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Welsh Public Library Standards Sixth Framework analysis

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Welsh Public Library Standards Sixth Framework analysis

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Views expressed in this report are those of the researcher and not necessarily those of the Welsh Government

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Glossary

Additional Learning Needs (ALN)

ALN refers to children, young people or adults with learning, physical or sensory needs that make it harder to learn than people of the same age.

Audiovisual (AV)

AV resources are any recorded materials that convey information through sound and/or moving images.

Consumer Prices Index (CPI)

The CPI measures the average change over time in prices paid by consumers for a representative "basket" of goods and services.

Core Entitlement (CE)

CEs are the basic entitlements that members of the public can expect from their library service.

Full Time Equivalent (FTE)

Equal to the working hours of a full-time staff member.

Interquartile Range (IQR)

A statistical measure of the spread of data. It is the difference between the 75th and 25th percentiles of the data.

Library Management System (LMS)

An LMS is software designed to manage library operations including cataloguing, borrowers and loans.

Quality Indicator (QI)

Qis measure the performance of Welsh library services. Some have targets and others can be used for benchmarking and monitoring.

Welsh Public Library Standards (WPLS)

The WPLS provide a national framework for assessing the performance and development of local authority library services.

1. Introduction

Public libraries in Wales play an important role in supporting literacy, education, digital inclusion, community participation, and wellbeing. Under the provisions of the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964, local authorities are required to provide a comprehensive and efficient library service for all residents wishing to make use of it. Welsh Ministers hold responsibility for ensuring that this statutory duty is fulfilled. In Wales, this oversight is exercised through the Welsh Public Library Standards (WPLS), which provide a national framework for assessing the performance and development of local authority library services.

The WPLS process involves the independent assessor producing a formal written assessment report for each authority. The reports are moderated by the Peer Reference Group which include Welsh Government officials, senior public librarians and a representative from Welsh Local Government Association. Their role is to ensure consistency throughout the reports and to represent the voice of the sector. Local authorities have the opportunity to fact check the reports before they are formally published.

The WPLS enable the Welsh Government to collect a consistent body of evidence about public library provision across Wales. Each framework combines a range of quantitative and qualitative information, including data on Core Entitlements and Quality Indicators, alongside narrative evidence such as impact statements, case studies, and statements on strategic direction. Together, these elements provide insight into the resources available to library services, patterns of service use, and the wider social outcomes and impacts associated with public library provision. The evidence gathered through the WPLS contributes to monitoring statutory compliance, informing policy development, and supporting advocacy and decision-making relating to the future of public library services.

The [Sixth Framework of the WPLS](#) originally ran from 2017 to 2020. However, due to the disruption caused by the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, the framework was extended until March 2025. During this period the reporting requirements were temporarily adjusted, including the use of a reduced dataset during the most acute stages of the pandemic. The framework was later revised through an addendum to cover the 2023 to 2024 and 2024 to 2025 reporting years. Over its extended lifespan, the Sixth Framework therefore generated an eight-year body of evidence documenting changes in library provision during a period that included both pre-pandemic conditions and the significant operational challenges associated with the pandemic.

The completion of the final reporting cycle in 2025 meant that the full dataset for the Sixth Framework was available for retrospective analysis. This provided an opportunity to examine trends in public library provision across Wales over the duration of the framework. As a result, in January 2026 Evidence To Action Limited was commissioned by the Welsh Government to undertake this analysis. The project was undertaken between January and March 2026.

The analysis considers patterns in the quantitative indicators, alongside insights drawn from the accompanying qualitative evidence submitted by library services. Particular attention is

given to identifying how services changed over time, how they responded to the disruption caused by the pandemic, and what the available evidence suggests about emerging trends within the sector.

1.1. Aims of the research

This aims of the research are to:

- identify the trends present in the Sixth Framework data supplied by library services in Wales
- provide insight into the changes in library services in Wales during the Sixth Framework Period

By drawing together the evidence collected across the framework period, the research sought to provide a clearer understanding of developments within the sector and to contribute to the evidence base supporting future policy, planning, and service development.

1.2. Research questions

In consultation with the Welsh Government, a set of research questions was agreed. The aim of the research was to interrogate the available data and, as far as possible, provide answers to the following questions:

- To what extent have the results of the WPLS Core Entitlements changed over the Sixth Framework period?
- What barriers and enablers affected Library services' ability to meet the WPLS Core Entitlements?
- To what extent have the results of the WPLS Quality Indicators changed over the Sixth Framework period?
- How have Welsh Public Libraries contributed to goals of the Welsh Government's Wellbeing of Future Generations Act?
- To what extent has the expenditure on stock in library services changed over the WPLS Sixth Framework period?
- To what extent has the spend on Welsh Language resources changed over the Sixth Framework period?
- To what extent have there been changes in the resource allocation being spent on e-resources?
- To what extent have there been changes in library services issues during the WPLS Sixth Framework period?

- Have opening hours of library services changed over the WPLS Sixth Framework period?
- What changes in service points have happened over the WPLS Sixth Framework period?
- To what extent have there been changes in digital engagement over the WPLS Sixth Framework period?
- Have there been changes in services/activities targeting disadvantaged or minority groups or individuals?
- What can the WPLS Sixth Framework data tell us about the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on Welsh Library services?

2. Methodology

The following outlines the approach taken to data analysis.

2.1. Approach

The research took a desk-based analytical approach designed to make full and appropriate use of the existing Welsh Public Library Standards (WPLS) Sixth Framework dataset. Because the study was retrospective and the data had already been collected across an eight-year period, a structured analysis of this material provided the most proportionate and robust means of meeting the aims of the research. The approach is consistent with the principles of the [Green Book](#), [Magenta Book](#) and [AQuA Book](#), emphasising transparency, clear documentation, reproducibility and an evidence-driven rationale for analytical choices.

2.1.1. Data sources

The main source of data was in the form of Excel spreadsheets provided by the Welsh Government which were used to produce the WPLS returns for each of the eight years of the Sixth Framework (2017 to 2025). In addition, qualitative data from the publicly available WPLS reports was included.

2.1.2. Data consolidation

A significant early task involved preparing the dataset for analysis. The data from 2017 to 2025 were held across multiple spreadsheets, reflecting changes in indicators, definitions and reporting practices over the extended lifetime of the Sixth Framework. The data were consolidated into a single harmonised spreadsheet which allowed a robust assessment of where indicators could be compared across the full period; where only partial comparisons were possible; and where data are missing or inconsistent, for example, due to data migration issues with the Library Management System (LMS) Cymru in 2024 to 2025 and as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. This preparatory stage ensured that subsequent quantitative work was grounded in a clear understanding of the structure, strengths and limitations of the dataset.

A summary of the changes in the Core Entitlement and Quality Indicator data over the course of the Sixth Framework is provided in [Annex A](#). This describes the changes in definitions and availability of data, and reflects on the impact of these changes on data analysis.

2.1.3. Quantitative analysis

In relation to the quantitative data, the analysis used data available in the spreadsheets that were provided for each Quality Indicator. For Core Entitlements, the relevant data were extracted from individual published reports. The analysis is based on the final decision in the published reports (met, partially met, not met). In some cases, this may not correspond with local authority reported decisions.

Where figures were not explicitly provided for a particular measure in one or more years, but could be calculated using other available data, these values were derived and added to the

collated dataset. For example, book budget figures were calculated using the reported percentage materials expenditure and total revenue expenditure.

Where authorities reported figures to different levels of precision, values were rounded so that all authorities and all years were presented to the same number of decimal places for a given indicator.

When data were missing for a particular year, but values were available for the preceding and succeeding years, and where there were no substantial changes in the reported figures, the missing total value was estimated by taking the average of the two surrounding years. The corresponding per capita value was left as “not available”, as the analytical approach used for per capita data differs from that applied to total figures. Where per capita figures are used in this report, these refer to per 1,000 population, unless otherwise stated.

The quantitative analysis focuses on identifying trends across the period. Descriptive statistics were calculated to explore trends in median, mean, range and quartile data for each year to highlight changes in key areas such as issues, opening hours, service points, library activities, Welsh language provision, staffing, digital engagement and budgets. In addition, percentage trend analysis was used to track changes over time. This method calculates the annual percentage change in data and allows for standardised comparisons of trends between datasets. The first year of the Sixth Framework, 2017 to 2018, was used as the base year (100%) for comparison to subsequent years. For spend measures, this process includes a comparison to inflation trends using Consumer Prices Index (CPI) data.

The quantitative analysis also investigates whether there is evidence to support a hypothesis of correlations between particular indicators or data points, for example, between resource spend and issues. Pearson’s correlation coefficient is used to explore such correlations over the course of the Framework (with Spearman’s rank correlation coefficient being calculated as an addition check). In addition, potential differences between urban and rural library authorities are explored using Mann-Whitney U tests. A list of authorities classified as urban and rural according to [DataMapWales](#) is available in [Annex B](#). Student’s t-test was used to explore difference between pre- and post- COVID-19 data. Details of the results obtained from statistical tests can be found in [Annex C](#).

2.1.4. Qualitative analysis

This analysis draws on qualitative evidence submitted by local authorities including:

- case studies submitted between 2017 to 2018 and 2021 to 2022
- impact statements submitted from 2022 to 2023 onwards
- strategic statements describing how library services contribute to national and local policy priorities submitted from 2017 to 2018 onwards
- future direction statements outlining planned service developments submitted between 2017 to 2018 and 2019 to 2020 and between 2022 to 2023 and 2024 to 2025

Case studies and impact statements typically describe specific examples of activities, services or individual experiences. Strategic statements and future direction statements tend to provide higher level descriptions of service priorities, policy alignment and planned developments.

These submissions were produced by library authorities as part of the annual reporting process and were therefore self-selected by services. The format, length and level of detail vary between authorities and across reporting years. In addition, the reporting framework evolved during the period, with impact statements replacing case studies in later years.

As a result, the qualitative evidence should be interpreted as illustrative rather than comprehensive. The qualitative analysis presented in this report therefore focuses on identifying examples of activities, priorities and reported impacts rather than attempting to measure the overall scale or distribution of provision across Wales.

Several methodological considerations should be noted:

- the analysis describes self-reported activities, experiences and contributions rather than independently measured outcomes
- frequency of reference to a theme does not indicate the scale, reach or effectiveness of activity
- absence of reference to a theme, activity or group should not be interpreted as absence of provision
- differences between years may reflect changes in reporting practices, evolving policy priorities and external context

2.1.5. Additional data sources

Where similar data to that reported by Welsh library services are available from library services in other nations, this is referenced in a 'wider context' section. The inclusion of wider context sections is, naturally, dependent on data availability and it is not possible to include such information in relation to all WPLS measures. **It is important to note that it is not possible to make direct comparisons between data from Welsh libraries and those elsewhere as definitions, data collection periods and other factors vary from country to country.** It is beyond the scope of this research to reflect on the potential limitations of external datasets referenced in this section. However, these data may be helpful in providing a wider context to the trends observed in Wales.

3. Changes to Core Entitlements

The research sought to answer the question 'To what extent have the results of the WPLS Core Entitlements changed over the Sixth Framework period?'

Core Entitlements enable the public to know what they can expect from their public library service. Through the WPLS process, these entitlements are initially self-assessed by each authority before being moderated by independent assessor and Reference Group to ensure consistency. A list of the Core Entitlements at the start of the Framework and those included in the Addendum can be found in [Annex D](#). The results of the Core Entitlements discussed in this report are those moderated assessments that have been published in annual reports. It should be noted that, whilst criteria are provided for each Core Entitlement, determining whether a service has met, partially met or not met a Core Entitlement is, to an extent, subjective and based on the narrative commentary provided by services. The way in which services present data, and the detail provided in relation to Core Entitlements can vary.

Table 3.1 outlines the number of library services meeting each Core Entitlement in full over the course of the Sixth Framework.

Table 3.1: Library services meeting Core Entitlements in full (n=22)

Some shorthand is used in this table, [x] = not applicable.

	2017 to 2018	2018 to 2019	2019 to 2020	2020 to 2021	2021 to 2022	2022 to 2023	2023 to 2024	2024 to 2025
CE 1: Free & Open to All	22	22	22	22	22	22	22	22
CE 2: Knowledgeable & Qualified Staff	22	22	22	22	22	22	21	22
CE 3: Range of Services & Activities	22	22	22	22	22	22	22	22
CE 4: Services for Special Needs	22	22	22	22	21	22	22	22
CE 5: Safe, Accessible Spaces	21	22	22	22	21	22	20	18
CE 6: Free Lending & Access to Info	20	20	20	20	21	21	21	21
CE 7: Free Use of Internet & IT	20	21	21	21	21	22	22	21
CE 8: Welsh Language Provision	22	22	22	22	22	22	22	22
CE 9: Shared Catalogue & Resources	22	22	22	22	22	22	22	21
CE 10: Partnership to Deliver New Services	20	22	22	22	22	21	22	22
CE 11: User Consultation	21	21	17	19	18	17	18	19
CE 12: Access to Library Strategy	13	16	17	15	15	17	14	16
CE 13: Supporting Digital Skills	[x]	[x]	[x]	[x]	[x]	[x]	22	22

Source: WPLS Core Entitlements

The following is a summary of services' performance against the Core Entitlements throughout the Sixth Framework.

The following Core Entitlements were **met in full by all services** throughout all years of the Sixth Framework:

- Core Entitlement 1: Free & Open to All
- Core Entitlement 3: Range of Services & Activities
- Core Entitlement 8: Welsh Language Provision
- Core Entitlement 13: Supporting Digital Skills (2023 to 2025 only)

The following Core Entitlements were **met in full by at least 20 services** throughout all years of the Sixth Framework:

- Core Entitlement 2: Knowledgeable & Qualified Staff
- Core Entitlement 4: Services for Special Needs
- Core Entitlement 6: Free Lending & Access to Info
- Core Entitlement 7: Free Use of Internet & IT
- Core Entitlement 9: Shared Catalogue & Resources
- Core Entitlement 10: Partnership to Deliver New Services

There were some annual fluctuations in the numbers meeting each of these Core Entitlements. Where information was provided, these changes were due to local factors affecting individual services and there were no obvious patterns in the extent to which various Core Entitlements were met.

The following Core Entitlements were **met in full or part by all services** throughout all years of the Sixth Framework:

- Core Entitlement 1: Free & Open to All
- Core Entitlement 2: Knowledgeable & Qualified Staff
- Core Entitlement 3: Range of Services & Activities
- Core Entitlement 4: Services for Special Needs
- Core Entitlement 5: Safe, Accessible Spaces
- Core Entitlement 6: Free Lending & Access to Info
- Core Entitlement 8: Welsh Language Provision
- Core Entitlement 9: Shared Catalogue & Resources.

- Core Entitlement 10: Partnership to Deliver New Services.
- Core Entitlement 13: Supporting Digital Skills (2023 to 2025 only).

The majority of Core Entitlements were therefore met in full or in part by the majority of Welsh library services throughout the Sixth Framework. However, there were three Core Entitlements that were more challenging for some services.

Core Entitlement 5 (CE 5) - Safe, Accessible Spaces: Services performed well against this Core Entitlement for much of the Sixth Framework period, with all services meeting CE 5 in part, if not in full, throughout the Framework period. However, a decline in the number of services meeting CE 5 in full was noted during the Addendum period. In a few cases, reasons for not meeting CE 5 related to buildings maintenance, but the majority of those struggling to meet every element of this Core Entitlement found the requirement for “suitable staffed opening hours” increasingly challenging to meet in the face of staffing reductions.

Core Entitlement 11 (CE 11) – User Consultation: The number of services meeting this Core Entitlement in full was highest (21) at the start of the Framework period (2017 to 2018 and 2018 to 2019), but from 2019 to 2020 onwards it fluctuated between 17 and 19. The difficulty of conducting customer surveys during COVID-19 is understandable, but performance had not returned to pre-COVID-19 levels by the end of the Sixth Framework.

Core Entitlement 12 (CE 12) - Access to Library Strategy: The number of services meeting this Core Entitlement in full fluctuated between 13 and 17, making it the most challenging Core Entitlement across Welsh library services as a whole. However, it is noted that, by the end of the Framework period, the majority of services not meeting CE 12 in full at least did so in part (e.g. by providing evidence of having a strategy but not making the document available on their website). The number of services meeting CE 12 is likely partly influenced by local planning cycles, which can mean that services have a gap between the end of one strategy and the introduction of the next.

4. Barriers and enablers to meeting Core Entitlements

The research sought to answer the question ‘What barriers and enablers affected library services’ ability to meet the WPLS Core Entitlements?’

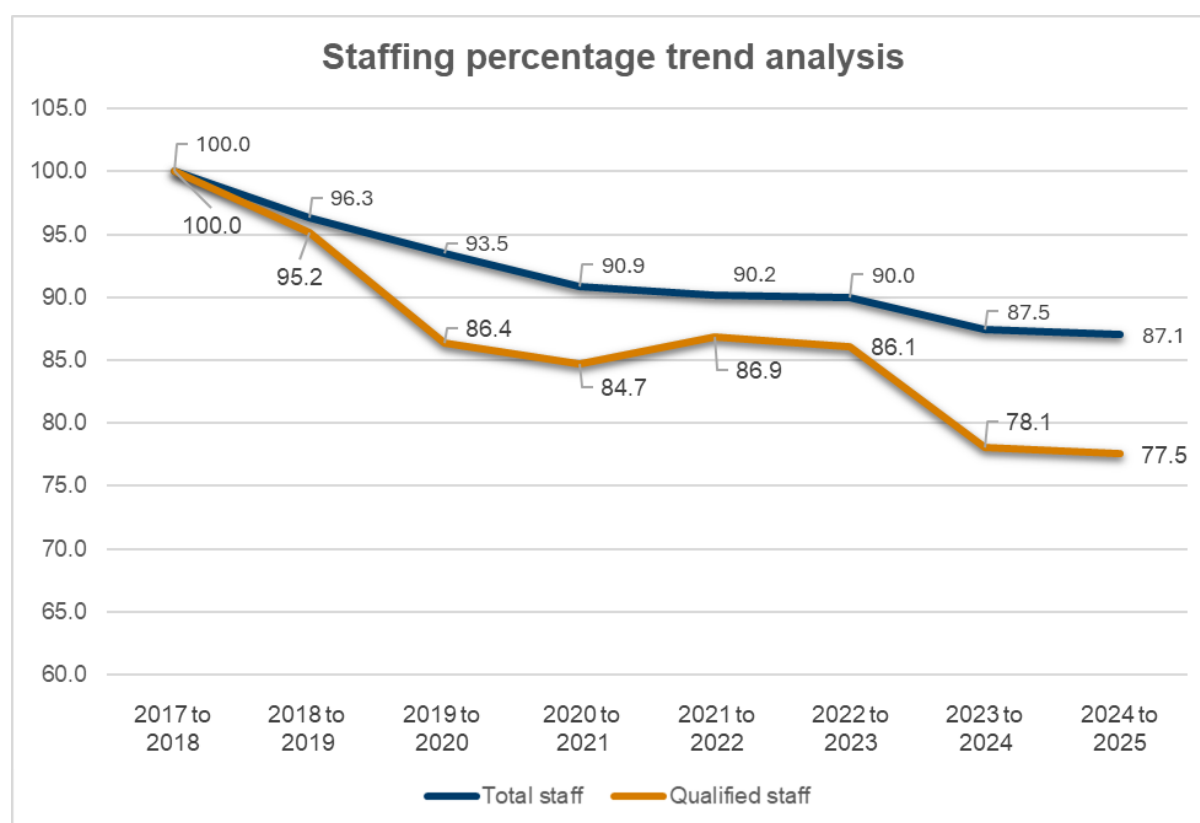
Whilst local factors may have an impact on the ability of individual authorities to meet the WPLS Core Entitlements, there are also some fundamental barriers and enablers that affect a service’s ability to deliver statutory public library provision.

4.1. Staffing

The Sixth Framework has seen notable changes in library staffing which impact on services’ ability to meet the Core Entitlements. Over the course of the Framework, an increasing number of services faced challenges meeting CE 5, a key component of which is adequate staffing.

Data related to staffing is provided, primarily, through QI 13. This shows that total library staff numbers decreased during the Sixth Framework. Nationally, the number of posts fell from 897.9 FTE to 781.7 FTE, a reduction of 116.2 posts or 12.9% (Fig 4.1).

Figure 4.1: Percentage trend analysis of staffing numbers



Description of Figure 4.1: A line graph comprising of two coloured lines which show the percentage trend analysis of staffing numbers. Line one displays the total staff percentage from the reporting period 2017 to 2018 until 2024 to 2025. Line two displays the qualified staff percentage from the reporting period 2017 to 2018 until 2024 to 2025.

Source: WPLSQI 13

The median number of staff per 10,000 population reported by individual library authorities decreased gradually over the course of the Framework. In addition, across the nation as a whole, the number of staff per 10,000 population decreased every year except in 2022 to 2023, which saw a small increase before declining again the following year (Table 4.1).

The range of staffing rates per 10,000 population figures reduced over the Sixth Framework. There was also no evidence of a significant difference in staffing rates in rural and urban authorities. As might be expected, there was a strong positive correlation between total staff numbers and total opening hours (Pearson's r ranged between 0.863 and 0.959, $p < 0.01$). In addition, there was evidence of a strong to very strong positive correlation between total staff and event attendance (Pearson's r ranged between 0.763 to 0.933, $p < 0.01$). There was also a moderate to strong positive correlation between total issues and total staff numbers (Pearson's r ranged between 0.611 to 0.811, $p < 0.01$).

Table 4.1: Per capita staffing

	2017 to 2018	2018 to 2019	2019 to 2020	2020 to 2021	2021 to 2022	2022 to 2023	2023 to 2024	2024 to 2025
High	4.37	4.36	4.34	4.28	4.28	4.39	3.60	3.29
Median	2.62	2.54	2.48	2.36	2.34	2.49	2.38	2.38
Low	1.66	1.64	1.54	1.53	1.44	1.39	1.26	1.31
Range	2.71	2.72	2.80	2.75	2.84	3.0	2.34	1.98
Lower quartile	2.26	2.22	2.26	2.02	2.03	2.38	2.08	1.97
Upper quartile	3.05	2.94	2.63	2.60	2.68	2.71	2.71	2.72
Interquartile range	0.79	0.72	0.37	0.58	0.65	0.33	0.63	0.75
National per capita	2.88	2.77	2.67	2.58	2.56	2.60	2.51	2.47

Source: WPLSQI 13

Staff training provision was maintained throughout the Framework. The median percentage of staff hours devoted to training was fairly stable for most of the period at between 1.6% and 2%, but it increased to 5% in 2024 to 2025 with the introduction of the LMS Cymru.

4.1.1. Qualified staff

Whilst total staff numbers will impact on an authority's ability to deliver core services, aspects of the Core Entitlements where a number of services struggle, namely strategic direction and co-ordinating customer feedback, are areas where qualified staff are particularly important.

Qualified staff numbers across Wales decreased throughout the Sixth Framework, although the trend was not a linear one. Qualified staff numbers were declining pre-COVID-19 and fell rapidly in 2019 to 2020, but then recovered slightly towards the end of the pandemic, before declining once more during the Addendum period. Nevertheless, the overall pattern is downward trend. Nationally, the number of qualified posts fell from 159.0 FTE to 123.3

FTE, a reduction of 35.7 posts or 22.5% There was no evidence of a statistically significant difference in qualified staffing rates in rural and urban authorities.

The interquartile range for qualified staff reduced throughout the Sixth Framework as the number of qualified staff per 10,000 population become more consistent across much of the country, with the exception of a small number of outlier authorities with notably higher rates of qualified staff (Table 4.2).

Table 4.2: Per capita qualified staff

	2017 to 2018	2018 to 2019	2019 to 2020	2020 to 2021	2021 to 2022	2022 to 2023	2023 to 2024	2024 to 2025
High	0.90	0.86	0.76	0.75	1.02	0.75	0.88	1.1
Median	0.55	0.55	0.48	0.44	0.47	0.47	0.42	0.33
Low	0.26	0.14	0.14	0.14	0.14	0.10	0.09	0.04
Range	0.64	0.72	0.62	0.61	0.88	0.65	0.79	1.06
Lower quartile	0.35	0.35	0.30	0.31	0.28	0.31	0.30	0.27
Upper quartile	0.70	0.66	0.58	0.56	0.55	0.58	0.51	0.44
Interquartile range	0.35	0.31	0.28	0.25	0.27	0.27	0.21	0.17
National per capita	0.51	0.48	0.44	0.42	0.44	0.44	0.40	0.39

Source: WPLSQI 13

Considering qualified staff as a percentage of total library staff, the median percentage stayed relatively stable at around 20% throughout most of the Sixth Framework period. However, the percentage of qualified staff in the workforce declined during the Addendum period to a median of between 16.3% and 18.0%.

