitlements in full. Of the 10 quality indicators which have targets, Neath Port Talbot is achieving 8 in full and 1 in part. One is not met.

Neath Port Talbot libraries are clearly appreciated by members of the local community who rate them highly in terms of customer service and the difference they make to their lives. The service has strong partnerships with several local organisations and is dedicated to the provision of outreach, as well as library-based, services. Levels of attendance at training and events, as well as overall visits per capita, are recovering from the Covid period. Although the figure for virtual visits is not particularly high, the service's digital offer appears to be appreciated as e-issues are in the top quartile. The service is clearly making efforts to improve its Welsh language provision. However, there are concerns about the level of acquisitions, staffing levels and opening hours. In light of these concerns, the service's plan to focus on strengthening the service, in particular through staff training and developing partnerships, would appear to be a prudent one. However, it would be helpful to clearly link these plans to local and national priorities.

- The service is in the top quartile for percentage of adults who think that using the library has helped them develop new skills; find helpful information for health and wellbeing; and made a difference to their lives, as well as the percentage of young people who think that the library helps them learn and find things out (Q11).
- User training opportunities are well-attended; attendance at both formal and informal training are in the top quartile of library authorities (Q15).
- Library events and activities are also well-attended; attendance at events per capita is in the top quartile of library services (Q16).
- The service is gradually recovering from the Covid pandemic and the figure for visits per capita is above the median (Q18).

2. Performance against the standards

The standards framework comprises of core entitlements, quality indicators with targets, quality indicators with benchmarks and impact measures. Section 2 summarises achievements against these areas. A narrative assessment of the authority's performance is provided in Section 3.

2.1. Core entitlements

Neath Port Talbot reported meeting all 12 of the Core Entitlements in full through self-assessment, providing detailed and helpful commentary within the return on each area covered. The independent assessor agreed with the self-assessment.

2.2. Quality indicators with targets

There are 16 quality indicators (QIs), of which 10 have constituent targets. Of these, Neath Port Talbot is achieving 8 in full and 1 in part. One is not met.

| Quality Indicator | Met? | |
|--|------|---------------|
| QI 3 Support for individual development: | | Met in full |
| a) ICT support | √ | |
| b) Information literacy and skills training | √ | |
| c) E-government support | √ | |
| d) Reader development | √ | |
| QI 4 (a) Support for health and well-being | | Met in full |
| i) Book Prescription Wales scheme | √ | |
| ii) Better with Books/Reading Well scheme | √ | |
| iii) Designated health & well-being collection | √ | |
| iv) Information about healthy lifestyles and behaviours | √ | |
| v) Signposting to health & well-being services | √ | |
| QI 6 all static service points offer events/activities for users with special requirements | √ | Met in full |
| QI 7 Location of service points | √ | Met in full |
| QI 9 Up-to-date and appropriate reading material | | Not met |
| Acquisitions per capita | x | |
| or Materials spend per capita | x | |
| QI 10 Welsh Language Resources | | Met in full |
| % of material budget spent on Welsh | √ | |
| or Spend on Welsh per capita | - | |
| QI 11 Online access: | | Met in full |
| a) i) Public access to Internet | √ | |
| ii) Wi-Fi provision | √ | |
| QI 12 Supply of requests | | Met in full |
| a) % of requests satisfied within 7 days | √ | |
| b) % of requests satisfied within 15 days | √ | |
| QI 13 Staffing levels and qualifications: | | Partially met |
| i) Staff per capita | x | |
| ii) Qualified staff per capita | x | |
| iii) Head of service qualification/training | √ | |
| iv) CPD percentage | x | |
| QI 16 Opening hours per capita | x | Not met |

2.3. Impact measures

The framework includes three indicators aimed at assessing the impact of library use on people’s lives. These indicators do not have targets, and authorities were only required to carry out user surveys for Q11 once over the original three-year period of the framework (2017-20). The summary figures (lowest, median and highest) are based on all authorities providing data in the 2022-23 return. Rankings reflect the numbers of respondents, where 1 is the highest scoring authority. However, it is important to bear in mind that some authorities have conducted surveys since 2020, whilst others report survey data from before the Covid pandemic. Some responses therefore reflect the situation several years ago, whilst others may have been affected by disruption during the pandemic period. As a result, there are limitations on the extent to which these data might be considered comparable.

Neath Port Talbot completed its adult and children’s user survey in March 2023.

| Performance indicator | | Rank | Lowest | Median | Highest |
|---|-----|-------|--------|--------|---------|
| Q1 1 Making a difference | | | | | |
| b) % of young people who think that the library helps them learn and find things out: | 97% | 2/16 | 58% | 90% | 98% |
| e) % of adults who think that the library has made a difference to their lives: | 93% | =3/16 | 41% | 86.5% | 96% |
| Q1 5 b) % of attendees of training sessions who said that the training had helped them achieve their goals: | 94% | 13/17 | 82% | 96% | 100% |

Authorities are also asked to provide an impact statement describing the impact which the library service has had on an individual or on a group of individuals during the year. Neath Port Talbot Libraries provided an impact statement concerning support provided to Ukrainian refugees who had been relocated to the area. This involved working alongside Local Area Coordinators to develop a programme of sessions and workshops. At Neath Port Talbot Library, coffee mornings provided a meeting place for refugees and a point of contact to get support from representatives of local authority departments. This also provided a ‘befriending’ opportunity with local residents resulting in a ‘sharing of cultures’. Refugees were invited to take part in library activities and join library groups. As a result, children have made new friends and gained confidence and this has provided more opportunity to socialise and feel connected within the community in a safe and welcoming space. One refugee commented: *“I find myself entirely happy being here. That’s my escape from my own reality.”*

2.4. Quality indicators and benchmarks

The remaining indicators do not have targets but allow services to monitor and benchmark their performance over time, in comparison with other authorities. The following table summarises Neath Port Talbot’s position for 2022-23. Ranks are included out of 22, where 1 is the highest, and 22 the lowest scoring authority, unless stated otherwise. Indicators where fewer than 22 authorities supplied data are those where relevant data was not available from some authorities. Indicators ‘per capita’ are calculated per 1,000 population unless otherwise noted.

| Performance indicator | | Rank | Lowest | Median | Highest |
|--|---------|--------|--------|---------|---------|
| QI 1 Making a difference | | | | | |
| a) % of adults who think that using the library has helped them develop new skills | 90% | 1/16 | 24% | 69.5% | 90% |
| c) health and well-being | 84% | 2/16 | 35% | 66.5% | 94% |
| d) enjoyable, safe and inclusive | 98% | 7/16 | 93% | 97% | 100% |
| QI 2 Customer satisfaction | | | | | |
| a) 'very good' or 'good' choice of books | 96% | 3/16 | 80% | 91% | 99% |
| b) 'very good' or 'good' customer care | 99% | =2/17 | 92% | 98% | 100% |
| c) 'very good' or 'good' IT facilities | 90% | =5/16 | 65% | 86% | 99% |
| d) 'very good' or 'good' overall | 98% | =5/17 | 94% | 98% | 100% |
| e) users aged 16 & under rating out of ten | 9.7 | =1/16 | 8.0 | 9.3 | 9.7 |
| QI 5 User training | | | | | |
| a) attendances per capita | 39 | 3/22 | 1 | 10.5 | 222 |
| c) informal training per capita | 415 | 2/19 | 5 | 131 | 424 |
| QI 6 attendances at events per capita | 357 | 2/22 | 13 | 165 | 559 |
| QI 8 Library use | | | | | |
| a) visits per capita | 2,503 | 5/21 | 781 | 2,106 | 4,814 |
| b) virtual visits per capita | 147 | 21/22 | 124 | 537.5 | 7,979 |
| c) active borrowers per capita | 113 | 9/22 | 43 | 106.5 | 167 |
| QI 10 Welsh issues per capita | 44 | =15/22 | 13 | 53 | 864 |
| QI 11 Online access | | | | | |
| a) Computers per 10,000 | 5.78 | 19/22 | 3.32 | 7.99 | 16.99 |
| b) % of available time used by the public | 14% | =5/19 | 7% | 11% | 77% |
| QI 13 Staffing levels and qualifications ⁴¹ | | | | | |
| (v) a) total volunteers | 1 | - | 0 | 8 | 256 |
| b) volunteer hours | 147 | - | 0 | 583.5 | 14,014 |
| QI 14 Operational expenditure | | | | | |
| a) total expenditure per capita | £13,226 | 8/21 | £6,726 | £11,476 | £27,330 |
| b) % on staff, | 62% | 15/21 | 46% | 64% | 78% |
| % on information resources | 9% | =16/21 | 5% | 12% | 21% |
| % on equipment and buildings | 5% | 8/21 | 1% | 3% | 29% |
| % on other operational costs; | 23% | =4/21 | 1% | 15% | 35% |
| c) capital expenditure per capita | £0 | =12/21 | -£479 | £145 | £2,865 |
| QI 15 Net cost per visit ⁴² | £3.22 | 13/19 | £0.41 | £2.76 | £6.22 |
| QI 16 Opening hours ⁴³ | | | | | |
| (iii) a) % hours unplanned closure of static service points | 0% | =1/22 | 0% | 0.05% | 0.95% |
| b) % mobile stops / home deliveries missed | 2.6% | 19/20 | 0% | 0% | 3.74% |

⁴¹ Following discussion with the peer review group it was decided not to include rankings for volunteers as the implications of volunteer numbers are ambiguous.

⁴² Rankings here have been reversed, so that 1 is the lowest scoring (best performing) authority.

⁴³ Rankings here have been reversed, so that 1 is the lowest scoring (best performing) authority.

3. Analysis of performance

The core entitlements and quality indicators can be divided into four key areas. This section of the report outlines performance under these areas.

3.1. Meeting customer needs (QI 1-5)

Neath Port Talbot performs well with regard to Making a difference (QI1). In particular, the service is in the top quartile for percentage of adults who think that using the library has helped them to develop new skills; find helpful information for health and wellbeing; and made a difference to their lives, as well as the percentage of young people who think that the library helps them learn and find things out. The service is also above the median for all aspects of customer service, and is particularly strong in relation to the rating out of ten by users aged 16 and under.

The service notes that, whilst there are no library-based shared reading groups (QI4), there are 25 adult and children's reading groups, including Welsh language groups. In addition, there are regular sessions where library staff visit locations in communities (e.g. schools, playgroups, nursing homes) to read to audiences. Five libraries currently have regular event/activities in collaboration with Macmillan, Quit Smoking and HWYL - signposting and guidance for mental health. Numbers attending both formal and informal training are in the top quartile of library authorities (QI5). In delivering training, library staff work in partnership with external organisations such as Digital Communities Wales, Community 4 Work and Jobcentre Plus.

3.2. Access and use (QI 6-8)

Attendance at events per capita is in the top quartile of library services (QI6). The numbers attending events has risen substantially since Covid restrictions were lifted. The figure for visits per capita is above the median (QI8) and the service notes that whilst they remain lower than levels pre-2020, figures are improving. The number of active borrowers is above the median, as is the figure for adult book issues. Neath Port Talbot is below the median for virtual visits per capita. However, as is the case for many library services, the website is becoming less well used as more interaction now comes via social media channels and apps such as Borrowbox and Pori. There is evidence of strong digital engagement as the service is in the top quartile of library authorities for e-issues.

3.3. Facilities and services (QI 9-12)

Neath Port Talbot does not meet the target for acquisitions (QI9) and it is below the median for materials spend per capita. It is also below the median for the proportion of the budget spent on children's resources. However, the service notes an increase in Welsh language stock, almost doubling in Welsh language spend last year and continuing to meet the target expenditure this year (QI10). However, issues per capita Welsh speaker are below the median. Neath Port Talbot is in the bottom quartile of library authorities for PCs per capita, but above the median for percentage of available time PCs are used. The services notes that there are many more users bring their own devices to access library WiFi, and consequently less demand for traditional desktop PCs. Neath Port Talbot meets the target for supply of requests

(Q112).

3.4. Expertise and capacity (Q1 13-16)

Neath Port Talbot does not meet the targets for overall staffing levels or qualified staff. The operational manager is qualified, but the service is below the median for qualified staff per capita (Q113). The service notes that number of FTE staff has decreased slightly due to minor amendments to staff contracts and changes in working hours for some staff. In addition, Neath Port Talbot does not meet the target for proportion of staff time devoted to training. In the return, the continued challenges of managing staff time and sickness around Covid, as well as managing the closure and relocation of Neath Library, are listed as reasons for reduced levels of staff training. Despite opening hours increasing since 2018-19 as extra hours were added to Neath Library, Neath Port Talbot still does not meet the target for opening hours (Q116). However, it is worth noting that this excludes provision through community-managed libraries and there were no unplanned closures of static branches this year.

4. Strategic context

As part of the return, authorities are asked to report on how the library service is contributing to wider Welsh Government priorities and strategic goals. Neath Port Talbot notes that, in setting its strategic goals the library service takes its lead from the objectives set out in Neath Port Talbot's Corporate Plan, Recover, Reset, Renew (2022-2027), namely:

- All children get the best start in life.
- All communities are thriving and sustainable.
- Our local environment, culture and heritage can be enjoyed by future generations.
- Local people are skilled and access high quality, green jobs.

These wellbeing objectives reflect the need to respond to the pandemic and relate to the all-Wales goals, as set out in the Well-Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015. The Service has also delivered on national projects that have taken their lead from Welsh Government goals: Summer of Fun 2022 and Health and Wellbeing Campaign – Places to Connect. However, limited detail was provided indicating how library services specifically contribute to council and government priorities.

5. Future direction

Reporting on the authority's future direction and plans for the library service over the following year, Neath Port Talbot refers to its post-pandemic Recovery Plan. Whilst the last four years the focus has been on large scale relocation and redevelopment projects, during the next year the aim will be on strengthening the service; continuing to develop staff through training; and engaging with partner organisations and users.

6. Conclusion

Neath Port Talbot libraries are clearly appreciated by members of the local community who rate them highly in terms of customer service and the difference they

make to their lives. The service has strong partnerships with several local organisations and is dedicated to the provision of outreach, as well as library-based, services. Levels of attendance at training and events, as well as overall visits per capita, are recovering from the Covid period. Although the figure for virtual visits is not particularly high, the service's digital offer appears to be appreciated as e-issues are in the top quartile. The service is clearly making efforts to improve its Welsh language provision. However, there are concerns about the level of acquisitions, staffing levels and opening hours. In light of these concerns, the service's plan to focus on strengthening the service, in particular through staff training and developing partnerships, would appear to be a prudent one. However, it would be helpful to clearly link these plans to local and national priorities.

Annual Assessment Report 2022/2023

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

1. Executive summary

Newport meets 11 of the 12 core entitlements in full and 1 in part. Of the 10 quality indicators which have targets, Newport is achieving 7 in full and 1 in part. Two are not met.

Users of Newport libraries clearly feel that the library makes a difference to their lives. The service performs well in terms of Making a Difference (Q11). Many of the service's activities this year have been focused on encouraging children and young people to return to the library, both with schools and as families. This appears to have had an impact as the library is rated highly by users aged 16 and under. The loss of the Information Literacy Librarian post has had an impact on adult provision, as well as having implications for overall staffing levels. Staffing levels and opening hours are a concern. These challenges could have implications for the service's ability to attract users back to the library after Covid. It is noted that the service anticipates significant challenges over the short to medium term due to budgetary pressures.

- Newport is in the top quartile for the percentage of adults who think that the library has made a difference to their lives (Q11).
- User training opportunities are well-supported; Newport is above the median for attendances per capita at user training (Q15).
- The service performs well for virtual visits per capita, which are above the median (Q18).
- Newport is in the top quartile of library authorities for requests available within 7 calendar days (Q12).

2. Performance against the standards

The standards framework comprises of core entitlements, quality indicators with targets, quality indicators with benchmarks and impact measures. Section 2 summarises achievements against these areas. A narrative assessment of the authority's performance is provided in Section 3.

2.1. Core entitlements

Newport reported meeting 11 of the Core Entitlements in full and 1 in part through self-assessment, providing detailed and helpful commentary within the return on each area covered. The independent assessor agreed with the self-assessment. Core Entitlement 12 was partially met because the Library Strategy 2017-20 is available, but Covid delayed the production of an updated Library Strategy.

