

# Welsh Public Library Standards: Annual Reports 2024-25

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# Blaenau Gwent Annual Assessment Report 2024-25

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.

## Executive summary

Blaenau Gwent meets all of the 13 Core Entitlements in full. Of the 5 quality indicators which have targets, Blaenau Gwent is achieving 4 in full and 1 in part.

Blaenau Gwent is performing well. It meets all of the Core Entitlements and performs around the median for most QI comparison measures. It is encouraging that the library service is valued within the authority and per capita revenue spending is increasing to help provide a better service for the local community. Although Blaenau Gwent struggles to meet staffing QI targets, the increases in total staff hours and opening hours this year are welcome. Attendance at events continues to be a strength of this service, in particular through the work of Outreach Officers who have helped to expand the range of activities and engage with communities who previously made limited use of the library. The continued decline in virtual visits is something the library may want to explore further to ensure the customers' needs are met in other ways (e.g. via social media) as the website is not well-used in comparison to other services.

- The service performs well with regards to Making a difference, particularly in relation to the percentage of adults who think the library has made a difference to their lives (QI1).
- Blaenau Gwent is in the top quartile of Welsh library authorities for opening hours per capita; the total number of opening hours has increased by 8% compared to 2023-24 (QI16).
- Event attendance has increased by 26% in comparison to 2023-24 and an impressive 92% compared to 2022-23 (QI6).

## Note to the 2024-25 report

During 2024-25 local authorities in Wales migrated to a new all Wales Digital Library Platform. The process of migration caused some disruption to the operation of library services including the acquisition of new stock which had to be suspended for a period as individual services moved to the new system. There are also some slight differences in the configuration of the new platform which means that the user data

across 2024-25 is not entirely consistent. The reports for 2024-25 do not therefore include the data detailed below for Quality Indicators 4, 8, 9 and 10.

- QI 4 Support for health and well-being
  - c) the number of loans of titles from the Reading Well in Wales series
- QI 8 Library use
  - c) the total number of active borrowers divided by the resident population, multiplied by 1,000
  - d) the total number of library members
  - e) the total number of book issues (adult and children separate)
  - f) the total number of audio-visual issues
- QI 9 Up-to-date and appropriate reading material
  - a) minimum acquisitions rate
  - b) % spent on children's resources
- QI 10 Welsh language resources
  - a) 4% minimum spend
  - b) Welsh issues per capita

All data will be reported and assessed for 2025-26 (the first year of Framework 7) and this data will be used to set the benchmark for the remaining years of the framework.

## Performance against the standards

The standards framework comprises Core Entitlements, quality indicators with targets, quality indicators with benchmarks and impact measures.

### Core Entitlements

Blaenau Gwent reported meeting all of the 13 Core Entitlements in full through self-assessment. Based on the detailed and helpful commentary provided, the independent assessor agrees with the self-assessment.

### Quality indicators with targets

There are 12 quality indicators (QIs), of which 5 have constituent targets. Of these, Blaenau Gwent is achieving 4 in full and 1 in part.

- QI 4 (a) Support for health and well-being **met in full p**
  - i) Reading Well scheme, **met**
  - ii) Designated health & well-being collection, **met**
  - iii) Information about healthier lifestyles and healthy behaviours, **met**
  - iv) Signposting to health & well-being services, **met**
- QI 6 All static service points offer events/activities for users with special requirements, **met in full p**

QI 7 Location of service points, **met in full p**

QI 13 Staffing levels and qualifications: **partially met n**

i) Staff per capita, **not met**

ii) Qualified staff per capita, **not met**

iii) Head of service qualification/training, **met**

iv) CPD percentage, **met**

QI 16 Opening hours per capita, **met in full p**

## Impact measures

The framework includes three indicators aimed at assessing the impact of library use on people's lives. These indicators do not have targets, and authorities are required to carry out user surveys for QI1 once over the 2022-23 to 2024-25 period. Blaenau Gwent undertook an adult survey in March 2023 and a children's survey in February 2023. The summary figures (lowest, median and highest) are based on all authorities providing data in the 2022-23, 2023-24 and 2024-25 returns. Rankings reflect the number of respondents, where 1 is the highest scoring authority.

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%	=8/19	68%	94%	99%
e) % of adults who think that the library has made a difference to their lives:	96%	1/20	31%	86.5%	96%
QI 5 b) % of attendees of training sessions who said that the training had helped them achieve their purpose in attending:	99%	=6/18	75%	98.5%	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 weekly Welsh Club at Abertillery Library. Through Clwb Cymraeg, the library not only supports the Welsh Government's aim to increase the number of Welsh speakers but also fosters friendships, combats loneliness and strengthens community ties in Abertillery.

The club has become a welcoming space for learners and speakers of all ages, making a real difference in people's lives. Led by a library assistant fluent in Welsh, the informal, friendly sessions offer conversation, support and encouragement, with participants meeting to build their skills and confidence together. A library assistant described the club saying, *"It's a pleasure to support learners and help them build confidence... every week we aim to reclaim our mother tongue."*

For one grandparent, joining the club meant gaining the ability to help her grandchildren with their Welsh-medium schoolwork. She now borrows children's books in Welsh weekly and enjoys reading with her grandchildren, *"They are proud*

of me!” Another participant described how the relaxed, face-to-face sessions helped her make new friends, overcome struggles with online classes and progress her learning through resources including the titles available on BorrowBox.

The club's impact extends beyond language skills. A carer attending the sessions said, *“Being a carer can be isolating... the club gives me a place to relax, learn, and take my mind off my worries.”* Others reported feeling included and supported, with one participant commenting that the sessions help to reduce anxiety and build social skills. Participants value the library's accessibility, flexibility and sense of community. As one attendee noted, *“It's great to be able to speak Welsh in Abertillery... it's a powerful feeling, knowing I'm learning more every week.”*

## Quality indicators and benchmarks

The remaining indicators do not have targets but allow services to monitor their performance over time. The following table summarises Blaenau Gwent's position for 2024-25. Rankings reflect the number of respondents, where 1 is the highest scoring authority. 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%	=10/20	17%	70%	90%
c) health and well-being	44%	19/20	1%	63%	90%
d) enjoyable, safe and inclusive	100%	=1/20	93%	97%	100%
QI 2 Customer satisfaction					
a) 'very good' or 'good' choice of books	90%	=11/20	84%	90.5%	97%
b) 'very good' or 'good' customer care	99%	=2/20	92%	98%	100%
c) 'very good' or 'good' IT facilities	85%	=10/20	60%	85%	99%
d) 'very good' or 'good' overall	97%	=12/20	85%	98%	100%
e) users aged 16 & under rating out of ten	9.0	15/18	8.0	9.4	9.7
QI 5 User support					
a) attendances per capita	10	14/21	1	28	214
c) informal support per capita	136	11/20	15	150	608
QI 6 Attendances at events per capita	307	8/22	14	224.5	764
QI 8 Library use					
b) virtual visits per capita	126	20/21	5	766	6,035
QI 13 Staffing levels and qualifications <sup>1</sup>					

<sup>1</sup> Rankings are not included for volunteers as the implications of volunteer numbers are ambiguous.

Performance indicator		Rank	Lowest	Median	Highest
(v) a) total volunteers	10	N/A	0	23	442
b) volunteer hours	990	N/A	0	883	22,706
QI 14 Operational expenditure					
a) total expenditure per capita	£12,646	11/21	£5,978	£12,646	£26,209
b) % on staff,	76%	=5/21	48%	67%	80%
% on information resources	8%	=13/21	4%	9%	19%
% on equipment and buildings	2%	=11/21	0%	2%	29%
% on other operational costs	14%	12/21	1%	15%	38%

## Analysis of performance

The Core Entitlements and quality indicators can be divided into three key areas. This section of the report outlines performance under these areas.

### Meeting customer needs (QI 1-2, 4-5)

Blaenau Gwent performs well with regard to both Making a difference (QI1) and Customer satisfaction (QI2); it is close to or above the median for the majority of measures, with the exception of health and well-being. The service performs particularly strongly in relation to the percentage of adults who think the library has made a difference to their lives (QI1), being the highest ranked authority nationally for this measure. In addition, it is in the top quartile of Welsh library authorities for customer care (QI2).

The service meets the target for Support for health and well-being (QI4) in full and has expanded its reading group provision to include a group for young adults, in addition to an online group and two Outreach Reading Groups in community venues.

Although attendance per capita at formal training activities has increased by around 15% compared to 2023-24, Blaenau Gwent remains below the median for this measure. However, the service performs well for the percentage of attendees to feel they achieved their purpose in attending. Attendance at informal support has increased slightly (3%) compared to 2023-24 but is below the median (QI5).

### Access and use (QI 6-8)

Blaenau Gwent continues to improve its performance in relation to event attendance, which has increased by 26% in comparison to 2023-24, and an impressive 92% compared to 2022-23. The service notes that two SPF-funded Outreach Officers have played an instrumental role in this increase, with a wide range of activities including Welsh baby yoga; creative writing; coding clubs; Cuppa and Company; Lego club; art for mental health; science labs; job clubs; book folding group; Welsh groups; Men, Music and Minds; litter picking activities; author events; and social groups for people with visual impairments.



Virtual visits are in the bottom quartile of Welsh library services and have continued to decline, decreasing by 19% compared to 2023-24 (QI8). However, Blaenau Gwent reports that social media use has increased by 47%, with Instagram engagement being particularly strong. E-issues are increasing, having risen by 23% compared to 2023-24 and by 58% compared to 2022-23. However, Blaenau Gwent remains in the bottom quartile nationally for this measure.

## Expertise and capacity (QI 13-14 &16)

As was the case in 2023-24, Blaenau Gwent meets the CPD percentage and head of service qualification elements of the Staffing levels and qualifications indicator, but does not meet the total or qualified staff per capita targets (QI13). Although the service is below the median for Welsh library authorities for both total and qualified staff per capita, there has been an increase in staffing numbers compared to the previous year as an additional library assistant has been appointed to Abertillery Library. In addition to staffing included in the WPLS calculation, there are two SPF-funded library outreach posts, a Digital Exclusion Officer based in the library service and Community Education staff in shared buildings who provide reception desk duties and admin support. There has been an increase in the number of hours spent on staff training and development this year due to LMS training and professional development hours for three members of staff working towards CILIP Chartership.

Blaenau Gwent is at the median for revenue expenditure per capita and this figure has increased by 10% compared to 2023-24 and by 25% compared to 2022-23 (QI14). The proportion allocated to staffing is above the national median. After an increase in 2023-24, the book budget has remained unchanged in 2024-25 and Blaenau Gwent is below the median for per capita book budget.

Abertillery Library re-opened in October 2024, following a successful funding application to the Transformational Capital Grant from Welsh Government. Blaenau Gwent is in the top quartile of library authorities for opening hours per capita and the total number of opening hours has increased by 8% compared to 2023-24 (QI16).

## 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 provided a detailed summary of how the service continues to contribute to the seven well-being goals in the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and how these goals provide a vision that links to the major themes of the library service. Examples provided against each goal include:

- **A globally responsible Wales** e.g. expanding the 'Libraries vs Litter' scheme involving local schools and introducing the 'Little Pickers' scheme involving early years groups; hosting Green Libraries Week; distributing free seeds through Little Veg Libraries; developing nature-themed Storytimes; and

extending Sports Libraries, costume loans and launching a ukulele loan scheme to support the circular economy.

- **A prosperous Wales** e.g. relocating Abertillery Library to Trinity Chapel - a refurbished town centre location boosting footfall, supporting local businesses and co-locating with Adult Education; delivering funded events in collaboration with the Regeneration Department, including Science Workshops and Monster Trails; and providing tailored digital skills and jobseeker support in partnership with Adult Community Learning.
- **A resilient Wales** e.g. supporting flood victims with on-site partner services; raising awareness during Pension Credit Week; adult craft sessions aimed at boosting numeracy skills; and working with partners like CAB, Pobl and health organisations to deliver targeted support in libraries.
- **A healthier Wales** e.g. working with Sports Development to expand Wiggly Words sessions combining exercise with literacy; providing safe welcoming spaces to help overcome isolation; promoting health campaigns such as Men's Health Week; distributing 'Melo' self-help materials; extending dementia-friendly singalongs; and launching the 'Libraries for Life' scheme with emergency services to teach children about health and safety.
- **A more equal Wales** e.g. one to one sessions with the Digital Inclusion Officer; being a designated digital inclusion hub in the National Data Bank Scheme; promoting Quiet Hours; marking events such as Windrush Day, Holocaust Memorial Day and Pride month; and expanding home delivery services for vulnerable and visually impaired customers.
- **A Wales of cohesive communities** e.g. outreach in care homes, youth centres and community groups; running a wide range of reading, craft, technology and well-being activities; and hosting police surgeries, MP and MS advice sessions.
- **A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language** e.g. extending Clwb Cymraeg taster sessions; Welsh Baby Yoga and Welsh Baby Rhyme times; celebrating Shwmae Day, Saint Dwynwen Day and St David's Day with themed activities; and hosting local history talks and Welsh folk tale workshops.

## Future direction

Reporting on the authority's future direction and plans for the library service over the coming year, Blaenau Gwent notes significant organisational developments within Aneurin Leisure Trust following a recent restructure and the creation of a new leadership team with a new interim Director responsible for the library service from April 2025. A new library service strategy, aligned with the evolving Aneurin Leisure Trust strategy, is in development, alongside initiatives to improve staff communication, performance and succession planning, including continued support for three Chartership candidates. It is expected that the new Welsh Government Priorities for Culture and Framework 7 of the Welsh Public Library Standards will jointly shape the library service's vision for 2025-26. A strong focus will be placed on

staff training to provide support for individual well-being and to contribute to local and national priorities.

Aneurin Leisure Trust is also working closely with the local authority on the future contract for library services, with an independent review due in September 2025. The service reports that it is highly valued by councillors, with positive feedback from the recent WPLS assessment reinforcing its importance. Despite ongoing financial pressures, the library budget will be maintained in 2025-26, with no planned reductions to book funds or staffing. Additionally, the Trust awaits the outcome of a Trailblazers funding application, which could further strengthen the library's role in improving levels of social and economic inactivity. Building on the successful relocation of Abertillery Library, the service reports that plans are underway to explore a similar modernisation project for Tredegar Library in partnership with the local authority.

## Conclusion

Blaenau Gwent is performing well. It meets all of the Core Entitlements and performs around the median for most QI comparison measures. It is encouraging that the library service is valued within the authority and per capita revenue spending is increasing to help provide a better service for the local community. Although Blaenau Gwent struggles to meet staffing QI targets, the increases in total staff hours and opening hours this year are welcome. Attendance at events continues to be a strength of this service, in particular through the work of Outreach Officers who have helped to expand the range of activities and engage with communities who previously made limited use of the library. The continued decline in virtual visits is something the library may want to explore further to ensure the customers' needs are met in other ways (e.g. via social media) as the website is not well-used in comparison to other services.

# Bridgend (Awen Cultural Trust) Annual Assessment Report 2024-25

Bridgend library service is provided by Awen Cultural Trust. 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.

## Executive summary

Bridgend meets all of the 13 Core Entitlements in full. Of the 5 quality indicators which have targets, Bridgend is achieving 4 in full and 1 in part.

Bridgend Library Service is performing very well. Activities, events and formal training provisions are important strengths of the service. Bridgend continues to expand its range of activities, and attendance figures are increasing markedly. Another positive feature is the fact that the service meets the target for qualified staff per capita and is planning for the future in supporting staff to achieve CILIP Chartership. Bridgend performs well in feedback from children and young people, and in terms of customer satisfaction. As is the case in many services, Bridgend is facing financial pressures, as is evident this year in the decrease in the reported book budget. However, as little information is available to date on the new Library Strategy and Cultural Services Strategy, it is difficult to comment on the potential impact on the service in the future.

- Bridgend is in the top quartile nationally for per capita attendance at formal training, and attendances have increased more than fourfold compared to 2023-24 (Q15).
- Bridgend is the highest ranked service nationally for customer satisfaction with IT facilities (Q12).
- Bridgend has the highest per capita event attendance nationally, and attendances have increased by 24% compared to 2023-24 and by 38% compared to 2022-23 (Q16).

## Note to the 2024-25 report

During 2024-25 local authorities in Wales migrated to a new all Wales Digital Library Platform. The process of migration caused some disruption to the operation of library services including the acquisition of new stock which had to be suspended for a period as individual services moved to the new system. There are also some slight

differences in the configuration of the new platform which means that the user data across 2024-25 is not entirely consistent. The reports for 2024-25 do not therefore include the data detailed below for Quality Indicators 4, 8, 9 and 10.

- QI 4 Support for health and well-being
  - c) the number of loans of titles from the Reading Well in Wales series
- QI 8 Library use
  - c) the total number of active borrowers divided by the resident population, multiplied by 1,000
  - d) the total number of library members
  - e) the total number of book issues (adult and children separate)
  - f) the total number of audio-visual issues
- QI 9 Up-to-date and appropriate reading material
  - a) minimum acquisitions rate
  - b) % spent on children's resources
- QI 10 Welsh language resources
  - a) 4% minimum spend
  - b) Welsh issues per capita

All data will be reported and assessed for 2025-26 (the first year of Framework 7) and this data will be used to set the benchmark for the remaining years of the framework.

## Performance against the standards

The standards framework comprises of Core Entitlements, quality indicators with targets, quality indicators with benchmarks and impact measures.

### Core Entitlements

Bridgend reported meeting all of the 13 Core Entitlements in full through self-assessment. Based on the detailed and helpful commentary provided, the independent assessor agrees with the self-assessment.

### Quality indicators with targets

There are 12 quality indicators (QIs), of which 5 have constituent targets. Of these, Bridgend is achieving 4 in full and 1 in part.

- QI 4 (a) Support for health and well-being, **met in full p**
  - i) Reading Well scheme, **met**
  - ii) Designated health & well-being collection, **met**
  - iii) Information about healthier lifestyles and healthy behaviours, **met**
  - iv) Signposting to health & well-being services, **met**
- QI 6 All static service points offer events/activities for users with special requirements, **met in full p**

QI 7 Location of service points, **met in full p**

QI 13 Staffing levels and qualifications, **partially met n**

i) Staff per capita, **not met**

ii) Qualified staff per capita, **met**

iii) Head of service qualification/training, **met**

iv) CPD percentage, **met**

QI 16 Opening hours per capita, **met in full p**

## Impact measures

The framework includes three indicators aimed at assessing the impact of library use on people's lives. These indicators do not have targets, and authorities are required to carry out user surveys for QI1 once over the 2022-23 to 2024-25 period. Bridgend undertook an adult survey in October 2023/spring 2025 and a children's survey in January 2025. The summary figures (lowest, median and highest) are based on all authorities providing data in the 2022-23, 2023-24 and 2024-25 returns. Rankings reflect the number of respondents, where 1 is the highest scoring authority.

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%	=2/19	68%	94%	99%
e) % of adults who think that the library has made a difference to their lives:	83%	=14/20	31%	86.5%	96%
QI 5 b) % of attendees of training sessions who said that the training had helped them achieve their purpose in attending:	100%	=1/18	75%	98.5%	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 focussed on the Pokémon Club for children, young people, and families at Bridgend Library. By providing space, resources, and encouragement, Bridgend Library has helped foster a safe, engaging environment where children and young people can thrive socially and emotionally, illustrating the library's essential role as a community hub that empowers individuals of all ages and demonstrating how the service responds to local needs and works with the community.

When the club's previous venue closed suddenly, library staff stepped in to offer a welcoming, safe space every Saturday afternoon. Since relocating to the library, the club has grown from six attendees to around thirty regular members within a year.

Parents report that the club has provided a vital space for children who face social challenges, including many who are autistic or experience anxiety. One parent shared, *"It has been amazing to watch children who struggled to talk at first now have the confidence to walk in smiling and interacting without encouragement."* The

library's support has enabled young people to build confidence, develop problem-solving and social skills, and form new friendships in a nurturing environment.

The club's inclusive nature - welcoming members from three to sixty years old, has created a unique intergenerational community. Families value the library's comfortable setting, where parents can relax with books, hot drinks, or computers while their children engage in activities that encourages positive face to face interaction. A parent expressed heartfelt appreciation, *"We all feel so lucky that everyone at Bridgend Library is so supportive and kind... it wouldn't be possible without Bridgend Library."*

## Quality indicators and benchmarks

The remaining indicators do not have targets but allow services to monitor their performance over time. The following table summarises Bridgend's position for 2024-25. Rankings reflect the number of respondents, where 1 is the highest scoring authority. 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	64%	=15/20	17%	70%	90%
c) health and well-being	48%	16/20	1%	63%	90%
d) enjoyable, safe and inclusive	97%	=9/20	93%	97%	100%
QI 2 Customer satisfaction					
a) 'very good' or 'good' choice of books	91%	=9/20	84%	90.5%	97%
b) 'very good' or 'good' customer care	98%	=10/20	92%	98%	100%
c) 'very good' or 'good' IT facilities	99%	1/20	60%	85%	99%
d) 'very good' or 'good' overall	99%	=2/20	85%	98%	100%
e) users aged 16 & under rating out of ten	9.5	=5/18	8.0	9.4	9.7
QI 5 User support					
a) attendances per capita	81	3/21	1	28	214
c) informal support per capita	65	14/20	15	150	608
QI 6 Attendances at events per capita	764	1/22	14	224.5	764
QI 8 Library use					
b) virtual visits per capita	766	11/21	5	766	6,035
QI 13 Staffing levels and qualifications <sup>2</sup>					

<sup>2</sup> Rankings are not included for volunteers as the implications of volunteer numbers are ambiguous.



Performance indicator		Rank	Lowest	Median	Highest
(v) a) total volunteers	52	N/A	0	23	442
b) volunteer hours	1,850	N/A	0	883	22,706
QI 14 Operational expenditure					
a) total expenditure per capita	£10,415	16/21	£5,978	£12,646	£26,209
b) % on staff,	77%	=3/21	48%	67%	80%
% on information resources	8%	=13/21	4%	9%	19%
% on equipment and buildings	2%	=11/21	0%	2%	29%
% on other operational costs	13%	13/21	1%	15%	38%

## Analysis of performance

The Core Entitlements and quality indicators can be divided into three key areas. This section of the report outlines performance under these areas.

### Meeting customer needs (QI 1-2, 4-5)

Now that data are available from across the Framework 6 Extension period, it is evident that Bridgend performs strongly with regard to young people, being above the median for positive survey responses from this customer group (QI1 & QI2). With regard to Making a difference (QI1), the service is below the median for some of the adult measures. However, for Customer satisfaction (Q2), it is at or above the median for all measures and is particularly highly rated for IT facilities, being the highest ranked service nationally for this measure.

Bridgend has increased the number of activities that support health and well-being this year, including reminiscence, work with carers, dementia hubs and Mental Health Matters. The service meets the target for Support for health and well-being (QI4) in full.

The service is in the top quartile nationally for attendance at formal training per capita (QI5). Reported attendances have risen more than fourfold compared to 2023-24 as Bridgend has worked with partners and through the SPF-funded Outreach Library Assistant to organise workshops and other sessions. 100% of attendees said they had achieved their purpose in attending (n=191). Informal support is below the national median, although the number of attendances has increased by 14% compared to 2023-24.

### Access and use (QI 6-8)

Bridgend has the highest per capita event attendance nationally and attendances have increased by 24% compared to 2023-24, and by 38% compared to 2022-23 (QI6). Examples of the types of events offered include author and illustrator events, dance sessions, history talks, crafting, creative writing, dementia groups, poetry clubs, film clubs, and Bridgend Children's Literacy Festival activities.



Bridgend is at the national median for virtual visits per capita and the number of visits recorded has increased by 4% compared to 2023-24 (QI8). Although Bridgend remains below the median for e-issues per capita, digital issues are increasing rapidly, being 46% higher than in 2023-24 and more than double the 2022-23 figure.

## Expertise and capacity (QI 13-14 &16)

Regarding Staffing levels and qualifications, Bridgend meets the targets for qualified staff per capita, head of service qualification and CPD percentage (QI13). Although the number of qualified staff reported decreased by 0.8 FTE, 4 members of staff have started the CILIP Chartership process in 2024-25<sup>3</sup>, which should impact on qualified staff numbers in future years. Total staffing numbers increased by 0.9 FTE in 2024-25 as the service used SPF funding to create a temporary additional outreach post and used funding for reminiscence work to offer part-time hours to staff to provide reminiscence sessions at nursing homes and community groups. However, whilst Bridgend is above the national median for total staff per capita, it still does not meet this target.

The service is below the median for revenue expenditure per capita and this figure is almost the same as that reported in 2023-24 (QI14). The proportion of expenditure dedicated to staffing is in the top quartile nationally. However, the anticipated drop in the book fund reported in the 2023-24 return is evident this year as the book budget has decreased by 31% and Bridgend is in the bottom quartile nationally for per capita book budget. Even taking possible disruption due to the introduction of the new LMS into account, this level of decline in the book fund is a serious concern.

Bridgend is in the top quartile of Welsh library authorities for Opening hours per capita and meets the target for this measure (QI16). Overall, opening hours have decreased slightly (2%) compared to 2023-24. Sarn Library reduced its hours from July 2024, and Maesteg and Y Llynfi Libraries relocated in October 2024, with their services being moved to Maesteg Town Hall. As they are now in the same location, their reported hours are shared rather than being counted separately.

## 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 (Awen Cultural Trust) outlined how their Social Impact Objectives align with key Welsh Government strategies. The Social Impact objectives include:

- 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.

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<sup>3</sup> 3 candidates are supported by the Welsh Government

- To create memorable and positive experiences by offering community spaces that meet diverse needs; provide flexibility; and are welcoming, safe and able to host a variety of activities.
- To support social regeneration and improve well-being by enhancing access to health information, reducing social isolation and improving the well-being of participants.
- To increase life skills and opportunities through formal and informal training, making a positive impact on literacy and information literacy.
- To reduce energy consumption and minimise the library service's environmental impact.

Bridgend Library Services highlights how these priorities directly support a range of Welsh Government policies. Specific examples described include supporting Black History Month with inclusive activities and stock; involving staff in initiatives like CILIP's Anti-Racist Library Collections Panel (Anti-Racist Wales); and ensuring LGBTQIA+ representation in events and collections (LGBTQ+ Action Plan for Wales).

## Future direction

Reporting on the authority's future direction and plans for the library service over the coming year, Bridgend notes that significant financial pressures facing the council have led to a review of various services to identify potential savings and improve operational efficiency. In this context, the Council, working with Awen Cultural Trust, is developing a new Cultural Services Strategy that will adopt a community-centric and evidence-based approach.

Although there are currently no confirmed proposals or timelines, the library service will continue as planned to develop a new Library Strategy covering 2026-29. This strategy will align with the Welsh Government's Priorities for Culture, Framework 7 of the Welsh Public Library Standards and Awen's own 2025-30 Strategy. It will also incorporate recommendations from the ongoing Library Consultation and reflect the outcomes of the wider Cultural Services Strategy. The service reports that the timescale for the 2026-29 strategy is dependent on the timing of the local authority Cultural Services Strategy. Bridgend remains committed to staff development, aiming to build a resilient, skilled and forward-looking team equipped to meet the evolving needs of its communities.

## Conclusion

Bridgend Library Service is performing well. Activities, events and formal training provisions are important strengths of the service. Bridgend continues to expand its range of activities, and attendance figures are increasing markedly. Another positive feature is the fact that the service meets the target for qualified staff per capita and is planning for the future in supporting staff to achieve CILIP Chartership. Bridgend performs well in feedback from children and young people and in terms of customer satisfaction. As is the case in many services, Bridgend is facing financial pressures, as is evident this year in the decrease in the reported book budget. However, as little information is available to date on the new Library Strategy and Cultural Services Strategy, it is difficult to comment in detail on the potential impact on the service in the future.

# Caerphilly Annual Assessment Report 2024-25

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.

## Executive summary

Caerphilly meets all of the 13 Core Entitlements in full. Of the 5 quality indicators which have targets, Caerphilly is achieving 4 in full and 1 in part.

Caerphilly Library Service continues to perform well in many areas. The service offers a wide range of well-attended activities, including support for customers who have special requirements. Staffing has been relatively stable this year, with the service supporting staff training, including CILIP Chartership. Whilst there are undoubtedly challenges with single-staffed service points, as noted in previous annual reports, the uncertainty over the future level of provision in Caerphilly is clearly a concern. Naturally, an important focus for the library service in 2025-26 will be ensuring that the authority continues to deliver a high standard of provision to all customers via community outreach and other means. In these circumstances, it is essential that the service monitors the impact of changes on customer satisfaction, attendances, issues and other WPLS measures.

- Formal training attendance has increased by 51% compared to 2023-24 (QI5).
- Caerphilly remains in the top quartile of Welsh library authorities for per capita attendance at events; attendance figures have increased by 35% compared to 2023-24 and by 93% compared to 2022-23 (QI6).
- The number of e-issues has increased by 66% compared with 2023-24 and has more than doubled compared with 2022-23 (QI9).

## Note to the 2024-25 report

During 2024-25 local authorities in Wales migrated to a new all Wales Digital Library Platform. The process of migration caused some disruption to the operation of library services including the acquisition of new stock which had to be suspended for a period as individual services moved to the new system. There are also some slight differences in the configuration of the new platform which means that the user data across 2024-25 is not entirely consistent. The reports for 2024-25 do not therefore include the data detailed below for Quality Indicators 4, 8, 9 and 10.

QI 4 Support for health and well-being

c) the number of loans of titles from the Reading Well in Wales series

- QI 8 Library use
- c) the total number of active borrowers divided by the resident population, multiplied by 1,000
  - d) the total number of library members
  - e) the total number of book issues (adult and children separate)
  - f) the total number of audio-visual issues
- QI 9 Up-to-date and appropriate reading material
- a) minimum acquisitions rate
  - b) % spent on children's resources
- QI 10 Welsh language resources
- a) 4% minimum spend
  - b) Welsh issues per capita

All data will be reported and assessed for 2025-26 (the first year of Framework 7) and this data will be used to set the benchmark for the remaining years of the framework.

## Performance against the standards

The standards framework comprises of Core Entitlements, quality indicators with targets, quality indicators with benchmarks and impact measures.

### Core Entitlements

Caerphilly reported meeting all of the 13 Core Entitlements in full through self-assessment. Based on the detailed and helpful commentary provided, the independent assessor agrees with the self-assessment.

### Quality indicators with targets

There are 12 quality indicators (QIs), of which 5 have constituent targets. Of these, Caerphilly is achieving 4 in full and 1 in part.

- QI 4 (a) Support for health and well-being, **met in full p**
- i) Reading Well scheme, **met**
  - ii) Designated health & well-being collection, **met**
  - iii) Information about healthier lifestyles and healthy behaviours, **met**
  - iv) Signposting to health & well-being services, **met**
- QI 6 All static service points offer events/activities for users with special requirements, **met in full p**
- QI 7 Location of service points, **met in full p**
- QI 13 Staffing levels and qualifications, **partially met n**
- i) Staff per capita, **not met**
  - ii) Qualified staff per capita, **not met**

- iii) Head of service qualification/training, **met**
- iv) CPD percentage, **met**

QI 16 Opening hours per capita, **met in full p**

## Impact measures

The framework includes three indicators aimed at assessing the impact of library use on people's lives. These indicators do not have targets, and authorities are required to carry out user surveys for QI1 once over the 2022-23 to 2024-25 period.

Caerphilly undertook an adult survey in November/December 2023 and a children's survey in November 2022. However, some of the questions required for the WPLS were not asked as individual questions but were included in a series of possible options. This means that it is difficult to make comparisons between the responses received by library customers in Caerphilly and those elsewhere. The summary figures (lowest, median and highest) are based on all authorities providing data in the 2022-23, 2023-24 and 2024-25 returns. Rankings reflect the number of respondents, where 1 is the highest scoring authority.

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% <sup>4</sup>	15/19	68%	94%	99%
e) % of adults who think that the library has made a difference to their lives:	31%	20/20	31%	86.5%	96%
QI 5 b) % of attendees of training sessions who said that the training had helped them achieve their purpose in attending:	99%	=6/18	75%	98.5%	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 which highlighted the valuable role that the library has played in supporting the local Ukrainian community. Caerphilly Library has provided space and support in a safe, inclusive, friendly and welcoming environment for a Ukrainian Community Group comprising of people displaced by war. The library's support began with an English-speaking club that quickly grew into a vibrant Ukrainian community group meeting weekly since 2023. Members have developed language skills, gained confidence and received important information on housing, employment and mental health support. The library has hosted cultural events, art sessions and workshops, creating opportunities for Ukrainians to share their traditions while learning about Welsh culture. As members shared, *"Together we have laughed, cried, shared stories, made friends, and found pieces of ourselves again."*

<sup>4</sup> A figure of 58% was reported, but respondents were offered the options of 'a lot' and 'a little', so the responses for both have been combined in the comparison table.

As well as providing practical support for adults, such as free driving theory lessons, the library has given children a place to play, learn and express themselves through art, helping families feel grounded in their new community. One group member expressed heartfelt gratitude, *“What began as a simple offer of space has become something far greater: a place of healing, connection and hope.”* Thanks to the library’s care and compassion, the Ukrainian Community Group has formed strong bonds; felt seen and supported; and taken important steps toward integration. A member reflected, *“The library became a bridge between our past and our future... a world where we belong again.”*

## Quality indicators and benchmarks

The remaining indicators do not have targets but allow services to monitor their performance over time. The following table summarises Caerphilly’s position for 2024-25. Rankings reflect the number of respondents, where 1 is the highest scoring authority. 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	17%	20/20	17%	70%	90%
c) health and well-being	1%	20/20	1%	63%	90%
d) enjoyable, safe and inclusive	99%	=4/20	93%	97%	100%
QI 2 Customer satisfaction					
a) ‘very good’ or ‘good’ choice of books	95%	3/20	84%	90.5%	97%
b) ‘very good’ or ‘good’ customer care	99%	=2/20	92%	98%	100%
c) ‘very good’ or ‘good’ IT facilities	88%	7/20	60%	85%	99%
d) ‘very good’ or ‘good’ overall	98%	=7/20	85%	98%	100%
e) users aged 16 & under rating out of ten	9.5	=5/18	8.0	9.4	9.7
QI 5 User support					
a) attendances per capita	17	14/21	1	28	214
c) informal support per capita	50	18/20	15	150	608
QI 6 Attendances at events per capita	527	3/22	14	224.5	764
QI 8 Library use					
b) virtual visits per capita	642	13/21	5	766	6,035
QI 13 Staffing levels and qualifications <sup>5</sup>					

<sup>5</sup> Rankings are not included for volunteers as the implications of volunteer numbers are ambiguous.

Performance indicator		Rank	Lowest	Median	Highest
(v) a) total volunteers	N/A	N/A	0	23	442
b) volunteer hours	164	N/A	0	883	22,706
QI 14 Operational expenditure					
a) total expenditure per capita	£17,552	4/21	£5,978	£12,646	£26,209
b) % on staff,	58%	=17/21	48%	67%	80%
% on information resources	7%	17/21	4%	9%	19%
% on equipment and buildings	29%	1/21	0%	2%	29%
% on other operational costs	5%	19/21	1%	15%	38%

## Analysis of performance

The Core Entitlements and quality indicators can be divided into three key areas. This section of the report outlines performance under these areas.

### Meeting customer needs (QI 1-2, 4-5)

Now that data are available from across the Framework 6 Extension period, it is evident that Caerphilly performs well for Customer satisfaction (QI2), being above the median for all measures. However, survey responses for Making a difference (QI1) are more mixed. As was explained in the 2023-24 report, this would appear to be, at least in part, a result of the way in which questions were asked in Caerphilly's survey which makes it difficult to make comparisons between these responses and those reported from other library authorities.

Caerphilly meets the target for Support for health and well-being (QI4) in full. Amongst the well-being support and services available are Meet, Greet & Signposting sessions with the CCBC Polish and Ukrainian Family Liaison Officers and Ukrainian support groups; Warm and Welcoming Spaces, allowing library staff to actively signpost to the Caerphilly Cares team; and a range of supplies offered on behalf of partner organisations (e.g. green caddy bags and reusable nappies).

Caerphilly is below the median for attendances at both formal and informal training/support (QI5). However, formal training attendance has increased by 51% compared to 2023-24 and the service performs strongly for the percentage of attendees who said they achieved their purpose in attending. Training offered includes digital skills, numeracy skills and adult literacy/ESOL. Informal support figures have increased by 3% compared to 2023-24 and it is noted that, as 11 of the 18 service points are single-staffed locations, the offer of intense IT support is often difficult.

### Access and use (QI 6-8)

Caerphilly remains in the top quartile of Welsh library authorities for per capita attendance at events (QI6). Attendance figures have increased by 35% compared to 2023-24, and by 93% compared to 2022-23. Events have included involvement in



Caerphilly Pride; GAVO: Talk With Your Baby; garden crafts and stories; Blessed Crow music event; Make Music Day (sessions aimed to help increase confidence and life skills); Ghostbusters event (crafts and activities for all ages); autism friendly introduction sessions; and sensory sessions.

Caerphilly continues to meet the target for Location of service points (Q17). The authority has maintained all 18 static libraries during this reporting period. However, on the 31st August 2025, 10 libraries in the Caerphilly borough are due to close: Aberbargoed, Abercarn, Abertridwr, Bedwas, Deri, Llanbradach, Machen, Nelson, Oakdale, and Pengam. The service is undertaking work to assess Community Asset Transfers (CAT) and to offer a Library Community Outreach Service at community venues to mitigate the closures. In addition, the LibraryLink service is undergoing a review to free up spaces for eligible residents who may be affected by the closures.

Although virtual visits per capita remain below the median, this figure has increased by 37% compared to 2023-24 (Q18). The service suggests that the increase may be a result of a range of factors including the move to PressReader and accessing library events on Dewis Cymru. In addition, residents can now join the library for online access only and if they wish to take up full access, they can visit their local library to upgrade their account. The number of e-issues has increased by 66% compared with 2023-24 and have more than doubled compared with 2022-23. However, Caerphilly is below the national median for this measure.