Table 4.3: Qualified staff as a percentage of total staff

	2017 to 2018	2018 to 2019	2019 to 2020	2020 to 2021	2021 to 2022	2022 to 2023	2023 to 2024	2024 to 2025
High	40.0%	36.3%	33.6%	33.6%	44.8%	37.6%	36.1%	41.0%
Median	20.5%	20.6%	19.1%	20.6%	19.9%	20.4%	18.0%	16.3%
Low	7.0%	3.8%	3.8%	3.5%	3.5%	2.2%	2.6%	2.8%
Range	33.0%	32.5%	29.8%	30.1%	41.3%	35.4%	33.5%	38.2%
Lower quartile	16.1%	14.4%	14.4%	15.6%	16.5%	15.5%	12.8%	13.0%
Upper quartile	25.6%	26.2%	22.7%	23.6%	23.0%	27.7%	21.1%	21.5%
Interquartile range	9.5%	11.8%	8.3%	8.0%	6.5%	12.2%	8.3%	8.5%
National per capita	17.7%	17.5%	16.4%	16.5%	17.1%	16.9%	15.8%	15.8%

Source: WPLSQI 13

4.1.2. Volunteers

The number of volunteer hours reported varied considerably across the country. Some authorities do not use any volunteers. However, in other services volunteer time accounts for a not inconsiderable proportion of total hours worked. Volunteer hours accounted for around 3% of hours worked nationally pre-pandemic. Volunteer numbers were not collected during COVID-19 and took a little time to recover post-pandemic. However, by the end of the Sixth Framework, volunteer hours accounted for 5.3% of hours worked nationally.

There is some evidence of a moderate negative correlation between volunteer hours and staffing numbers across the Sixth Framework (Pearson's $r=-0.464$, $p<0.05$). This suggests that as staffing numbers fall, volunteer hours may rise. If services are relying more heavily on volunteers to deliver services, in the absence of paid staff, this presents a barrier to the successful delivery of statutory library provision. As [CILIP's policy statement](#) on the use of volunteers in public libraries states, if paid roles are directly replaced by volunteers, "...services will suffer and will be unsustainable. What remains would be a library service unable to serve the community comprehensively, support people's information needs or provide everyone with the opportunity for learning and development".

4.2. Service points and opening hours

The provision of service points, and the opening hours of those service points, are key factors in ensuring library services meet the Core Entitlements, in particular CE 5, which is one of the more challenging Core Entitlements for some services. Data relating to service point provision and opening hours are provided by QI 7 and QI 16 respectively.

Changes in service points are described in greater detail in Section 12. In summary, the provision of service points has witnessed a downward trend nationally during the Sixth Framework. Only 5 services did not report a reduction in static and/or mobile service points

between 2018 to 2019 and 2024 to 2025. Across Wales, there were 8 fewer static service points and 20 fewer mobiles in 2024 to 2025 compared to 2018 to 2019.

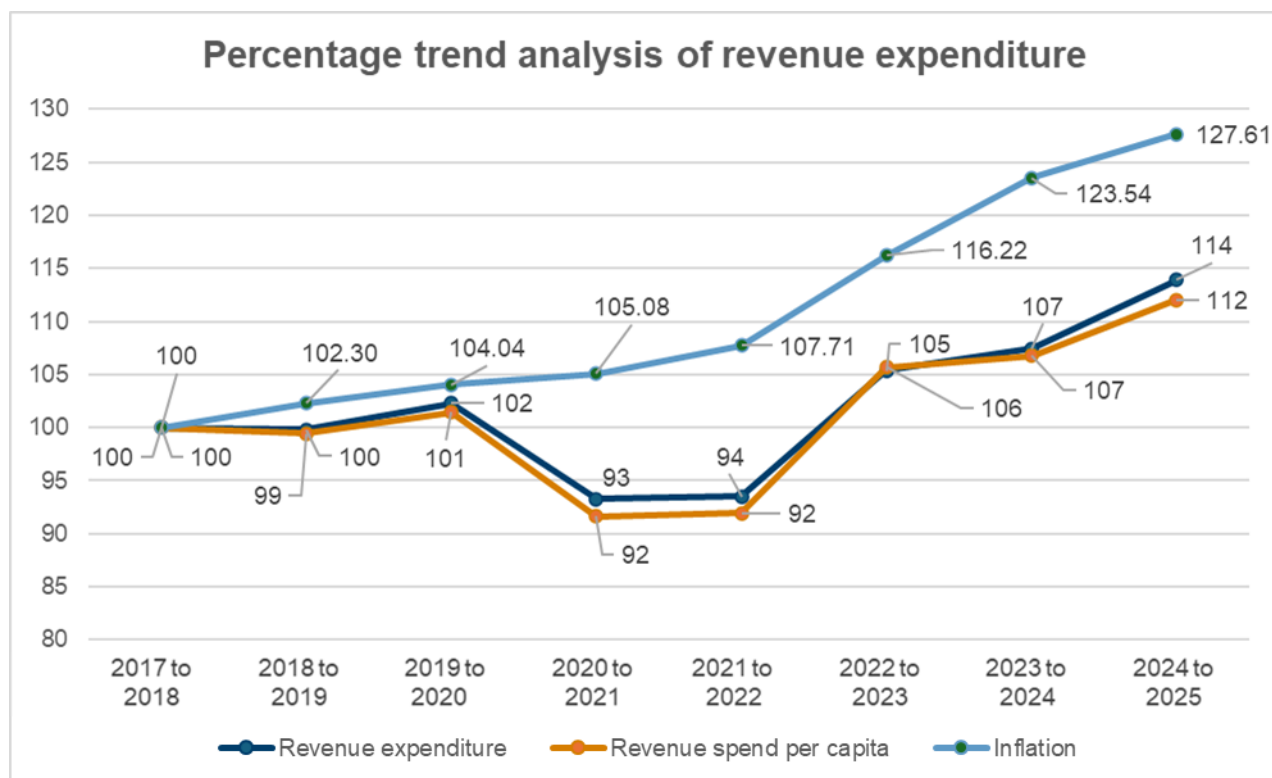
Changes in opening hours are described in greater detail in Section 11. To summarise, opening hours have declined over the course of the Sixth Framework, falling steadily either side of the pandemic period. On average, services saw opening hours reduced by around 10%. However, the pattern varied across the country and around one quarter of services reported an increase in staffed opening hours per capita. Whilst unstaffed hours rose over the course of the Sixth Framework, these still formed a small part of the total library opening hours.

4.3. Financial resources

Library service financial resourcing is necessary for the provision of staffing, service points and information resources. Changes in resourcing are described in greater detail in Sections 7, 8 and 9. Information about resourcing is provided via QI 9, QI 10 and QI 14.

Figure 4.2 shows changes in revenue expenditure over the course of the Sixth Framework as a percentage trend analysis. Revenue expenditure rose slightly nationally pre-COVID-19, although at a rate below inflation. Revenue expenditure then decreased during COVID-19 before starting to rise again from 2022 to 2023 onwards. Total revenue spend increased by 14% over the Framework period. However, this is reduced to a 12% per capita increase when changing population figures are taken into account. Furthermore, when [inflation](#) is taken into account, total revenue spend is considerably lower in real terms than it was at the start of the Framework. Only three Welsh library services saw revenue expenditure per capita increase by more than the rate of inflation (i.e. increase in real terms) over the course of the Sixth Framework.

Figure 4.2: Percentage trend analysis of revenue expenditure



Description of Figure 4.2: A line graph comprising of three coloured lines which show the percentage trend analysis of revenue expenditure. Line one displays the revenue expenditure from the reporting period 2017 to 2018 until 2024 to 2025. Line two displays the revenue spend per capita from the reporting period 2017 to 2018 until 2024 to 2025. Line three displays inflation from the reporting period 2017 to 2018 until 2024 to 2025.

Source: WPLSQI 14

The median and mean national revenue expenditure per capita both fluctuated pre-COVID-19, but fell in 2020 to 2021. There was a small increase from this low point in 2021 to 2022, followed by larger increases during the remainder of the Framework. However, in all years, the mean national revenue spend per capita was higher than the median local authority, and this gap increased in the post-COVID-19 period. This pattern can be explained by the fact that Cardiff is outlier compared to the remainder of Welsh library authorities in terms of revenue spend and this results in a larger national mean figure.

Table 4.4: Per capita total revenue expenditure

	2017 to 2018	2018 to 2019	2019 to 2020	2020 to 2021	2021 to 2022	2022 to 2023	2023 to 2024	2024 to 2025
High	£17,771	£19,449	£23,333	£19,526	£20,184	£27,330	£24,685	£26,209
Median	£11,915	£12,146	£11,470	£10,064	£10,323	£11,476	£12,023	£12,646
Low	£7,047	£7,181	£7,260	£6,501	£7,052	£6,726	£6,046	£5,978
Range	£10,724	£12,268	£16,073	£13,025	£13,132	£20,604	£18,640	£20,232
Lower quartile	£10,004	£9,715	£9,311	£8,412	£8,509	£9,043	£9,598	£10,271
Upper quartile	£15,068	£14,440	£14,811	£12,494	£13,419	£15,237	£15,419	£15,448
Interquartile range	£5,064	£4,725	£5,500	£4,082	£4,910	£6,194	£5,821	£5,177
National per capita	£12,932	£12,862	£13,123	£11,851	£11,889	£13,663	£13,810	£14,492

Source: WPLSQI 14

4.4. Summary

The basic requirements of a statutory library service, namely, staff, service points and financial resources are necessary for authorities to meet the WPLS Core Entitlements. These requirements are interlinked, for example, more staff are required to offer longer opening hours, and financial resources are necessary to provide staff, service points and information resources. Pressure on each of these components makes it increasingly challenging for Welsh library services to perform against some of the Core Entitlements.

Figure 4.3: Wider context for staffing and expenditure

Staffing: Libraries in Scotland	1. Lost around 612 fulltime equivalent (FTE) staff between 2012 to 2013 and 2022 to 2023 (CILIPS, nd)
Staffing: Libraries in Great Britain	1. Between 2018 to 2019 and 2019 2020, the total number of paid staff in libraries in Great Britain declined by 2.4% according to CIPFA (2020) 2. However, in 2020 to 2021, 2021 to 2022, 2022 to 2023, CIPFA reported that staff levels remained relatively steady (CIPFA 2022, CIPFA 2023a, CIPFA 2023b)
Expenditure: Libraries in Great Britain	1. According to CIPFA's annual library survey, 2018 to 2019, total expenditure on libraries in Great Britain stood at £12,646 per 1,000 people. Between 2018 to 2019 and 2021 to 2022, this figure fell each year 2. However, in 2022 to 2023, total expenditure on libraries in Great Britain rose 3% to £12,551 per 1,000 people. Nevertheless, this remained 0.75% below the 2018 to 2019 per capita figure (CIPFA 2020, CIPFA 2023b)

Description of Figure 4.3: A chart highlighting wider context with three coloured sections. Section one explains that Scottish public libraries lost around 612 fulltime equivalent (FTE) staff between 2012 to 2013 and 2022 to 2023 (CILIPS, nd). Section two explains that between 2018 to 2019 and 2019 2020, the total number of paid staff in libraries in Great Britain declined by 2.4% according to CIPFA (2020). However, in 2020 to 2021, 2021 to 2022, 2022 to 2023, CIPFA reported that staff levels remained relatively steady (CIPFA 2022, CIPFA 2023a, CIPFA 2023b). Section three explains that according to CIPFA's annual library survey, 2018 to 2019, total expenditure on libraries in Great Britain stood at £12,646 per 1,000 people. Between 2018 to 2019 and 2021 to 2022, this figure fell each year. However, in 2022 to 2023, total expenditure on libraries in Great Britain rose 3% to £12,551 per 1,000 people. Nevertheless, this remained 0.75% below the 2018 to 2019 per capita figure (CPIFA 2020, CIPFA 2023b).

Source: [CILIPS, nd](#), [CIPFA 2020](#), [CIPFA 2022](#), [CIPFA 2023a](#) and [CIPFA 2023b](#).

5. Changes in the results of the WPLS Quality Indicators

The research sought to answer the question: 'To what extent have the results of the WPLS Quality Indicators changed over the Sixth Framework period?'

There are two types of Quality Indicators (QIs) within the Sixth Framework, those provided for monitoring and benchmarking, and those with specific targets. Ten of the 16 QIs have targets, although data were not collected for every target each year due to COVID-19 restrictions and changes to the Framework during the Addendum period (See [Annex A](#)). This chapter reports on the results of QIs with targets only; other QIs are discussed in elsewhere in this report.

5.1. QI 3: Support for individual development

QI 3 target data were collected in four years: 2017 to 2018, 2018 to 2019, 2019 to 2020 and 2022 to 2023. In the Addendum to the Sixth Framework, QI 3 was replaced by CE13.

Table 5.1: Number of services meeting QI 3 targets (n=22)

	2017 to 2018	2018 to 2019	2019 to 2020	2022 to 2023
a) Basic support for use of ICT	21	21	21	21
b) Digital literacy / skills training	20	21	22	19
c) Support to access e-govt resources	22	22	22	21
d) Reader development programmes	22	22	22	20
Meeting target in full	19	20	21	19
Meeting target in part	3	2	1	3

Source: WPLSQI 3

Overall, Welsh library services performed well in relation to QI 3, with target measures being met by between 19 and 22 services each year. There had been a gradual improvement in the number of services meeting this target in full prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, but in 2022 to 2023, results returned to their 2017 to 2018 level. Basic IT support, reader development and e-government support targets were met by at least 20 services in each year for which these measures were collected. With the exception of basic IT support, performance was slightly lower in 2022 to 2023 than it had been pre-COVID-19 likely due in part to some services taking longer to recover from pandemic restrictions. The digital literacy/skills training target was more challenging for some services to meet post-COVID-19, but it is worth noting that this could involve partnership working with other organisations which could take time to re-establish.

Where services struggled to meet one or more target, it was usually due to issues in one branch within the service. However, in a small number of cases, there were more widespread challenges that affected a larger proportion of service points within an authority.

5.2. QI 4: Support for health and wellbeing

QI 4 target data were collected in all years except 2020 to 2021 and 2021 to 2022. However, during the Addendum period, there was a minor change to reflect the move from [Books on Prescription Wales](#) and [Better with Books](#) to the [Reading Well scheme](#).

Table 5.2: Number of services meeting QI 4 targets (n=22)

Some shorthand is used in this table, [x] = not applicable.

	2017 to 2018	2018 to 2019	2019 to 2020	2022 to 2023	2023 to 2024	2024 to 2025
ai) Book Prescription Wales	22	22	22	21	[x]	[x]
a ii) Better with Books	22	22	22	19	[x]	[x]
ai) Reading Well	[x]	[x]	[x]	[x]	22	22
aiii) Health / wellbeing collection	22	22	22	21	22	22
aiv) Healthy lifestyle info	22	22	22	21	22	22
av) Health / wellbeing services	22	22	22	21	22	22
Meeting target in full	22	22	22	19	22	22
Meeting target in part	[x]	[x]	[x]	3	[x]	[x]

Source: WPLSQI 4

Welsh library services performed extremely well against QI 4 throughout the Framework. Targets were met by all services every year except for 2022 to 2023. The dip in this year could be related to the transition from Books on Prescription/Better with Books to Reading Well, as well as local issues affecting a particular branch within a service meaning there was not 100% coverage.

5.3. QI 6: User attendance at library events

QI 6 target data were collected in 2017 to 2018 and 2018 to 2019. As there were few library events during the COVID-19 pandemic, data collection resumed from 2022 to 2023 onwards.

Table 5.3: Number of services meeting QI 6 target (n=22)

	2017 to 2018	2018 to 2019	2022 to 2023	2023 to 2024	2024 to 2025
b) Events special requirements	19	19	17	21	22

Source: WPLSQI 6

The number of services meeting the QI 6 target rose during the Sixth Framework. Whilst the majority of services met this target throughout the period, there was a notable improvement during the Addendum period, and all services were meeting the target by the end of the Sixth Framework.

5.4. QI 7: Location of service points

QI 7 data were collected throughout the Sixth Framework. However, not all services were able to submit this information every year as some did not have access to software to perform the calculation. In the final year of the Framework, the Welsh Government performed the calculation centrally. It should therefore be noted that the methods used to calculate this measure may vary between authorities and over time.

Table 5.4: Number of services meeting QI 7 target (n=22)

	2017 to 2018	2018 to 2019	2019 to 2020	2020 to 2021	2021 to 2022	2022 to 2023	2023 to 2024	2024 to 2025
Meeting target	22	22	21	21	20	17	18	19
Not meeting target	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	3
Missing data	0	0	0	0	1	4	3	0

Source: WPLSQI 7

The number of library services meeting the QI 7 target declined during the Sixth Framework. The data suggest that it became increasingly difficult for some services to meet this target, especially those serving more rural areas, as 3 out of the 9 authorities falling within the lowest population density category did not meet the target in 2024 to 2025.

5.5. QI 9: Up-to-date and appropriate reading material

QI 9 target data were collected every year except 2024 to 2025, when the introduction of the LMS Cymru meant acquisitions figures were not available for the whole year. Under the original Sixth Framework, services could meet this target based on either the number of items acquired or resource spend per capita. These targets were based on the WPLS Fifth Framework acquisitions targets, which drew on the median for Welsh library services for 2013 to 2014. During the Addendum period, only the acquisitions rate was collected and

this target varied depending on population density. For the Addendum, acquisitions targets were based on the [IFLA Public Library Service Guidelines \(2nd edition\)](#).

Table 5.5: Number of services meeting QI 9 target (n=22)

Some shorthand is used in this table, [x] = not applicable.

	2017 to 2018	2018 to 2019	2019 to 2020	2020 to 2021	2021 to 2022	2022 to 2023	2023 to 2024
Meeting item target	9	5	5	4	6	12	10
Meeting £ target	3	1	1	1	2	3	[x]
Overall meeting target	9	5	5	4	6	12	10

Source: WPLSQI 9

QI 9 was one of the more challenging targets for Welsh library services during the Sixth Framework. The number of services meeting the target fluctuated over the course of the Framework, but slightly more services met the target towards end of period (albeit with a change to the target in 2023 to 2024). Numbers meeting QI 9 were lowest during the pandemic. Around half of Welsh library services met this target in the post-COVID-19 period. In years when both item and spend measures were collected, more services met the target based on number of items than based on spend.

5.6. QI 10: Welsh language resources

QI 10 target data were collected every year except 2024 to 2025, when the introduction of the LMS Cymru meant acquisitions figures were not available for the whole year. Under the original Sixth Framework, services could meet this target based on either percentage of the material budget or resource spend per capita Welsh speaker. During the Addendum period, only the percentage of the material budget was collected.

Table 5.6: Number of services meeting QI 10 target (n=22)

Some shorthand is used in this table, [x] = not applicable.

	2017 to 2018	2018 to 2019	2019 to 2020	2020 to 2021	2021 to 2022	2022 to 2023	2023 to 2024
Meeting budget % target	14	17	18	16	16	19	19
Meeting £ target	6	6	5	2	5	7	[x]
Overall meeting target	16	17	18	16	16	19	19

Source: WPLSQI 10

The number of authorities meeting the QI10 target was highest in the post-COVID-19 period. In years when both percentage and spend measures were collected, more services met the target based on percentage of the budget than based on spend per capita.

5.7. QI 11: Online access

QI 11 target data were collected in four years: 2017 to 2018, 2018 to 2019, 2019 to 2020 and 2022 to 2023. In the Addendum to the Sixth Framework, QI 11 was included in CE 7 as it was considered an essential element that all libraries should provide.

Table 5.7: Number of services meeting QI 11 targets (n=22)

	2017 to 2018	2018 to 2019	2019 to 2020	2022 to 2023
ai) Devices with public access to internet	22	22	21	22
a ii) WiFi access for users	20	21	21	22
Meeting target in full	20	21	20	22
Meeting target in part	2	0	2	0
Missing data	0	1	0	0

Source: WPLSQI 11

Welsh library services performed well with regard to QI 11 targets. Performance improved over the course of the Framework for WiFi access and at the end of the period for which data were collected, all services were meeting QI 11 in full.

5.8. QI 12: Supply of requests

QI 12 target data were collected in four years: 2017 to 2018, 2018 to 2019, 2019 to 2020 and 2022 to 2023. QI 12 was not included in the Addendum to the Sixth Framework.

Table 5.8: Number of services meeting QI 12 targets (n=22)

	2017 to 2018	2018 to 2019	2019 to 2020	2022 to 2023
a) Min 64% requests available within 7 calendar days	19	21	16	10
b) Min 79% requests available within 15 calendar days	17	19	16	14
Meeting target in full	17	17	16	8
Meeting target in part	2	4	0	8

Source: WPLSQI 12

The number of library services meeting the QI 12 targets decreased dramatically when data collection resumed post-COVID-19. There had been a small drop in 2019 to 2020, but in 2022 to 2023, only 8 services were meeting this target in full. This may have been impacted to some extent by COVID-19-related changes to practice.

5.9. QI 13: Staffing levels and qualifications

QI 13 data were collected throughout the Sixth Framework. However, data on training hours were not collected between 2019 to 2020 and 2021 to 2022 due to COVID-19 restrictions. In addition, the target for training hours was increased in the Addendum from 1% of aggregate staff working hours to 2%.

Table 5.9: Number of services meeting QI 13 targets (n=22)

Some shorthand is used in this table, [x] = not applicable.

	2017 to 2018	2018 to 2019	2019 to 2020	2020 to 2021	2021 to 2022	2022 to 2023	2023 to 2024	2024 to 2025
i) Total staff	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	0
ii) Qualified staff	7	6	4	4	4	3	2	3
iii) Op manager qualified?	21	21	21	21	20	20	20	20
iv) Training hours	22	22	[x]	[x]	[x]	15	11	20
Meeting target in full	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Meeting target in part	22	22	21	21	20	21	21	22
Missing data	[x]	[x]	[x]	[x]	[x]	[x]	2	2

Source: WPLSQI 13

This was the most challenging QI for Welsh library services. No service met QI 13 in full during the Sixth Framework, although most services met the target in part throughout the period. In 2017 to 2018, 2018 to 2019 and 2024 to 2025, all services met QI 13 in part. In other years, a small number of services failed to meet the target (either in full or in part) or did not provide data. Services performed best in relation to the operational manager qualification measure. A number struggled to meet the training hours requirement in the immediate post-COVID-19 period, but all those providing data did so in 2024 to 2025, partly as a result of training necessary in relation to the introduction of the LMS Cymru. The number of services meeting the qualified staffing target declined from 7 to 3 over the Sixth Framework. The numbers meeting the total staffing target has been consistently very low and by the end of the Framework, no services met it.

5.10. QI 16: Opening hours

QI 16 target data were collected in all years except 2020 to 2021 and 2021 to 2022 when library opening hours were affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Table 5.10: Number of services meeting QI 16 target (n=22)

	2017 to 2018	2018 to 2019	2019 to 2020	2022 to 2023	2023 to 2024	2024 to 2025
Meeting target	16	15	15	13	13	11
Not meeting target	6	7	7	8	9	11
Missing data	0	0	0	1	0	0

Source: WPLSQI 16

Meeting QI 16 became increasingly challenging for Welsh library services over the course of the Sixth Framework. The number of services meeting the opening hours target gradually declined over the period. At the end of the Framework, only half of library services were meeting the target.

5.11. Summary

Overall, the QI targets against which Welsh library services have performed best over the Sixth Framework are QI 3, QI 4, QI 6 and QI 11. Conversely, targets that have proved most challenging are QI 9 and QI 13. It is also worth noting some targets were increasingly challenging for some services to meet towards the end of the Framework period, specifically QI 7 and QI 16.

6. Contribution of Welsh Public Libraries to the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015

The research sought to answer the question ‘How have Welsh Public Libraries contributed to goals of the Welsh Government’s Wellbeing of Future Generations Act?’ Whilst the Welsh Public Library Standards are designed to be professional performance measures, it is possible to use the data to show how public libraries contribute to various Welsh Government policies and legislation. The key strategic framework that was operating during the Sixth Framework period was The Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.

6.1. The Wellbeing of Future Generations Act overview

The [Wellbeing of Future Generations \(Wales\) Act 2015](#) sets out the following seven national goals for Wales: A Prosperous Wales; A Resilient Wales; A Healthier Wales; A More Equal Wales; A Wales of Cohesive Communities; A Wales of Vibrant Culture and Thriving Welsh Language; and A Globally Responsible Wales.