2.2. Quality indicators with targets

There are 16 quality indicators (QIs), of which 10 have constituent targets. Of these, Newport is achieving 7 in full and 1 in part. Two are not met.

| Quality Indicator | Met? | |
|--|------|---------------|
| QI 3 Support for individual development: | | Met in full |
| a) ICT support | √ | |
| b) Information literacy and skills training | √ | |
| c) E-government support | √ | |
| d) Reader development | √ | |
| QI 4 (a) Support for health and well-being | | Met in full |
| i) Book Prescription Wales scheme | √ | |
| ii) Better with Books/Reading Well scheme | √ | |
| iii) Designated health & well-being collection | √ | |
| iv) Information about healthy lifestyles and behaviours | √ | |
| v) Signposting to health & well-being services | √ | |
| QI 6 all static service points offer events/activities for users with special requirements | √ | Met in full |
| QI 7 Location of service points | √ | Met in full |
| QI 9 Up-to-date and appropriate reading material | | Not met |
| Acquisitions per capita | X | |
| <u>or</u> Materials spend per capita | x | |
| QI 10 Welsh Language Resources | | Met in full |
| % of material budget spent on Welsh | √ | |
| <u>or</u> Spend on Welsh per capita | - | |
| QI 11 Online access: | | Met in full |
| a) i) Public access to Internet | √ | |
| ii) Wi-Fi provision | √ | |
| QI 12 Supply of requests | | Met in full |
| a) % of requests satisfied within 7 days | √ | |
| b) % of requests satisfied within 15 days | √ | |
| QI 13 Staffing levels and qualifications: | | Partially met |
| i) Staff per capita | x | |
| ii) Qualified staff per capita | x | |
| iii) Head of service qualification/training | √ | |
| iv) CPD percentage | X | |
| QI 16 Opening hours per capita | X | Not met |

2.3. Impact measures

The framework includes three indicators aimed at assessing the impact of library use on people's lives. These indicators do not have targets, and authorities were only required to carry out user surveys for QI1 once over the original three-year period of the framework (2017-20). The summary figures (lowest, median and highest) are

based on all authorities providing data in the 2022-23 return. Rankings reflect the numbers of respondents, where 1 is the highest scoring authority. However, it is important to bear in mind that some authorities have conducted surveys since 2020, whilst others report survey data from before the Covid pandemic. Some responses therefore reflect the situation several years ago, whilst others may have been affected by disruption during the pandemic period. As a result, there are limitations on the extent to which these data might be considered comparable.

Newport completed its adult and children's user survey in March 2023.

| Performance indicator | | Rank | Lowest | Median | Highest |
|---|--------------|-------|--------|--------|---------|
| QI 1 Making a difference | | | | | |
| b) % of young people who think that the library helps them learn and find things out: | 93% | =5/16 | 58% | 90% | 98% |
| e) % of adults who think that the library has made a difference to their lives: | 93% | =3/16 | 41% | 86.5% | 96% |
| QI 5 b) % of attendees of training sessions who said that the training had helped them achieve their goals: | Not provided | - | 82% | 96% | 100% |

Authorities are also asked to provide an impact statement describing the impact which the library service has had on an individual or on a group of individuals during the year. Newport provided an impact statement which referred to a mother and her two children who recently relocated to the city. The family attends and values the regular Story Club sessions at the Central Library. The library provided a safe and neutral space in which the mother could get support from staff to find out more about the local area including schools and volunteering opportunities. As a result of the support provided, she was able to find voluntary work that matches her professional experience.

2.4. Quality indicators and benchmarks

The remaining indicators do not have targets but allow services to monitor and benchmark their performance over time, in comparison with other authorities. The following table summarises Newport's position for 2022-23. Ranks are included out of 22, where 1 is the highest, and 22 the lowest scoring authority, unless stated otherwise. Indicators where fewer than 22 authorities supplied data are those where relevant data was not available from some authorities. Indicators 'per capita' are calculated per 1,000 population unless otherwise noted.

| Performance indicator | | Rank | Lowest | Median | Highest |
|--|--------|--------|--------|---------|---------|
| QI 1 Making a difference | | | | | |
| a) % of adults who think that using the library has helped them develop new skills | 80% | 6/16 | 24% | 69.5% | 90% |
| c) health and well-being | 74% | =4/16 | 35% | 66.5% | 94% |
| d) enjoyable, safe and inclusive | 97% | =8/16 | 93% | 97% | 100% |
| QI 2 Customer satisfaction | | | | | |
| a) 'very good' or 'good' choice of books | 94% | =4/16 | 80% | 91% | 99% |
| b) 'very good' or 'good' customer care | 98% | =9/17 | 92% | 98% | 100% |
| c) 'very good' or 'good' IT facilities | 82% | =11/16 | 65% | 86% | 99% |
| d) 'very good' or 'good' overall | 97% | =10/17 | 94% | 98% | 100% |
| e) users aged 16 & under rating out of ten | 9.5 | =5/16 | 8.0 | 9.3 | 9.7 |
| QI 5 User training | | | | | |
| a) attendances per capita | 28 | 5/22 | 1 | 10.5 | 222 |
| c) informal training per capita | 56 | 15/19 | 5 | 131 | 424 |
| QI 6 attendances at events per capita | 80 | 20/22 | 13 | 165 | 559 |
| QI 8 Library use | | | | | |
| a) visits per capita | 1,106 | 20/21 | 781 | 2,106 | 4,814 |
| b) virtual visits per capita | 733 | 9/22 | 124 | 537.5 | 7,979 |
| c) active borrowers per capita | 43 | 22/22 | 43 | 106.5 | 167 |
| QI 10 Welsh issues per capita | 20 | 21/22 | 13 | 53 | 864 |
| QI 11 Online access | | | | | |
| a) Computers per 10,000 | 3.32 | 22/22 | 3.32 | 7.99 | 16.99 |
| b) % of available time used by the public | 24% | 2/19 | 7% | 11% | 77% |
| QI 13 Staffing levels and qualifications ⁴⁴ | | | | | |
| (v) a) total volunteers | 3 | - | 0 | 8 | 256 |
| b) volunteer hours | 90 | - | 0 | 583.5 | 14,014 |
| QI 14 Operational expenditure | | | | | |
| a) total expenditure per capita | £6,726 | 21/21 | £6,726 | £11,476 | £27,330 |
| b) % on staff, | 66% | =8/21 | 46% | 64% | 78% |
| % on information resources | 20% | 4/21 | 5% | 12% | 21% |
| % on equipment and buildings | 6% | 7/21 | 1% | 3% | 29% |
| % on other operational costs; | 8% | 16/21 | 1% | 15% | 35% |
| c) capital expenditure per capita | £0 | =12/21 | -£479 | £145 | £2,865 |
| QI 15 Net cost per visit ⁴⁵ | £3.52 | 14/19 | £0.41 | £2.76 | £6.22 |
| QI 16 Opening hours ⁴⁶ | | | | | |
| (iii) a) % hours unplanned closure of static service points | 0.14% | =15/22 | 0% | 0.05% | 0.95% |
| b) % mobile stops / home deliveries missed | 0% | =1/20 | 0% | 0% | 3.74% |

⁴⁴ Following discussion with the peer review group it was decided not to include rankings for volunteers as the implications of volunteer numbers are ambiguous.

⁴⁵ Rankings here have been reversed, so that 1 is the lowest scoring (best performing) authority.

⁴⁶ Rankings here have been reversed, so that 1 is the lowest scoring (best performing) authority.

3. Analysis of performance

The core entitlements and quality indicators can be divided into four key areas. This section of the report outlines performance under these areas.

3.1. Meeting customer needs (QI 1-5)

Newport performs well in relation to Making a difference (QI1), performing at or above the median for all measures, and in the top quartile for the percentage of adults who think that the library has made a difference to their lives. In relation to customer services measures, the service performs particularly well with regard to book choice and under rating out of ten by users aged 16 (QI2). Whilst Newport meets the targets for health and wellbeing support (QI3), the service notes that many health information partnership and mental health awareness activities have not yet re-commenced since they were halted during the pandemic. Newport has set up a volunteer-led group through the Reading Friends scheme in one branch and will assess this pilot with the aim to roll-out to more sites in the future. Newport is above the median for attendances per capita at user training, but below the median for informal training (QI5). Much of the user-training activity this year was focused on school refresher visits. A smaller amount of adult training was delivered, by partners and the library service.

3.2. Access and use (QI 6-8)

The service has increased the number of events and activities offered this year. The focus has been on children and families, including a programme of holiday activities and weekly story clubs. However, attendance at events per capita is in the bottom quartile of Welsh library authorities (QI6). The loss of the Information Literacy Librarian post has had an impact on adult provision, as has changes to the ways in which other services (e.g. work and skills) are now engaging with clients. The number of visits is in the bottom quartile of library authorities; however, virtual visits per capita are above the median (QI8). Active borrowers and both adult and children's book issues per capita are in the bottom quartile of library authorities.

3.3. Facilities and services (QI 9-12)

Newport does not meet the target for acquisitions (QI9), although materials spend per capita is around the median. The service meets the target for spend on Welsh language materials, but issues per capita Welsh speaker is below the median. Newport acknowledges a low level of engagement with this stock and a difficulty in sourcing Welsh language stock that is reflective of the culture of south-east Wales communities. Over half the Welsh language budget is allocated to junior stock, which has a higher level of use. Welsh Language story times and baby massage sessions are due to recommence in the coming year. Although Newport is in the bottom quartile for number of PCs per capita, its IT facilities are comparatively well used, and it is in the top quartile for time PCs are actively used (QI11). The service comments that the reduction in the number of public PCs reflects changes to library buildings and the impact of the Covid pandemic. Newport achieves the target for supply of requests and is in the top quartile of library authorities for requests available within 7 calendar days (QI12).

3.4. Expertise and capacity (Q1 13-16)

Newport does not meet the targets for overall staffing levels or for qualified staff per capita, although it does retain a qualified operational manager (Q13). It is in the bottom quartile of library authorities for staffing levels. The staffing complement was reduced by one in 22-23 as a vacant professional post was deleted due to financial pressures. The service also fails to meet the target for proportion of staff time dedicated to training. Despite being in the bottom quartile of library authorities for total expenditure per capita (Q14), the cost per visit figure at Newport libraries is higher than the median (Q15) During the Covid pandemic, the service stopped using volunteers at branch libraries and this suspension has been maintained subject to a forthcoming service review. Newport does not meet the target for opening hours (Q16), although it is worth noting that the opening hours reported do not include any times when library services within a shared site may be available outside of staffed library hours.

4. Strategic context

As part of the return, authorities are asked to report on how the library service is contributing to wider Welsh Government priorities and strategic goals. Newport highlights commitments within the Programme for Government that Newport Library Service is either currently supporting or has planned future activity aligned with. These include the following.

- **Protect, re-build and develop our services for vulnerable people:** Home Delivery Service; pilot Reading Friends programme in Malpas Library, with planned rollout to large branch libraries during 2023; partnership work with Newport Social Services to deliver be-spoke digital literacy support to foster carers.
- **Continue our long-term programme of education reform, and ensure educational inequalities narrow and standards rise:** digitisation programme for material relating to the history of Newport and Gwent.
- **Celebrate diversity and move to eliminate inequality in all of its forms:** collection of community language bookstock within the Central Library.
- **Push forward towards a million Welsh speakers, and enable our tourism, sports and arts industries to thrive:** focus on supplying stock suitable for learners and for younger children and work in partnership with Mudiad Meithrin to run popular Welsh language rhyme times and baby yoga sessions.

5. Future direction

Reporting on the authority's future direction and plans for the library service over the following year, Newport reports that a new corporate structure was implemented in October 2022, under which the Library Service became part of the Community Regeneration team within the new Housing and Communities (H&C) service area. This offers opportunities to work to develop links with these teams. However, the Service will face significant challenges over the short to medium term as Newport City Council takes steps to meet anticipated budgetary pressure. An asset optimisation review is currently underway, which includes the Library Service, with co-location of community services having been identified as a key area for further development. The development of a new Library Strategy will now form part of the

overall corporate approach. Another factor that will inform the future direction is the long-term impacts of the Covid pandemic, in particular, whether this will result in a permanent change in the use of online services.

6. Conclusion

Users of Newport libraries clearly feel that the library makes a difference to their lives. The service performs well in terms of Making a Difference (Q11). Many of the service's activities this year have been focused on encouraging children and young people to return to the library, both with schools and as families. This appears to have had an impact as the library is rated highly by users aged 16 and under. The loss of the Information Literacy Librarian post has had an impact on adult provision, as well as having implications for overall staffing levels. Staffing levels and opening hours are a concern. It is noted that the service anticipates significant challenges over the short to medium term due to budgetary pressures.

Annual Assessment Report 2022/2023

This report has been prepared based on information provided in Pembrokeshire's annual return, impact statements and narrative report submitted to the Culture Division of the Welsh Government.

1. Executive summary

Pembrokeshire meets all of the 12 core entitlements in full. Of the 10 quality indicators which have targets, Pembrokeshire achieved 6 in full and 2 in part. Two were not met.

Pembrokeshire library service is popular within the local community; visits per capita are above the median for Welsh library services and the service is rated highly in terms of the difference it makes to people's lives. The closure of Narberth Library has impacted on the service's performance in relation to several QIs this year, but Pembrokeshire provided comprehensive information outlining how it will be able to move out of its temporary premises and resume a full service soon. Budgets for staffing and acquisitions are an ongoing concern. However, a strength of Pembrokeshire's return is its clear plans for the forthcoming year. The service is aware that this is likely to be a challenging time but has identified practical priorities to take the service forward.

- Pembrokeshire performs well in terms of Making a difference; it is in the top quartile of Welsh library authorities for the percentage of young people who think that the library helps them learn and find things out; percentage of adults who think that the library has made a difference to their lives; and who experience the library as enjoyable, safe and inclusive (QI1).
- Pembrokeshire is highly rated by children and young people; it is in the top quartile of library services for users aged 16 and under rating out of ten (QI2).
- Whilst use of library services is still being affected by the legacy of the Covid pandemic, usage figures are increasing and the number of visits per capita is now above the median (QI8).
- Welsh language provision is well-supported; issues per capita Welsh speaker are above the median figure (QI10).

2. Performance against the standards

The standards framework comprises of core entitlements, quality indicators with targets, quality indicators with benchmarks and impact measures. Section 2 summarises achievements against these areas. A narrative assessment of the authority's performance is provided in Section 3.

2.1. Core entitlements

Pembrokeshire reported meeting all 12 of the Core Entitlements in full through self-assessment. The independent assessor accepts the self-assessment based on assessments made in previous years.

2.2. Quality indicators with targets

There are 16 quality indicators (QIs), of which 10 have constituent targets. Of these, Pembrokeshire is achieving 6 in full and 2 in part. Two are not met. The emergency closure of Narberth Library in November 2022 impacted on the service's ability to fully meet QI3 and QI6.

| Quality Indicator | Met? | |
|--|------|---------------|
| QI 3 Support for individual development: | | Partially met |
| a) ICT support | √ | |
| b) Information literacy and skills training | X | |
| c) E-government support | √ | |
| d) Reader development | √ | |
| QI 4 (a) Support for health and well-being | | Met in full |
| i) Book Prescription Wales scheme | √ | |
| ii) Better with Books/Reading Well scheme | √ | |
| iii) Designated health & well-being collection | √ | |
| iv) Information about healthy lifestyles and behaviours | √ | |
| v) Signposting to health & well-being services | √ | |
| QI 6 all static service points offer events/activities for users with special requirements | X | Not met |
| QI 7 Location of service points | √ | Met in full |
| QI 9 Up-to-date and appropriate reading material | | Not met |
| Acquisitions per capita | x | |
| <u>or</u> Materials spend per capita | x | |
| QI 10 Welsh Language Resources | | Met in full |
| % of material budget spent on Welsh | √ | |
| <u>or</u> Spend on Welsh per capita | - | |
| QI 11 Online access: | | Met in full |
| a) i) Public access to Internet | √ | |
| ii) Wi-Fi provision | √ | |
| QI 12 Supply of requests | | Met in full |
| a) % of requests satisfied within 7 days | √ | |
| b) % of requests satisfied within 15 days | √ | |

| Quality Indicator | Met? |
|---|---------------|
| QI 13 Staffing levels and qualifications: | Partially met |
| i) Staff per capita | x |
| ii) Qualified staff per capita | x |
| iii) Head of service qualification/training | √ |
| iv) CPD percentage | √ |
| QI 16 Opening hours per capita | √ Met in full |

2.3. Impact measures

The framework includes three indicators aimed at assessing the impact of library use on people's lives. These indicators do not have targets, and authorities were only required to carry out user surveys for QI1 once over the original three-year period of the framework (2017-20). The summary figures (lowest, median and highest) are based on all authorities providing data in the 2022-23 return. Rankings reflect the numbers of respondents, where 1 is the highest scoring authority. However, it is important to bear in mind that some authorities have conducted surveys since 2020, whilst others report survey data from before the Covid pandemic. Some responses therefore reflect the situation several years ago, whilst others may have been affected by disruption during the pandemic period. As a result, there are limitations on the extent to which these data might be considered comparable.

Pembrokeshire completed its adult and children's user survey in March 2023.

| Performance indicator | | Rank | Lowest | Median | Highest |
|---|-----|-------|--------|--------|---------|
| QI 1 Making a difference | | | | | |
| b) % of young people who think that the library helps them learn and find things out: | 98% | 1/16 | 58% | 90% | 98% |
| e) % of adults who think that the library has made a difference to their lives: | 93% | =3/16 | 41% | 86.5% | 96% |
| QI 5 b) % of attendees of training sessions who said that the training had helped them achieve their goals: | 96% | =9/17 | 82% | 96% | 100% |

Authorities are also asked to provide an impact statement describing the impact which the library service has had on an individual or on a group of individuals during the year. Pembrokeshire provided an impact statement focussed on the experience of a visitor with autism to Milford Haven Library. Over the last year, he has visited the library and appreciated the warm welcome from staff who have created a safe space for him. Staff spend time reading and talking to him, which makes him feel safe and happy and he considers the staff to be his friends and companions. Staff have worked carefully to nurture a relationship with him and ensure that he felt safe within the library and, as a result, his regular visits to the library are chosen over and above any other visits that are on offer.