## Expertise and capacity (Q1 13-14 &16)

Regarding Staffing levels and qualifications, whilst Caerphilly does not meet the total staffing and qualified staff per capita targets, it is above the median for both measures (Q113). However, the service had to close single-staffed sites on 8 occasions due to staffing pressures. The total staff figure remains unchanged from the previous year, whilst the number of qualified staff has decreased by 0.1 FTE due to retirement. A Community Librarian is part way through a master's qualification and 1 member of staff is currently undertaking CILIP Chartership with Welsh Government support. The CPD percentage has increased compared to 2023-24 and Caerphilly continues to meet this target.

Based on estimated figures from the CCBC Finance Team, Caerphilly remains in the top quartile nationally for revenue expenditure per capita and operational expenditure has increased by 10% compared to 2023-24 (Q114). However, the book budget has decreased by 8%. Although this may have been affected by the introduction of the LMS, it is a concern coming on top of the 15% reduction reported last year. The service has the highest proportion of spending on equipment and buildings nationally, in part due to a large NNDR (Business Rates) rebate.

Opening hours are unchanged from 2023-24 (Q116). Caerphilly continues to rank in the top quartile of Welsh library authorities for opening hours per capita and meets the target for this measure. After being closed by Storm Eunice in April 2022, Deri

Library reopened in August 2024. In addition, Pengam Library reopened at the beginning of April 2025 following CCBC Flying Start and Welsh Government investment to create a joint public library and Meithrin Flying Start building.

## 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 provided a comprehensive mapping of how the service supports the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and other Welsh Government strategic priorities. Examples of contributions against the Well-being Objectives include the following:

- **Enabling Our Children to Succeed in Education** e.g. Bookstart, Early Years sessions, Coding Clubs, Homework Clubs, Reading Hacks, reading groups; a volunteer scheme for 15-17-year-olds to support the Summer Reading Challenge and the School Engagement Scheme to enhance pupils' reading, information and learning skills aligned with the Welsh Curriculum.
- **Enabling Our Residents to Thrive** e.g. activities like Golden Oldies, Coding Clubs for Adults and Knit & Natter; Warm and Welcoming Spaces with free refreshments, SIM cards and warm packs; free digital support in partnership with Barclays; and employment-focused projects such as Bridges into Work and Communities for Work.
- **Enabling Our Communities to Thrive** e.g. schemes like Reading Well and Empathy Lab; free sanitary products via the Period Dignity Scheme; providing space for health organisations like NHS and MIND; and resettlement sessions for Ukrainian and Polish residents.
- **Enabling our Economy to Grow** e.g. space for business advice providers; state-of-the-art training and meeting facilities at the Rhymney Library Hub; affordable printing and scanning; assistance for EU Settlement Scheme applicants; and acting as anchor tenants in town centres to support local economic well-being.
- **Enabling Our Environment to be Greener** e.g. participating in the Books4U initiative; recycling plastic book jackets; membership cards made from recycled plastic; electric vehicle charging at Rhymney Library Hub; recycling discontinued books; and donating redundant furniture to community organisations.

## Future direction

Reporting on the authority's future direction and plans for the library service over the coming year, Caerphilly has set a clear course with the approval of its new Public Library Strategic Vision 2025-28 by the Council Cabinet in May 2025. This strategy reaffirms the council's commitment to deliver a sustainable, inclusive and inspiring library service that supports lifelong learning and fosters community connections.

Central to the vision is transitioning to a Hub model, ensuring residents can access library resources and wider support services at key town centre locations across the county borough. The strategy outlines four key objectives: enhancing the availability and range of library services; improving residents' access to information and support through Hubs; prioritising community needs within Hubs to strengthen individual resilience; and rationalising the number of library buildings to optimise resources and enhance service quality. Plans for 2025-26 include decommissioning 10 library sites; preparing and delivering community outreach projects; and working with organisations pursuing Community Asset Transfers to operate independent library services at affected locations. The service will also focus on preparing and staffing the new Hub libraries; developing a new Library Service Improvement Plan for 2026-2029; and maintaining its commitment to high-quality provision.

## Conclusion

Caerphilly Library Service continues to perform well in many areas. As in previous years, staff are clearly proud of the service they offer and have taken great time and care to provide detailed information in the WPLS return. The service offers a wide range of well-attended activities, including support for customers who have special requirements. Staffing has been relatively stable this year, with the service supporting staff training, including CILIP Chartership. Whilst there are undoubtedly challenges with single-staffed service points, as noted in previous annual reports, the uncertainty over the future level of provision in Caerphilly is clearly a concern. Naturally, an important focus for the library service in 2025-26 will be ensuring that the authority continues to deliver a high standard of provision to all customers via community outreach and other means. In these circumstances, it is essential that the service monitors the impact of changes on customer satisfaction, attendances, issues and other WPLS measures.

# Cardiff Annual Assessment Report 2024-25

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.

## Executive summary

Cardiff meets all of the 13 Core Entitlements in full. Of the 5 quality indicators which have targets, Cardiff is achieving 4 in full and 1 in part.

Cardiff continues to perform well and to offer a high-quality service to its customers, as evidenced by customer satisfaction scores. User support, training and event attendance continue to be key strengths of the service and staff clearly make efforts to ensure these are inclusive for customers with a wide range of needs and interests. It is positive that the number of e-issues has recovered from the reduction reported in 2023-24. However, the decline in the percentage of customers rating the book stock and IT facilities as good or very good is something the service will want to monitor, particularly in light of the reduction in the book budget reported this year. The reduction in staffing numbers in Cardiff this year is a concern, especially given the low number of qualified staff in the authority and the rapid expansion in the use of volunteers. For Cardiff to continue to offer a high-quality service to its customers, it is essential that it invests in knowledgeable and qualified staff.

- Cardiff has the highest per capita attendance rates at formal user training nationally and attendances have increased by 6% compared to 2023-24 (Q15).
- Cardiff is in the top quartile of library authorities for per capita attendance at events, and the total number of attendees has risen by 10% compared to 2023-24, and by 98% compared to 2022-23 (Q16).
- Cardiff is the highest-ranking service nationally for e-issues per capita (Q19).

## Note to the 2024-25 report

During 2024-25 local authorities in Wales migrated to a new all Wales Digital Library Platform. The process of migration caused some disruption to the operation of library services including the acquisition of new stock which had to be suspended for a period as individual services moved to the new system. There are also some slight differences in the configuration of the new platform which means that the user data across 2024-25 is not entirely consistent. The reports for 2024-25 do not therefore include the data detailed below for Quality Indicators 4, 8, 9 and 10.

- QI 4 Support for health and well-being
  - c) the number of loans of titles from the Reading Well in Wales series
- QI 8 Library use
  - c) the total number of active borrowers divided by the resident population, multiplied by 1,000
  - d) the total number of library members
  - e) the total number of book issues (adult and children separate)
  - f) the total number of audio-visual issues
- QI 9 Up-to-date and appropriate reading material
  - a) minimum acquisitions rate
  - b) % spent on children's resources
- QI 10 Welsh language resources
  - a) 4% minimum spend
  - b) Welsh issues per capita

All data will be reported and assessed for 2025-26 (the first year of Framework 7) and this data will be used to set the benchmark for the remaining years of the framework.

## Performance against the standards

The standards framework comprises of Core Entitlements, quality indicators with targets, quality indicators with benchmarks and impact measures.

### Core Entitlements

Cardiff reported meeting all of the 13 Core Entitlements in full through self-assessment. Based on the helpful commentary provided, the independent assessor agrees with the self-assessment.

### Quality indicators with targets

There are 12 quality indicators (QIs), of which 5 have constituent targets. Of these, Cardiff is achieving 4 in full and 1 in part.

- QI 4 (a) Support for health and well-being, **met in full p**
  - i) Reading Well scheme, **met**
  - ii) Designated health & well-being collection, **met**
  - iii) Information about healthier lifestyles and healthy behaviours, **met**
  - iv) Signposting to health & well-being services, **met**

QI 6 All static service points offer events/activities for users with special Requirements, **met in full p**

QI 7 Location of service points, **met in full p**

QI 13 Staffing levels and qualifications, **partially met n**

i) Staff per capita, **not met**

ii) Qualified staff per capita, **not met**

iii) Head of service qualification/training, **met**

iv) CPD percentage, **met**

QI 16 Opening hours per capita, **met in full p**

## Impact measures

The framework includes three indicators aimed at assessing the impact of library use on people's lives. These indicators do not have targets, and authorities are required to carry out user surveys for QI1 once over the 2022-23 to 2024-25 period. Cardiff undertook an adult survey and a children's survey in November 2024. The summary figures (lowest, median and highest) are based on all authorities providing data in the 2022-23, 2023-24 and 2024-25 returns. Rankings reflect the number of respondents, where 1 is the highest scoring authority.

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%	=8/19	68%	94%	99%
e) % of adults who think that the library has made a difference to their lives:	86%	=11/20	31%	86.5%	96%
QI 5 b) % of attendees of training sessions who said that the training had helped them achieve their purpose in attending:	100%	=1/18	75%	98.5%	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 describing a keep fit group that has been established at St Mellons Hub. When the original venue for the group closed, a local volunteer worked with the library's Inclusion Officer to relocate to St Mellons Hub, creating an inclusive exercise programme tailored to older adults and those with varying abilities.

With marketing support and equipment provided, the group has grown into a thriving weekly class attracting up to 35 participants, including individuals living with long-term conditions such as Parkinson's disease. For many, attending the group has become essential for maintaining both physical health and social well-being. As well as facilitating physical exercise, the sessions contribute to fostering friendships, building confidence and reducing loneliness. By providing a welcoming space for the keep fit group, St Mellons Hub demonstrates how Cardiff Libraries and Hubs support

community-led initiatives that improve health, enhance social connections and empower residents to lead more active, engaged lives.

## Quality indicators and benchmarks

The remaining indicators do not have targets but allow services to monitor their performance over time. The following table summarises Cardiff's position for 2024-25. Rankings reflect the number of respondents, where 1 is the highest scoring authority. 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	79%	=5/20	17%	70%	90%
c) health and well-being	84%	=2/20	1%	63%	90%
d) enjoyable, safe and inclusive	96%	15/20	93%	97%	100%
QI 2 Customer satisfaction					
a) 'very good' or 'good' choice of books	89%	=13/20	84%	90.5%	97%
b) 'very good' or 'good' customer care	97%	=14/20	92%	98%	100%
c) 'very good' or 'good' IT facilities	85%	=10/20	60%	85%	99%
d) 'very good' or 'good' overall	94%	17/20	85%	98%	100%
e) users aged 16 & under rating out of ten	9.2	=12/18	8.0	9.4	9.7

Performance indicator		Rank	Lowest	Median	Highest
QI 5 User support					
a) attendances per capita	214	1/21	1	28	214
c) informal support per capita	264	3/20	15	150	608
QI 6 Attendances at events per capita	502	4/22	14	224.5	764
QI 8 Library use					
b) virtual visits per capita	6,035	1/21	5	766	6,035
QI 13 Staffing levels and qualifications <sup>6</sup>					

<sup>6</sup> *Rankings are not included for volunteers as the implications of volunteer numbers are ambiguous.*



Performance indicator		Rank	Lowest	Median	Highest
(v) a) total volunteers	442	N/A	0	23	442
b) volunteer hours	20,509	N/A	0	883	22,706
QI 14 Operational expenditure					
a) total expenditure per capita	£26,209	1/21	£5,978	£12,646	£26,209
b) % on staff	65%	12/21	48%	67%	80%
% on information resources	4%	21/21	4%	9%	19%
% on equipment and buildings	28%	2/21	0%	2%	29%
% on other operational costs	3%	20/21	1%	15%	38%

## Analysis of performance

The Core Entitlements and quality indicators can be divided into three key areas. This section of the report outlines performance under these areas.

### Meeting customer needs (QI 1-2, 4-5)

Cardiff generally performs well in relation to Making a difference (QI1), with most results from the November 2024 survey seeing a small increase compared to the previous survey. However, whilst Customer satisfaction (QI2) rates are high, being 85% or above for all measures, the decline in the percentage of customers rating the book stock and IT facilities as good or very good warrants further investigation, and the service notes that customer trends in relation to book resources will be actively monitored.

Cardiff meets the target for Support for health and well-being in full (QI4). The library service plays an active role in initiatives such as STI community testing; blood pressure monitor loan scheme; work around dementia prevention; and supporting vaccination and screening programmes.

The service has the highest per capita attendance rates at formal user training activities nationally and attendances have increased by 6% compared to 2023-24 (QI5). 100% of attendees said they achieved their purpose in attending. The service is in the top quartile of Welsh library authorities for informal support per capita and attendances have increased by 20% compared to 2023-24.

### Access and use (QI 6-8)

Cardiff is in the top quartile of library authorities for per capita attendance at events, and the total number of attendees has risen by 10% compared to 2023-24, and by 98% compared to 2022-23 (QI6). Events this year have included sporting reminiscence, digital social clubs, conversation groups, Proud coffee mornings, tai chi, badminton, table tennis, walking groups, chess, dementia cafes, unpaid carer groups, cost of living events, literary events, Friends and Neighbours groups, Eco club, gardening groups, Welsh story time, HIV peer support group, local history events, and singing groups.



Cardiff is the highest-ranking service nationally for e-issues per capita. E-issues have increased by 17% compared to 2023-24, so despite the fall in e-issues last year, the figure is now 2% higher than that reported in 2022-23. In addition, although the number of virtual visits to Cardiff's website has declined by 21% compared to 2023-24, Cardiff continues to have the highest rate of virtual visits nationally (QI8).

## Expertise and capacity (QI 13-14 &16)

The figure for total staff has declined by 8 FTE compared to 2023-24, meaning that, although Cardiff remains the highest ranked service nationally, it no longer meets the target for this measure (QI13). The number of staff (FTE) has decreased by 20% since 2022-23. The service also does not meet the target for qualified staff per capita and is the lowest ranked authority nationally for this measure; the number of qualified staff is unchanged from 2023-24. The staff profile in Cardiff is an outlier nationally: across Wales as a whole one in every 6.3 (FTE) staff is qualified, but in Cardiff, just one staff member in 36.0 (FTE) is qualified. Cardiff has an extensive volunteering programme, with volunteers involved in tasks such as delivering Story and Rhyme time sessions in community languages; supporting the delivery of warm spaces; and supporting activity programmes. This year, the number of volunteers has almost doubled, and volunteer hours have increased more than threefold, at a time when staff numbers have declined. Volunteer hours equate to over 12 FTE in total. Given the rapid increase in the level of volunteer involvement in Cardiff at the same time as a reduction in paid staff, it is particularly important to ensure that volunteers are used according to [CILIP guidance](#).

Cardiff has the highest revenue spend per capita figure nationally (QI14) and this has increased by 6% compared to 2023-24. However, the book budget has decreased by 14% over the same period, although it remains around the national median. In light of staffing reductions, it is unsurprising that the proportion of the budget allocated to staffing has decreased this year. The proportion of the budget allocated to equipment and buildings has increased, including the refurbishment of Rumney Partnership Hub; repairs to the stonework of Cathays Heritage and Branch Library; the Neurodivergent Friendly Hubs project; and replacement of the Central Library Hub doors.

Whilst Cardiff continues to meet the Opening hours target (QI16) and is around the median for this measure, there has been a slight reduction (2%) in opening hours this year in Central Library Hub, Penylan Library, Canton Library, Cathays Heritage Library, Whitchurch, Rhiwbina, and Rhydypennau Hubs.

## 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 detailed their contribution to a range of national strategies. Examples of how Cardiff

supports the well-being objectives outlined in the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 include:

- **Protect, re-build and develop our services for our vulnerable people** e.g. Carers' Corners to provide information and guidance; dementia cafes; sensory-calm spaces and resources for neurodivergent individuals; warm spaces during winter; access to money advice services; and helping residents build digital skills for safe internet use to enhance well-being, employment opportunities and lifelong learning.
- **Celebrate diversity and move to eliminate inequality in all of its forms** e.g. creating LGBTQIA+ inclusive environments; participating in Pride Cymru Festival; running Proud Coffee Mornings in partnership with Pride Cymru; annual cultural celebrations; and multilingual story times with volunteers.
- **Push forward towards a million Welsh speakers, and enable our tourism, sports and arts industries to thrive** e.g. expanding Welsh language collections; supporting Welsh reading groups, story sessions and conversation groups; and working with Menter Caerdydd to deliver Welsh-medium activities.
- **Make our cities, towns and villages even better places in which to live and work** e.g. creating inclusive, accessible spaces that meet community needs; expanding volunteer-led events to improve older adults' social well-being; promoting reading, play and diverse events for children and young people; and collaborating with public health teams on initiatives like blood pressure monitor loans, STI test collection and health campaigns.

## Future direction

Reporting on the authority's future direction and plans for the library service over the coming year, Cardiff will focus on delivering the new Hubs and Library Strategy 2024-29, developed in consultation with customers to identify priorities for future services. Guided by the overarching vision of 'Delivering high quality services and support to meet the specific needs of each community', the strategy is structured around ten key aims. These include inspiring a love of reading and culture through diverse collections; providing trusted information and advice in line with national quality standards; and offering cost of living support for those most affected by economic pressures. Cardiff will also work to enhance digital inclusion by evolving its digital services; supporting employment and skills through mentoring and training; and empowering children and young people by engaging them in shaping collections and activities. The strategy commits to promoting health and well-being through initiatives such as Reading Well and community health testing; offering volunteer opportunities to build skills and community connections; and delivering inclusive spaces that meet Cardiff's diverse needs. Finally, the service will prioritise outreach and seek opportunities to extend provision to ensure that vulnerable or underserved communities benefit from Hub services.

## Conclusion

Cardiff continues to perform well and to offer a high-quality service to its customers, as evidenced by customer satisfaction scores. User support, training and event attendance continue to be key strengths of the service and staff clearly make efforts to ensure these are inclusive for customers with a wide range of needs and interests. It is positive that the number of e-issues has recovered from the reduction reported in 2023-24. However, the decline in the percentage of customers rating the book stock and IT facilities as good or very good is something the service will want to monitor, particularly in light of the reduction in the book budget reported this year. The reduction in staffing numbers in Cardiff this year is a concern, especially given the low number of qualified staff in the authority and the rapid expansion in the use of volunteers. For Cardiff to continue to offer a high-quality service to its customers, it is essential that it invests in knowledgeable and qualified staff.

# Carmarthenshire Annual Assessment Report 2024-25

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.

## Executive summary

Carmarthenshire meets all of the 13 Core Entitlements in full. Of the 5 quality indicators which have targets, Carmarthenshire is achieving 3 in full and 1 in part. One QI is not met.

Carmarthenshire's library service is clearly valued by customers, who rate their experiences of engaging with the service highly. The service performs particularly well for informal support and offers a wide range of activities for customers. However, the fact that the service does not meet the target for opening hours and the reduction in the percentage of the population within the specified distance/travel time of a service point are areas of concern, as is the reduction in operational expenditure and the book budget. The decline in e-issues is also something Carmarthenshire will want to investigate further as this does not reflect national trends.

- Carmarthenshire is the highest ranked service nationally for the following customer satisfaction measures: choice of books; rated very good or good overall; being enjoyable, safe and inclusive; and rating by users aged 16 and under (QI2).
- Carmarthenshire is above the median for informal support per capita and the number of informal support sessions increased by 17% compared to 2023-24, and by 55% compared to 2022-23 (QI5).
- The number of virtual visits has increased by 26% compared to 2023-24 and Carmarthenshire is in the top quartile nationally for this measure (QI8).

## Note to the 2024-25 report

During 2024-25 local authorities in Wales migrated to a new all Wales Digital Library Platform. The process of migration caused some disruption to the operation of library services including the acquisition of new stock which had to be suspended for a period as individual services moved to the new system. There are also some slight differences in the configuration of the new platform which means that the user data

across 2024-25 is not entirely consistent. The reports for 2024-25 do not therefore include the data detailed below for Quality Indicators 4, 8, 9 and 10.

- QI 4 Support for health and well-being
  - c) the number of loans of titles from the Reading Well in Wales series
- QI 8 Library use
  - c) the total number of active borrowers divided by the resident population, multiplied by 1,000
  - d) the total number of library members
  - e) the total number of book issues (adult and children separate)
  - f) the total number of audio-visual issues
- QI 9 Up-to-date and appropriate reading material
  - a) minimum acquisitions rate
  - b) % spent on children's resources
- QI 10 Welsh language resources
  - a) 4% minimum spend
  - b) Welsh issues per capita

All data will be reported and assessed for 2025-26 (the first year of Framework 7) and this data will be used to set the benchmark for the remaining years of the framework.

## Performance against the standards

The standards framework comprises of Core Entitlements, quality indicators with targets, quality indicators with benchmarks and impact measures.

### Core Entitlements

Carmarthenshire reported meeting all of the 13 Core Entitlements in full through self-assessment. Based on the detailed and helpful commentary provided, the independent assessor agrees with the self-assessment.

### Quality indicators with targets

There are 12 quality indicators (QIs), of which 5 have constituent targets. Of these, Carmarthenshire is achieving 3 in full and 1 in part. One QI is not met.

- QI 4 (a) Support for health and well-being, **met in full p**
  - i) Reading Well scheme, **met**
  - ii) Designated health & well-being collection, **met**
  - iii) Information about healthier lifestyles and healthy behaviours, **met**
  - iv) Signposting to health & well-being services, **met**
- QI 6 All static service points offer events/activities for users with special requirements, **met in full p**

QI 7 Location of service points, **met in full p**

QI 13 Staffing levels and qualifications, **partially met n**

i) Staff per capita, **not met**

ii) Qualified staff per capita, **met**

iii) Head of service qualification/training, **met**

iv) CPD percentage, **met**

QI 16 Opening hours per capita, **not met l**

## Impact measures

The framework includes three indicators aimed at assessing the impact of library use on people's lives. These indicators do not have targets, and authorities are required to carry out user surveys for QI1 once over the 2022-23 to 2024-25 period.

Carmarthenshire undertook an adult survey and a children's survey in February 2023. The summary figures (lowest, median and highest) are based on all authorities providing data in the 2022-23, 2023-24 and 2024-25 returns. Rankings reflect the number of respondents, where 1 is the highest scoring authority.

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%	7/19	68%	94%	99%
e) % of adults who think that the library has made a difference to their lives:	91%	8/20	31%	86.5%	96%
QI 5 b) % of attendees of training sessions who said that the training had helped them achieve their purpose in attending:	100%	=1/18	75%	98.5%	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. Carmarthenshire provided an impact statement which focussed on the Stars on the Shelves project. Carmarthenshire's participation in Stars on the Shelves created an inspiring, memorable experience for over 200 children, connecting them directly with some of Wales' most celebrated authors. Across eight events at libraries in Ammanford, Llanelli and Carmarthen, children engaged in interactive reading sessions, author-led workshops and discussions that ignited their creativity and enthusiasm for reading and writing. Workshops focused on storytelling techniques, character development and the writing process, while book signings provided children with treasured keepsakes and a personal connection to the authors. Feedback from students and teachers was overwhelmingly positive, with children expressing excitement about meeting authors and teachers noting increased motivation and improvements in literacy skills. Cllr Hazel Evans, Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Leisure, Culture and Tourism, praised the initiative, stating, "*The engagement between the authors and children was both positive and exciting, with*

*very inspirational outcomes.... It's a project that 'joins the dots' in reading for pleasure and has been very successful, motivating and inspiring."*

Through Stars on the Shelves, Carmarthenshire Libraries demonstrated the power of libraries to inspire creativity, enhance literacy and strengthen community ties by bringing books and their authors to life.

## Quality indicators and benchmarks

The remaining indicators do not have targets but allow services to monitor their performance over time. The following table summarises Carmarthenshire's position for 2024-25. Rankings reflect the number of respondents, where 1 is the highest scoring authority. 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	88%	3/20	17%	70%	90%
c) health and well-being	71%	7/20	1%	63%	90%
d) enjoyable, safe and inclusive	100%	=1/20	93%	97%	100%

Performance indicator		Rank	Lowest	Median	Highest
QI 2 Customer satisfaction					
a) 'very good' or 'good' choice of books	97%	1/20	84%	90.5%	97%
b) 'very good' or 'good' customer care	99%	=2/20	92%	98%	100%
c) 'very good' or 'good' IT facilities	87%	=8/20	60%	85%	99%
d) 'very good' or 'good' overall	100%	1/20	85%	98%	100%
e) users aged 16 & under rating out of ten	9.1	=1/18	8.0	9.4	9.7
QI 5 User support					
a) attendances per capita	6	16/21	1	28	214
c) informal support per capita	233	5/20	15	150	608
QI 6 Attendances at events per capita	229	11/22	14	224.5	764
QI 8 Library use					
b) virtual visits per capita	1,307	4/21	5	766	6,035

QI 13 Staffing levels and qualifications<sup>7</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Rankings are not included for volunteers as the implications of volunteer numbers are ambiguous.

Performance indicator		Rank	Lowest	Median	Highest
(v) a) total volunteers	9	N/A	0	23	442
b) volunteer hours	650	N/A	0	883	22,706
QI 14 Operational expenditure					
a) total expenditure per capita	£19,114	2/21	£5,978	£12,646	£26,209
b) % on staff	53%	20/21	48%	67%	80%
% on information resources	10%	=8/21	4%	9%	19%
% on equipment and buildings	4%	=6/21	0%	2%	29%
% on other operational costs	33%	3/21	1%	15%	38%

## Analysis of performance

The Core Entitlements and quality indicators can be divided into three key areas. This section of the report outlines performance under these areas.

### Meeting customer needs (QI 1-2, 4-5)

Comparing Carmarthenshire's customer survey results to those from across Wales for the Framework 6 Extension period, the service performs strongly for Making a difference (QI1) and Customer satisfaction (QI2), being above the median for Welsh library authorities for all measures, and the highest ranked nationally for choice of books; rated good or very good overall; being enjoyable, safe and inclusive; and rating by users aged 16 and under.

Carmarthenshire meets the target for Support for health and well-being (QI4). The service notes that well-being is high on the agenda for the service, with all staff expected to participate and achieve relevant accreditation (e.g. Investors in Carers).

Carmarthenshire is above the median for informal support per capita and the number of informal support sessions recorded increased by 17% compared to 2023-24 and by 55% compared to 2022-23 (QI5). However, attendance at formal training activities decreased by 71% compared to 2023-24 and Carmarthenshire is now below the national median for this measure. The return does not provide information on possible reasons for this reduction. However, training is clearly well-received by those who attend; 100% of attendees surveyed (n=1,122) said that they had achieved their purpose in attending.

### Access and use (QI 6-8)

Although event attendance figures have decreased slightly compared to 2023-24 (3%), Carmarthenshire is just above the median of Welsh library authorities for event attendance per capita (QI6). The library service offered a wide range of events, including fizzpop for children, lindy hop and jive, reminiscence, author visits, digital drop in, watercolour sessions, Christmas fairs, St David's Day fair, maker sessions, autism awareness, sewing, and a dementia session with school children and care home residents.



Carmarthenshire continues to meet the target for Location of service points (QI7). However, there has been a notable decrease in the percentage of the population within the specified distance of a service point (from 95% to 77%) due to a reduction in the mobile fleet from three vehicles to one.

The number of virtual visits reported has increased by 26% compared to 2023-24 and Carmarthenshire is in the top quartile nationally for this measure (QI8). However, e-issues in Carmarthenshire have decreased by 11% compared to 2023-24. It is the only library service to experience a notable reduction in e-issues this year. The service reports problems with PressReader which may have accounted, in part, for a reduction in numbers. Nevertheless, the service continues to be above the median for e-issues amongst Welsh library authorities.

## Expertise and capacity (QI 13-14 &16)

Carmarthenshire meets the target for qualified staff per capita and is in the top quartile of Welsh library authorities for this measure (QI13). Although the total number of staff has increased by 11.1 FTE compared to 2023-24, Carmarthenshire continues to not meet this target. The service reports that the council is evaluating every post with a recruitment freeze being in place since October 2024 and core staffing levels are being reviewed prior to any vacancies being advertised.

The service is in the top quartile nationally for operational expenditure per capita, although this figure is reduced (by 2%) compared to 2023-23 (QI14).

Carmarthenshire is also in the top quartile for per capita book budget. However, the book budget has seen a more notable reduction of 18% compared to 2023-24. The service notes that over the next 3 years there is a commitment to efficiency savings which is to be delivered across the service. Carmarthenshire does not meet the target for Opening hours (QI16) and continues to be below the national median for this measure.

## 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 moving forward with Welsh Government strategic goals, particularly Prosperity for All and the Connected and Ambitious Libraries framework.

Over the past year, Carmarthenshire Libraries placed particular emphasis on the well-being of older adults, especially those living with dementia. This included intergenerational sing-along events which were delivered in three regional libraries to promote the Reading Well for Dementia collection; inclusive chair dancing and traditional stroll sessions, supporting both physical and mental health; and a 1940s-style Tea Dance featuring period music, local heritage exhibits and reminiscence activities. All three initiatives demonstrated how libraries can meaningfully address

national priorities, fostering inclusion, promoting well-being and encouraging participation across generations.

## Future direction

Reporting on the authority's future direction and plans for the library service over the coming year, Carmarthenshire reports that it is working to evolve to meet the demands of a changing society while maintaining inclusive, high-quality services. The service anticipates significant revenue reductions over the next three to five years, requiring innovative delivery models to protect service quality and accessibility. Key commitments include maintaining strong service levels despite budget constraints; embedding a digital-first, customer-centric approach; investing in workforce development and succession planning; expanding engagement with schools through resources aligned to the national curriculum; and strengthening the library's role in preventative health initiatives.

To future-proof provision, the service will continue implementing four distinct library formats: Full Service Regional Libraries offering comprehensive services in larger towns; Digital Regional Libraries providing self-service access with signposting to digital support; Community/Branch Libraries delivering flexible local access with a mix of staffed and unstaffed models; and Mobile Libraries reaching rural and underserved communities. This model, informed by successful pilots and user feedback, aims to balance efficiency with equitable access.

## Conclusion

Carmarthenshire's library service is clearly valued by customers, who highly rate their experiences of engaging with the service. The service performs particularly well for informal support and offers a wide range of activities for customers. However, the fact that the service does not meet the target for opening hours and the reduction in the percentage of the population within the specified distance/travel time of a service point are areas of concern, as is the reduction in operational expenditure and the book budget. The decline in e-issues is also something Carmarthenshire will want to investigate further as this does not reflect national trends.

# Ceredigion Annual Assessment Report 2024-25

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.

## Executive summary

Ceredigion meets 11 of the 13 Core Entitlements in full. The remaining 2 Core Entitlements are not met. Of the 5 quality indicators which have targets, Ceredigion is achieving 3 in full and 1 in part. One target is not met.

Ceredigion continues to perform well in a number of areas. The increase in e-issues has continued and Ceredigion performs above the national median for informal support attendance. It is also positive that staff CPD has increased this year, allowing Ceredigion to meet the target for this measure. However, the fact that Ceredigion has not meet Core Entitlements 11 and 12 throughout the Framework 6 Extension period is a serious concern. As stated previously, consultation with users and the development of a strategy will give the service a stronger sense of its future direction, which is particularly important in a time of increasing budgetary pressures.

- Ceredigion is above the median for informal support per capita and the number of sessions reported has risen by 20% compared to 2023-24 (Q15).
- Ceredigion is in the top quartile of Welsh library authorities for e-issues per capita, which have increased by 23% compared to 2023-24 and by 75% since 2022-23 (Q18).
- Ceredigion has the highest number of opening hours per capita nationally (Q16).

## Note to the 2024-25 report

During 2024-25 local authorities in Wales migrated to a new all Wales Digital Library Platform. The process of migration caused some disruption to the operation of library services including the acquisition of new stock which had to be suspended for a period as individual services moved to the new system. There are also some slight differences in the configuration of the new platform which means that the user data across 2024-25 is not entirely consistent. The reports for 2024-25 do not therefore include the data detailed below for Quality Indicators 4, 8, 9 and 10.

QI 4 Support for health and well-being

c) the number of loans of titles from the Reading Well in Wales series

- QI 8 Library use
- c) the total number of active borrowers divided by the resident population, multiplied by 1,000
  - d) the total number of library members
  - e) the total number of book issues (adult and children separate)
  - f) the total number of audio-visual issues
- QI 9 Up-to-date and appropriate reading material
- a) minimum acquisitions rate
  - b) % spent on children's resources
- QI 10 Welsh language resources
- a) 4% minimum spend
  - b) Welsh issues per capita

All data will be reported and assessed for 2025-26 (the first year of Framework 7) and this data will be used to set the benchmark for the remaining years of the framework.

## Performance against the standards

The standards framework comprises of Core Entitlements, quality indicators with targets, quality indicators with benchmarks and impact measures.

### Core Entitlements

Ceredigion reported meeting 11 of the 13 Core Entitlements in full through self-assessment, with the remaining 2 Core Entitlements being self-assessed as not met. Based on the commentary provided, the independent assessor agrees with the self-assessment. However, as was the case in 2023-24, Ceredigion has provided limited information in the return, making it difficult for the independent assessor to make an accurate judgement. As has been the case throughout the Framework 6 extension period, Ceredigion does not meet CE12 as the service is still working on a strategy. CE11 is also not met as the service has not consulted users during the Framework 6 (or Framework 6 Extension) period.

### Quality indicators with targets

There are 12 quality indicators (QIs), of which 5 have constituent targets. Of these, Ceredigion is achieving 3 in full and 1 in part. One target is not met.

- QI 4 (a) Support for health and well-being, **met in full p**
- i) Reading Well scheme, **met**
  - ii) Designated health & well-being collection, **met**
  - iii) Information about healthier lifestyles and healthy behaviours, **met**
  - iv) Signposting to health & well-being services, **met**
- QI 6 All static service points offer events/activities for users with special Requirements, **met in full p**

QI 7 Location of service points, **not met** |

QI 13 Staffing levels and qualifications, **partially met** n

i) Staff per capita, **not met**

ii) Qualified staff per capita, **not met**

iii) Head of service qualification/training, **met**

iv) CPD percentage, **met**

QI 16 Opening hours per capita, **met in full p**

## Impact measures

The framework includes three indicators aimed at assessing the impact of library use on people's lives. These indicators do not have targets, and authorities are required to carry out user surveys for QI1 once over the 2022-23 to 2024-25 period. No data are available for Ceredigion as the service has not carried out an adult or children's user survey during the Framework 6 Extension period. The summary figures (lowest, median and highest) are based on all authorities providing data in the 2022-23, 2023-24 and 2024-25 returns. Rankings reflect the number of respondents, where 1 is the highest scoring authority.

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:	N/A	N/A	68%	94%	99%
e) % of adults who think that the library has made a difference to their lives:	N/A	N/A	31%	86.5%	96%
QI 5 b) % of attendees of training sessions who said that the training had helped them achieve their purpose in attending:	91%	=15/18	75%	98.5%	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 described the transformative role that the library played in supporting a woman in her 60s with learning difficulties as she navigated the challenges of independent living following the loss of her parents. When her sister brought her to the library for help, staff responded with compassionate, practical support that empowered her to take important steps towards greater independence. Library staff connected her with Social Services and Citizens Advice; assisted her in applying for a passport by navigating the GOV.UK website; and helped her to secure a bus pass. These actions enabled her to access essential services, manage daily tasks and maintain mobility, including using her bus pass to visit friends.

Her parents were avid newspaper readers and through accessing PressReader on her sister's device she is now able to access them for free outside of the library. In addition, she now visits the library regularly and chats with staff in a welcoming

environment. Her story illustrates how libraries can offer personalised, life-enhancing support that fosters independence, inclusion and a sense of belonging.

## Quality indicators and benchmarks

The remaining indicators do not have targets but allow services to monitor their performance over time. The following table summarises Ceredigion's position for 2024-25. Rankings reflect the number of respondents, where 1 is the highest scoring authority. 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	N/A	N/A	17%	70%	90%
c) health and well-being	N/A	N/A	1%	63%	90%
d) enjoyable, safe and inclusive	N/A	N/A	93%	97%	100%

Performance indicator		Rank	Lowest	Median	Highest
QI 2 Customer satisfaction					
a) 'very good' or 'good' choice of books	N/A	N/A	84%	90.5%	97%
b) 'very good' or 'good' customer care	N/A	N/A	92%	98%	100%
c) 'very good' or 'good' IT facilities	N/A	N/A	60%	85%	99%
d) 'very good' or 'good' overall	N/A	N/A	85%	98%	100%
e) users aged 16 & under rating out of ten	N/A	N/A	8.0	9.4	9.7
QI 5 User support					
a) attendances per capita	5	17/21	1	28	214
c) informal support per capita	173	7/20	15	150	608
QI 6 Attendances at events per capita	14	22/22	14	224.5	764
QI 8 Library use					
b) virtual visits per capita	907	8/21	5	766	6,035
QI 13 Staffing levels and qualifications <sup>8</sup>					

<sup>8</sup> *Rankings are not included for volunteers as the implications of volunteer numbers are ambiguous.*

Performance indicator		Rank	Lowest	Median	Highest
(v) a) total volunteers	20	N/A	0	23	442
b) volunteer hours	1,350	N/A	0	883	22,706
QI 14 Operational expenditure					
a) total expenditure per capita	£10,128	17/21	£5,978	£12,646	£26,209
b) % on staff,	80%	1/21	48%	67%	80%
% on information resources	19%	1/21	4%	9%	19%
% on equipment and buildings	0%	21/21	0%	2%	29%
% on other operational costs	1%	21/21	1%	15%	38%

## Analysis of performance

The Core Entitlements and quality indicators can be divided into three key areas. This section of the report outlines performance under these areas.

### Meeting customer needs (QI 1-2, 4-5)

Ceredigion has not consulted with users during the Framework 6 Extension period. The 2023-24 WPLS return stated that a consultation process was included in the business plan for 2024-25, but no results have been provided. Ceredigion meets the target for Support for health and well-being (QI4) in full. The service is above the national median for informal support per capita and the number of sessions reported has risen by 20% compared to 2023-24 (QI5). However, the service is below the median for formal training per capita and numbers are down slightly (4%) compared to 2023-24.

### Access and use (QI 6-8)

Ceredigion is in the top quartile of Welsh library authorities for e-issues per capita (QI8). E-issues have increased by 23% compared to 2023-24 and by 75% since 2022-23. Virtual visits per capita remain above the median, although there has been a small decline (3%) compared to 2023-24.