In exploring how libraries contribute to the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act, the following sources of evidence are used:

- Core Entitlement and Quality Indicator data as described below
- case studies between 2017 to 2018 and 2021 to 2022 and impact statements from 2022 to 2023 onwards submitted by library authorities as part of annual reporting
- strategic statements between 2017 to 2018 and 2019 to 2020 and between 2022 to 2023 and 2024 to 2025 in which library services described how their work aligns with national and local policy priorities.

It is worth noting that, across the eight-year data set, the case studies and impact statements most frequently align with:

- a Healthier Wales
- a Wales of Cohesive Communities
- a More Equal Wales
- a Prosperous Wales

The strategic statements reinforce this pattern. Across multiple years, library services explicitly describe their work as contributing particularly to:

- community wellbeing and mental health
- literacy, learning and skills development
- digital inclusion and access to services
- community cohesion and social connection

Some strategic statements also highlight contributions to environmental sustainability initiatives and resource sharing, although these themes appear less frequently than the social and wellbeing goals.

6.2. Contribution to the Seven National Goals

The following sections outline ways in which Welsh Public Libraries contributed to the seven goals in the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015. The examples provided are not exhaustive but illustrate some ways in which Welsh libraries have contributed to the Act during the Sixth Framework.

6.2.1. A Prosperous Wales

Welsh libraries contribute to the goal of a prosperous Wales in a variety of ways, including by supporting learning and skills development; the efficient use of resources; and via employment opportunities.

Core Entitlements. CE 3 (Range of Services & Activities) and CE 13 (Supporting Digital Skills - 2023 to 2025 only) were met in full by all Welsh library services throughout the Sixth Framework. CE 2 (Knowledgeable & Qualified Staff) and CE 5 (Safe, Accessible Spaces) were met in full or part by all services in all years. CE 7 (Free Use of Internet & IT) was met in full by at least 20 services throughout the Sixth Framework.

Quality Indicators. Across the Sixth Framework, an average 1 in 20 of the population of Wales attended formal training sessions organised or hosted by a library service annually. The median proportion of attendees who said attendance had helped them to achieve their purpose in attending ranged between 75% and 86% (QI 5).

Amongst adults responding to customer surveys, a median of between 70% (2022 to 2025) and 82% (2017 to 2020) said that using the library had helped them to develop new skills (QI 1). In all years in which data were collected, 21 services offered basic support in the use of IT infrastructure in all static service points open 10 hours per week or more. Between 19 and 22 services offered training to support literacy, numeracy, information and digital skills (QI 3).

Throughout the Framework, the majority of library services met the target for the percentage of the population living within the specified distance of a service point, with between 17 and 22 services meeting this target annually (QI 7). This ensures that people can access resources and training opportunities close to home.

Regarding employment opportunities, an average of 825.4 staff were employed in Welsh library services during the Sixth Framework period. This included an average of 138.1 qualified staff (QI 13). The median proportion of revenue expenditure allocated to staffing ranged between 10% and 14% (QI 15).

During the Sixth Framework, an average of 1 in 9 of the Welsh population were library borrowers, thus accessing books and other resources in a more sustainable way (QI 8). The median per capita book budget ranged between £1,086 and £1,549 (QI 9). Where library services did not have materials immediately available, the median percentage of requests

available within 7 days ranged between 61.5% and 72.5%, and the median percentage of requests available within 15 days ranged between 81% and 86.5% (QI 12).

Qualitative data. The case studies and impact statements provide a wide range of examples of how Welsh libraries have contributed to this goal. This includes: provision of training to contribute to skills development including numeracy, digital skills and literacy, coding clubs and makerspaces; enhancing employability through providing assistance with CV creation and job searches; and participating in partnerships to support adult learning.

Strategic statements similarly highlight the role of libraries in supporting lifelong learning, employability and digital skills, often in partnership with adult learning providers, employment services and community organisations.

6.2.2. A Resilient Wales

Welsh libraries contribute to the goal of a resilient Wales through support for health and wellbeing; access to resources including the Internet; and consultation with users.

Core Entitlements. CE 3 (Range of Services & Activities) was met in full by all services throughout the Sixth Framework. CE 7 (Free Use of Internet & IT) was met in full by at least 20 services in all years. At least 17 services met CE 11 (User Consultation) throughout the Framework period.

Quality Indicators. At least 21 services had a designated health and wellbeing collection; signposting to health and wellbeing services; and healthy lifestyles/behaviours information in all static services points open for 10 hours a week or more throughout the Sixth Framework period (QI 4).

To provide access to information to support resilience, an average of £1,458 per capita was allocated to information resources across the Sixth Framework (QI 14). The median number of devices providing access to the internet within a library service ranged between 88.5 and 114 annually. This equates to between 8.73 and 9.56 devices per 10,000 population (QI 11).

Qualitative data. The case studies and impact statements provide some examples of how Welsh libraries have contributed to this goal. This includes initiatives to promote reuse of materials and environmental responsibility such as repair café partnerships and recycling initiatives. The provision of reading groups and support for groups advocating wellbeing and early years support, such as children's Rhyme Times, also contribute to the resilience goal.

Strategic statements occasionally reiterate these themes, describing participation in environmental initiatives such as circular-economy projects, electric vehicle library services and sustainability partnerships.

6.2.3. A Healthier Wales

Welsh libraries contribute to the goal of a healthier Wales by supporting a society in which people's physical and mental wellbeing is maximised and in which choices and behaviours that benefit future health are understood.

Core Entitlements. CE 3 (Range of Services & Activities) was met in full by all services throughout the Sixth Framework. CE 4 (Services for Special Needs) was met in full or part by all services in all years.

Quality Indicators. Amongst adults responding to customer surveys, a median of between 63% (2022 to 2025) and 70% (2017 to 2020) said that they had found helpful information for health and wellbeing at the library (QI 1). Books on Prescription Wales, Better with Books and/or Reading Well schemes were available in all static service points open for 10 hours a week or more in between 20 and 22 library services throughout the Sixth Framework. The median percentage of static service points open 10 hours a week or more offering Storytimes/ Baby Rhyme Times was 100% (Addendum only). The median offering health information partnerships ranged between 89.5% and 100% (QI 4).

Throughout the Framework period, between 17 and 22 services offered events and activities for groups or individuals who have special requirements in all static service points open for 10 hours a week or more (QI 6).

Qualitative data. The case studies and impact statements provide many examples of how Welsh libraries have contributed to this goal. This includes: activities to help reduce loneliness and social isolation such as reading groups, reminiscence sessions, Knit and Natter groups and delivering books to people who cannot make it to a library; supporting mental and physical health through the provision of resources, events and activities such as drop in sessions for people with dementia and their carers; and offering calm, trusted spaces during times of stress or transition. Across all years, libraries are presented as preventative and supportive environments contributing to both individual and community health.

Strategic statements reinforce this picture by highlighting partnerships with health boards, wellbeing initiatives and social prescribing programmes. Libraries describe providing health information, hosting wellbeing groups and offering inclusive spaces where individuals can access support services in non-clinical environments.

6.2.4. A More Equal Wales

Welsh libraries contribute to the goal of a more equal Wales by providing access to public services; free access to information for all; supporting people who may need additional support; and via staff training.

Core Entitlements. CE 1 (Free & Open to All) and CE 13 (Supporting Digital Skills - 2023 to 2025 only) were met in full by all Welsh library services throughout the Sixth Framework. CE 2 (Knowledgeable & Qualified Staff), CE 4 (Services for Special Needs) and CE 6 (Free Lending & Access to Info) were met in full or part by all services in all years of the Sixth Framework. CE 7 (Free Use of Internet & IT) was met in full by at least 20 services throughout the Sixth Framework.

Quality Indicators. Between 20 and 22 services provided at least one device giving public access to the internet and WiFi access for users during each year these data were collected

(QI 11). Between 21 and 22 services provided support for users to access local and national e-government resources in all static service points open 10 per week or more (QI 3).

Whilst resources are loaned free of charge, the average 'cost' (i.e. investment in resources) per loan was 53p. The cost per loan was highest during the pandemic but fell to 38p in 2023 to 2024 (QI 14).

The median percentage of static services points open for 10 hours a week or more which offered dementia-friendly services and mental health awareness/support was 100% throughout the Framework (QI 4).

Library services support their staff to achieve their potential through professional development. The median percentage of staff working hours spent in training ranged between 1.6% and 5% annually (QI13).

Qualitative data. The case studies and impact statements provide many examples of how Welsh libraries have contributed to this goal. There is a strong inclusion narrative as libraries frequently describe removing barriers to participation and supporting those facing disadvantage. The important role of libraries as free, accessible services that help individuals navigate systems, maintain independence and participate more fully in society is also highlighted. Examples include: specific support for autistic children and young people; iPad and laptop lending schemes to reduce digital inequality; providing warm spaces for those affected by the rise in the cost of living; outreach and home delivery services for those with limited mobility; and organising and hosting events and resources for people with visual impairment.

Strategic statements further emphasise the role of libraries in addressing digital exclusion, poverty and inequality, including initiatives providing free internet access, digital devices and connectivity for individuals experiencing digital poverty.

6.2.5. A Wales of Cohesive Communities

Welsh libraries contribute to the goal of a Wales of cohesive communities through providing accessible spaces where people can come together and support each other.

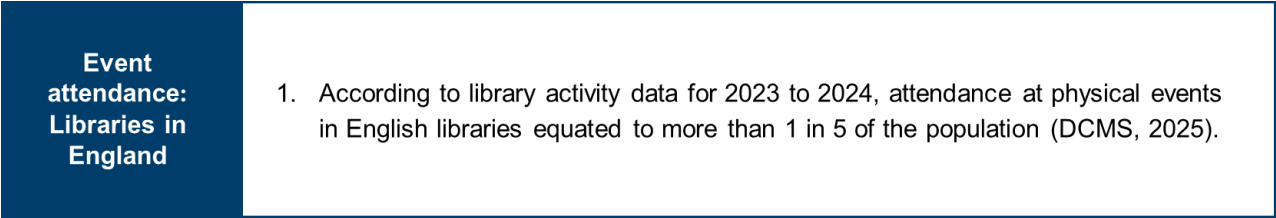
Core Entitlements. CE 1 (Free & Open to All) and CE 3 (Range of Services & Activities) were met in full by all Welsh library services throughout the Sixth Framework. CE 5 (Safe, Accessible Spaces) was met in full or part by all services in all years.

Quality Indicators. Welsh libraries were open for an average of 394,974 hours per annum during the Sixth Framework (QI 16). Amongst adults responding to customer surveys, a median of 97% (2017 to 2020 and 2022 to 2025) said they experienced the library as an enjoyable, safe and inclusive place (QI 1). During the Framework period, annual attendance at library events and activities equated to an average of 1 in 4 of the population (QI 6). Libraries support volunteering opportunities within local communities. During the Sixth Framework, an average of 916 individuals supported library services as volunteers each year (QI 13).

Qualitative data. The case studies and impact statements provide many examples of how Welsh libraries have contributed to this goal. Libraries provide neutral, welcoming spaces where people meet, share experiences and build relationships. Libraries frequently act as trusted civic spaces, bringing together diverse groups in ways that strengthen local cohesion. Examples include: supporting groups of refugees, and others new to a local area, to meet and build friendships and make connections; signposting to local services; the provision of a wide range of activities and events that foster a sense of community such as reading groups and intergenerational activities.

Strategic statements echo this role by describing libraries as community hubs that host local organisations, advice services and community groups. Several services highlight their role in providing Warm Spaces during the cost-of-living crisis, further reinforcing the function of libraries as accessible community infrastructure.

Figure 6.1: Wider context for event attendance



Description of Figure 6.1: A chart highlighting wider context with one coloured section. This section explains that according to library activity data for 2023 to 2024, attendance at physical events in English libraries equated to more than 1 in 5 of the population (DCMS, 2025).

Source: [DCMS 2025](#)

6.2.6. A Wales of Vibrant Culture and Thriving Welsh Language

Welsh libraries contribute to the goal of a Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language by events, activities and resources that support literature and other forms of art and culture, including the Welsh language.

Core Entitlements. CE 3 (Range of Services & Activities) and CE 8 (Welsh Language Provision) were met in full by all Welsh library services throughout the Sixth Framework. CE 6 (Free Lending & Access to Info), CE 9 (Shared Catalogue & Resources) and CE 10 (Partnership to Deliver New Services) were met in full or part by all services in all years.

Quality Indicators. Over the course of the Framework, an average of 1.85 adult books were borrowed annually per adult living in Wales. An average of 4.5 books were issued per child in Wales each year, and an average of 0.75 e-resources were issued per person living in Wales (QI 8). Across the Sixth Framework period, an average of 0.73 Welsh language resources were loaned per Welsh speaker in the population (QI 10). Amongst adults responding to customer surveys, a median of 91% (2017 to 2020 and 2022 to 2025) rated the choice of books in the library they use as good or very good (QI 2).

Libraries continued to add new materials to update collections; the median acquisitions rate ranged between 141.0 and 244.5 per capita across the Sixth Framework (QI 9). The median per capita Welsh resources spend ranged between £520 and £625 (QI 10).

Qualitative data. The case studies and impact statements provide a range of examples of how Welsh libraries have contributed to this goal. This includes: leading and participating in cultural events; the provision of Welsh language resources and activities such as adult Welsh language reading groups and children's Rhyme Time sessions; hosting author events and participating in literary and arts festivals; and preserving community heritage through local history archives.

Strategic statements reinforce this role by highlighting Welsh-language collections, bilingual services and partnerships supporting Cymraeg 2050, alongside cultural events, exhibitions and community heritage initiatives.

6.2.7. A Globally Responsible Wales

Welsh libraries contribute to the goal of a globally responsible Wales through strategic planning and effective use of resources.

Core Entitlements. CE 12 (Access to Library Strategy) was met in full by between 13 and 17 library services during the Sixth Framework.

Quality Indicators. The average revenue expenditure per person living in Wales across the Sixth Framework was £13.08 (QI 14). The median cost per visit ranged between £1.82 and £2.76 for years when this measure was collected (QI 15).

Qualitative data. The case studies and impact statements provide some examples of how Welsh libraries have contributed to this goal. This includes the provision of support for people displaced due to global events and activities to support environmental causes.

Strategic statements occasionally refer explicitly to collaboration across the national Welsh library network, shared procurement and resource-sharing arrangements including the LMS Cymru, that support efficient use of public resources.

6.3. Welsh library examples

The following examples draw on the case studies and impact statements from the WPLS reports over the Framework 6 period. These provide some illustrative examples of how libraries met one or more of the goals of The Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.

6.3.1. Strengthening family wellbeing through advice and community connection

Library services can support families experiencing multiple challenges. One example describes a mother and her three children who had moved to the area from another country and faced language barriers, financial difficulties, poor housing conditions and issues with bullying at school. Having developed a trusted relationship with library staff, the woman approached the library for support.

Staff connected her with employability services, helping her secure work at a local hotel, and signposted her to family support services. They also worked in partnership with the local school and other agencies to address the bullying and improve the family's situation, including support to move from private rented accommodation to council housing.

As a result, the mother secured employment and the family were able to move to more suitable accommodation. They reported feeling safer and more secure, with improved wellbeing and a more positive outlook for the future. ([Swansea annual report 2020 to 2021](#)).

6.3.2. Supporting integration and community connection for Ukrainian residents

Libraries can play a valuable role in supporting refugees to rebuild connections and integrate into their communities. Caerphilly Library Service provided a safe, inclusive and welcoming space for a Ukrainian community group, which developed from an initial English conversation session into a regular weekly gathering.

Through these sessions, members developed language skills; gained confidence; and accessed information on housing, employment and mental health support. The library also hosted cultural events and creative activities, enabling participants to share their own traditions while engaging with Welsh culture. As members shared, "Together we have laughed, cried, shared stories, made friends, and found pieces of ourselves again."

In addition to supporting adults, the library provided opportunities for children to play, learn and express themselves through art, helping families feel more settled. One group member expressed, "What began as a simple offer of space has become something far greater: a place of healing, connection and hope." Reflecting on their experience, another member noted, "The library became a bridge between our past and our future... a world where we belong again." The example demonstrates how library services can foster connection, confidence and a sense of belonging for people rebuilding their lives in a new community. ([Caerphilly annual report 2024 to 2025](#)).

6.3.3. Supporting young people's skills and aspirations through Makerspaces

Carmarthenshire highlights the value of two Makerspaces in increasing engagement among pupils identified as non-engagers and at risk of becoming NEET (not in education, employment or training). Working in partnership with Carmarthenshire Communities for Work+ (C4W+), creative sessions such as retro gaming and mug pressing were delivered at libraries in Carmarthen and Llanelli.

The Makerspaces provide access to a range of digital tools and technologies, and are supported by specialist staff who deliver innovative sessions. The activities helped build participants' confidence, with one attendee reporting an interest in pursuing a construction apprenticeship with a focus on 3D design following their experience.

Feedback from the sessions was positive, including: "The sessions in the library went well. The staff in both libraries were very helpful to the young people and were considerate of their needs". ([Carmarthenshire annual report 2023 to 2024](#)).

6.3.4. Supporting language learning, confidence and social connection through Welsh conversation groups

Libraries can support language learning while also strengthening social connection and community wellbeing. In Blaenau Gwent, a weekly Welsh conversation group at Abertillery Library provides a welcoming space for learners and speakers of all ages to build confidence and develop their language skills. Led by a Welsh speaking library assistant, the sessions offer informal, supportive opportunities for participants to practise Welsh together.

The group has helped participants engage more fully in everyday life, including supporting family learning. One grandparent described how attending the sessions enabled her to help her grandchildren with Welsh medium schoolwork and enjoy reading with them. Others highlighted the value of the sessions in building friendships, overcoming barriers to learning and progressing their skills in a relaxed, face to face environment.

The impact of the group extends beyond language learning. Participants described improvements in confidence, reduced isolation and a stronger sense of belonging. As one carer noted, "Being a carer can be isolating... the club gives me a place to relax, learn, and take my mind off my worries." Another participant reflected, "It's great to be able to speak Welsh in Abertillery... it's a powerful feeling, knowing I'm learning more every week." The example demonstrates how library services can promote cultural participation while supporting wellbeing, inclusion and community connection. ([Blaenau Gwent annual report 2024 to 2025](#)).

6.3.5. Reducing digital poverty and inequality through device lending and access to technology

Libraries can play an important role in addressing digital exclusion by providing access to devices and supporting people to engage with online services. In Monmouthshire, a Lend-A-Laptop scheme was developed in partnership between Community Education and the Strategic Library Service, enabling library members to borrow laptops in the same way as books.

Through the scheme, Chromebooks were made available across community hubs and libraries, helping to meet increased demand for digital access, including remote learning and everyday online tasks. By removing barriers to device access, the initiative supports individuals who may otherwise be unable to get online.

Early feedback indicated that the scheme has enabled users to carry out essential activities such as updating CVs and searching for employment. The example demonstrates how library services can help address digital poverty and inequality by providing practical access to technology and supporting individuals to participate more fully in digital life. ([Monmouthshire annual report 2023 to 2024](#)).

7. Changes in stock expenditure

The research sought to answer the question ‘To what extent has the stock expenditure in library services changed over the Framework period?’

Stock expenditure data are captured via QI 9 and QI 14. During the Addendum period, the target for QI 9 was adjusted and was measured only as the number of items acquired. Previously services reported both spend and items acquired per capita.

Over the Sixth Framework period, 16 authorities saw a reduction in total stock expenditure, with the remaining 6 reporting an increase. The median percentage change was -21.9%. The median and mean spend per capita both declined at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, then rose again to close to pre-COVID-19 levels before reducing further towards the end of the Framework period (Table 7.1).

Table 7.1: Stock expenditure per capita

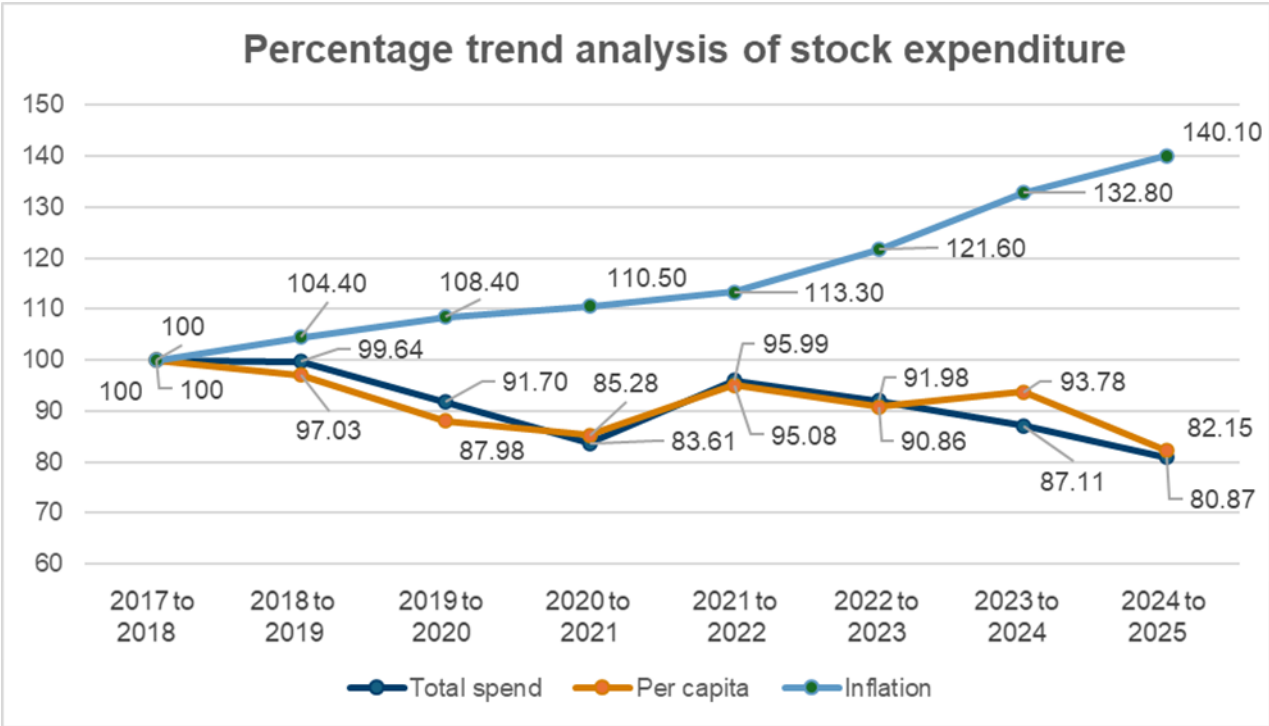
	2017 to 2018	2018 to 2019	2019 to 2020	2020 to 2021	2021 to 2022	2022 to 2023	2023 to 2024	2024 to 2025
High	£2,520	£2,497	£2,274	£2,345	£2,405	£2,386	£2,876	£2,370
Median	£1,499	£1,549	£1,413	£1,257	£1,418	£1,374	£1,297	£1,086
Low	£312	£701	£741	£796	£753	£902	£487	£450
Range	£2,208	£1,796	£1,533	£1,549	£1,652	£1,484	£2,389	£1,920
Lower quartile	£1,283	£1,385	£1,306	£995	£1,206	£1,189	£1,097	£919
Upper quartile	£1,665	£1,697	£1,648	£1,562	£1,734	£1,666	£1,550	£1,621
Interquartile range	£382	£311	£342	£567	£528	£477	£453	£702
National per capita	£1,609	£1,597	£1,463	£1,321	£1,518	£1,484	£1,393	£1,280

Source: WPLSQI 9 and WPLSQI 14

The range and interquartile range both fluctuated throughout the Framework period, but there were no obvious trends over time. Furthermore, there was no evidence of a significant difference in stock expenditure between urban and rural authorities.

Percentage trend analysis of materials spend across all Welsh library authorities (taking 2017 to 2018 as the base year) shows a fluctuating pattern of expenditure (Fig 7.1). Expenditure decreased prior to, and during, the early stages of the COVID-19 pandemic. It recovered slightly later in the pandemic and then remained relatively stable until towards the end of the Framework period, when there was another decline. Total spend and spend per capita both followed a similar pattern. At the end of the Framework, stock expenditure nationally was around 80% of the 2017 to 2018 base, although this figure may have been affected by the introduction of the LMS in late 2024. It is also worth noting that, taking [inflation](#) into account, stock expenditure was around three-fifths of its 2017 to 2018 level in real terms, and no services saw stock expenditure keep pace with inflation.