2.4. Quality indicators and benchmarks

The remaining indicators do not have targets but allow services to monitor and benchmark their performance over time, in comparison with other authorities. The following table summarises Pembrokeshire's position for 2022-23. Ranks are included out of 22, where 1 is the highest, and 22 the lowest scoring authority,

unless stated otherwise. Indicators where fewer than 22 authorities supplied data are those where relevant data was not available from some authorities. Indicators 'per capita' are calculated per 1,000 population unless otherwise noted.

| Performance indicator | | Rank | Lowest | Median | Highest |
|--|---------|--------|--------|---------|---------|
| QI 1 Making a difference | | | | | |
| a) % of adults who think that using the library has helped them develop new skills | 75% | 7/16 | 24% | 69.5% | 90% |
| c) health and well-being | 68% | 8/16 | 35% | 66.5% | 94% |
| d) enjoyable, safe and inclusive | 100% | =1/16 | 93% | 97% | 100% |
| QI 2 Customer satisfaction | | | | | |
| a) 'very good' or 'good' choice of books | 91% | =8/16 | 80% | 91% | 99% |
| b) 'very good' or 'good' customer care | 98% | =9/17 | 92% | 98% | 100% |
| c) 'very good' or 'good' IT facilities | 87% | =7/16 | 65% | 86% | 99% |
| d) 'very good' or 'good' overall | 98% | =5/17 | 94% | 98% | 100% |
| e) users aged 16 & under rating out of ten | 9.7 | =1/16 | 8.0 | 9.3 | 9.7 |
| QI 5 User training | | | | | |
| a) attendances per capita | 3 | 18/22 | 1 | 10.5 | 222 |
| c) informal training per capita | 130 | 11/19 | 5 | 131 | 424 |
| QI 6 attendances at events per capita | | | | | |
| | 83 | 19/22 | 13 | 165 | 559 |
| QI 8 Library use | | | | | |
| a) visits per capita | 2,232 | 10/21 | 781 | 2,106 | 4,814 |
| b) virtual visits per capita | 217 | 19/22 | 124 | 537.5 | 7,979 |
| c) active borrowers per capita | 71 | 19/22 | 43 | 106.5 | 167 |
| QI 10 Welsh issues per capita | | | | | |
| | 56 | 10/22 | 13 | 53 | 864 |
| QI 11 Online access | | | | | |
| a) Computers per 10,000 | 7.20 | 15/22 | 3.32 | 7.99 | 16.99 |
| b) % of available time used by the public | 9% | =13/19 | 7% | 11% | 77% |
| QI 13 Staffing levels and qualifications⁴⁷ | | | | | |
| (v) a) total volunteers | 35 | - | 0 | 8 | 256 |
| b) volunteer hours | 1,446 | - | 0 | 583.5 | 14,014 |
| QI 14 Operational expenditure | | | | | |
| a) total expenditure per capita | £11,476 | 11/21 | £6,726 | £11,476 | £27,330 |
| b) % on staff, | 60% | =17/21 | 46% | 64% | 78% |
| % on information resources | 8% | 20/21 | 5% | 12% | 21% |
| % on equipment and buildings | 3% | =11/21 | 1% | 3% | 29% |
| % on other operational costs; | 29% | 2/21 | 1% | 15% | 35% |
| c) capital expenditure per capita | £234 | 9/21 | -£479 | £145 | £2,865 |

⁴⁷ Following discussion with the peer review group it was decided not to include rankings for volunteers as the implications of volunteer numbers are ambiguous.

| Performance indicator | | Rank | Lowest | Median | Highest |
|---|-------|-------|--------|--------|---------|
| QI 15 Net cost per visit ⁴⁸ | £2.76 | 10/19 | £0.41 | £2.76 | £6.22 |
| QI 16 Opening hours ⁴⁹ | | | | | |
| (iii) a) % hours unplanned closure of static service points | 0.95% | 22/22 | 0% | 0.05% | 0.95% |
| b) % mobile stops / home deliveries missed | 0.25% | 15/20 | 0% | 0% | 3.74% |

3. Analysis of performance

The core entitlements and quality indicators can be divided into four key areas. This section of the report outlines performance under these areas.

3.1. Meeting customer needs (QI 1-5)

Pembrokeshire performs well in term of Making a difference (QI1); it is in the top quartile of Welsh library authorities for the percentage of young people who think that the library helps them learn and find things out; percentage of adults who think that the library has made a difference to their lives; and who experience the library as enjoyable, safe and inclusive. Whilst it is above the median for the percentage of adults finding helpful health and wellbeing information, the service notes that this figure has declined, so there are plans to review the provision of health and wellbeing information. Pembrokeshire is in the top quartile of library services for users aged 16 and under rating out of ten (QI2). It also performs well in terms of adult customer satisfaction, being around the median for all measures. The service partially met the indicator for Support for individual development (QI3) due to the emergency closure of Narberth Library (as a result of structural damage). Although the service took well-thought though measures to ensure a basic service could continue to be provided, public access to IT has not been possible whilst the library is in its temporary premises.

Attendance at formal training is below the median (QI5). The service recognises that the number of attendances at pre-arranged user training sessions is lower than the pre Covid figure when sessions were largely provided by third parties, such as Job Centre Plus. Limited library staff capacity also had an impact on the number of sessions. However, numbers taking part in informal training, and the percentage of attendees who said that training had helped them achieve their goals are both at, or close to, the median figure.

3.2. Access and use (QI 6-8)

Sessions for people with special requirements took place in 10 libraries, but the session in Narberth was cancelled due to the emergency closure. Pembrokeshire therefore did not meet the target for QI6. Event attendance per capita is below the median, but is starting to recover post-Covid. More than half of event attendees were children. The number of visits per capita is slightly above the median (QI8). Whilst the service is below the median for the number of website hits, active borrowers and book issues, the library reports that all measures have increased on the previous year.

⁴⁸ Rankings here have been reversed, so that 1 is the lowest scoring (best performing) authority.

⁴⁹ Rankings here have been reversed, so that 1 is the lowest scoring (best performing) authority.

3.3. Facilities and services (QI 9-12)

The service reports that it has increased its spend and number of items purchased as a result of utilising part of a book fund reserve which has been in place for some years. The service feels that the reserve should help to maintain provision over the medium term, which is anticipated to be a very challenging financial environment. However, despite this additional provision, Pembrokeshire did not meet the target for acquisitions and its materials spend per capita was below the median (QI9). The percentage of budget allocated to children's resources is also below the median, although Pembrokeshire reports this has increased since last year. Pembrokeshire meets the target for Welsh language acquisitions and is slightly above the median for Welsh language issues per capita Welsh speaker (QI10). The service has been focusing on Welsh language resources for young children and adult stock for the mobile library. An Action Plan has been compiled to promote the Welsh language resources more effectively.

Pembrokeshire is below the median for number of PCs per capita, but also below the median for the percentage of time these are actively used (QI11). The service notes that PC usage was already declining prior to Covid and it has reviewed the level of provision in light of this declining demand for static PCs alongside increased numbers of customer bringing their own devices and greater use of WiFi during unstaffed hours. A rolling programme of PC replacement in all static libraries is being undertaken. Pembrokeshire comfortably meets the target for supply of requests (QI12).

3.4. Expertise and capacity (QI 13-16)

Pembrokeshire does not meet the target for staffing per capita or qualified staff per capita, although it does have a qualified operational manager and meets the target for proportion of staff time devoted to training (QI13). There are volunteers based at three community managed libraries. It is noted that two community managed libraries have reduced their hours post Covid and are trying to recruit more volunteers, as their numbers have been depleted. Pembrokeshire meets the target for opening hours, but unplanned closure of static service points and missed mobile stops/home deliveries are both higher than the median (QI16). This was due to emergency repairs being required to Narberth Library resulting in a move to temporary premises; a flood at Saundersfoot Library; and emergency repairs being required to the mobile library vehicle.

4. Strategic context

As part of the return, authorities are asked to report on how the library service is contributing to wider Welsh Government priorities and strategic goals.

Pembrokeshire aligns priorities outlined in its Library Service Strategy to the aims of the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act (2014) and the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act (2015). These include the need to create stronger, healthier communities, reduce poverty and deliver excellence efficiently. The service provides a number of specific examples, a selection of which are outlined below.

- **A prosperous Wales (Wellbeing of Future Generations Act):** Pembroke and Narberth libraries will be relocated to a more central location within their

communities as part of wider developments that include cultural attractions, cafes and new homes. The new libraries will also be in shared, more energy efficient 'new build' facilities.

- **A healthier Wales (Wellbeing of Future Generations Act): Wellbeing & Prevention (Social Services and Wellbeing Act):** 'Life Hub' rooms are available in some libraries so health professionals can meet clients in a relaxed, non-clinical setting.
- **A more equal Wales (Wellbeing of Future Generations Act): Partnership and Integration (Social Services & Wellbeing Act):** the Library Service achieved the Silver Level status for 'Investors in Carers' as recognition of best practice in identifying and supporting unpaid carers of all ages.
- **A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language (Wellbeing of Future Generations Act):** the service has identified three areas for consideration: Welsh language resources (books and e-books), partnership working and assessment of Welsh language skills amongst staff.

5. Future direction

Reporting on the authority's future direction and plans for the library service over the following year, Pembrokeshire outlines its move from the Community Services Directorate into the Education Directorate, which it is anticipated will lead to more engagement with schools, adult learning and inclusion services. A new library will be opened in Narberth, in partnership with the local community, and the service will continue to progress the new library in Pembroke, scheduled to open in 2025. The service acknowledges that budgeting issues will be challenging, but plans to explore further collaborative working with town and community councils in order to protect and enhance services whilst reducing costs. Pembrokeshire also aims to complete, and start the implementation of, a new stock policy and enhance digital services through a change of Wi-Fi provider, piloting Wi-Fi printing and improving the library's web presence. It will also review its communications plan to investigate the feasibility of removing reservation fees and fines, and deliver its Welsh language project.

6. Conclusion

Pembrokeshire library service is popular within the local community; visits per capita are above the median for Welsh library services and the service is rated highly in terms of the difference it makes to people's lives. The closure of Narberth Library has impacted on the service's performance in relation to several QIs this year, but Pembrokeshire provided comprehensive information outlining how it will be able to move out of its temporary premises and resume a full service soon. Budgets for staffing and acquisitions are an ongoing concern. However, a strength of Pembrokeshire's return is its clear plans for the forthcoming year. The service is aware that this is likely to be a challenging time but has identified practical priorities to take the service forward.

Annual Assessment Report 2022/2023

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

1. Executive summary

Powys met 10 of the 12 core entitlements in full and 2 in part. Of the 10 quality indicators which have targets, Powys achieved 7 in full and 1 in part. Two targets were not met.

Powys is performing well in a number of areas, including Welsh language issues, attendance at user training, virtual visits and active borrowers. Health and well-being support is another strength of the service, supported by partnership working with a number of organisations. It is anticipated that the Mobile Transformation programme will help the service to ensure that residents who are not able to visit a library can continue to access the service effectively. However, it is important that the service goes ahead with plans to conduct an up-to-date user survey in the coming year. In many ways, Powys is entering a potentially exciting period, with two capital build projects about to start. The service also has a clear focus in terms of the future of digital support. However, the staffing situation is a concern, in particular, a number of years without a Principal Librarian in post due to secondment of operational manager. This occurs at a time when good leadership is likely to be especially important given the key transformation projects taking place and development of a digital strategy/service.

- User training opportunities are well-attended; Powys is above the median for attendance at formal user training (QI5).
- The service performs well for virtual visits and active borrowers per capita, both of which are above the median (QI8).
- Welsh language provision is well-used; Welsh language issues per capita Welsh speaker are above the median (QI10).
- There is good access to digital provision; the service is in the top quartile of library authorities for the provision of PCs per capita (QI11).

2. Performance against the standards

The standards framework comprises of core entitlements, quality indicators with targets, quality indicators with benchmarks and impact measures. Section 2 summarises achievements against these areas. A narrative assessment of the authority's performance is provided in Section 3.

2.1. Core entitlements

Powys reported meeting 10 of the Core Entitlements in full and 1 in part through self-assessment, with the remaining Core Entitlement being unmet. However, the independent assessor considers Powys to be meeting 10 Core Entitlements in full and 2 in part. In the case of CE11, whilst the service has not conducted a user

survey since the pandemic, it has conducted adult children’s surveys during the Framework period and has plans to conduct surveys in the coming year.

| Core Entitlement | Self assessment | Independent assessor |
|---|------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 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 wellbeing 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. | Not 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 |

2.2. Quality indicators with targets

There are 16 quality indicators (QIs), of which 10 have constituent targets. Of these, Powys is achieving 7 in full and 1 in part. Two targets were not met.

| Quality Indicator | Met? | |
|--|----------------------------|---------------|
| QI 3 Support for individual development: | | Met in full |
| a) ICT support | √ | |
| b) Information literacy and skills training | √ | |
| c) E-government support | √ | |
| d) Reader development | √ | |
| QI 4 (a) Support for health and well-being | | Met in full |
| i) Book Prescription Wales scheme | √ | |
| ii) Better with Books/Reading Well scheme | √ | |
| iii) Designated health & well-being collection | √ | |
| iv) Information about healthy lifestyles and behaviours | √ | |
| v) Signposting to health & well-being services | √ | |
| QI 6 all static service points offer events/activities for users with special requirements | √ | Met in full |
| QI 7 Location of service points | X | Not met |
| QI 9 Up-to-date and appropriate reading material | | Met in full |
| Acquisitions per capita | √ | |
| <u>or</u> Materials spend per capita | - | |
| QI 10 Welsh Language Resources | | Met in full |
| % of material budget spent on Welsh | √ | |
| <u>or</u> Spend on Welsh per capita | - | |
| QI 11 Online access: | | Met in full |
| a) i) Public access to Internet | √ | |
| ii) Wi-Fi provision | √ | |
| QI 12 Supply of requests | | Partially met |
| a) % of requests satisfied within 7 days | X | |
| b) % of requests satisfied within 15 days | √ | |
| QI 13 Staffing levels and qualifications: | | Not met |
| i) Staff per capita | x | |
| ii) Qualified staff per capita | x | |
| iii) Head of service qualification/training | Not provided ⁵⁰ | |
| iv) CPD percentage | Not provided | |
| QI 16 Opening hours per capita | √ | Met in full |

2.3. Impact measures

The framework includes three indicators aimed at assessing the impact of library use on people's lives. These indicators do not have targets, and authorities were only required to carry out user surveys for QI1 once over the original three-year period of the framework (2017-20). The summary figures (lowest, median and highest) are based on all authorities providing data in the 2022-23 return. Rankings reflect the

⁵⁰ Powys Library Service has been operating with no Principal Librarian since November 2021.

numbers of respondents, where 1 is the highest scoring authority. However, it is important to bear in mind that some authorities have conducted surveys since 2020, whilst others report survey data from before the Covid pandemic. Some responses therefore reflect the situation several years ago, whilst others may have been affected by disruption during the pandemic period. As a result, there are limitations on the extent to which these data might be considered comparable.

Powys has plans to conduct adult and children's customer surveys during 2023-34.

| Performance indicator | | Rank | Lowest | Median | Highest |
|---|--------------|------|--------|--------|---------|
| QI 1 Making a difference | | | | | |
| b) % of young people who think that the library helps them learn and find things out: | Not provided | /16 | 58% | 90% | 98% |
| e) % of adults who think that the library has made a difference to their lives: | Not provided | /16 | 41% | 86.5% | 96% |
| QI 5 b) % of attendees of training sessions who said that the training had helped them achieve their goals: | Not provided | /17 | 82% | 96% | 100% |

Authorities are also asked to provide an impact statement describing the impact which the library service has had on an individual or on a group of individuals during the year. Powys provided an impact statement about a customer who was provided with digital assistance by the service. The library service has facilitated access to Welsh classes online to allow the customer to engage in cultural pursuits from home. This has enriched her life, keeping her mentally active and reducing feelings of boredom and isolation. Providing access to meditation resources has supported her with her mental health and management of stress and anxiety resulting from her health condition. The customer has been empowered to use technology to stay connected with friends and family, and the library service has fostered a sense of belonging and emotional support during difficult times. This has impacted positively on her health and quality of life.

