

Welsh Public Library Standards 2014-17

Neath Port Talbot

Annual Assessment Report 2015-16

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.

1) Executive summary

Neath Port Talbot met 17 of the 18 core entitlements in full and failed to meet 1.

Of the 7 quality indicators which have targets, Neath Port Talbot achieved 2 in full, 3 in part and failed to achieve 2. This is a decline in performance compared to last year.

Budget cuts have begun to erode achievements in what was previously a strong service. The reduction in investment in staff and materials for the statutory service is a cause for concern, and continued cuts may impact on the level of support which can be provided to community managed libraries.

- 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. Training is well attended and there is a high level of informal support.
- The target for easy access to service points is met, and visits have increased. Indicators of use are generally above the median for Wales as whole. Attendances at library events have increased for the fourth consecutive year.
- Significant cuts to the book fund in 2015-16 have affected collection development, and many targets in this area are missed this year. Levels of ICT provision are low, and the authority is prioritising improvements to the Wi-Fi infrastructure. Usage of ICT facilities is above the median for Wales.
- Staffing has also been cut, and targets which have been met in the past are now missed. This is a further cause for concern. Volunteers within the statutory service give 120 hours each on average. Average net cost per visit has fallen to £2.00 in 2015-16, below the median for Wales.
- Considering the four areas in the framework (*Customers and communities; Access for all; Learning for life; and Leadership and development*) in comparison to the rest of Wales, Neath Port Talbot reports a mixed performance in all areas except *Leadership and development*, where most of the indicators are below the median. It remains an efficient service, 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. The service continues to support these libraries with a range of resources, including book stock and IT, but no direct staff, and follows the guidance on community managed libraries in omitting their data from its return.

Compared to the previous year, performance has declined in several areas, largely as a result of funding cuts. The community managed libraries are well supported, as noted above.

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, but failed to meet 1, concerning access to the library's strategy, policy and objectives. A new five-year strategy was developed during the year, which will be published following approval by the full Council.

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 2 in full, 3 in part and is failing to achieve 2 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:		Not met
a) Acquisitions per capita	✗	
or Materials spend per capita	✗	
b) Replenishment rate	✗	
QI 9 Appropriate reading material:		Partially 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	✗	
b) Professional staff per capita	✗	
c) Head of service qualification/training	✓	
d) CPD percentage	✗	
QI 16 Opening hours per capita	✗	Not met

* Authorities are not penalised on this indicator if all static service points provide internet access but their mobiles do not.

Targets which were met last year for replenishment rate, professional staff per capita, CPD and opening hours have not been met this year. However, the targets for spending on

children's materials and online access at all service points have been achieved this year.

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.

Neath Port Talbot carried out an impact survey in October 2014.

Performance indicator		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%	6/12	86%	93%	99%
e) % of adults who think that the library has made a difference to their lives:	73%	11/13	36%	87%	97%
% of children who think that the library has made a difference to their lives:	85%	3/11	57%	73%	93%
QI 4 b) % of attendees of training sessions who said that the training had helped them achieve their goals:	95%	12/17	85%	97%	100%

Neath Port Talbot provided 4 outstanding impact case studies which showed the real difference the library service makes in users' own words:

- A user for whom cycling to the library became a reason to go out following illness
- An unemployed user who has gained confidence in using a computer
- A user who feels part of her local community from using the library
- The personal and professional impacts for one user at different stages of her life

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 2015-16. 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. Figures reported in respect of last year for QI 4 to QI 16 are repeated for convenience of comparison. Note that indicators 'per capita' are calculated per 1,000 population.

Performance indicator		Rank	Lowest	Median	Highest	2014/15	Rank
QI 1 Making a difference							
a) new skills	72%	7/13	23%	72%	92%		
c) health and well-being	44%	9/13	26%	58%	93%		
d) enjoyable, safe and inclusive	84%	13/13	84%	97%	100%		
QI 2 Customer satisfaction							
a) 'very good' or 'good' choice of books	97%	1/14	74%	89%	97%		
b) 'very good' or 'good' customer care	96%	8/14	90%	97%	99%		
c) 'very good' or 'good' overall;	99%	1/14	92%	97%	99%		