Figure 7.1: Percentage trend analysis of stock expenditure

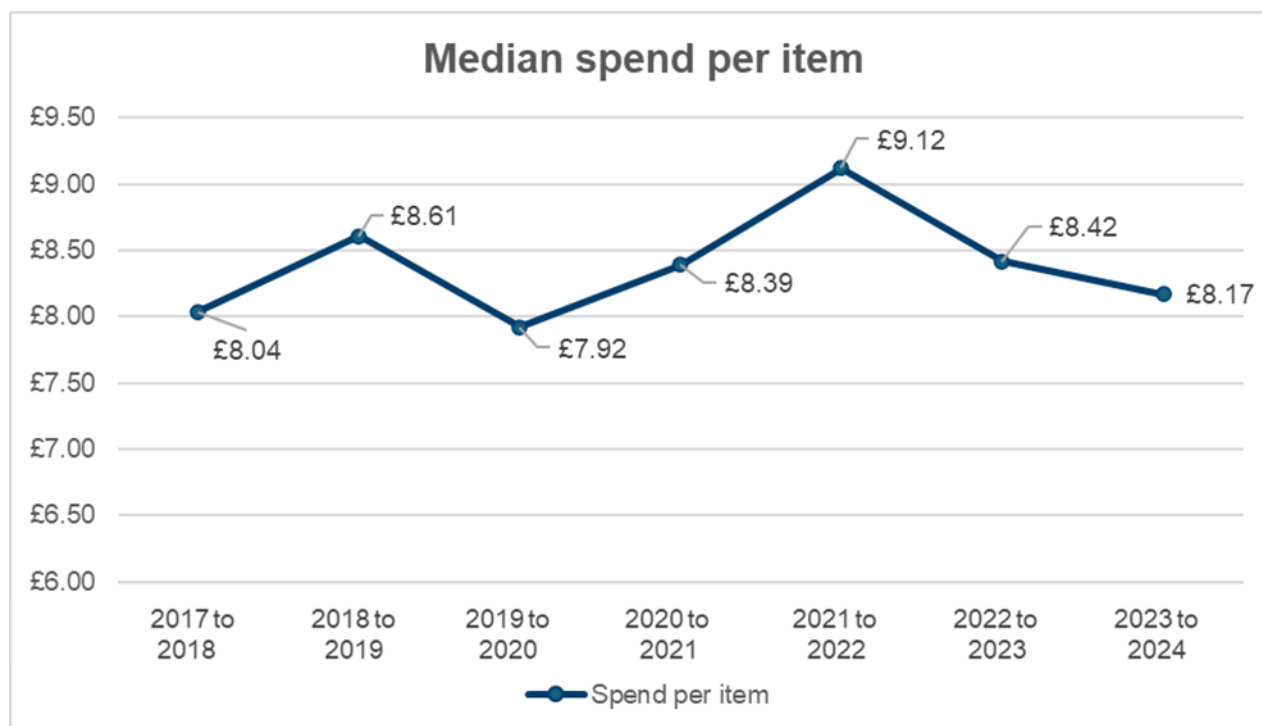


Description of Figure 7.1: A line graph comprising of three coloured lines which show the percentage trend analysis of stock expenditure. Line one displays the total spend from the reporting period 2017 to 2018 until 2024 to 2025. Line two displays the per capita spend from the reporting period 2017 to 2018 until 2024 to 2025. Line three displays inflation from the reporting period 2017 to 2018 until 2024 to 2025.

Source: WPLSQI 9 and WPLSQI 14

In years for which data are available, the median spend per item figure fluctuated between £7.92 and £9.12 per item (Fig 7.2). It is worth noting that the difference between the spend per item at the start and end of the Framework was only 13p. If inflation were taken into account, the cost of an equivalent item to that purchased for £8.04 in 2017 to 2018 (the median in that year) would be expected to be £10.67 in 2023 to 2024 (a difference of £2.63).

Figure 7.2: Median spend per item



Description of Figure 7.2: A line graph comprising of one coloured line which shows the median spend per item. Line one displays the spend per item from the reporting period 2017 to 2018 until 2023 to 2024.

Source: WPLS 9 and WPLS 14

Percentage spend on children's resources remained fairly stable at between 17% and 19% of the total materials budget throughout the Sixth Framework (Table 7.2). The interquartile range also altered little, ranging between 3% and 6%. Comparing 2017 to 2018 and 2023 to 2024 figures, 12 services reported a reduction in the percentage of their budget allocated to children's resources, but for most the change was small, and the median percentage change was -1.5%.

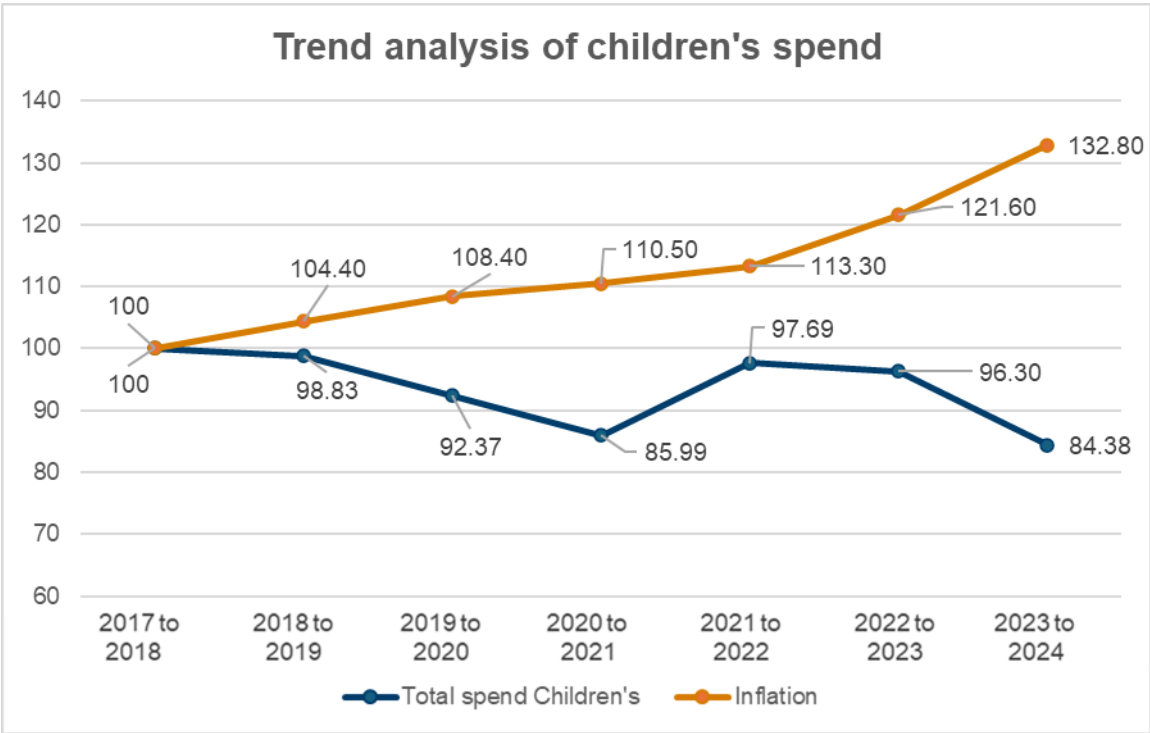
Table 7.2: Percentage of stock expenditure allocated to children's resources

	2017 to 2018	2018 to 2019	2019 to 2020	2020 to 2021	2021 to 2022	2022 to 2023	2023 to 2024
High	31%	29%	26%	27%	28%	28%	26%
Median	17.5%	18%	17%	19%	18%	19%	17%
Low	6%	12%	13%	7%	11%	12%	12%
Range	25%	17%	13%	20%	17%	16%	14%
Lower quartile	16%	15%	15%	16%	16.5%	18%	15%
Upper quartile	21%	21%	21%	21%	22.5%	21%	21%
Interquartile range	5%	6%	6%	5%	6%	3%	6%

Source: WPLSQI 9

A percentage trend analysis was carried out based on estimated figures calculated using the book budget and percentage allocated to children’s resources reported in returns (Fig 7.3). Whilst acknowledging that this is an estimate, it suggests that spending was lower in 2023 to 2024 (the last year for which data are available) than at the start of the Framework period. A small pre-COVID-19 decline accelerated at the start of the pandemic period, but then recovered again before dipping back at the end of the reporting period. Expenditure per capita reduced by around 15%, from approximately £1.69 per child in 2017 to 2018 to around £1.43 per child in 2023 to 2024. It is also worth noting that the gap between spend and inflation in 2023 to 2024 was greater for children’s resources than for overall library resources.

Figure 7.3: Percentage trend analysis of spend on children’s resources



Description of Figure 7.3: A line graph comprising of two coloured lines which show the percentage trend analysis of spend on children’s resources. Line one displays the total Children’s spend from the reporting period 2017 to 2018 until 2023 to 2024. Line two displays inflation from the reporting period 2017 to 2018 until 2023 to 2024.

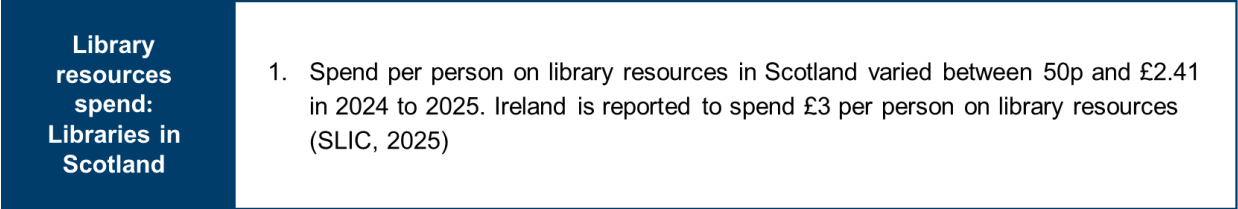
Source: WPLSQI 9 and WPLSQI 14

7.1. Summary

There is clear evidence that stock expenditure has decreased over the course of the Sixth Framework period. Expenditure was declining gradually pre-COVID-19 and this trend was accelerated during the pandemic period. Although there was a slight recovery in the post-COVID-19 period, stock expenditure did not return to pre-COVID-19 levels. When inflation is taken into account, the decline in expenditure over the course of the Framework is even more pronounced.

However, a reduction in materials budgets has not necessarily led to a reduction in the number of items purchased as the spend per item follows a different trend to that expected based on inflation data. There are a number of possible reasons for this: library services are likely trying to make the best use of increasingly limited budgets and making purchasing decisions with this in mind. However, it is beyond the scope of this research to identify reasons for this.

Figure 7.4: Wider context for library resources spend



Description of Figure 7.4: A chart highlighting wider context with one coloured section. This section explains that spend per person on library resources in Scotland varied between 50p and £2.41 in 2024 to 2025. Ireland is reported to spend £3 per person on library resources (SLIC, 2025).

Source: [SLIC 2025](#)

8. Welsh language resources spend

The research sought to answer the question ‘To what extent has the spend on Welsh language resources changed over the Sixth Framework period?’

During the addendum period, the target for QI 10 was adjusted and was measured only as a percentage of the materials budget. Previously, services reported both the percentage of the materials budget and spend per capita Welsh speaker.

The median percentage spend on Welsh language materials remained between 4% and 5.5% throughout the Sixth Framework period. There was also relatively little change in the median spend per Welsh speaker, although this was lowest during the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 to 2021 and highest towards the end of the Framework period. The mean per capita figure nationally followed a similar pattern to the median, although this was slightly higher in most years due a small number of authorities with higher spend figures. The authorities in this higher spend group changed over the course of the Framework, indicating that the purchase of Welsh language resources might be a priority in a particular year, or years, rather than being a long-term feature of spending patterns within a given authority.

Table 8.1 sets out a summary of the data for spend per capita on Welsh language resources.

Table 8.1: Spend data per capita Welsh speaker

	2017 to 2018	2018 to 2019	2019 to 2020	2020 to 2021	2021 to 2022	2022 to 2023	2023 to 2024^[1]
High	£1,402	£1,630	£1,086	£1,930	£1,442	£1,440	£1,412
Median	£496	£523	£497	£390	£555	£550	£572
Low	£12	£174	£116	£236	£188	£312	£64
Range	£1,390	£1,456	£970	£1,694	£1,254	£1,128	£1,348
Lower quartile	£309	£428	£296	£315	£365	£449	£397
Upper quartile	£750	£808	£734	£527	£748	£881	£769
Interquartile range	£441	£380	£438	£212	£383	£432	£372
National per capita	£523	£570	£542	£520	£550	£625	£586

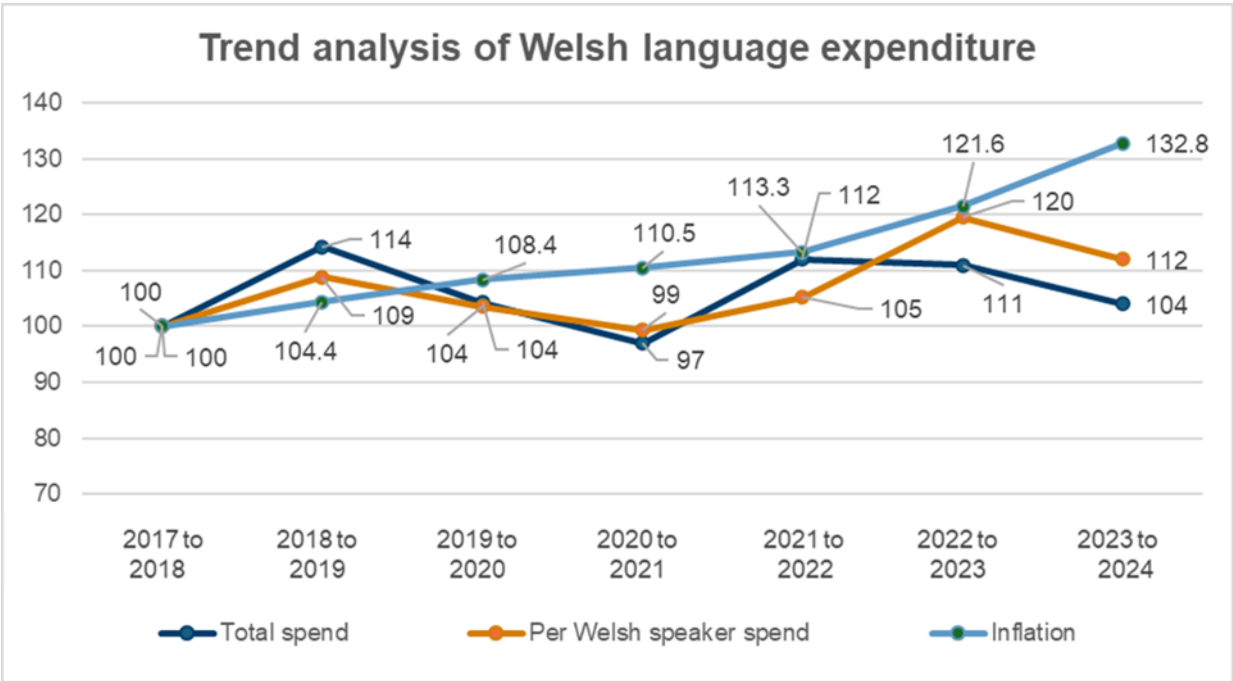
Source: WPLSQI 10

[1] Estimated figures based on percentage of materials spend allocated to Welsh language resources.

Fourteen services had a higher per capita spend on Welsh language materials at the end of the Framework period than the start. Whilst the median change was a 21% increase, 3 services saw their per capita spend increase by fourfold or more. The spread of per capita spend figures across Wales fluctuated, as demonstrated by the interquartile range and range, which varied over the course of the Framework, with no clear trends evident over time.

Percentage trend analysis of total spend across Welsh library authorities (taking 2017 to 2018 as the base year) shows a fluctuating pattern of expenditure (Fig 8.1).

Figure 8.1: Percentage trend analysis of spend on Welsh language materials



Description of Figure 8.1: A line graph comprising of three coloured lines which show the percentage trend analysis of spend on Welsh language materials. Line one displays the total spend from the reporting period 2017 to 2018 until 2023 to 2024. Line two displays the per Welsh speaker spend from the reporting period 2017 to 2018 until 2023 to 2024. Line three displays inflation from the reporting period 2017 to 2018 until 2023 to 2024.

Source: WPLSQI 10

There was a notable dip in total spend and per capita spend during the COVID-19 pandemic, but spending rose in the immediate post-pandemic period. Spend figures appear to have fallen away slightly at the end of the period for which data are available. However, it should be noted that 2023 to 2024 figures are estimates based on the percentage of total budget and thus, may not be completely accurate. In contrast to overall stock expenditure, expenditure on Welsh language resources was slightly higher (4%) at the end of the Sixth Framework compared to 2017 to 2018, with a more notable increase (12%) when the number of Welsh speakers is taken into account.

However, when inflation is factored in, although the rate of increase in total and per capita spend in 2018 to 2019 were above inflation, for the remainder of the Sixth Framework, both total and per capita spend on Welsh language resources were lower than their equivalent value in 2017 to 2018. Nevertheless, in 6 services expenditure on Welsh language materials increased by more than the rate of inflation during the Sixth Framework. All the authorities that increased spending by more than the rate of inflation had less than 15% of Welsh speakers in the population.

As expected, there is a strong positive relationship between total spend on Welsh language materials and percentage of Welsh speakers in a local authority, though this relationship was less strong during the COVID-19 pandemic period (Pearson's r ranged between 0.687 to 0.862, $p < 0.01$, excluding 2020-21). There was a significant difference between Welsh language spend per capita in urban and rural authorities in some years, but this was not consistent throughout the Sixth Framework. It is therefore difficult to draw firm conclusions about the relationship between type of authority and Welsh language spend.

8.1. Summary

Welsh language spend has been less affected by decreasing stock budgets than is the case for overall stock expenditure. Whilst spending was impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, it recovered post-pandemic and both total and per capita Welsh speaker expenditure have risen over the course of the Framework. Nevertheless, spending has failed to keep pace with inflation in the majority of authorities.

9. Changes in the resource allocation of spend on e-resources

The research sought to answer the question: ‘To what extent have there been changes in the resource allocation being spent on e-resources?’

Data on the allocation of spend on e-resources were only reported via Q1 9 during the Addendum period when authorities reported the percentage of the materials budget allocated to e-resources. The median percentage spend was fairly similar in both years, rising slightly in 2024 to 2025 (see Table 9.1). However, the mean spend per capita nationally was 16% lower in 2024 to 2025 compared to the previous year. This is partly due to one of the highest spending authorities in 2023 to 2024 not providing data in 2024 to 2025 [\[footnote 1\]](#). The range and interquartile range were smaller in 2024 to 2025, indicating there was greater consistency in spend across the country.

Table 9.1: E-resources spend

	2023 to 2024	2024 to 2025
High	49%	28%
Median	15.5%	17%
Low	4%	5%
Range	45%	23%
Lower quartile	8%	10.5%
Upper quartile	22%	19.5%
Interquartile range	14%	9%
National spend per capita	£211.37	£177.86

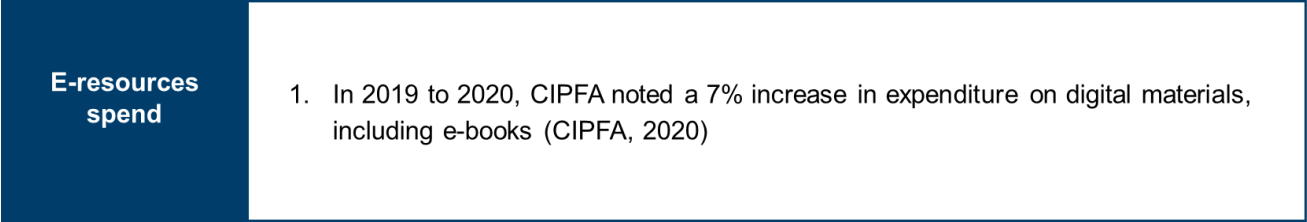
Source: WPLSQI 9

Given the limited data available, it is not possible to draw firm conclusions on changes over time in e-resource allocation. However, there is no evidence of a difference in spend depending on whether an authority is considered rural or urban. As might be expected, authorities with larger resource allocations tended to spend more on e-resources. However, changes in total resource allocation between 2023 to 2024 and 2024 to 2025 did not directly correspond to changes in e-resource provision (i.e. an increase/decrease in total resource allocation did not necessarily result in a corresponding increase/decrease in e-resource allocation). This indicates that factors other than the total budget library services have available affect decisions about e-purchasing. There is some evidence of a relationship between e-resource allocation and e-issues, as described in Chapter 10.

Footnotes

[\[1\]](#) As there is only one year’s data from this authority, it is not possible to estimate a value for the missing year.

Figure 9.1: Wider context for e-resources spend



Description of Figure 9.1: A chart highlighting wider context with one coloured section. This section explains that in 2019 to 2020, CIPFA noted a 7% increase in expenditure on digital materials, including e-books (CIPFA, 2020).

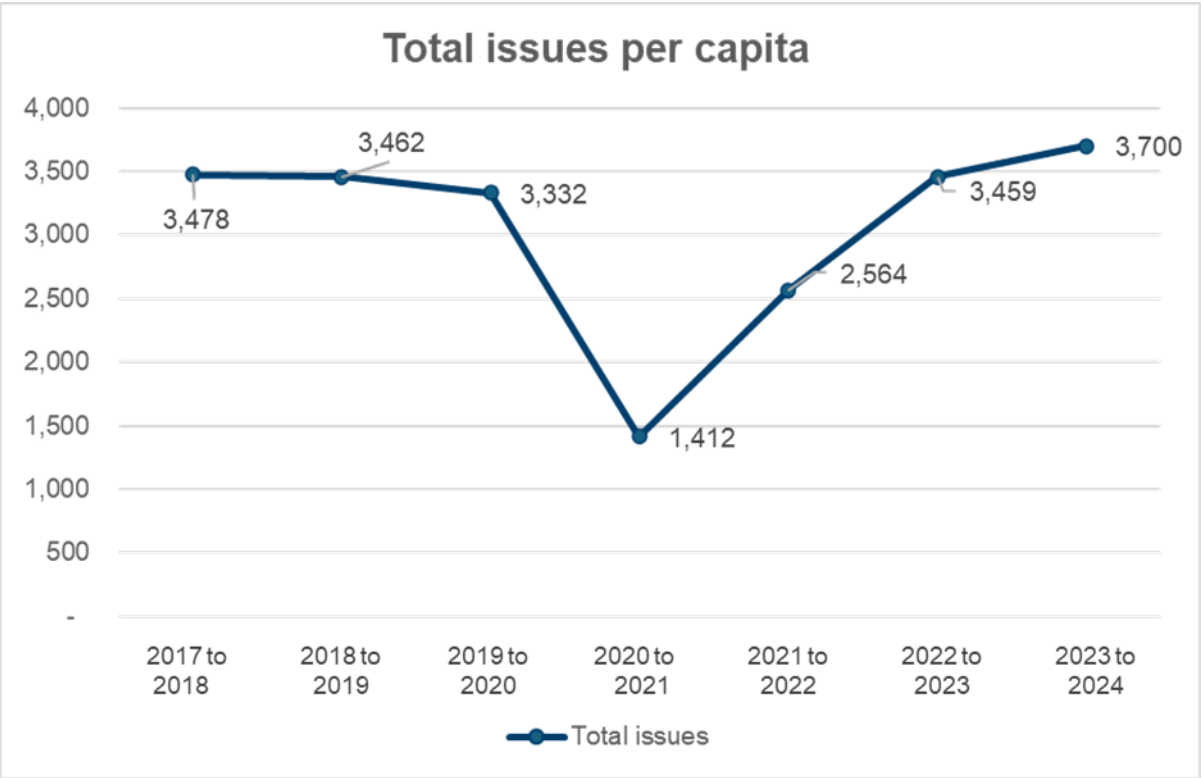
Source: [CIPFA 2020](#)

10. Changes in library service loans

The research sought to answer the question ‘To what extent have there been changes in library service issues during the WPLS Sixth Framework period?’

Issues (or loans) data are captured via QI 8 and QI 10. Taking all types of issues (print and digital) into account, there was a slight decline in per capita issue figures pre-COVID-19, followed by a significant drop at the start of the pandemic. However, issues quickly recovered and by 2023 to 2024 were 6% higher than figures at the start of the Sixth Framework, and trending upwards (Fig 10.1).

Figure 10.1: Trends in total issues per capita



Description of Figure 10.1: A line graph comprising of one coloured line which shows the trends in total issues per capita. Line one displays the total issues from the reporting period 2017 to 2018 until 2023 to 2024.

Source: WPLSQI 8

However, despite this encouraging trend, it is important to note that the median, lower quartile and upper quartile figures for per capita issues all remained lower than they had been pre-COVID-19 (Table 10.1). The increase in mean per capita issues nationally was driven by a small number of services at the upper end of the range. It is worth noting that this group of authorities with higher issue figures included a mix of both urban and rural areas, and there is no evidence of a significant difference in issue figures between rural and urban authorities. Seven authorities saw per capita issues increase during the Framework period, with the remaining 15 reporting a decrease.