2.4. Quality indicators and benchmarks

The remaining indicators do not have targets but allow services to monitor and benchmark their performance over time, in comparison with other authorities. The following table summarises Powys's position for 2022-23. Ranks are included out of 22, where 1 is the highest, and 22 the lowest scoring authority, unless stated otherwise. Indicators where fewer than 22 authorities supplied data are those where relevant data was not available from some authorities. Indicators 'per capita' are calculated per 1,000 population unless otherwise noted.

| Performance indicator | | Rank | Lowest | Median | Highest |
|--|--------------|--------|--------|---------|---------|
| QI 1 Making a difference | | | | | |
| a) % of adults who think that using the library has helped them develop new skills | Not provided | - | 24% | 69.5% | 90% |
| c) health and well-being | Not provided | - | 35% | 66.5% | 94% |
| d) enjoyable, safe and inclusive | Not provided | - | 93% | 97% | 100% |
| QI 2 Customer satisfaction | | | | | |
| a) 'very good' or 'good' choice of books | Not provided | - | 80% | 91% | 99% |
| b) 'very good' or 'good' customer care | Not provided | - | 92% | 98% | 100% |
| c) 'very good' or 'good' IT facilities | Not provided | - | 65% | 86% | 99% |
| d) 'very good' or 'good' overall | Not provided | - | 94% | 98% | 100% |
| e) users aged 16 & under rating out of ten | Not provided | - | 8.0 | 9.3 | 9.7 |
| QI 5 User training | | | | | |
| a) attendances per capita | 16 | 9/22 | 1 | 10.5 | 222 |
| c) informal training per capita | Not provided | - | 5 | 131 | 424 |
| QI 6 attendances at events per capita | | | | | |
| | 97 | 18/22 | 13 | 165 | 559 |
| QI 8 Library use | | | | | |
| a) visits per capita | 2,076 | 14/21 | 781 | 2,106 | 4,814 |
| b) virtual visits per capita | 1,270 | 5/22 | 124 | 537.5 | 7,979 |
| c) active borrowers per capita | 131 | 6/22 | 43 | 106.5 | 167 |
| QI 10 Welsh issues per capita | | | | | |
| | 69 | 9/22 | 13 | 53 | 864 |
| QI 11 Online access | | | | | |
| a) Computers per 10,000 | 16.70 | 2/22 | 3.32 | 7.99 | 16.99 |
| b) % of available time used by the public | 7% | =17/19 | 7% | 11% | 77% |
| QI 13 Staffing levels and qualifications⁵¹ | | | | | |
| (v) a) total volunteers | 59 | - | 0 | 8 | 256 |
| b) volunteer hours | 1,909 | - | 0 | 583.5 | 14,014 |
| QI 14 Operational expenditure | | | | | |
| a) total expenditure per capita | £9,256 | 15/21 | £6,726 | £11,476 | £27,330 |
| b) % on staff, | 61% | 16/21 | 46% | 64% | 78% |
| % on information resources | 13% | =7/21 | 5% | 12% | 21% |
| % on equipment and buildings | 7% | =5/21 | 1% | 3% | 29% |
| % on other operational costs; | 19% | 9/21 | 1% | 15% | 35% |
| c) capital expenditure per capita | £178 | 10/21 | -£479 | £145 | £2,865 |

⁵¹ Following discussion with the peer review group it was decided not to include rankings for volunteers as the implications of volunteer numbers are ambiguous.

| Performance indicator | | Rank | Lowest | Median | Highest |
|---|-------|--------|--------|--------|---------|
| QI 15 Net cost per visit ⁵² | £1.16 | 2/19 | £0.41 | £2.76 | £6.22 |
| QI 16 Opening hours ⁵³ | | | | | |
| (iii) a) % hours unplanned closure of static service points | 0.34% | =18/22 | 0% | 0.05% | 0.95% |
| b) % mobile stops / home deliveries missed | N/A | - | 0% | 0% | 3.74% |

3. Analysis of performance

The core entitlements and quality indicators can be divided into four key areas. This section of the report outlines performance under these areas.

3.1. Meeting customer needs (QI 1-5)

No data is provided in relation to QI1 or QI2 this year. Powys meets the targets for Support for individual development (QI3) and Support for health and well-being (QI4) in full. In addition to the standard services, Powys has developed two other book support schemes in four libraries across the county (and requestable elsewhere): Books about Cancer - a joint project with Improving the Cancer Journey Powys and funded by Powys Teaching Health Board's Charitable Fund, and Books about Bereavement for Children, a project with Powys County Council Commissioning Team to support bereaved families. Mental health awareness activities include a grief group and a Mums Matter sessions for new mums who are feeling low, anxious or overwhelmed. Powys is above the median for attendance at formal user training (QI5). Although no data is available for informal training, all staff provide basic ICT support to customers. In addition, through Shared Prosperity grant funding, the service is developing some libraries into Digital Community Hubs.

3.2. Access and use (QI 6-8)

Powys acknowledges that the service is still in the position of re-building audiences after the pandemic, and it has taken a little while to re-start activities. Event attendance per capita is below the median for Welsh library services (QI6). Examples of events include author visits, Warm Spaces activities, Careers Wales advice sessions, hearing aid clinics, and drop-ins for Ukrainian refugees.

Powys does not meet the target for location of services (QI7). The low population density of the county is noted in relation to this target. Furthermore, since the pandemic, the two mobile libraries have been removed permanently from the service. Powys is working on a Mobile Transformation programme and looking at ways of operating a home delivery service aimed at more vulnerable residents, with the assistance of volunteer groups across the county. The service continues to offer Order & Collect, and works with volunteers to deliver reading materials to those who are not able to visit a library. Visits per capita are slightly below the median (despite a number of shared service points counting total footfall, not simply library access). However, virtual visits and active borrowers per capita are both above the median

⁵² *Rankings here have been reversed, so that 1 is the lowest scoring (best performing) authority.*

⁵³ *Rankings here have been reversed, so that 1 is the lowest scoring (best performing) authority.*

(Q18). Adult book issues and e-issues per capita are also above the median.

3.3. Facilities and services (Q1 9-12)

Powys meets the target for number of acquisitions per capita, although it is below the median for materials spend per capita (Q19). The service notes an increase in expenditure on children's books as a result of grant funding through the Shared Prosperity Multiply strand to purchase Number Up books to support parents to improve their numeracy skills. The service also meets the target for percentage spend on Welsh language materials, and Welsh language issues per capita are above the median (Q10). A number of libraries have Cymraeg i Blant sessions that include Ioga Babi a Stori a Chân as well as Welsh language conversation groups for adult learners. Provision of PCs per capita is in the top quartile of library authorities, although the percentage of available time used by the public is below the median (Q11). The service reports that the use of desktop computers continues to decline; however, there is increased use of Wi-Fi. Powys partially meets the target for supply of requests (Q12), in part due to the fact that some libraries now only have one delivery a week.

3.4. Expertise and capacity (Q1 13-16)

Powys does not meet the targets for overall staffing per capita or qualified staff per capita, although the latter is above the median and the service is currently supporting one member of staff to achieve a library qualification (Q13). Powys Library Service has been operating with no Principal Librarian since November 2021. The Principal Librarian is currently seconded and due to return April 2024 therefore the service continues to operate with no designated operational manager, although two Senior Librarians have been awarded honorariums from June 2023. No data is provided with regard to time allocated to staff training. Powys meets the target for opening hours, but is above the median figure for unplanned and emergency closures (Q16). These were due to utilities failure and staff unavailability.

4. Strategic context

As part of the return, authorities are asked to report on how the library service is contributing to wider Welsh Government priorities and strategic goals. Examples of contributions made by Powys library service are outlined below.

- **A Healthier Wales:** working with or signposting to specialist organisations and groups.
- **A More Equal Wales:** the provision of free IT equipment, broadband and wi-fi, particularly in a rural area such as Powys, where broadband access is poor, to education, small businesses and job seeking; a grant funded iPad loan scheme has allowed the service to trial the sharing of digital resources and free mi-fi internet access with socially and digitally disadvantaged customers.
- **A Wales of Vibrant Culture and Thriving Welsh language:** sessions with “Cymraeg i Blant” and Welsh learners conversation groups.
- **A Globally Responsible Wales:** library use brings residents and visitors into town centres, creating value to the local economy through associated spend; the large number of volunteers that now support libraries are developing a

wide range of skills for the future.

5. Future direction

Reporting on the authority's future direction and plans for the library service over the following year, Powys describes the focus for the future as: developing a financially sustainable library service; harnessing digital capabilities; and expanding the network of partners and volunteers. Powys County Council is currently undertaking a Customer Services Review, the outcome of which is likely to have an impact on the library service. In addition, the service reports staffing pressures at all levels; it is currently operating with no Principal Librarian and is finding it hard to recruit good calibre candidates to posts with few hours and relief contracts. In addition, the stock budget for 2023-24 has been significantly cut.

Two capital projects are due to start building work in the autumn at Y Lanfa (Welshpool Library and Powysland Museum) and Ystradgynlais Library. Work is continuing to develop digital community hubs, supporting digital citizenship and addressing digital exclusion. Digital Support officers will promote facilities on site, deliver training to staff, provide digital drop-in support for the public and recruit volunteers to ensure sustainability of the project. Number Up!, a project to grow maths confidence in parents and carers, will launch in July 2023. In addition, work is underway to create a website for Powys' libraries, museums, and archives, which will include digitised photographs and ephemera from the local studies collections. Future digital plans include the adoption of a wider range of social media platforms to broaden audience reach and the development of a brand identity. Upskilling staff will be a key priority, with a focus on digital content creation and Search Engine Optimisation.

6. Conclusion

Powys is performing well in a number of areas, including Welsh language issues, attendance at user training, virtual visits and active borrowers. Health and well-being support is another strength of the service, supported by partnership working with a number of organisations. It is anticipated that the Mobile Transformation programme will help the service to ensure that residents who are not able to visit a library can continue to access the service effectively. However, it is important that the service goes ahead with plans to conduct an up-to-date user survey in the coming year. In many ways, Powys is entering a potentially exciting period, with two capital build projects about to start. The service also has a clear focus in terms of the future of digital support. However, the staffing situation is a concern, in particular, a number of years without a Principal Librarian in post due to secondment of operational manager. This occurs at a time when good leadership is likely to be especially important given the key transformation projects taking place and development of a digital strategy/service.

Annual Assessment Report 2022/2023

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

1. Executive summary

Rhondda Cynon Taf met all of the 12 core entitlements in full. Of the 10 quality indicators which have targets, Rhondda Cynon Taf is achieving 5 in full and 1 in part. Four were not met.

Rhondda Cynon Taf libraries are clearly valued by members of the local community. The number of visits per capita, and customers rating the choice of books, customer care and library overall 'good' or 'very good' are all above the median for Welsh library authorities. It would appear that users are gradually returning to the service after the Covid pandemic, and visits per capita are above the median for Welsh library authorities. However, Rhondda Cynon Taf is facing a challenging financial situation. The planned cuts to staffing and the book budget are a serious concern given that the service is already falling short of targets in these areas. The proposed reduction in staffing may well hamper the service's ability to make improvements in other areas where it is not currently able to meet targets, including opening hours and activity provision.

- Rhondda Cynon Taf performs well for many areas of customer feedback; customers rating the choice of books, customer care and library overall 'good' or 'very good' are all above the median (Q12).
- User training opportunities are well-supported; attendance at pre-arranged user training is now recovering from the pandemic and is above the median for Welsh library services (Q15).
- The library space is well-used; visits per capita are in the top quartile of Welsh library services (Q18).
- The service did not experience any unplanned closures or missed home deliveries (Q16).

2. Performance against the standards

The standards framework comprises of core entitlements, quality indicators with targets, quality indicators with benchmarks and impact measures. Section 2 summarises achievements against these areas. A narrative assessment of the authority's performance is provided in Section 3.

2.1. Core entitlements

Rhondda Cynon Taf reported meeting all 12 of the Core Entitlements in full through self-assessment, providing detailed and helpful commentary within the return on each area covered. The independent assessor agreed with the self-assessment.

2.2. Quality indicators with targets

There are 16 quality indicators (QIs), of which 10 have constituent targets. Of these, Rhondda Cynon Taf is achieving 5 in full and 1 in part. Four were not met.

| Quality Indicator | Met? | |
|--|------|---------------|
| QI 3 Support for individual development: | | Met in full |
| a) ICT support | √ | |
| b) Information literacy and skills training | √ | |
| c) E-government support | √ | |
| d) Reader development | √ | |
| QI 4 (a) Support for health and well-being | | Met in full |
| i) Book Prescription Wales scheme | √ | |
| ii) Better with Books/Reading Well scheme | √ | |
| iii) Designated health & well-being collection | √ | |
| iv) Information about healthy lifestyles and behaviours | √ | |
| v) Signposting to health & well-being services | √ | |
| QI 6 all static service points offer events/activities for users with special requirements | X | Not met |
| QI 7 Location of service points | √ | Met in full |
| QI 9 Up-to-date and appropriate reading material | | Not met |
| Acquisitions per capita | X | |
| <u>or</u> Materials spend per capita | x | |
| QI 10 Welsh Language Resources | | Met in full |
| % of material budget spent on Welsh | √ | |
| <u>or</u> Spend on Welsh per capita | - | |
| QI 11 Online access: | | Met in full |
| a) i) Public access to Internet | √ | |
| ii) Wi-Fi provision | √ | |
| QI 12 Supply of requests | | Not met |
| a) % of requests satisfied within 7 days | X | |
| b) % of requests satisfied within 15 days | X | |
| QI 13 Staffing levels and qualifications: | | Partially met |
| i) Staff per capita | x | |
| ii) Qualified staff per capita | x | |
| iii) Head of service qualification/training | √ | |
| iv) CPD percentage | X | |
| QI 16 Opening hours per capita | X | Not met |

2.3. Impact measures

The framework includes three indicators aimed at assessing the impact of library use on people's lives. These indicators do not have targets, and authorities were only required to carry out user surveys for QI1 once over the original three-year period of the framework (2017-20). The summary figures (lowest, median and highest) are based on all authorities providing data in the 2022-23 return. Rankings reflect the

numbers of respondents, where 1 is the highest scoring authority. However, it is important to bear in mind that some authorities have conducted surveys since 2020, whilst others report survey data from before the Covid pandemic. Some responses therefore reflect the situation several years ago, whilst others may have been affected by disruption during the pandemic period. As a result, there are limitations on the extent to which these data might be considered comparable.

Rhondda Cynon Taf completed its adult user survey in March 2022 and its children's user survey in March 2023.

| Performance indicator | | Rank | Lowest | Median | Highest |
|---|-----|-------|--------|--------|---------|
| QI 1 Making a difference | | | | | |
| b) % of young people who think that the library helps them learn and find things out: | 90% | =7/16 | 58% | 90% | 98% |
| e) % of adults who think that the library has made a difference to their lives: | 85% | 11/16 | 41% | 86.5% | 96% |
| QI 5 b) % of attendees of training sessions who said that the training had helped them achieve their goals: | 96% | =9/17 | 82% | 96% | 100% |

Authorities are also asked to provide an impact statement describing the impact which the library service has had on an individual or on a group of individuals during the year. Rhondda Cynon Taf provided an impact statement about the provision of increased space and activities for local communities to support more non-traditional use of the library and to help combat loneliness and isolation. This provides customers a chance to connect with others in a warm, safe, welcoming, non-judgemental environment. With the closure of other community venues and the cost-of-living crisis, this was seen as especially important. Initially, as part of the Places to Connect programme, three Coffee and Craft sessions were set up in three libraries and were attended by a total of 95 people and attendee feedback was positive. Building on the success of these events, eight other events were organised and attended by 239 people. A crochet club has been started at Treorchy library and 'Community Puzzle' tables set up at several libraries. Feedback from two Ukrainian settlers has led to the establishment of a library 'Coffee and Chat' group for people whose first language is not English. The events have reportedly contributed to increased confidence and wellbeing for many community members and resulted in more diverse use of the library space.