Ceredigion does not meet the target for Location of service points (QI7) as the number of mobile libraries was reduced from 3 to 2 this year. The service is reorganising the routes of the remaining two mobiles to try to improve coverage. The service is in the bottom quartile of Welsh library authorities for event attendance per capita, although this has increased by 7% compared to 2023-24, and by 13% compared to 2022-23 (QI6). Limited information is provided about the types of events offered.

### Expertise and capacity (QI 13-14 &16)

Ceredigion meets the target for Opening hours and has the highest number of opening hours per capita nationally (QI16). The number of opening hours has remained static throughout the Framework 6 Extension period. The service is below the median for revenue spend per capita, which remains almost unchanged from



2023-24 (Q114). Whilst the per capita book budget has decreased by 8% compared to 2023-24, Ceredigion is in the top quartile nationally for this measure. The percentage of the budget allocated to staffing is the highest nationally.

Ceredigion partially meets the target for Staff levels and qualifications (Q113). CPD percentage has increased this year, meaning the service now meets the target for this measure. However, the service is below the median for both total staff and qualified staff per capita and does not meet the target for either measure. Total staff is unchanged from 2023-24, but the number of qualified staff has decreased by 1 FTE. Ceredigion lost 1 professional post this year and carried 1 professional post as vacant, along with 3 other posts (equivalent of 1 FTE) due to required budget savings and in preparation for reorganisation.

## 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 highlighted how its activities contribute to national strategies, including the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015. Some examples include:

- **A prosperous Wales** e.g. hosting job clubs, supporting Universal Credit applications, and facilitating online applications for Ceredigion's fully digital housing register.
- **A healthier Wales** e.g. expanding support for people living with dementia; acting as an agent for Wireless for the Blind, supplying free audio devices; and providing access to talking books.
- **A more equal Wales** e.g. distributing free period products through the Welsh Government's Period Dignity Scheme; offering loanable sports equipment in partnership with leisure centres; providing IT classes for beginners; and supporting Bookstart with nearly 100% birth coverage.
- **A Wales of cohesive communities** e.g. offering local information to foster community engagement.
- **A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language** e.g. employing fully bilingual staff who promote Welsh; dedicating 8% of the book budget to Welsh language resources; supporting local history through comprehensive collections; organising author events, storytimes and lectures; engaging with community groups like Merched y Wawr and WI; and hosting bilingual reading groups.
- **A globally responsible Wales** e.g. working closely with other Welsh library authorities through purchasing and digital consortia.

## Future direction

Reporting on the authority's future direction and plans for the library service over the coming year, Ceredigion library service is aligning its development closely with



Ceredigion County Council's strategic priorities, particularly the Digital Strategy 2024-30 and broader community-focused objectives. Although no standalone library strategy is currently published, key themes are emerging that will shape library services in the county.

Digital inclusion will be a central focus, with libraries expected to deliver digital skills training for all ages; provide free access to Wi-Fi and devices; and support residents in navigating online public services. In parallel, libraries will strengthen their role in promoting community well-being and social inclusion by offering safe, welcoming spaces aimed at reducing loneliness and isolation; hosting inclusive events for families and vulnerable groups; and supporting mental health through reading and creative activities. Lifelong learning and literacy remain priorities, with plans to promote early years literacy; support adult learning (including ESOL and basic skills); and collaborate with schools and colleges to enhance educational outcomes. Libraries will also contribute to the council's sustainability and cultural goals by adopting eco-friendly practices; running awareness campaigns; and offering bilingual services and cultural programming to celebrate Welsh language and local identity.

## Conclusion

Ceredigion continues to perform well in a number of areas. The increase in e-issues has continued and Ceredigion performs above the national median for informal support attendance. It is also positive that staff CPD has increased this year, allowing Ceredigion to meet the target for this measure. However, the fact that Ceredigion has not meet Core Entitlements 11 and 12 throughout the Framework 6 Extension period is a serious concern. As stated previously, consultation with users and the development of a strategy will give the service a stronger sense of its future direction, which is particularly important in a time of increasing budgetary pressures.

As noted in previous annual reports, the level of commentary offered in Ceredigion's return is very limited compared to that provided by many authorities, and this limits the independent assessor's ability to highlight positive work being done within the service or to fully reflect on areas where Ceredigion performs less well than other library services.

# Conwy Annual Assessment Report 2024-25

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.

## Executive summary

Conwy meets all of the 13 Core Entitlements in full. Of the 5 quality indicators which have targets, Conwy is achieving 4 in full and 1 in part.

Conwy continues to perform well in many areas, including virtual visits, issues and formal training/informal support attendance. The service clearly works hard to better understand and address areas that have been identified as a concern through customer surveys and other WPLS data. It is also positive that opening hours have been maintained and the book fund has recovered slightly this year. However, whilst the service continues to invest in staff development, the reduction in the number of qualified staff is a concern, as is the longer-term financial security of Conwy Libraries, especially when Shared Prosperity Funding ends in 2026.

- Informal support sessions per capita continue to be in the top quartile nationally and the number of sessions has increased by 11% compared to 2023-24 (Q15).
- The number of user attendances at library events has increased by 13% compared to 2023-24, and by 46% compared to 2022-23 (Q16).
- Conwy is above the national median for e-issues per capita and issues have increased by 34% compared to 2023-24 and have more than doubled since 2022-23 (Q18).

## Note to the 2024-25 report

During 2024-25 local authorities in Wales migrated to a new all Wales Digital Library Platform. The process of migration caused some disruption to the operation of library services including the acquisition of new stock which had to be suspended for a period as individual services moved to the new system. There are also some slight differences in the configuration of the new platform which means that the user data across 2024-25 is not entirely consistent. The reports for 2024-25 do not therefore include the data detailed below for Quality Indicators 4, 8, 9 and 10.

QI 4 Support for health and well-being

c) the number of loans of titles from the Reading Well in Wales series

- QI 8 Library use
- c) the total number of active borrowers divided by the resident population, multiplied by 1,000
  - d) the total number of library members
  - e) the total number of book issues (adult and children separate)
  - f) the total number of audio-visual issues
- QI 9 Up-to-date and appropriate reading material
- a) minimum acquisitions rate
  - b) % spent on children's resources
- QI 10 Welsh language resources
- a) 4% minimum spend
  - b) Welsh issues per capita

All data will be reported and assessed for 2025-26 (the first year of Framework 7) and this data will be used to set the benchmark for the remaining years of the framework.

## Performance against the standards

The standards framework comprises of Core Entitlements, quality indicators with targets, quality indicators with benchmarks and impact measures.

### Core Entitlements

Conwy reported meeting all of the 13 Core Entitlements in full through self-assessment. Based on the detailed and helpful commentary provided, the independent assessor agrees with the self-assessment.

### Quality indicators with targets

There are 12 quality indicators (QIs), of which 5 have constituent targets. Of these, Conwy is achieving 4 in full and 1 in part.

- QI 4 (a) Support for health and well-being, **met in full p**
- i) Reading Well scheme, **met**
  - ii) Designated health & well-being collection, **met**
  - iii) Information about healthier lifestyles and healthy behaviours, **met**
  - iv) Signposting to health & well-being services, **met**
- QI 6 All static service points offer events/activities for users with special Requirements, **met in full p**
- QI 7 Location of service points, **met in full p**
- QI 13 Staffing levels and qualifications, **partially met n**
- i) Staff per capita, **not met**
  - ii) Qualified staff per capita, **not met**

- iii) Head of service qualification/training, **met**
- iv) CPD percentage, **met**

QI 16 Opening hours per capita, **met in full p**

## Impact measures

The framework includes three indicators aimed at assessing the impact of library use on people's lives. These indicators do not have targets, and authorities are required to carry out user surveys for QI1 once over the 2022-23 to 2024-25 period. Conwy undertook an adult survey and a children's survey in November 2023. The summary figures (lowest, median and highest) are based on all authorities providing data in the 2022-23, 2023-24 and 2024-25 returns. Rankings reflect the number of respondents, where 1 is the highest scoring authority.

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%	=13/19	68%	94%	99%
e) % of adults who think that the library has made a difference to their lives:	79%	=18/20	31%	86.5%	96%
QI 5 b) % of attendees of training sessions who said that the training had helped them achieve their purpose in attending:	91%	=15/18	75%	98.5%	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 an impact statement which focussed on the value of the Reading Friends groups, in particular Clwb Clebran at Abergele Library. Through Clwb Clebran, Conwy Libraries demonstrate how libraries can support language learning, build confidence and foster community, while celebrating and promoting Welsh culture.

Established three years ago, this fortnightly group supports adults who began as new Welsh learners initially lacking confidence to converse in Welsh. Clwb Clebran is led by a fluent Welsh speaker and offers learners opportunities to build their language skills through conversation, listening, reading and engaging in games. Resources like Papurau Bro, Welsh magazines and text extracts enrich the experience. Over time, participants have transitioned from hesitantly speaking Welsh only during the sessions to conversing naturally in Welsh before, during and after meetings. The supportive, informal environment has empowered attendees to join additional learner groups, form friendships and extend their practice beyond the library, including watching S4C, listening to Radio Cymru, and attending Welsh language gigs. Geoff, a group member, shared how Clwb Clebran helped him, *"Meeting different people with different levels of Welsh, it gives me the chance to practise both my reading and my conversation. It's really helped my confidence."*

The group's success has generated demand from learners inside and outside Conwy county with requests for weekly sessions. Judith Griffith, Library Manager at Abergele, commented, *"It's been extremely rewarding to witness the improvement in attendees' Welsh language skills and their growing confidence."*

## Quality indicators and benchmarks

The remaining indicators do not have targets but allow services to monitor their performance over time. The following table summarises Conwy's position for 2024-25. Rankings reflect the number of respondents, where 1 is the highest scoring authority. 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	64%	=15/20	17%	70%	90%
c) health and well-being	49%	15/20	1%	63%	90%
d) enjoyable, safe and inclusive	95%	16/20	93%	97%	100%
QI 2 Customer satisfaction					
a) 'very good' or 'good' choice of books	88%	15/20	84%	90.5%	97%
b) 'very good' or 'good' customer care	96%	18/20	92%	98%	100%
c) 'very good' or 'good' IT facilities	64%	19/20	60%	85%	99%
d) 'very good' or 'good' overall	97%	=12/20	85%	98%	100%
e) users aged 16 & under rating out of ten	9.1	14/18	8.0	9.4	9.7
QI 5 User support					
a) attendances per capita	34	=6/21	1	28	214
c) informal support per capita	253	4/20	15	150	608
QI 6 Attendances at events per capita	207	15/22	14	224.5	764
QI 8 Library use					
b) virtual visits per capita	5,372	2/21	5	766	6,035
QI 13 Staffing levels and qualifications <sup>9</sup>					

<sup>9</sup> Rankings are not included for volunteers as the implications of volunteer numbers are ambiguous.

Performance indicator		Rank	Lowest	Median	Highest
(v) a) total volunteers	40	N/A	0	23	442
b) volunteer hours	1,850	N/A	0	883	22,706
QI 14 Operational expenditure					
a) total expenditure per capita	£14,932	6/21	£5,978	£12,646	£26,209
b) % on staff,	73%	8/21	48%	67%	80%
% on information resources	10%	=8/21	4%	9%	19%
% on equipment and buildings	2%	=11/21	0%	2%	29%
% on other operational costs	15%	11/21	1%	15%	38%

## Analysis of performance

The Core Entitlements and quality indicators can be divided into three key areas. This section of the report outlines performance under these areas.

### Meeting customer needs (QI 1-2, 4-5)

Now that data are available for all authorities conducting a customer survey during the Framework 6 Extension period, this positions Conwy below the median of Welsh library authorities for all Making a difference (QI1) and Customer satisfaction (QI2) measures. During 2024-25, the service has taken action to address responses for health and well-being, including the promotion of the Reading Well collections. In response to the reduced satisfaction rate with IT facilities, the service was able to secure funding for 20 new screens in Llandudno and Kinmel Bay libraries; updated PCs to provide compatibility with Windows 11; and extended access to Wi-Fi printing across all libraries.

Per capita attendance at formal training is above the median for Welsh library authorities and has increased by 3% compared to 2023-24, and by 7% compared to 2022-23 (QI5). Informal support sessions per capita continue to be in the top quartile nationally and the number of sessions has increased by 11% compared to 2023-24. The service meets the target for Health and well-being (QI4) in full. Activities this year included journaling sessions for people with dementia and their carers funded through the Welsh Government/Books Council of Wales funding.

### Access and use (QI 6-8)

Although Conwy is below the national median for User attendances at library events (QI6), the number of reported attendances has increased by 13% compared to 2023-24, and by 46% compared to 2022-23. Through the SPF-funded project 'Creu'r Sbardun', nearly 1,500 events were held at libraries, including story times, reading groups, Shared Reading, Reading Friends groups, craft and story sessions, digital help, and activities with local groups such as Scouts and Merched y Wawr.

Conwy continues to be in the top quartile of Welsh library authorities for virtual visits per capita, although the total number of virtual visits has decreased slightly (1%)

compared to 2023-24, possibly due to the online service disruption with implementation of the new all-Wales LMS (QI8). Conwy is above the national median for e-issues per capita and issues have increased by 34% compared to 2023-24 and have more than doubled since 2022-23.

## Expertise and capacity (QI 13-14 &16)

Whilst Conwy is above the median of Welsh library authorities for total staff, it does not meet the target for this measure and the total staff figure has seen a small reduction since 2023-24 (0.4 FTE) (QI13). A staffing restructure has been completed providing more staffing capacity at frontline manager level. The service is now looking to recruit to fill posts which had remained vacant pending the decision on a potential reduction in opening hours. However, qualified staffing levels have reduced more notably as a further two posts were removed in April 2024 (1.86 FTE). CPD percentage has increased this year due to all-Wales LMS training, health and safety, and management training for the five newly appointed Library Managers. Three members of staff are currently undertaking CILIP Chartership with Welsh Government support.

Conwy is above the national median for revenue spend per capita, although the budget has reduced by 3% compared to 2023-24 (QI14). Whilst the reduction of 3% may seem relatively small, it comes in a context of rising costs and equates to 49p per person, which is the third largest per capita reduction in Wales this year. Nevertheless, it is positive that, after a reduction to the book budget in 2023-24, this has increased slightly (2%) this year, although it remains below the 2022-23 figure.

Conwy meets the target for Opening hours, which are unchanged from 2023-24 (QI16). The service reports that, following a public consultation in 2024 on a potential reduction of 25% in opening hours due to budgetary constraints, these proposals were not accepted by the Leader and Cabinet in the 2025-26 budget setting process.

## 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. Conwy provided examples of how it continues to contribute to all seven goals of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and the Programme for Government. The development of libraries as community hubs remains central, with a strong focus on upskilling staff, supporting community library groups and building partnerships to address national priorities including poverty, literacy, older people, digital access and loneliness.

Through the SPF-funded cultural programme 'Creu'r Sbardun', three library staff have taken on dedicated roles to deliver innovative cultural activities that increase access to the arts and place the Welsh language at the heart of events, aligning with the Conwy Culture Strategy. Musical performances, dance, poetry and workshops in



libraries have contributed to a Wales of Cohesive Communities and a Wales of Thriving Culture and Welsh Language. National Library initiatives like 'Cornel Clip' have extended cultural participation at Llanrwst and Conwy libraries.

The service continues to support digital inclusion and social well-being through initiatives like Warm Welcome sessions; Safe Spaces provision, which the service has led expansion from the initial pilot at 5 area libraries to a total of 26 sites throughout the county; and free holiday story time and craft sessions. Collaborative projects with Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board and the Mental Wellness Team, such as the Recovery College model in Colwyn Bay Library, demonstrate integrated work supporting mental health and well-being.

The service's participation in the Age Friendly WHO application, work with partners on anti-racist and LGBT+ action plans and central role in the CCBC Customer Strategy all highlight its commitment to inclusive, accessible library provision that supports key Welsh Government strategic goals and the Well-being Act.

## Future direction

Reporting on the authority's future direction and plans for the library service over the coming year, Conwy will continue to operate within the framework of the existing Library and Information Strategy, while facing ongoing financial challenges that have prompted reviews of service deliverables. Consultation was carried out with customers on potential reductions of up to 25% in opening hours; however, the Leader and Cabinet decided against implementing these cuts for 2025-26, preserving current opening hours. Despite this, a staffing restructure completed in April 2024, has seen three professional roles deleted, further reducing capacity within a team that has already experienced significant reductions since 2017. This leaves only four professional roles within the service, limiting development opportunities and placing pressure on staff.

The service remains committed to progressing its Libraries as Community Hubs model, supported by Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF) resources and continuation funding into 2025-26 to enable marketing efforts and the delivery of a diverse cultural programme. Conwy Libraries will continue to build partnerships with health and social care colleagues to develop new referral pathways. The authority has also taken on the authority-wide function of Age Friendly Communities. Successful shared library locations in Conwy and Llanrwst have informed plans to explore a similar model at Llandudno, with a proposal to move library services to Venue Cymru to improve accessibility, energy efficiency and opening hours.

Financial sustainability remains a serious concern for Conwy, with Shared Prosperity Funding providing partial protection until March 2026, beyond which further budget pressures could impact service delivery.



## Conclusion

Conwy continues to perform well in many areas, including virtual visits, issues and formal training/informal support attendance. The service clearly works hard to better understand and address areas that have been identified as a concern through customer surveys and other WPLS data. It is also positive that opening hours have been maintained, and the book fund has recovered slightly this year. However, whilst the service continues to invest in staff development, the reduction in the number of qualified staff is a concern, as is the longer-term financial security of Conwy Libraries, especially when Shared Prosperity Funding ends in 2026.

# Denbighshire Annual Assessment Report 2024-25

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.

## Executive summary

Denbighshire reported meeting all of the 13 Core Entitlements in full. However, the independent assessor considers that the service meets 12 of the 13 Core Entitlements in full and 1 in part. Of the 5 quality indicators which have targets, Denbighshire is achieving 3 in full and 1 in part. One QI is not met.

Denbighshire performs well in a number of areas: e-issues and virtual visits have risen, as has attendance at formal training. It is also positive that time allocated for staff training has increased this year. However, there are a number of areas of concern. The reduction in opening hours, staffing and book budget this year all present significant challenges to the effective operation of the service. Whilst it is not possible to make a definitive connection from the information available, it is perhaps unsurprising that informal support and event attendance have declined alongside opening hours and staffing numbers. In this context, the proposed expansion of the volunteering programme and a move to more unstaffed opening hours both raise concerns. Whilst appreciating that Denbighshire is aiming to develop its services within a challenging financial environment, the value of having knowledgeable staff available to support library customers should not be underestimated. In addition, whilst it may be possible to secure some additional funds for supplementary activities from alternative sources, funding for core services needs to be maintained to deliver the key elements of a comprehensive and efficient library service.

- Denbighshire is above the national median for virtual visits and the number of virtual visits reported has more than doubled compared to 2023-24 (QI8).
- Per capita attendance at formal training has increased by 28% compared to 2023-24 and by 61% compared to 2022-23 (QI5).
- Staff CPD percentage has increased markedly, and Denbighshire now meets this target (QI13).

## Note to the 2024-25 report

During 2024-25 local authorities in Wales migrated to a new all Wales Digital Library Platform. The process of migration caused some disruption to the operation of library services including the acquisition of new stock which had to be suspended for a period as individual services moved to the new system. There are also some slight differences in the configuration of the new platform which means that the user data across 2024-25 is not entirely consistent. The reports for 2024-25 do not therefore include the data detailed below for Quality Indicators 4, 8, 9 and 10.

- QI 4 Support for health and well-being
  - c) the number of loans of titles from the Reading Well in Wales series
- QI 8 Library use
  - c) the total number of active borrowers divided by the resident population, multiplied by 1,000
  - d) the total number of library members
  - e) the total number of book issues (adult and children separate)
  - f) the total number of audio-visual issues
- QI 9 Up-to-date and appropriate reading material
  - a) minimum acquisitions rate
  - b) % spent on children's resources
- QI 10 Welsh language resources
  - a) 4% minimum spend
  - b) Welsh issues per capita

All data will be reported and assessed for 2025-26 (the first year of Framework 7) and this data will be used to set the benchmark for the remaining years of the framework.

## Performance against the standards

The standards framework comprises of Core Entitlements, quality indicators with targets, quality indicators with benchmarks and impact measures.

### Core Entitlements

Denbighshire reported meeting all of the 13 Core Entitlements in full through self-assessment. Based on the detailed and helpful commentary provided, the independent assessor considers that the service has met 12 Core Entitlements in full and 1 in part.

1. **Libraries in Wales are free to join and open to all.**  
Self-Assessment: Fully met  
Independent Assessor: **Fully met p**

- 2. Libraries in Wales ensure friendly, knowledgeable and qualified staff are on hand to help.**  
Self-Assessment: Fully met  
Independent Assessor: **Fully met p**
- 3. Libraries in Wales provide access to a range of services, activities, and high-quality resources in a range of formats to support lifelong learning, personal health and well-being, community participation, cultural experiences, recreation, and reading for pleasure.**  
Self-Assessment: Fully met  
Independent Assessor: **Fully met p**
- 4. Libraries in Wales provide appropriate services, facilities and information resources for individuals and groups with special requirements.**  
Self-Assessment: Fully met  
Independent Assessor: **Fully met p**
- 5. Libraries provide appropriate safe, attractive and accessible physical spaces with suitable staffed opening hours.**  
Self-Assessment: Fully met  
Independent Assessor: **Partially met n**  
This is due to the drastic reduction in opening hours in June 2024, with a corresponding reduction in staffing. Opening hours per capita were 24% lower in 2024-25 compared to the previous year following a 40% reduction implemented mid-way through the year. It is noted that the service tries to ensure that the hours offered in local libraries complement each other, but it is questionable whether local needs are being adequately met in the light of the significant reduction in hours.
- 6. Libraries in Wales lend books for free, and deliver free access to information, including online information resources available 24 hours a day.**  
Self-Assessment: Fully met  
Independent Assessor: **Fully met p**
- 7. Libraries in Wales provide free use of the Internet including Wi-Fi, and access to digital equipment, in all service points.**  
Self-Assessment: Fully met  
Independent Assessor: **Fully met p**
- 8. Libraries in Wales provide access to services, cultural activities, and high-quality resources in the Welsh language.**  
Self-Assessment: Fully met

Independent Assessor: **Fully met p**

- 9. Libraries in Wales work in partnership to share catalogues and facilitate access to the resources of all Welsh libraries.**

Self-Assessment: Fully met

Independent Assessor: **Fully met p**

- 10. Libraries in Wales work with a range of partners to promote and deliver services to new and diverse audiences, enabling more people to benefit from those services.**

Self-Assessment: Fully met

Independent Assessor: **Fully met p**

- 11. Libraries in Wales regularly consult users to gather their views on the service and information about their changing needs.**

Self-Assessment: Fully met

Independent Assessor: **Fully met p**

- 12. Libraries in Wales provide access to their library service strategy, policies, objectives and vision, in print and online, in a range of languages appropriate for the community.**

Self-Assessment: Fully met

Independent Assessor: **Fully met p**

- 13. Libraries in Wales provide support to help improve people's digital skills and confidence, including the use of e-government services**

Self-Assessment: Fully met

Independent Assessor: **Fully met p**

## Quality indicators with targets

There are 12 quality indicators (QIs), of which 5 have constituent targets. Of these, Denbighshire is achieving 3 in full and 1 in part. One QI is not met

- QI 4 (a) Support for health and well-being, **met in full p**

i) Reading Well scheme, **met**

ii) Designated health & well-being collection, **met**

iii) Information about healthier lifestyles and healthy behaviours, **met**

iv) Signposting to health & well-being services, **met**

- QI 6 All static service points offer events/activities for users with special Requirements, **met in full p**

- QI 7 Location of service points, **met in full p**

- QI 13 Staffing levels and qualifications, **partially met n**

i) Staff per capita, **not met**

- ii) Qualified staff per capita, **not met**
- iii) Head of service qualification/training, **met**
- iv) CPD percentage, **met**

QI 16 Opening hours per capita, **not met**

## Impact measures

The framework includes three indicators aimed at assessing the impact of library use on people's lives. These indicators do not have targets, and authorities are required to carry out user surveys for QI1 once over the 2022-23 to 2024-25 period.

Denbighshire conducted an adult survey and a children's survey in October 2024.

The summary figures (lowest, median and highest) are based on all authorities providing data in the 2022-23, 2023-24 and 2024-25 returns. Rankings reflect the number of respondents, where 1 is the highest scoring authority.

Performance indicator		Rank	Lowest	Median	Highest
QI 1 Making a difference					
b) % of young people who think that the library helps them learn and find things out:	96%	=5/19	68%	94%	99%
e) % of adults who think that the library has made a difference to their lives:	87%	10/20	31%	86.5%	96%
QI 5 b) % of attendees of training sessions who said that the training had helped them achieve their purpose in attending:	75%	18/18	75%	98.5%	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 showing the benefits of volunteers to complement library services.

## Quality indicators and benchmarks

The remaining indicators do not have targets but allow services to monitor their performance over time. The following table summarises Denbighshire's position for 2024-25. Rankings reflect the number of respondents, where 1 is the highest scoring authority. Indicators 'per capita' are calculated per 1,000 population unless otherwise noted.

Performance indicator		Rank	Lowest	Median	Highest
<b>QI 1 Making a difference</b>					
a) % of adults who think that using the library has helped them develop new skills	68%	14/20	17%	70%	90%
c) health and well-being	57%	12/20	1%	63%	90%
d) enjoyable, safe and inclusive	93%	=18/20	93%	97%	100%
<b>QI 2 Customer satisfaction</b>					
a) 'very good' or 'good' choice of books	87%	=16/20	84%	90.5%	97%
b) 'very good' or 'good' customer care	95%	19/20	92%	98%	100%
c) 'very good' or 'good' IT facilities	70%	=16/20	60%	85%	99%
d) 'very good' or 'good' overall	93%	18/20	85%	98%	100%
e) users aged 16 & under rating out of ten	9.2	=12/18	8.0	9.4	9.7
<b>QI 5 User support</b>					
a) attendances per capita	29	=9/21	1	28	214
c) informal support per capita	179	6/20	15	150	608
<b>QI 6 Attendances at events per capita</b>	263	=9/22	14	224.5	764
<b>QI 8 Library use</b>					
b) virtual visits per capita	814	9/21	5	766	6,035
<b>QI 13 Staffing levels and qualifications<sup>10</sup></b>					
(v) a) total volunteers	4	N/A	0	23	442
b) volunteer hours	630	N/A	0	883	22,706
<b>QI 14 Operational expenditure</b>					
a) total expenditure per capita	£11,962	13/21	£5,978	£12,646	£26,209
b) % on staff,	58%	=17/21	48%	67%	80%
% on information resources	8%	=13/21	4%	9%	19%
% on equipment and buildings	9%	5/21	0%	2%	29%
% on other operational costs	25%	=5/21	1%	15%	38%

## Analysis of performance

The Core Entitlements and quality indicators can be divided into three key areas. This section of the report outlines performance under these areas.

### Meeting customer needs (QI 1-2, 4-5)

Denbighshire conducted a customer survey in autumn 2024, following a reduction to opening hours. In these circumstances it is perhaps not surprising that the service performs below the national median for the majority of measures (QI1 & QI2). However, it should be noted that the service is above the median for the percentage of young people who think the library helps them to learn (QI1) and received positive comments from many customers.

The service meets the target for Support for health and well-being (QI4) in full. All libraries continue to offer weekly Talking Points run jointly by Denbighshire County

<sup>10</sup> *Rankings are not included for volunteers as the implications of volunteer numbers are ambiguous.*

Council and Betsi Cadwaldr University Health Board. A variety of organisations use libraries to hold drop ins, including Help to Quit, Adferiad and North Wales Integrated Autism Service. Libraries also have STI testing kits and period products available.

Per capita attendance at formal training sessions is slightly above the median and attendance has increased by 28% compared to 2023-24 and by 61% compared to 2022-23 (QI5). This figure includes sessions delivered by FE colleges, Cwmpas and the U3A on library premises. It is a concern that only 75% of attendees (n=49) said the training helped them to achieve their purpose in attending, although it is noted that the way in which this question was asked, in addition to the fairly small sample size, means the data may not be completely reliable. Denbighshire is above the median for informal support per capita. However, attendance numbers have declined by 45% compared to 2023-24.

## Access and use (QI 6-8)

Although Denbighshire remains above the median for per capita event attendance, total attendance at library events has decreased by 8% since 2023-24 (QI6). The service reports that the reduction in opening hours has meant that library staff have less capacity to run events. However, they have continued to offer a variety of activities, including reading groups, craft groups, knit and natter, Paned a Sgwrs, author events, class visits, Bookstart Rhyme times, a 'Fiction Fest', and Stars of the Shelves.

Denbighshire is above the national median for virtual visits and the number of virtual visits reported has more than doubled compared to 2023-24 (despite potential problems with Google Analytics) (QI8). The service is also in the top quartile nationally for e-issues per capita, which have increased by 30% compared to 2023-24.

## Expertise and capacity (QI 13-14 &16)

Denbighshire does not meet the targets for either total staff or qualified staff per capita (QI13). Library opening hours were reduced by 40% in June 2024 so there was a corresponding reduction in staffing levels. The total number of staff reported has declined by 6.9 FTE compared to 2023-24 and the number of qualified staff has decreased by 1.3 FTE. This means the service is just below the median for qualified staff per capita and is in the bottom quartile nationally for total staff. Total staff per capita is less than half the target figure. More positively, the CPD percentage has increased markedly, and Denbighshire now meets this target. A member of staff is currently undertaking CILIP Chartership, with Welsh Government support.

The service does not currently proactively advertise for volunteers but works with local organisations whose clients may benefit from volunteering in a library e.g. work placements. Denbighshire is planning to take a more active approach to recruiting volunteers in the coming year and is looking to set up Friends Groups to help support library activities and help with fundraising. Whilst volunteers can provide



valuable support to library services, in a situation where staff numbers are reducing, it is particularly important to ensure that they are used in accordance with [CILIP guidance](#).

Operational expenditure (Q114) has decreased by 14% compared to 2023-24 and Denbighshire is now below the national median for this measure. This equates to a reduction of £2.02 per head. Even more concerning is the reduction in the book budget which is 25% lower than last year. Even allowing for potential disruption to acquisitions with the introduction of the new LMS, this is highly worrying.

Library opening hours were reduced by 40% in June 2024 due to budget savings. As a result, Denbighshire no longer meets the target for Opening hours and is now in the bottom quartile nationally for this measure (Q116). Opening hours for the reporting year are 24% lower than in 2023-24 and the number of hours is expected to decrease again in 2025-26 as the full impact of the changes is felt.

## 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. Denbighshire highlighted how its libraries support the Welsh Government's Priorities for Culture, the Council's Welsh Language Strategy and Cymraeg 2050 by enabling people of all ages to connect with culture, literacy, health, and community life. Examples include:

- **Supporting Culture** e.g. collaboration with Camau Cerdd to enrich Bookstart Rhyme Times with live music and instrument exploration, including Bookstart Christmas shows at Theatr Twm o'r Nant, attended by around 170 families, many experiencing live theatre for the first time. For adults, libraries offered cultural activities such as Spanish classes, creative writing groups and an author series featuring both English and Welsh speaking authors.
- **Supporting Literacy** e.g. ante-natal visits and bilingual rhyme times introducing families to reading; class visits and the Summer Reading Challenge encouraging primary-age reading; a writing workshop for Prestatyn High School students with author Rebecca Roberts; and an Adult Reading Challenge, launched in January 2025.
- **Supporting Health and Well-being** e.g. Weekly Talking Points sessions and Job Clubs with Working Denbighshire; all staff are Dementia Friends and have autism awareness training; and the Home Library Service for residents unable to access libraries.
- **Supporting the Welsh Language** e.g. bilingual rhyme times to introduce families to Welsh from an early age with staff from Menter Iaith and RhAG promoting the benefits of Welsh medium education; opportunities to engage with staff in Welsh; and Welsh activities such as author events, reading groups and Paned a Sgwrs sessions.
- **Supporting Digital Inclusion** e.g. Chromebook loan service; free SIM cards to residents experiencing data poverty through a partnership with the National

Databank; and collaborations with Llandrillo College and Cwmpas to offer free digital skills classes to the local community.

## Future direction

Reporting on the authority's future direction and plans for the library service over the coming year, Denbighshire is aiming to develop and grow its services within a challenging environment of current and anticipated budget constraints. The service seeks to diversify funding sources and boost income from alternative sources including hire of the library facilities. In collaboration with the Community Resilience Team, plans are in place to establish 'Friends of the Library' groups to support activities and fundraising efforts, including applying to funding streams that would not otherwise be available to a local authority. A pilot group at Rhuddlan Library is already underway, which will serve as a model for rolling out similar groups across other libraries to help enhance local engagement, and increase event capacity and community promotion.

The service has secured a Transformation Capital Grant to refurbish Corwen Library in autumn 2025. This will include installing Open+ technology to extend unstaffed opening hours, providing greater flexibility for borrowing and returning books via self-service. If successful, this model could be expanded to additional libraries. Denbighshire seeks to continue developing partnership working to build on libraries' roles as trusted, safe community spaces. For example, there are plans to expand the Bookstart Rhyme Time programme with new sessions in Llangollen and Corwen in partnership with Flying Start.

## Conclusion

Denbighshire performs well in a number of areas: e-issues and virtual visits have risen, as has attendance at formal training. It is also positive that time allocated for staff training has increased this year. However, there are a number of areas of concern. The reduction in opening hours, staffing and book budget this year all present significant challenges to the effective operation of the service. Whilst it is not possible to make a definitive connection from the information available, it is perhaps unsurprising that informal support and event attendance have declined alongside opening hours and staffing numbers. In this context, the proposed expansion of the volunteering programme and a move to more unstaffed opening hours both raise concerns. Whilst appreciating that Denbighshire is aiming to develop its services within a challenging financial environment, the value of having knowledgeable staff available to support library customers should not be underestimated. In addition, whilst it may be possible to secure some additional funds for supplementary activities from alternative sources, funding for core services needs to be maintained to deliver the key elements of a comprehensive and efficient library service.

# Flintshire Annual Assessment Report 2024-25

Flintshire library service is provided by Gwella Wales. 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.

## Executive summary

Flintshire meets 12 of the 13 Core Entitlements in full. The remaining Core Entitlement is not met. Of the 5 quality indicators which have targets, Flintshire is achieving 4 in full and 1 in part.

Data reported this year show Flintshire continues to perform well in many areas. Its survey data demonstrate that the service is valued by customers, and training, events and activities are all well-supported. The service is also providing increasing levels of informal support to customers and e-issues are rising. There have, understandably, been some challenges this year as the service has transferred from Aura to Gwella. Whilst staff levels remain a concern, it is positive that the staff CPD percentage has increased this year.

- Flintshire performs very well for Making a difference and Customer satisfaction, being above the median of Welsh library authorities for all measures (QI1 and QI2).
- The number of informal support sessions reported has increased almost fourfold compared to 2023-24 and Flintshire is now the highest-ranking service nationally for this measure (QI5).
- Flintshire is in the top quartile of Welsh library authorities for event attendance per capita; the total number of attendees is 65% higher than in 2023-24 and 111% higher than in 2022-23 (QI6).

## Note to the 2024-25 report

During 2024-25 local authorities in Wales migrated to a new all Wales Digital Library Platform. The process of migration caused some disruption to the operation of library services including the acquisition of new stock which had to be suspended for a period as individual services moved to the new system. There are also some slight differences in the configuration of the new platform which means that the user data across 2024-25 is not entirely consistent. The reports for 2024-25 do not therefore include the data detailed below for Quality Indicators 4, 8, 9 and 10.

QI 4 Support for health and well-being

c) the number of loans of titles from the Reading Well in Wales series

QI 8 Library use

c) the total number of active borrowers divided by the resident population, multiplied by 1,000

d) the total number of library members

e) the total number of book issues (adult and children separate)

f) the total number of audio-visual issues

QI 9 Up-to-date and appropriate reading material

a) minimum acquisitions rate

b) % spent on children's resources

QI 10 Welsh language resources

a) 4% minimum spend

b) Welsh issues per capita

All data will be reported and assessed for 2025-26 (the first year of Framework 7) and this data will be used to set the benchmark for the remaining years of the framework.

## Performance against the standards

The standards framework comprises of Core Entitlements, quality indicators with targets, quality indicators with benchmarks and impact measures.

### Core Entitlements

Flintshire reported meeting 12 of the 13 Core Entitlements in full, with the remaining Core Entitlement being reported as not met, through self-assessment. Based on the detailed and helpful commentary provided, the independent assessor agrees with the self-assessment. As described in the return, library services in Flintshire were transferred from being delivered by Aura Leisure and Libraries Ltd to a new organisation, Flintshire Libraries and Leisure Ltd (trading as Gwella) on 1st November 2024. As a result, there is no strategy currently available, but the service reports that one will be developed to underpin the wider organisational business plan in 2025-26 (CE12).

### Quality indicators with targets

There are 12 quality indicators (QIs), of which 5 have constituent targets. Of these, Flintshire is achieving 4 in full and 1 in part.

QI 4 (a) Support for health and well-being, **met in full p**

i) Reading Well scheme, **met**

ii) Designated health & well-being collection, **met**

iii) Information about healthier lifestyles and healthy behaviours, **met**

iv) Signposting to health & well-being services, **met**

QI 6 All static service points offer events/activities for users with special Requirements, **met in full p**

QI 7 Location of service points, **met in full p**

QI 13 Staffing levels and qualifications, **partially met n**

i) Staff per capita, **not met**

ii) Qualified staff per capita, **not met**

iii) Head of service qualification/training, **met**

iv) CPD percentage, **met**

QI 16 Opening hours per capita, **met in full p**

## Impact measures

The framework includes three indicators aimed at assessing the impact of library use on people's lives. These indicators do not have targets, and authorities are required to carry out user surveys for QI1 once over the 2022-23 to 2024-25 period. Flintshire conducted an adult survey and a children's survey in March 2024. The summary figures (lowest, median and highest) are based on all authorities providing data in the 2022-23, 2023-24 and 2024-25 returns. Rankings reflect the number of respondents, where 1 is the highest scoring authority.