Total issues per person living in Wales ranged between 1.41 and 3.70 annually during the Sixth Framework, with an average of 3.06.

Table 10.1: Per capita issues

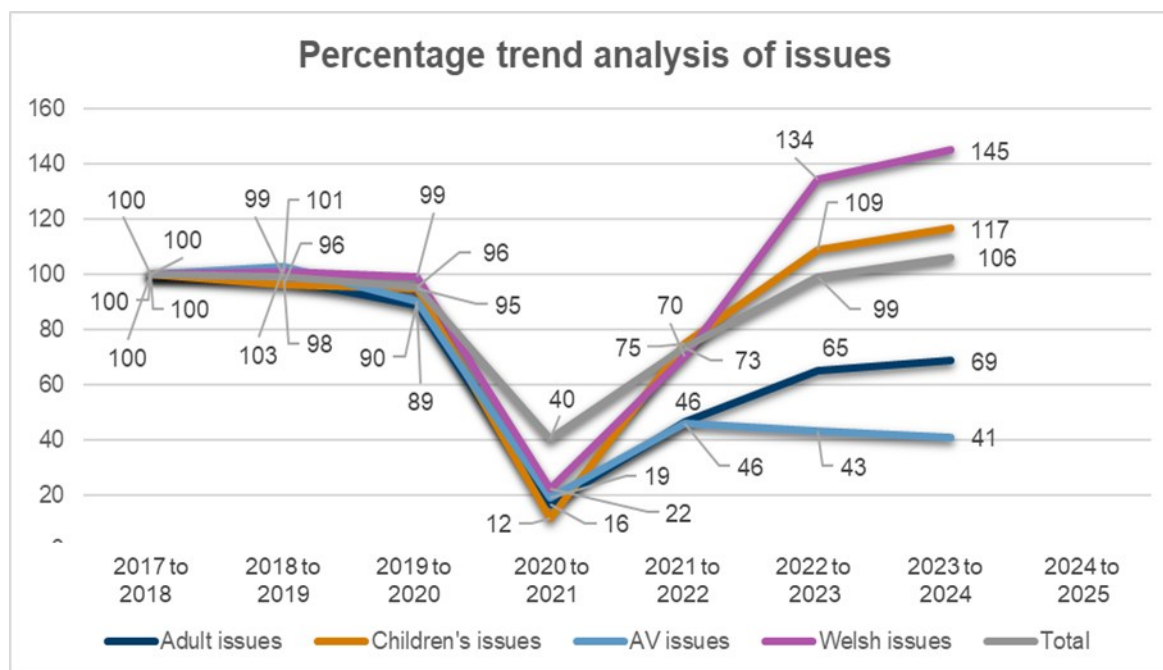
	2017 to 2018	2018 to 2019	2019 to 2020	2020 to 2021	2021 to 2022	2022 to 2023	2023 to 2024
High	5,783	6,304	5,970	3,086	5,297	8,261	7,942
Median	3,300	3,202	3,313	1,166	1,919	2,612	2,818
Low	1,790	1,943	1,415	623	997	1,432	1,093
Range	3,993	4,361	4,555	2,463	4,301	6,830	6,849
Lower quartile	2,815	2,863	2,770	934	1,623	2,259	2,538
Upper quartile	3,863	3,891	3,731	1,610	2,536	3,578	3,459
Interquartile range	1,049	1,028	961	676	913	1,319	921
National per capita	3,478.5	3,461.9	3,332.1	1,412.2	2,564.0	3,459.2	3,699.9

Source: WPLSQI 8

There is evidence of a strong to very strong positive correlation between total issues and total resource spend for every year between 2017 to 2018 and 2023 to 2024 (Pearson's r ranged between 0.768 and 0.921, $p < 0.01$). There is also evidence of a strong positive relationship between total opening hours and total issues for years in which data are available (Pearson's r ranged between 0.799 and 0.856, $p < 0.01$). In addition, there is a moderate to strong positive correlation between total issues and total staff (Pearson's r ranged between 0.611 and 0.811, $p < 0.01$). Authorities with higher spending, more staff and longer opening hours tend to have higher issue figures. There was also a weak to moderate correlation between qualified staff and total issues in the first three years of the Framework (pre-COVID-19) (Pearson's r ranged between 0.431 and 0.574, $p < 0.05$), but this was not maintained post-COVID-19.

Underlying this pattern in overall issues, issues of various types of material changed over the Sixth Framework period (Fig 10.2).

Figure 10.2: Percentage trend analysis of issue categories



Description of Figure 10.2: A line graph comprising of five coloured lines which show the percentage trend analysis of issue categories. Line one displays adult issues from the reporting period 2017 to 2018 until 2024 to 2025. Line two displays Children's issues from the reporting period 2017 to 2018 until 2024 to 2025. Line three displays AV issues from the reporting period 2017 to 2018 until 2024 to 2025. Line four displays Welsh issues from the reporting period 2017 to 2018 until 2024 to 2025. Line five displays the total from the reporting period 2017 to 2018 until 2024 to 2025.

Source: WPLSQI 8 and WPLSQI 10

10.1. Adult book issues

Nationally, adult book issues per capita were falling gradually pre-pandemic. After dipping sharply in 2020 to 2021, they recovered somewhat, but by 2023 to 2024 were still well below pre-pandemic figures, although continuing to increase slowly. Nationally, issues declined by 31.0% over the data collection period (Fig 10.2). All authorities reported lower adult issues in 2023 to 2024 than they had in 2017 to 2018. The median, upper quartile and lower quartile per capita issue figures were all below pre-pandemic levels at the end of the data collection period (Table 10.2).

Adult issues per adult in Wales ranged between 0.44 and 2.69 annually during the Sixth Framework, with an average of 1.85.

Table 10.2: Per capita adult issues

	2017 to 2018	2018 to 2019	2019 to 2020	2020 to 2021	2021 to 2022	2022 to 2023	2023 to 2024
High	4,590	5,094	4,560	647	2,505	2,815	3,117
Median	2,005	1,969.5	1,806	365	915.5	1,349.5	1,270.5
Low	1,184	1,279	1,463	173	466	805	558
Range	3,406	3,815	3,097	474	2,039	2,010	2,559
Lower quartile	1,791	1,688	1,574	297	696	1,144	1,139
Upper quartile	2,429	2,313	2,311	525	1,013	1,400	1,617
Interquartile range	638	625	737	228	317	256	478
National per capita	2,692.1	2,638.4	2,384.5	439.4	1,242.3	1,746.2	1,840.9

Source: WPLSQI 8

There is evidence of a strong positive correlation between resource spend and adult issues (Pearson's r ranged between 0.708 and 0.902, $p < 0.01$). Authorities with larger book budgets tended to report higher adult issues.

Excluding the years most affected by the COVID-19 pandemic (2020 to 2021 and 2021 to 2022), there was some evidence of a statistically significant difference ($p < 0.05$) between urban and rural authorities, with per capita adult issues in rural authorities tending to be higher.

10.2. Children's book issues

Children's book issues per capita increased notably during the Sixth Framework. Like adult issues, national per capita issues were declining gradually pre-COVID-19 and fell sharply at the start of the pandemic. However, post-COVID-19, figures recovered quickly, and children's issues nationally were above pre-pandemic levels from 2022 to 2023 onwards (Fig 10.2). Children's issues were 17% higher in 2023 to 2024 than they had been at the start of the Framework period. However, whilst national per capita (mean) figures have risen, the per capita median was slightly lower in 2023 to 2024 than it had been in 2017 to 2018, Upper quartile and lower quartile figures were also lower than at the start of the Framework (Table 10.3). In fact, only 6 authorities reported increased children's issues per capita numbers between 2017 to 2018 and 2023 to 2024, and much of the national increase was driven by a dramatic increase in children's issues in Cardiff. The national capital was an outlier for children's issues compared to other authorities during the post-pandemic period. However, overall, there was no statistically significant difference in children's issues between urban and rural authorities.

Children's issues per child in Wales ranged between 0.61 and 6.09 annually during the Sixth Framework, with an average of 4.5.

Table 10.3: Per capita children's issues

	2017 to 2018	2018 to 2019	2019 to 2020	2020 to 2021	2021 to 2022	2022 to 2023	2023 to 2024
High	1,817	1,449	1,213	277	2,073	2,964	2,005
Median	813.5	804.5	816	100.5	420.5	708	794.5
Low	322	270	260	23	94	212	277
Range	1,495	1,179	953	254	1,979	2,752	1,728
Lower quartile	669	718	714	72	364	547	609
Upper quartile	1,076	1,028	1,035	132	592	841	959
Interquartile range	407	310	321	60	228	294	350
National per capita	5,222.9	5,036.1	4,958.9	606.2	3,899.0	5,679.2	6,087.7

Source: WPLSQI 8

There is evidence of a strong positive correlation between children's issue figures and spending on children's resources. As might be expected, this was slightly weaker in 2020 to 2021 at the height of the pandemic, but for the remainder of the Framework, Pearson's r ranged between 0.772 and 0.885, ($p < 0.01$). This suggests that authorities with higher spending on children's resources tend to report higher children's issue figures.

10.3. Audio Visual (AV) issues

Overall, there was a 59% decrease in the number of AV issues nationally. Only one authority saw AV issues per capita increase during the Framework period. In common with other resource types, AV issues fell dramatically at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. Although there was some recovery in the following years, the median, mean, upper quartile and lower quartile figures in the post-pandemic period all remained lower than they had been at the start of the Framework (Table 10.4). This is unsurprising as COVID-19 accelerated access to newer technologies for some customers, reducing the demand for older AV formats.

Table 10.4: Per capita AV issues

	2017 to 2018	2018 to 2019	2019 to 2020	2020 to 2021	2021 to 2022	2022 to 2023	2023 to 2024
High	244	324	235	95	147	189	155
Median	107.5	116.5	107	23	41.5	46	44
Low	56	50	46	6	14	10	15
Range	188	274	189	89	133	179	140
Lower quartile	88	91	60	16	37	35	35
Upper quartile	162	167	140	29	73	58	56
Interquartile range	74	76	80	13	36	23	21
National per capita	122.2	125.3	110.2	23.1	56.1	52.5	50.0

Source: WPLSQI 8

10.4. Welsh language issues

Welsh language issues per capita Welsh speaker were relatively steady pre-pandemic. After a decline in 2020 to 2021, they started to increase and exceeded pre-pandemic figures from 2022 to 2023 onwards. The total number of issues nationally increased by 45% over the course of the Framework (Fig 10.2). However, the median figure for Welsh authorities was similar in 2023 to 2024 to that in 2017 to 2018 (Table 10.5). Eleven authorities reported an increase in Welsh issues per capita, whilst the other 11 reported a decrease. The increase in national per capita (mean) figures appears to have been driven by two factors: 1) increased issues amongst local authorities at the lower end of the range as the lowest and lower quartile figures rose; and 2) increases amongst the highest performing authorities, evidenced by outliers at the upper end of the range in the final years of data collection. There was no evidence of a significant difference in per capita Welsh issues in rural compared to urban authorities.

Welsh language issues per Welsh speaker ranged between 0.17 and 1.11 annually during the Sixth Framework, with an average of 0.73.

Table 10.5: Per capita Welsh issues

	2017 to 2018	2018 to 2019	2019 to 2020	2020 to 2021	2021 to 2022	2022 to 2023	2023 to 2024
High	1,462	1,424	1,468	467	1,105	2,644	2,725
Median	630	601	641	63	340	570	632
Low	73	95	311	17	71	174	161
Range	1,389	1,329	1,157	450	1,034	2,470	2,564
Lower quartile	378	417	406	42	232	454	510
Upper quartile	847	903	853	111	573	741	853
Interquartile range	469	486	447	69	341	287	343
National per capita	765.9	771.5	756.9	171.0	538.6	1,030.2	1,110.8

Source: WPLSQI 10

There was evidence of a low to moderate correlation between Welsh language issues and spend on Welsh language materials (Pearson's r ranged between 0.340 to 0.768, $p < 0.05$), but this correlation is not as strong as for other resource types. Whilst spend on Welsh materials may have some impact on issue figures, there are likely to be other factors that are important. Factors impacting on Welsh loan figures may include the provision of Welsh language activities and events, and the extent to which Welsh language collections match the needs of local speakers (e.g. level of materials). However, it is not possible to comment on the extent to which such factors may have an impact based on WPLS data alone.

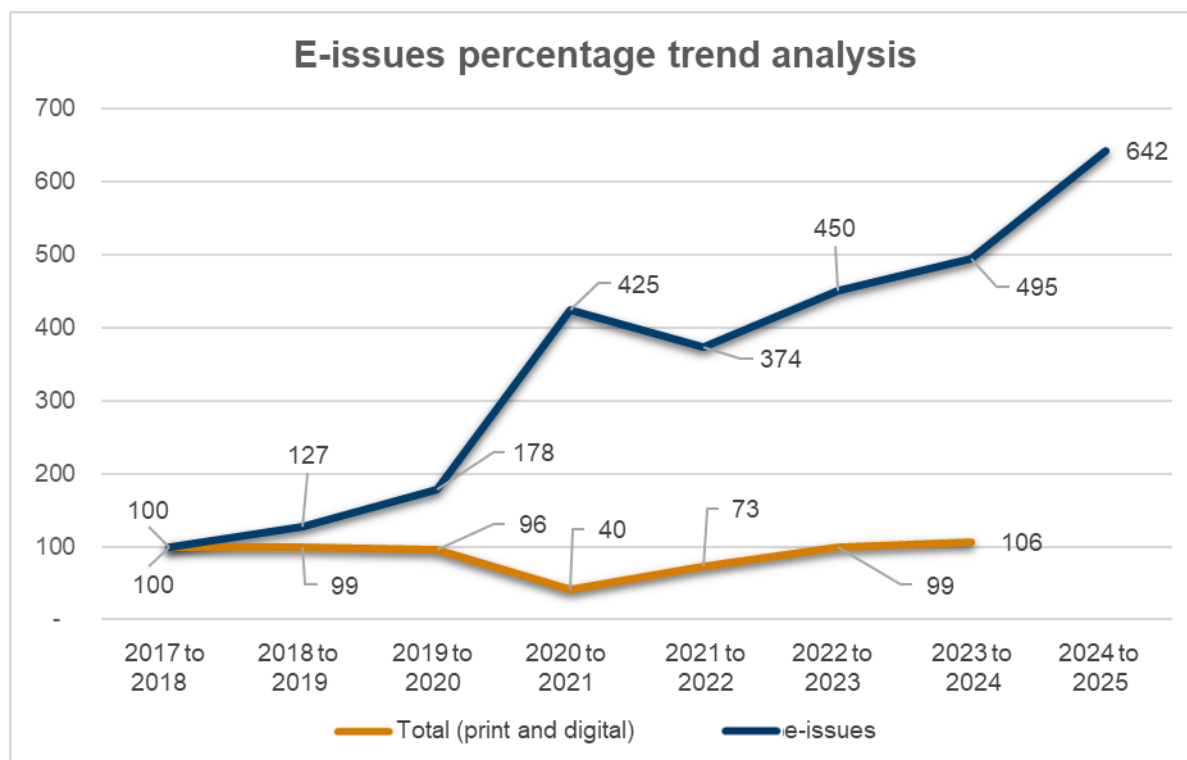
10.5. E-issues

As can be seen from Figure 10.3, e-issues followed a different pattern to other types of resource issues during the Sixth Framework. Nationally, e-issues per capita increased more than six-fold during the Framework and were on an upward trend at the end of the period. The median, upper quartile, lower quartile, and highest and lowest values all rose between 2017 to 2018 and 2024 to 2025 (Table 10.6). Following a sharp increase in 2020 to 2021 at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic period, e-issues fell back slightly, but in the Addendum period, they exceeded 2020 to 2021 levels and continued to trend upwards. All local authorities reported an increase in e-issues over the Sixth Framework period. Nationally, e-issues increased by 542% between 2017 to 2018 and 2024 to 2025.

E-issues per person ranged between 0.21 and 1.38 annually during the Sixth Framework, with an average of 0.75.

It is important to note, however, that Cardiff was an outlier in the post-pandemic period. Although the trend in this authority was similar to that in many others in Wales, the magnitude of the increase differed as per capita e-issues in the capital city region rose almost nine-fold. However, there was no evidence of a significant difference in e-issues between urban and rural authorities.

Figure 10.3: E-issues percentage trend analysis



Description of Figure 10.3: A line graph comprising of two coloured lines which show the percentage trend analysis of e-issues. Line one displays the total print and digital issues from the reporting period 2017 to 2018 until 2024 to 2025. Line two displays e-issues from the reporting period 2017 to 2018 until 2024 to 2025.

Source: WPLSQI 8

Table 10.6: Per capita e-issues

	2017 to 2018	2018 to 2019	2019 to 2020	2020 to 2021	2021 to 2022	2022 to 2023	2023 to 2024	2024 to 2025
High	568	609	597	2,766	2,788	3,464	2,898	3,300
Median	167.5	246	390	615	473	569	724	1,012
Low	83	62	144	255	172	197	198	368
Range	485	547	453	2,511	2,616	3,267	2,700	2,932
Lower quartile	135	170	272	457	404	419	564	750
Upper quartile	206	316	470	1,017	643	934	963	1,727
Interquartile range	71	146	198	560	239	515	399	977
National per capita	214.9	273.4	382.6	914.2	803.1	967.9	1,064.9	1,380.7

Source: WPLSQI 8

There is evidence of a moderate correlation between e-issues and spend on e-resources (Pearson's r ranged between 0.542 and 0.751, $p < 0.01$). It is possible that the provision of e-

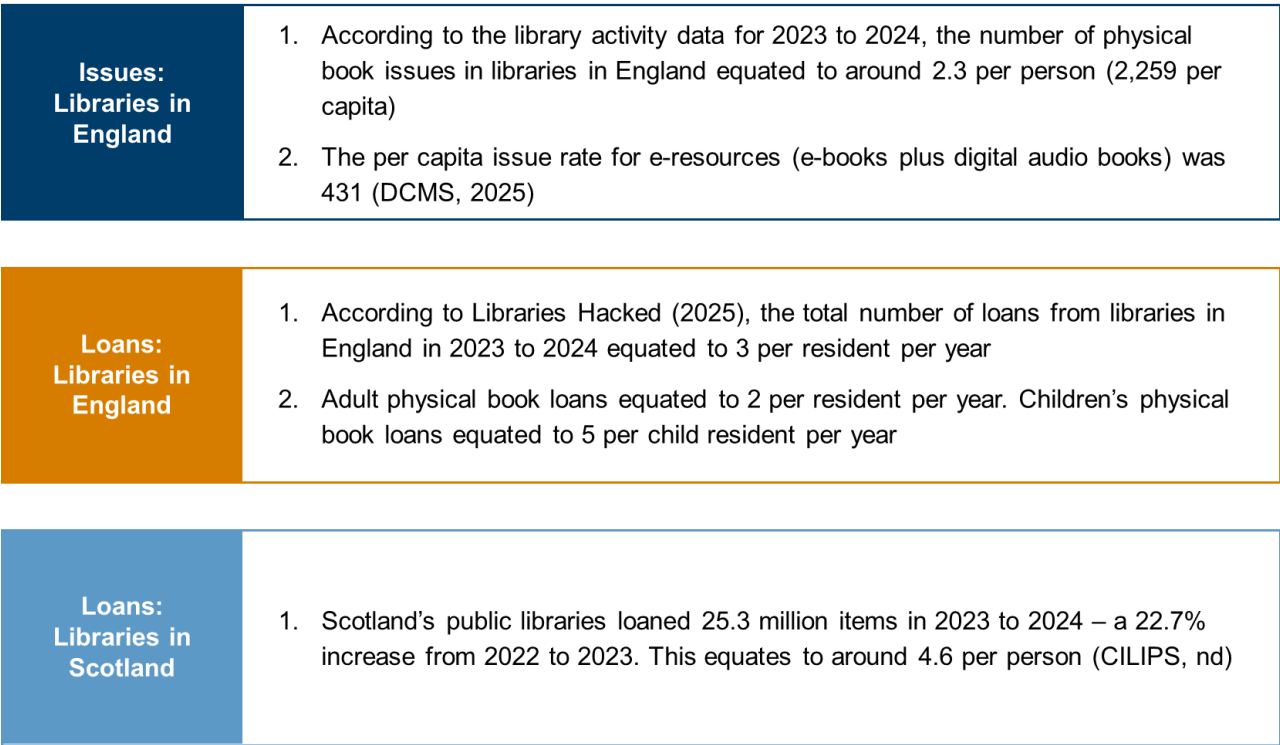
resources by the Welsh Government may mean that the relationship between local authority budgets and e-issues is not as strong as is the case for other resource types.

10.6. Summary

Overall, the number of issues across Wales rose over the Sixth Framework. Given the pressure on stock budgets during this period (see Section 7), this is not an insignificant achievement for the sector. There was a marked decline in physical issues over the COVID-19 period, but this was balanced to some extent by a dramatic increase in e-resource borrowing. Children’s issues and Welsh language issues recovered post-COVID-19 and were higher at the end of the Framework than they had been at the start. However, adult issues and AV issues did not recover to pre-COVID-19 levels and, based on current trends, there is little indication that they will do so in the next few years.

However, underlying these national level trends, it is important to be aware that there are marked differences around the country. The increase in total issues in Wales is, to a large extent, driven by increases within a small number of higher performing authorities, rather than a similar level of increase spread across the country. Whilst some of these increases may be explained by geographical and demographic factors (e.g. capital city region or changing population patterns), there are clearly marked differences that have no obvious explanation based on the data available as some authorities have recovered from the pandemic period more strongly than others.

Figure 10.4: Wider context for issues and loans



Description of Figure 10.4: A chart highlighting wider context with three coloured sections. Section one explains that according to the library activity data for 2023 to 2024, the number of physical book issues in libraries in England equated to around 2.3 per person (2,259 per

capita). The per capita issue rate for e-resources (e-books plus digital audio books) was 431 (DCMS, 2025). Section two explains that according to Libraries Hacked (2025), the total number of loans from libraries in England in 2023 to 2024 equated to 3 per resident per year. Adult physical book loans equated to 2 per resident per year. Children's physical book loans equated to 5 per child resident per year. Section three explains that Scotland's public libraries loaned 25.3 million items in 2023 to 2024 which is a 22.7% increase from 2022 to 2023. This equates to around 4.6 per person (CILIPS, nd).

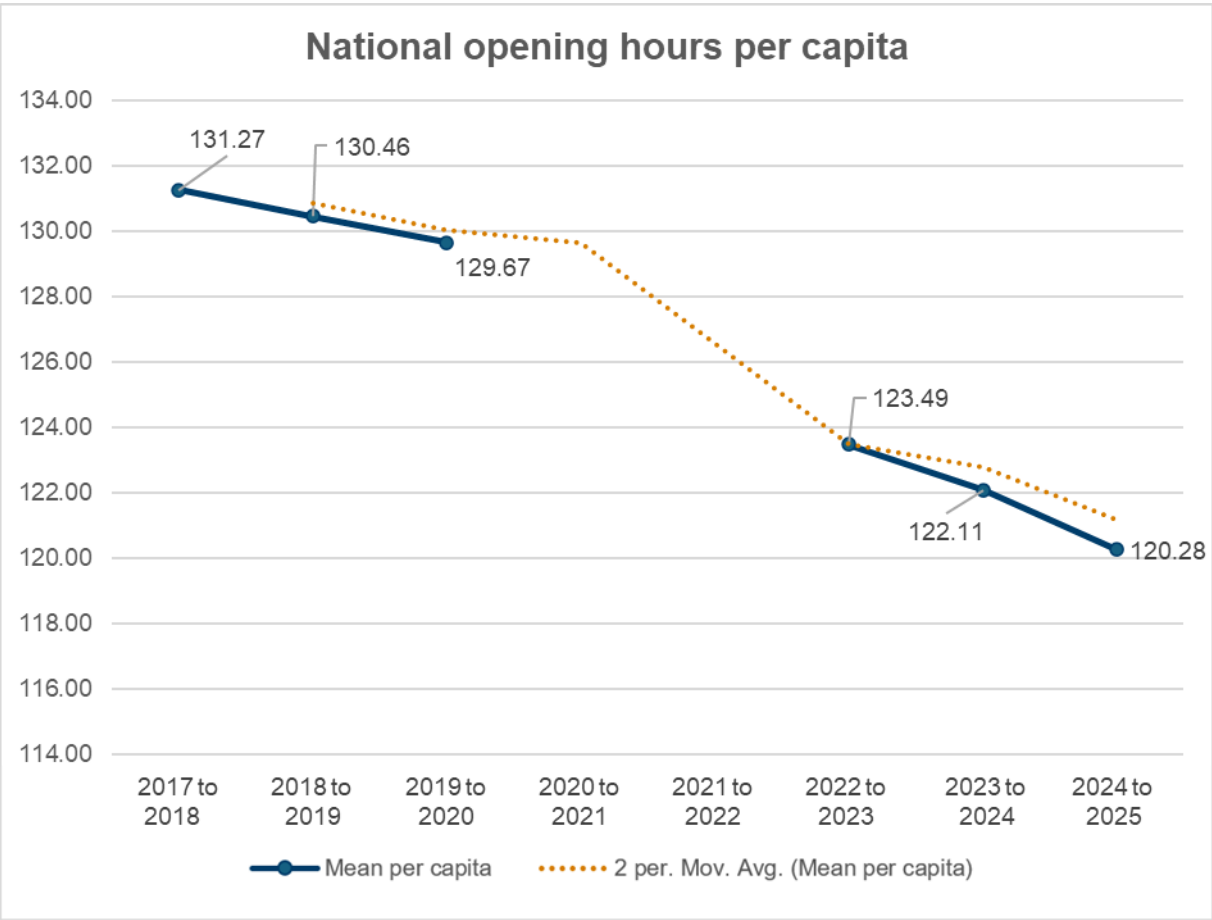
Source: [DCMS 2025](#) and [CILIPS nd](#).