2.4. Quality indicators and benchmarks

The remaining indicators do not have targets but allow services to monitor and benchmark their performance over time, in comparison with other authorities. The following table summarises Rhondda Cynon Taf's position for 2022-23. Ranks are included out of 22, where 1 is the highest, and 22 the lowest scoring authority, unless stated otherwise. Indicators where fewer than 22 authorities supplied data are those where relevant data was not available from some authorities. Indicators 'per capita' are calculated per 1,000 population unless otherwise noted.

| Performance indicator | | Rank | Lowest | Median | Highest |
|--|--------|--------|--------|---------|---------|
| QI 1 Making a difference | | | | | |
| a) % of adults who think that using the library has helped them develop new skills | 62% | 12/16 | 24% | 69.5% | 90% |
| c) health and well-being | 42% | 14/16 | 35% | 66.5% | 94% |
| d) enjoyable, safe and inclusive | 93% | =14/16 | 93% | 97% | 100% |
| QI 2 Customer satisfaction | | | | | |
| a) 'very good' or 'good' choice of books | 94% | =4/16 | 80% | 91% | 99% |
| b) 'very good' or 'good' customer care | 99% | =2/17 | 92% | 98% | 100% |
| c) 'very good' or 'good' IT facilities | 83% | 10/16 | 65% | 86% | 99% |
| d) 'very good' or 'good' overall | 99% | =3/17 | 94% | 98% | 100% |
| e) users aged 16 & under rating out of ten | 9.4 | 7/16 | 8.0 | 9.3 | 9.7 |
| QI 5 User training | | | | | |
| a) attendances per capita | 17 | 8/22 | 1 | 10.5 | 222 |
| c) informal training per capita | 8 | 18/19 | 5 | 131 | 424 |
| QI 6 attendances at events per capita | 129 | 15/22 | 13 | 165 | 559 |
| QI 8 Library use | | | | | |
| a) visits per capita | 2,559 | 4/21 | 781 | 2,106 | 4,814 |
| b) virtual visits per capita | 490 | 13/22 | 124 | 537.5 | 7,979 |
| c) active borrowers per capita | 83 | 17/22 | 43 | 106.5 | 167 |
| QI 10 Welsh issues per capita | 44 | =15/22 | 13 | 53 | 864 |
| QI 11 Online access | | | | | |
| a) Computers per 10,000 | 6.82 | 16/22 | 3.32 | 7.99 | 16.99 |
| b) % of available time used by the public | 11% | =9/19 | 7% | 11% | 77% |
| QI 13 Staffing levels and qualifications ⁵⁴ | | | | | |
| (v) a) total volunteers | 7 | - | 0 | 8 | 256 |
| b) volunteer hours | 1,032 | - | 0 | 583.5 | 14,014 |
| QI 14 Operational expenditure | | | | | |
| a) total expenditure per capita | £8,932 | 17/21 | £6,726 | £11,476 | £27,330 |
| b) % on staff | 69% | 7/21 | 46% | 64% | 78% |
| % on information resources | 16% | 5/21 | 5% | 12% | 21% |
| % on equipment and buildings | 3% | =11/21 | 1% | 3% | 29% |
| % on other operational costs | 12% | 14/21 | 1% | 15% | 35% |
| c) capital expenditure per capita | £0 | =12/21 | -£479 | £145 | £2,865 |
| QI 15 Net cost per visit ⁵⁵ | £2.31 | 8/19 | £0.41 | £2.76 | £6.22 |
| QI 16 Opening hours ⁵⁶ | | | | | |
| (iii) a) % hours unplanned closure of static service points | 0% | =1/22 | 0% | 0.05% | 0.95% |
| b) % mobile stops / home deliveries missed | 0% | =1/20 | 0% | 0% | 3.74% |

⁵⁴ Following discussion with the peer review group it was decided not to include rankings for volunteers as the implications of volunteer numbers are ambiguous.

⁵⁵ Rankings here have been reversed, so that 1 is the lowest scoring (best performing) authority.

⁵⁶ Rankings here have been reversed, so that 1 is the lowest scoring (best performing) authority.

3. Analysis of performance

The core entitlements and quality indicators can be divided into four key areas. This section of the report outlines performance under these areas.

3.1. Meeting customer needs (QI 1-5)

Rhondda Cynon Taf achieves the median for percentage of young people who think that the library helps them learn and find things out (QI1). It is below the median for feedback from adult users in relation to Making a difference, but it is acknowledged that the timing of surveys over the pandemic period may have an impact on this measure. Customers rating the choice of books, customer care and library overall 'good' or 'very good' are all above the median (QI2). Three of the four 'Living Well in Wales' campaigns took place during this period, and activities, events and information resources were organised for: Dip into reading, Age Well and Places to connect. A number of organisations involved in promoting healthy lifestyles and wellbeing make use of libraries, including Foodwise (healthy eating), baby massage and NHS long Covid and depression sessions (QI4). Whilst attendance at user training sessions is lower than pre-pandemic levels, the number of attendees has been increasing steadily throughout the year and overall, attendance at user training was above the median (QI5). Participation in informal training was below the median, however. During this period, the service has looked to both re-establish existing partnerships that were lost during the pandemic and also to create new partnerships with organisations that wish to make use of facilities to provide training sessions.

3.2. Access and use (QI 6-8)

Rhondda Cynon Taf did not meet the target for events and activities for those who have special requirements as only 11 of the 13 static service points offered such provision. Whilst the number of events and activities increased throughout the year, event attendance was below the median (QI6). Visits per capita are in the top quartile of Welsh library services, however, and the service reports that this is now only 16% below pre pandemic levels. The number of virtual visits per capita is below the median and Rhondda Cynon Taf reflects that this may be the result of people returning to traditional borrowing practices after the pandemic. Whilst the survey reports that the number of active borrowers and adult loans have increased, the service is currently below the median for these measures, as well as for children's issues (QI8).

3.3. Facilities and services (QI 9-12)

Rhondda Cynon Taf does not meet the target for acquisitions (QI9), although it is close to the median for materials spend per capita. The service reports that performance against this target is unlikely to improve given the current financial situation and the service has been advised that a percentage of the book budget will be offered up as an efficiency saving in 2023- 2024. The service meets the target for acquisition of Welsh language materials, but issues are below the median per capita Welsh speaker (QI10). Rhondda Cynon Taf acknowledges that, whilst Welsh language issues have increased on last year, they are still remain below pre-pandemic levels. The service also offers an extensive programme of Welsh language events and activities.

Rhondda Cynon Taf is below the median for PCs per capita, but achieves the median for the percentage of time these are actively used (Q111). The service notes that the demand for, and usage of, public access computers has fallen to its lowest level since public access PCs were introduced. Whilst these computers provide the only method by which some users can gain access to the internet, increasingly library users are relying on their own devices and making use of the library WiFi. Rhondda Cynon Taf is now taking the approach of providing smaller numbers of PCs for everyday use, whilst maintaining larger numbers within IT suites in some larger libraries which can be used for classes and training purposes. The service does not meet the target for supply of requests (Q112) and notes that its performance against this target is unlikely to improve as budgetary pressures lead to a reduction in its book budget.

3.4. Expertise and capacity (Q1 13-16)

Rhondda Cynon Taf does not meet the targets for overall staffing per capita or qualified staff per capita, although it does have a qualified operational manager. The number of qualified staff has reduced by one (as a result of retirement), but two members of staff are currently working towards professional qualifications. The service is also below the target for proportion of staff time devoted to training (Q113). Rhondda Cynon Taf notes a lower than average number of volunteers this year as the council's work placement scheme was suspended for the majority of the reporting period. Total revenue expenditure is below the median and the service reports that this is down on last year as a result of a 0.5% compulsory efficiency saving imposed on services throughout the council in response to the current financial position (Q114). Rhondda Cynon Taf does not meet the target for opening hours (Q116), but it notes that the cluster model means that at least one branch library and an area library is open in each cluster for 6 days of the week to enable access for customers within the resources available. The service did not experience any unplanned closures or missed home deliveries. Its mobile libraries are yet to return to service following the Covid pandemic and it continues to run an expanded 'At Home' service for members of the community that cannot visit a static library. A decision is expected later in the year on whether this model will be adopted as a permanent change of service.

4. Strategic context

As part of the return, authorities are asked to report on how the library service is contributing to wider Welsh Government priorities and strategic goals. Rhondda Cynon Taf highlights how libraries are contributing towards the seven wellbeing goals prioritised by the Welsh Government. Some examples highlighted are as follows.

- **A prosperous Wales:** supporting Job Clubs and back to work programmes with Communities for Work Plus and other local organisations; volunteering opportunities offered within the Library Service help people gain additional skills to improve their job prospects.
- **A resilient Wales:** the council's policy of developing local hubs with libraries at their heart provides local access to a wide range of services for education, leisure, support and advice. These help to build resilience in the community by providing network structures, social support and community bonds and

good information and communication systems that assist in informing the public.

- **A more equal Wales:** providing audio books, large print books, Welsh language stock, books in braille and dyslexia-friendly books.
- **A Wales of cohesive communities:** close ties with the Business Improvement Districts at Pontypridd, Aberdare and Treorchy allow libraries to play a key role in programmes that involve the whole community thereby raising the profile of the library whilst providing resources and locations for events to take place.
- **A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language:** supporting and participating in Welsh Language events including Parti Ponty and Shwmae Day.
- **A globally responsible Wales:** information and advice on local initiatives, plus recycling bags and battery drop off points.

5. Future direction

Reporting on the authority's future direction and plans for the library service over the following year, Rhondda Cynon Taf highlights increasing visitor numbers and issues as a priority. The service notes the challenges presented by further efficiency savings for 2023/24, which include replacing the mobile library service with an enhanced 'At Home' service, the loss of one Library Assistant post and a 10% cut to the book budget. Its priorities will therefore be:

- Continuing to build audiences, returning usage to pre-pandemic levels
- Carrying out a service review
- Working with SCL Cymru and the Welsh Government on the re-tendering process for an All-Wales Library Management System.

6. Conclusion

Rhondda Cynon Taf libraries are clearly valued by members of the local community. The number of visits per capita, and customers rating the choice of books, customer care and library overall 'good' or 'very good' are all above the median for Welsh library authorities. It would appear that users are gradually returning to the service after the Covid pandemic, and visits per capita are above the median for Welsh library authorities. However, Rhondda Cynon Taf is facing a challenging financial situation. The planned cuts to staffing and the book budget are a serious concern given that the service is already falling short of targets in these areas. The proposed reduction in staffing may well hamper the service's ability to make improvements in other areas where it is not currently able to meet targets, including opening hours and activity provision.

Annual Assessment Report 2022/2023

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

1. Executive summary

Swansea reported meeting all of the 12 core entitlements in full. Of the 10 quality indicators which have targets, Swansea is achieving 7 in full and 1 in part. Two were not met.

Swansea is performing well in a number of areas. Visits, active borrowers and issues are comparatively high. Customer satisfaction is high, as is the proportion of adults who feel the library makes a difference to their lives. Events are well attended, and the service works effectively with partner organisations to arrange a number of innovative events and activities. There are likely to be significant changes to Swansea libraries in the future; the service is investigating the potential of a community hubs model, whilst continuing to maintain a successful accessible library service. The lack of qualified staff, combined with a comparatively low percentage of staff time devoted to training, is a concern (although it is acknowledged the latter may, in part, be due to under reporting). In light of this, the focus on staff skills development to support potential changes in the delivery of services is welcome.

- Swansea is in the top quartile of Welsh library services for the percentage of adults who think that the library has made a difference to their lives (Q11).
- The service performs well in terms of customer satisfaction; it is above the median for all customer satisfaction measures (Q12).
- Library events are well-supported by members of the local community; attendance per capita is above the median (Q16).
- The number of active borrowers per capita is in the top quartile of library authorities, and issues of adult books, children's books and e-issues are all above the median (Q18).
- The service has a good level of digital provision; Swansea is above the median for online access measures (Q111).

2. Performance against the standards

The standards framework comprises of core entitlements, quality indicators with targets, quality indicators with benchmarks and impact measures. Section 2 summarises achievements against these areas. A narrative assessment of the authority's performance is provided in Section 3.

2.1. Core entitlements

Swansea reported meeting all 12 of the Core Entitlements in full through self-assessment, providing detailed and helpful commentary within the return on each area covered. The independent assessor agreed with the self-assessment.

2.2. Quality indicators with targets

There are 16 quality indicators (QIs), of which 10 have constituent targets. Of these, Swansea is achieving 7 in full and 1 in part. Two targets were not met.

| Quality Indicator | Met? | |
|--|------|---------------|
| QI 3 Support for individual development: | | Met in full |
| a) ICT support | √ | |
| b) Information literacy and skills training | √ | |
| c) E-government support | √ | |
| d) Reader development | √ | |
| QI 4 (a) Support for health and well-being | | Met in full |
| i) Book Prescription Wales scheme | √ | |
| ii) Better with Books/Reading Well scheme | √ | |
| iii) Designated health & well-being collection | √ | |
| iv) Information about healthy lifestyles and behaviours | √ | |
| v) Signposting to health & well-being services | √ | |
| QI 6 all static service points offer events/activities for users with special requirements | √ | Met in full |
| QI 7 Location of service points | √ | Met in full |
| QI 9 Up-to-date and appropriate reading material | | Not met |
| Acquisitions per capita | X | |
| <u>or</u> Materials spend per capita | x | |
| QI 10 Welsh Language Resources | | Not met |
| % of material budget spent on Welsh | X | |
| <u>or</u> Spend on Welsh per capita | x | |
| QI 11 Online access: | | Met in full |
| a) i) Public access to Internet | √ | |
| ii) Wi-Fi provision | √ | |
| QI 12 Supply of requests | | Met in full |
| a) % of requests satisfied within 7 days | √ | |
| b) % of requests satisfied within 15 days | √ | |
| QI 13 Staffing levels and qualifications: | | Partially met |
| i) Staff per capita | x | |
| ii) Qualified staff per capita | x | |
| iii) Head of service qualification/training | √ | |
| iv) CPD percentage | X | |
| QI 16 Opening hours per capita | √ | Met in full |

2.3. Impact measures

The framework includes three indicators aimed at assessing the impact of library use on people's lives. These indicators do not have targets, and authorities were only required to carry out user surveys for QI1 once over the original three-year period of the framework (2017-20). The summary figures (lowest, median and highest) are

based on all authorities providing data in the 2022-23 return. Rankings reflect the numbers of respondents, where 1 is the highest scoring authority. However, it is important to bear in mind that some authorities have conducted surveys since 2020, whilst others report survey data from before the Covid pandemic. Some responses therefore reflect the situation several years ago, whilst others may have been affected by disruption during the pandemic period. As a result, there are limitations on the extent to which these data might be considered comparable.

Swansea completed its adult and children's user survey in November 2022.

| Performance indicator | | Rank | Lowest | Median | Highest |
|---|-----|-------|--------|--------|---------|
| QI 1 Making a difference | | | | | |
| b) % of young people who think that the library helps them learn and find things out: | 68% | 15/16 | 58% | 90% | 98% |
| e) % of adults who think that the library has made a difference to their lives: | 95% | 2/16 | 41% | 86.5% | 96% |
| QI 5 b) % of attendees of training sessions who said that the training had helped them achieve their goals: | 86% | 16/17 | 82% | 96% | 100% |

Authorities are also asked to provide an impact statement describing the impact which the library service has had on an individual or on a group of individuals during the year. Swansea provided an impact statement about a customer who recently suffered a bereavement. He valued the support of library staff who he felt comfortable talking to about this issue, and he appreciated them taking the time to listen to him. He was able to use the safe and welcoming library space to meet with friends, family and the minister to make funeral arrangements. Using the computing, printing and scanning facilities in the library, and with digital skills assistance from library staff, he was able to produce an order of service on a limited budget.

2.4. Quality indicators and benchmarks

The remaining indicators do not have targets but allow services to monitor and benchmark their performance over time, in comparison with other authorities. The following table summarises Swansea's position for 2022-23. Ranks are included out of 22, where 1 is the highest, and 22 the lowest scoring authority, unless stated otherwise. Indicators where fewer than 22 authorities supplied data are those where relevant data was not available from some authorities. Indicators 'per capita' are calculated per 1,000 population unless otherwise noted.

| Performance indicator | | Rank | Lowest | Median | Highest |
|--|---------|--------|--------|---------|---------|
| QI 1 Making a difference | | | | | |
| a) % of adults who think that using the library has helped them develop new skills | 69% | =9/16 | 24% | 69.5% | 90% |
| c) health and well-being | 65% | 9/16 | 35% | 66.5% | 94% |
| d) enjoyable, safe and inclusive | 93% | =14/16 | 93% | 97% | 100% |
| QI 2 Customer satisfaction | | | | | |
| a) 'very good' or 'good' choice of books | 92% | 7/16 | 80% | 91% | 99% |
| b) 'very good' or 'good' customer care | 99% | =2/17 | 92% | 98% | 100% |
| c) 'very good' or 'good' IT facilities | 90% | 5/16 | 65% | 86% | 99% |
| d) 'very good' or 'good' overall | 99% | =3/17 | 94% | 98% | 100% |
| e) users aged 16 & under rating out of ten | 9.6 | 4/16 | 8.0 | 9.3 | 9.7 |
| QI 5 User training | | | | | |
| a) attendances per capita | 11 | =10/22 | 1 | 10.5 | 222 |
| c) informal training per capita | 114 | 13/19 | 5 | 131 | 424 |
| QI 6 attendances at events per capita | 232 | 6/22 | 13 | 165 | 559 |
| QI 8 Library use | | | | | |
| a) visits per capita | 2,416 | 8/21 | 781 | 2,106 | 4,814 |
| b) virtual visits per capita | 581 | 11/22 | 124 | 537.5 | 7,979 |
| c) active borrowers per capita | 167 | 1/22 | 43 | 106.5 | 167 |
| QI 10 Welsh issues per capita | 54 | 11/22 | 13 | 53 | 864 |
| QI 11 Online access | | | | | |
| a) Computers per 10,000 | 9.63 | 5/22 | 3.32 | 7.99 | 16.99 |
| b) % of available time used by the public | 15% | 4/19 | 7% | 11% | 77% |
| QI 13 Staffing levels and qualifications ⁵⁷ | | | | | |
| (v) a) total volunteers | 7 | - | 0 | 8 | 256 |
| b) volunteer hours | 200 | - | 0 | 583.5 | 14,014 |
| QI 14 Operational expenditure | | | | | |
| a) total expenditure per capita | £13,051 | 9/21 | £6,726 | £11,476 | £27,330 |
| b) % on staff, | 78% | 1/21 | 46% | 64% | 78% |
| % on information resources | 12% | =9/21 | 5% | 12% | 21% |
| % on equipment and buildings | 2% | =16/21 | 1% | 3% | 29% |
| % on other operational costs; | 7% | 17/21 | 1% | 15% | 35% |
| c) capital expenditure per capita | £321 | 8/21 | -£479 | £145 | £2,865 |
| QI 15 Net cost per visit ⁵⁸ | £3.75 | 15/19 | £0.41 | £2.76 | £6.22 |
| QI 16 Opening hours ⁵⁹ | | | | | |
| (iii) a) % hours unplanned closure of static service points | 0.13% | 14/22 | 0% | 0.05% | 0.95% |
| b) % mobile stops / home deliveries missed | 0% | =1/20 | 0% | 0% | 3.74% |

⁵⁷ Following discussion with the peer review group it was decided not to include rankings for volunteers as the implications of volunteer numbers are ambiguous.

