Welsh Public Library Standards 2014-17

Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council

Annual Assessment Report 2014-15

This report has been prepared based on information provided in Neath Port Talbot's annual return, case studies and narrative report submitted to Museums, Archives and Libraries Division of the Welsh Government.

Neath Port Talbot's return was not approved by the authority prior to submission; such approval is expected in October 2015.

1) Executive summary

Neath Port Talbot met 17 of the 18 core entitlements in full, and partially met 1.

Of the 7 quality indicators which have targets, Neath Port Talbot achieved 3 in full, 3 in part and failed to achieve 1.

The service appears to have maintained most of its strong performance from previous years, despite a substantial change to its structure. However, cuts are already beginning to erode achievements and the distracting from the commitment and engagement of the staff.

- Neath Port Talbot carried out an impact survey in October 2014, which provides strong evidence of impact. Four excellent impact case studies written by the users themselves described a range of benefits of using the library service.

- Neath Port Talbot carried out customer surveys in October 2014, with mixed results. Satisfaction overall and with the choice of books was the highest in Wales, conversely the authority obtained the lowest score among those reporting a survey this year for the library being an enjoyable safe and inclusive place. Training is well attended and there is a high level of informal support.

- The transfer of 9 libraries to the community, and consequent exclusion of their data from the return, has impacted on levels of provision and use in a number of areas. The target for easy access to service points continues to be met on the reduced estate, and attendances at library events have increased.

- Neath Port Talbot only narrowly missed the targets for acquisitions overall, and meets the replenishment rate target. ICT provision has been impacted by the transfer of equipment to the community, and is now the lowest in Wales, although the inclusion of available tablet devices brings provision closer to the target. ICT facilities are well used. The proportion of requests supplied within 15 days is the highest in Wales, and the proportion within 7 days the second highest.

- Targets for professional staff are met, and staff training is well developed. Few volunteers are used within the statutory service, but give a remarkable 200 hours each on average. Average cost per visit has fallen to £2.17 in 2014-15, the second lowest in Wales.

- Compared to the rest of Wales, Neath Port Talbot performs well in the area of *Access for all*, while performance is mixed in the areas of *Customers and*

Communities, and *Learning for life*. It is one of the more efficient services, with a low cost per visit.

- Neath Port Talbot had been steadily improving, as seen in previous reports, and it is disappointing to note that previous gains, especially around stock performance, are now being eroded. The transfer of around half its branches to community groups has restricted what can be included in the return.

2) Performance against the standards

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

a) Core entitlements

Neath Port Talbot is meeting 17 of the 18 core entitlements in full, and partially meeting 1, which concerns access to the library's strategy, policy and objectives. It does not have a separate strategy document from the broader Cultural Services Strategy, and is awaiting council approval for the service delivery plan before making this available.

b) Quality indicators with targets

There are 16 quality indicators (QI) within the framework. Of the 7 which have targets, Neath Port Talbot is achieving 3 in full, 3 in part and is failing to achieve 1 of the indicators:

Quality Indicator	Met?	
QI 3 Individual development:		Met in full
a) ICT support	✔	
b) Skills training	✔	
c) Information literacy	✔	
d) E-government support	✔	
e) Reader development	✔	
QI 5 Location of service points	✔	Met in full
QI 8 Up-to-date reading material:		Partially met
a) Acquisitions per capita	✘	
or Materials spend per capita	✘	
b) Replenishment rate	✔	
QI 9 Appropriate reading material:		Not met
a) % of material budget on children	✘	
b) % of material budget spent on Welsh	✘	
or Spend on Welsh per capita	✘	
QI 10 Online access:		Partially met
a) All service points	*	
Computers per capita	✘	
b) Wi-Fi provision	✔	
QI 13 Staffing levels and qualifications:		Partially met
a) Staff per capita	✘	

Quality Indicator	Met?	
b) Professional staff per capita	✔	
c) Head of service qualification/training	✔	
d) CPD percentage	✔	
QI 16 Opening hours per capita	✔	Met in full

* In this first year of the new framework, MALD agreed that authorities would not be penalised on this indicator if all static service points provide internet access but their mobiles did not.

c) Impact measures

The framework contains three indicators which seek to gather evidence of the impact that using the library service has on people's lives. Through these and other indicators it is possible to see how the library service is contributing towards educational, social, economic and health and wellbeing local and national agendas. These indicators do not have targets. Not all authorities collected data for the impact indicators, and ranks are included out of the numbers of respondents stated, where 1 is the highest scoring authority.