11. Changes in opening hours

The research sought to answer the question ‘Have opening hours of library services changed over the Sixth Framework period?’

Fig 11.1 shows changes in opening hours per capita nationally over the Sixth Framework period as reported in QI 16. As opening hours data were not collected between 2020 and 2022 due to COVID-19 restrictions, a trend line (dotted) is added to show the moving average for changes over the Framework period. This shows that whilst opening hours were trending downwards before COVID-19, they had declined more dramatically when reporting resumed in 2022 to 2023. Opening hours continued to decrease post-COVID-19, albeit at a slower rate than they had over the pandemic.

Figure 11.1: Opening hours per capita across Welsh libraries



Description of Figure 11.1: A line graph comprising of two coloured lines which show the opening hours per capita across Welsh libraries. Line one displays the mean per capita from the reporting period 2017 to 2018 until 2024 to 2025. Line two displays the two period moving average for the mean per capita from the reporting period 2017 to 2018 until 2024 to 2025.

Source: WPLSQI 16

In 15 services, the total number of opening hours decreased between 2017 to 2018 and 2024 to 2025. However, 6 saw opening hours increase, with the remaining service

experiencing no change. The median percentage change in opening hours across the Framework was -10.5%.

As shown in Table 11.1, the median staffed opening hours per capita declined pre-COVID-19. When data collection resumed, the median per capita staffed opening hours was close to the pre-pandemic figure, but this began to decrease again and by 2024 to 2025, the median was slightly below the target for this QI. The range and interquartile range for per capita staffed opening hours both reduced towards the end of the Framework period, indicating a more consistent level of staffed opening hours per capita across Wales.

Table 11.1: Median staffed opening hours

	2017 to 2018	2018 to 2019	2019 to 2020	2022 to 2023	2023 to 2024	2024 to 2025
High	204	203	200	184	181	178
Median	132	129.5	124	127	124.5	119.5
Low	74	74	83	63	62	62
Range	130	129	117	121	119	116
Lower quartile	114	111	111	110	104	104
Upper quartile	150	152	152	148.5	135	136
Interquartile range	36	41	41	38.5	31	32

Source: WPLSQI 16

The number of services reporting unstaffed opening hours doubled from 3 to 6 during the Sixth Framework. Whilst unstaffed hours increased during the Framework period, they accounted for a relatively small proportion of total opening hours (between approximately 0.75% and 6.0%). Unstaffed hours were highest in the immediate post-COVID-19 period in 2022 to 2023. In 2024 to 2025, 4 services reported more unstaffed hours per capita than they had in 2017 to 2018, and one service reported fewer.

During the first two years of the Sixth Framework, there was some evidence that total opening hours per capita were higher in rural authorities ($p < 0.05$). However, during the remainder of the Framework period, although mean and median per capita opening hours remained higher in rural authorities compared to urban services, this difference was not statistically significant.

The number of services reporting unplanned or emergency closures of static service points in the years for which these data were collected ranged between 3 and 12. The median percentage was 0% for all years and the highest annual figures reported ranged from 0.3% to 4%. There was no obvious pattern to unplanned or emergency closures which were usually due to local factors such as weather or building issues.

The number of services reporting missed mobile stops in the years for which these data were collected ranged between 6 and 12. The median percentage ranged between 0% and 4% and the highest annual figures reported ranged from 3.7% to 11.2%.

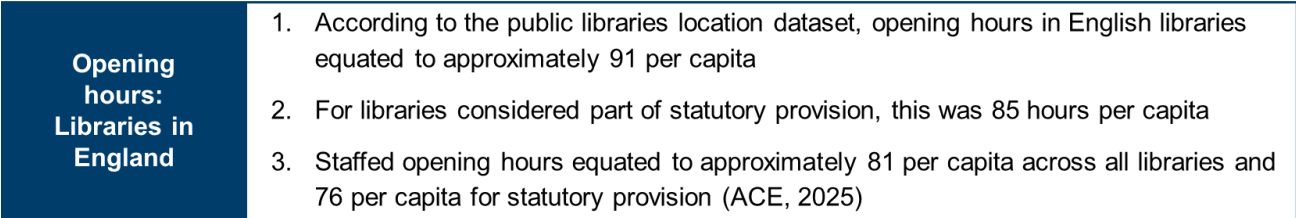
As might be expected, there was evidence of a strong positive correlation between opening hours and staffing numbers throughout the Sixth Framework period. However, it is worth noting that this relationship was even stronger in the post-COVID-19 period (Pearson’s r was between 0.863 and 0.868 pre-COVID-19, and between 0.943 and 0.959 post-COVID-19, $p<0.01$)., meaning it is very likely that changes in staffing numbers will impact on opening hours.

Nationally, opening hours per member of library staff were 7% higher in 2024 to 2025 than they had been in 2017 to 2018, meaning that libraries had maintained a higher level of opening hours in relation to the number of staff available than had been the case at the start of the Sixth Framework. However, the situation varied across the country and in 9 authorities, opening hours per staff member were lower in 2024 to 2025 than they had been in 2017 to 2018. There was no relationship between opening hours per staff member and whether an authority is urban or rural. When volunteer hours are also taken into account, opening hours per worker (staff or volunteer) increased by 4.5% during the course of the Framework. This indicates that, even taking volunteers into account, there were fewer personnel per opening hour. Whilst it is beyond the scope of this analysis to explore the implications of this, a greater proportion of staff time devoted to immediate customer facing activities may present challenges for other aspects of library service planning and provision.

11.1. Summary

Opening hours dropped noticeably over the COVID-19 pandemic and continued to decrease over the remainder of the Sixth Framework, albeit more gradually. Unstaffed opening hours increased, but still only accounted for a small proportion of total opening hours.

Figure 11.2: Wider context for opening hours



Description of Figure 11.2: A chart highlighting wider context with one coloured section. This section explains that according to the public libraries location dataset, opening hours in English libraries equated to approximately 91 per capita. For libraries considered part of statutory provision, this was 85 hours per capita. Staffed opening hours equated to approximately 81 per capita across all libraries and 76 per capita for statutory provision (ACE, 2025).

Source: [ACE 2025](#)

12. Changes in service points

The research sought to answer the question 'What changes in service points have happened over the Sixth Framework period?'

Between 2018 to 2019 and 2024 to 2025, data reported as part of the WPLS contextual background indicate that there was an overall loss nationally of 7 service points open for 10 hours a week or more. The number declined from 208 to 201. Six services saw a decrease of 1 or 2 service points. Only 1 service reported an increase in service points open for 10 hours a week or more. The number of static service points open for less than 10 hours a week remained fairly small throughout the Framework, declining from 7 to 6 between 2018 to 2019 and 2024 to 2025.

The Sixth Framework period saw a dramatic decline in mobile provision with the loss of more than two-thirds of mobiles nationally. The number of mobiles reported decreased from 29 to 9. In 2018 to 2019, 17 services had at least one mobile service, but by 2024 to 2025, only 8 did so.

The number of community libraries reported in the annual returns declined during COVID-19, but returned to close to 2018 to 2019 numbers by 2024 to 2025 when 16 were included in returns, compared to 17 in 2018 to 2019.

According to data provided in QI 7, only 2 services saw an increase in the percentage of the population living within the stipulated travel time or distance from a service point. Sixteen witnessed a decrease and 2 reported no change. It is not possible to comment on the remaining 2 services as they changed location category (based on population density) during the Framework, so the data are not comparable. Whilst the majority of changes were fairly small, 5 services saw a change of more than 15%. It is important to note that the methods of calculating this QI may have changed for some services over the course of the Framework, so figures may not be completely comparable.

Figure 12.1: Wider context for statutory provision, library loss and location of service points

Statutory provision: Libraries in England	1. In England, there was a 0.8% decrease in the number of libraries included as part of statutory provision between the end of 2019 and the end of 2024 (ACE, 2025)
Library loss: Libraries in Scotland	1. In Scotland, 54 libraries were reported to have been lost since 2013 to 2014 and 2025 (SLIC, 2025)
Location of service points: Libraries in England	1. In England and Wales, approximately 78% of the population are within a 30-minute walk of a public library 2. Urban, densely populated local authorities in England generally have a higher percentage of their population within a 15-minute walk of a public library compared with surrounding rural, sparsely populated local authorities (ONS, 2024)

Description of Figure 12.1: A chart highlighting wider context with three coloured sections. Section one explains that in England, there was a 0.8% decrease in the number of libraries included as part of statutory provision between the end of 2019 and the end of 2024 (ACE, 2025). Section two explains that in Scotland, 54 libraries were reported to have been lost since 2013 to 2014 and 2025 (SLIC, 2025). Section three explains that in England and Wales, approximately 78% of the population are within a 30-minute walk of a public library. Urban, densely populated local authorities in England generally have a higher percentage of their population within a 15-minute walk of a public library compared with surrounding rural, sparsely populated local authorities (ONS, 2024).

Source: [ACE 2025](#), [SLIC 2025](#) and [ONS 2024](#)

13. Changes in digital engagement

The research sought to answer the question 'To what extent have there been changes in digital engagement over the Sixth Framework period?'

The ways in which digital engagement has changed over the Sixth Framework period, reflects wider changes in the ways in which people use technology, for example, greater use of smartphones and other personal devices, but fewer fixed PCs. In the original Framework, library services reported on online access via QI 11, but in the Addendum, this became included within CE 7.

Customer satisfaction regarding library IT facilities is collected via QI 2. The median percentage of customers rating IT facilities as good or very good was 88% in 2017 to 2020 and 85% in 2022 to 2025. Whilst these numbers indicate high levels of satisfaction it is worth noting that they are lower than customer satisfaction for books, customer care or the library overall. The range and interquartile range of responses is also wider for satisfaction with IT facilities compared to other areas.

Trends in e-issues are reported in Section 10. This section therefore focuses on other areas of digital engagement.

13.1. Online access

The number of devices giving public access to the Internet was collected in 2017 to 2018, 2018 to 2019, 2019 to 2020 and in 2022 to 2023. The median number of devices per capita in static libraries fluctuated in the pre-COVID-19 period, but declined after. This is unsurprising as, whilst PCs remain important to some customers, digital provision moved away from fixed PC access and towards greater use of WiFi provision to support customers using their own devices. This is demonstrated by figures for the percentage of time PCs were in use. This figure was stable pre-COVID-19, but declined immediately after the pandemic period when the median percentage more than halved from 27% to 11%.

The total number of devices giving public access to the internet decreased by 9% over the data collection period. However, 6 services saw the number of devices increase. The median and national per capita (mean) number of devices per 10,000 population available in static libraries also declined over the data collection period (Table 13.1). The range for per capita devices was larger post-COVID-19, but the interquartile range reduced slightly as the pattern of changing online provision varied across the country. There was no significant difference in number of devices providing internet access in urban and rural services.

Table 13.1: Devices per 10,000 resident population giving public internet access in static libraries

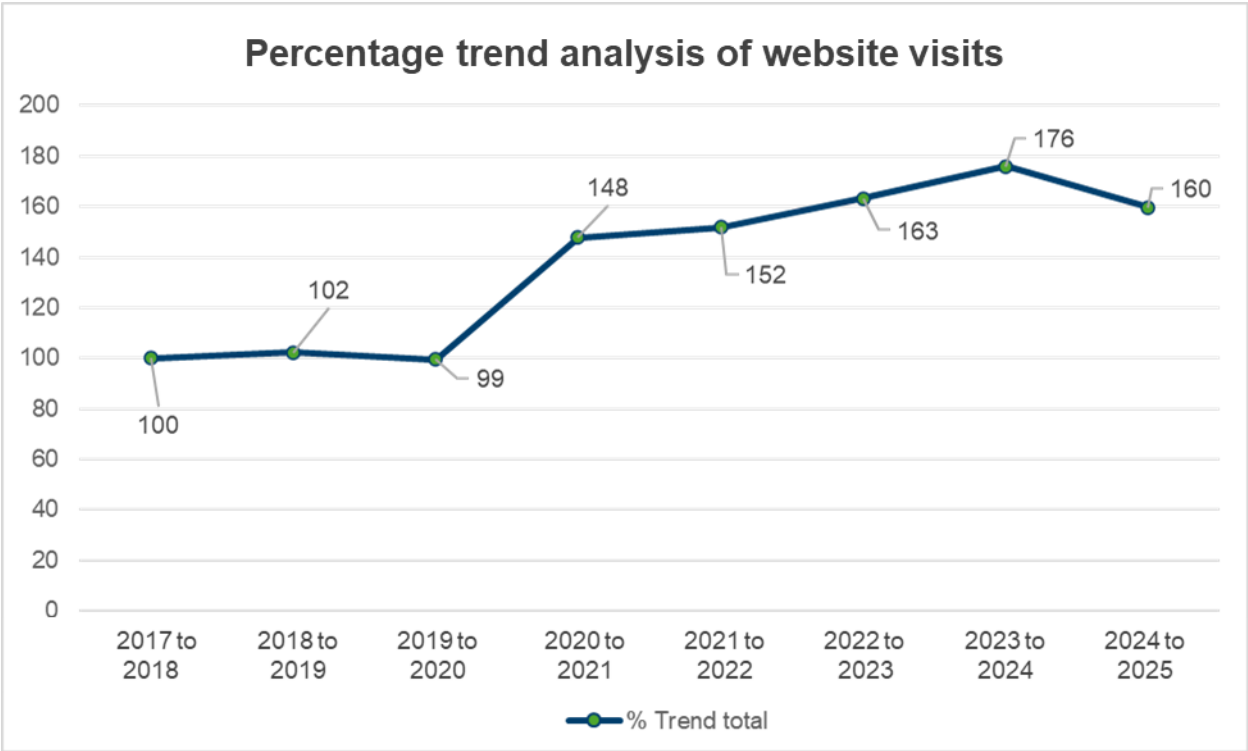
	2017 to 2018	2018 to 2019	2019 to 2020	2022 to 2023
High	13.85	13.83	13.81	16.99
Median	9.43	9.54	9.12	7.99
Low	5.02	4.95	4.46	3.32
Range	8.83	8.88	9.35	13.67
Lower quartile	7.89	7.76	7.25	6.38
Upper quartile	10.87	10.79	10.42	9.55
Interquartile range	2.98	3.03	3.17	3.17
National per capita	9.56	9.53	9.19	8.73

Source: WPLSQI 11

13.2. Website visits

Fig 13.1 shows the percentage trend in website visits nationally, taking 2017 to 2018 as the base year as reported in QI 8.

Figure 13.1: Percentage trend analysis for website visits



Description of Figure 13.1: A line graph comprising of one coloured line which shows the percentage trend analysis for website visits. Line one displays the percentage trend total from the reporting period 2017 to 2018 until 2024 to 2025.

Source: WPLSQI 8

There was a notable increase in virtual visits in 2020 to 2021 and the upward trend was sustained in subsequent years, with the exception of the final year of the Framework. However, it should be noted that much of the rise was the result of a more than 2.5-fold increase in website visits in Cardiff. The national capital, which operates a fully integrated hub model, was a notable outlier from other Welsh library services for the post-COVID-19 period. When this service is omitted, the pattern becomes one of relative stability during much of the Framework, before increasing slightly during the Addendum period. Whilst nationally, there was a 59.8% increase in total virtual visits during the Sixth Framework, when Cardiff is excluded, this falls to 13.9%. However, there were also notable differences across other areas of the country; ten authorities saw a decline in website visits during the Sixth Framework, whilst the remainder reported an increase.

The median website visits per capita declined during COVID-19, but then recovered somewhat, although it did not return to pre-COVID-19 levels by the end of the Framework period. Whilst the range increased, the interquartile range was smaller in the second half of the Framework, indicating that, disregarding outliers, there is greater consistency in the number of website visits across much of the country (Table 13.2).

Table 13.2: Per capita website visits

	2017 to 2018	2018 to 2019	2019 to 2020	2020 to 2021	2021 to 2022	2022 to 2023	2023 to 2024	2024 to 2025
High	2,211	2,205	2,131	5,983	6,768	7,979	7,851	6,035
Median	866.5	885	834	623.9	581	537.5	743	766
Low	243	345	239	100	129	124	158	5
Range	1,968	1,860	1,892	5,883	6,639	7,855	7,693	6,033
Lower quartile	473	481	434	417	269.5	365	374.5	427
Upper quartile	1,255	1,318	1,233	1,289	942	956	984	1,136
Interquartile range	782	837	799	872	673	591	610	709
National per capita	983.6	1,003.6	970.7	1,428.7	1,468.4	1,609.1	1,719.6	1,545.9

Source: WPLSQI 8

It is clear that not all services use websites in the same way. Some will have more social media traffic, for example. It is important to remember that, for some services, website traffic may represent a relatively small proportion of total digital engagement. There was no evidence of a significant difference between website visits per capita depending on whether an authority is classified as rural or urban.

13.3. Summary

Patterns of digital engagement changed during the Sixth Framework as many customers moved from using static PCs to bringing their own devices to log onto library WiFi. This inevitably affected the ways in which digital engagement took place. Virtual visits rose nationally, although the extent to which customers engaged with library service websites varied around the country. The increase in e-issues (see Section 10) also indicates increasing engagement with digital resources.

Figure 13.2: Wider context for website visits

Website visits: Libraries in Great Britain	1. CIPFA reported that web visits to libraries in Great Britain rose in 2019 to 2020 with a 25.8% increase compared to 2015 to 2016
	2. There were a total of 131 million online visits in 2019 to 2020, over 2 per person (CIPFA, 2020)
	3. Web visits continued to rise in 2020 to 2021 (CIPFA, 2022) but began to fall from 2021 to 2022 when an 8% decrease was reported. Website visits fell further to 1,703 per 1,000 people (1.7 per person) in 2022 to 2023, a 26% decrease compared to the previous year (CIPFA, 2023b)

Description of Figure 13.2: A chart highlighting wider context with one coloured section. This section explains that CIPFA reported that web visits to libraries in Great Britain rose in 2019 to 2020 with a 25.8% increase compared to 2015 to 2016. There were a total of 131 million online visits in 2019 to 2020, over 2 per person (CIPFA, 2020). Web visits continued to rise

in 2020 to 2021 (CIPFA, 2022) but began to fall from 2021 to 2022 when an 8% decrease was reported. Website visits fell further to 1,703 per 1,000 people (1.7 per person) in 2022 to 2023, a 26% decrease compared to the previous year (CIPFA, 2023b).

Source: [CIPFA 2020](#), [CIPFA 2022](#) and [CIPFA 2023b](#)

14. Changes in services targeted at disadvantaged or minority groups and individuals

The research sought to answer the question 'Have there been changes in services/activities targeting disadvantaged or minority groups or individuals?'

Libraries provide support to a wide range of individuals and groups experiencing disadvantage. These include:

- people experiencing poor mental health, anxiety, stress or low confidence
- people experiencing loneliness, social isolation or bereavement
- people with disabilities, sensory impairments or additional learning needs, including autistic individuals
- people living with dementia and their carers
- refugees, asylum seekers and people new to the UK or local area
- people experiencing homelessness or housing insecurity
- people affected by digital exclusion or data poverty
- families facing poverty or cost of living pressures
- people seeking employment, skills support or help navigating online public services
- children and young people at risk of disengagement from education, employment or training.

Information about services targeted towards disadvantaged or minority groups is provided via:

- CE 4: appropriate services, facilities and information resources for individuals and groups with special requirements
- QI 4: Support for health and wellbeing
- QI 6: Events and activities for those who have special requirements
- case studies/impact statements
- strategic statements and future direction statements that describe how services prioritise support for particular groups within their communities

Whilst the majority of services provided activities for disadvantaged or minority groups and individuals throughout the Sixth Framework, provision across the country became more consistent in the Addendum period, with all services offering events or activities for customers with special requirements in all branches open for 10 hours a week or more by the end of the Sixth Framework (QI 6).

14.1. Supporting wellbeing and reducing social isolation

A substantial strand of qualitative evidence relates to individuals experiencing loneliness, poor mental health, anxiety, bereavement or other social isolation. Libraries support people through activities such as shared reading groups, informal drop-in sessions, creative groups and community activities that provide low pressure opportunities for connection. In several examples drawn from case studies and impact statements, participation in library-based groups is associated with improved confidence, a renewed sense of routine and belonging, and reduced feelings of loneliness. Strategic and future direction statements reinforce this theme by describing an ongoing emphasis on wellbeing, loneliness reduction and inclusive community hubs. Several authorities describe plans to strengthen wellbeing support and community connection for adults who feel socially isolated.

The QI 4 data also provide evidence that Welsh libraries perform well for mental health awareness activities. Although a small number of services struggled to offer mental health awareness in some or all branches, the lower quartile rose and interquartile range reduced during the Sixth Framework, indicating an improved, and more consistent, offer across the country.

Health partnerships were available in all libraries in the majority of services. These involve library services working alongside public health bodies, social care teams and third sector organisations to deliver wellbeing support. This includes partnerships with organisations such as Public Health Wales, local health boards and mental health charities, as well as involvement in schemes such as social prescribing initiatives. The median percentage of service points offering health partnerships was 100%, with the exception of 2023 to 2024. However, not all services offered health partnerships in all service points open 10 hours a week or more. The lower quartile fell from 83% in 2019 to 2020 to between 44% and 57% post-COVID-19 as authorities sometimes found it difficult to re-establish partnerships. This resulted in a larger interquartile range, indicating more variation in the level of provision across the country.

The median percentage of service points offering Book Clubs was 90% or higher in all years for which data were collected. Whilst a number of services were unable to offer book clubs in all service points, the interquartile range decreased over the course of the Framework, providing evidence of a more consistent offer across Wales.

14.1.1. Illustrative example: the value of the Home Delivery Service

To support individuals experiencing loneliness, isolation and health related barriers to accessing library services, Monmouthshire provides a Home Delivery Service. The service provides books in a range of formats to people who are unable to visit libraries due to mobility issues or ill health. The service offers valuable social interaction through contact with library staff and for some is considered ‘a lifeline’. One customer remarked: “I was so upset when I couldn’t read because of the loss of my sight. I felt that if I couldn’t read, I’d want to die. But then the Home Delivery service came to my rescue”. ([Monmouthshire annual report 2022 to 2023](#)).

14.1.2. Illustrative example: supporting social inclusion amongst young adults

Bridgend illustrates how library services support young adults with Additional Learning Needs (ALN), particularly through close links with local day care services. One example describes a customer who visits the library regularly with his carer. These visits have contributed to improved mental health, a sense of routine, and reduced feelings of loneliness and social isolation. The library offers a calm and safe environment that supports his emotional wellbeing. The individual has used library facilities such as public computers and printers to create a book about his life, helping to develop his digital and literacy skills. He comments “The library is my second home, I love coming here”. ([Bridgend annual report 2023 to 2024](#)).

14.1.3. Illustrative example: supporting wellbeing and social connection through community hub activities

In Cardiff, one example describes a man facing increasing isolation following the death of his wife and changes in his health. Through participation in activities organised through Community Hubs, including group outings, walking activities and regular social gatherings, he was able to remain active and connected. These opportunities provided a sense of routine, companionship and engagement with others in his local area. As a result, the activities contributed positively to his wellbeing, helping to reduce isolation and strengthen his sense of belonging within the community. ([Cardiff annual report 2022 to 2023](#)).

14.2. Supporting people with disabilities, dementia and Additional Learning Needs (ALN)

Libraries frequently describe working with disabled individuals or those with Additional Learning Needs (ALN), including autistic individuals; people with learning disabilities; and people with visual, or other sensory, impairments, as well as offering support for people living with dementia. Examples of provision includes dementia cafés, dementia friendly activities, reminiscence resources, autism friendly sessions, accessible reading formats and sensory based activities.