Performance indicator		Rank	Lowest	Median	Highest
QI 1 Making a difference					
b) % of young people who think that the library helps them learn and find things out:	96%	=5/19	68%	94%	99%
e) % of adults who think that the library has made a difference to their lives:	94%	4/20	31%	86.5%	96%
QI 5 b) % of attendees of training sessions who said that the training had helped them achieve their purpose in attending:	N/A	N/A	75%	98.5%	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 the contribution the service made to Adult Learners' Week 2024 by delivering a diverse programme of activities designed to inspire lifelong learning and strengthen community connections. Across all library sites, sessions in clay modelling, sea glass craft, mindfulness, digital skills, and an introduction to Makaton were offered in small, friendly groups, ensuring attendees felt comfortable and welcome. Activities were led by library staff, helping build trust and deepen relationships between libraries and their communities. Free refreshments were offered, while accessible locations helped remove barriers such as transport costs and childcare, enabling more people to take part. Flintshire reports that the sessions had a significant impact, supporting attendees to develop new skills, reduce social isolation and build confidence, which were key goals for the week and beyond. The activities also helped to showcase,

and signpost attendees to, other services and activities provided by the library service.

## Quality indicators and benchmarks

The remaining indicators do not have targets but allow services to monitor their performance over time. The following table summarises Flintshire's position for 2024-25. Rankings reflect the number of respondents, where 1 is the highest scoring authority. 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	74%	9/20	17%	70%	90%
c) health and well-being	90%	1/20	1%	63%	90%
d) enjoyable, safe and inclusive	99%	=4/20	93%	97%	100%

Performance indicator		Rank	Lowest	Median	Highest
QI 2 Customer satisfaction					
a) 'very good' or 'good' choice of books	94%	=4/20	84%	90.5%	97%
b) 'very good' or 'good' customer care	99%	=2/20	92%	98%	100%
c) 'very good' or 'good' IT facilities	93%	3/20	60%	85%	99%
d) 'very good' or 'good' overall	99%	=2/20	85%	98%	100%
e) users aged 16 & under rating out of ten	9.5	=5/18	8.0	9.4	9.7
QI 5 User support					
a) attendances per capita	33	8/21	1	28	214
c) informal support per capita	608	1/20	15	150	608
QI 6 Attendances at events per capita	444	5/22	14	224.5	764
QI 8 Library use					
b) virtual visits per capita <sup>11</sup>	443	15/21	5	766	6,035
QI 13 Staffing levels and qualifications <sup>12</sup>					

<sup>11</sup> Reported figures relate to website visits from 1st April - 31st October 2024 only.

<sup>12</sup> Rankings are not included for volunteers as the implications of volunteer numbers are ambiguous.

Performance indicator		Rank	Lowest	Median	Highest
(v) a) total volunteers	134	N/A	0	23	442
b) volunteer hours	756	N/A	0	883	22,706
QI 14 Operational expenditure					
a) total expenditure per capita	N/A	N/A	£5,978	£12,646	£26,209
b) % on staff,	N/A	N/A	48%	67%	80%
% on information resources	N/A	N/A	4%	9%	19%
% on equipment and buildings	N/A	N/A	0%	2%	29%
% on other operational costs	N/A	N/A	1%	15%	38%

## Analysis of performance

The Core Entitlements and quality indicators can be divided into three key areas. This section of the report outlines performance under these areas.

### Meeting customer needs (QI 1-2, 4-5)

Flintshire performs very well for Making a difference (QI1) and Customer satisfaction (QI2), being above the median of Welsh library authorities for all measures. It ranks highest nationally for impact on health and well-being. The service meets the targets for health and well-being in full (QI4). Flintshire hosts a 'Singing for the Brain' group and two reminiscence groups 'Sporting Memories' and 'Mold Memories'. All branches participated in Hi-Vis fortnight to promote services and resources for people who have a vision or print impairment. The programme of activities and events designed to support health and well-being includes jigsaw clubs; craft and chat groups; mindfulness art sessions; and quizzes.

Flintshire is above the national median for per capita attendance at formal training sessions and attendance has increased by 6% compared to 2023-24 (QI5). As was the case last year, no data are provided on the percentage of attendees who achieved their purpose in attending. The number of informal support sessions reported has increased almost fourfold compared to 2023-24 and Flintshire is now the highest-ranking service nationally for this measure. This increase is attributed, in part, to a review of the recording process and guidance for staff.

### Access and use (QI 6-8)

Flintshire is in the top quartile of Welsh library authorities for event attendance per capita; the total number of attendees is 65% higher than in 2023-24 and 111% higher than in 2022-23 (QI6). The library service continues to participate in the 'Fit, Fed and Read' scheme in the Easter and Summer holidays to support health and well-being, promote literacy skills and tackle food poverty in Flintshire. Many of the children and families who took part had never used library services before. Other events and activities have included author visits; Baby Babble speech and literacy sessions; STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) interactive sessions;



Autism Service drop in; mindfulness art sessions; and a new Family History course based on the popular television series 'A House Through Time'.

E-issues are slightly above the national median and have increased by 30% compared to 2023-24 and more than doubled since 2022-23 (Q18). It is not possible to comment on virtual visits as the service has been without a fully functioning website since its transfer to Gwella in November 2024; it is operating on a 'skeleton site' whilst a new website is being developed.

## Expertise and capacity (Q1 13-14 &16)

Flintshire does not meet the target for total staff or qualified staff per capita and is below the national median for both measures (Q13). Staffing has remained relatively static (0.5 FTE reduction in total staff). More positively, the CPD percentage has increased considerably this year as a result of the implementation of the new LMS system, and the service now meets this target. The number of volunteers has decreased slightly possibly due to disruption caused by the move from Aura to Gwella. The service meets the target for Opening hours (Q16) and is above the national median for this measure. Opening hours per capita are unchanged and Flintshire continues to provide access to some services during unstaffed hours.

## 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 highlighted how it supports a wide range of national priorities. A variety of events and activities support social connection, learning and community engagement, such as Craft and Chat groups, Sporting Memories sessions, writing clubs, and reading groups. Partnerships with organisations like We Mind the Gap and the DWP's 'Work Wednesday' in Flint provide targeted support for young people and jobseekers. The Adult Community Learning programme continues to deliver qualifications and skills training, including Food Hygiene, Family First Aid, Customer Care, and COSHH courses. There are events and opportunities to help older people maintain social networks and improve their digital confidence, as well as activities like 'Singing for the Brain' for people living with dementia and their carers.

Flintshire libraries actively promote Welsh language and culture, including through exhibitions like 'Steel.Site.Speaks' exploring the history of Shotton Steelworks and Family History sessions. To support digital inclusion, Flintshire's digital offer includes wireless printing and a digital loan scheme that offers tablet devices with training and a buy-back option. To ensure collections reflect the diversity of the community, the service maintains a formal stock policy to promote positive representation and participates in national initiatives to ensure inclusive and contextualised resources, including anti-racist library collections training.

## Future direction

Reporting on the authority's future direction and plans for the library service over the coming year, Flintshire is in a period of considerable uncertainty after experiencing significant organisational change with the transfer of services and staff from Aura Leisure and Libraries to the council-owned Local Authority Trading Company, Flintshire Libraries and Leisure Ltd (trading as Gwella) on 1 November 2024. Following this period of change, the focus will be on sustaining service standards while supporting staff to further develop community outreach, in addition to digital, and health and well-being provision.

The service does not currently have a library strategy or service plan, although Flintshire reports that work is underway on a new Library Strategy, which will align with national and local priorities and, when the new website is live, an updated service plan will be implemented. In addition, a new finance system will support service stability and the establishment of new consortium agreements for resource suppliers will ensure greater continuity and support effective collection management moving forward.

## Conclusion

Data reported this year show Flintshire continues to perform well in many areas. Survey data demonstrate that the service is valued by customers, and training, events and activities are all well-supported. The service is also providing increasing levels of informal support to customers and e-issues are rising. Whilst staff levels remain a concern, it is positive that the staff CPD percentage has increased this year.

It is noted that more context was provided in the return this year and this was extremely helpful in assisting the independent assessor to reflect on possible explanations for, and implications of, the data provided. There have, understandably, been some challenges during 2024-25 as the service has transferred from Aura to Gwella. As a result of this, there are some gaps in the WPLS data which limit the independent assessor's ability to comment on all aspects of the service.

# Gwynedd Annual Assessment Report 2024-25

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.

## Executive summary

Gwynedd meets all of the 13 Core Entitlements in full. Of the 5 quality indicators which have targets, Gwynedd is achieving 4 in full and 1 in part.

Gwynedd Libraries are clearly valued by customers who rate them highly. The service continues to perform well in a number of areas, including e-issues and virtual visits. Furthermore, Gwynedd is leading the implementation of the LMS Cymru project. Whilst formal training sessions remain well-received, the number of attendances reported has declined this year. Event attendance has also decreased, although the service has clearly made efforts to present a strong summer holiday offering. The most worrying aspect of this year's report is the decline in both total and qualified staff numbers. Whilst it is positive that members of staff are being supported through CILIP Chartership, which will hopefully impact on qualified staff numbers in the future, the continued reduction in staffing numbers is likely to have an impact on the service's ability to continue to meet customer needs to the high level it has done in the past.

- Gwynedd performs well for Making a difference, being at or above the median for all measures (QI1).
- E-issues are above the national median and continue to rise, being 57% higher than in 2023-24 and more than double the 2022-23 figure (QI8).
- Virtual visits per capita are above the median for Welsh library authorities and have increased by 31% compared to 2023-24 (QI8).

## Note to the 2024-25 report

During 2024-25 local authorities in Wales migrated to a new all Wales Digital Library Platform. The process of migration caused some disruption to the operation of library services including the acquisition of new stock which had to be suspended for a period as individual services moved to the new system. There are also some slight differences in the configuration of the new platform which means that the user data across 2024-25 is not entirely consistent. The reports for 2024-25 do not therefore include the data detailed below for Quality Indicators 4, 8, 9 and 10.

- QI 4 Support for health and well-being
  - c) the number of loans of titles from the Reading Well in Wales series
- QI 8 Library use
  - c) the total number of active borrowers divided by the resident population, multiplied by 1,000
  - d) the total number of library members
  - e) the total number of book issues (adult and children separate)
  - f) the total number of audio-visual issues
- QI 9 Up-to-date and appropriate reading material
  - a) minimum acquisitions rate
  - b) % spent on children's resources
- QI 10 Welsh language resources
  - a) 4% minimum spend
  - b) Welsh issues per capita

All data will be reported and assessed for 2025-26 (the first year of Framework 7) and this data will be used to set the benchmark for the remaining years of the framework.

## Performance against the standards

The standards framework comprises of Core Entitlements, quality indicators with targets, quality indicators with benchmarks and impact measures.

### Core Entitlements

Gwynedd reported meeting all of the 13 Core Entitlements in full through self-assessment. Based on the detailed commentary provided, the independent assessor agrees with the self-assessment.

### Quality indicators with targets

There are 12 quality indicators (QIs), of which 5 have constituent targets. Of these, Gwynedd is achieving 4 in full and 1 in part.

- QI 4 (a) Support for health and well-being, **met in full p**
  - i) Reading Well scheme, **met**
  - ii) Designated health & well-being collection, **met**
  - iii) Information about healthier lifestyles and healthy behaviours, **met**
  - iv) Signposting to health & well-being services, **met**
- QI 6 All static service points offer events/activities for users with special Requirements, **met in full p**
- QI 7 Location of service points, **met in full p**

- QI 13 Staffing levels and qualifications, **partially met n**
- i) Staff per capita, **not met**
  - ii) Qualified staff per capita, **not met**
  - iii) Head of service qualification/training, **met**
  - iv) CPD percentage, **not reported**

QI 16 Opening hours per capita, **met in full p**

## Impact measures

The framework includes three indicators aimed at assessing the impact of library use on people's lives. These indicators do not have targets, and authorities are required to carry out user surveys for QI1 once over the 2022-23 to 2024-25 period. Gwynedd conducted an adult survey and a children's survey in November 2023. The summary figures (lowest, median and highest) are based on all authorities providing data in the 2022-23, 2023-24 and 2024-25 returns. Rankings reflect the number of respondents, where 1 is the highest scoring authority.

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%	=8/19	68%	94%	99%
e) % of adults who think that the library has made a difference to their lives:	88%	9/20	31%	86.5%	96%
QI 5 b) % of attendees of training sessions who said that the training had helped them achieve their purpose in attending:	100%	=1/18	75%	98.5%	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 which was broad in coverage, describing a range of activities rather than a specific impact example. Through the provision of digital support, the library service helps people to access relevant information and assists residents to live full and safe lives in their communities. Specific examples include the provision of free SIM cards and data vouchers as part of the National Databank Scheme; basic digital skills sessions for social care workers; and workshops on applying for Pension Credit.

## Quality indicators and benchmarks

The remaining indicators do not have targets but allow services to monitor their performance over time. The following table summarises Gwynedd's position for 2024-25. Rankings reflect the number of respondents, where 1 is the highest scoring authority. 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%	=1/20	17%	70%	90%
c) health and well-being	76%	4/20	1%	63%	90%
d) enjoyable, safe and inclusive	98%	=7/20	93%	97%	100%
QI 2 Customer satisfaction					
a) 'very good' or 'good' choice of books	93%	=6/20	84%	90.5%	97%
b) 'very good' or 'good' customer care	99%	=2/20	92%	98%	100%
c) 'very good' or 'good' IT facilities	94%	2/20	60%	85%	99%
d) 'very good' or 'good' overall	99%	=2/20	85%	98%	100%
e) users aged 16 & under rating out of ten	8.0	18/18	8.0	9.4	9.7
QI 5 User support					
a) attendances per capita	3	=18/21	1	28	214
c) informal support per capita	105	12/20	15	150	608
QI 6 Attendances at events per capita	177	17/22	14	224.5	764
QI 8 Library use					
b) virtual visits per capita	1,120	6/21	5	766	6,035

Performance indicator		Rank	Lowest	Median	Highest
QI 13 Staffing levels and qualifications <sup>13</sup>					
(v) a) total volunteers	0	N/A	0	23	442
b) volunteer hours	0	N/A	0	883	22,706
QI 14 Operational expenditure					
a) total expenditure per capita	£21,543	2/21	£5,978	£12,646	£26,209
b) % on staff,	48%	21/21	48%	67%	80%
% on information resources	11%	=5/21	4%	9%	19%
% on equipment and buildings	3%	10/21	0%	2%	29%
% on other operational costs	38%	1/21	1%	15%	38%

## Analysis of performance

The Core Entitlements and quality indicators can be divided into three key areas. This section of the report outlines performance under these areas.

### Meeting customer needs (QI 1-2, 4-5)

Now that results are available from across the Framework 6 Extension period, Gwynedd is shown to perform well for Making a difference (QI1), being at or above the median for all measures and the highest ranked nationally for the percentage of adults who think that using the library has helped them develop new skills. The service also performs well with regard to Customer satisfaction (QI2), being above the median for all measures, with the exception of the rating out of 10 by children

<sup>13</sup> *Rankings are not included for volunteers as the implications of volunteer numbers are ambiguous.*

and young people, for which it is the lowest ranked Welsh library authority. As was stated in 2023-24, this is something the service may want to look at in more detail in its forthcoming surveys.

Per capita attendance at formal training sessions remains below the median for Welsh library authorities and after an impressive increase in 2023-24, the number of attendances has reduced by 33% this year. It is noted that third party provision and school visits are not included in the total. Training is well-received, with 100% of attendees surveyed (n=322) saying they had achieved their purpose in attending. Gwynedd was able to report on informal support attendance this year and this figure is also below the median for Welsh library authorities.

## Access and use (QI 6-8)

Per capita event attendance has decreased by 9% this year and is below the median for Welsh library authorities (QI6). The 2023-24 annual report described the removal of funding for the Summer Reading Challenge. However, in 2024, the service held literary walking activities during the summer holidays with the Bala literary walk and Draw Dros y Don project - a self-guided tour based on the novel Bod Rhydderch by Lona Patel and associated workshops. In addition, Gwynedd held a Warm Welcome and a Children's Summer Fun programme which included crafting, face painting, a Balloon workshop, a graffiti workshop, and Mama G's Story Sessions.

Virtual visits per capita are above the median for Welsh library authorities and have increased by 31% compared to 2023-24 (QI8). E-issues are also above the national median and continue to rise, being 57% higher than in 2023-24 and more than double the 2022-23 figure.

## Expertise and capacity (QI 13-14 &16)

Gwynedd does not meet the targets for total staff or qualified staff per capita (QI13). The total staffing figure has declined by 3.6 FTE this year and the service reports facing further cuts which will affect staffing hours in the coming year. The number of qualified staff has been reduced by 2.5 FTE. This means that Gwynedd is no longer in the top quartile of Welsh library authorities for total staff and qualified staff per capita, although it is slightly above the median for both. It is positive that 3 members of the library team have started the process of CILIP Chartership. As in previous years, Gwynedd reports having no formal way of recording staff hours spent in training or personal development.

The service is in the top quartile of Welsh library authorities for total expenditure per capita and this has increased by 14% compared to 2023-24. Even though the book fund has decreased by 17% compared to 2023-24, Gwynedd is the highest ranked nationally for per capita book fund (although, as the service notes, the materials figure includes resources other than reading materials) (QI14). Gwynedd meets the target for opening hours per capita and is in the top quartile of Welsh library



authorities for this measure (Q116). The total number of staffed opening hours reported is unchanged from 2023-24, but self-service hours have increased.

## 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. Gwynedd identified a range of ways in which it contributes to national priorities, particularly those outlined in the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015. Examples include:

- **Promoting reading for pleasure and literacy** e.g. Gwynedd ran over 100 summer activities for children with support from the North Wales Shared Prosperity Fund and delivered the highly successful “Hei Hogia” tour to 38 schools, reaching approximately 3,200 pupils in year 5-8.
- **Supporting health and well-being** e.g. well-being related activities within the community delivered by two well-being promotion officers transferred to the library service.
- **Digital support** e.g. One-to-one digital support sessions delivered both in libraries and in people’s homes. At a national level, Gwynedd is leading the implementation of the LMS Cymru project, contributing to the goals of the Digital Strategy for Wales.
- **Reducing environmental impact** e.g. eliminating the use of plastic book jackets; using electric vehicles for the home library delivery service; working with community initiatives such as Dolan and Benthylg through the Library of Things service to support the Welsh Government’s Circular Economy Strategy.
- **Promoting the Welsh language and culture** e.g. regular Welsh-medium rhyme and story family sessions, community language events and projects such as Dewch am Dro (Come for a Walk) and Draw Dros y Don (Across the Waves) supported by the North Wales Shared Prosperity Fund; supporting Welsh learners through informal sessions such as Paned a Sgwrs (Tea and Chat); and working with partners such as Grŵp Llandrillo Menai and Adult Learning Wales to administer the Adult Community Education grant and develop strong community networks.

## Future direction

Reporting on the authority’s future direction and plans for the library service, Gwynedd outlined their vision for the next five years in their plan Llyfrgelloedd Llawn Bywyd 2023–28 (Living Libraries). Despite ongoing challenges for public services, the service remains committed to developing goals in the areas of Reading, Health and Well-being, Welsh Language and Culture, and Information and Digital, providing a responsive, comprehensive and efficient offer that aligns with both local and national priorities. The service remains focused on delivering a strong community



offer. Future plans also include strengthening partnerships with organisations such as the Circular Economy Network and Grŵp Llandrillo Menai, particularly around community education and sustainability.

The loss of the Schools Library Service in March 2025, following funding withdrawal by the Education Department, represents a notable change. However, Gwynedd plans to explore new collaborative models with schools, building on successful initiatives such as Hei Hogia and the Family Reading Scheme, and will secure annual support from the Education Department to fund Summer Reading Challenge materials.

Gwynedd reports that the coming year will see the implementation of a new staffing structure as the new Library Leadership Team sets priorities within the context of the Library Plan. Gwynedd will continue as the lead authority for the LMS Cymru Consortium project.

## Conclusion

Gwynedd Libraries are clearly valued by customers who rate them highly. The service continues to perform well in a number of areas, including e-issues and virtual visits. Whilst formal training sessions remain well-received, the number of attendances reported has declined this year. Event attendance has also decreased, although the service has clearly made efforts to present a strong summer holiday offering. The most worrying aspect of this year's report is the decline in both total and qualified staff numbers. Whilst it is positive that members of staff are being supported through CILIP Chartership, which will hopefully impact on qualified staff numbers in the future, the continued reduction in staffing numbers is likely to have an impact on the service's ability to continue to meet customer needs to the high level it has done in the past.

It is positive that Gwynedd has been able to introduce systems to capture previously missing data relating to informal support. This is helpful to provide a fuller picture of the service and its activities. However, the lack of a staff CPD percentage remains a gap in the Gwynedd return.

# Isle of Anglesey Annual Assessment Report 2024-25

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

## Executive summary

Isle of Anglesey meets 11 of the 13 Core Entitlements in full and 2 in part. Of the 5 quality indicators which have targets, Isle of Anglesey is achieving 4 in full and 1 in part.

Isle of Anglesey has improved its performance dramatically in a number of areas this year, specifically attendance at events and formal training, which have been boosted by SPF funding. It is also positive that e-issues continue to increase, and virtual visits remain strong. Whilst recruiting to the vacant qualified post this year has had a positive impact on the capacity of the senior team, the service acknowledges that the increase in the number of events and activities has exposed the challenges of current staffing levels.

Despite many positive elements of this year's return, Isle of Anglesey still does not meet two of the Core Entitlements. This is becoming increasingly worrying as issues highlighted in previous annual reports have not been addressed. It is now a number of years since a customer survey was last carried out, and the service continues to assert that, whilst a new strategy has been produced, it is unable to make it available. In addition, the commentary on the future direction refers to the broader council strategy but is noticeably weak on specific details of library development.

- Attendances at formal training have risen this year, having increased more than fourfold compared to 2023-24 (Q15).
- E-issues have more than doubled compared to 2023-24 and have almost trebled since 2022-23 (Q18).
- The library website is well used, and Anglesey remains in the top quartile of Welsh library services for virtual visits (Q18).

## Note to the 2024-25 report

During 2024-25 local authorities in Wales migrated to a new all Wales Digital Library Platform. The process of migration caused some disruption to the operation of library

services including the acquisition of new stock which had to be suspended for a period as individual services moved to the new system. There are also some slight differences in the configuration of the new platform which means that the user data across 2024-25 is not entirely consistent. The reports for 2024-25 do not therefore include the data detailed below for Quality Indicators 4, 8, 9 and 10.

- QI 4 Support for health and well-being
  - c) the number of loans of titles from the Reading Well in Wales series
- QI 8 Library use
  - c) the total number of active borrowers divided by the resident population, multiplied by 1,000
  - d) the total number of library members
  - e) the total number of book issues (adult and children separate)
  - f) the total number of audio-visual issues
- QI 9 Up-to-date and appropriate reading material
  - a) minimum acquisitions rate
  - b) % spent on children's resources
- QI 10 Welsh language resources
  - a) 4% minimum spend
  - b) Welsh issues per capita

All data will be reported and assessed for 2025-26 (the first year of Framework 7) and this data will be used to set the benchmark for the remaining years of the framework.

## Performance against the standards

The standards framework comprises of Core Entitlements, quality indicators with targets, quality indicators with benchmarks and impact measures.

### Core Entitlements

Isle of Anglesey reported meeting 11 of the 13 Core Entitlements in full and 2 Core Entitlements in part through self-assessment. Based on the detailed and helpful commentary provided, the independent assessor agrees with the self-assessment. Regarding CE11, the service has not conducted a user survey during the Framework 6 Extension period. This is attributed to staffing issues and a decision to delay due to the introduction of the new LMS. This Core Entitlement is partially met as the service does conduct some user consultation. In particular, SPF funding has supported consultation around event and activity provision during 2024-25. With respect to CE12, as was the case in the 2023-24 return, Anglesey reports that library service strategy and policies have been reviewed and updated but have not been made available online as yet.

## Quality indicators with targets

There are 12 quality indicators (QIs), of which 5 have constituent targets. Of these, Isle of Anglesey is achieving 4 in full and 1 in part.

- QI 4 (a) Support for health and well-being, **met in full p**  
 i) Reading Well scheme, **met**  
 ii) Designated health & well-being collection, **met**  
 iii) Information about healthier lifestyles and healthy behaviours, **met**  
 iv) Signposting to health & well-being services, **met**
- QI 6 All static service points offer events/activities for users with special Requirements, **met in full p**
- QI 7 Location of service points, **met in full p**
- QI 13 Staffing levels and qualifications, **partially met n**  
 i) Staff per capita, **not met**  
 ii) Qualified staff per capita, **not met**  
 iii) Head of service qualification/training, **met**  
 iv) CPD percentage, **met**
- QI 16 Opening hours per capita, **met in full p**

## Impact measures

The framework includes three indicators aimed at assessing the impact of library use on people's lives. These indicators do not have targets, and authorities are required to carry out user surveys for QI1 once over the 2022-23 to 2024-25 period. Isle of Anglesey has not conducted an adult survey or a children's survey during the Framework 6 Extension period. The summary figures (lowest, median and highest) are based on all authorities providing data in the 2022-23, 2023-24 and 2024-25 returns. Rankings reflect the number of respondents, where 1 is the highest scoring authority.

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:	N/A	N/A	68%	94%	99%
e) % of adults who think that the library has made a difference to their lives:	N/A	N/A	31%	86.5%	96%
QI 5 b) % of attendees of training sessions who said that the training had helped them achieve their purpose in attending:	98%	=10/18	75%	98.5%	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 highlighting the value of a library-based graffiti workshop for young adults. Llangefni and Holyhead Libraries

successfully worked with young people aged 10 and above through an inspiring graffiti workshop led by artist Andy Birch. Funded in part by the SPF fund, the workshop aimed to foster creativity, introduce teens who are not regular users to the library and produce a lasting community artwork. Participants designed their own graffiti-style name boards and participated in a brainstorming session, which included suggesting words and phrases in both English and Welsh for a new mural on the library wall in Llangefni. Their ideas were incorporated into a vibrant artwork resulting in a colourful piece that celebrates reading and reflects the creativity and collaboration of local young people. The mural has been warmly received by the community and stands as a legacy of the project, instilling pride and a sense of ownership among participants. Feedback from participants and parents has been positive. One parent shared, *“I struggle to find suitable activities for older children, so this has been great,”* while a teenager commented, *“It’s been good to try something new and be creative with people my own age.”*

Through this workshop, Isle of Anglesey provided a meaningful opportunity for self-expression, strengthened connections with young people, and demonstrated the power of libraries to inspire creativity and build community pride.

## Quality indicators and benchmarks

The remaining indicators do not have targets but allow services to monitor their performance over time. The following table summarises Isle of Anglesey’s position for 2024-25. Rankings reflect the number of respondents, where 1 is the highest scoring authority. Indicators ‘per capita’ are calculated per 1,000 population unless otherwise noted.

Performance indicator		Rank	Lowest	Median	Highest
<b>QI 1 Making a difference</b>					
a) % of adults who think that using the library has helped them develop new skills	N/A	N/A	17%	70%	90%
c) health and well-being	N/A	N/A	1%	63%	90%
d) enjoyable, safe and inclusive	N/A	N/A	93%	97%	100%
<b>QI 2 Customer satisfaction</b>					
a) 'very good' or 'good' choice of books	N/A	N/A	84%	90.5%	97%
b) 'very good' or 'good' customer care	N/A	N/A	92%	98%	100%
c) 'very good' or 'good' IT facilities	N/A	N/A	60%	85%	99%
d) 'very good' or 'good' overall	N/A	N/A	85%	98%	100%
e) users aged 16 & under rating out of ten	N/A	N/A	8.0	9.4	9.7
<b>QI 5 User support</b>					
a) attendances per capita	9	15/21	1	28	214
c) informal support per capita	15	20/20	15	150	608
<b>QI 6 Attendances at events per capita</b>	125	19/22	14	224.5	764
<b>QI 8 Library use</b>					
b) virtual visits per capita	2,385	3/21	5	766	6,035
<b>QI 13 Staffing levels and qualifications<sup>14</sup></b>					
(v) a) total volunteers	2	N/A	0	23	442
b) volunteer hours	87	N/A	0	883	22,706
<b>QI 14 Operational expenditure</b>					
a) total expenditure per capita	£15,965	6/21	£5,978	£12,646	£26,209
b) % on staff,	64%	=13/21	48%	67%	80%
% on information resources	10%	=8/21	4%	9%	19%
% on equipment and buildings	2%	=11/21	0%	2%	29%
% on other operational costs	24%	7/21	1%	15%	38%

## Analysis of performance

The Core Entitlements and quality indicators can be divided into three key areas. This section of the report outlines performance under these areas.

### Meeting customer needs (QI 1-2, 4-5)

Attendances at formal training have risen this year, having increased more than fourfold compared to 2023-24 as numbers were boosted by SPF grant funding (QI5). The percentage of users saying the training helped them to achieve their purpose is also much improved compared to the previous year. Informal support numbers have increased by 24% compared to 2023-24 and the service reports that demand continues to increase for informal help, particularly with completing online forms, scanning documents and job searching. However, Anglesey still has the lowest figure for informal support per capita figure nationally. The service notes that informal support may not always be captured and reported. Anglesey meets the target for

<sup>14</sup> *Rankings are not included for volunteers as the implications of volunteer numbers are ambiguous.*

Health and well-being (QI4) in full and reports that significant staff time and resource is spent in this area. The service has not conducted a user survey in recent years, but reports plans to undertake a survey in 2025-26 (QI1 & QI2).

## Access and use (QI 6-8)

SPF grant funding has had an impact on the events and activity programme this year; event attendance increased by 25% and the service targeted new or underrepresented audiences (QI6). Events have included book launches, felting workshops, digital photography and author talks. However, despite notable improvements, the service remains in the bottom quartile of Welsh library authorities for this measure.

The library website continues to be well used, and Anglesey remains in the top quartile of Welsh library services for virtual visits despite a small decrease (3%) in virtual visits compared to 2023-24 (QI8). The service is above the median for e-issues per capita. E-issues have more than doubled compared to 2023-24 and have almost trebled since 2022-23.

## Expertise and capacity (QI 13-14 &16)

Anglesey does not meet the targets for total staff or qualified staff per capita, although it is above the national median for both measures (QI13). Total staffing numbers have declined slightly (0.4 FTE) as a vacant post was deleted and work redistributed. The service reports that the effects of carrying vacant posts within the service are increasingly evident as it ramps up the events and activities programme. However, a longstanding vacant professional post was successfully recruited during this reporting period which has positively impacted the senior team capacity.

Operational expenditure (QI14) is above the national median and has increased by 26% compared to 2023-24 due to the addition of significant grant funding. However, the per capita book budget has remained unchanged from the previous year.

The service continues to meet the opening hours target and is above the national median for this measure (QI16). Opening hours are unchanged from 2023-24. The service reports that mobile library routes have been revised according to community and customer needs, but opening hours have remained the same.

## 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. Isle of Anglesey identified a range of areas where its library service supports these priorities; examples include:

- **Learning** e.g. partnerships with Adult Community Education, which sits within the library service; and project packs and reading resources for primary school children and teachers provided by the school library service.
- **Reading and literacy** e.g. delivering basic skills sessions with partners; class visits; multiple copy packs; and themed collections provided by the school library service.
- **Community well-being** e.g. assisting third sector organisations and other partners to promote their services.
- **Skills and economic regeneration** e.g. providing business information; supporting digital inclusion and literacy; and acting as a hub for tourist information.
- **Digital inclusion and participation** e.g. providing help and support in person, by phone and via email; facilitating online IT courses and one-to-one digital sessions; and expanding the Digital Library offer, including digital newspapers and BorrowBox.
- **Health and well-being** e.g. therapeutic and read-aloud groups for blind and partially sighted residents; maintaining the Housebound Library Service; and running promotions to reduce loneliness.
- **Cultural identity** e.g. maintaining an extensive local history collection that links place and language; placing high emphasis on Welsh language stock; and facilitating Welsh language and Welsh learners' reading groups.
- **Poverty** e.g. offering a Warm Space during the winter.

## Future direction

Reporting on the authority's future direction and plans for the library service over the coming year, Isle of Anglesey will continue to operate in alignment with the Isle of Anglesey Council Plan 2023-28. Acknowledging the significant challenges posed by the current economic situation and cost of living crisis, the service will contribute to the council's vision by supporting sustainable communities for learning and offering accessible, quality services that enrich the lives of Anglesey residents. Future library service priorities include advancing key areas identified in the Council Plan: promoting the Welsh language; supporting social care and well-being; enhancing education; contributing to economic development opportunities; and addressing climate change. Isle of Anglesey reports that the authority and its staff will maintain their focus on safeguarding residents' welfare, well-being and quality of life.



## Conclusion

Isle of Anglesey has improved its performance dramatically in a number of areas this year, specifically attendance at events and formal training, which have been boosted by SPF funding. It is also positive that e-issues continue to increase, and virtual visits remain strong. Whilst recruiting to the vacant qualified post this year has had a positive impact on the capacity of the senior team, the service acknowledges that the increase in the number of events and activities has exposed the challenges of current staffing levels.

Despite many positive elements of this year's return, Isle of Anglesey still does not meet two of the Core Entitlements. This is becoming increasingly worrying as issues highlighted in previous annual reports have not been addressed. It is now a number of years since a customer survey was last carried out, and the service continues to assert that, whilst a new strategy has been produced, it is unable to make it available. In addition, the commentary on the future direction refers to the broader council strategy but is noticeably weak on specific details of library development.

# Merthyr Tydfil Annual Assessment Report 2024-25

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.

## Executive summary

Merthyr Tydfil reported meeting all of the 13 Core Entitlements in full through self-assessment. However, the independent assessor considers that the service meets 12 of the 13 Core Entitlements in full and 1 in part. Of the 5 quality indicators which have targets, Merthyr Tydfil is achieving 3 in full and 1 in part. One QI is not met.

In 2023-24, serious concerns were raised about Merthyr Tydfil Libraries as a result of a reduction in funding and change in governance which had severe impact on staffing, opening hours and resource provision. However, the 2024-25 return demonstrates that the situation in Merthyr Tydfil has clearly improved during the year. It is positive that the service now meets 12 of the 13 Core Entitlements. Staffing numbers are gradually increasing, IT provision is being improved, more activities are being offered, and the book budget has increased this year. However, the impact of the problems the service has experienced in recent years, is still being felt. In particular, the reduction in opening hours has clearly impacted customers and also limits the service's ability to work with partners who wish to make use of library spaces. Merthyr Tydfil Libraries now have a strategy to guide their development over the next few years and it is evident from this year's return that progress is being made. However, as was noted in the 2023-24 annual report, it is likely that the service will take a number of years to recover from the challenges it has faced.

- Merthyr Tydfil is around, or above, the median for Making a difference measures, and in the top quartile for health and well-being and skills development (QI1).
- User attendance at library events has grown considerably as attendances have increased more than 50-fold compared to 2023-24 (QI6).
- E-issues have more than doubled compared to 2023-24 (QI8).

## Note to the 2024-25 report

During 2024-25 local authorities in Wales migrated to a new all Wales Digital Library Platform. The process of migration caused some disruption to the operation of library

services including the acquisition of new stock which had to be suspended for a period as individual services moved to the new system. There are also some slight differences in the configuration of the new platform which means that the user data across 2024-25 is not entirely consistent. The reports for 2024-25 do not therefore include the data detailed below for Quality Indicators 4, 8, 9 and 10.

QI 4 Support for health and well-being

c) the number of loans of titles from the Reading Well in Wales series

QI 8 Library use

c) the total number of active borrowers divided by the resident population, multiplied by 1,000

d) the total number of library members

e) the total number of book issues (adult and children separate)

f) the total number of audio-visual issues

QI 9 Up-to-date and appropriate reading material

a) minimum acquisitions rate

b) % spent on children's resources

QI 10 Welsh language resources

a) 4% minimum spend

b) Welsh issues per capita

All data will be reported and assessed for 2025-26 (the first year of Framework 7) and this data will be used to set the benchmark for the remaining years of the framework.

## Performance against the standards

The standards framework comprises of Core Entitlements, quality indicators with targets, quality indicators with benchmarks and impact measures.

### Core Entitlements

Merthyr Tydfil reported meeting all of the 13 Core Entitlements in full through self-assessment. Based on the detailed and helpful commentary provided, the independent assessor considers that the service has met 12 Core Entitlements in full and 1 in part. In 2023-24, Merthyr Tydfil was judged not to have met CE5 due to a drastic reduction in opening hours in 2023-24, the full impact of which becomes evident in this year's return, as the service notes. The service acknowledges that the reduction in opening hours has prompted user concerns and is to be commended for holding a consultation on this topic. However, until there is evidence that changes have been made to ensure that opening hours suit local needs, the service continues to only partially meet CE5.

More positively, it is pleasing to note that two new full-time library assistant posts and a part time Library Outreach post were created in 2024-25, helping the service to

ensure CE2 is met this year. In addition, Merthyr Tydfil now has a publicly available library strategy, enabling the service to meet CE12.