Performance indicator		Rank	Lowest	Median	Highest	2014/15	Rank
d) child rating out of ten	9.0	9/13	8.0	9.2	9.5		
QI 4 User training							
a) attendances per capita	72	4	5	30	390	67	3
c) informal training per capita	382	2/19	3	195	1017	371	2 / 21
QI 6 Library use							
a) visits per capita	4,523	9	2,467	3,967	6,185	4,486	9
b) virtual visits per capita	1,222	7	340	976	2,475	1,222	6
c) active borrowers per capita	167	7	45	157	273	173	10
QI 7 attendances at events per capita	387	3	60	223	666	384	3
QI 11 Use of ICT - % of available time used by the public							
a) equipment	42%	5	20%	31%	68%	46%	7
b) Wi-Fi services	42%	7/8	20%	60%	90%	37%	5 / 8
QI 12 Supply of requests							
a) % available within 7 days	76%	5	57%	71%	86%	81%	2
b) % available within 15 days	93%	3	71%	86%	96%	94%	1
QI 13 Staffing levels and qualifications							
(v) a) total volunteers	18	11	0	18	103	6	14
b) total volunteer hours	2,175	3	0	582	3,699	1,210	5
QI 14 Operational expenditure							
a) total expenditure per capita	£12,154	13/21	£7,516	£12,749	£18,760	£12,379	17
b) % on staff	57%	13/21	40%	58%	79%	61%	8
% on information resources	12%	13/21	7%	13%	23%	16%	4
% on equipment and buildings	3%	14/21	1%	3%	20%	0%	22
% on other operational costs	27%	8/21	0%	20%	39%	23%	11
c) capital expenditure per capita	£0	14/21	£0	£272	£4,677	£1,245	6
QI 15 Net cost per visit	£2.00	18/21	£1.83	£2.43	£3.53	£2.05	11 / 11
QI 16 Opening hours (<i>see note</i>)							
(ii) a) % hours unplanned closure of static service points	0.00%	1	0.00%	0.00%	0.16%	0%	1
b) % mobile stops / home deliveries missed	1.30%	9/19	0.00%	0.71%	23.44%	1.0%	12 / 19

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

3) Analysis of performance

The core entitlements and quality indicators are divided into four key areas. This section of the report outlines performance against the quality indicators within these four areas, and compares results with those from the first year of the framework.

a) Customers and communities

Neath Port Talbot carried out customer surveys in October 2014, which were reported in detail last year. 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 levels of informal training are the second highest in Wales.

b) Access for all

Neath Port Talbot meets the target for access to service points, and the figures reported do not include 9 community managed libraries, although library members continue to use these services. There has been a slight increase in visits to library premises (which is positive, and

bucking the Wales trend), although the number of active borrowers, which includes those who use computers, but not e-book users, has fallen slightly. These levels of use are above the median for Wales; issues figures are not however, which may be influenced by use of the community libraries which is not included. Attendances at library events has increased for the fourth consecutive 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 suffered a significant cut to the book fund in 2015-16, and as a result has missed the targets for acquisitions this year. The authority meets the target for spending on children's materials. The proportion of the total spent on Welsh language material has fallen, and targets have not been met, as other stock areas have been prioritised. Difficulties experienced in the selection and supply of Welsh language stock have been resolved following discussion with the Welsh Book Council.

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. There has been a further slight fall in the number of public access PCs available, and the authority does not plan to increase this, citing lack of space coupled with low usage as offering poor value for money; however the authority notes ownership of an additional 22 tablet devices and 9 computers used for specific activities which it has not included in the return in order to keep its reporting the same for the WPLS and CIPFA. Usage of ICT facilities is above the median for Wales. Wi-Fi usage has increased, and improvements to this infrastructure are seen as a priority.

Neath Port Talbot supplies requests in a timely way, despite a slight fall in the speed of supply this year, attributed to cuts in the book fund, reductions in available delivery hours, and stock being held longer at community managed libraries.

d) Leadership and development

Targets for staffing levels and staff development have not been met this year, and this is an area of some concern, where previously the authority performed well. Adherence to the council's policy on redeployment has led to some unqualified staff in posts which require qualifications. The head of service is a Chartered Librarian. Within the statutory service, Neath Port Talbot used 18 volunteers, who give an average of 120 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.

A significant budget cut fell in the areas of staff and materials, and the authority notes that as a result of a change in the way operational and maintenance costs are charged, the 2% reported fall in expenditure does not reflect the impact of cuts on the service. The average net cost per visit at £2.00 is below the median for Wales. Opening hours have fallen as a result of decommissioning one mobile library vehicle; branch hours have remained unchanged. Neath Port Talbot is one of five authorities to cut opening hours below the target this year.

4) Strategic context

Neath Port Talbot provided a comprehensive statement detailing the library service's contribution towards local authority agendas and wider Welsh Government priorities. Five broad areas were described; working with children and young people, literacy, information literacy, digital inclusion and health and wellbeing.

5) Future direction

Neath Port Talbot expects to continue to provide a mix of statutory and community managed libraries, which has proved sustainable to date, together with a digital 24/7 online service. The vision for a vibrant library service delivered in partnership with other agencies and the voluntary sector is designed to ensure that statutory obligations are maintained.

6) Conclusion

Budget cuts have begun to erode achievements in what was previously a strong service. The reduction in investment in staff and materials for the statutory service is a cause for concern, and continued cuts may impact on the level of support which can be provided to community managed libraries.