Overall, Welsh libraries perform very well in regard to dementia-friendly provision, with the exception of a small number of services that do not offer dementia-friendly provision across some or all branches (Q1 4). Regarding Shared Reading groups (reading aloud together), the distribution was uneven across the country. The median percentage of service points offering Shared Reading groups had been increasing prior to COVID-19, but following the pandemic, the median returned to close to its 2017 to 2018 figure and stayed between 15% and 18% for the remainder of the Framework. The lower quartile fell post-COVID-19 as more services offered Shared Reading in few or no libraries. It should be noted that, whilst the generic term “reading aloud together” is included in guidance, the use of the term Shared Reading implies a particular scheme with its own training programme which some services struggled to be able to afford to send staff on, or felt they were no longer able to offer if a trained member of staff left the service.

Several impact statements describe how accessible collections and staff support individuals to continue to read and participate despite deteriorating sight or other health conditions. Other examples describe structured or adapted sessions designed to be welcoming for autistic children and young people, or people with learning disabilities. Strategic statements also describe plans to improve accessibility through dementia-friendly resources, accessible collections and inclusive environments.

14.2.1. Illustrative example: supporting independence and life transitions for individuals with learning difficulties

Ceredigion library service illustrates how library services can support individuals with learning difficulties to develop independence and navigate significant life changes. One example describes a woman in her 60s who was adjusting to independent living following the loss of her parents. With support from library staff, she was connected to key services including Social Services and Citizens Advice, and received assistance completing online processes such as applying for a passport and securing a bus pass. This support enabled her to access essential services, manage day to day tasks and maintain mobility, including travelling independently to visit friends. She now visits the library regularly, where the welcoming environment and ongoing interaction with staff contribute to her confidence and sense of belonging. Her experience illustrates how libraries can provide practical, personalised support that promotes independence, inclusion and wellbeing. ([Ceredigion annual report 2024 to 2025](#)).

14.2.2. Illustrative example: supporting independence and wellbeing for people living with dementia

Denbighshire provides an example of how library services supported an individual living with dementia to remain active, engaged and independent. A man, who had retired early, visited the library with his wife to explore available resources. The couple found the environment to be welcoming and inclusive, and valued the ability of staff to communicate effectively and sensitively. The library provides a space where he feels comfortable and able to maintain his independence, while also offering a wide range of physical and digital resources that support ongoing learning and mental stimulation. These include materials that can be accessed both in the library and at home. He comments “it’s such an incredibly helpful and interesting resource – I feel privileged to have access to it”. ([Denbighshire annual report 2022 to 2023](#)).

14.3. Supporting refugees, migrants and new communities

Libraries are described as welcoming environments which can support refugees, asylum seekers and people new to the UK to build social networks, develop language skills, access information and regain confidence after displacement or migration. Strategic statements reinforce this through references to language support, resettlement related activity and inclusive programming designed to help new residents feel part of their communities.

14.3.1. Illustrative example: supporting refugee integration and community connection through partnership working

Neath Port Talbot illustrates how library services have supported Ukrainian refugees resettled in the area through partnership working and community based activities. Working alongside Local Area Coordinators, the library developed a programme of sessions and workshops, including coffee mornings, that provided a welcoming space for refugees to meet, access support from local authority services and connect with local residents. These activities created opportunities for social interaction, cultural exchange and participation in wider library groups. As a result, children were able to build friendships and gain confidence, while families reported feeling more connected to their local community. The library provided a safe and supportive environment where individuals could begin to rebuild a sense of belonging. One refugee commented: “I find myself entirely happy being here. That’s my escape from my own reality.” ([Neath Port Talbot annual report 2022 to 2023](#)).

14.3.2. Illustrative example: supporting refugee integration and access to services

Rhondda Cynon Taf illustrates how libraries support refugee resettlement and community integration. Pontypridd Library provides a safe and welcoming space for regular meetings between the Resettlement Team and refugee families, enabling face to face support across areas such as housing, education and health. Library staff also promote services, encourage membership and connect families to activities including children’s sessions.

The library has developed collections in various languages, helping refugees maintain connections to their first languages while settling into the community. Feedback indicates that the library environment reduces anxiety, builds confidence and supports access to local services and networks. The example highlights the role of libraries in supporting inclusion, community cohesion and successful resettlement. ([Rhondda Cynon Taf annual report 2024 to 2025](#)).

14.4. Supporting people experiencing economic hardship, homelessness and related vulnerability

The qualitative evidence includes examples of libraries supporting individuals and families facing poverty, unemployment, homelessness and cost of living pressures. Libraries are often described as entry points where individuals can access computers; receive support completing forms and applications; and connect with wider advice and support services. Strategic statements from later years of the Framework also highlight the role of libraries as welcoming community spaces providing support during the cost of living crisis.

14.4.1. Illustrative example: supporting a homeless individual to rebuild independence

Swansea libraries provides an example of support for a man who was homeless and without social connections following release from prison. He had learned about library services during his time in HMP Swansea, where Swansea Council Libraries provides a library service. After release, he used the ‘warm-space’ provision in the library, alongside

accessing other services. While seeking accommodation, library staff supported him with research and signposted him to relevant services. He subsequently secured housing and employment and reported being appreciative of the support he received, as well as the kindness and respect shown by library staff. ([Swansea annual report 2023 to 2024](#)).

14.4.2. Illustrative example: supporting wellbeing during financial hardship through warm spaces

Blaenau Gwent highlights the value of the Warm Spaces initiative and associated activities introduced in October 2022. Customers experiencing financial pressures valued having access to a warm, safe and welcoming environment that supported companionship and wellbeing. Many also took part in activities such as Knit and Natter and Cuppa and Company sessions, as well as benefitting from free access to WiFi and computers.

One customer who had lost his job reported that, alongside valuing the warm space, the support received from the library contributed to him securing new employment and accommodation, and reflected that “without the library I think I would have ended up on the streets”. ([Blaenau Gwent annual report 2022 to 2023](#)).

14.5. Addressing digital exclusion and enabling access to services

Digital exclusion appears as one of the most consistently evidenced forms of disadvantage across the Framework. Libraries support individuals who lack digital skills, internet access or confidence using online services. Support includes one-to-one digital assistance, digital skills training and device lending schemes. Strategic statements describe libraries as important providers of digital inclusion infrastructure, helping people access public services and employment resources.

14.5.1. Illustrative example: supporting digital inclusion and connection through tablet lending

Vale of Glamorgan libraries delivered a digital partnership project which was a scheme to lend WiFi enabled tablets to library members to reduce digital exclusion. This project removed barriers for those individuals without access to the internet and those without digital skills. For one retired woman, the loaned iPad was a lifeline, enabling her to keep in contact with her family, alongside shopping online, finding information and entertainment. ([Vale of Glamorgan annual report 2019 to 2020](#)).

14.5.2. Illustrative example: supporting older and vulnerable people through home based digital support

In Gwynedd, the Home Digital Support Service, an extension to the Mobile Home Delivery Service, provides digital support for older and vulnerable people who rely on technology as a means of engaging with the outside world. The service helped one older man set up his new internet box, and connect devices, while providing him with information on the range of digital services provided by the library. This was critical for him in maintaining links with family and accessing media and services. ([Gwynedd annual report 2018 to 2019](#)).

14.5.3. Illustrative example: supporting wellbeing and connection through digital access and learning

Powys provides an example of how library services support individuals through digital assistance and access to online resources. One customer was supported to access Welsh language classes online, enabling her to engage in cultural activities from home. This helped keep her mentally active and reduced feelings of boredom and isolation. Access to meditation resources also supported her mental health and helped her manage stress and anxiety linked to a health condition. Through this support, she was able to use technology to stay connected with friends and family, contributing to a sense of belonging and improved wellbeing. Overall, the support had a positive impact on her health and quality of life. ([Powys annual report 2022 to 2023](#)).

14.6. Supporting young people and reducing risk of disengagement

Libraries provide activities that support children and young people, particularly those who may struggle to engage with traditional educational environments. Programmes such as creative workshops, digital activities and makerspaces offer opportunities to develop confidence, explore interests and build skills. Strategic and future direction statements also emphasise the role of libraries in supporting learning and improving life chances for young people.

Storytimes and Baby Rhyme Times are an area where most services performed well during the Sixth Framework period. The median percentage of service points where these were available was 100% in years when figures were collected. The interquartile range was small, indicating a high level of coverage across the country for these activities.

14.6.1. Illustrative example: supporting young people's skills, confidence and employability through Makerspaces

Vale of Glamorgan highlights the role of Barry Library's Makerspace in supporting young people at risk of disengagement from education, employment or training. Opened in April 2023, the Makerspace provides access to innovative digital technology and forms part of the library's refreshed digital offer. For example, six young people enrolled on a Bridge Programme at Cardiff and the Vale College, designed to build confidence, develop digital skills and support progression into further learning. As part of the programme, participants attended sessions in the library's Makerspace, where they completed a digital design project using specialist software and equipment, culminating in a final exhibition. Through these sessions, the young people developed digital, creative and independent learning skills. Their tutor reported increased confidence and engagement, commenting: "Seeing learners' step beyond their comfort zones, engaging with external organisations has been truly inspiring." This example demonstrates how library services can support skills development, confidence and future employability while engaging new users. ([Vale of Glamorgan annual report 2023 to 2024](#)).

14.6.2. Illustrative example: engaging young people and supporting creativity through arts based activities

Isle of Anglesey highlights the value of a library based graffiti workshop in engaging young people and supporting creativity. Llangefni and Holyhead Libraries worked with young people through a workshop led by artist Andy Birch, aimed at encouraging creativity and attracting new users to the library. Participants designed graffiti-style name boards and contributed ideas in both English and Welsh for a mural at Llangefni Library. These were incorporated into a vibrant artwork celebrating reading and reflecting the creativity and collaboration of local young people. The mural has been well received and has fostered a sense of pride and ownership among participants. Feedback from participants and parents was 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.” The example demonstrates how libraries can engage young people, support self-expression and strengthen community connections. ([Isle of Anglesey annual report 2024 to 2025](#)).

14.6.3. Illustrative example: engaging children and strengthening school partnerships through library visits

Pembrokeshire libraries highlights the value of school visits in engaging children and strengthening links between libraries and local schools. Visits to Milford Haven Library provided opportunities to promote library services, encourage new memberships and engage children who had not visited for some time. They also enabled closer collaboration with teaching staff, with library staff supporting classroom learning by preparing resources on specific topics. The visits helped build stronger relationships with schools and created opportunities to introduce children and their families to library services. Feedback from children, parents and staff was highly positive. One parent commented that daughter, “said her trip to the library was so much fun! She liked being read to and all the books there.” A Learning Support Assistant commented “I would like to take this opportunity to say a huge thank you for being so welcoming and giving our children such a lovely experience and showing them what a wonderful, free resource that we have on our doorstep. I hope that the children continue to come back year on year with their families and eventually on their own.” ([Pembrokeshire annual report 2023 to 2024](#)).

15. Impact of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic

The research sought to answer the question ‘What can the WPLS Sixth Framework data tell us about the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on Welsh library services?’

The COVID-19 pandemic had a significant impact on the operation of Welsh public library services. The closure of library buildings during lockdown periods meant that many traditional services could not operate in their usual form. To deliver a service during the pandemic, libraries had to adapt their offer rapidly. In 2020 to 2021, measures introduced included:

- allowing automatic loan renewals across all library services in Wales
- going fine free, either permanently or temporarily
- expanding the availability of online resources, supported by an additional £500,000 of Welsh Government funding to purchase resources
- offering online sessions including Welsh language; reminiscence sessions for care home residents; and story time and rhyme time sessions.
- a total of 7,797 online sessions, attended by 618,349 individuals in 2020 to 2021 and 2021 to 2022
- staff making befriending phone calls to vulnerable customers who were shielding
- introducing self-service digital click & collect lockers in some services to enable customers to reserve items and collect from the locker at a time convenient to them. In 2020 to 2021 and 2021 to 2022, Welsh library services provided a total of 251,967 click and collect issues
- offering Bookstart Dechrau Da and Baby and Early Years packs to families of babies and young children through the library service whilst health visitor face to face services were suspended
- a number of library staff were redeployed and provided support to shielding families through the delivery of food and prescriptions

It should be noted that it was, understandably, not possible to collect the entire WPLS dataset during the years most affected by the pandemic. This means it is not possible to comment fully on some trends over this time.

15.1. Usage patterns

Library usage was inevitably affected by COVID-19 as service points closed during lockdowns and some services and activities were moved online. In terms of physical library visits, national per capita figures were steady pre-COVID-19, but there was a notable decline when data collection resumed in 2022 to 2023. Physical visitor figures were not collected in the Addendum period.

Active borrower numbers fell almost universally during the first year of the pandemic, but from 2021 to 2022, they began to recover. However, borrower numbers remained below pre-pandemic levels. It is worth noting though that active borrower figures were more consistent across the country post-COVID-19 as the interquartile range reduced. The proportion of library members who were active borrowers fluctuated considerably across the Sixth Framework, both nationally and within particular services. This is likely due in part to the timing of database purges.

Changing issue patterns are discussed in greater detail in Section 10. In summary, adult issue numbers fell at the start of the pandemic, but then rose in all services in 2021 to 2022, but only one service returned to pre-pandemic levels during the Sixth Framework. Children's issues also rebounded in all services as COVID-19 restrictions were lifted. By 2023 to 2024, issue figures reported for children's resources had recovered from the COVID-19-related reductions and were above 2019 to 2020 levels.

The increasing use of digital services, which expanded significantly during the pandemic, continued post-COVID-19. The upward trend in e-issues at the end of the Framework is consistent across the majority of authorities and looks set to continue, although perhaps at a slower rate than in the years immediately following the pandemic.

Comparing changes in issue figures across the country, it is apparent that some services recovered relatively rapidly, whilst others continued to find it more difficult more to emerge from the impact of the pandemic.

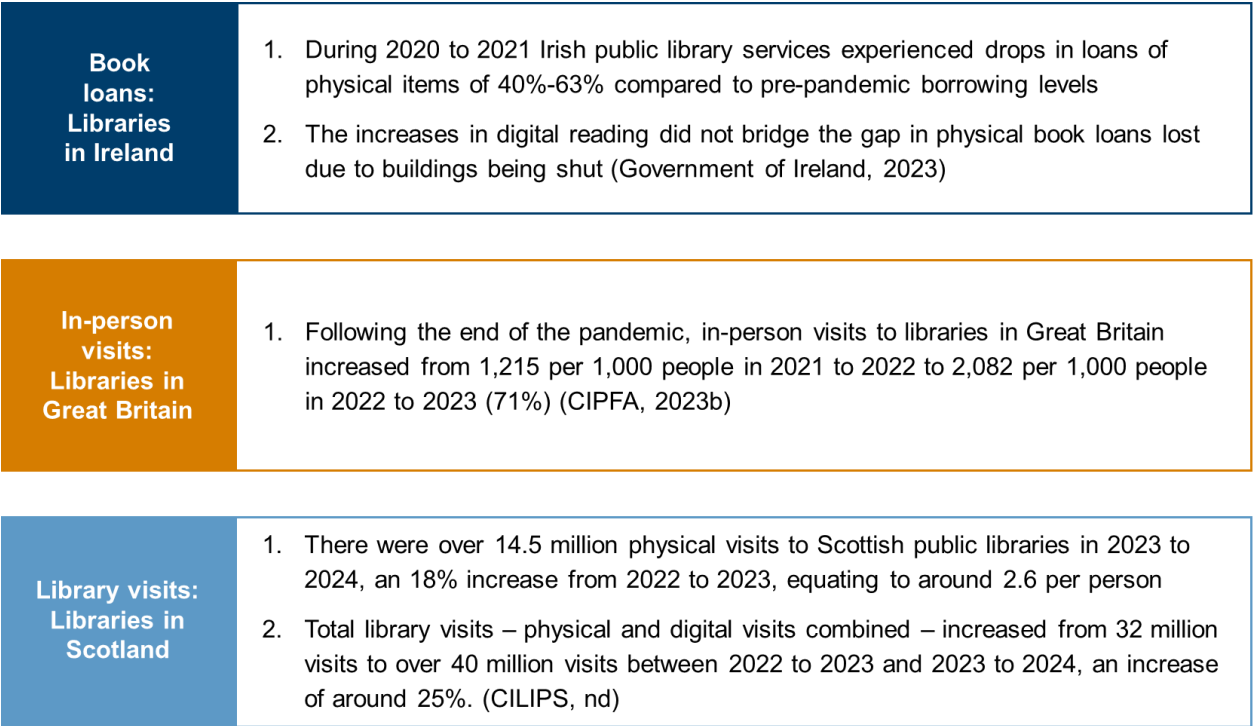
15.1.1. Illustrative example: the value of the home library service

Flintshire Libraries' home library service continued throughout the pandemic and gained additional customers, including those who were isolating and unable to visit their local or mobile library. The regular deliveries ensured ongoing access to reading materials while also providing a point of contact for individuals who were spending long periods at home. A bereaved customer noted the following: "During the pandemic I joined the Home Library service...I look forward to my bag of books and always receive a variety of choice....my reading helps take me to another world, at a time when I need to find a happy place." ([Flintshire annual report 2020 to 2021](#)).

15.1.2. Illustrative example: reducing isolation through digital inclusion and partnership working

In Wrexham, library staff worked in partnership with adult social care teams to deliver a project aimed at supporting vulnerable residents. Through funding from a Community Inclusion Grant, iPads with 4G connectivity were provided to individuals identified as being at risk of isolation. This enabled participants to stay in contact with friends and family, as well as access digital resources such as audiobooks through the library service. The devices provided a vital means of connection, helping individuals remain engaged and reducing feelings of isolation. ([Wrexham annual report 2020 to 2021](#)).

Figure 15.1: Wider context for book loans, in-person visits and library visits



Description of Figure 15.1: A chart highlighting wider context with three coloured sections. Section one explains that during 2020 to 2021 Irish public library services experienced drops in loans of physical items of 40%-63% compared to pre-pandemic borrowing levels. The increases in digital reading did not bridge the gap in physical book loans lost due to buildings being shut (Government of Ireland, 2023). Section two explains that following the end of the pandemic, in-person visits to libraries in Great Britain increased from 1,215 per 1,000 people in 2021 to 2022 to 2,082 per 1,000 people in 2022 to 2023 (71%) (CIPFA, 2023b). Section three explains that there were over 14.5 million physical visits to Scottish public libraries in 2023 to 2024, an 18% increase from 2022 to 2023, equating to around 2.6 per person. Total library visits, both physical and digital visits combined, increased from 32 million visits to over 40 million visits between 2022 to 2023 and 2023 to 2024, an increase of around 25%. (CILIPS, nd).

Source: [Government of Ireland 2023](#), [CIPFA 2023b](#) and [CILIPS nd](#)

15.2. Strategy and planning

Future direction statements frequently refer to the uncertainty created by the pandemic and the need for services to reconsider their priorities and planning frameworks. Some services reported delays in strategy development or changes to planned projects as attention shifted to maintaining essential services and supporting communities.

Future direction statements from later years indicate that services were working to encourage people to return to library buildings while continuing to develop digital services that had proved valuable during the pandemic.

15.3. Activity, event and customer training provision

Inevitably, it took some time for event provision to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic period. However, by 2023 to 2024, there was evidence that customers were returning to libraries in increasing numbers to take part in a wide range of events, activities and training opportunities.

Formal training attendance figures showed signs of a slight decrease pre-COVID-19. Attendance then dipped further during the pandemic before starting to gradually increase again, although it did not return to pre-COVID-19 levels. It is therefore difficult to say whether COVID-19 simply exacerbated an existing trend of declining provision in this area. Whilst the majority of services broadly followed a similar trend, a number exhibited a different pattern, for example, showing a notable increase in attendance in the post-COVID-19 years, or alternatively a sustained decline post-COVID-19 with limited evidence of recovery. It is important to note that figures collected for this measure are influenced by partners who frequently deliver training in conjunction with the library, so some of the fluctuation may be due to changes in local partnership arrangements.

Median informal support figures dipped after COVID-19 then started to increase again gradually, although they did not return to pre-COVID-19 levels. However, there was a high degree of variation between authorities. Some followed the pattern described, but others did not, for example, maintaining pre-COVID-19 figures in 2022 to 2023, but then declining drastically in the following years. Some figures appear anomalous and not realistic as an annual change in a service. This suggests the way these data are collected is not consistent. In 2024 to 2025, in particular, the range of values was notably wider than in previous years.

Event attendance figures were rising pre-COVID-19. Figures fell during the pandemic, but then started to increase again and exceeded pre-COVID-19 figures by 2024 to 2025. However, figures varied widely across Wales and the range and interquartile range widened during the Addendum period as some services appeared to struggle to recover.

15.3.1. Illustrative example: supporting wellbeing and reducing social isolation through online reading groups

Newport library service provides an example of a services adapting to support wellbeing and reduce social isolation during the pandemic by moving a shared reading group online. The group continued to meet regularly, providing an important opportunity for social interaction at a time when many participants had limited contact outside their immediate households. Sessions combined informal conversation with shared reading, creating space for participants to connect, share experiences and support one another. The group became an important source of routine, connection and emotional support, particularly for those living alone. Feedback from participants highlights the value of the sessions. One member commented: "During the last year, the Shared Reading Group has been a little taste of normality in a very strange world....This service has impacted on me greatly as I live alone, and it is something to look forward to on a Wednesday. To feel a little more cultured and

knowledgeable and less lonely by the end of our session.” ([Newport annual report 2020 to 2021](#)).

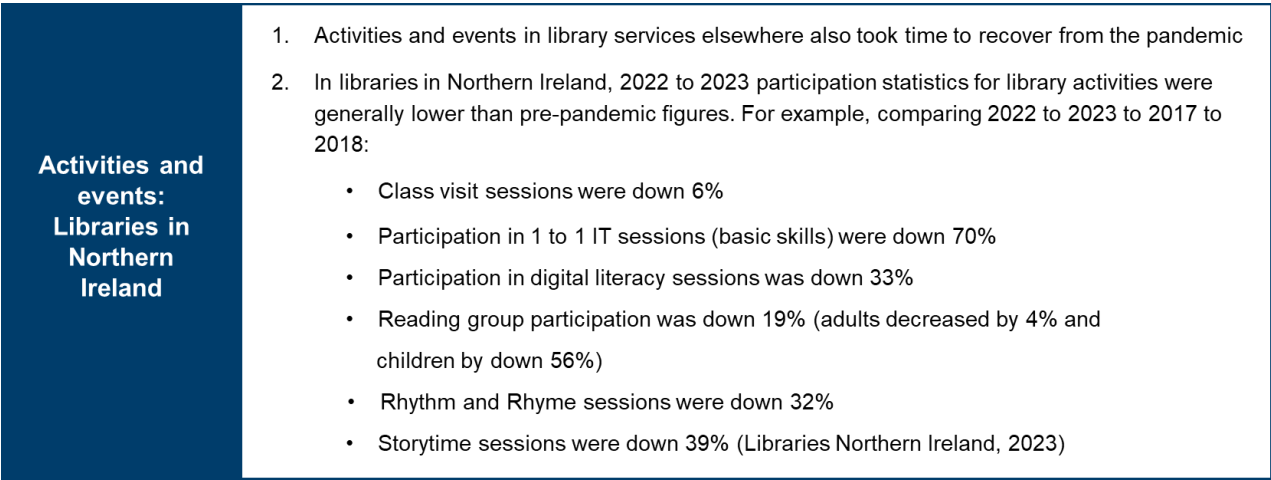
15.3.2. Illustrative example: supporting care home residents’ wellbeing through digital outreach activities

Bridgend highlights how library services adapted outreach activity during the pandemic by delivering storytelling and reminiscence sessions to care home residents via Zoom. With in person visits paused, library staff worked with local care homes to provide interactive sessions using stories, images and family history materials to stimulate conversation and shared memories. These sessions offered residents a change to routine, opportunities for social interaction and a chance to engage in new activities. They also supported relaxation and wellbeing by creating a calm and engaging environment. A member of staff at the care home said: “I have found that these sessions are beneficial for relaxation as they concentrate on listening and it helps them feel calm...I just wanted to let you know the positive impact the stories are having and that we appreciate you taking the time to do these with us.” ([Bridgend annual report 2020 to 2021](#)).

15.3.3. Illustrative example: building digital confidence and social connection through virtual book groups

Torfaen libraries highlight how a virtual book club established during the pandemic supported both social connection and digital confidence. With libraries closed, the group used the BorrowBox service to access shared reading materials suitable for online discussion. Library staff supported members to participate and facilitated the transition to Microsoft Teams. The first session was attended by 12 members, the majority of whom were in their 70s and 80s, lived alone and had not previously used virtual meeting platforms. Despite initial technical challenges, participants quickly adapted. The group helped reduce social isolation and loneliness while also building confidence in using digital technology. ([Torfaen annual report 2020 to 2021](#)).

