

Welsh Public Library Standards 2017-2020: Neath Port Talbot

Annual Assessment Report 2017-18

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

1 Executive summary

Neath Port Talbot met all of the 12 core entitlements in full.

Of the 10 quality indicators which have targets, Neath Port Talbot achieved 6 in full, 1 in part and failed to achieve 3.

Neath Port Talbot library service continues to deliver effectively for its local community, despite some reductions in performance in 2017-18, notably with regard to cuts to the materials budget. It is encouraging that extra funding is to be allocated to address this downturn in 2018-19. The service also shows strength and leadership in a number of areas, and is to be commended for its contribution to sector developments around digital access and provision of e-resources in particular. The authority continues to support seven community-managed libraries (two less than in 2016-17), extending service reach beyond its eight official service points with consequent benefits for service users, although this contribution is not counted as part of statutory service performance.

- Neath Port Talbot submitted four case studies demonstrating the positive impact that the service makes. 97% of attendees at training sessions said they were helped to achieve their goals.
- Attendance at pre-arranged training sessions, and numbers helped by informal training have both fallen slightly, but are still amongst the highest in Wales.
- Attendance at events and activities organised by the library have increased, with performance per capital the second highest in Wales.
- Physical visits and book issues have declined, but operational issues, since resolved, are understood to have been a factor. There has been a welcome increase in library membership, and numbers of active borrowers.
- Budget reductions affected the materials budget in 2017-18, with overall spending falling by 20%. The acquisitions targets were as a result missed by some margin. There is a commitment to address this issue in 2018-19.
- Staffing levels and aggregate annual opening hours remain below target; the return does not include the seven community-managed libraries, although they continue to be supported by staff expertise, and a range of service resources.

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 these areas. A narrative assessment of the authority's performance is provided in Section 3.

2.1 Core entitlements

Neath Port Talbot is meeting all of the 12 core entitlements in full, with a focus on delivering services and resources in the areas of digital inclusion, health and well-being, children's literacy and lifelong learning. A range of services are provided for individuals and groups with special needs, including work with refugees to assist with language and technology skills. The service participates in the Books4u regional partnership and continues to support the Passport scheme which opens up academic libraries to Neath Port Talbot's library members. A Library Strategy (2016-2021) is in place setting out the vision and objectives for the service and how these align with wider corporate priorities.

2.2 Quality indicators with targets

There are 16 quality indicators (QIs), of which ten have constituent targets. Of these, Neath Port Talbot is achieving 6 in full, one in part and is failing to achieve 3.

Quality Indicator	Met?	
QI 3 Support for individual development:		Met in full
a) ICT support	✓	
b) Information literacy and skills training	✓	
c) E-government support	✓	
d) Reader development	✓	
QI 4 (a) Support for health and well-being		Met in full
i) Book Prescription Wales scheme	✓	
ii) Better with Books scheme	✓	
iii) Designated health & well-being collection	✓	
iv) Information about healthy lifestyles and behaviours	✓	
v) Signposting to health & well-being services	✓	
QI 6 all static service points offer events/activities for users with special requirements	✓	Met in full
QI 7 Location of service points	✓	Met in full
QI 9 Up-to-date and appropriate reading material		Not met
Acquisitions per capita	x	
<u>or</u> Materials spend per capita	x	
QI 10 Welsh Language Resources		Not met
% of material budget spent on Welsh	x	
<u>or</u> Spend on Welsh per capita	x	
QI 11 Online access:		Met in full
a) i) Public access to Internet	✓	
ii) Wi-Fi provision	✓	
QI 12 Supply of requests		Met in full
a) % of requests satisfied within 7 days	✓	
b) % of requests satisfied within 15 days	✓	
QI 13 Staffing levels and qualifications:		Partially met
i) Staff per capita	x	
ii) Qualified staff per capita	x	

iii) Head of service qualification/training	✓	
iv) CPD percentage	✓	
QI 16 Opening hours per capita	x	Not met

There has been no change in Neath Port Talbot's performance compared to the last year of the fifth framework for those quality indicators where direct comparisons are possible.

2.3 Impact measures

The framework includes three indicators aimed at assessing the impact of library use on people's lives. These indicators do not have targets, and authorities are only required to carry out user surveys for QI 1 once over the three-year period of the framework. The summary figures (lowest, median and highest) are therefore based on those authorities indicating they completed their user survey during this first year of the framework. Rankings reflect the numbers of respondents, where 1 is the highest scoring authority.

Neath Port Talbot has yet to complete its user surveys; these are due to be carried out in 2018/19.