- 14. Libraries in Wales are free to join and open to all.**  
Self-Assessment: Fully met  
Independent Assessor: **Fully met p**
- 15. Libraries in Wales ensure friendly, knowledgeable and qualified staff are on hand to help.**  
Self-Assessment: Fully met  
Independent Assessor: **Fully met p**
- 16. Libraries in Wales provide access to a range of services, activities, and high-quality resources in a range of formats to support lifelong learning, personal health and well-being, community participation, cultural experiences, recreation, and reading for pleasure.**  
Self-Assessment: Fully met  
Independent Assessor: **Fully met p**
- 17. Libraries in Wales provide appropriate services, facilities and information resources for individuals and groups with special requirements.**  
Self-Assessment: Fully met  
Independent Assessor: **Fully met p**
- 18. Libraries provide appropriate safe, attractive and accessible physical spaces with suitable staffed opening hours.**  
Self-Assessment: Fully met.  
Independent Assessor: **Partially met n**  
This is due to the continued reduction in opening hours and lack of evidence that measures have been taken to ensure opening hours meet local needs.
- 19. Libraries in Wales lend books for free, and deliver free access to information, including online information resources available 24 hours a day.**  
Self-Assessment: Fully met  
Independent Assessor: **Fully met p**
- 20. Libraries in Wales provide free use of the Internet including Wi-Fi, and access to digital equipment, in all service points.**  
Self-Assessment: Fully met  
Independent Assessor: **Fully met p**

21. **Libraries in Wales provide access to services, cultural activities, and high-quality resources in the Welsh language.**  
Self-Assessment: Fully met  
Independent Assessor: **Fully met p**
22. **Libraries in Wales work in partnership to share catalogues and facilitate access to the resources of all Welsh libraries.**  
Self-Assessment: Fully met  
Independent Assessor: **Fully met p**
23. **Libraries in Wales work with a range of partners to promote and deliver services to new and diverse audiences, enabling more people to benefit from those services.**  
Self-Assessment: Fully met  
Independent Assessor: **Fully met p**
24. **Libraries in Wales regularly consult users to gather their views on the service and information about their changing needs.**  
Self-Assessment: Fully met  
Independent Assessor: **Fully met p**
25. **Libraries in Wales provide access to their library service strategy, policies, objectives and vision, in print and online, in a range of languages appropriate for the community.**  
Self-Assessment: Fully met.  
Independent Assessor: **Fully met p**
26. **Libraries in Wales provide support to help improve people's digital skills and confidence, including the use of e-government services**  
Self-Assessment: Fully met  
Independent Assessor: **Fully met p**

## Quality indicators with targets

There are 12 quality indicators (QIs), of which 5 have constituent targets. Of these, Merthyr Tydfil is achieving 3 in full and 1 in part. One QI is not met.

- QI 4 (a) Support for health and well-being, **met in full p**
  - i) Reading Well scheme, **met**
  - ii) Designated health & well-being collection, **met**
  - iii) Information about healthier lifestyles and healthy behaviours, **met**
  - iv) Signposting to health & well-being services, **met**
- QI 6 All static service points offer events/activities for users with special Requirements, **met in full p**

QI 7 Location of service points, **met in full p**

QI 13 Staffing levels and qualifications, **partially met n**

i) Staff per capita, **not met**

ii) Qualified staff per capita, **not met**

iii) Head of service qualification/training, **met**

iv) CPD percentage, **met**

QI 16 Opening hours per capita, **not met l**

## Impact measures

The framework includes three indicators aimed at assessing the impact of library use on people's lives. These indicators do not have targets, and authorities are required to carry out user surveys for QI1 once over the 2022-23 to 2024-25 period. Merthyr Tydfil conducted an adult survey and a partial children's survey in March 2025. The summary figures (lowest, median and highest) are based on all authorities providing data in the 2022-23, 2023-24 and 2024-25 returns. Rankings reflect the number of respondents, where 1 is the highest scoring authority.

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:	92%	12/19	68%	94%	99%
e) % of adults who think that the library has made a difference to their lives:	85%	13/20	31%	86.5%	96%
QI 5 b) % of attendees of training sessions who said that the training had helped them achieve their purpose in attending:	N/A	N/A	75%	98.5%	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 demonstrating how libraries can support well-being, independence and community connection by providing digital resources to meet individual needs. Through personalised support and digital expertise, Dowlais Library staff have enabled readers to overcome barriers posed by mobility and health issues, increased digital literacy, and fostered renewed excitement around reading.

An example was provided of the support the library offered to a member of the Dowlais Hookers crochet group that meets at the library. She is a keen reader who found that her deteriorating eyesight limited her to large print books, which often didn't include her favourite authors. Library staff suggested BorrowBox as an accessible alternative. They supported her to download, install and use the BorrowBox app on her tablet, which she found extremely valuable commenting, *"BorrowBox is marvellous! I've enjoyed every book I've read."* Soon she was enthusiastically sharing her latest reads with fellow crochet group members, who became curious and asked staff for help accessing the app themselves. The ripple

effect saw others in the group adopt BorrowBox, improving their access to reading material and boosting digital confidence. Members shared how BorrowBox has had a positive impact with one commenting, *“It’s so easy to use... I can borrow books and renew them when it’s difficult to leave home because of my hip,”* and another stating, *“When my arthritis is bad, holding a book is difficult - using BorrowBox on a tablet is much easier.”*

## Quality indicators and benchmarks

The remaining indicators do not have targets but allow services to monitor their performance over time. The following table summarises Merthyr Tydfil’s position for 2024-25. Rankings reflect the number of respondents, where 1 is the highest scoring authority. 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	79%	=5/20	17%	70%	90%
c) health and well-being	75%	5/20	1%	63%	90%
d) enjoyable, safe and inclusive	97%	=9/20	93%	97%	100%

Performance indicator		Rank	Lowest	Median	Highest
QI 2 Customer satisfaction					
a) ‘very good’ or ‘good’ choice of books	84%	20/20	84%	90.5%	97%
b) ‘very good’ or ‘good’ customer care	92%	20/20	92%	98%	100%
c) ‘very good’ or ‘good’ IT facilities	74%	15/20	60%	85%	99%
d) ‘very good’ or ‘good’ overall	85%	20/20	85%	98%	100%
e) users aged 16 & under rating out of ten	N/A	N/A	8.0	9.4	9.7
QI 5 User support					
a) attendances per capita	N/A	N/A	1	28	214
c) informal support per capita	N/A	N/A	15	150	608
QI 6 Attendances at events per capita					
	191	16/22	14	224.5	764
QI 8 Library use					
b) virtual visits per capita	5	21/21	5	766	6,035

QI 13 Staffing levels and qualifications<sup>15</sup>

<sup>15</sup> *Rankings are not included for volunteers as the implications of volunteer numbers are ambiguous.*

Performance indicator		Rank	Lowest	Median	Highest
(v) a) total volunteers	1	N/A	0	23	442
b) volunteer hours	150	N/A	0	883	22,706
QI 14 Operational expenditure					
a) total expenditure per capita	£9,675	18/21	£5,978	£12,646	£26,209
b) % on staff,	61%	15/21	48%	67%	80%
% on information resources	18%	2/21	4%	9%	19%
% on equipment and buildings	12%	4/21	0%	2%	29%
% on other operational costs	10%	15/21	1%	15%	38%

## Analysis of performance

The Core Entitlements and quality indicators can be divided into three key areas. This section of the report outlines performance under these areas.

### Meeting customer needs (QI 1-2, 4-5)

The customer survey carried out by Merthyr Tydfil in March 2025 shows a marked improvement on the results reported in the previous year. This year, the service used a combination of online surveys that were advertised widely on library social media, and paper surveys in all libraries<sup>16</sup>. The paper surveys increased the number of completed surveys. Comparing these results to those reported nationally during the Framework 6 Extension period, Merthyr Tydfil is close to, or above, the median for Making a difference (QI1 measures), and in the top quartile for health and well-being and skills development. However, perhaps unsurprisingly given the challenges of the last few years, the service performs comparatively less well for Customer satisfaction (QI2); despite promising improvements compared to 2023-24, it is still the lowest ranked authority for three of the four adult customer satisfaction measures. The service acknowledges that financial problems under the Merthyr Tydfil Leisure Trust severely affected the number and choice of new books added to library stock. The service has taken action to improve its IT offer. New IT equipment has been put in place at Aberfan, Dowlais and Merthyr Tydfil Libraries and equipment will be installed at Treharris Library when it re-opens in August 2025.

Merthyr Tydfil continues to meet the target for Support for health and well-being (QI4) in full. Shared reading groups have not yet been re-introduced but will be a priority area for training as new library staff become established in their roles. Libraries continue to provide space for community groups such as Knit & Natter, art groups, writing groups etc., although the reduction in opening hours has limited the availability of library spaces for partner organisations.

<sup>16</sup> Children's surveys were conducted during class visits to the library and library staff visits to schools. This means that children were able to respond themselves, rather than their parents. However, it also means that not all children who completed surveys may have visited the library.



No data are provided in relation to User support (QI5). The service reports that low staffing levels means that formal training sessions are carried out by partners working in library spaces. A sample survey of informal support will be carried out in October 2025.

## Access and use (QI 6-8)

Merthyr Tydfil's performance in relation to User attendance at library events has improved considerably compared to 2023-24 (QI6). The number of events organised has increased from 418 in 2023-24 to 658 in 2024-2025. The number of attendances reported has grown more than 50-fold and is close to the 2022-23 figure. Many library events are aimed at reducing social isolation. Events included story times, creative writing sessions, wellwoman journalling, Walk & Talk, homework support, and art exhibitions.

Merthyr Tydfil is the bottom ranking service nationally for virtual visits (QI8). However, the service notes that the new library website does not yet have a widget installed to provide data on visitor figures, so the figure only counts visits to Libraries Wales portal. The service is in the bottom quartile nationally for e-issues per capita. However, e-issues have more than doubled compared to 2023-24.

## Expertise and capacity (QI 13-14 &16)

Merthyr Tydfil now meets the target for staff CPD percentage; indeed, it has the joint highest percentage nationally for this measure. However, total staff and qualified staff per capita are still below the median and the service does not meet either of these targets (QI13). Nevertheless, the situation is improving. Two new full-time library assistant posts and a part-time (0.4) library outreach post were created in 2024-25. Although currently, only the Operations Librarian has a formal library qualification, a further member of staff will shortly be starting an MA Information Studies through distance learning.

Merthyr Tydfil is in the bottom quartile nationally for Operational expenditure per capita; per capita revenue spending has increased by 2% compared to 2023-24 (QI14). However, the service devotes a significant proportion of the budget to materials and is in the top quartile of Welsh library authorities for per capita book budget and the book budget has increased by 10% compared to the previous year.

Reported Opening hours per capita (QI16) have decreased this year, and the service does not meet this target. It is in the bottom quartile nationally for this measure. The full impact of the reduction in library opening hours introduced from September 2024 (reported in the 2023-24 return), was only evident in this year's return. An opening hours consultation has been carried out in response to library user concern about the reduction in library opening hours. The service reports that it is likely that some changes will be made to library opening hours, though extra opening hours are unlikely.

## 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 highlighted a range of activities demonstrating how libraries contributed to the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 goals and national priorities, including the following:

- **A prosperous Wales** e.g. free access to IT equipment to support local businesses with designing and printing documents; low-cost photocopying and printing services; and space for meetings.
- **A resilient Wales** e.g. partnering with Communities4Work and Compass Community Hub to support jobseekers; and working with Flying Start to provide early language support sessions for parents and families.
- **A healthier Wales** e.g. organising Women's Wellness Journaling Sessions to support mental health.
- **A Wales of cohesive communities** e.g. community events that foster connection such as Empathy Day outreach sessions, Walk & Talk sessions and local history talks; creating inclusive spaces with book displays celebrating Pride, Black History Month and Holocaust Memorial Day; and offering volunteer opportunities including the Library Memorial Garden project.
- **A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language** e.g. creative sessions including art groups, writing clubs, comic clubs, knit & natter and book groups; author talks in both Welsh and English; and working with Cymraeg i Blant to deliver bilingual baby massage and baby yoga sessions introducing Welsh to families.
- **A globally responsible Wales** e.g. transforming waste ground behind Merthyr Library into a Memorial Garden; collaborating on installing electric car charging points at library car parks; serving as collection points for small electrical items, food waste bags and batteries; and investing in energy-saving technologies like LED lighting and efficient heating systems.

## Future direction

Reporting on the authority's future direction and plans for the library service over the coming year, Merthyr Tydfil refers to the Library Outreach Team's work in promoting the service to non-library users and educational establishments. The reopening of Treharris Library is planned, accompanied by a promotional programme to reconnect with lapsed library members and attract new audiences. Merthyr Tydfil Libraries will also explore collaborations with partner organisations to establish library hubs staffed by volunteers, expanding access to library services for those who may not currently use them. A review of the library staffing structure is planned. Additionally, the service will work with the National Library of Wales to promote the Clip Corner.

## Conclusion

The situation in Merthyr Tydfil Libraries has clearly improved in many areas since 2023-24. It is positive that the service now meets 12 of the 13 Core Entitlements. Staffing numbers are gradually increasing, IT provision is being improved, more activities are being offered, and the book budget has increased this year. However, the impact of the problems the service has experienced in recent years is still being felt. In particular, the reduction in opening hours has clearly impacted customers and also limits the service's ability to work with partners who wish to make use of library spaces. Merthyr Tydfil Libraries now have a strategy to guide their development over the next few years and it is evident from this year's return that progress is being made. However, as was noted in the 2023-24 annual report, it is likely that the service will take a number of years to recover from the challenges it has faced.

# Monmouthshire Annual Assessment Report

## 2024-25

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.

### Executive summary

Monmouthshire meets 12 of the 13 Core Entitlements in full and one in part. Of the 5 quality indicators which have targets, Monmouthshire is achieving 3 in full and 1 in part. One target is not met.

In 2023-24, serious concerns were raised about Monmouthshire Libraries as a result of challenges around staffing, availability of service points and the provision of materials. However, this year's return demonstrates clear improvements in the service's performance during 2024-25. Monmouthshire now meets the target for Location of service points (Q17) in full and the target for Staffing levels and qualifications (Q13) in part. Furthermore, operational expenditure has increased, although the proportion of the budget allocated to materials (book budget) has declined. It is noted that the service has taken action to address concerns about staff training which were highlighted in the 2023-24 annual report. The service performs well for e-issues and Monmouthshire is clearly developing innovative delivery and engagement initiatives, including schools' engagement and resources for people living with dementia. Overall, therefore, the picture is clearly an improving one although, understandably, it is likely to take the service some time to recover from the financial and staffing challenges of the last few years. However, concerns remain in some areas, in particular, staffing levels remain low and the service still does not meet the target for opening hours. The reduction in per capita book budget this year is especially worrying given the concerns about materials provision identified in 2023-24.

- Event attendance figures have increased by 16% compared to 2023-24 and by 36% compared to 2022-23 (Q16).
- The service is in the top quartile nationally for e-issues per capita as e-issues have increased by 27% compared to 2023-24 and by 94% compared to 2022-23 (Q18).
- Monmouthshire is above the national median for informal support per capita (Q15).

## Note to the 2024-25 report

During 2024-25 local authorities in Wales migrated to a new all Wales Digital Library Platform. The process of migration caused some disruption to the operation of library services including the acquisition of new stock which had to be suspended for a period as individual services moved to the new system. There are also some slight differences in the configuration of the new platform which means that the user data across 2024-25 is not entirely consistent. The reports for 2024-25 do not therefore include the data detailed below for Quality Indicators 4, 8, 9 and 10.

- QI 4 Support for health and well-being
  - c) the number of loans of titles from the Reading Well in Wales series
- QI 8 Library use
  - c) the total number of active borrowers divided by the resident population, multiplied by 1,000
  - d) the total number of library members
  - e) the total number of book issues (adult and children separate)
  - f) the total number of audio-visual issues
- QI 9 Up-to-date and appropriate reading material
  - a) minimum acquisitions rate
  - b) % spent on children's resources
- QI 10 Welsh language resources
  - a) 4% minimum spend
  - b) Welsh issues per capita

All data will be reported and assessed for 2025-26 (the first year of Framework 7) and this data will be used to set the benchmark for the remaining years of the framework.

## Performance against the standards

The standards framework comprises of Core Entitlements, quality indicators with targets, quality indicators with benchmarks and impact measures.

### Core Entitlements

Monmouthshire reported meeting 12 of the 13 Core Entitlements in full and one in part through self-assessment. Based on the helpful commentary provided, the independent assessor agrees with the self-assessment. The service partially meets CE12 as the library strategy is not yet published.

### Quality indicators with targets

There are 12 quality indicators (QIs), of which 5 have constituent targets. Of these, Monmouthshire is achieving 3 in full and 1 in part. One target is not met.

- QI 4 (a) Support for health and well-being, **met in full p**  
 i) Reading Well scheme, **met**  
 ii) Designated health & well-being collection, **met**  
 iii) Information about healthier lifestyles and healthy behaviours, **met**  
 iv) Signposting to health & well-being services, **met**
- QI 6 All static service points offer events/activities for users with special Requirements, **met in full p**
- QI 7 Location of service points, **met in full p**
- QI 13 Staffing levels and qualifications, **partially met n**  
 i) Staff per capita, **not met**  
 ii) Qualified staff per capita, **not met**  
 iii) Head of service qualification/training, **not met**  
 iv) CPD percentage, **met**
- QI 16 Opening hours per capita, **not met l**

## Impact measures

The framework includes three indicators aimed at assessing the impact of library use on people's lives. These indicators do not have targets, and authorities are required to carry out user surveys for QI1 once over the 2022-23 to 2024-25 period.

Monmouthshire conducted an adult survey in March 2023 and a children's survey in October 2022. The summary figures (lowest, median and highest) are based on all authorities providing data in the 2022-23, 2023-24 and 2024-25 returns. Rankings reflect the number of respondents, where 1 is the highest scoring authority.

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:	88%	16/19	68%	94%	99%
e) % of adults who think that the library has made a difference to their lives:	83%	=14/20	31%	86.5%	96%
QI 5 b) % of attendees of training sessions who said that the training had helped them achieve their purpose in attending:	99%	=6/18	75%	98.5%	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 an impact statement describing how Caldicot Community Hub has transformed its role in the community through an innovative school engagement programme. Beginning in September 2023 with Rogiet Primary School, the hub created a model of weekly school visits that has inspired enthusiasm for reading and library use among local children. Each week, different year groups participate in interactive sessions featuring storytelling, poetry, quizzes and crafts. Every child borrows a book to take back to school, encouraging an appetite for

reading and fostering a sense of ownership. This approach has introduced hundreds of children to the library environment, leading to a significant increase in new library memberships among young people.

The programme's success has seen it expand in 2024-25 and it now includes Dewstow, Durand, Undy and Castle Park Primary Schools, with sessions spanning Reception to Year 6. Local nurseries, including a Welsh-medium nursery, have also joined, benefiting from bilingual sessions that promote Welsh language and culture. Plans are in place to extend the programme further with Welsh-language groups from Caldicot Comprehensive School. Demand now exceeds capacity, with a waiting list reflecting the programme's strong reputation and impact on supporting literacy, inspired a love of reading, and strengthened community ties.

## Quality indicators and benchmarks

The remaining indicators do not have targets but allow services to monitor their performance over time. The following table summarises Monmouthshire's position for 2024-25. Rankings reflect the number of respondents, where 1 is the highest scoring authority. 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%	19/20	17%	70%	90%
c) health and well-being	46%	17/20	1%	63%	90%
d) enjoyable, safe and inclusive	97%	=9/20	93%	97%	100%
QI 2 Customer satisfaction					
a) 'very good' or 'good' choice of books	87%	=16/20	84%	90.5%	97%
b) 'very good' or 'good' customer care	98%	=10/20	92%	98%	100%
c) 'very good' or 'good' IT facilities	70%	=16/20	60%	85%	99%
d) 'very good' or 'good' overall	96%	=15/20	85%	98%	100%
e) users aged 16 & under rating out of ten	9.3	11/18	8.0	9.4	9.7
QI 5 User support					
a) attendances per capita	2	20/21	1	28	214
c) informal support per capita	164	10/20	15	150	608
QI 6 Attendances at events per capita	220	12/22	14	224.5	764
QI 8 Library use					
b) virtual visits per capita	520	14/21	5	766	6,035
QI 13 Staffing levels and qualifications <sup>17</sup>					

<sup>17</sup> Rankings are not included for volunteers as the implications of volunteer numbers are ambiguous.



Performance indicator		Rank	Lowest	Median	Highest
(v) a) total volunteers	27	N/A	0	23	442
b) volunteer hours	478	N/A	0	883	22,706
QI 14 Operational expenditure					
a) total expenditure per capita	£9,415	20/21	£5,978	£12,646	£26,209
b) % on staff,	64%	=13/21	48%	67%	80%
% on information resources	5%	20/21	4%	9%	19%
% on equipment and buildings	15%	3/21	0%	2%	29%
% on other operational costs	16%	=9/21	1%	15%	38%

## Analysis of performance

The Core Entitlements and quality indicators can be divided into three key areas. This section of the report outlines performance under these areas.

### Meeting customer needs (QI 1-2, 4-5)

Comparing Monmouthshire to other services across the Framework 6 Extension period, the service performs at the median for users who feel the library is enjoyable, safe and inclusive, but is below the median for the remaining Making a difference (QI1) measures. Regarding Customer satisfaction (QI2) Monmouthshire is at the national median for customer care, but below the median for other customer satisfaction measures.

The service meets the target for Support for health and well-being (QI4). In February 2025, Monmouthshire launched a collection of memory boxes, designed to stimulate reminiscence and support those living with dementia, in collaboration with the Dementia Support and Awareness Team.

Monmouthshire is in the bottom quartile of Welsh library services for formal training attendance per capita and the number of attendances reported has decreased by 20% compared to 2023-24. Formal training is delivered in partnership with the Adult and Community Learning service through a franchise agreement with Coleg Gwent. 99% of those attending (n=254, including some courses outside the WPLS remit) said the training had helped them to achieve their purpose in attending. Monmouthshire is above the national median for informal support per capita.

### Access and use (QI 6-8)

Event attendance figures have increased by 16% compared to 2023-24 and by 36% compared to 2022-23 (QI6). Monmouthshire is close to the national median for this measure. The library service collaborated with local performance artists to develop a bilingual performance inspired by Mali a'r Môr Stormus by Malachy Doyle and Andrew Whitson, which has toured five library authorities. Other events have included carol services, festive celebrations, quiz night, and live music events. The percentage of households within the specified distance of a service point increased



by 1% in this year's calculations and Monmouthshire now meets the target for Location of service points (QI7). Virtual visits have increased by 31% compared to 2023-24, but Monmouthshire remains below the median for this measure (QI8). The service is in the top quartile nationally for e-issues per capita as e-issues have increased by 27% compared to 2023-24 and by 94% compared to 2022-23.

## Expertise and capacity (QI 13-14 &16)

Monmouthshire's performance in relation to Staffing levels and qualifications (QI13) has improved this year, as the service now meets the training element of this indicator. Indeed, the number of staff training hours reported has increased by more than 18-fold compared to 2023-24. However, staffing levels have not changed since last year and the service does not currently have an operational manager with a library qualification, although it is noted that the head of library services is undertaking CILIP Chartership training. Monmouthshire currently has a small number of volunteers but is exploring how they can augment the service via volunteers. In doing this, the service should ensure that volunteers are used according to [CILIP guidance](#).

Although revenue expenditure has increased by 12% compared to 2023-24, Monmouthshire remains in the bottom quartile nationally for Operational expenditure per capita (QI14). The per capita book budget is also in the bottom quartile and has decreased by 7% compared to the 2023-24 figure as the proportion of the budget allocated to materials has declined from 6% to 5%. Monmouthshire is the lowest ranked library authority for per capita book budget. Opening hours per capita have decreased slightly (3%) compared to 2023-24, so the service continues to be below the national median for this measure and does not meet the Opening hours target (QI16).

## 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 identified five key areas in which its programmes support the Welsh Government's strategic priorities:

- **Promoting learning and skills development** e.g. school engagement visits, homework clubs, adult reading groups, device loan schemes, one-to-one support, and access to online learning platforms.
- **Supporting health and well-being** e.g. partnering with local health boards and community mental health teams to deliver dementia-friendly Memory Boxes and creative activities such as cookery-based learning and arts engagement.
- **Championing the Welsh language and culture** e.g. promoting Cymraeg 2050 through bilingual story times, Welsh-language stock development and

cultural programming; and collaborating with Welsh-medium schools and local artists on projects such as the bilingual performance of Mali a'r Môr Stormus.

- **Strengthening communities and reducing inequality** e.g. outreach through mobile library provision, and targeted engagement with schools and care homes to ensure equitable access.
- **Delivering value and sustainability** e.g. maximising partnerships, community engagement, and support.

## Future direction

Reporting on the authority's future direction and plans for the library service over the coming year, Monmouthshire refers to entering a critical period of renewal. The service acknowledges the significant impact of sustained austerity on staffing, service point availability and stock provision, but remains committed to revitalising library services with the support of Monmouthshire County Council and in alignment with the Community and Corporate Plan 2022-28.

An immediate priority is the development of a new five-year Public Library Strategy, informed by both internal discussions and public consultation. This strategy will establish a clear, measurable framework to ensure libraries remain open, accessible and welcoming spaces that promote lifelong learning, well-being, digital inclusion, and cultural engagement. The new strategy will also reflect the Council's key priorities, including fairness, community resilience and opportunities for all, recognising the vital role libraries play in supporting these goals. Monmouthshire hopes that this, and an emphasis on collaboration, will restore public confidence and ensure the service continues to deliver meaningful impact for residents across the county.

## Conclusion

There are clear improvements in Monmouthshire's performance this year. The service now meets the target for Location of service points (Q17) in full and the target for Staffing levels and qualifications (Q113) in part. Furthermore, operational expenditure has increased, although the proportion of the budget allocated to materials (book budget) has declined. It is noted that the service has taken action to address concerns about staff training which were highlighted in the 2023-24 annual report. The service performs well for e-issues and Monmouthshire is clearly developing innovative delivery and engagement initiatives, including schools' engagement and resources for people living with dementia. Overall, therefore, the picture is clearly an improving one although, understandably, it is likely to take the service some time to recover from the challenges of the last few years. However, concerns remain in some areas, in particular, staffing levels have not increased; the service still does not meet the target for opening hours; and both the book budget and overall revenue spending remain in the bottom quartile nationally.

# Neath Port Talbot Annual Assessment Report 2024-25

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.

## Executive summary

Neath Port Talbot meets all of the 13 Core Entitlements in full. Of the 5 quality indicators which have targets, Neath Port Talbot is achieving 3 in full and 1 in part. One QI is not met.

Neath Port Talbot continues to perform well in many areas. It is evident that the library service is appreciated by members of the local community who rate it highly. Attendances at events, training and informal support continue to be well above the median for Welsh library authorities. It is also positive that the book budget has increased this year. However, concerns about staffing levels and opening hours remain. In addition, the decline in the number of virtual visits is something the service may wish to investigate further to identify possible reasons for this and make any necessary adjustments to the library website.

- Neath Port Talbot is joint highest-ranking authority nationally for percentage of adults who think that using the library has helped them develop new skills, and rating by users aged 16 and under (QI1 & QI2).
- Both formal training and informal support attendances per capita are in the top quartile nationally (QI5).
- Per capita event attendance continues to be above the median for Welsh library authorities and has increased by 4% compared to 2023-24 and 17% since 2022-23 (QI6).

## Note to the 2024-25 report

During 2024-25 local authorities in Wales migrated to a new all Wales Digital Library Platform. The process of migration caused some disruption to the operation of library services including the acquisition of new stock which had to be suspended for a period as individual services moved to the new system. There are also some slight differences in the configuration of the new platform which means that the user data across 2024-25 is not entirely consistent. The reports for 2024-25 do not therefore include the data detailed below for Quality Indicators 4, 8, 9 and 10.

- QI 4 Support for health and well-being
  - c) the number of loans of titles from the Reading Well in Wales series
- QI 8 Library use
  - c) the total number of active borrowers divided by the resident population, multiplied by 1,000
  - d) the total number of library members
  - e) the total number of book issues (adult and children separate)
  - f) the total number of audio-visual issues
- QI 9 Up-to-date and appropriate reading material
  - a) minimum acquisitions rate
  - b) % spent on children's resources
- QI 10 Welsh language resources
  - a) 4% minimum spend
  - b) Welsh issues per capita

All data will be reported and assessed for 2025-26 (the first year of Framework 7) and this data will be used to set the benchmark for the remaining years of the framework.

## Performance against the standards

The standards framework comprises of Core Entitlements, quality indicators with targets, quality indicators with benchmarks and impact measures.

### Core Entitlements

Neath Port Talbot reported meeting all of the 13 Core Entitlements in full through self-assessment. Based on the detailed and helpful commentary provided, the independent assessor agrees with the self-assessment.

### Quality indicators with targets

There are 12 quality indicators (QIs), of which 5 have constituent targets. Of these, Neath Port Talbot is achieving 3 in full and 1 in part. One QI is not met.

- QI 4 (a) Support for health and well-being, **met in full p**
  - i) Reading Well scheme, **met**
  - ii) Designated health & well-being collection, **met**
  - iii) Information about healthier lifestyles and healthy behaviours, **met**
  - iv) Signposting to health & well-being services, **met**
- QI 6 All static service points offer events/activities for users with special Requirements, **met in full p**
- QI 7 Location of service points, **met in full p**

- QI 13 Staffing levels and qualifications, **partially met n**
- i) Staff per capita, **not met**
  - ii) Qualified staff per capita, **not met**
  - iii) Head of service qualification/training, **met**
  - iv) CPD percentage, **met**

QI 16 Opening hours per capita, **not met l**

## Impact measures

The framework includes three indicators aimed at assessing the impact of library use on people's lives. These indicators do not have targets, and authorities are required to carry out user surveys for QI1 once over the 2022-23 to 2024-25 period. The summary figures (lowest, median and highest) are based on all authorities providing data in the 2022-23, 2023-24 and 2024-25 returns. Neath Port Talbot conducted an adult survey and a children's survey in March 2023. Rankings reflect the number of respondents, where 1 is the highest scoring authority.

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:	97%	4/19	68%	94%	99%
e) % of adults who think that the library has made a difference to their lives:	93%	=5/20	31%	86.5%	96%
QI 5 b) % of attendees of training sessions who said that the training had helped them achieve their purpose in attending:	96%	13/18	75%	98.5%	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 provided an impact statement demonstrating how libraries can transform lives by providing personalised support, fostering digital skills and creating welcoming spaces where individuals can build confidence, find community and discover a love of reading. Roy, who first visited Skewen Library in June 2024 after the loss of his wife, had no experience of using digital devices. He sought help from library staff, who recognised his needs extended beyond routine IT support. Staff compiled a list of agencies which could offer additional assistance and welcomed Roy as a regular visitor, providing a supportive and friendly environment. Roy attended one-to-one and group digital training sessions, and quickly developed confidence in using mobile phones, tablets and laptops - moving from novice to skilled user in under six months. Roy also began providing support and advice to others in digital learning classes. His journey highlights the empowering impact of digital inclusion initiatives in libraries. In addition to his new digital skills, Roy discovered a passion for reading mysteries, engaging with fellow library users to share book recommendations and has become a confident user of BorrowBox, expanding his reading opportunities and embracing further digital resources.

## Quality indicators and benchmarks

The remaining indicators do not have targets but allow services to monitor their performance over time. The following table summarises Neath Port Talbot's position for 2024-25. Rankings reflect the number of respondents, where 1 is the highest scoring authority. 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%	=1/20	17%	70%	90%
c) health and well-being	84%	=2/20	1%	63%	90%
d) enjoyable, safe and inclusive	98%	=7/20	93%	97%	100%
QI 2 Customer satisfaction					
a) 'very good' or 'good' choice of books	96%	2/20	84%	90.5%	97%
b) 'very good' or 'good' customer care	99%	=2/20	92%	98%	100%
c) 'very good' or 'good' IT facilities	90%	=5/20	60%	85%	99%
d) 'very good' or 'good' overall	98%	=7/20	85%	98%	100%
e) users aged 16 & under rating out of ten	9.7	=1/18	8.0	9.4	9.7
Performance indicator		Rank	Lowest	Median	Highest
QI 5 User support					
a) attendances per capita	41	5/21	1	28	214
c) informal support per capita	441	2/20	15	150	608
QI 6 Attendances at events per capita	415	6/22	14	224.5	764
QI 8 Library use					
b) virtual visits per capita	196	19/21	5	766	6,035
QI 13 Staffing levels and qualifications <sup>18</sup>					
(v) a) total volunteers	23	N/A	0	23	442
b) volunteer hours	776	N/A	0	883	22,706
QI 14 Operational expenditure					
a) total expenditure per capita	£13,860	7/21	£5,978	£12,646	£26,209
b) % on staff,	60%	16/21	48%	67%	80%
% on information resources	9%	=11/21	4%	9%	19%
% on equipment and buildings	2%	=11/21	0%	2%	29%
% on other operational costs	30%	4/21	1%	15%	38%

## Analysis of performance

The Core Entitlements and quality indicators can be divided into three key areas. This section of the report outlines performance under these areas.

<sup>18</sup> *Rankings are not included for volunteers as the implications of volunteer numbers are ambiguous.*

## Meeting customer needs (QI 1-2, 4-5)

Neath Port Talbot performs well in relation to Making a difference (QI1) and Customer satisfaction (QI2); it is above the median of Welsh library authorities for all measures and is joint highest-ranking authority nationally for percentage of adults who think that using the library has helped them develop new skills, and for rating by users aged 16 and under. Neath Port Talbot meets the target for Support for health and well-being (QI4), and the service works with a number of health-related agencies including Social Services, Local Area Co-ordinators, Age Connects, DeafBlind UK, Sightlife, the NPT Mobile Foot Clinic, and MacMillan. Both formal training and informal support attendances are in the top quartile nationally, with attendance figures little changed from 2023-24 (QI5).

## Access and use (QI 6-8)

Per capita event attendance continues to be above the median for Welsh library authorities and has increased by 4% compared to 2023-24 and by 17% since 2022-23 (QI6). In October 2024, the service staged its first Children's Book Festival. It has also become a Warm Welcome champion. Events for users with special requirements include Sightlife for people with visual impairments, coffee mornings for Ukrainian refugees, and Chai and Chat meetings.

The number of virtual visits is in the bottom quartile for Welsh library authorities and the virtual visits figure has declined by 11% compared to 2023-24 (QI8). E-issues have decreased slightly (1%) compared to 2023-24, although Neath Port Talbot remains close to the median.

## Expertise and capacity (QI 13-14 &16)

Regarding Staffing levels and qualifications, Neath Port Talbot meets the targets for staff CPD percentage and head of service qualification but does not meet the targets for total staff or qualified staff per capita. One member of staff is working towards CILIP Chartership. The service is around the national median for total staff and above the median for qualified staff per capita (QI13). Total staff numbers decreased by 0.9 FTE, but there has been no change in the number of qualified staff. The service has 23 volunteers who support events and activities.

Operational expenditure is above the national median and has increased by 7% compared to 2023-24 (QI14). The per capita book budget is slightly above the median for Welsh library authorities and has increased by 9% compared to the previous year. Neath Port Talbot does not meet the target for opening hours per capita (QI16).

## 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 outlined how their work aligns with the objectives of Neath Port Talbot's Corporate Plan 2024-27 and the Neath Port Talbot Culture Strategy 2023, as well as a range of national policies and strategies. Examples of contributions include:

- Developing partnerships with Swansea Bay University Health Board to support residents living with long-term physical and mental health conditions, improving access to health professionals in the community.
- Maintaining a collaborative programme of work with the Welsh Government's Flying Start initiative to deliver resources, activities and support for children in the early years and their families and carers.
- Delivering formal training sessions with partners such as Swansea University and Neath Port Talbot Adult Learning in the Community to help residents improve skills and enhance employment prospects.
- Supporting the Welsh Government's School Holiday Enrichment Programmes by offering a wide range of school holiday events and activities for children.
- Creating a Children's Book Festival to give children opportunities to experience high-quality literary events, engage with professional writers and illustrators, and develop their own creative skills.
- Running a Summer Reading Challenge programme that achieved the highest-ever percentage of children competing in Neath Port Talbot Libraries, encouraging literacy and reading for pleasure.
- Working with Menter Iaith and Flying Start NPT to deliver Welsh language song and rhyme sessions for children under three and a programme of Welsh language activities for young children.
- Providing space and resources in town centre libraries to support small businesses and the self-employed.

## Future direction

Reporting on the authority's future direction and plans for the library service over the coming year, Neath Port Talbot will be guided by the vision set out in the new 2025-30 Library Strategy: to provide a vibrant, inclusive library service that inspires imagination and learning, and creates an environment for all residents and visitors to fulfil their potential. The strategy commits to delivering services through a strong, sustainable network of public libraries, including both Local Authority-run and Community Managed sites, ensuring that all spaces remain safe, welcoming and supportive of community engagement through reading, technology, and connections to culture and heritage.

The strategy emphasises community engagement; digital literacy; and libraries as spaces for social interaction, learning and cultural events. Neath Port Talbot reports that they will work to improve facilities, invest in sustainable technologies and place reading at the heart of library activities. The service also plans to integrate more closely with other local authority services to enhance the library offer.

## Conclusion

Neath Port Talbot continues to perform well in many areas. It is evident that the library service is appreciated by members of the local community who rate it highly. Attendances at events, training and informal support continue to be well above the median for Welsh library authorities. It is also positive that the book budget has increased this year. However, concerns about staffing levels and opening hours remain. In addition, the decline in the number of virtual visits is something the service may wish to investigate further to identify possible reasons for this and make any necessary adjustments to the library website.

# Newport Annual Assessment Report 2024-25

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.

## Executive summary

Newport reported meeting 12 of the 13 Core Entitlements in full and one in part through self-assessment. However, the independent assessor considers that the service has met 11 Core Entitlements in full and 2 in part. Of the 5 quality indicators which have targets, Newport is achieving 3 in full and 1 in part. One target is not met.

As was the case in 2023-24, Newport performs well in some areas, including formal training provision and virtual visits. The service has developed strong relationships with local schools and a variety of community stakeholders in the Newport area. The recruitment of a Community Librarian this year is a positive development for service delivery, and it is hoped that this post can help to increase engagement, including event attendance and support for a diverse range of community groups. However, the situation with regard to key aspects of the library service raises serious concerns. The gradual decrease in opening hours in the last few years, combined with the lowest per capita staffing levels nationally, have now reached a level where Newport does not meet Core Entitlement 5, and further reductions are anticipated for 2025-26. It is promising that the service has now drafted a strategy document, although this is not yet approved. Fundamentally, however, Newport will continue to face significant challenges to the delivery of an effective library service whilst funding levels remain so far below other Welsh authorities.

- Newport is in the top quartile of Welsh library authorities for per capita attendance at formal training sessions, and attendances have increased by 45% compared to 2023-24, and by 58% compared to 2022-23 (Q15).
- Newport is above the national median for virtual visits, which have increased by 14% compared to 2023-24, and by 31% since 2022-23 (Q18).
- E-issues per capita have increased, being 38% higher than in 2023-24, and more than double the 2022-23 figure (Q18).

