

Neath Port Talbot Libraries

Impact Statement (indicative length 300 words).

Sandfields Library plays a prominent role in the lives of many. It provides opportunities for people to engage with, and contribute to, their community. In turn, this has a significant positive impact on the wellbeing of individuals who, through the library, are actively involved in the community.

This Statement focusses on Gareth, who has become a frequent library visitor and is now an essential part of Sandfields Library.

Before visiting the library Gareth led a reclusive life. He would rarely venture out and, in large part due to his speech impediment, wouldn't engage in conversations. Consequently, socialising and making friends are a challenge.

Gareth first came to the library via the local men's mental health group, the Marauders. The Marauders have built up a strong working relationship with Sandfields Library with both supporting each other and working to support men in the community.

The Gareth of the first visit is very different from the Gareth of today. The difficulties with speech are still there but since that first visit Gareth has developed new friendships with other library users where each looks out for and supports one another. He is actively involved in library projects in the community such as the community garden and has volunteered with the Library of Things. Gareth has grown into a regular reader over the last year and will often tell you what he thought of the book and what books he would recommend. He has also learned to play chess and will play with friends when he is at the library.

Gareth's story is one of many stories that could be told from any library. It tells the story of how the library, and with all that the library offers, enhances wellbeing and gives people space to grow as individuals and contribute to the community.