Performance indicator	Neath Port Talbot	*Rank*	Lowest	Median	Highest
QI 1 Making a difference					
b) % of children who think that the library helps them learn and find things out:	93%	*4 / 7*	63%	93%	95%
e) % of adults who think that the library has made a difference to their lives:	73%	*7 / 7*	73%	87%	92%
% of children who think that the library has made a difference to their lives:	85%	*3 / 6*	43%	79%	90%
QI 4 b) % of attendees of training sessions who said that the training had helped them achieve their goals:	94%	*7 / 16*	80%	93%	100%

Neath Port Talbot carried out an impact survey in October 2014. Four impact case studies were supplied, all written by customers of the service:

- a mother of two young children described how the library helped her to integrate into the community;

- an unemployed person described the library's contribution, through its ICT facilities, to helping him apply for jobs;

- the social inclusion and well-being benefits of the library for a user with health concerns; and

- a disabled user of the home delivery service who describes it as 'a life saver'.

d) Quality performance indicators and benchmarks

The remaining indicators do not have targets, but allow performance to be compared between authorities. The following table summarises Neath Port Talbot's position for 2014-15. Ranks are included out of 22, where 1 is the highest, and 22 the lowest scoring authority, unless stated otherwise. (Indicators where fewer than 22 authorities supplied data are obtained from customer surveys which only need to be carried out once during the three year framework period, or those where relevant data elements were not available

to some authorities.)

Performance indicator	Neath Port Talbot	Rank	Lowest	Median	Highest
QI 1 Making a difference					
a) new skills	72%	5 / 9	55%	72%	93%
c) health and well-being	44%	7 / 9	29%	58%	91%
d) enjoyable, safe and inclusive	84%	7 / 7	84%	97%	98%
QI 2 Customer satisfaction					
a) 'very good' or 'good' choice of books	97%	1 / 10	82%	89%	97%
b) 'very good' or 'good' customer care	95%	9 / 10	93%	99%	99%
c) 'very good' or 'good' overall;	99%	1 / 10	94%	96%	99%
d) child rating out of ten	9.0	7 / 9	8.0	9.2	9.4
QI 4 User training					
a) attendances per capita	67	3	2	26	278
c) informal training per capita	371	2 / 21	16	162	484
QI 6 Library use					
a) visits per capita	4,486	9	2,637	4,177	5,955
b) virtual visits per capita	1,222	6	212	923	2,449
c) active borrowers per capita	173	10	71	155	288
QI 7 attendances at events per capita	384	3	21	192	464
QI 11 Use of ICT - % of available time used by the public					
a) equipment	46%	7	23%	36%	70%
b) Wi-Fi services	37%	5 / 8	4%	37%	79%
QI 12 Supply of requests					
a) % available within 7 days	81%	2	62%	69%	81%
b) % available within 15 days	94%	1	74%	84%	94%
QI 13 Staffing levels and qualifications					
(v) a) total volunteers	6	14	0	14	74
b) total volunteer hours	1,210	5	0	527	2696
QI 14 Operational expenditure					
a) total expenditure per capita	£12,379	17	£8,966	£14,054	£20,796
b) % on staff,	61%	8	45%	57%	77%
% on information resources	16%	4	5%	13%	21%
% on equipment and buildings	0%	22	0%	4%	27%
% on other operational costs;	23%	11	4%	22%	37%
c) capital expenditure per capita	£1,245	6	£0	£266	£2,126
QI 15 Cost per visit	£2.17	21	£2.07	£2.87	£3.92
QI 16 Opening hours *(see note)*					
(ii) a) % hours unplanned closure of static service points	0%	1	0.0%	0.02%	0.52%
b) % mobile stops / home deliveries missed	1.0%	12 / 19	0.0%	0.4%	5.4%

Note: Rankings here have been reversed, so that 1 is the lowest scoring authority.