## Note to the 2024-25 report

During 2024-25 local authorities in Wales migrated to a new all Wales Digital Library Platform. The process of migration caused some disruption to the operation of library services including the acquisition of new stock which had to be suspended for a

period as individual services moved to the new system. There are also some slight differences in the configuration of the new platform which means that the user data across 2024-25 is not entirely consistent. The reports for 2024-25 do not therefore include the data detailed below for Quality Indicators 4, 8, 9 and 10.

- QI 4 Support for health and well-being
  - c) the number of loans of titles from the Reading Well in Wales series
- QI 8 Library use
  - c) the total number of active borrowers divided by the resident population, multiplied by 1,000
  - d) the total number of library members
  - e) the total number of book issues (adult and children separate)
  - f) the total number of audio-visual issues
- QI 9 Up-to-date and appropriate reading material
  - a) minimum acquisitions rate
  - b) % spent on children's resources
- QI 10 Welsh language resources
  - a) 4% minimum spend
  - b) Welsh issues per capita

All data will be reported and assessed for 2025-26 (the first year of Framework 7) and this data will be used to set the benchmark for the remaining years of the framework.

## Performance against the standards

The standards framework comprises of Core Entitlements, quality indicators with targets, quality indicators with benchmarks and impact measures.

### Core Entitlements

Newport reported meeting 12 of the 13 Core Entitlements in full and 1 in part through self-assessment. Based on the detailed and helpful commentary provided, the independent assessor considers that the service has met 11 Core Entitlements in full and 2 in part.

- 27. Libraries in Wales are free to join and open to all.**  
Self-Assessment: Fully met  
Independent Assessor: **Fully met p**
- 28. Libraries in Wales ensure friendly, knowledgeable and qualified staff are on hand to help.**  
Self-Assessment: Fully met  
Independent Assessor: **Fully met p**

29. **Libraries in Wales provide access to a range of services, activities, and high-quality resources in a range of formats to support lifelong learning, personal health and well-being, community participation, cultural experiences, recreation, and reading for pleasure.**  
Self-Assessment: Fully met  
Independent Assessor: **Fully met p**
30. **Libraries in Wales provide appropriate services, facilities and information resources for individuals and groups with special requirements.**  
Self-Assessment: Fully met  
Independent Assessor: **Fully met p**
31. **Libraries provide appropriate safe, attractive and accessible physical spaces with suitable staffed opening hours.**  
Self-Assessment: Fully met  
Independent Assessor: **Partially met n**  
This is due to the continued reduction in opening hours and lack of evidence that measures have been taken to ensure opening hours meet local needs.
32. **Libraries in Wales lend books for free, and deliver free access to information, including online information resources available 24 hours a day.**  
Self-Assessment: Fully met  
Independent Assessor: **Fully met p**
33. **Libraries in Wales provide free use of the Internet including Wi-Fi, and access to digital equipment, in all service points.**  
Self-Assessment: Fully met  
Independent Assessor: **Fully met p**
34. **Libraries in Wales provide access to services, cultural activities, and high-quality resources in the Welsh language.**  
Self-Assessment: Fully met  
Independent Assessor: **Fully met p**
35. **Libraries in Wales work in partnership to share catalogues and facilitate access to the resources of all Welsh libraries.**  
Self-Assessment: Fully met  
Independent Assessor: **Fully met p**
36. **Libraries in Wales work with a range of partners to promote and deliver services to new and diverse audiences, enabling more people to benefit from those services.**

Self-Assessment: Fully met

Independent Assessor: **Fully met p**

**37. Libraries in Wales regularly consult users to gather their views on the service and information about their changing needs.**

Self-Assessment: Fully met

Independent Assessor: **Fully met p**

**38. Libraries in Wales provide access to their library service strategy, policies, objectives and vision, in print and online, in a range of languages appropriate for the community.**

Self-Assessment: Partially met

Independent Assessor: **Partially met n**

A new library strategy has been drafted, approval for which will be sought later in 2025.

**39. Libraries in Wales provide support to help improve people's digital skills and confidence, including the use of e-government services**

Self-Assessment: Fully met

Independent Assessor: **Fully met p**

## Quality indicators with targets

There are 12 quality indicators (QIs), of which 5 have constituent targets. Of these, Newport is achieving 3 in full and 1 in part. One target is not met.

QI 4 (a) Support for health and well-being, **met in full p**

i) Reading Well scheme, **met**

ii) Designated health & well-being collection, **met**

iii) Information about healthier lifestyles and healthy behaviours, **met**

iv) Signposting to health & well-being services, **met**

QI 6 All static service points offer events/activities for users with special Requirements, **met in full p**

QI 7 Location of service points, **met in full p**

QI 13 Staffing levels and qualifications, **partially met n**

i) Staff per capita, **not met**

ii) Qualified staff per capita, **not met**

iii) Head of service qualification/training, **met**

iv) CPD percentage, **met**

QI 16 Opening hours per capita, **not met l**

## Impact measures

The framework includes three indicators aimed at assessing the impact of library use on people's lives. These indicators do not have targets, and authorities are required to carry out user surveys for QI1 once over the 2022-23 to 2024-25 period. Newport conducted an adult survey and a children's survey in March 2023. The summary figures (lowest, median and highest) are based on all authorities providing data in the 2022-23, 2023-24 and 2024-25 returns. Rankings reflect the number of respondents, where 1 is the highest scoring authority.

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%	11/19	68%	94%	99%
e) % of adults who think that the library has made a difference to their lives:	93%	=5/20	31%	86.5%	96%
QI 5 b) % of attendees of training sessions who said that the training had helped them achieve their purpose in attending:	N/A	N/A	75%	98.5%	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 the support provided to the Ukrainian community at Newport Central Library. The library provides a calm, welcoming space for support groups, and hosts writing workshops and cultural celebrations. By offering an environment where individuals of all ages can come together, share experiences and access resources, the library has played a key role in helping new arrivals settle and thrive. The library's provision of Ukrainian-language book clubs, creative writing groups and computer skills sessions has empowered young community members to improve their English, develop digital literacy and build confidence. One participant, aged 17, shared, *"When I came to Wales, I felt lost and couldn't understand anything. Newport Library helped me feel safe again"*, while another, aged 19, reflected, *"The translated computer classes gave me confidence... now I can apply for jobs and study online."*

In January 2025, the library hosted a cultural event, attended by around 90 members of the Ukrainian community and other library users, celebrating heritage through performances and shared moments that strengthened community spirit. Attendees expressed thanks for the library's friendly staff, who ensured meetings and events ran smoothly, and for thoughtful touches like refreshments that created a warm atmosphere. Iryna, a group member commented, *"We would like to express our heartfelt gratitude to Newport Central Library for providing such a welcoming and supportive space for our Ukrainian Community Group meetings."*

## Quality indicators and benchmarks

The remaining indicators do not have targets but allow services to monitor their performance over time. The following table summarises Newport's position for 2024-25. Rankings reflect the number of respondents, where 1 is the highest scoring authority. 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%	4/20	17%	70%	90%
c) health and well-being	74%	6/20	1%	63%	90%
d) enjoyable, safe and inclusive	97%	=9/20	93%	97%	100%
QI 2 Customer satisfaction					
a) 'very good' or 'good' choice of books	94%	=4/20	84%	90.5%	97%
b) 'very good' or 'good' customer care	98%	=10/20	92%	98%	100%
c) 'very good' or 'good' IT facilities	82%	=13/20	60%	85%	99%
d) 'very good' or 'good' overall	97%	=12/20	85%	98%	100%
e) users aged 16 & under rating out of ten	9.5	=5/18	8.0	9.4	9.7
QI 5 User support					
a) attendances per capita	44	4/21	1	28	214
c) informal support per capita	55	17/20	15	150	608
QI 6 Attendances at events per capita	99	21/22	14	224.5	764
QI 8 Library use					
b) virtual visits per capita	936	7/21	5	766	6,035

Performance indicator		Rank	Lowest	Median	Highest
QI 13 Staffing levels and qualifications <sup>19</sup>					
(v) a) total volunteers	24	N/A	0	23	442
b) volunteer hours	5,000	N/A	0	883	22,706
QI 14 Operational expenditure					
a) total expenditure per capita	£5,978	21/21	£5,978	£12,646	£26,209
b) % on staff,	72%	9/21	48%	67%	80%
% on information resources	17%	=3/21	4%	9%	19%
% on equipment and buildings	4%	=6/21	0%	2%	29%
% on other operational costs	7%	=16/21	1%	15%	38%

## Analysis of performance

The Core Entitlements and quality indicators can be divided into three key areas. This section of the report outlines performance under these areas.

<sup>19</sup> Rankings are not included for volunteers as the implications of volunteer numbers are ambiguous.



## Meeting customer needs (QI 1-2, 4-5)

Newport is in the top quartile of Welsh library authorities for per capita attendance at formal training sessions (QI5). Attendances have increased by 45% compared to 2023-24 and by 58% compared to 2022-23. The majority of formal user training sessions were focussed on work with children, with a particular emphasis on school and class visits, and the Multiply programme. Informal training sessions continue to be below the national median and the numbers reported have changed little compared to the previous year.

Newport is close to, or above, the median for Making a difference (QI1) and Customer satisfaction (QI2) measures. The service meets the target for Support for health and well-being (QI4) and continues to be involved in external partnerships related to health and well-being support.

## Access and use (QI 6-8)

Newport remains in the bottom quartile of Welsh library authorities for event attendance per capita, although the number of attendances reported has risen by 17% compared to 2023-24 (QI6). Events this year included a partnership with the Ukrainian Refugee Council to deliver a bilingual performance on the impact of the war in Ukraine on refugee families in Newport; the implementation of Newport's inaugural Festival of Words in partnership with cultural providers across the city; opportunities for adults with additional needs in Central and Rogerstone Libraries; and new sessions for queer and trans youth.

Newport is above the national median for virtual visits, which have increased by 14% compared to 2023-24, and by 31% since 2022-23 (QI8). E-issues per capita have also increased, being 38% higher than in 2023-24 and more than double the 2022-23 figure. However, despite the increase, Newport remains below the median for Welsh library authorities in terms of e-issues per capita.

## Expertise and capacity (QI 13-14 &16)

The service does not meet the targets for total or qualified staff (QI13). Although total staff per capita has increased by 1 FTE this year with the recruitment of a new Community Librarian, Newport continues to have the lowest figure for total staff per capita amongst Welsh library authorities. Total staff per capita is less than half the target figure. The service performs better for qualified staff; the number of qualified staff has remained stable and is at the national median, although this is also some way below the target. Three members of staff are currently working towards CILIP Chartership with Welsh Government support.

The number of volunteers in Newport has increased dramatically this year; the service reports 24 volunteers and 5,000 volunteer hours (equivalent to almost 3 FTE). This year saw the two partnerships with the Independent Living Programme for adults with additional needs at Coleg Gwent. Central Library witnessed the

service's first internship programme in which interns supported staff whilst learning skills and gaining experience of the Community Learning and Library Assistant role, with a view to securing paid positions in the future. This initiative will continue in 2025-26. At Rogerstone Library, learners from the gardening programme overhauled and maintained the outdoor garden in partnership with Keep Wales Tidy officers. Given the significant increase in volunteering, alongside the low level of paid staff in Newport, it is important to ensure that volunteers continue to be used in line with [CILIP guidance](#).

Operational expenditure per capita in Newport is the lowest nationally (Q114). The gap between Newport and other Welsh library authorities continues to grow; this year, the per capita figure is £3,400 less than the next lowest authority and less than half the national median<sup>20</sup>. Furthermore, the book budget has been reduced by 16% compared to 2023-24 and by 23% compared to 2022-23. Even allowing for disruption in acquisitions due to the introduction of the new LMS, this is highly worrying and is likely to have a long-term impact on the collection.

The service does not meet the target for opening hours per capita and is in the bottom quartile of Welsh library authorities for this measure (Q116). Reported opening hours have decreased by a further 2% this year, making a total decrease of 9% since 2022-23. Opening hours per capita are just 63% of the target.

## 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 identified a range of activities supporting the Programme for Government, including the following:

- **Protect, re-build and develop our services for vulnerable people** e.g. a Home Delivery Service for residents unable to access library buildings; extending the volunteer programme to support adults with additional needs; and a new Community Librarian engaging previously under-served communities to inform service provision. New partnerships include supported internships with Coleg Gwent; participation in NCC's Families Working Group in partnership with the Royal Foundation to tackle homelessness; working with homeless and temporary accommodation teams to deliver story times and deposit collections in temporary accommodation hotels; establishing a pollinator garden maintained by adults with additional needs; partnerships with Looked After Children's teams; and creative writing sessions for asylum seekers, immigrants and refugees.
- **Celebrate diversity and move to eliminate inequality in all of its forms** e.g. The Library Manager works with the Senior Equalities and Diversities Officer and minority ethnic communities to celebrate their contributions to

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<sup>20</sup> Indicators 'per capita' are calculated per 1,000 population

Newport's history. Work is underway to refine World Language collections, reviewing stock and languages across the service. There are collaborations with GWIR on youth LGBTQ+ stock selection and hosting creative writing classes.

- **Push forward towards a million Welsh speakers, and enable our tourism, sports and arts industries to thrive** e.g. investing in Welsh language stock, with a particular focus on materials suitable for learners and young children.
- **Continue the long-term programme of education reform, and ensure educational inequalities narrow and standards rise** e.g. the Local History team supports local schools' research projects on Newport's history.

## Future direction

Reporting on the authority's future direction and plans for the library service over the coming year, Newport aims to continue to enhance customer service through a Community Led philosophy, ensuring services directly reflect the needs of local communities. All branch staff have now received training in effective story time delivery, enabling the reintroduction of story time sessions across all branches for the first time since before the pandemic. Efforts to boost engagement with children's reading have resulted in the number of schools participating in the Summer Reading Challenge increasing from 4 to 33 (out of 44) schools.

Newport reports that Operations Librarians will have greater availability to support wider community engagement activities. Following community advocacy against further branch closures and heightened scrutiny from Cabinet, Newport considers that the library service will receive additional support for its work.

Plans to relocate and merge Malpas and St Julian's libraries at Malpas Court have been cancelled, resulting in Malpas Library remaining open. However, St Julian's Library will close in August 2025. It is hoped that continued investment in digital services and the rollout of reader development principles across branches will drive further increases in membership and active participation in library programmes, services and collections.

## Conclusion

As was the case in 2023-24, Newport performs well in some areas, including formal training provision and virtual visits. The service has developed strong relationships with local schools and a variety of community stakeholders in the Newport area. The recruitment of a Community Librarian this year is a positive development for service delivery, and it is hoped that this post can help to increase engagement, including event attendance. However, the situation with regard to key aspects of the library service raises serious concerns. The gradual decrease in opening hours in the last few years, combined with the lowest per capita staffing levels nationally, have now reached a level where Newport does not meet Core Entitlement 5, and further

reductions are anticipated for 2025-26. It is promising that the service has now drafted a strategy document, although this is not yet approved. Fundamentally, however, Newport will continue to face significant challenges to the delivery of an effective library service whilst funding levels remain so far below other Welsh authorities.

# Pembrokeshire Annual Assessment Report

## 2024-25

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.

### Executive summary

Pembrokeshire meets all of the 13 Core Entitlements in full. Of the 5 quality indicators which have targets, Pembrokeshire is achieving 4 in full and 1 in part.

Pembrokeshire libraries are clearly appreciated by their customers, who feel that the service makes a difference to their lives. E-issues have continued to increase, as has formal training attendance. However, in terms of engagement in events, training and support, Pembrokeshire is not recovering as rapidly, or consistently, from the pandemic period as many other library authorities have, and as time goes on this is becoming a cause for concern. The reduction in staff numbers, staffed opening hours and book budgets this year weaken the service. Further reductions in staff, opening hours and book funds anticipated in the coming years are worrying. These moves, along with the authority's plans to rely more heavily on community volunteering, raise questions about the service's ability to continue to meet the Core Entitlements and QI targets in future years.

- Pembrokeshire is the joint highest ranked authority nationally for the rating given by users aged 16 and under (QI2), and customers who consider the library to be enjoyable, safe and inclusive (QI1).
- E-issues per capita have increased by 18% compared to 2023-24, and by 58% compared to 2022-23 (QI8).
- Pembrokeshire now meets the target for staff hours allocated to training (QI13).

### Note to the 2024-25 report

During 2024-25 local authorities in Wales migrated to a new all Wales Digital Library Platform. The process of migration caused some disruption to the operation of library services including the acquisition of new stock which had to be suspended for a period as individual services moved to the new system. There are also some slight differences in the configuration of the new platform which means that the user data across 2024-25 is not entirely consistent. Pembrokeshire did not migrate until end of

May 2025 and was able to provide a full data set. For equity and consistency with other authorities the report for 2024-25 does not include the data for Quality Indicators 4, 8, 9 and 10.

- QI 4 Support for health and well-being
  - c) the number of loans of titles from the Reading Well in Wales series
- QI 8 Library use
  - c) the total number of active borrowers divided by the resident population, multiplied by 1,000
  - d) the total number of library members
  - e) the total number of book issues (adult and children separate)
  - f) the total number of audio-visual issues
- QI 9 Up-to-date and appropriate reading material
  - a) minimum acquisitions rate
  - b) % spent on children's resources
- QI 10 Welsh language resources
  - a) 4% minimum spend
  - b) Welsh issues per capita

All data will be reported and assessed for 2025-26 (the first year of Framework 7) and this data will be used to set the benchmark for the remaining years of the framework.

## Performance against the standards

The standards framework comprises of Core Entitlements, quality indicators with targets, quality indicators with benchmarks and impact measures.

### Core Entitlements

Pembrokeshire reported meeting all of the 13 Core Entitlements in full through self-assessment. Based on the detailed and helpful commentary provided, the independent assessor agrees with the self-assessment.

### Quality indicators with targets

There are 12 quality indicators (QIs), of which 5 have constituent targets. Of these, Pembrokeshire is achieving 4 in full and 1 in part.

- QI 4 (a) Support for health and well-being, **met in full p**
  - i) Reading Well scheme, **met**
  - ii) Designated health & well-being collection, **met**
  - iii) Information about healthier lifestyles and healthy behaviours, **met**
  - iv) Signposting to health & well-being services, **met**
- QI 6 All static service points offer events/activities for users with special

requirements, **met in full p**

QI 7 Location of service points, **met in full p**

QI 13 Staffing levels and qualifications, **partially met n**

i) Staff per capita, **not met**

ii) Qualified staff per capita, **not met**

iii) Head of service qualification/training, **met**

iv) CPD percentage, **met**

QI 16 Opening hours per capita, **met in full p**

## Impact measures

The framework includes three indicators aimed at assessing the impact of library use on people's lives. These indicators do not have targets, and authorities are required to carry out user surveys for QI1 once over the 2022-23 to 2024-25 period.

Pembrokeshire conducted an adult survey and a children's survey in March 2023.

The summary figures (lowest, median and highest) are based on all authorities providing data in the 2022-23, 2023-24 and 2024-25 returns. Rankings reflect the number of respondents, where 1 is the highest scoring authority.

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%	=2/19	68%	94%	99%
e) % of adults who think that the library has made a difference to their lives:	93%	=5/20	31%	86.5%	96%
QI 5 b) % of attendees of training sessions who said that the training had helped them achieve their purpose in attending:	100%	=1/18	75%	98.5%	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 highlighting that since 2022, Pembroke Dock Library has partnered with Menter Iaith Pembrokeshire to host Coffi a Cymraeg sessions. The Development Officer Menter Iaith Sir Benfro states, *"The sessions are important to create opportunities for fluent speakers, new speakers and learners to come together in a welcoming relaxed atmosphere to speak and practise their language in an area where there are few other opportunities to do so."* These gatherings play a valuable role in promoting language use, strengthening cultural identity, and building community connections. Participants report a significant social impact, sharing that the sessions help them meet new people, make friends, and reduce loneliness. One attendee noted, *"Libraries are vital in my life. Without the Welsh groups meeting in the library, where would we meet to talk?"* Attendees also benefit from learning new skills, including improving their confidence speaking Welsh, gaining exposure to the language outside formal lessons, and discovering Welsh books and cultural resources. The sessions encourage greater engagement

with the library, with many participants borrowing books, attending other groups and exploring library services. One participant highlighted, *“It works alongside learning Welsh. Immerses you in a friendly atmosphere.”*

The sessions have fostered a positive, stress-free environment where everyone feels included and supported, while the partnership between the library and Menter Iaith demonstrates effective collaboration to meet local needs. Library staff also benefit, finding opportunities to practise Welsh themselves and engage more deeply with the community.

## Quality indicators and benchmarks

The remaining indicators do not have targets but allow services to monitor their performance over time. The following table summarises Pembrokeshire’s position for 2024-25. Rankings reflect the number of respondents, where 1 is the highest scoring authority. 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%	8/20	17%	70%	90%
c) health and well-being	68%	9/20	1%	63%	90%
d) enjoyable, safe and inclusive	100%	=1/20	93%	97%	100%
QI 2 Customer satisfaction					
a) ‘very good’ or ‘good’ choice of books	91%	=9/20	84%	90.5%	97%
b) ‘very good’ or ‘good’ customer care	98%	=10/20	92%	98%	100%
c) ‘very good’ or ‘good’ IT facilities	87%	=8/20	60%	85%	99%
d) ‘very good’ or ‘good’ overall	98%	=7/20	85%	98%	100%
e) users aged 16 & under rating out of ten	9.7	=1/18	8.0	9.4	9.7
QI 5 User support					
a) attendances per capita	1	21/21	1	28	214
c) informal support per capita	77	13/20	15	150	608
QI 6 Attendances at events per capita	116	20/22	14	224.5	764
QI 8 Library use					
b) virtual visits per capita	198	18/21	5	766	6,035
QI 13 Staffing levels and qualifications <sup>21</sup>					

<sup>21</sup> *Rankings are not included for volunteers as the implications of volunteer numbers are ambiguous.*



Performance indicator		Rank	Lowest	Median	Highest
(v) a) total volunteers	77	N/A	0	23	442
b) volunteer hours	2,575	N/A	0	883	22,706
QI 14 Operational expenditure					
a) total expenditure per capita	£12,068	12/21	£5,978	£12,646	£26,209
b) % on staff,	58%	=17/21	48%	67%	80%
% on information resources	6%	=18/21	4%	9%	19%
% on equipment and buildings	2%	=11/21	0%	2%	29%
% on other operational costs	34%	2/21	1%	15%	38%

## Analysis of performance

The Core Entitlements and quality indicators can be divided into three key areas. This section of the report outlines performance under these areas.

### Meeting customer needs (QI 1-2, 4-5)

Pembrokeshire performs well with regard to Making a difference (QI1) and Customer satisfaction (QI2), being at or above the median for all measures. It performs particularly strongly with respect to the rating given by users aged 16 and under (QI2), and customers who consider the library to be enjoyable, safe and inclusive (QI1). Pembrokeshire is the joint highest ranked authority nationally for both measures.

The service meets the target for Support for health and well-being (QI4) in full. Libraries work with a range of partners to provide health and well-being support, including counselling services (e.g. Mind Counselling), the Hywel Dda Speech & Language Therapy Unit, Cariad Pet Therapy, ASD Family Help (for autistic and neurodivergent individuals), Dyfed Drug & Alcohol Support, SNAP (support for pre-school children with additional needs), and Adferiad (mental health support).

Although attendance at formal training sessions has almost doubled compared to 2023-24, Pembrokeshire is still the lowest ranked authority nationally for this measure (QI5). Nevertheless, 100% of the attendees who were surveyed (n=28) said they had achieved their purpose in attending. Staffing capacity means that the library service relies on third parties coming in to deliver the training, so has limited control over the number of sessions offered. Pembrokeshire is also below the national median for informal support per capita and the number of sessions reported has declined by 18% compared to 2023-24 and by 40% compared to 2022-23. To ensure this information is being captured as accurately as possible, the service is going to pilot a quarterly week-long sample in 2025-26.

### Access and use (QI 6-8)

Pembrokeshire is in the bottom quartile of Welsh library authorities for per capita attendance at events (QI6). Attendance numbers have increased marginally compared to 2023-24 (2%). Examples of activities offered for users with special

requirements, include a craft session for Portfield School (children and young people with a learning disability), Reading Dog sessions for children with additional learning needs, and sensory toy library sessions for children and adults with additional learning needs.

During 2024-25 Narberth Library has been relocated but is still within the town centre and the service continues to meet the target for Location of service points (Q17).

Pembrokeshire remains in the bottom quartile of Welsh library authorities for virtual visits per capita (Q18). Visits to the website have increased by 3% compared to 2023-24, but remain below the 2022-23 figure. E-issues per capita have increased by 18% compared to 2023-24, and by 58% compared to 2022-23. However, the service remains below the median for this measure.

## Expertise and capacity (Q1 13-14 &16)

It is positive that Pembrokeshire does meet the target for staff hours allocated to training this year. However, it does not meet the targets for total staff or qualified staff per capita, and both figures have declined compared to 2023-24 (Q13). The service is now below the national median for total staff per capita. The number of staff has fallen by 4.1 FTE due to the loss of 1.6 FTE library management posts; 0.8 FTE frontline staff; not replacing archive staff (0.8 FTE); and vacant posts (0.9 FTE) due to retirements (which are being covered by casual staff). The number of qualified staff has decreased by 1.5 FTE as a result of efficiency savings (one post was merged and another not replaced on retirement of the postholder).

Whilst the number of staff has declined this year, the number of volunteers has increased to 77. Together, volunteers contribute 2,575 hours (approximately 1.5 FTE) to the service. In both Narberth and Saundersfoot, the number of hours provided by volunteers is now greater than the total provided by paid PCC staff. Given the increasing level of volunteer involvement in Pembrokeshire, it is particularly important to ensure that volunteers are used according to [CILIP guidance](#).

Per capita operational expenditure is close to the national median but has decreased by 4% compared to 2023-24 (Q14). Pembrokeshire is in the bottom quartile for per capita materials expenditure and this has reduced by 22% compared to the previous year due to a need to make savings (although the resources budget was unaltered from 2023-24). This is worrying as it is likely to impact on the service's ability to offer up-to-date and attractive resources for customers.

Although staffed opening hours have declined by 4% compared to 2023-24. Pembrokeshire still meets the target for the number of opening hours per capita (Q16). The service now has 2 libraries that offer unstaffed opening hours (via Bibliotheca's Open Plus system). The number of unstaffed opening hours has increased by around one-third compared to 2023-24 following the introduction of Open Plus at Narberth Library from November 2024.

## 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 highlighted a wide range of activities aligned with priorities in the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and, at local level, the Programme for Administration of Pembrokeshire County Council 2022-27, and the Well-being Plan for Pembrokeshire, with a focus on reducing inequality and poverty and building thriving, connected communities. Examples of contributions include:

- Activities like baby rhyme times, knit and natter groups, book clubs, Welsh conversation groups, Lego clubs, author talks, and craft sessions.
- Hosting approximately 42 partner organisations in library spaces to provide support on mental health, employability, housing, money management, legal issues, managing addiction, finance, and scam awareness.
- Maintaining services to connect rural communities, including a Mobile Library service visiting 57 villages, and a Library at Home service delivering to vulnerable and isolated people.
- Providing books in multiple formats to ensure accessibility, and supporting national initiatives like the Summer Reading Challenge and BookStart.
- Enhancing cultural access through partnerships such as the collaboration with the National Library of Wales to display cultural material in the Riverside Gallery at Haverfordwest Library and jointly managing the Fishguard Tapestry, which has become a destination for cruise ship visitors. Activities, such as author-led workshops with Welsh authors, through the Books Council of Wales' 'Stars on the Shelves' initiative, give children opportunities to interact with writers and develop storytelling skills.
- Supporting the Welsh language by providing bilingual signage and resources, encouraging library staff to develop Welsh language skills, and funding Welsh lessons for new staff.
- Ensuring equity and inclusion by aligning services with the Anti-racist Wales Action Plan and LGBTQ+ Action Plan for Wales; gathering views from diverse communities through the Library Needs Assessment; delivering creative writing workshops for adults from underrepresented groups through the All Stories project; and attending the Anti-racist Library Collections training.

## Future direction

Reporting on the authority's future direction and plans for the library service over the coming year, Pembrokeshire refers to significant financial challenges, with a 20% cost saving required in the 2025-26 financial year. Although there are currently no plans to close libraries, savings will be sought through measures such as reducing opening hours, book funds and staffing levels, as well as increasing income and exploring other cost-saving interventions. Looking ahead, the council's Medium Term Financial Plan indicates ongoing financial pressures, with all council services asked

to identify 5% annual savings for at least the next three years. This challenging financial context will shape the future direction of the library service, which must balance achieving financial sustainability with maintaining statutory service delivery. Pembrokeshire anticipates requiring greater investment from local Town and Community Councils and increased community involvement through volunteering. Community support models are already established in smaller libraries. In the future, Pembrokeshire intends to look towards similar approaches in larger libraries, which will be more challenging.

## Conclusion

Pembrokeshire libraries are clearly appreciated by their customers, who feel that the service makes a difference to their lives. E-issues have continued to increase, as has formal training attendance. However, in terms of engagement in events, training and support, Pembrokeshire is not recovering as rapidly, or consistently, from the pandemic period as many library authorities, and as time goes on this is becoming a cause for concern. The reduction in staff numbers, opening hours and book budgets this year weaken the service, and the further reduction in staff, staffed opening hours and book funds anticipated in the coming years are worrying. These moves, along with the authority's plans to rely more heavily on community volunteering raise questions about the service's ability to continue to meet the Core Entitlements and QI targets in future years.

Regarding the reporting of WPLS data, Pembrokeshire is aware that the recording of informal support activities is still an area for improvement and plans to pilot a quarterly week-long sample in 2024-25.

# Powys Annual Assessment Report 2024-25

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.

## Executive summary

Powys meets 12 of the 13 Core Entitlements in full and 1 in part. Of the 5 quality indicators which have targets, Powys is achieving 3 in full and 1 in part. One QI is not met.

Powys performs well in a number of areas. Attendances at formal training, events and informal support are all increasing, as are e-issues. It is also positive that the service now meets the target for number of static service points providing events and activities for users with special requirements. The creation of new posts in the staffing structure is another positive from this year's return, and will hopefully allow Powys to continue to develop its activities and community support offer. Powys clearly has strong links within the local community, in particular relating to health and well-being support. The location of service points target remains an ongoing challenge given the population density of the county. Whilst there has been a welcome improvement in performance against QI7 this year, the service is still a way short of the target.

- Powys is the top-ranking Welsh library authority for young people who think the library helps them to learn (QI1).
- Powys remains in the top quartile nationally for attendance at formal training sessions, with attendances increasing by 25% compared to 2023-24, and almost 11-fold since 2022-23 (QI5).
- Powys now meets the target for number of static service points providing events and activities for users with special requirements (QI6).

## Note to the 2024-25 report

During 2024-25 local authorities in Wales migrated to a new all Wales Digital Library Platform. The process of migration caused some disruption to the operation of library services including the acquisition of new stock which had to be suspended for a period as individual services moved to the new system. There are also some slight differences in the configuration of the new platform which means that the user data across 2024-25 is not entirely consistent. The reports for 2024-25 do not therefore include the data detailed below for Quality Indicators 4, 8, 9 and 10.

- QI 4 Support for health and well-being
  - c) the number of loans of titles from the Reading Well in Wales series
- QI 8 Library use
  - c) the total number of active borrowers divided by the resident population, multiplied by 1,000
  - d) the total number of library members
  - e) the total number of book issues (adult and children separate)
  - f) the total number of audio-visual issues
- QI 9 Up-to-date and appropriate reading material
  - a) minimum acquisitions rate
  - b) % spent on children's resources
- QI 10 Welsh language resources
  - a) 4% minimum spend
  - b) Welsh issues per capita

All data will be reported and assessed for 2025-26 (the first year of Framework 7) and this data will be used to set the benchmark for the remaining years of the framework.

## Performance against the standards

The standards framework comprises of Core Entitlements, quality indicators with targets, quality indicators with benchmarks and impact measures.

### Core Entitlements

Powys reported meeting 12 of the 13 Core Entitlements in full and 1 in part through self-assessment. Based on the detailed and helpful commentary provided, the independent assessor agrees with the self-assessment. CE 6 is partially met due to the fact that there is a charge for items outside the authority, but within Wales.

### Quality indicators with targets

There are 12 quality indicators (QIs), of which 7 have constituent targets. Of these, Powys is achieving 3 in full and 1 in part. One QI is not met.

- QI 4 (a) Support for health and well-being, **met in full p**
  - i) Reading Well scheme, **met**
  - ii) Designated health & well-being collection, **met**
  - iii) Information about healthier lifestyles and healthy behaviours, **met**
  - iv) Signposting to health & well-being services, **met**
- QI 6 All static service points offer events/activities for users with special requirements, **met in full p**

QI 7 Location of service points, **not met** l

QI 13 Staffing levels and qualifications, **partially met** n

i) Staff per capita, **not met**

ii) Qualified staff per capita, **not met**

iii) Head of service qualification/training, **met**

iv) CPD percentage, **met**

QI 16 Opening hours per capita, **met in full** p

## Impact measures

The framework includes three indicators aimed at assessing the impact of library use on people's lives. These indicators do not have targets, and authorities are required to carry out user surveys for QI1 once over the 2022-23 to 2024-25 period. Powys conducted an adult survey and a children's survey in March 2024. The summary figures (lowest, median and highest) are based on all authorities providing data in the 2022-23, 2023-24 and 2024-25 returns. Rankings reflect the number of respondents, where 1 is the highest scoring authority.

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:	99%	1/19	68%	94%	99%
e) % of adults who think that the library has made a difference to their lives:	95%	=2/20	31%	86.5%	96%
QI 5 b) % of attendees of training sessions who said that the training had helped them achieve their purpose in attending:	88%	17/18	75%	98.5%	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 which referred to the impact of support provided for students from the Orbis Group, a specialist service supporting children and adults with complex needs associated with autism, during visits to Knighton Library. Through weekly visits, students of various ages gain confidence, develop practical skills, and foster a love of books and libraries. During each visit, younger children borrow and return books, use the self-service machine, and play board games. These activities help nurture early literacy skills, inspire imagination and provide positive associations with reading. Older students take on meaningful tasks that mirror workplace responsibilities, including checking the post box, unboxing book deliveries and completing shelf checks for reserved titles. This has boosted their confidence, communication and organisational skills. Library staff have noted clear progress in the students' ability to carry out duties independently and responsibly.



By providing a welcoming, structured environment where Orbis students can engage with books and practise essential life skills, Knighton Library demonstrates the powerful role libraries play in supporting inclusion, personal development and community engagement for young people with additional needs.

## Quality indicators and benchmarks

The remaining indicators do not have targets but allow services to monitor their performance over time. The following table summarises Powys's position for 2024-25. Rankings reflect the number of respondents, where 1 is the highest scoring authority. 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%	=10/20	17%	70%	90%
c) health and well-being	61%	11/20	1%	63%	90%
d) enjoyable, safe and inclusive	97%	=9/20	93%	97%	100%

Performance indicator		Rank	Lowest	Median	Highest
QI 2 Customer satisfaction					
a) 'very good' or 'good' choice of books	86%	=18/20	84%	90.5%	97%
b) 'very good' or 'good' customer care	99%	=2/20	92%	98%	100%
c) 'very good' or 'good' IT facilities	85%	=10/20	60%	85%	99%
d) 'very good' or 'good' overall	87%	19/20	85%	98%	100%
e) users aged 16 & under rating out of ten	9.4	=9/18	8.0	9.4	9.7
QI 5 User support					
a) attendances per capita	172	2/21	1	28	214
c) informal support per capita	60	16/20	15	150	608
QI 6 Attendances at events per capita	210	14/22	14	224.5	764
QI 8 Library use					
b) virtual visits per capita	N/A	N/A	5	766	6,035
QI 13 Staffing levels and qualifications <sup>22</sup>					

<sup>22</sup> Rankings are not included for volunteers as the implications of volunteer numbers are ambiguous.



Performance indicator		Rank	Lowest	Median	Highest
(v) a) total volunteers	259	N/A	0	23	442
b) volunteer hours	5,817	N/A	0	883	22,706
QI 14 Operational expenditure					
a) total expenditure per capita	£12,985	10/21	£5,978	£12,646	£26,209
b) % on staff,	74%	7/21	48%	67%	80%
% on information resources	6%	=18/21	4%	9%	19%
% on equipment and buildings	4%	=6/21	0%	2%	29%
% on other operational costs	16%	9/21	1%	15%	38%

## Analysis of performance

The Core Entitlements and quality indicators can be divided into three key areas. This section of the report outlines performance under these areas.

### Meeting customer needs (QI 1-2, 4-5)

Now all the data for the Framework 6 Extension period are available, Powys is shown to perform close to, or above, the national median for all Making a difference measures(QI1). It is the top-ranking authority for young people who think the library helps them to learn and find things out. Powys also generally performs well in Customer Satisfaction (QI2), achieving 85% or above for all measures.

Support for health and well-being (QI4) continues to be a priority, with a new role of Community Engagement Officer (Health & Well-being) added to the staffing structure. The library service has established countywide health information partnerships, including with Powys Teaching Health Board (PTHB), on various projects including an iPad loan scheme. Support for people living with dementia and their carers includes drop-in sessions with a member of the Memory Assessment Team, Tai Chi Movements for Well-being (TMW) sessions and an intergenerational singing group. Another highlight is Powys People First Book Club at y Gaer (Brecon). Powys People First helps to organise self-advocacy groups for people with a learning disability across Powys who meet each week to read in a group and share their thoughts about the book as well as join in mindful activities.

Powys remains in the top quartile nationally for attendance at formal training sessions, with attendances increasing by 25% compared to 2023-24, and almost 11-fold since 2022-23 (QI5). This was due in part to two Shared Prosperity Fund projects: Number Up and Digital Community Hubs. As part of the latter project, 10 digital hubs were established, which resulted in a significant increase in engagement. Reported attendances for informal support have also risen, up by 34% compared to 2023-24, although Powys continues to be below the median for this measure.

## Access and use (QI 6-8)

In 2024-25, Powys met the target for number of static service points providing events and activities for users with special requirements (QI6). Events for those with special requirements include Ukrainian community drop-in sessions, money advice drop-ins, energy advice sessions and activities for those living with dementia. The service also continues to work closely with Accessibility Powys to support and enable individuals and families to lead full lives and to access and participate fully in their communities. The number of attendances at activities and events increased by 30% compared to 2023-24, and more than doubled since 2022-23, although the service remains below the national median for per capita attendance.

