

Welsh Public Library Standards 2014-17

Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council

Annual Assessment Report 2016-17

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 all of the 18 core entitlements in full

Of the 7 quality indicators which have targets, Neath Port Talbot achieved 2 in full, 3 in part and failed to achieve 2, the same as the previous year.

Following significant budget cuts over recent years the authority has maintained expenditure levels this year, and achieves high customer satisfaction. Following some years of change, the service appears to be stabilising and has areas of improvement which should be praised. The continuing low levels of staff, acquisitions and opening hours remain a cause for concern for the maintenance of current levels of performance, particularly if there is any further pressure on the budget. Half the authority's service points are now managed by the community, and are not included in the return, which has an impact on overall performance.

- Four excellent impact case studies described a range of benefits of using the library service. 95% of attendees at training sessions said they were helped to achieve their goals.
- Neath Port Talbot carried out customer surveys in October 2016 which saw improvements in all areas over the last survey carried out in October 2014. Customer satisfaction ratings were very high and the proportion of adults who rate the choices of books, customer care standards and the library overall as very good or good are the highest in Wales.
- Attendance at both formal and informal training has increased over last year, with the per capita level of informal training the second highest in Wales.
- Physical visits have increased slightly over last year and the per capita level remains above the median for Wales. Virtual visits have reduced over last year and this is attributed to the growth in visits to the library's social media accounts rather than the website. The number of requests has fallen slightly but they continue to be delivered in a timely manner.
- Anticipated cuts to the book fund were not made this year, however, the per capita levels of acquisitions and materials expenditure remain below target level.
- Staffing levels remain below target; however, there has been an increase in the number of staff hours spent in training so that this target is now achieved. Opening hours remain unchanged and below target.

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 performs well in the areas of *Customers and communities* and *Access for all*, but less well on *Learning for life*.

Compared to the previous year where there were significant cuts, performance levels have generally been maintained this year, although several areas remain below target. The return does not include the nine community libraries although the service continues to support these libraries with a range of resources, including book stock and IT, but no direct staff.

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. Neath Port Talbot provides support to 9 community managed libraries which are not included in the return.

a) Core entitlements

Neath Port Talbot now meets all of the 18 core entitlements in full, following approval and publication of the library's strategy, policy and objectives during the year.

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	✗	

Quality Indicator	Met?	
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.*

This is the same position as last 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 a survey of adults and children in October 2016.

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:	97%	5/19	68%	93%	100%
e) % of adults who think that the library has made a difference to their lives:	96%	3/19	36%	86%	97%
% of children who think that the library has made a difference to their lives:	97%	2/17	58%	82%	98%
QI 4 b) % of attendees of training sessions who said that the training had helped them achieve their goals:	95%	14/19	80%	97%	100%

Neath Port Talbot provided 4 impact case studies which showed the real difference the library service makes:

- Two volunteer IT supporters, one of whom has since obtained an apprenticeship and the other who has increased in confidence and gained experience.
- Feedback from three participants in a creative writing project for chronic pain sufferers, who have all benefited in different ways.
- Support for a refugee family, including language sessions which have led to one member enrolling at a local college, and the use of ICT in support of the children's school work.
- Sessions with dementia sufferers in care homes, which are to be extended.

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 2016-17. 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 those where relevant data elements were not available to some authorities. Figures reported in respect of the first two years of the framework 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	2015/16 Rank	2014/15 Rank
QI 1 Making a difference							
a) new skills	88%	3	19	23%	71%	93%	
c) health and well-being	86%	3	20	26%	56%	94%	
d) enjoyable, safe and inclusive	99%	6	19	93%	98%	100%	
QI 2 Customer satisfaction							
a) 'very good' or 'good' choice of books	98%	1	20	74%	90%	98%	
b) 'very good' or 'good' customer care	100%	1	20	90%	99%	100%	
c) 'very good' or 'good' overall;	100%	1	20	92%	97%	100%	
d) child rating out of ten	9.7	2	19	8.6	9.1	10.0	
QI 4 User training							
a) attendances per capita	81	4		3	34	248	72 4 67 3
c) informal training per capita	390	2	20	1	156	712	382 2 / 19 371 2 / 21
QI 6 Library use							
a) visits per capita	4,632	5		2,453	4,033	6,751	4,523 9 4,486 9
b) virtual visits per capita	1,136	7	21	341	922	2,299	1,222 7 1,222 6
c) active borrowers per capita	156	11		77	153	235	167 7 173 10
QI 7 attendances at events per capita	496	1		62	214	496	387 3 384 3
QI 11 Use of ICT - % of available time used by the public							
a) equipment	40%	6	21	16%	32%	69%	42% 5 46% 7
QI 12 Supply of requests							
a) % available within 7 days	75%	7	21	48%	70%	82%	76% 5 81% 2
b) % available within 15 days	95%	2	21	65%	85%	96%	93% 3 94% 1
QI 13 Staffing levels and qualifications							
(v) a) total volunteers	10	15		0	24	209	18 11 6 14
b) total volunteer hours	1,470	7		0	798	5,156	2,175 3 1,210 5
QI 14 Operational expenditure							
a) total expenditure per capita	£11,979	11	21	£6,745	£11,979	£16,968	£12,154 13 / 21 9 £12,379 17
b) % on staff	58%	10	21	46%	58%	75%	57% 13 / 21 61% 8
% on information resources	12%	13	21	4%	13%	25%	12% 13 / 21 16% 4
% on equipment and buildings	0%	20	21	0%	4%	20%	3% 14 / 21 0% 22