⁵⁸ Rankings here have been reversed, so that 1 is the lowest scoring (best performing) authority.

⁵⁹ Rankings here have been reversed, so that 1 is the lowest scoring (best performing) authority.

3. Analysis of performance

The core entitlements and quality indicators can be divided into four key areas. This section of the report outlines performance under these areas.

3.1. Meeting customer needs (QI 1-5)

Swansea is in the top quartile of Welsh library services for the percentage of adults who think that the library has made a difference to their lives (QI1) and the service reports that this has increased since the last survey in 2018. It is close to the median for other measures on the adult survey, with the exception of the percentage experiencing the library as enjoyable, safe and inclusive, which is below the median. Swansea acknowledges that the percentage of young people who think that the library helps them learn and find things out is disappointing and needs further investigation. The service is above the median for all customer satisfaction measures (QI2), and performs particularly well for customer care. Swansea meets the target for Support for health and well-being (QI4) but recognises that more careful monitoring of shared reading activities is needed. The service is around the median for attendance at formal user training, but below the median for informal training attendance (QI5) and attendance levels remain below those recorded pre-Covid.

3.2. Access and use (QI 6-8)

Event attendance per capita is above the median (QI6). Events in the last year have included StoryTrails, a major 2-day event at Swansea Central Library; Summer of Fun activities; young writers workshops; and warm spaces activities. Both physical and virtual visits per capita are above the median for Welsh library authorities (QI8), although the service has noted that more people are using the PORI app and Bolinda Ebook app, rather than visiting the library website. The figure for active borrowers per capita is in the top quartile of library authorities. Furthermore, issues of adult books, children's books and e-issues are all above the median. QI7 was met in full.

3.3. Facilities and services (QI 9-12)

Swansea did not meet the target for acquisitions (QI9), although its materials spend was above the median. The service reports that acquisitions were concentrated on high demand fiction and recreational non-fiction titles, plus ebooks and e-audio titles, as well as refreshing the foreign language section to support residents who do not use English or Welsh as a first language. Although Welsh language spend has increased, it remains below the target figure (QI10). Spend has been concentrated on materials for school age children, especially in libraries with a Welsh medium school located in their catchment area, and on materials to support those learning the Welsh language. Welsh language issues per capita are close to the median. Swansea is above the median for online access measures (QI11). The service notes that IT provision in libraries supports those requiring non-mobile equipment, for instance, for lengthy form filling, access to printing or access to software applications not available on mobile devices. Swansea comfortably meets the target for supply of requests (QI12).

3.4. Expertise and capacity (Q1 13-16)

Swansea does not meet the target for staffing levels per capita, although it is in the top quartile of library authorities for this measure (Q13). Whilst the service has a qualified operational manager, it is below the median for qualified staff per capita and does not meet this target. Swansea also fails to meet the target for staff training, although it acknowledges the current recording system for staff training is poor and this figure may be under representative of actual training. Swansea meets the target for opening hours and the level of unplanned closures is close to the median (Q16).

4. Strategic context

As part of the return, authorities are asked to report on how the library service is contributing to wider Welsh Government priorities and strategic goals. Some of the examples provided by Swansea are summarised below.

- **Supporting wellbeing and mental health:** review of the housebound delivery service qualifying criteria to include those who are culturally isolated in their home.
- **Supporting people to develop new skills, gain employment and create better lives:** partner with the Swansea Council for Voluntary Services to host a digital support volunteer within Central Library and offer two work placements within the LibraryLine and local history sections.
- **Work towards net zero:** a pilot de-jacketing project is assessing the implications of not plastic jacketing books in 3 libraries.
- **Supporting children's literacy:** book banded sections, which help parents/carers choose books that support children's reading levels in schools.

5. Future direction

Reporting on the authority's future direction and plans for the library service over the following year, Swansea library service reported that it will be concentrating on investigating how libraries can help support the council's ambition to provide more community hubs while continuing to maintain a successful accessible library service. In addition, further progress will be made to moving the central library to a new location in the city centre as part of the Welsh Government sustainable towns project, which sees the library form part of a city centre hub sharing space with other council services and third sector organisations. Swansea is cognisant that staff teams will be challenged to work differently in the future and the service will explore how it can support this through training and new skills development, building on current digital skills and developing new ones. It is acknowledged that a digital strategy is still needed, but the service is awaiting the outcome of the new Library Management System procurement process and the potential of a fit for purpose digital platform for Wales. Another priority is supporting the Wales curriculum by working with local schools.

6. Conclusion

Swansea is performing well in a number of areas. Visits, active borrowers and issues are comparatively high. Customer satisfaction is high, as is the proportion of adults who feel the library makes a difference to their lives. Events are well attended, and

the service works effectively with partner organisations to arrange a number of innovative events and activities. There are likely to be significant changes to Swansea libraries in the future; the service is investigating the potential of a community hubs model, whilst continuing to maintain a successful accessible library service. The lack of qualified staff, combined with a comparatively low percentage of staff time devoted to training, is a concern (although it is acknowledged the latter may, in part, be due to under reporting). In light of this, the focus on staff skills development to support potential changes in the delivery of services is welcome.

Annual Assessment Report 2022/2023

This report has been prepared based on information provided in Torfaen's annual return, impact statements and narrative report submitted to the Culture Division of the Welsh Government.

1. Executive summary

Torfaen met all of the 12 core entitlements in full. Of the 10 quality indicators which have targets, Torfaen is achieving 5 in full and 1 in part. Four were not met.

During 2022-23, Torfaen continued to rebuild, but is still clearly recovering from the effects of the pandemic. It is evident that staff at Torfaen care deeply about the value of the library service and are keen to support their local community. Torfaen is performing well in some areas, in particular, in terms of attendance at, and the impact of, user training. Furthermore, the service has introduced a number of new wellbeing-related activities following the recruitment of a Health & Wellbeing Professional. Staffing levels are a concern, especially given the removal of four library assistant posts from the staffing structure. Level of acquisitions is also a concern as is the reduction in opening hours, which are well below the target. The work to develop libraries as community hubs should be monitored to see if it does increase visitor numbers as anticipated.

- The percentage of adults rating the library 'very good' or 'good' overall is above the median (Q12).
- Support for individual development (Q13) and Support for health and wellbeing (Q14) were met in full.
- Torfaen is above the median for attendance at both formal and informal training, and is in the top quartile of library authorities for the percentage of attendees of training sessions who said that the training had helped them achieve their goals (Q15).
- Customers experienced a reliable service; Torfaen is in the top quartile of library authorities for fewest unplanned closures or missed home deliveries (Q16).

2. Performance against the standards

The standards framework comprises of core entitlements, quality indicators with targets, quality indicators with benchmarks and impact measures. Section 2 summarises achievements against these areas. A narrative assessment of the authority's performance is provided in Section 3.

2.1. Core entitlements

Torfaen reported meeting all 12 of the Core Entitlements in full through self-assessment, providing detailed and helpful commentary within the return. The independent assessor agreed with the self-assessment.

2.2. Quality indicators with targets

There are 16 quality indicators (QIs), of which 10 have constituent targets. Of these, Torfaen is achieving 5 in full and 1 in part. Four were not met.

| Quality Indicator | Met? | |
|--|------|---------------|
| QI 3 Support for individual development: | | Met in full |
| a) ICT support | √ | |
| b) Information literacy and skills training | √ | |
| c) E-government support | √ | |
| d) Reader development | √ | |
| QI 4 (a) Support for health and well-being | | Met in full |
| i) Book Prescription Wales scheme | √ | |
| ii) Better with Books/Reading Well scheme | √ | |
| iii) Designated health & well-being collection | √ | |
| iv) Information about healthy lifestyles and behaviours | √ | |
| v) Signposting to health & well-being services | √ | |
| QI 6 all static service points offer events/activities for users with special requirements | √ | Met in full |
| QI 7 Location of service points | √ | Met in full |
| QI 9 Up-to-date and appropriate reading material | | Not met |
| Acquisitions per capita | X | |
| <u>or</u> Materials spend per capita | x | |
| QI 10 Welsh Language Resources | | Not met |
| % of material budget spent on Welsh | X | |
| <u>or</u> Spend on Welsh per capita | x | |
| QI 11 Online access: | | Met in full |
| a) i) Public access to Internet | √ | |
| ii) Wi-Fi provision | √ | |
| QI 12 Supply of requests | | Not met |
| a) % of requests satisfied within 7 days | X | |
| b) % of requests satisfied within 15 days | X | |
| QI 13 Staffing levels and qualifications: | | Partially met |
| i) Staff per capita | x | |
| ii) Qualified staff per capita | x | |
| iii) Head of service qualification/training | √ | |
| iv) CPD percentage | X | |
| QI 16 Opening hours per capita | X | Not met |

2.3. Impact measures

The framework includes three indicators aimed at assessing the impact of library use on people's lives. These indicators do not have targets, and authorities were only required to carry out user surveys for QI1 once over the original three-year period of the framework (2017-20). The summary figures (lowest, median and highest) are

based on all authorities providing data in the 2022-23 return. Rankings reflect the numbers of respondents, where 1 is the highest scoring authority. However, it is important to bear in mind that some authorities have conducted surveys since 2020, whilst others report survey data from before the Covid pandemic. Some responses therefore reflect the situation several years ago, whilst others may have been affected by disruption during the pandemic period. As a result, there are limitations on the extent to which these data might be considered comparable.

Torfaen completed its adult and children's user survey during February-March 2023.

| Performance indicator | | Rank | Lowest | Median | Highest |
|---|------|--------|--------|--------|---------|
| QI 1 Making a difference | | | | | |
| b) % of young people who think that the library helps them learn and find things out: | 82% | =13/16 | 58% | 90% | 98% |
| e) % of adults who think that the library has made a difference to their lives: | 86% | =9/16 | 41% | 86.5% | 96% |
| QI 5 b) % of attendees of training sessions who said that the training had helped them achieve their goals: | 100% | =1/17 | 82% | 96% | 100% |

Authorities are also asked to provide an impact statement describing the impact which the library service has had on an individual or on a group of individuals during the year. Torfaen provided an impact statement that focused on a collaboration with Torfaen Community Connectors to establish a new fortnightly group at Cwmbran Library. The 'Forget Me Not Fridays' group offers support to those affected by dementia and their carers. These two-hour sessions provide an opportunity for carers to connect, share experiences and seek advice and support, and for those with dementia to participate in enjoyable activities. Group members with dementia have reported developing new friendships and a greater sense of acceptance, inclusion and enjoyment. Group leaders have noticed an increased level of engagement, ease of conversation and interaction developing in this group over time and carers have provided positive feedback. This group is gaining in popularity and new referrals are being made by the Torfaen Memory Clinic.

2.4. Quality indicators and benchmarks

The remaining indicators do not have targets but allow services to monitor and benchmark their performance over time, in comparison with other authorities. The following table summarises Torfaen's position for 2022-23. Ranks are included out of 22, where 1 is the highest, and 22 the lowest scoring authority, unless stated otherwise. Indicators where fewer than 22 authorities supplied data are those where relevant data was not available from some authorities. Indicators 'per capita' are calculated per 1,000 population unless otherwise noted.

| Performance indicator | | Rank | Lowest | Median | Highest |
|--|--------|--------|--------|---------|---------|
| QI 1 Making a difference | | | | | |
| a) % of adults who think that using the library has helped them develop new skills | 69% | =9/16 | 24% | 69.5% | 90% |
| c) health and well-being | 69% | 7/16 | 35% | 66.5% | 94% |
| d) enjoyable, safe and inclusive | 97% | =8/16 | 93% | 97% | 100% |
| QI 2 Customer satisfaction | | | | | |
| a) 'very good' or 'good' choice of books | 89% | 12/16 | 80% | 91% | 99% |
| b) 'very good' or 'good' customer care | 97% | =14/17 | 92% | 98% | 100% |
| c) 'very good' or 'good' IT facilities | 82% | =11/16 | 65% | 86% | 99% |
| d) 'very good' or 'good' overall | 98% | =5/17 | 94% | 98% | 100% |
| e) users aged 16 & under rating out of ten | 8.9 | 15/16 | 8.0 | 9.3 | 9.7 |
| QI 5 User training | | | | | |
| a) attendances per capita | 22 | 6/22 | 1 | 10.5 | 222 |
| c) informal training per capita | 133 | 9/19 | 5 | 131 | 424 |
| QI 6 attendances at events per capita | 109 | 17/22 | 13 | 165 | 559 |
| QI 8 Library use | | | | | |
| a) visits per capita | 1,860 | 15/21 | 781 | 2,106 | 4,814 |
| b) virtual visits per capita | 413 | 16/22 | 124 | 537.5 | 7,979 |
| c) active borrowers per capita | 105 | 14/22 | 43 | 106.5 | 167 |
| QI 10 Welsh issues per capita | 33 | 20/22 | 13 | 53 | 864 |
| QI 11 Online access | | | | | |
| a) Computers per 10,000 | 7.46 | 14/22 | 3.32 | 7.99 | 16.99 |
| b) % of available time used by the public | 12% | 8/19 | 7% | 11% | 77% |
| QI 13 Staffing levels and qualifications ⁶⁰ | | | | | |
| (v) a) total volunteers | 0 | - | 0 | 8 | 256 |
| b) volunteer hours | 0 | - | 0 | 583.5 | 14,014 |
| QI 14 Operational expenditure | | | | | |
| a) total expenditure per capita | £9,154 | 16/21 | £6,726 | £11,476 | £27,330 |
| b) % on staff, | 66% | =8/21 | 46% | 64% | 78% |
| % on information resources | 11% | =12/21 | 5% | 12% | 21% |
| % on equipment and buildings | 2% | =16/21 | 1% | 3% | 29% |
| % on other operational costs; | 20% | =7/21 | 1% | 15% | 35% |
| c) capital expenditure per capita | £336 | =6/21 | -£479 | £145 | £2,865 |
| QI 15 Net cost per visit ⁶¹ | £3.00 | 12/19 | £0.41 | £2.76 | £6.22 |
| QI 16 Opening hours ⁶² | | | | | |
| (iii) a) % hours unplanned closure of static service points | 0% | =1/22 | 0% | 0.05% | 0.95% |
| b) % mobile stops / home deliveries missed | 0% | =1/20 | 0% | 0% | 3.74% |

⁶⁰ Following discussion with the peer review group it was decided not to include rankings for volunteers as the implications of volunteer numbers are ambiguous.

⁶¹ Rankings here have been reversed, so that 1 is the lowest scoring (best performing) authority.

⁶² Rankings here have been reversed, so that 1 is the lowest scoring (best performing) authority.

3. Analysis of performance

The core entitlements and quality indicators can be divided into four key areas. This section of the report outlines performance under these areas.

3.1. Meeting customer needs (QI 1-5)

Torfaen is at or around the median for Making a difference measures in the adult survey (QI1). Whilst the rating for the percentage of young people who think that the library helps them learn and find things out has increased since the previous survey, this is below the median. In relation to customer satisfaction, whilst the percentage of adults rating the library 'very good' or 'good' overall is above the median, Torfaen is below the median for the remaining customer satisfaction measures. QIs relating to Support for individual development (QI3) and Support for health and well-being (QI4) were met in full. The service reports that shared reading sessions are gradually starting to rebuild with the new Health & Wellbeing Professional establishing reading and poetry activities in community locations. It is still proving difficult to re-establish shared reading sessions in local residential homes, but Torfaen has set up a dementia support group in collaboration with Torfaen's Community Connectors, as well as an arts and craft group for those that have been recently bereaved and are struggling with loneliness (QI4). Torfaen is above the median for attendance at both formal and informal training, and is in the top quartile of library authorities for the percentage of attendees of training sessions who said that the training had helped them achieve their goals (QI5). However, the service reports seeing a decline in demand for digital support sessions generally.

3.2. Access and use (QI 6-8)

Although Torfaen reported achieving over 70% of its pre-Covid figure for attendances at library events during the year, the service is below the median for this measure (QI6). Whilst Torfaen has seen a gradual return to using libraries post Covid, visits per capita were below the median for Welsh library authorities (QI8). The service has returned to a three-week loan period to help encourage more regular visiting by customers. Torfaen reports that visits to the library's website continued to rise, although the figure for virtual visits per capita is below the median. The service reports year on year growth in library membership, and the number of active borrowers is around the median. Both adult and children's book issues are below the median, although they have started to recover from the Covid period.