Figure 15.2: Wider context for activities and events



Description of Figure 15.2: A chart highlighting wider context with one coloured section. This section explains that activities and events in library services elsewhere also took time to

recover from the pandemic. In libraries in Northern Ireland, 2022 to 2023 participation statistics for library activities were generally lower than pre-pandemic figures. For example, comparing 2022 to 2023 to 2017 to 2018 it showed the following; class visit sessions were down 6%; participation in 1 to 1 IT sessions (basic skills) were down 70%; participation in digital literacy sessions was down 33%; reading group participation was down 19% (adults decreased by 4% and children down by 56%); Rhythm and Rhyme sessions were down 32%; and Storytime sessions were down 39% (Libraries Northern Ireland, 2023).

Source: [Libraries Northern Ireland, 2023](#)

15.4. Customer satisfaction and impact of library services

As Welsh library services are only required to carry out a customer survey once every three years, results for the Sixth Framework period fall into pre-COVID-19 (2017 to 2020) and post-COVID-19 (2022 to 2025) groupings. Whilst it is not possible to attribute any changes in responses in these two timeframes directly to the pandemic, it is worth noting differences between the two datasets.

The median percentage of adults who thought that using the library had helped them to develop new skills was lower post-COVID-19. At the same time, the interquartile range reduced, meaning there was greater consistency in the way that the majority of services performed, but there were several outliers at the lower end of the scale. There was some evidence of a statistically significant difference between pre- and post-COVID-19 figures for this measure (Student's $t=2.32$, $p<0.05$).

The median percentage of adults who found helpful information for health and wellbeing at the library was also lower post-COVID-19. Again, whilst the interquartile range reduced, there were several outliers at the lower end of the scale as the range increased. There was some evidence of a statistically significant difference between pre- and post-COVID-19 figures (Student's $t=2.24$, $p<0.05$).

The pattern of adults who experience the library as an enjoyable, safe and inclusive place changed little between pre- and post-COVID-19 figures. The median remained the same and the range of values was slightly smaller post-COVID-19. The median percentage of adults who think the library had made a difference to their lives was slightly lower post-COVID-19. The interquartile range was smaller, but there were more outliers at the lower end of the scale. There was little difference between pre- and post-COVID-19 figures for the percentage of young people who think the library helps them to learn; the median, range and interquartile range all saw little change. For these three measures, there was no evidence of a statistically significant difference between pre- and post-COVID-19 figures.

There was little difference between pre- and post-COVID-19 figures for any of the customer service measures, namely the percentage of adults rating the choice of books, IT facilities, customer care or library overall as 'very good' or 'good' and rating out of 10 by children and young people. In all cases, there were only slight changes in the median, range and interquartile range.

15.5. Staffing and volunteers

During the COVID-19 pandemic, library staff in several Welsh authorities contributed to wider community support initiatives organised by their local authorities. Staff were redeployed or volunteered to assist with activities such as welfare calls to vulnerable residents, helping coordinate community support networks, delivering essential supplies and supporting services assisting people who were shielding or isolated. These activities demonstrated the adaptability of library staff and the broader civic role that library services can play during periods of crisis. The example highlights how library staff contributed to local authority emergency responses while continuing to support library users in new ways.

Volunteer numbers fell during COVID-19 due to lockdowns and other restrictions. Although numbers recovered in the years that followed, the median number of volunteers and volunteer hours were below their pre-COVID-19 figures at end of the Sixth Framework. Nevertheless, a small number of authorities were outliers, having considerably higher volunteer numbers and/or volunteer hours than the majority of services. The gap between these services and the remainder of Welsh library authorities increased in the post-COVID-19 period.

15.5.1. Illustrative example: library staff redeployment to support vulnerable residents

Conwy library service highlights how library staff supported vulnerable residents during lockdown through redeployment to call handling, brokerage and shielding support teams. In these roles, staff provided practical and emotional support to individuals who were frightened, confused or in need of assistance. With high demand affecting access to food and medicine, particularly in the early stages of the pandemic, library staff played a key role in ensuring that vulnerable residents received essential supplies. They worked closely with partners, including food banks and community groups, to coordinate support. One member of staff noted: “The collaborative work we did with existing food banks, and those set up by local community groups was heartening. Their support and immediate response to requests for help were invaluable to us in resolving difficult situations”. ([Conwy annual report 2020 to 2021](#)).

15.5.2. Illustrative example: library staff supporting community wellbeing and connection

Merthyr Tydfil libraries highlights how library staff responded quickly during the first lockdown to support their communities. Staff established networks on digital platforms to stay connected, share information and ensure that individuals were not left isolated during a difficult period. The team also sought out volunteering opportunities, including delivering free school meals to children, and maintained regular contact with Homelink customers to support those at risk of isolation. In addition, some staff contributed to local NHS support efforts by collecting food and toiletries for hospital staff under pressure. ([Merthyr Tydfil annual report 2020 to 2021](#)).

Figure 15.3: Wider context for volunteer numbers

Volunteer numbers: Libraries in Great Britain	1. In 2022 to 2023, CIPFA reported that, while staff levels in libraries in Great Britain had remained steady, the number of volunteers showed significant recovery since 2021 to 2022 2. Volunteer numbers rose from 0.34 per 1,000 people in 2021 to 2022 to 0.59 in 2022 to 2023, a 74% increase
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Description of Figure 15.3: A chart highlighting wider context with one coloured section. This section explains that in 2022 to 2023, CIPFA reported that, while staff levels in libraries in Great Britain had remained steady, the number of volunteers showed significant recovery since 2021 to 2022. Volunteer numbers rose from 0.34 per 1,000 people in 2021 to 2022 to 0.59 in 2022 to 2023, a 74% increase.

Source: [CIPFA 2023b](#)

15.6. Summary

During COVID-19, libraries experienced significant disruption to normal service delivery but adapted rapidly by expanding digital services, introducing new service models and maintaining access to resources wherever possible. At the same time, libraries played an important role in supporting their communities. Through online activities, home delivery services and wider community support initiatives, libraries helped reduce isolation, maintain access to reading and information and provide practical assistance to residents. As services moved into the recovery phase, attention shifted towards rebuilding engagement and integrating the lessons learned during the pandemic into future service development. However, it is clear that some services rebounded more quickly than others. It is difficult to comment on patterns of post-COVID-19 recovery across Welsh library services based on the WPLS data alone. For example, health inequalities and economic disparity, exacerbated during the pandemic, may play a role in recovery in different localities.

Many of the changes initially brought about, or accelerated, by the pandemic appear to have long lasting implications for Welsh libraries. For example, the decline in adult book issues and corresponding rise in e-issues was undoubtedly boosted by the COVID-19 lockdowns. National level improvements in some areas should not mask that fact that some services continued to struggle to recover long after restrictions were lifted.

16. Conclusions

This study examined trends in Welsh public library provision during the WPLS Sixth Framework period (2017 to 2025). Drawing on both quantitative and qualitative evidence, the analysis provides insight into how library services evolved during a period marked by structural pressures, the disruption of the COVID-19 pandemic, and subsequent recovery.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that Welsh public libraries continued to deliver a broad range of services and supported Welsh Government policy priorities associated with the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015. However, the analysis also identifies a number of pressures affecting the sector, particularly in relation to staffing, opening hours, service points and financial resourcing.

Stability of the core library offer

The fundamental elements of the statutory public library service in Wales remained largely stable across the Sixth Framework period. Most Core Entitlements were met, in full or in part, by the majority of Welsh library services throughout the Framework. The core foundations of the public library service therefore remain firmly embedded across the Welsh library network.

However, a small number of Core Entitlements proved more challenging to meet consistently. In particular, those relating to opening hours, user consultation and strategic planning showed greater variation between authorities and across years. These challenges appear to be associated with wider pressures on staffing capacity and operational resources.

Performance against the WPLS Quality Indicators presents a mixed picture. Several indicators relating to service delivery and community activity were consistently met by the majority of authorities. For example, indicators associated with digital support, reader development, health and wellbeing services, and internet access remained strong across the framework period. Conversely, indicators associated with staffing levels, opening hours and stock provision were more challenging. In particular, the staffing-related indicator was not met in full by any service during the Sixth Framework. In addition, the proportion of services meeting the opening hours target declined over time.

Overall, the evidence suggests that while the statutory framework continues to provide a stable foundation for library provision, the capacity of services to consistently meet all aspects of that framework is increasingly influenced by underlying resource constraints.

Challenges for Welsh libraries

One of the clearest trends identified in the analysis is the gradual reduction in staffing levels across Welsh library services during the Sixth Framework period. Nationally, library staffing declined by approximately 12.9%, with an even larger reduction in qualified professional staff. These changes occurred gradually over the period rather than as a result of a single event.

The analysis also indicates a strong relationship between staffing levels and service capacity. For example, staffing levels show a strong positive correlation with opening hours, highlighting the operational link between workforce capacity and service availability.

Alongside staffing changes, the number of library service points and total opening hours also declined across Wales. Although the scale of these changes varies between authorities, the overall national trend suggests a gradual reduction in physical service infrastructure during the framework period. Despite this, the majority of services have continued to deliver the core functions expected within the WPLS framework.

Financial trends and resource allocation

Financial data suggest that, although total revenue expenditure increased slightly across the framework period, this increase did not keep pace with inflation. When adjusted for inflation, overall spending on library services is around 13.5% lower in real terms. Only a small number of authorities experienced real-term increases in revenue expenditure.

These financial pressures are reflected in several operational indicators. In particular, stock acquisition targets were among the most difficult for services to meet. The analysis suggests that maintaining up-to-date collections and resource investment remains a continuing challenge for many authorities.

At the same time, investment in digital resources and infrastructure has become increasingly important. Libraries have continued to support access to digital services, online resources and e-government.

Impact of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic represents a major contextual factor affecting the Sixth Framework period. The pandemic disrupted data collection, reduced physical access to services and required library services to adapt rapidly to changing circumstances. The pandemic also accelerated certain developments, including digital engagement and the expansion of online services.

Recovery from the pandemic period was not consistent across the country. Whilst some services recovered relatively quickly in terms of visitor numbers, issues, events and so forth, the impact of the pandemic was more long-lasting in other services. Headline national figures can mask a variety of experiences in library services across Wales.

Overall assessment

The evidence suggests that Welsh public libraries remained resilient throughout the Sixth Framework period and continued to deliver a wide range of services that support national policy priorities and community wellbeing. Libraries continue to provide significant social value, supporting learning, wellbeing, inclusion and cultural participation across Wales. However, the analysis also indicates that the sector is operating within increasingly constrained resources. Declines in staffing levels, reductions in service points and pressures on revenue expenditure put increasing pressure on library services and the

impacts are evident in the growing challenges many library services face in meeting Core Entitlements and Quality Indicator targets.

Annex A: Changes in Core Entitlement and Quality Indicator data

Note: data reported for all CEs and QIs were affected to some extent by the COVID-19 pandemic in 2019 to 2020, 2020 to 2021 and 2021 to 2022.

Core Entitlements

Core Entitlement 1: Reported in all years.

Core Entitlement 2: Reported in all years.

Core Entitlement 3: Reported in all years.

Core Entitlement 4: Reported in all years.

Core Entitlement 5: Reported in all years.

Core Entitlement 6: Reported in all years. Minor amendment for 2023 to 2024 and 2024 to 2025 to address issues around administration fees.

Core Entitlement 7: Reported in all years. Minor amendments for 2023 to 2024 and 2024 to 2025 to note provision depends on nature of service point and substitute 'digital equipment' for 'computers'. Incorporates QI 11 in 2023 to 2024 and 2024 to 2025.

Core Entitlement 8: Reported in all years.

Core Entitlement 9: Reported in all years.

Core Entitlement 10: Reported in all years.

Core Entitlement 11: Reported in all years. Minor amendment for 2023 to 2024 and 2024 to 2025 to include remote users in definition.

Core Entitlement 12: Reported in all years. Minor amendment for 2023 to 2024 and 2024 to 2025 to request links to documents included.

Core Entitlement 13 Reported in 2023 to 2024 and 2024 to 2025 only.

Quality indicators

Quality Indicator 1: Services were required to collect QI 1 once between 2017 to 2018 and 2019 to 2020 and once in 2022 to 2023 and 2024 to 2025 period. Minor amendment for 2023 to 2024 and 2024 to 2025 to clarify reporting period.

Quality Indicator 2: Services were required to collect QI 2 once in 2017 to 2018 and 2019 to 2020 period and once in 2022 to 2023 and 2024 to 2025 period. Minor amendment for 2023 to 2024 and 2024 to 2025 to clarify reporting period.

Quality Indicator 3: Collected in 2017 to 2018, 2018 to 2019, 2019 to 2020 and 2022 to 2023 only. Replaced by CE 13 in 2023 to 2024 and 2024 to 2025.

Quality Indicator 4: This QI was not collected in 2020 to 2021 or 2021 to 2022. In 2023 to 2024 and 2024 to 2025, the guidance noted that library-led events delivered by or with partner organisations could be included. From 2023 to 2024 onwards, Books on Prescription/Better with Books were replaced by Reading Well; dementia-friendly and mental health awareness were replaced by a wider category of 'other services such as mental health support, support for carers and other groups, dementia-friendly services'; data on Story times/Baby Rhyme Time were added'. Reading Well issue figures were collected in 2023 to 2024 only.

Quality Indicator 5: Not collected in 2019 to 2020, 2020 to 2021 or 2021 to 2022. In 2023 to 2024 and 2024 to 2025, there was a minor change to the wording of part b to refer to 'purpose in attending', rather than 'goals'.

Quality Indicator 6: Not collected in 2019 to 2020, 2020 to 2021 or 2021 to 2022. Minor amendments for 2023 to 2024 and 2024 to 2025 to define special requirements and note that events delivered in partnership with organisations should be included.

Quality Indicator 7: Collected in all years. Minor amendments for 2023 to 2024 and 2024 to 2025 to cover Library at Home Services.

Quality Indicator 8: Collected in all years. However, part a was not collected in 2020 to 2021 or 2021 to 2022. In 2023 to 2024 parts c, d, e and f were not collected. Part a was removed in 2023 to 2024 and 2024 to 2025. In 2023 to 2024, acquisitions targets were adjusted to reflect population density. In 2023 to 2024 and 2024 to 2025, part c, % spend on e-resources was added.

Quality Indicator 9: Collected in all years. However, parts a and b were not collected in 2024 to 2025.

Quality Indicator 10: Not collected in 2024 to 2025. In 2023 to 2024, the acquisitions target was collected as a percentage of material budget only (not per Welsh speaking population).

Quality Indicator 11: Not collected in 2020 to 2021 or 2021 to 2022. In 2023 to 2024 and 2024 to 2025, this was included in CE 7.

Quality Indicator 12: Collected in 2017 to 2018, 2018 to 2019, 2019 to 2020 and 2022 to 2023 only.

Quality Indicator 13: Collected in all years. However, part iv was not collected in 2019 to 2020, 2020 to 2021 or 2021 to 2022. In 2023 to 2024 and 2024 to 2025, the target for part iv (training hours) was increased from 1% to 2%.

Quality Indicator 14: Collected in all years. Part c (capital expenditure) was removed in 2023 to 2024 and 2024 to 2025.

Quality Indicator 15: Collected in 2017 to 2018, 2018 to 2019 and 2022 to 2023 only.

Quality Indicator 16: Not collected in 2020 to 2021 or 2021 to 2022. In 2023 to 2024 and 2024 to 2025, parts a and b (emergency closure/missed mobile stops) were removed.

Annex B: Classification of local authorities

The 2021 [Rural Urban Classification \(RUC\)](#) is a standardised method for classifying geographies as rural or urban developed in collaboration with ONS Geography, DEFRA and Welsh Government. The following list indicates whether Welsh local authorities are classified as urban or rural according to this method.

Rural

Carmarthenshire

Ceredigion

Denbighshire

Gwynedd

Isle of Anglesey

Pembrokeshire

Powys

Urban

Blaenau Gwent

Bridgend

Caerphilly

Cardiff

Conwy

Flintshire

Merthyr Tydfil

Neath Port Talbot

Newport

Rhondda Cynon Taf

Swansea

Torfaen

Vale of Glamorgan

Wrexham

Annex C: Summary of statistical analysis

Table C.1: Total staff and opening hours

	2017 to 2018	2018 to 2019	2019 to 2020	2022 to 2023	2023 to 2024	2024 to 2025
Pearson's r	0.868	0.863	0.867	0.944	0.943	0.959
p	<0.01	<0.01	<0.01	<0.01	<0.01	<0.01

Source: WPLSQI 13 and WPLSQI 16

Table C.2: Opening hours and total issues

	2017 to 2018	2018 to 2019	2019 to 2020	2022 to 2023	2023 to 2024
Pearson's r	0.827	0.825	0.799	0.856	0.847
p	<0.01	<0.01	<0.01	<0.01	<0.01

Source WPLSQI 8 and WPLSQI 13

Table C.3: Resource spend and total issues

	2017 to 2018	2018 to 2019	2019 to 2020	2020 to 2021	2021 to 2022	2022 to 2023	2023 to 2024
Pearson's r	0.886	0.915	0.921	0.772	0.798	0.775	0.768
p	<0.01	<0.01	<0.01	<0.01	<0.01	<0.01	<0.01

Source: WPLSQI 8, WPLSQI 9 and WPLSQI 14

Table C.4: Total resource spend and adult issues

	2017 to 2018	2018 to 2019	2019 to 2020	2020 to 2021	2021 to 2022	2022 to 2023	2023 to 2024
Pearson's r	0.859	0.868	0.832	0.708	0.711	0.902	0.824
p	<0.01	<0.01	<0.01	<0.01	<0.01	<0.01	<0.01

Source: WPLSQI 8, WPLSQI 9 and WPLSQI 14

Table C.5: Children's resource spend and children's issues

	2017 to 2018	2018 to 2019	2019 to 2020	2020 to 2021	2021 to 2022	2022 to 2023	2023 to 2024
Pearson's r	0.804	0.776	0.885	0.656	0.772	0.821	0.862
p	<0.01	<0.01	<0.01	<0.01	<0.01	<0.01	<0.01

Source: WPLSQI 8, WPLSQI 9 and WPLSQI 14

Table C.6: E-resource spend and e-resource issues

	2023 to 2024	2024 to 2025
Pearson's r	0.542	0.751
p	<0.01	<0.01

Source: WPLSQI 8, WPLSQI 9 and WPLSQI 14

Table C.7: Total resource spend and e-resource spend

	2023 to 2024	2024 to 2025
Pearson's r	0.749	0.867
p	<0.01	<0.01

Source: WPLSQI 9 and WPLSQI 14

Table C.8: Welsh language resources and Welsh spend

	2017 to 2018	2018 to 2019	2019 to 2020	2020 to 2021	2021 to 2022	2022 to 2023	2023 to 2024
Pearson's r	0.340	0.768	0.737	0.449	0.634	0.638	0.621
p	<0.01	<0.01	<0.01	<0.05	<0.01	<0.01	<0.01

Source: WPLSQI 10 and WPLSQI 14

Table C.9: Per capita Welsh resource spend in urban/rural authorities

	2017 to 2018	2018 to 2019	2019 to 2020	2020 to 2021	2021 to 2022	2022 to 2023	2023 to 2024¹
Mann-Whitney U	31.0	21.5	16.0	35.5	29.0	28.0	18.0
p	0.095	<0.05	<0.01	0.172	0.07	0.59	<0.05

Source: WPLSQI 10

[1] Data estimate based on percentage resource spend.

Table C.10: Opening hours per capita in urban/rural authorities

	2017 to 2018	2018 to 2019	2019 to 2020	2022 to 2023	2023 to 2024	2024 to 2025
Mann-Whitney U	26.0	24.0	31.0	34.5	31.5	36.0
p	<0.05	<0.05	0.095	0.218	0.101	0.127

Source: WPLSQI 16

Table C.11: Welsh spend and Welsh speakers

	2017 to 2018	2018 to 2019	2019 to 2020	2020 to 2021	2021 to 2022	2022 to 2023	2023 to 2024
Pearson's r	0.785	0.774	0.687	0.492	0.862	0.851	0.827
p	<0.01	<0.01	<0.01	<0.05	<0.01	<0.01	<0.01

Source: WPLSQI 10

Table C.12: Per capita adult issues in urban and rural authorities

	2017 to 2018	2018 to 2019	2019 to 2020	2020 to 2021	2021 to 2022	2022 to 2023	2023 to 2024
Mann Whitney U	22.0	25.0	22.0	31.0	28.0	25.0	21.0
p	<0.05	<0.05	<0.05	0.095	0.059	<0.05	<0.05

Source: WPLSQI 8

Table C.13: Total issues and qualified staff

	2017 to 2018	2018 to 2019	2019 to 2020	2020 to 2021	2021 to 2022	2022 to 2023	2023 to 2024
Pearson's r	0.575	0.431	0.594	0.177	0.163	0.027	0.125
p	<0.01	<0.05	<0.01	0.216	0.234	0.453	0.578

Source: WPLSQI 8 and WPLSQI 13

Table C.14: Total issues and total staff

	2017 to 2018	2018 to 2019	2019 to 2020	2020 to 2021	2021 to 2022	2022 to 2023	2023 to 2024
Pearson's r	0.667	0.722	0.766	0.811	0.738	0.693	0.611
p	<0.01	<0.01	<0.01	<0.01	<0.01	<0.01	<0.01

Source: WPLSQI 8 and WPLSQI 13

Table C.15: Change in mobile provision in urban/rural authorities

	Change in mobile numbers
Mann Whitney U	47.0
p	0.538

Source: WPLS Contextual data

Table C.16: Total staff and total event attendance

	2017 to 2018	2018 to 2019	2022 to 2023	2023 to 2024	2024 to 2025
Pearson's r	0.933	0.856	0.763	0.896	0.856
p	<0.01	<0.01	<0.01	<0.01	<0.01

Source: WPLSQI 13 and WPLSQI 16

Annex D: Sixth framework Core Entitlements

Core Entitlement 1: Free & Open to All

Sixth Framework: Libraries in Wales will be free to join, and open to all.

Addendum: No change

Core Entitlement 2: Knowledgeable & Qualified Staff

Sixth Framework: Libraries in Wales will ensure friendly, knowledgeable, and qualified staff are on hand to help.

Addendum: No change

Core Entitlement 3: Range of Services & Activities

Sixth Framework: Libraries in Wales will provide access to a range of services, activities, and high-quality resources in a range of formats to support lifelong learning, personal well-being and development, community participation, and culture and recreation.

Addendum: 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.

Core Entitlement 4: Services for Special Needs

Sixth Framework: Libraries in Wales will provide appropriate services, facilities and information resources for individuals and groups with special requirements.

Addendum: No change

Core Entitlement 5: Safe, Accessible Spaces

Sixth Framework: Libraries in Wales will provide appropriate safe, attractive, and accessible physical spaces with suitable staffed opening hours.

Addendum: No change

Core Entitlement 6: Free Lending & Access to Info

Sixth Framework: Libraries in Wales will lend books for free, and deliver free access to information, including online information resources available 24 hours a day.

Addendum: No change

Core Entitlement 7: Free Use of Internet & IT

Sixth Framework: Libraries in Wales will provide free use of the Internet and computers, including WiFi.

Addendum: Libraries in Wales provide free use of the Internet including WiFi, and access to digital equipment, in all service points.

Core Entitlement 8: Welsh Language Provision

Sixth Framework: Libraries in Wales will provide access to services, cultural activities, and high quality resources in the Welsh language.

Addendum: No change

Core Entitlement 9: Shared Catalogue & Resources

Sixth Framework: Libraries in Wales will work in partnership to share catalogues and facilitate access to the resources of all Welsh libraries.

Addendum: No change

Core Entitlement 10: Partnership to Deliver New Services

Sixth Framework: Libraries in Wales will work with a range of partners to promote and deliver services to new and diverse audiences, enabling more people to benefit from those services.

Addendum: No change

Core Entitlement 11: User Consultation

Sixth Framework: Libraries in Wales will regularly consult users to gather their views on the service and information about their changing needs.

Addendum: No change

Core Entitlement 12: Access to Library Strategy

Sixth Framework: Libraries in Wales will provide access to the library's service's strategy, policies, objectives and vision, in print and online, in a range of languages appropriate for the community.

Addendum: No change

Core Entitlement 13: Supporting Digital Skills (2023 to 2025 only)

Sixth Framework: Not applicable

Addendum: Libraries in Wales provide support to help improve people's digital skills and confidence, including the use of e government services