Although the percentage of the population within the specified distance of a library service or mobile stop is higher than was reported in 2023-24, Powys does not meet the target for Location of services (QI7). The challenges of working in an area with a low population density are noted and the service offers Order & Collect and works with volunteers to deliver reading materials to customers who are not able to reach a library.

Powys is above the national median for e-issues, which have more than doubled compared to 2023-24 (QI8). The service was unable to report on virtual visits this year due to technical issues with Google Analytics.

## Expertise and capacity (QI 13-14 &16)

Although Powys does not meet the targets for either total staff or qualified staff per capita, it is in the top quartile nationally for both measures (QI13). However, it should be noted that the total staffing number is based on the whole of Powys Cultural Services (i.e. including museums, libraries and archives) as all four museums are now co-located with libraries. As a result of a recent staffing review, four new Community Engagement Officer posts have been created with remits for Children and Young People, Culture & Heritage, Digital, and Health & Well-being. Their overarching aims for 2025-26 will be to map the makeup of communities and carry out a needs analysis. For 2024-25, one Senior Library Assistant (Digital Support) post was funded by a Housing Support Grant with a focus on digital inclusion. Library Assistants, Hub Assistants and Centre Assistants have historically been paid at Grade 3. Following a review of the job descriptions a new role has been created called Community, Culture and Digital Officer, paid at Grade 5. The new role and grade reflect the need for new skills and acknowledge the current responsibility of front-line staff. The proportion of staff time spent on training is notably higher this year due to the implementation of the new LMS. Two members of staff are undertaking CILIP Chartership with Welsh Government support.

Powys makes use of volunteers, with volunteer hours reported equating to just under 3.5 FTE members of staff (a 4% decrease from 2023-24). It is noted that this figure includes volunteers from across Cultural Services. Further to the service review,

there is now a Volunteer Engagement Officer post in the staffing structure. However, it is important to ensure that volunteers are used in line with [CILIP guidance](#).

Following a decrease in Operational expenditure in 2023-24, revenue spending has increased by 43% this year and Powys is now above the national median (Q114). The proportion of revenue spending allocated to staffing has increased from 67% to 74% as a result of the staffing changes reported. However, despite the increase to the overall budget, the book budget has been reduced by 13%. Whilst it is acknowledged that acquisitions may have been impacted by the introduction of the new LMS, this is a concern.

Powys meets the target for opening hours, with a slight increase in opening hours this year (1%) (Q116). The service also has a small number of unstaffed opening hours.

## 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. Powys outlined a broad range of activities contributing to policies such as the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, including the following:

- **A healthier Wales** e.g. loaning blood pressure monitors and providing free dementia resources such as memory boxes and Rempods; raising awareness of health issues and connecting residents with specialist organisations; and reducing social isolation through a variety of activities.
- **A more equal Wales** e.g. offering free IT equipment and digital support sessions to boost skills and reduce digital poverty; and operating Warm Spaces during the winter months to support those in need.
- **A Wales of cohesive communities** e.g. offering a safe and neutral space where residents can connect with others through activities and events.
- **A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language** e.g. offering co-located facilities that support access to cultural activities and provide resources and events in Welsh, including Cymraeg i Blant and Welsh learners' conversation groups.
- **A globally responsible Wales** e.g. recycling and reusing library materials locally; supporting volunteers including Welsh Baccalaureate, work experience and Duke of Edinburgh students; and serving as litter picking hubs for Keep Wales Tidy.

## Future direction

Reporting on the authority's future direction and plans for the library service over the coming year, Powys will operate within the framework of the council's Corporate Strategic Direction, 'Sustainable Powys', which seeks to design stronger, fairer and greener services within available budgets, while fostering resilience through community-led solutions. However, as Powys points out, 'Sustainable Powys' is not yet fully developed and implemented and, until it is, the future direction and plans for Cultural Services, including the library, remain unclear. As part of Cultural Services, the library service faces significant financial challenges over the next few years requiring ongoing adaptation to ensure service delivery remains sustainable and responsive to community needs. A new staffing structure is in place to enhance outreach and promote library services to a wider audience.

## Conclusion

Powys performs well in a number of areas. Attendances at formal training, events and informal support are all increasing, as are e-issues. It is also positive that the service now meets the target for number of static service points providing events and activities for users with special requirements. The creation of new posts in the staffing structure is another positive from this year's return, and will hopefully allow Powys to continue to develop its activities and community support offer. Powys clearly has strong links within the local community, in particular relating to health and well-being support. The location of service points target remains an ongoing challenge given the population density of the county. Whilst there has been a welcome improvement in performance against Q17 this year, the service is still a way short of the target.

Regarding the WPLS return, it is positive that Powys has been able to provide staffing figures this year. However, it remains difficult to compare staffing levels in Powys with those in other library authorities because an estimate of the proportion of staff time dedicated to library services is not provided.

# Rhondda Cynon Taf Annual Assessment Report 2024-25

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.

## Executive summary

Rhondda Cynon Taf meets all of the 13 Core Entitlements in full. Of the 5 quality indicators which have targets, Rhondda Cynon Taf is achieving 3 in full and 1 in part. One QI is not met.

Rhondda Cynon Taf Libraries are clearly valued by customers and the service performs well in a number of areas, including formal training provision and support for staff training. It is also positive that this year has seen increases in informal support and overall opening hours, although the service does not yet meet the target for the latter. However, the continued reduction of the book budget remains a concern and if action is not taken to address this, it is likely to start to impact on customers' experience of the library service. Rhondda Cynon Taf may also wish to review its e-resource provision. Whilst e-issues are increasing, they are notably lower than other Welsh library authorities, so the service may wish to investigate this further and explore ways to make its e-resource offer more attractive to customers.

- Rhondda Cynon Taf is the top-ranked service nationally for customer care (QI2).
- Rhondda Cynon Taf is above the national median for formal support per capita, and the number of formal support sessions provided has increased by 18% compared to 2023-24, and by 70% compared to 2022-23 (QI5).
- Informal support per capita has increased dramatically since 2023-24, rising more than threefold (QI5).

## Note to the 2024-25 report

During 2024-25 local authorities in Wales migrated to a new all Wales Digital Library Platform. The process of migration caused some disruption to the operation of library services including the acquisition of new stock which had to be suspended for a period as individual services moved to the new system. There are also some slight differences in the configuration of the new platform which means that the user data

across 2024-25 is not entirely consistent. The reports for 2024-25 do not therefore include the data detailed below for Quality Indicators 4, 8, 9 and 10.

- QI 4 Support for health and well-being
  - c) the number of loans of titles from the Reading Well in Wales series
- QI 8 Library use
  - c) the total number of active borrowers divided by the resident population, multiplied by 1,000
  - d) the total number of library members
  - e) the total number of book issues (adult and children separate)
  - f) the total number of audio-visual issues
- QI 9 Up-to-date and appropriate reading material
  - a) minimum acquisitions rate
  - b) % spent on children's resources
- QI 10 Welsh language resources
  - a) 4% minimum spend
  - b) Welsh issues per capita

All data will be reported and assessed for 2025-26 (the first year of Framework 7) and this data will be used to set the benchmark for the remaining years of the framework.

## Performance against the standards

The standards framework comprises of Core Entitlements, quality indicators with targets, quality indicators with benchmarks and impact measures.

### Core Entitlements

Rhondda Cynon Taf reported meeting all of the 13 Core Entitlements in full through self-assessment. Based on the detailed and helpful commentary provided, the independent assessor agrees with the self-assessment.

### Quality indicators with targets

There are 12 quality indicators (QIs), of which 5 have constituent targets. Of these, Rhondda Cynon Taf is achieving 3 in full and 1 in part. One QI is not met.

- QI 4 (a) Support for health and well-being, **met in full p**
  - i) Reading Well scheme, **met**
  - ii) Designated health & well-being collection, **met**
  - iii) Information about healthier lifestyles and healthy behaviours, **met**
  - iv) Signposting to health & well-being services, **met**
- QI 6 All static service points offer events/activities for users with special requirements, **met in full p**

QI 7 Location of service points, **met in full p**

QI 13 Staffing levels and qualifications, **partially met n**

i) Staff per capita, **not met**

ii) Qualified staff per capita, **not met**

iii) Head of service qualification/training, **met**

iv) CPD percentage, **met**

QI 16 Opening hours per capita, **not met l**

## Impact measures

The framework includes three indicators aimed at assessing the impact of library use on people's lives. These indicators do not have targets, and authorities are required to carry out user surveys for QI1 once over the 2022-23 to 2024-25 period. Rhondda Cynon Taf conducted an adult survey in March 2025 and a children's survey in March 2023. The summary figures (lowest, median and highest) are based on all authorities providing data in the 2022-23, 2023-24 and 2024-25 returns. Rankings reflect the number of respondents, where 1 is the highest scoring authority.

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%	=13/19	68%	94%	99%
e) % of adults who think that the library has made a difference to their lives:	82%	17/20	31%	86.5%	96%
QI 5 b) % of attendees of training sessions who said that the training had helped them achieve their purpose in attending:	97%	12/18	75%	98.5%	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 detailing how Pontypridd Library has played a crucial role in Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council's commitment to welcoming up to 50 refugees through the UK Resettlement Scheme. By providing a friendly, safe and non-judgemental space, the library hosts weekly meetings between the Resettlement Team and refugee families, enabling personalised, face-to-face support to address needs related to housing, education, health and integration. Library staff actively promote library services, encourage new memberships and connect families to activities like children's Rhyme Time. The library has expanded its collection of books in European languages, helping refugees maintain connections to their first languages while settling into their new community.

Feedback from both the Resettlement Team and refugee families indicates that meeting at the library significantly reduces anxiety and supports smoother transitions. The welcoming environment has been described as making refugees feel comfortable and valued, and the opportunity to access council services and community activities in one place has helped them begin to build local connections.



The library setting also helps families gain confidence navigating their new community.

By facilitating these meetings, Pontypridd Library supports community cohesion; eases refugees' resettlement journeys; and demonstrates the essential role libraries play in fostering inclusion and providing trusted, accessible spaces that help newcomers feel at home.

## Quality indicators and benchmarks

The remaining indicators do not have targets but allow services to monitor their performance over time. The following table summarises Rhondda Cynon Taf's position for 2024-25. Rankings reflect the number of respondents, where 1 is the highest scoring authority. 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	76%	7/20	17%	70%	90%
c) health and well-being	56%	=13/20	1%	63%	90%
d) enjoyable, safe and inclusive	99%	=4/20	93%	97%	100%

Performance indicator		Rank	Lowest	Median	Highest
QI 2 Customer satisfaction					
a) 'very good' or 'good' choice of books	93%	=6/20	84%	90.5%	97%
b) 'very good' or 'good' customer care	100%	1/20	92%	98%	100%
c) 'very good' or 'good' IT facilities	91%	4/20	60%	85%	99%
d) 'very good' or 'good' overall	98%	=7/20	85%	98%	100%
e) users aged 16 & under rating out of ten	9.4	=9/18	8.0	9.4	9.7
QI 5 User support					
a) attendances per capita	29	=9/21	1	28	214
c) informal support per capita	63	15/20	15	150	608
QI 6 Attendances at events per capita	212	13/22	14	224.5	764
QI 8 Library use					
b) virtual visits per capita	648	12/21	5	766	6,035
QI 13 Staffing levels and qualifications <sup>23</sup>					

<sup>23</sup> *Rankings are not included for volunteers as the implications of volunteer numbers are ambiguous.*



Performance indicator		Rank	Lowest	Median	Highest
(v) a) total volunteers	16	N/A	0	23	442
b) volunteer hours	998	N/A	0	883	22,706
QI 14 Operational expenditure					
a) total expenditure per capita	£11,498	14/21	£5,978	£12,646	£26,209
b) % on staff,	77%	=3/21	48%	67%	80%
% on information resources	9%	=11/21	4%	9%	19%
% on equipment and buildings	2%	=11/21	0%	2%	29%
% on other operational costs	12%	14/21	1%	15%	38%

## Analysis of performance

The Core Entitlements and quality indicators can be divided into three key areas. This section of the report outlines performance under these areas.

### Meeting customer needs (QI 1-2, 4-5)

Rhondda Cynon Taf performs well for Customer satisfaction (QI2), being at or above the median for all measures, and the top-ranked service nationally for customer care. Results for Making a difference (QI1) are also positive in most areas. Rhondda Cynon Taf meets the target for Support for health and well-being in full and new initiatives this year include libraries becoming designated Safe Space locations and participation in a government scheme to provide free period products (QI4).

Rhondda Cynon Taf is above the national median for formal support per capita and the number of formal support sessions provided has increased by 18% compared to 2023-24, and by 70% compared to 2022-23 (QI5). Informal support per capita has increased dramatically since 2023-24, rising more than threefold. However, despite these notable improvements, the service remains below the national median for this measure.

### Access and use (QI 6-8)

Event attendance per capita is slightly below the median (QI6). Attendance figures have remained close to the previous year's figures. Activities include long term established groups such as Knit and Natter, Creative Writing, and Dungeons and Dragons; limited term events such as guitar lessons, Welsh lessons and Foodwise courses; and one-off events such as Easter and Christmas activities.

Although the proportion of the population living within the specified distance of a library has declined compared to that reported in 2023-24, Rhondda Cynon Taf still comfortably meets the target for Location of services (QI7). Virtual visits have risen by 12% compared to 2023-24, and Rhondda Cynon Taf is now close to the median for this measure (QI8). However, the service is the lowest ranking nationally for e-issues, despite an increase of 12% compared to 2023-24.

## Expertise and capacity (QI 13-14 &16)

Rhondda Cynon Taf does not meet the target for total staff per capita, although it is around the national median for this measure (QI13). The service reports that financial pressures in the council led to a service review in 2024. This resulted in 3 senior library assistant and 1 stock control assistant posts being cut from the staffing structure, reducing the number of staff by 2 FTE. The total staff figure includes an apprentice, an NHLF grant funded project manager and an SPF-funded ICT development officer. The service also does not meet the target for qualified staff per capita and this figure remains unchanged from 2023-24. Rhondda Cynon Taf reports that it is unlikely to recruit additional qualified staff in the near future, although a member of staff has completed their course and is waiting for confirmation of their grade. Some unqualified staff remain in posts that require qualifications due to the need to redeploy displaced staff during recent service restructures. Once these staff leave the posts will be advertised as qualified posts. The service does, however, perform well for the proportion of staff time devoted to training. A staff appraisal system has recently been introduced and a key element of this is identifying staff training needs.

Although Operational expenditure has increased by 15%, Rhondda Cynon Taf remains below the national median (QI14). Whilst overall expenditure has increased this year, the proportion allocated to materials has reduced and the book budget is 12% lower than in 2023-24. Whilst the introduction of the new LMS may have caused disruption this year, the per capita spend on materials has decreased by 28% since 2022-23.

Although Rhondda Cynon Taf does not meet the target for Opening hours (QI16), the service has made improvements in relation to this QI since the previous year, with overall opening hours increasing by 12%. Following a service review in 2024, the 3 area libraries reduced their opening hours, but smaller branch libraries increased their opening hours. The service operates a cluster model so that at least one branch library and one area library is open within a cluster for 6 days of the week. In addition, there is an 'At Home' delivery service.

## 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 outlined a wide range of activities aligned with the Council's Corporate Plan 2024-30 (Working with Our Communities), which serves as the Well-being Plan required by the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015. The plan focusses on four well-being objectives. Examples of contributions include:

- **People and Communities** e.g. free access to a range of activities such as Reading Well schemes, Dementia Cafés, Foodwise sessions, Baby Rhyme

Times and the Summer Reading Challenge to support education, skills development, well-being and community connection.

- **Work and Business** e.g. delivering training, digital skills support and essential skills courses in partnership with Adult Education and Jobcentre Plus; supporting Job Clubs and back-to-work programmes with Communities for Work Plus; and offering volunteering opportunities that help people develop additional skills to improve job prospects.
- **Nature and Environment** e.g. supporting recycling initiatives, providing battery drop-off points, reusable nappy schemes and free period products; and installing solar panels and efficient lighting systems in libraries.
- **Culture, Heritage and Welsh Language** e.g. access to Welsh-language resources including large print, audio, e-books and e-magazines; developing bilingual and Welsh-medium events such as Welsh language classes, reading groups, coffee mornings and Rhyme Times; ensuring Welsh-speaking staff are easily identifiable and training all staff to Welsh Language Level 1; and preserving community memory through local history collections.

## Future direction

Reporting on the authority's future direction and plans for the library service over the coming year, Rhondda Cynon Taf notes that, while efficiency savings have not yet been requested for 2025-26, financial pressures facing local authorities remain a key factor that could influence future service planning and direction.

Key priorities for the year ahead include finalising and publishing a new Library Strategy covering 2026-30, which will set out the service's vision and action plan for the coming years. Additionally, a joint 'Priorities for Culture' grant application is being pursued in partnership with the Arts service. If successful, this funding will support the development of creative and rehearsal spaces for artists at the Cultural Hub partnership site at Treorchy Library and the Park and Dare Theatre, further strengthening the library's role in promoting cultural engagement and supporting local creative communities. A further priority for the service will be to fully embed the new All Wales LMS.

## Conclusion

Rhondda Cynon Taf Libraries are clearly valued by customers and the service performs well in a number of areas, including formal training provision and support for staff training. It is also positive that this year has seen increases in informal support and overall opening hours, although the service does not yet meet the target for the latter. However, the continued reduction of the book budget remains a concern and if action is not taken to address this, it is likely to start to impact on customers' experience of the library service. Rhondda Cynon Taf may also wish to review its e-resource provision. Whilst e-issues are increasing, they are notably lower than other Welsh library authorities, so the service may wish to investigate this further and explore ways to make its e-resource offer more attractive to customers.

# Swansea Annual Assessment Report 2024-25

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.

## Executive summary

Swansea meets all of the 13 Core Entitlements in full. Of the 5 quality indicators which have targets, Swansea is achieving 3 in full and 1 in part. One QI is not met.

Swansea continues to perform well in a number of areas, including event attendance, informal support, virtual visits and e-issues. The service is also continuing to work creatively with children and young people to ensure the library offer meets their needs. The lack of qualified staff was highlighted as a concern in last year's return. Whilst it is, of course, disappointing that the library service was unable to recruit qualified staff, a positive outcome is that it is supporting existing staff to achieve qualified status in the future. Swansea has not met the target for opening hours per capita this year. Whilst acknowledging this is due to rapid population changes rather than a reduction in opening hours, it is suggested that Swansea review opening hours provision across the authority to determine whether there is scope to adjust opening hours in light of population changes, and the increased demand for library services that may result.

- Swansea performs well for Customer satisfaction, being above the national median for all measures (QI2).
- Event attendance continues to be above the median for Welsh library authorities and has increased by 5% compared to 2023-24 (QI6).
- The service is in the top quartile nationally for e-issues per capita. E-issues have risen by 24% compared to 2023-24, and by 75% compared to 2022-23 (QI8).

## Note to the 2024-25 report

During 2024-25 local authorities in Wales migrated to a new all Wales Digital Library Platform. The process of migration caused some disruption to the operation of library services including the acquisition of new stock which had to be suspended for a period as individual services moved to the new system. There are also some slight differences in the configuration of the new platform which means that the user data across 2024-25 is not entirely consistent. The reports for 2024-25 do not therefore include the data detailed below for Quality Indicators 4, 8, 9 and 10.

- QI 4 Support for health and well-being
  - c) the number of loans of titles from the Reading Well in Wales series
- QI 8 Library use
  - c) the total number of active borrowers divided by the resident population, multiplied by 1,000
  - d) the total number of library members
  - e) the total number of book issues (adult and children separate)
  - f) the total number of audio-visual issues
- QI 9 Up-to-date and appropriate reading material
  - a) minimum acquisitions rate
  - b) % spent on children's resources
- QI 10 Welsh language resources
  - a) 4% minimum spend
  - b) Welsh issues per capita

All data will be reported and assessed for 2025-26 (the first year of Framework 7) and this data will be used to set the benchmark for the remaining years of the framework.

## Performance against the standards

The standards framework comprises of Core Entitlements, quality indicators with targets, quality indicators with benchmarks and impact measures.

### Core Entitlements

Swansea reported meeting all of the 13 Core Entitlements in full through self-assessment. Based on the detailed and helpful commentary provided, the independent assessor agrees with the self-assessment.

### Quality indicators with targets

There are 12 quality indicators (QIs), of which 5 have constituent targets. Of these, Swansea is achieving 3 in full and 1 in part. One QI is not met.

- QI 4 (a) Support for health and well-being, **met in full p**
  - i) Reading Well scheme, **met**
  - ii) Designated health & well-being collection, **met**
  - iii) Information about healthier lifestyles and healthy behaviours, **met**
  - iv) Signposting to health & well-being services, **met**
- QI 6 All static service points offer events/activities for users with special requirements, **met in full p**
- QI 7 Location of service points, **met in full p**

QI 13 Staffing levels and qualifications, **partially met n**

i) Staff per capita, **not met**

ii) Qualified staff per capita, **not met**

iii) Head of service qualification/training, **met**

iv) CPD percentage, **met**

QI 16 Opening hours per capita, **not met l**

## Impact measures

The framework includes three indicators aimed at assessing the impact of library use on people's lives. These indicators do not have targets, and authorities are required to carry out user surveys for QI1 once over the 2022-23 to 2024-25 period. Swansea conducted an adult survey and a children's survey in November 2022. The summary figures (lowest, median and highest) are based on all authorities providing data in the 2022-23, 2023-24 and 2024-25 returns. Rankings reflect the number of respondents, where 1 is the highest scoring authority.

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%	19/19	68%	94%	99%
e) % of adults who think that the library has made a difference to their lives:	95%	=2/20	31%	86.5%	96%
QI 5 b) % of attendees of training sessions who said that the training had helped them achieve their purpose in attending:	92%	14/18	75%	98.5%	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 showing the benefits of volunteers to complement library services. An example was provided of how, at one of Swansea's community libraries, a dedicated volunteer and poet has transformed lives through her creative contributions, particularly during Refugee Week and the Warm Spaces campaign. Having experienced the challenges of asylum-seeking herself, she hosted poetry readings at a library coffee morning for local refugee families, sharing her journey of moving to the UK. This inspired attendees to open up, share their own stories and form new friendships based on shared experiences. The volunteer collaborated with library staff to lead paper craft sessions for adults, creating welcoming, therapeutic spaces where participants could learn new skills, socialise and find comfort. These sessions attracted new members to the library and enriched the sense of community. Reflecting on her motivation, the volunteer shared, *"I get immense pleasure from doing arts and crafts in a social environment... I am giving back to the community."* She added, *"I want to help those who are seeking asylum or are refugees... If I can contribute in any way to help them, that is something that means a lot to me."*

## Quality indicators and benchmarks

The remaining indicators do not have targets but allow services to monitor their performance over time. The following table summarises Swansea's position for 2024-25. Rankings reflect the number of respondents, where 1 is the highest scoring authority. 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%	=12/20	17%	70%	90%
c) health and well-being	65%	10/20	1%	63%	90%
d) enjoyable, safe and inclusive	93%	=18/20	93%	97%	100%
QI 2 Customer satisfaction					
a) 'very good' or 'good' choice of books	92%	8/20	84%	90.5%	97%
b) 'very good' or 'good' customer care	99%	=2/20	92%	98%	100%
c) 'very good' or 'good' IT facilities	90%	=5/20	60%	85%	99%
d) 'very good' or 'good' overall	99%	=2/20	85%	98%	100%
e) users aged 16 & under rating out of ten	9.6	4/18	8.0	9.4	9.7

Performance indicator		Rank	Lowest	Median	Highest
QI 5 User support					
a) attendances per capita	24	12/21	1	28	214
c) informal support per capita	165	9/20	15	150	608
QI 6 Attendances at events per capita	349	7/22	14	224.5	764
QI 8 Library use					
b) virtual visits per capita	806	10/21	5	766	6,035
QI 13 Staffing levels and qualifications <sup>24</sup>					
(v) a) total volunteers	32	N/A	0	23	442
b) volunteer hours	1,034	N/A	0	883	22,706
QI 14 Operational expenditure					
a) total expenditure per capita	£13,669	8/21	£5,978	£12,646	£26,209
b) % on staff,	79%	2/21	48%	67%	80%
% on information resources	11%	=5/21	4%	9%	19%
% on equipment and buildings	2%	=11/21	0%	2%	29%
% on other operational costs	7%	=16/21	1%	15%	38%

## Analysis of performance

The Core Entitlements and quality indicators can be divided into three key areas. This section of the report outlines performance under these areas.

<sup>24</sup> Rankings are not included for volunteers as the implications of volunteer numbers are ambiguous.



## Meeting customer needs (QI 1-2, 4-5)

Swansea performs well for Customer satisfaction, being above the national median for all measures (QI2). However, in the last user survey, conducted in late 2022, staff felt that the percentage of young people who think the library helps them to learn was disappointing (QI1). Swansea therefore continues to work with schools and look at new ways to gather feedback and suggestions from children and parents, including purchasing as much as possible from stock suggestions from those groups. The service has invested for the first time in e-resources to support learning (reflecting the decline in children's non-fiction publishing) and have raised the issue with book suppliers. The children's librarian worked with a primary school on a stock selection exercise and attended a Swansea-wide school event on World Children's Day to gather children's feedback about libraries using Lego.

Swansea meets the target for Support for health and well-being (QI4) in full. Health and well-being activities include Gowerton Library sensory sessions for younger children; the Hard of Hearing group at Swansea Central Library, which offers a multidisciplinary support group; and physical activity groups, such as Ramblers in Gowerton and Walking for Mental Health at Swansea Central Library.

The service is close to the national median for both formal and informal support attendance (QI5). Attendance at formal training sessions have declined by 11% compared to 2023-24. However, informal support has increased by 20% since 2023-24, and by 51% compared to 2023-24. The service notes that informal support requests increased due to queries about the use of the new LMS, as well as bus pass applications and changes to Universal Credit.

## Access and use (QI 6-8)

Event attendance continues to be above the median for Welsh library authorities and has increased by 5% compared to 2023-24 (QI6). The service reports tapping into local and national funding opportunities to work with new partners and external facilitators to provide activities.

Swansea also continues to be above the median of Welsh library authorities for virtual visits per capita, although website visits have decreased by 8% compared to 2023-24 (QI8). The service is in the top quartile nationally for e-issues per capita. E-issues have risen by 24% compared to 2023-24, and by 75% compared to 2022-23.

## Expertise and capacity (QI 13-14 &16)

Swansea is in the top quartile of Welsh library authorities for total staff per capita but in the bottom quartile for qualified staff (QI13). The ratio of qualified to unqualified staff is notably lower than the national average. The service has not attracted more qualified staff to roles during this year despite several advertisements for roles. This is attributed to competition from other employers in the area offering better opportunities. However, the service is taking steps to develop staff already in post to

prepare them for qualified roles, including LAIS qualifications (Apprenticeships at Levels 3 and 5). Two members of staff are undertaking CILIP Chartership. The local authority has approved a workforce review for 2025 to revise the staffing structure. Time devoted to staff training has increased this year due to the implementation of the new LMS as well as the level of staff turnover.

Operational expenditure per capita is above the national median, although there has been a slight decrease (1%) compared to 2023-24 (Q114). The book budget has also decreased slightly (by 2%), although Swansea also remains above the national median for this measure.

Although opening hours remain the same as 2023-24, Swansea no longer meets the target for Opening hours per capita due population increases (Q116). Some libraries have had some new signage to improve visibility of opening hours in the community.

## Strategic context

As part of the return, authorities are asked to report on how the library service is contributing to wider Welsh Government priorities and strategic goals. Swansea outlined a wide range of activities demonstrating its contribution:

- **Sustainable health care** e.g. delivering library services to vulnerable residents through the home delivery service; addressing period poverty by providing resources and reusable products; and delivering events and activities to support well-being and reduce isolation.
- **Vulnerable people** e.g. using internal Poverty and Prevention funding to deliver free events targeted at families and out-of-school activities; and supporting the work of play teams and Flying Start to help children and families.
- **Sustainable economy, services and industries for the future** e.g. offering spaces for employability-related organisations such as Careers Wales; and working with the Fusion Community Arts Officer to facilitate cultural skill creation among underrepresented groups.
- **Climate and nature emergency** e.g. expanding the use of recycled cardboard library cards reducing plastic use in book processing, implementing energy monitoring tools and eliminating single-use plastics in event delivery.
- **Education and reducing inequalities** e.g. increasing collaboration with schools in relation to Cynefin (the new school curriculum); supporting children's literacy through class visits and the Summer Reading Challenge; and participating in council Poverty Prevention forums and working with colleagues in other direct support delivery services, including the third sector.
- **Diversity and move to eliminate inequality** e.g. monitoring diversity in stock selection; engaging with national campaigns like Refugee Week, Black History Month and Pride Month; safeguarding and VAWDASV (Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence) training for staff; achieving Library of Sanctuary status for Swansea Libraries and the prison

library managed by the service; investing in multilingual resources; and launching Polish story and craft sessions at Central Library.

- **Welsh language and Welsh speakers** e.g. increasing spending on Welsh language resources for adults and children; exploring opportunities for greater Welsh language use among non-Welsh speakers in the workplace; and recruiting more Welsh speakers to library teams.
- **Transforming towns** Y Storfa, the city centre hub project supported by Transforming Towns and the Transformation Capital Grants Programme remains a priority and further capital investment is being sought to improve library buildings and expand services across Swansea's communities.

## Future direction

Reporting on the authority's future direction and plans for the library service over the coming year, Swansea is focusing on developing its role in community hubs.

Consultancy was commissioned to explore how libraries across Swansea can align with, and extend the vision for, the Y Storfa City Centre Hub. Planning efforts are now directed towards delivering the library component of Y Storfa, supported by Welsh Government Transformation Grant funding, to incorporate transformational elements when the library relocates later this year.

The service is also prioritising workforce development, building on recent successful LAIS placements and CILIP chartership CPD opportunities. Plans include seeking additional qualification pathways for existing staff to strengthen professional expertise across the team. A workforce reconfiguration is underway, exploring new ways of working for library teams. Swansea has secured a Welsh Government Fusion grant for 2025-26 to employ a Community Cultural Coordinator. This role will work with libraries to engage more residents in cultural activities and bring art and culture to communities beyond the city centre. Swansea report that the Council is embracing AI and encouraging staff to adopt a new digital skill this year to support digital innovation. In addition, the service aims to continue to contribute to carbon reduction by minimising plastic use and improving energy efficiency at library sites.

## Conclusion

Swansea continues to perform well in a number of areas, including event attendance, informal support, virtual visits and e-issues. The service is also continuing to work creatively with children and young people to ensure the library offer meets their needs. The lack of qualified staff was highlighted as a concern in last year's return. Whilst it is, of course, disappointing that the library service was unable to recruit qualified staff, a positive outcome is that it is supporting existing staff to achieve qualified status in the future. Swansea has not met the target for opening hours per capita this year. Whilst acknowledging this is due to rapid population changes rather than a reduction in opening hours, it is suggested that

Swansea review opening hours provision across the authority to determine whether there is scope to adjust opening hours in light of population changes, and the increased demand for library services that may result.

# Torfaen Annual Assessment Report 2024-25

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.

## Executive summary

Torfaen reported meeting all of the 13 Core Entitlements in full through self-assessment. However, the independent assessor considers that the service meets 12 of the 13 Core Entitlements in full and 1 in part. Of the 5 quality indicators which have targets, Torfaen is achieving 3 in full and 1 in part. One QI is not met.

Library provision in Torfaen has a strong focus on health and well-being support, and the service performs well in this area with a number of innovative initiatives. The fact that Torfaen meets the target for staff CPD percentage is another positive feature of this year's return. However, the decline in formal user training this year is a concern and something the service should explore further to better understand, and hopefully remedy, in future years. The fact that staffing levels are so low in Torfaen compared to many other Welsh library authorities will inevitably have an impact on the service's ability to offer user support, events and training. The level of opening hours per capita in Torfaen is equally worrying, but again, it is difficult to see how this can be significantly improved until current staffing levels are addressed.

Overall, children's responses in user surveys are less positive than those received from adult customers. Whilst they are not at a level to produce concern, feedback from children and young people is something the service is advised to pay particular attention to in the survey planned for 2025-26.

- Event attendances have increased by 17% compared to 2023-24, and by 59% compared to 2022-23 (QI6).
- E-issues have increased by 46% compared to 2023-24, and have more than doubled since 2022-23 (QI8).
- Health and well-being support is a strength of the service, led by the Health and Well-being Library Professional (QI4).

## Note to the 2024-25 report

During 2024-25 local authorities in Wales migrated to a new all Wales Digital Library Platform. The process of migration caused some disruption to the operation of library services including the acquisition of new stock which had to be suspended for a

period as individual services moved to the new system. There are also some slight differences in the configuration of the new platform which means that the user data across 2024-25 is not entirely consistent. The reports for 2024-25 do not therefore include the data detailed below for Quality Indicators 4, 8, 9 and 10.

- QI 4 Support for health and well-being
  - c) the number of loans of titles from the Reading Well in Wales series
- QI 8 Library use
  - c) the total number of active borrowers divided by the resident population, multiplied by 1,000
  - d) the total number of library members
  - e) the total number of book issues (adult and children separate)
  - f) the total number of audio-visual issues
- QI 9 Up-to-date and appropriate reading material
  - a) minimum acquisitions rate
  - b) % spent on children's resources
- QI 10 Welsh language resources
  - a) 4% minimum spend
  - b) Welsh issues per capita

All data will be reported and assessed for 2025-26 (the first year of Framework 7) and this data will be used to set the benchmark for the remaining years of the framework.

## Performance against the standards

The standards framework comprises of Core Entitlements, quality indicators with targets, quality indicators with benchmarks and impact measures.

### Core Entitlements

Torfaen reported meeting all of the 13 Core Entitlements in full through self-assessment. Based on the detailed and helpful commentary provided, the independent assessor considers that the service has met 12 Core Entitlements in full and 1 in part. CE12 is partially met as the service does not have a strategy and associated measures of success covering the 2024-25 period.

- 40. Libraries in Wales are free to join and open to all.**  
Self-Assessment: Fully met  
Independent Assessor: **Fully met p**
- 41. Libraries in Wales ensure friendly, knowledgeable and qualified staff are on hand to help.**  
Self-Assessment: Fully met  
Independent Assessor: **Fully met p**

- 42. Libraries in Wales provide access to a range of services, activities, and high-quality resources in a range of formats to support lifelong learning, personal health and well-being, community participation, cultural experiences, recreation, and reading for pleasure.**  
Self-Assessment: Fully met  
Independent Assessor: **Fully met p**
- 43. Libraries in Wales provide appropriate services, facilities and information resources for individuals and groups with special requirements.**  
Self-Assessment: Fully met  
Independent Assessor: **Fully met p**
- 44. Libraries provide appropriate safe, attractive and accessible physical spaces with suitable staffed opening hours.**  
Self-Assessment: Fully met  
Independent Assessor: **Fully met p**
- 45. Libraries in Wales lend books for free, and deliver free access to information, including online information resources available 24 hours a day.**  
Self-Assessment: Fully met  
Independent Assessor: **Fully met p**
- 46. Libraries in Wales provide free use of the Internet including Wi-Fi, and access to digital equipment, in all service points.**  
Self-Assessment: Fully met  
Independent Assessor: **Fully met p**
- 47. Libraries in Wales provide access to services, cultural activities, and high-quality resources in the Welsh language.**  
Self-Assessment: Fully met  
Independent Assessor: **Fully met p**
- 48. Libraries in Wales work in partnership to share catalogues and facilitate access to the resources of all Welsh libraries.**  
Self-Assessment: Fully met  
Independent Assessor: **Fully met p**
- 49. Libraries in Wales work with a range of partners to promote and deliver services to new and diverse audiences, enabling more people to benefit from those services.**  
Self-Assessment: Fully met

Independent Assessor: **Fully met p**

**50. Libraries in Wales regularly consult users to gather their views on the service and information about their changing needs.**

Self-Assessment: Fully met

Independent Assessor: **Fully met p**

**51. Libraries in Wales provide access to their library service strategy, policies, objectives and vision, in print and online, in a range of languages appropriate for the community.**

Self-Assessment: Fully met

Independent Assessor: **Partially met n**

This is due to the current strategy only covering the 2018-23 period. It is noted that the service reports that the strategy will be updated this year once the Cwmbran Library refurbishment project has taken place. The target is partially met as the service does present a service offer and associated policies (Torfaen Library and Information Service Standards), which has been updated during the Framework 6 Extension period.

**52. Libraries in Wales provide support to help improve people's digital skills and confidence, including the use of e-government services**

Self-Assessment: Fully met

Independent Assessor: **Fully met p**

## Quality indicators with targets

There are 12 quality indicators (QIs), of which 5 have constituent targets. Of these, Torfaen is achieving 3 in full and 1 in part. One QI is not met.

QI 4 (a) Support for health and well-being, **met in full p**

i) Reading Well scheme, **met**

ii) Designated health & well-being collection, **met**

iii) Information about healthier lifestyles and healthy behaviours, **met**

iv) Signposting to health & well-being services, **met**

QI 6 All static service points offer events/activities for users with special requirements, **met in full p**

QI 7 Location of service points, **met in full p**

QI 13 Staffing levels and qualifications, **partially met n**

i) Staff per capita, **not met**

ii) Qualified staff per capita, **not met**

iii) Head of service qualification/training, **met**

iv) CPD percentage, **met**

QI 16 Opening hours per capita, **not met l**



## Impact measures

The framework includes three indicators aimed at assessing the impact of library use on people's lives. These indicators do not have targets, and authorities are required to carry out user surveys for QI1 once over the 2022-23 to 2024-25 period. Torfaen conducted an adult survey and a children's survey during 2023. The summary figures (lowest, median and highest) are based on all authorities providing data in the 2022-23, 2023-24 and 2024-25 returns. Rankings reflect the number of respondents, where 1 is the highest scoring authority.