3.3. Facilities and services (QI 9-12)

Torfaen did not meet the acquisitions target (QI9) and is below the median for materials spend per capita. The service notes increased spend on BorrowBox e-book resources and physical audio book stock in response to more demand from the Library@Home Service. Torfaen does not meet the target for percentage spend on Welsh language materials and issues per capita Welsh speaker are in the bottom quartile of Welsh library authorities (QI10). To encourage greater use, the service is incorporating Welsh language books into displays and promoting the collections at outreach events. It reports that junior Welsh stock is much better used than adult stock due to increased awareness and use of the Welsh language in local playgroups, nurseries and schools. Online access meets the target and measures

are close to the median figures (Q111). The service notes that use of the library's public computers continues to fall as more and more people are using their own devices. There are plans to introduce wi-fi printing in the forthcoming period. Torfaen did not meet the target for supply of requests; as is noted in the return, the small size of the library service makes meeting requests internally particularly challenging. The service also reported a discrepancy between the number of requests logged and figures available via the LMS (Q112).

3.4. Expertise and capacity (Q1 13-16)

Torfaen does not meet the target for overall or qualified staff per capita, although there is a qualified operational manager in post (Q113). Four Library Assistant posts which became vacant during the pandemic have been removed from the staff structure this year. However, the vacant Health & Wellbeing Officer post has been filled. The service also falls slightly short of the training provision target. There are no volunteers to support paid staff in Torfaen. The service does not meet the target for opening hours per capita and is in the bottom quartile of library authorities for this measure; this ongoing issue was exacerbated by a reduction in opening hours from January 2022. However, it is in the top quartile of library authorities for fewest unplanned closures or missed home deliveries (Q116). Home deliveries remain popular, and include both those registered for the Library@Home Service and customers who request a delivery to their home from time to time.

4. Strategic context

As part of the return, authorities are asked to report on how the library service is contributing to wider Welsh Government priorities and strategic goals. Some of the examples provided by Torfaen are summarised below.

- **A 'Healthier Wales'**: a new Health & Wellbeing Professional has introduced 1-1 support for people that need advice, signposting or simply someone to talk to.
- **A Wales of 'Cohesive Communities'**: Torfaen Citizen's Advice has extended its on-site presence at Cwmbran Library to include a Saturday service. Torfaen Credit Union and TCBC Customer Services also have a regular onsite presence and TCHC Employability uses library spaces to deliver Communities for Work, Let's Get Digital and Bridges Into Work sessions. Additional plans are underway to further develop library buildings into 'community hubs' offering a range of Council services under one roof.

5. Future direction

Reporting on the authority's future direction and plans for the library service over the following year, Torfaen commented that the current Libraries Strategy ends in 2023, but it is intended to extend the terms of this Strategy for one year to compensate for the time lost to develop the service during Covid. A new strategy will be produced in 2024. Torfaen will continue monitor the impacts of the reduction in opening hours made across the service in January 2022. Forthcoming plans involve more work to develop libraries as community hubs, with library staff being more involved with supporting simple Customer Services enquiries on site and providing IT support to encourage use of online Council services. Ideas currently being explored are to

develop hybrid dementia sessions and the development of a 'human library' at Cwmbran. Torfaen plans to apply to the WG Transformation Capital Grant Programme to improve Cwmbran Library, modernising the space to better reflect patterns of usage.

6. Conclusion

During 2022-23, Torfaen continued to rebuild, but is still clearly recovering from the effects of the pandemic. It is evident that staff at Torfaen care deeply about the value of the library service and are keen to support their local community. Torfaen is performing well in some areas, in particular, in terms of attendance at, and the impact of, user training. Furthermore, the service has introduced a number of new wellbeing-related activities following the recruitment of a Health & Wellbeing Professional. Staffing levels are a concern, especially given the removal of four library assistant posts from the staffing structure. Level of acquisitions is also a concern as is the reduction in opening hours, which are well below the target. The work to develop libraries as community hubs should be monitored to see if it does increase visitor numbers as anticipated.

Annual Assessment Report 2022/2023

This report has been prepared based on information provided in Vale of Glamorgan's annual return, impact statements and narrative report submitted to the Culture Division of the Welsh Government.

1. Executive summary

Vale of Glamorgan met 10 of the 12 core entitlements in full. The service's self-assessment stated that two Core Entitlements were not met, but the independent assessor judged one of these to have been met in part. Of the 10 quality indicators which have targets, Vale of Glamorgan achieved 7 in full and 1 in part. Two were not met.

The Vale of Glamorgan performs well in a number of areas, being above the median for Welsh library authorities for attendance per capita at events, visits per capita and active borrowers per capita. It also performs well for the number of qualified staff per capita. Staffing is supplemented by a large number of volunteers. There are financial pressures, however, and the service is being asked to generate more income. The potential impact of introducing charges to attend activities and other fees/charges will need to be monitored. It is important that Vale of Glamorgan conducts user surveys - in particular an adult survey - in the coming year to gather user feedback.

- Library events are well-attended; Vale of Glamorgan is above the median for attendance per capita at events (QI6).
- The library service is well-used by members of the local community; Vale of Glamorgan is above the median for visits per capita and for active borrowers per capita (QI6).
- The service demonstrates a commitment to the provision of Welsh language resources; spend per capita Welsh speaker is above the median (QI10)
- Vale of Glamorgan meets the target for qualified staff per capita and is in the top quartile of library authorities for this measure (QI13).

2. Performance against the standards

The standards framework comprises of core entitlements, quality indicators with targets, quality indicators with benchmarks and impact measures. Section 2 summarises achievements against these areas. A narrative assessment of the authority's performance is provided in Section 3.

2.1. Core entitlements

Vale of Glamorgan reported meeting 10 of the Core Entitlements in full through self-assessment, providing detailed and helpful commentary within the return on each area covered. The library service reported not meeting 2 targets. However, the independent assessor considers one of these targets to be partially met. For CE11, the Vale of Glamorgan has not run an adult user survey during the period of the Framework. However, a children's user survey was conducted in February 2020.

The service plans to conduct an adult user survey in October 2023 and the Children's User Survey in early 2024. Regarding CE12, a library strategy has been developed, but is not yet a public-facing document. We therefore agree with the self-assessment that this Core Entitlement has not been met.

| Core Entitlement | Self assessment | Independent assessor |
|---|------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 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 wellbeing 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 | 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. | Not met | Not met |

2.2. Quality indicators with targets

There are 16 quality indicators (QIs), of which 10 have constituent targets. Of these, Vale of Glamorgan is achieving 7 in full and 1 in part. Two were not met.

| Quality Indicator | Met? | |
|--|------|---------------|
| QI 3 Support for individual development: | | Met in full |
| a) ICT support | √ | |
| b) Information literacy and skills training | √ | |
| c) E-government support | √ | |
| d) Reader development | √ | |
| QI 4 (a) Support for health and well-being | | Met in full |
| i) Book Prescription Wales scheme | √ | |
| ii) Better with Books/Reading Well scheme | √ | |
| iii) Designated health & well-being collection | √ | |
| iv) Information about healthy lifestyles and behaviours | √ | |
| v) Signposting to health & well-being services | √ | |
| QI 6 all static service points offer events/activities for users with special requirements | √ | Met in full |
| QI 7 Location of service points | √ | Met in full |
| QI 9 Up-to-date and appropriate reading material | | Met in full |
| Acquisitions per capita | √ | |
| <u>or</u> Materials spend per capita | - | |
| QI 10 Welsh Language Resources | | Met in full |
| % of material budget spent on Welsh | √ | |
| <u>or</u> Spend on Welsh per capita | - | |
| QI 11 Online access: | | Met in full |
| a) i) Public access to Internet | √ | |
| ii) Wi-Fi provision | √ | |
| QI 12 Supply of requests | | Not met |
| a) % of requests satisfied within 7 days | x | |
| b) % of requests satisfied within 15 days | x | |
| QI 13 Staffing levels and qualifications: | | Partially met |
| i) Staff per capita | x | |
| ii) Qualified staff per capita | √ | |
| iii) Head of service qualification/training | √ | |
| iv) CPD percentage | √ | |
| QI 16 Opening hours per capita | X | Not met |

2.3. Impact measures

The framework includes three indicators aimed at assessing the impact of library use on people's lives. These indicators do not have targets, and authorities were only required to carry out user surveys for QI1 once over the original three-year period of the framework (2017-20). The summary figures (lowest, median and highest) are based on all authorities providing data in the 2022-23 return. Rankings reflect the numbers of respondents, where 1 is the highest scoring authority. However, it is important to bear in mind that some authorities have conducted surveys since 2020, whilst others report survey data from before the Covid pandemic. Some responses

therefore reflect the situation several years ago, whilst others may have been affected by disruption during the pandemic period. As a result, there are limitations on the extent to which these data might be considered comparable.

Vale of Glamorgan completed its adults' user survey in February 2016 and its children's user survey in February 2020.

| Performance indicator | | Rank | Lowest | Median | Highest |
|---|-----|--------|--------|--------|---------|
| QI 1 Making a difference | | | | | |
| b) % of young people who think that the library helps them learn and find things out: | 89% | 11/16 | 58% | 90% | 98% |
| e) % of adults who think that the library has made a difference to their lives: | 41% | =15/16 | 41% | 86.5% | 96% |
| QI 5 b) % of attendees of training sessions who said that the training had helped them achieve their goals: | 96% | =9/17 | 82% | 96% | 100% |

Authorities are also asked to provide an impact statement describing the impact which the library service has had on an individual or on a group of individuals during the year. Vale of Glamorgan provided an impact statement about how the Warm Welcome initiative has attracted a new customer into the library who has dementia and how the service and activities there have benefitted her. As a way of staying warm and occupied, this lady was directed to the free tea and coffee sessions which had started in Barry library as part of the Warm Welcome initiative. Interactions with staff who encouraged her to take part in activities within the library led her to attend the library more often. As a result, she now attends the library each day. She has made a group of friends who she regularly interacts with, and this has helped her gain confidence around other people, reduce isolation and increased her sense of social wellbeing. To build on this success of Warm Welcome Sessions, the free tea and coffee sessions are being continued at four libraries for the rest of the year.

2.4. Quality indicators and benchmarks

The remaining indicators do not have targets but allow services to monitor and benchmark their performance over time, in comparison with other authorities. The following table summarises Vale of Glamorgan's position for 2022-23. Ranks are included out of 22, where 1 is the highest, and 22 the lowest scoring authority, unless stated otherwise. Indicators where fewer than 22 authorities supplied data are those where relevant data was not available from some authorities. Indicators 'per capita' are calculated per 1,000 population unless otherwise noted.

| Performance indicator | | Rank | Lowest | Median | Highest |
|--|---------|--------|--------|---------|---------|
| QI 1 Making a difference | | | | | |
| a) % of adults who think that using the library has helped them develop new skills | 24% | 16/16 | 24% | 69.5% | 90% |
| c) health and well-being | 35% | 16/16 | 35% | 66.5% | 94% |
| d) enjoyable, safe and inclusive | 99% | =4/16 | 93% | 97% | 100% |
| QI 2 Customer satisfaction | | | | | |
| a) 'very good' or 'good' choice of books | 85% | 14/16 | 80% | 91% | 99% |
| b) 'very good' or 'good' customer care | 97% | =14/17 | 92% | 98% | 100% |
| c) 'very good' or 'good' IT facilities | 81% | 13/16 | 65% | 86% | 99% |
| d) 'very good' or 'good' overall | 95% | =15/17 | 94% | 98% | 100% |
| e) users aged 16 & under rating out of ten | 9.0 | =12/16 | 8.0 | 9.3 | 9.7 |
| QI 5 User training | | | | | |
| a) attendances per capita | 6 | 16/22 | 1 | 10.5 | 222 |
| c) informal training per capita | 84 | 14/19 | 5 | 131 | 424 |
| QI 6 attendances at events per capita | 333 | 3/22 | 13 | 165 | 559 |
| QI 8 Library use | | | | | |
| a) visits per capita | 2,461 | 7/21 | 781 | 2,106 | 4,814 |
| b) virtual visits per capita | 256 | 18/22 | 124 | 537.5 | 7,979 |
| c) active borrowers per capita | 118 | 8/22 | 43 | 106.5 | 167 |
| QI 10 Welsh issues per capita | 50 | 14/22 | 13 | 53 | 864 |
| QI 11 Online access | | | | | |
| a) Computers per 10,000 | 8.83 | 9/22 | 3.32 | 7.99 | 16.99 |
| b) % of available time used by the public | 9% | =13/19 | 7% | 11% | 77% |
| QI 13 Staffing levels and qualifications ⁶³ | | | | | |
| (v) a) total volunteers | 165 | - | 0 | 8 | 256 |
| b) volunteer hours | 14,014 | - | 0 | 583.5 | 14,014 |
| QI 14 Operational expenditure | | | | | |
| a) total expenditure per capita | £15,350 | 5/21 | £6,726 | £11,476 | £27,330 |
| b) % on staff, | 63% | =13/21 | 46% | 64% | 78% |
| % on information resources | 9% | =16/21 | 5% | 12% | 21% |
| % on equipment and buildings | 2% | =16/21 | 1% | 3% | 29% |
| % on other operational costs; | 26% | 3/21 | 1% | 15% | 35% |
| c) capital expenditure per capita | £1,975 | 2/21 | -£479 | £145 | £2,865 |
| QI 15 Net cost per visit ⁶⁴ | £3.89 | 16/19 | £0.41 | £2.76 | £6.22 |
| QI 16 Opening hours ⁶⁵ | | | | | |
| (iii) a) % hours unplanned closure of static service points | 0.09% | 13/22 | 0% | 0.05% | 0.95% |
| b) % mobile stops / home deliveries missed | 0% | =1/20 | 0% | 0% | 3.74% |

⁶³ Following discussion with the peer review group it was decided not to include rankings for volunteers as the implications of volunteer numbers are ambiguous.

⁶⁴ Rankings here have been reversed, so that 1 is the lowest scoring (best performing) authority

⁶⁵ Rankings here have been reversed, so that 1 is the lowest scoring (best performing) authority

3. Analysis of performance

The core entitlements and quality indicators can be divided into four key areas. This section of the report outlines performance under these areas.

3.1. Meeting customer needs (QI 1-5)

Vale of Glamorgan is below the median for the majority of measures relating to Making a difference (QI1) and Customer satisfaction (QI2). However, it is difficult to draw conclusions from these results given the length of time since the last surveys were conducted. The service meets the QIs for Support for individual development (QI3) and Support for health and well-being (QI4) in full. User attendance at both formal and informal training per capita is below the median, although the service does achieve the median for percentage of attendees of training sessions who said that the training had helped them achieve their goals (QI5). Vale of Glamorgan notes that the grant funding for many user training sessions ended causing the number of sessions to decrease. However, there are now Digital Drop-in sessions with Digital Champion Volunteers at five libraries and it is anticipated numbers will increase now the Makerspace in Barry Library is open.

3.2. Access and use (QI 6-8)

Vale of Glamorgan is above the median for attendance per capita at events (QI6). Activities include jigsaw, backgammon, knitting, colouring, an adult Wargames group, an online Art Club and author talks. Vale of Glamorgan is also above the median for visits per capita and for active borrowers per capita (QI6). However, it is below the median for virtual visits and for both adult and children's book issues per capita.

3.3. Facilities and services (QI 9-12)

Vale of Glamorgan meets the target for acquisitions per capita and the materials spend per capita is around the median (QI9). At 16%, the proportion of the budget allocated to children's resources is below the median figure however. The service also meets the target for percentage spend on Welsh language materials, and the spend per capita Welsh speaker is above the median (QI10). Despite this, Vale of Glamorgan is below the median for the level of Welsh language issues. The service is above the median for number of PCs per capita, but below for percentage of available time used by the public (QI11). It is noted that there has been a slight reduction in the number of desktop public PCs since this indicator was last submitted due to more people bringing their own devices; the impact of social distancing during part of the reporting period; and PCs being unavailable as a result of technical issues. Hublet tablets have been introduced to Barry and Penarth Libraries, which has offset some of the reduction in desktop PCs. Vale of Glamorgan has not met the target for supply of requests (QI12). It is noted that the process of automatically advancing its due dates, begun during Covid, has hindered supply of requests at times. However, this system will return the pre-Covid arrangement from July 2023.

3.4. Expertise and capacity (QI 13-16)

Vale of Glamorgan meets the target for qualified staff per capita and is in the top quartile of library authorities for this measure (QI13). Whilst the service does not

meet the target for overall staffing per capita, it is still above the median for this measure. There was some staff turnover during the year and vacancies generally filled by casual staff, agency staff and additional hours for part time staff until appointments could be made. Two full time posts for the Makerspaces at Penarth and Barry were made permanent. The targets for training and a qualified operational manager are met. Volunteers make a substantial contribution to the service, in particular in community-run libraries; volunteer hours account for around 1,900 days' work per year in total. The only unplanned closures were at Penarth Library due to a flood in the toilets (Q116). The Open+ service was purchased for Penarth Library. However due to technical and staffing issues the service has been unable to operate. Open+ at Barry Library is now out of date. Once the issues at Penarth have been resolved, it is anticipated that an updated version of the system will be purchased for Barry Library.