Performance indicator	Rank	Lowest	Median	Highest	2015/16	Rank	2014/15	Rank	
% on other operational costs	29%	7 /21	9%	22%	37%	27%	8 / 21	23%	11
c) capital expenditure per capita	£0.00	15/21	£0	£341	£16,692	£0	14 / 21	£1,245	6
QI 15 Net cost per visit	£1.94	16/20	£1.50	£2.33	£3.30	£2.00	18 / 21	£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%	0.48%	0.00%	1	0%	1
b) % mobile stops / home deliveries missed	1.54%	10/19	0.00%	0.13%	8.33%	1.30%	9 / 19	1.0%	12 / 19

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

Data on Wi-Fi usage has only been provided by three authorities for 2016-17 and so is not included in the table above.

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 two years of the framework.

a) Customers and communities

Neath Port Talbot carried out customer surveys in October 2016 which saw improvements in all areas over the last survey carried out in October 2014. The proportion of adults who have found helpful information for health and well-being at the library has almost doubled since the last survey and now stands at 86% - the third highest in Wales. Customer satisfaction ratings were very high and the proportions of adults who rate the choices of books, customer care standards and the library overall as very good or good are the highest in Wales. Attendances at formal training sessions have increased over last year, with 95% of attendees indicating the sessions had helped them achieve their goals.

Attendance at informal training sessions has also increased slightly this year, and the per capita levels remain the second highest in Wales. Overall performance within this category should therefore be praised.

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 compared to last year and the per capita level remains above the median for Wales. Virtual visits, however, have fallen compared to last year and it is noted that this may be due to the website no longer being the first online port of call for members, with the service operating through multiple channels including social media. Overall library members have increased slightly, although the number of active borrowers has fallen, partly as a result of a full cleanse of the system which was undertaken in November 2016. Attendance at events and activities organised by the library has increased by 28%, and the per capita level is the highest in Wales.

c) Learning for life

Neath Port Talbot has maintained similar levels of acquisitions and materials expenditure compared to last year when there had been a significant cut to the book budget. It does not meet any of the acquisitions targets, although it can be seen as a positive sign that the anticipated further cuts to the book fund were not made this year. Expenditure on materials for children has also been maintained and the proportion of materials expenditure accounted for by these items meets the target. Materials expenditure on items in the Welsh language has increased over last year, however, this still falls below the target.

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. Neath Port Talbot does not currently meet the target for computer provision, however, they do cite a lack of space, adequate provision given the levels of usage and an increasing number of members using their own devices as reasons why the number of PCs will not be increased. It is also noted that new higher spec PC's are currently being installed in libraries throughout the authority, and that an additional 22 tablet devices and 9 computers used for specific activities are not included in the return; including this provision would not reach the target set, however.

The number of requests has fallen slightly over last year; however, they continue to be supplied in a timely manner, with 95% of requests satisfied within 15 days – the second highest level in Wales. It is noted that these figures do not include requests made at the community libraries.

d) Leadership and development

Targets for staffing levels have not been met again this year, with a slight decrease in both overall and professional staff due to one member of staff retiring. It is noted that 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. There has been an increase in the number of staff hours spent in training so that the staff development target has been met – this is an improvement over last year. It is noted that staff are encouraged to identify any relevant courses that they wish to attend, these include regional and UK wide training events. The number of volunteers has fallen this year, with a total of ten each providing an average of 147 hours to the service. It is noted that the number of volunteers does not include those at community libraries and that all volunteers are offered the same training and support as library staff. The service also provides professional guidance and support to volunteers at the 9 community libraries, but not authority-funded staff work directly in the libraries.

Following significant budget cuts over previous years, the service has strived to minimise any further cuts on frontline delivery. A small decrease of 1.1% in total revenue expenditure is largely attributed to the renegotiation of several contracts which has brought overall costs down but has no direct impact of the delivery of frontline services. Opening hours are unchanged over last year and remain below target level.

4) Strategic context

Neath Port Talbot provided a comprehensive statement detailing the library service's contribution towards the priorities set out in the Corporate Improvement Plan, taking into

account the seven national well-being goals.

5) Future direction

Neath Port Talbot expects to continue to provide a mix of statutory and community managed libraries, 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

Following significant budget cuts over recent years the authority has maintained expenditure levels this year, and achieves high customer satisfaction. Following some years of change, the service appears to be stabilising and has areas of improvement which should be praised. The continuing low levels of staff, acquisitions and opening hours remain a cause for concern for the maintenance of current levels of performance, particularly if there is any further pressure on the budget. Half the authority's service points are now managed by the community, and are not included in the return, which has an impact on overall performance.