3) Analysis of performance

The core entitlements and quality indicators are divided into four key areas. This section of

the report outlines performance against the quality indicators within these four areas.

a) Customers and communities

Neath Port Talbot carried out customer surveys in October 2014, with mixed results. The service recorded the highest levels of satisfaction of those authorities conducting surveys this year among adults for the choice of books, and overall. Satisfaction with customer care was the second lowest in Wales, however, and the authority gained the poorest score in Wales for the library being an enjoyable safe and inclusive place. All libraries provide the full range of support for individual development, and a partnership approach is used to provide basic ICT support. Training is well attended, and there is a high level of informal training recorded. The authority notes that the only dissatisfaction with its training programmes was recorded when an external supplier let them down.

b) Access for all

Neath Port Talbot meets the target for access to service points, and the figures reported do not include 9 libraries which have been transferred to the community. This transfer has led to an expected fall in the reported number of visits to library premises, but there has also been a fall in virtual visits compared to 2013-14. Both levels are above the median for Wales. The authority also notes a drop in usage for the mobile library. Interestingly, a slight increase in membership has been reported compared to last year, and this now stands at 58.8% of the population, although only 17.3% are recorded as active borrowers. Attendances at library events has increased compared to last year, as a result of more events being offered and improved marketing, and levels per capita are the third highest in Wales.

c) Learning for life

Neath Port Talbot only narrowly missed the targets for acquisitions overall, and meets the replenishment rate target with a proactive approach to stock management. The authority has a relatively high proportion of children in its population, and fails to meet the target for spending on children's materials, despite increases in per capita spend over recent years. The proportion of the total spent on Welsh language material has fallen, although spend per capita has increased compared to 2013-14.

Online access is provided at all static service points, but is no longer available on the mobile library owing to a combination of technical issues and lack of demand. The transfer of nine service points to the community, along with their ICT facilities, has led to a fall in the number of computers per capita, which is now at the lowest level in Wales. The authority notes an additional 20 tablet devices and 9 computers used for specific activities which it has not included; adding these would not result in the authority meeting the target, but it would raise the reported figure from 6.3 to 8.4 computers per 10,000 population. The ICT facilities provided are well used.

Neath Port Talbot supplies requests in a timely way, with the highest proportion in Wales supplied within 15 days.

d) Leadership and development

As in other areas, the transfer of 9 libraries to the community has impacted on performance against the staffing targets. Targets for professional staff are met, however, and the head of service is a Chartered Librarian. Staff training is well developed. Within

the statutory service, Neath Port Talbot used just 6 volunteers, who give a remarkable average of over 200 hours each to the service. All are offered the same training and support as paid staff. The service also provides professional guidance and support to volunteers at the 9 community libraries.

The transfer of 9 of the least efficient libraries to the community at the start of the year has resulted in a saving of 12% in total expenditure compared to 2013-14, and a reduction in the average cost per visit to £2.17, the second lowest in Wales. Opening hours have fallen to the third lowest in Wales, but the target is met.

4) Strategic context

The return details five key priorities which are reported on to the Council – working with children and young people, literacy, information literacy, digital inclusion, and health and well-being. A variety of actions are described under each heading showing how the service is delivering on these priorities.

The impact of the transfer of nine libraries to community management at the start of the year has been referred to above. The service continues to provide professional guidance, training, book stock rotation, access to the library management system, the request service, and the computer hardware at the time of transfer to these libraries. However, following the issuing by the Welsh Government of guidance on inclusion of volunteer community libraries as part of the statutory service, Neath Port Talbot has not included them in their return. The model has proved to be sustainable to date, and a smooth transition achieved by working with the community.

5) Conclusion

The service appears to have maintained most of its strong performance from previous years, despite a substantial change to its structure. However, cuts are already beginning to erode achievements and the distracting from the commitment and engagement of the staff.