4. Strategic context

As part of the return, authorities are asked to report on how the library service is contributing to wider Welsh Government priorities and strategic goals. The Vale of Glamorgan refers its annual Team Plan, which states targets and actions for the upcoming year and identifies how the service will contribute to achieving the Council's Vision, which ties in with the Well-being of Future Generations Act. Some of the comprehensive examples provided by Vale of Glamorgan libraries are summarised below.

- Makerspaces support digitally driven innovation and creativity. They give people access to new technologies and state of the art equipment that many are unable to afford or access otherwise.
- Partner organisations, including Careers Wales, Communities for Work, and the Family Information Service, use libraries to meet clients on a one-to-one basis or promote their services through information stalls, displays and events.
- Grants from the Warm Welcome and Healthy Living in Wales initiatives meant that over the past year the service was able to offer an increased number of art, craft and well-being activities, alongside free tea and coffee in the majority of libraries.
- The service supports volunteering by offering work experience opportunities for students from local schools, DoE candidates, people gaining employment skills or people who have retired and wish to work for the community.

5. Future direction

Reporting on the authority's future direction and plans for the library service over the following year, the Vale of Glamorgan anticipates a restructure to the department following the retirement of key postholders. The service reports that, in the coming year, it is expected to develop and look for more income generating opportunities. As a result, it has reinstated all fines and charges, and from the summer onwards there will be a charge to attend many activities. The service plans to replace its current self-service terminals with updated Bibliotheca self-service kiosks, allowing payments to be taken by credit card.

6. Conclusion

The Vale of Glamorgan performs well in a number of areas, being above the median for Welsh library authorities for attendance per capita at events, visits per capita and active borrowers per capita. It also performs well for the number of qualified staff per capita. Staffing is supplemented by a large number of volunteers. There are financial pressures, however, and the service is being asked to generate more income. The potential impact of introducing charges to attend activities and other fees/charges will need to be monitored. It is important that Vale of Glamorgan conducts user surveys - in particular an adult survey - in the coming year to gather user feedback.

Annual Assessment Report 2022/2023

This report has been prepared based on information provided in Wrexham's annual return, impact statements and narrative report submitted to the Culture Division of the Welsh Government.

1. Executive summary

Wrexham reported meeting 5 of the Core Entitlements in full and 4 in part through self-assessment, with the remaining 1 Core Entitlement being not met. However, the independent assessor considers that the service has met 7 Core Entitlements in full and 3 in part. Of the 10 quality indicators which have targets, Wrexham achieved 5 in full and 3 in part. One target was not met and no information was provided for the remaining indicator.

Wrexham Libraries is performing well in a number of areas, in particular with regard to acquisitions, Welsh language issues, commitment to staff training and event attendance. However, there are a number of areas of concern, particularly the fact the Wrexham is only partially meeting a number of the Core Entitlements. The lack of recent user consultation is a concern as this obviously limits the service's ability to develop in line with the needs of its communities. Information provided about Wrexham's future direction suggest several significant changes, for example, the relocation of services, and it will be important to consider users' responses to these proposals. There are a number of gaps in the data provided by Wrexham, and limited contextual information, making it difficult for the independent assessor to make a full assessment of the service.

- Library events are well-attended; attendance per capita is above the median and Wrexham meets the target for Q16 in full.
- Visits per capita, virtual visits and active borrowers are all below the median (Q18).
- Wrexham meets the target for acquisitions per capita (Q19).
- Welsh language provision is well-supported; the service meets the target for the percentage materials spend on Welsh language materials and is above the median for Welsh issues per capita (Q10).
- Wrexham does not meet the targets for overall staffing provision per capita or for qualified staff per capita, and is below the median of Welsh library authorities for both measures (Q13).

2. Performance against the standards

The standards framework comprises of core entitlements, quality indicators with targets, quality indicators with benchmarks and impact measures. Section 2 summarises achievements against these areas. A narrative assessment of the authority's performance is provided in Section 3.

2.1. Core entitlements

Wrexham reported meeting 5 of the Core Entitlements in full and 4 in part through self-assessment, with the remaining 1 Core Entitlement being not met. The service provided detailed and helpful commentary within the return on each area covered. Based on this, the independent assessor considers that the service has met 7 Core Entitlements in full and 3 in part.

| Core Entitlement | Self assessment | Independent assessor |
|---|------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 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 wellbeing 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. | Partially 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. | Partially 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. | Partially met | Partially met |
| 11. Libraries in Wales will regularly consult users to gather their views on the service and information about their changing needs. | Not 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 |

In the case of CE5, it is acknowledged that Wrexham has not met the opening hours target, but this target has been challenging for a number of services as opening hours adjust post-Covid therefore, for consistency, Wrexham should not be penalised for this. Wrexham is attempting to respond to local needs, for example, through pop-up library provision. In the case of CE7, whilst the IT difficulties experienced by Wrexham are acknowledged and are likely to have impacted on provision at points during the year, the service meets the targets for Q11 and

reports that access to IT remains free of charge. Wi-fi is provided across all libraries. Finally, regarding CE11, whilst the assessor would strongly urge the service to improve its consultation with users as a matter of urgency, an adult user survey has been conducted within the Framework period, although no children's survey has been carried out. The assessor therefore judges this Core Entitlement to have been partially met.

2.2. Quality indicators with targets

There are 16 quality indicators (QIs), of which 10 have constituent targets. Of these, Wrexham is achieving 5 in full and 3 in part. One target was not met and no information was provided for the remaining indicator.

| Quality Indicator | Met? | |
|--|--------------|---------------|
| QI 3 Support for individual development: | | Partially met |
| a) ICT support | √ | |
| b) Information literacy and skills training | X | |
| c) E-government support | √ | |
| d) Reader development | X | |
| QI 4 (a) Support for health and well-being | | Met in full |
| i) Book Prescription Wales scheme | √ | |
| ii) Better with Books/Reading Well scheme | √ | |
| iii) Designated health & well-being collection | √ | |
| iv) Information about healthy lifestyles and behaviours | √ | |
| v) Signposting to health & well-being services | √ | |
| QI 6 all static service points offer events/activities for users with special requirements | √ | Met in full |
| QI 7 Location of service points | Not provided | - |
| QI 9 Up-to-date and appropriate reading material | | Met in full |
| Acquisitions per capita | √ | |
| <u>or</u> Materials spend per capita | - | |
| QI 10 Welsh Language Resources | | Met in full |
| % of material budget spent on Welsh | √ | |
| <u>or</u> Spend on Welsh per capita | - | |
| QI 11 Online access: | | Met in full |
| a) i) Public access to Internet | √ | |
| ii) Wi-Fi provision | √ | |
| QI 12 Supply of requests | | Partially met |
| a) % of requests satisfied within 7 days | X | |
| b) % of requests satisfied within 15 days | √ | |

| Quality Indicator | Met? |
|---|----------------|
| QI 13 Staffing levels and qualifications: | Partially met |
| i) Staff per capita | x |
| ii) Qualified staff per capita | x |
| iii) Head of service qualification/training | √ |
| iv) CPD percentage | √ |
| QI 16 Opening hours per capita | x Not met |

2.3. Impact measures

The framework includes three indicators aimed at assessing the impact of library use on people’s lives. These indicators do not have targets, and authorities were only required to carry out user surveys for QI1 once over the original three-year period of the framework (2017-20). The summary figures (lowest, median and highest) are based on all authorities providing data in the 2022-23 return. Rankings reflect the numbers of respondents, where 1 is the highest scoring authority. However, it is important to bear in mind that some authorities have conducted surveys since 2020, whilst others report survey data from before the Covid pandemic. Some responses therefore reflect the situation several years ago, whilst others may have been affected by disruption during the pandemic period. As a result, there are limitations on the extent to which these data might be considered comparable.

Wrexham reports that no survey has been carried out in 2022-23. Due to an ongoing review of the library service, it has been considered inappropriate to carry out a survey.

| Performance indicator | | Rank | Lowest | Median | Highest |
|---|--------------|------|--------|--------|---------|
| QI 1 Making a difference | | | | | |
| b) % of young people who think that the library helps them learn and find things out: | Not provided | - | 58% | 90% | 98% |
| e) % of adults who think that the library has made a difference to their lives: | Not provided | - | 41% | 86.5% | 96% |
| QI 5 b) % of attendees of training sessions who said that the training had helped them achieve their goals: | Not provided | - | 82% | 96% | 100% |

Authorities are also asked to provide an impact statement describing the impact which the library service has had on an individual or on a group of individuals during the year. Wrexham provided an impact statement focusing on a ‘Welsh Conversation Group’ that had been started in September 2022 for those with limited opportunities to speak Welsh or who have limited opportunities to use their Welsh language skills. The group is run by a member of Wrexham Library staff who is a first language Welsh speaker. Group members are encouraged to choose a focus for their learning that can benefit them in their daily activities. The sessions are informal and friendly, taking place in a relaxed and non-judgemental space. Starting with five members, membership has grown with over 10 people attending. This has resulted in new library users, some of whom have enrolled as library members and are borrowing from the Welsh language collection. Due to the success of the group, the frequency and duration of meetings is set to increase.

2.4. Quality indicators and benchmarks

The remaining indicators do not have targets but allow services to monitor and benchmark their performance over time, in comparison with other authorities. The following table summarises Wrexham's position for 2022-23. Ranks are included out of 22, where 1 is the highest, and 22 the lowest scoring authority, unless stated otherwise. Indicators where fewer than 22 authorities supplied data are those where relevant data was not available from some authorities. Indicators 'per capita' are calculated per 1,000 population unless otherwise noted.

| Performance indicator | | Rank | Lowest | Median | Highest |
|--|--------------|--------|--------|--------|---------|
| QI 1 Making a difference | | | | | |
| a) % of adults who think that using the library has helped them develop new skills | Not provided | - | 24% | 69.5% | 90% |
| c) health and well-being | Not provided | - | 35% | 66.5% | 94% |
| d) enjoyable, safe and inclusive | Not provided | - | 93% | 97% | 100% |
| QI 2 Customer satisfaction | | | | | |
| a) 'very good' or 'good' choice of books | Not provided | - | 80% | 91% | 99% |
| b) 'very good' or 'good' customer care | Not provided | - | 92% | 98% | 100% |
| c) 'very good' or 'good' IT facilities | Not provided | - | 65% | 86% | 99% |
| d) 'very good' or 'good' overall | Not provided | - | 94% | 98% | 100% |
| e) users aged 16 & under rating out of ten | Not provided | - | 8.0 | 9.3 | 9.7 |
| QI 5 User training | | | | | |
| a) attendances per capita | 1 | =21/22 | 1 | 10.5 | 222 |
| c) informal training per capita | Not provided | - | 5 | 131 | 424 |
| QI 6 attendances at events per capita | | | | | |
| | 222 | 8/22 | 13 | 165 | 559 |
| QI 8 Library use | | | | | |
| a) visits per capita | 1,401 | 19/21 | 781 | 2,106 | 4,814 |
| b) virtual visits per capita | 124 | 22/22 | 124 | 537.5 | 7,979 |
| c) active borrowers per capita | 98 | =15/22 | 43 | 106.5 | 167 |
| QI 10 Welsh issues per capita | | | | | |
| | 77 | 8/22 | 13 | 53 | 864 |
| QI 11 Online access | | | | | |
| a) Computers per 10,000 | 4.07 | 21/22 | 3.32 | 7.99 | 16.99 |
| b) % of available time used by the public | Not provided | - | 7% | 11% | 77% |

| Performance indicator | | Rank | Lowest | Median | Highest |
|---|--------------|-------|--------|---------|---------|
| QI 13 Staffing levels and qualifications ⁶⁶ | | | | | |
| (v) a) total volunteers | 0 | - | 0 | 8 | 256 |
| b) volunteer hours | 0 | - | 0 | 583.5 | 14,014 |
| QI 14 Operational expenditure | | | | | |
| a) total expenditure per capita | Not provided | - | £6,726 | £11,476 | £27,330 |
| b) % on staff, | Not provided | - | 46% | 64% | 78% |
| % on information resources | Not provided | - | 5% | 12% | 21% |
| % on equipment and buildings | Not provided | - | 1% | 3% | 29% |
| % on other operational costs; | Not provided | - | 1% | 15% | 35% |
| c) capital expenditure per capita | Not provided | - | -£479 | £145 | £2,865 |
| QI 15 Net cost per visit ⁶⁷ | | | | | |
| | Not provided | - | £0.41 | £2.76 | £6.22 |
| QI 16 Opening hours ⁶⁸ | | | | | |
| (iii) a) % hours unplanned closure of static service points | 0.51% | 20/22 | 0% | 0.05% | 0.95% |
| b) % mobile stops / home deliveries missed ⁶⁹ | Not provided | - | 0% | 0% | 3.74% |

3. Analysis of performance

The core entitlements and quality indicators can be divided into four key areas. This section of the report outlines performance under these areas.

3.1. Meeting customer needs (QI 1-5)

No data is provided regarding performance in relation to QI1 or QI2. Regarding Support for individual development (QI3), Wrexham reports that training to improve skills is on an ad hoc basis as users present with difficulties. The service partially meets the targets for QI3. Digital skills training programmes are provided through other organisations, although it has been a challenge to find IT training provision / providers. The service notes that the limited IT facilities and wi-fi in many branch libraries can make it difficult to organise training. Wrexham is below the median for attendance at formal training per capita and no data is provided with regard to formal training (QI5).

3.2. Access and use (QI 6-8)

Event attendance per capita is above the median and Wrexham meets the target for this QI6 in full. No data is available for location of service points (QI7). Visits per capita, virtual visits and active borrowers are all below the median (QI8). However, the service is above the median for e-issues per capita and close to the median for

⁶⁶ Following discussion with the peer review group it was decided not to include rankings for volunteers as the implications of volunteer numbers are ambiguous

⁶⁷ Rankings here have been reversed, so that 1 is the lowest scoring (best performing) authority.

⁶⁸ Rankings here have been reversed, so that 1 is the lowest scoring (best performing) authority.

⁶⁹ Wrexham is unable to report mobile opening hours as the service has been gradually piloted and rolled out in 2022-23.

children's issues.

3.3. Facilities and services (QI 9-12)

Wrexham meets the target for acquisitions per capita (QI9). It also meets the target for the percentage materials spend on Welsh language materials and it is above the median for Welsh issues per capita (QI10). Wrexham is below the median for number of PCs per capita (QI11). However, it is noted that public access devices have been rolled out over the reporting year so numbers have grown over the year, and the figure will likely increase next year as iPads have now been installed in all libraries. Wrexham partially meets the target for supply of requests (QI12), noting that the time taken to transport requested items across North Wales can make these targets challenging to achieve in some cases.

3.4. Expertise and capacity (QI 13-16)

Wrexham does not meet the targets for overall staffing provision per capita or for qualified staff per capita, and is below the median of Welsh library authorities for both measures (QI13). It reports a reduction in professional posts, which is believed to be unlikely to change. The service does, however, have a qualified operational manager and is above the median for the percentage of staff time devoted to training. Wrexham libraries do not make use of volunteers. Wrexham does not meet the target for opening hours (QI16). There were a number of unplanned closures due to heavy snowfall. No data was provided in relation to operational expenditure (QI14) or cost per visit (QI15).

4. Strategic context

As part of the return, authorities are asked to report on how the library service is contributing to wider Welsh Government priorities and strategic goals. Wrexham links to the Welsh Government priorities of a more prosperous, equal and greener Wales. Examples provided include the following.

- **Eliminate Inequalities:** Wrexham libraries became designated 'Warm Hubs' in response to the Cost of Living Crisis and Cost of Energy Crisis. This resulted in new, existing and lapsed users making use of libraries for a variety of purposes.
- **Promotion of Welsh Language and Culture:** Welsh / bilingual story and rhyme times; Welsh language school visits to libraries; two Welsh language reading groups; Welsh language author events; Magi Ann / Seren a Sbarc sessions; Welsh / Bilingual newsletter; and Welsh social media pages.

5. Future direction

Reporting on the authority's future direction and plans for the library service over the following year, Wrexham highlights the anticipated relocation of Wrexham Archives public search room in Autumn / Winter 2023, which it is anticipated will strengthen the library offer to residents, visitors and communities. In addition, the service aims to investigate the potential relocation of other services, organisations and or

businesses into library buildings. However, it would be helpful if more explicit information was provided about how they intend to achieve this.

6. Conclusion

Wrexham Libraries is performing well in a number of areas, in particular with regard to acquisitions, Welsh language issues, commitment to staff training and event attendance. However, there are a number of areas of concern, particularly the fact that Wrexham is only partially meeting a number of the Core Entitlements. The lack of recent user consultation is a concern as this obviously limits the service's ability to develop in line with the needs of its communities. Information provided about Wrexham's future direction suggest several significant changes, for example, the relocation of services, and it will be important to consider users' responses to these proposals. There are a number of gaps in the data provided by Wrexham, and limited contextual information, making it difficult for the independent assessor to make a full assessment of the service.