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%	18/19	68%	94%	99%
e) % of adults who think that the library has made a difference to their lives:	86%	=11/20	31%	86.5%	96%
QI 5 b) % of attendees of training sessions who said that the training had helped them achieve their purpose in attending:	98%	=10/18	75%	98.5%	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 successful and innovative partnership with Torfaen Council's Sports Development team, delivering sessions for the For Dads By Dads programme - a ten-week support course for new and expectant fathers. These sessions provide a safe space for fathers to share early reading experiences and explore their important role in building lifelong reading habits with their children. Library staff lead discussions on the importance of father-child engagement at every developmental stage and introduce ways that dads can share books and stories. The library's support includes providing book stock, activities and welcoming spaces that make reading together enjoyable and accessible. The impact of the programme is illustrated by feedback received including, *"I've been working 1-1 with a dad involved with social services... he's now reading stories every night to his twin boys and is less self-conscious when engaging them."*

Building on this success, Torfaen Libraries established Dad's Story and Rhyme time, a Saturday event offering time-pressed fathers more opportunities to bond with their babies and toddlers through stories and rhymes, while building a supportive network. Bookstart Cymru materials are also distributed during sessions, raising awareness of resources to encourage early literacy.

This initiative demonstrates how libraries can inspire lifelong learning, strengthen family bonds and create inclusive, supportive communities.

## Quality indicators and benchmarks

The remaining indicators do not have targets but allow services to monitor their performance over time. The following table summarises Torfaen's position for 2024-25. Rankings reflect the number of respondents, where 1 is the highest scoring authority. 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%	=12/20	17%	70%	90%
c) health and well-being	69%	8/20	1%	63%	90%
d) enjoyable, safe and inclusive	97%	=9/20	93%	97%	100%
QI 2 Customer satisfaction					
a) 'very good' or 'good' choice of books	89%	=13/20	84%	90.5%	97%
b) 'very good' or 'good' customer care	97%	=14/20	92%	98%	100%
c) 'very good' or 'good' IT facilities	82%	=13/20	60%	85%	99%
d) 'very good' or 'good' overall	98%	=7/20	85%	98%	100%
e) users aged 16 & under rating out of ten	8.9	16/18	8.0	9.4	9.7
QI 5 User support					
a) attendances per capita	28	11/21	1	28	214
c) informal support per capita	166	8/20	15	150	608
QI 6 Attendances at events per capita	171	18/22	14	224.5	764
QI 8 Library use					
b) virtual visits per capita	415	17/21	5	766	6,035

Performance indicator		Rank	Lowest	Median	Highest
QI 13 Staffing levels and qualifications <sup>25</sup>					
(v) a) total volunteers	0	N/A	0	23	442
b) volunteer hours	0	N/A	0	883	22,706
QI 14 Operational expenditure					
a) total expenditure per capita	£9,538	19/21	£5,978	£12,646	£26,209
b) % on staff,	68%	10/21	48%	67%	80%
% on information resources	11%	=5/21	4%	9%	19%
% on equipment and buildings	1%	=19/21	0%	2%	29%
% on other operational costs	20%	8/21	1%	15%	38%

## Analysis of performance

The Core Entitlements and quality indicators can be divided into three key areas. This section of the report outlines performance under these areas.

<sup>25</sup> *Rankings are not included for volunteers as the implications of volunteer numbers are ambiguous.*

## Meeting customer needs (QI 1-2, 4-5)

Now comparable data is available from across the Framework 6 Extension period, they show that Torfaen performs close to the national median for Making a difference (QI1) and Customer satisfaction (QI2) measures for adult customers. However, it is in the bottom quartile of Welsh library authorities in relation to children's responses.

The service meets the target for Support for health and well-being (QI4) in full. This year saw the launch of a new Dementia Hub at Cwmbran Library as part of the wider Gwent Dementia service. The service's Health and Well-being Library Professional conducts one-to-one health and well-being sessions providing advice and signposting, as well as working with partners to provide activities and events on site and in the community, including health information events, assisted technology awareness-raising and carer support days.

Torfaen performs at the median for formal training attendance (QI5). However, attendance has fallen by 34% compared to 2023-24. The service reports that numbers have been affected by a reduction in library skills sessions delivered for children as staff focus has moved to other initiatives. Torfaen remains above the median for informal support, although there has been a small decrease (2%) compared to the previous year. With regard to informal IT support, staff have noted a further decline in the number of customers looking for basic IT support and more demand for support requiring a higher level of knowledge.

## Access and use (QI 6-8)

Event attendance continues to be below the median for Welsh library authorities, although attendances have increased by 16% compared to 2023-24, and by 59% compared to 2022-23 (QI6). During the five-week Cwmbran Library closure, the team liaised with the Cwmbran town centre management staff to ensure activities could continue at alternative venues, including unused office space and a town centre café bar.

Torfaen is below the median for virtual visits per capita, although the number of website visits has increased by 6% compared to 2023-24 (QI8). The service attributes this increase, in part, to customers using the website during the five-week Cwmbran Library closure period. Although e-issues remain below the national median, they have increased by 46% compared to 2023-24, and have more than doubled since 2022-23.

## Expertise and capacity (QI 13-14 &16)

Torfaen does not meet the target for total staff or qualified staff per capita and staffing remains the same as in 2023-24 (QI13). Whilst the service is above the median for qualified staff per capita, total staff per capita is in the bottom quartile of Welsh library services and is less than half the target figure. The service experienced two long periods of unplanned staff absence during 2024 which had an impact on

service delivery, although Torfaen was able to offer an honorarium payment to the Senior Library Assistant and appoint a relief Caretaker to help mitigate the impact of these absences. A new Library Manager was appointed in December 2024 and a new Library Caretaker will be recruited in 2025. The service also recruited five new casual staff during the year. The hours devoted to staff training have increased this year and Torfaen now meets this target.

Operational expenditure per capita is in the bottom quartile of Welsh library authorities and has decreased slightly (by 1%) compared to 2023-24 (Q14). Expenditure on materials decreased by 9% in 2024-25 (although the allocated budget was unchanged from 2023-24) and Torfaen is below the national median for materials spend per capita. Torfaen continues to not meet the target for opening hours per capita and the service is the lowest ranked nationally for this measure, with opening hours equating to just 52% of the per capita target (Q16).

## 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. Torfaen highlighted a range of activities which support various priorities and align with Marmot principles<sup>26</sup>. This includes the following:

- **A prosperous Wales** e.g. fostering lifelong learning and digital skills through modern facilities including power-enabled study spaces, tablet bars and VR headsets following the WG-funded refurbishment of Cwmbran Library; offering regular IT sessions and digital skills support in partnership with Communities into Work and Let's Get Digital; continuing iPad lending and introducing a Hublet tablet service at Cwmbran Library; and providing access to electronic resources such as Access to Research, the 1921 Census and Borrowbox, all supporting the Welsh Government's vision of a digitally skilled, economically active population.
- **A healthier Wales** e.g. a dedicated Health and Well-being Professional leading a wide-ranging programme; providing a variety of well-being activities including 1-1 health advice; dementia support groups; bereavement craft groups; carers' information days; mental health awareness sessions; tea and tech meetups; and collaborations with partners on initiatives supporting families affected by suicide, homelessness, bereavement and trauma. The Library@Home service ensures housebound residents remain connected.
- **A Wales of cohesive communities** e.g. serving as trusted, inclusive hubs with integrated services such as Torfaen Citizens Advice, Torfaen Credit Union and Council Customer Services at Cwmbran Library; acting as a first point of contact to signpost residents to community-based provision; hosting a vibrant events programme including intergenerational crafts, reading groups, Lego and coding clubs, and author events; engaging nearly 1,000 children in the

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<sup>26</sup> <https://www.local.gov.uk/marmot-review-report-fair-society-healthy-lives>

Summer Reading Challenge; and delivering targeted outreach to groups such as through Dads for Lads and the Women's Hub at Ethnic Minorities and Youth Services.

- **A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language** e.g. promoting Welsh language and culture through Rhyme Time sessions; school visits; incorporating Welsh language books into displays and health promotions; and delivering events such as the Big Welsh Rhyme Time, Clwb Cwtsh sessions for parents and Stars of the Shelves author sessions, all contributing to Cymraeg 2050.

## Future direction

Reporting on the authority's future direction and plans for the library service over the coming year, Torfaen refers to embracing the Marmot principles as the foundation for their strategic direction, focusing on reducing health inequalities, promoting social inclusion and enhancing community well-being. Future strategic directions comprise four key areas: developing libraries as community well-being hubs; digital inclusion and lifelong learning; early intervention and prevention; and cultural and educational development. Looking forward, Torfaen aims to evolve its libraries as flexible, multi-functional spaces that are inclusive, adaptable and responsive to community needs. It is intended that the services provided contribute to increasing resilience amongst local residents and avoid dependency on formal services. Torfaen report that these activities will sit alongside the provision of core library services.

## Conclusion

Library provision in Torfaen has a strong focus on health and well-being support, and the service performs well in this area with a number of innovative initiatives. The fact that Torfaen meets the target for staff CPD percentage is another positive feature of this year's return. However, the decline in formal user training this year is a concern and something the service should explore further to better understand, and hopefully remedy, in future years. The fact that staffing levels are so low in Torfaen compared to many other Welsh library authorities will inevitably have an impact on the service's ability to offer user support, events and training. The level of opening hours per capita in Torfaen is equally worrying, but again, it is difficult to see how these can be significantly improved until current staffing levels are addressed.

Overall, children's responses in user surveys are less positive than those received from adult customers. Whilst they are not at a level to produce concern, feedback from children and young people is something the service is advised to pay particular attention to in the survey planned for 2025-26.

# Vale of Glamorgan Annual Assessment Report 2024-25

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.

## Executive summary

Vale of Glamorgan meets all of the 13 Core Entitlements in full. Of the 5 quality indicators which have targets, Vale of Glamorgan is achieving 3 in full and 1 in part. One QI is not met.

Vale of Glamorgan is performing well in many areas: event attendance, formal training attendance, e-issues and virtual visits have all seen notable increases this year. The increase in the book budget is, of course, welcome as this will help the service to ensure it has up-to-date and appealing resources to continue to attract customers. It is also positive that opening hours have increased again this year, although the service does not yet meet this target. It is pleasing to see that Vale of Glamorgan has taken action to address issues highlighted in the 2023-24 annual report. It now meets the target for qualified staff per capita and, indeed, is the highest ranked authority nationally for this measure. It has conducted user surveys this year and reports being committed to making them an annual activity to continually assess impact and ensure services evolve in line with user needs. In future consultations with customers, Vale of Glamorgan may wish to explore possible reasons for the lower levels of satisfaction with IT provision, especially given as this is a focus for the service, as well as potential explanations for Making a difference (QI1) measures being lower than many other services, which is surprising given the positive performance of Vale of Glamorgan libraries in many other areas of the WPLS. The notable decrease in the informal support provision this year is another area that warrants further investigation by the service.

- Formal training attendance has continued to increase with attendances rising by 89% compared to 2023-24 and over fourfold since 2022-23 (QI5).
- Event attendance is a strength of Vale of Glamorgan's offer, and the service continues to be in the top quartile of library services for this measure (QI6).
- Vale of Glamorgan is in the top quartile of library authorities for virtual visits per capita and the number of visits has risen by one-third compared to 2023-24 (QI8).

## Note to the 2024-25 report

During 2024-25 local authorities in Wales migrated to a new all Wales Digital Library Platform. The process of migration caused some disruption to the operation of library services including the acquisition of new stock which had to be suspended for a period as individual services moved to the new system. There are also some slight differences in the configuration of the new platform which means that the user data across 2024-25 is not entirely consistent. The reports for 2024-25 do not therefore include the data detailed below for Quality Indicators 4, 8, 9 and 10.

- QI 4 Support for health and well-being
  - c) the number of loans of titles from the Reading Well in Wales series
- QI 8 Library use
  - c) the total number of active borrowers divided by the resident population, multiplied by 1,000
  - d) the total number of library members
  - e) the total number of book issues (adult and children separate)
  - f) the total number of audio-visual issues
- QI 9 Up-to-date and appropriate reading material
  - a) minimum acquisitions rate
  - b) % spent on children's resources
- QI 10 Welsh language resources
  - a) 4% minimum spend
  - b) Welsh issues per capita

All data will be reported and assessed for 2025-26 (the first year of Framework 7) and this data will be used to set the benchmark for the remaining years of the framework.

## Performance against the standards

The standards framework comprises of Core Entitlements, quality indicators with targets, quality indicators with benchmarks and impact measures.

### Core Entitlements

Vale of Glamorgan reported meeting all of the 13 Core Entitlements in full through self-assessment. Based on the detailed and helpful commentary provided, the independent assessor agrees with the self-assessment.

### Quality indicators with targets

There are 12 quality indicators (QIs), of which 5 have constituent targets. Of these, Vale of Glamorgan is achieving 3 in full and 1 in part. One QI is not met.



- QI 4 (a) Support for health and well-being, **met in full p**  
 i) Reading Well scheme, **met**  
 ii) Designated health & well-being collection, **met**  
 iii) Information about healthier lifestyles and healthy behaviours, **met**  
 iv) Signposting to health & well-being services, **met**
- QI 6 All static service points offer events/activities for users with special requirements, **met in full p**
- QI 7 Location of service points, **met in full p**
- QI 13 Staffing levels and qualifications, **partially met n**  
 i) Staff per capita, **not met**  
 ii) Qualified staff per capita, **met**  
 iii) Head of service qualification/training, **not met**  
 iv) CPD percentage, **met**
- QI 16 Opening hours per capita, **not met l**

## Impact measures

The framework includes three indicators aimed at assessing the impact of library use on people's lives. These indicators do not have targets, and authorities are required to carry out user surveys for QI1 once over the 2022-23 to 2024-25 period. Vale of Glamorgan conducted an adult survey and a children's survey in October 2024. The summary figures (lowest, median and highest) are based on all authorities providing data in the 2022-23, 2023-24 and 2024-25 returns. Rankings reflect the number of respondents, where 1 is the highest scoring authority.

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:	83%	17/19	68%	94%	99%
e) % of adults who think that the library has made a difference to their lives:	79%	=18/20	31%	86.5%	96%
QI 5 b) % of attendees of training sessions who said that the training had helped them achieve their purpose in attending:	99%	=6/18	75%	98.5%	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 that had broad coverage, rather than a specific example of impact. The statement centred around digital inclusion, sustainability and skills development. The library service has established itself as a leader in tackling digital exclusion and promoting community resilience through its innovative programmes at Barry and Penarth Libraries. Makerspaces at both libraries have become vibrant, hands-on learning environments, where partnerships with a local college provide bespoke sessions for learners facing



barriers to education and employment. These creative workshops build confidence, digital awareness and employability skills by introducing participants to tools like 3D printers and Cricut machines in an informal, supportive setting. Feedback has been positive, with learners reporting improved motivation and confidence.

Complementing this work, the Tablet Loan Scheme provides devices, connectivity and one-to-one assistance from trained library staff and partners such as Digital Communities Wales. This joined-up approach ensures residents gain the essential digital skills needed to navigate daily life and access services. Supporting sustainability, Barry Library's partnership with the Barry Repair Café empowers residents to repair household items, promoting environmental responsibility and community resilience.

The library's leadership in digital inclusion was recognised during a recent visit by the First Minister, who praised the service for its role in equipping communities with the skills and tools needed to thrive in a digital world. These initiatives highlight how Vale of Glamorgan Libraries combine creativity, technology and community engagement to make a lasting impact on individuals and the wider community.

## Quality indicators and benchmarks

The remaining indicators do not have targets but allow services to monitor their performance over time. The following table summarises Vale of Glamorgan's position for 2024-25. Rankings reflect the number of respondents, where 1 is the highest scoring authority. 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	58%	18/20	17%	70%	90%
c) health and well-being	45%	18/20	1%	63%	90%
d) enjoyable, safe and inclusive	93%	=18/20	93%	97%	100%
QI 2 Customer satisfaction					
a) 'very good' or 'good' choice of books	90%	=11/20	84%	90.5%	97%
b) 'very good' or 'good' customer care	97%	=14/20	92%	98%	100%
c) 'very good' or 'good' IT facilities	60%	20/20	60%	85%	99%
d) 'very good' or 'good' overall	99%	=2/20	85%	98%	100%
e) users aged 16 & under rating out of ten	8.7	17/18	8.0	9.4	9.7
QI 5 User support					
a) attendances per capita	34	=6/21	1	28	214
c) informal support per capita	34	19/20	15	150	608
QI 6 Attendances at events per capita	543	2/22	14	224.5	764
QI 8 Library use					
b) virtual visits per capita	1,152	5/21	5	766	6,035
QI 13 Staffing levels and qualifications <sup>27</sup>					

<sup>27</sup> Rankings are not included for volunteers as the implications of volunteer numbers are ambiguous.

Performance indicator		Rank	Lowest	Median	Highest
(v) a) total volunteers	169	N/A	0	23	442
b) volunteer hours	22,706	N/A	0	883	22,706
QI 14 Operational expenditure					
a) total expenditure per capita	£13,111	9/21	£5,978	£12,646	£26,209
b) % on staff,	76%	=5/21	48%	67%	80%
% on information resources	13%	4/21	4%	9%	19%
% on equipment and buildings	4%	=6/21	0%	2%	29%
% on other operational costs	7%	=16/21	1%	15%	38%

## Analysis of performance

The Core Entitlements and quality indicators can be divided into three key areas. This section of the report outlines performance under these areas.

### Meeting customer needs (QI 1-2, 4-5)

Results from this year's customer surveys show the service is currently below the national median for all elements of Making a difference (QI1). However, it does perform well in some aspects of Customer satisfaction (QI2), in particular customer care and overall rating, both of which were rated good or very good by over 95% of those surveyed. However, the rating for IT facilities is a concern as this was the lowest reported nationally. The service acknowledges this has highlighted the need for investment in digital infrastructure and enhanced support for users, and plans to address this as part of the wider digital development strategy.

Formal training attendance has continued to increase with attendances rising by 89% compared to 2023-24 and over fourfold since 2022-23 (QI5). The service is now above the median for this measure. However, numbers helped via informal support have declined by 58% compared to 2023-24 and Vale of Glamorgan is now in the bottom quartile of Welsh library services for this measure. No commentary is provided in the return to suggest possible reasons for this decrease.

### Access and use (QI 6-8)

Event attendance is a strength of Vale of Glamorgan's offer; attendance numbers have increased slightly compared to the previous year (2%) and the service continues to be in the top quartile of library services for this measure (QI6). Events include dementia friendly coffee mornings, sensory story times for children with additional needs, carers' drop-in sessions, and digital support tailored for older adults and those with accessibility requirements.

Vale of Glamorgan is in the top quartile of Welsh library authorities for virtual visits per capita and the number of visits has risen by one-third compared to 2023-24 (QI8). Whilst the service remains in the bottom quartile nationally for e-issues, there

has been an impressive 87% increase compared to 2023-24, and e-issues have more than doubled compared to 2022-23.

## Expertise and capacity (QI 13-14 &16)

There is a more positive picture in relation to staffing this year. Vale of Glamorgan now meets the target for qualified staff per capita and is the highest-ranking Welsh library authority for this measure (QI13). Although the designated operational manager does not currently hold a relevant qualification, this is being addressed as they are currently undertaking CILIP Chartership, along with 2 further members of staff. The total number of staff per capita has also increased, being 3.5 FTE higher than in 2023-24. Whilst the service does not meet the target for this measure, it is above the median of Welsh library authorities. The 5 community-managed libraries, which serve just under 23% of the population of Vale of Glamorgan (around 38,000 people), operate independently with volunteer support. The number of volunteers reported has declined compared to 2023-24. However, the total volunteer hours worked have increased and equate to over 13 FTE staff. Given the level of volunteer involvement in Vale of Glamorgan, it is particularly important to ensure that volunteers are used according to [CILIP guidance](#).

Operational expenditure is above the median for Welsh library services, but the figure has decreased by 15% compared to 2023-24 (QI14). This is the largest percentage decrease in revenue expenditure nationally and equates to £2.38 less per head of population. However, despite the overall reduction in expenditure, the book budget has increased by 26%. In addition, the proportion of the budget allocated to staffing has increased, from 59% to 76%, as the service realigned the budget to focus more heavily on staffing and materials.

Although reported opening hours have increased by 13% compared to 2023-24, Vale of Glamorgan still does not meet the target for opening hours (QI16). The service acknowledges that extending opening hours is a priority for the service as none of the community-managed libraries are open on a full-time basis. However, two community libraries have increased their opening hours from April 2025.

## 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. Vale of Glamorgan outlined a wide range of activities that support the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and a range of Welsh Government strategies. Examples include the following:

- **Providing hubs for community learning and cultural engagement** e.g. a programme of author talks, live performances, exhibitions, reading groups and creative workshops, often delivered in partnership with the Arts Development

Officer and local organisations; and regular Baby Rhyme Times and seasonal craft activities to encourage early literacy and reinforce intergenerational ties.

- **Championing digital inclusion and lifelong learning** e.g. partnering with Digital Communities Wales to tackle digital exclusion through one-to-one digital support sessions, outreach to priority groups and the Tablet Loan Scheme; and developing innovative facilities like Barry Library MakerSpace.
- **Supporting employability and inclusive growth** e.g. supporting the Welsh Government's commitment to engaging every young person in education by providing volunteering and work placement opportunities and digital skills programme; and expanding youth engagement with targeted skills-based programmes and creative workshops, aligned with the Young Person's Guarantee.
- **Promoting the Welsh language and culture** e.g. Welsh-medium story times, author events and craft sessions; promoting bilingual resources and e-resources; normalising the use of Welsh through bilingual signage; providing Welsh language training for staff; and working with Welsh-medium schools to support early language development, contributing to Cymraeg 2050 goals.

## Future direction

Reporting on the authority's future direction and plans for the library service over the coming year, Vale of Glamorgan reports its commitment to building a resilient, inclusive and future-ready service that meets the evolving needs of local communities. Strategic priorities focus on three key areas: increasing access and inclusion; strengthening cultural and digital provision; and supporting community well-being. Vale of Glamorgan's plans include continued investment in digital inclusion through expanding the successful Tablet Loan Scheme, increasing digital skills training opportunities, and developing MakerSpaces across libraries. The library's cultural programming will grow through partnerships with the Council's Arts Development team and other stakeholders, positioning libraries as creative community hubs that promote mental health, learning and creative expression. A major focus will be on strengthening the role of the library in improving literacy, with deeper engagement with schools via class visits, reading challenges and targeted outreach, as well as support for early years literacy, reluctant readers and lifelong reading habits. Outreach efforts, refreshed library spaces and a robust bilingual digital presence will further modernise services and widen access.

In 2025-26, the service aims to develop a new Library Strategy aligned with the Council's Vale 2030 vision and the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act, co-designed with communities for services that are relevant, equitable and sustainable.

## Conclusion

Vale of Glamorgan is performing well in many areas: event attendance, formal training attendance, e-issues and virtual visits have all seen notable increases this

year. The increase in the book budget is, of course, welcome as this will help the service to ensure it has up-to-date and appealing resources to continue to attract customers. It is also positive that opening hours have increased again this year, although the service does not yet meet this target. It is pleasing to see that Vale of Glamorgan has taken action to address issues highlighted in the 2023-24 annual report. It now meets the target for qualified staff per capita and, indeed, is the highest ranked authority nationally for this measure. It has conducted user surveys this year and reports being committed to making them an annual activity to continually assess impact and ensure services evolve in line with user needs. In future consultations with customers, Vale of Glamorgan may wish to explore possible reasons for the lower levels of satisfaction with IT provision, especially given as this is a focus for the service, as well as potential explanations for Making a difference (Q11) measures being lower than many other services, which is surprising given the positive performance of Vale of Glamorgan libraries in many other areas of the WPLS. The notable decrease in the informal support provision this year is another area that warrants further investigation by the service.

# Wrexham Annual Assessment Report 2024-25

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.

## Executive summary

Wrexham reported meeting 8 of the 13 Core Entitlements in full and 5 in part through self-assessment. However, the independent assessor considers that the service has met 9 Core Entitlements in full and 4 in part. Of the 5 quality indicators which have targets, Wrexham is achieving 3 in full and 1 in part. One QI is not met.

Whilst there are some positives in this year's report, including increasing event attendance and a larger book budget, which should help to ensure customers have access to up-to-date and attractive resources, the situation in Wrexham libraries is highly concerning. In particular, the fact that Wrexham meets only 9 of the 13 Core Entitlements in full is an issue the authority needs to address as a matter of urgency. Regarding performance against the quality indicators, it is disappointing that opening hours have declined further this year. Wrexham library staff are clearly making efforts to improve the service for customers, and this is demonstrated in the 97% of customers surveyed who rated customer care as good or very good. However, issues that raise serious concerns in this year's return include: the lack of consultation with children and young people to ensure the library service meets their needs (QI1&2 and CE11); continued gaps in the data provided, in particular relating to informal support which should be an integral aspect of the library offer to customers (QI5); and concerns about the level of IT provision (QI2 and CE7).

- Over 95% of customers rate customer care, and the library overall, as good or very good (QI2).
- Wrexham continues to be above the national median for event attendance per capita (QI6).
- Virtual visits have more than doubled compared to 2023-24 and increased by 258% compared to 2022-23 (QI8).

## Note to the 2024-25 report

During 2024-25 local authorities in Wales migrated to a new all Wales Digital Library Platform. The process of migration caused some disruption to the operation of library services including the acquisition of new stock which had to be suspended for a period as individual services moved to the new system. There are also some slight

differences in the configuration of the new platform which means that the user data across 2024-25 is not entirely consistent. The reports for 2024-25 do not therefore include the data detailed below for Quality Indicators 4, 8, 9 and 10.

- QI 4 Support for health and well-being
  - c) the number of loans of titles from the Reading Well in Wales series
- QI 8 Library use
  - c) the total number of active borrowers divided by the resident population, multiplied by 1,000
  - d) the total number of library members
  - e) the total number of book issues (adult and children separate)
  - f) the total number of audio-visual issues
- QI 9 Up-to-date and appropriate reading material
  - a) minimum acquisitions rate
  - b) % spent on children's resources
- QI 10 Welsh language resources
  - a) 4% minimum spend
  - b) Welsh issues per capita

All data will be reported and assessed for 2025-26 (the first year of Framework 7) and this data will be used to set the benchmark for the remaining years of the framework.

## Performance against the standards

The standards framework comprises of Core Entitlements, quality indicators with targets, quality indicators with benchmarks and impact measures.

### Core Entitlements

Wrexham reported meeting 8 of the 13 Core Entitlements in full and 5 in part through self-assessment. Based on the detailed and helpful commentary provided, the independent assessor considers that the service has met 9 Core Entitlements in full and 4 in part.

- 53. Libraries in Wales are free to join and open to all.**  
Self-Assessment: Fully met  
Independent Assessor: **Fully met p**
- 54. Libraries in Wales ensure friendly, knowledgeable and qualified staff are on hand to help.**  
Self-Assessment: Fully met  
Independent Assessor: **Fully met p**

- 55. Libraries in Wales provide access to a range of services, activities, and high-quality resources in a range of formats to support lifelong learning, personal health and well-being, community participation, cultural experiences, recreation, and reading for pleasure.**  
Self-Assessment: Fully met  
Independent Assessor: **Fully met p**
- 56. Libraries in Wales provide appropriate services, facilities and information resources for individuals and groups with special requirements.**  
Self-Assessment: Fully met  
Independent Assessor: **Fully met p**
- 57. Libraries provide appropriate safe, attractive and accessible physical spaces with suitable staffed opening hours.**  
Self-Assessment: Partially met  
Independent Assessor: **Partially met n**  
This is due to the lack of a programme of modernisation or refurbishment for the physical estate.
- 58. Libraries in Wales lend books for free, and deliver free access to information, including online information resources available 24 hours a day.**  
Self-Assessment: Fully met  
Independent Assessor: **Fully met p**
- 59. Libraries in Wales provide free use of the Internet including Wi-Fi, and access to digital equipment, in all service points.**  
Self-Assessment: Partially met  
Independent Assessor: **Partially met n**  
This is due to the lack of Wi-Fi provision in all branches.
- 60. Libraries in Wales provide access to services, cultural activities, and high-quality resources in the Welsh language.**  
Self-Assessment: Fully met  
Independent Assessor: **Fully met p**
- 61. Libraries in Wales work in partnership to share catalogues and facilitate access to the resources of all Welsh libraries.**  
Self-Assessment: Partially met  
Independent Assessor: **Partially met n**  
This is due to the lack of inter library loan provision beyond the six north Wales counties.



- 62. Libraries in Wales work with a range of partners to promote and deliver services to new and diverse audiences, enabling more people to benefit from those services.**  
Self-Assessment: Partially met  
Independent Assessor: **Fully met p**  
This is assessed as fully met because, although there is no discrete marketing budget, the service clearly invests in marketing.
- 63. Libraries in Wales regularly consult users to gather their views on the service and information about their changing needs.**  
Self-Assessment: Partially met  
Independent Assessor: **Partially met n**  
Although an adult customer survey has been conducted, no children's survey is reported within the Framework 6 Extension period.
- 64. Libraries in Wales provide access to their library service strategy, policies, objectives and vision, in print and online, in a range of languages appropriate for the community.**  
Self-Assessment: Fully met  
Independent Assessor: **Fully met p**
- 65. Libraries in Wales provide support to help improve people's digital skills and confidence, including the use of e-government services**  
Self-Assessment: Fully met  
Independent Assessor: **Fully met p**

## Quality indicators with targets

There are 12 quality indicators (QIs), of which 5 have constituent targets. Of these, Wrexham is achieving 3 in full and 1 in part. One QI is not met.

- QI 4 (a) Support for health and well-being, **met in full p**  
i) Reading Well scheme, **met**  
ii) Designated health & well-being collection, **met**  
iii) Information about healthier lifestyles and healthy behaviours, **met**  
iv) Signposting to health & well-being services, **met**
- QI 6 All static service points offer events/activities for users with special requirements, **met in full p**
- QI 7 Location of service points, **met in full p**
- QI 13 Staffing levels and qualifications, **partially met n**  
i) Staff per capita, **not met**  
ii) Qualified staff per capita, **not met**  
iii) Head of service qualification/training, **met**  
iv) CPD percentage, **met**

QI 16 Opening hours per capita, **not met** |

## Impact measures

The framework includes three indicators aimed at assessing the impact of library use on people's lives. These indicators do not have targets, and authorities are required to carry out user surveys for QI1 once over the 2022-23 to 2024-25 period. Wrexham conducted an adult survey in May/June 2024. No children's survey was conducted during the Framework 6 Extension period. The summary figures (lowest, median and highest) are based on all authorities providing data in the 2022-23, 2023-24 and 2024-25 returns. Rankings reflect the number of respondents, where 1 is the highest scoring authority.

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:	N/A	N/A	68%	94%	99%
e) % of adults who think that the library has made a difference to their lives:	83%	=14/20	31%	86.5%	96%
QI 5 b) % of attendees of training sessions who said that the training had helped them achieve their purpose in attending:	N/A	N/A	75%	98.5%	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 a statement referring to a local history archive that has been established at Brynteg Library in partnership with the Broughton District History Group (BDHG). The archive houses a variety of resources, including maps, birth, marriage and death records, diaries, photographs and multimedia content relating to Broughton and the surrounding areas. One archive user commented, *"The availability of resources such as this, located within the community they represent, provides a valuable opportunity both for academic and family research and should be cherished and promoted so future generations can continue to appreciate the long history of the community of Broughton and those who built it."*

## Quality indicators and benchmarks

The remaining indicators do not have targets but allow services to monitor their performance over time. The following table summarises Wrexham's position for 2024-25. Rankings reflect the number of respondents, where 1 is the highest scoring authority. 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	63%	17/20	17%	70%	90%
c) health and well-being	56%	=13/20	1%	63%	90%
d) enjoyable, safe and inclusive	94%	17/20	93%	97%	100%
QI 2 Customer satisfaction					
a) 'very good' or 'good' choice of books	86%	=18/20	84%	90.5%	97%
b) 'very good' or 'good' customer care	97%	=14/20	92%	98%	100%
c) 'very good' or 'good' IT facilities	67%	18/20	60%	85%	99%
d) 'very good' or 'good' overall	96%	=15/20	85%	98%	100%
e) users aged 16 & under rating out of ten	N/A	N/A	8.0	9.4	9.7
QI 5 User support					
a) attendances per capita	3	=18/21	1	28	214
c) informal support per capita	N/A	N/A	15	150	608
QI 6 Attendances at events per capita	263	=9/22	14	224.5	764
QI 8 Library use					
b) virtual visits per capita	439	16/21	5	766	6,035

Performance indicator		Rank	Lowest	Median	Highest
QI 13 Staffing levels and qualifications <sup>28</sup>					
(v) a) total volunteers	1	N/A	0	23	442
b) volunteer hours	54	N/A	0	883	22,706
QI 14 Operational expenditure					
a) total expenditure per capita	£11,240	15/21	£5,978	£12,646	£26,209
b) % on staff,	67%	11/21	48%	67%	80%
% on information resources	8%	=13/21	4%	9%	19%
% on equipment and buildings	1%	=19/21	0%	2%	29%
% on other operational costs	25%	=5/21	1%	15%	38%

## Analysis of performance

The Core Entitlements and quality indicators can be divided into three key areas. This section of the report outlines performance under these areas.

### Meeting customer needs (QI 1-2, 4-5)

Wrexham has conducted an adult customer survey this year (QI1 and QI2). Although responses are below the national median, it still performs well in several areas, in particular, customer care and overall rating, which are rated good or very good by over 95% of customers. However, the rating of IT facilities is a concern as only two-thirds of customers surveyed rate these as good or very good (QI2). No children's

<sup>28</sup> *Rankings are not included for volunteers as the implications of volunteer numbers are ambiguous.*

survey has been conducted during the Framework 6 Extension period, so it is not possible to comment on young people's experiences of the library service.

The service meets the target for Health and well-being (QI4) in full. Health and well-being related activities offered include reminiscence groups, craft groups, friendship groups, and knit and natter groups. The service has now secured a partner to deliver IT training sessions. However, the partner conducts their own evaluation, so no data are available on whether attendees achieved their purpose in attending. Wrexham is in the bottom quartile of Welsh authorities for the number of formal training sessions per capita. No records are kept on the number of customers helped informally during the year (QI5).

## Access and use (QI 6-8)

Wrexham continues to be above the median for event attendance per capita, although attendance figures are slightly lower than in 2023-24 (by 3%) (QI6). To extend its support for customers with special requirements, the service produced a leaflet called "I am Going to The Library" for neurodivergent people to help them prepare to visit the library.

Wrexham meets Location of service points (QI7) in full. Although virtual visits remain below the median, they have more than doubled compared to 2023-24 and increased by 258% compared to 2022-23 (QI8). E-issues are below the median for Welsh library authorities and the figure has increased by just 1% from 2023-24.

## Expertise and capacity (QI 13-14 &16)

As was the case in 2023-24, Wrexham does not meet the targets for total staff or qualified staff per capita, and remains below the median of Welsh library authorities for both measures (QI13). Staff numbers are unchanged from 2023-24. However, the service remains committed to staff development and exceeds the target for this measure.

Revenue spending per capita has increased by 10% compared to 2023-24, although Wrexham is below the median for operational expenditure (QI14). Furthermore, although the book budget remains below the median, it has increased by 52% compared to the previous year.

Wrexham does not meet the target for opening hours and remains in the bottom quartile of Welsh library authorities for this measure (QI16). Reported opening hours have decreased by 4% compared to 2023-24. However, the opening hours figure does not include the Pop-Up/Doorstep Delivery Library Service, which fluctuates depending on the availability of community venues.

## 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 highlighted a variety of ways in which it supports local, regional and national policy priorities, including the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and the Council Plan 2020-28. Examples include:

- **Eliminating inequalities** e.g. designating libraries as 'Warm Hubs' during winter months to support residents and staff affected by the cost-of-living and energy crises; providing inclusive, welcoming spaces where individuals can read, charge devices, access Wi-Fi and participate in a wide range of free activities including taster sessions, lunchtime learning, Lego clubs and reading groups. The provision of a Wi-Fi printing service allows users to print from home or car and collect from a local branch library at their convenience, supporting digital access and inclusion for those who may face technological or financial barriers.
- **Promoting the Welsh language and culture** e.g. delivering a bilingual service across all sites; promoting Welsh resources in all communications; hosting Welsh-language story and rhyme time sessions; facilitating Welsh language school visits to libraries; supporting Welsh language reading groups; hosting author events; providing Magi Ann/Seren a Sbarc sessions; maintaining dedicated Welsh social media channels; and distributing a bilingual newsletter to subscribers. A dedicated internal group (Tîm Cymraeg) coordinates marketing and activities relating to the Welsh language, and Brawddeg yr Wythnos is circulated weekly to all library staff.

## Future direction

Reporting on the authority's future direction and plans for the library service over the coming year, Wrexham reports continuing to operate under significant financial pressure with annual funding reductions and limited staffing levels. In line with budgetary pressure on Wrexham County Borough Council, Wrexham Library and Information Service is under review with the task of cutting the budget by £185,000 whilst striving to deliver a comprehensive library service with minimal impact on stakeholders. Despite these pressures, Wrexham reports that the Council remains committed to maintaining a modern, resilient and relevant public library service for residents, visitors and communities. The relocation of Wrexham Archives' public search room to Wrexham City Library in 2024 has further strengthened the city centre library offer. Looking ahead, the service is committed to exploring opportunities to co-locate other services, organisations or businesses within library buildings to enrich the customer experience and create more sustainable, collaborative models of service delivery.

## Conclusion

Whilst there are some positives in this year's report, including increasing event attendance and a larger book budget, which should help to ensure customers have access to up-to-date and attractive resources, the situation in Wrexham libraries is highly concerning. In particular, the fact that Wrexham meets only 9 of the 13 Core Entitlements in full is an issue the authority needs to address as a matter of urgency. Regarding performance against the quality indicators, it is disappointing that opening hours have declined further this year. Wrexham library staff are clearly making efforts to improve the service for customers, and this is demonstrated in the 97% of customers surveyed who rated customer care as good or very good. However, issues that raise serious concerns in this year's return include: the lack of consultation with children and young people to ensure the library service meets their needs (QI1&2 and CE11); continued gaps in the data provided, in particular relating to informal support which should be an integral aspect of the library offer to customers (QI5); and concerns about the level of IT provision (QI2 and CE7).