Performance indicator	Rank	Lowest	Median	Highest	
QI 1 Making a difference					
b) % of young people who think that the library helps them learn and find things out:	n/a	73%	94%	97%	
e) % of adults who think that the library has made a difference to their lives:	n/a	38%	90%	95%	
QI 5 b) % of attendees of training sessions who said that the training had helped them achieve their goals:	97%	11/17	75%	98%	100%

Authorities are also asked to provide up to four case studies describing the impact which the library service has had on an individual or on a group of individuals during the year. Neath Port Talbot provided four such case studies:

- Song and Rhyme – impact of these sessions on young families. Parents have noticed how they improve the children's confidence, communication skills, and socialisation; the parents themselves benefit from peer support, and have made new friends.
- Participation – impact of the library service on an individual with special needs; following the end of a work placement visiting the library has become a key part of his routine – attending classes, Local History coffee mornings, and borrowing books to help with personal projects – improving his knowledge and his emotional well-being.
- Home Delivery Services – the impact of this service on individuals with special needs; bringing them greater independence, and providing valuable social contact.
- Children's Well-being – the impact of the library on one child who has been attending since he was a baby; benefitting from free access to a range of books that his family could not afford to buy, and the opportunity to join the library's clubs / activities. He has developed advanced reading skills, and loves the library space and the great staff.

2.4 Quality indicators and benchmarks

The remaining indicators do not have targets, but allow services to monitor and benchmark their performance over time, in comparison with other authorities. The following table

summarises Neath Port Talbot's position for 2017-18. 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 was not available to some authorities. Where possible, figures from the last year of the fifth framework have been included for comparison; however, in some cases a change in definition or the introduction of additional measures makes comparisons impractical. Indicators 'per capita' are calculated per 1,000 population unless otherwise noted.

Performance indicator	Rank	Lowest	Median	Highest	2016/17	
QI 1 Making a difference						
a) % of adults who think that using the library has helped them develop new skills:	n/a	24%	83%	94%	88%	
c) health and well-being	n/a	33%	65%	95%	86%	
d) enjoyable, safe and inclusive	n/a	90%	98%	100%	99%	
QI 2 Customer satisfaction						
a) 'very good' or 'good' choice of books	n/a	88%	91%	98%	98%	
b) 'very good' or 'good' customer care	n/a	93%	99%	100%	100%	
c) 'very good' or 'good' IT facilities	n/a	74%	86%	94%		
d) 'very good' or 'good' overall;	n/a	93%	97%	99%	100%	
e) users aged 16 & under rating out of ten	n/a	8.5	9.1	9.2	9.7	
QI 5 User training						
a) attendances per capita	77	5/22	10	32	238	81
c) informal training per capita	372	4/22	15	199	473	390
QI 6 attendances at events per capita	526	2/22	82	228	684	496
QI 8 Library use						
a) visits per capita	4,520	4/22	2,501	4,047	7,014	4,632
b) virtual visits per capita	910	10/22	243	866	2,211	1,136
c) active borrowers per capita	190	6/22	100	154	229	156
QI 10 Welsh issues per capita*	47	15/22	4	68	663	
QI 11 Online access						
b) Computers per capita^	6	21/22	5	9	14	6
c) % of available time used by the public	34%	7/22	14%	27%	67%	40%
QI 13 Staffing levels and qualifications						
(v) a) total volunteers	31	11/21	3	31	196	10
b) total volunteer hours	2,525	4/21	40	1,346	11,939	1,470
QI 14 Operational expenditure						
a) total expenditure per capita	£12,139	10/21	£7,047	£11,915	£17,771	£11,979
b) % on staff,	61%	12/21	44%	63%	75%	58%
% on information resources	10%	16/21	4%	13%	25%	12%
% on equipment and buildings	0%	21/21	0%	4%	20%	0%
% on other operational costs;	29%	5/21	0%	18%	37%	29%
c) capital expenditure per capita	£0	14/20	£0	£338	£17,432	£0
QI 15 Net cost per visit	£1.38	17/21	£1.24	£1.82	£2.41	£1.94

QI 16 Opening hours [#]						
(iii) a) % hours unplanned closure of static service points	0.00%	1/21	0.00%	0.02%	1.28%	0.00%
b) % mobile stops / home deliveries missed	2.02%	15/20	0.00%	0.35%	11.24%	1.54%

^{*} per Welsh speaking resident population

[^]per 10,000 resident population

[#] 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 can be divided into four key areas. This section of the report outlines performance under these areas, and compares this performance (where applicable) with the final year of the fifth framework (2016-17).

3.1 Meeting customer needs (QI 1-5)

Neath Port Talbot has yet to conduct its user surveys which are planned for 2018-19. All static libraries provide a full-range of support for individual development, and health and well-being is also well-supported. Attendance at pre-arranged training sessions, and numbers helped by informal training have both fallen slightly in 2017-18, but are still among the highest in Wales. 97% of attendees indicated that the training had helped them achieve their goals.

3.2 Access and use (QI 6-8)

Neath Port Talbot continues to meet the target for easy access to service points, with the additional benefits of access to seven community-managed libraries, which are not included within the statutory return. Attendance at events and activities organised by the library has increased again in 2017-18, with performance per capita the second highest in Wales, and provision made at all statutory libraries for those with special requirements. Numbers of visitors and book issues have however fallen, with the authority attributing this to operational issues early in the year, which were subsequently resolved. In contrast library membership and the number of active borrowers has increased, with membership figures reflecting use across both the eight statutory service points and the seven community-managed libraries. Issues with the current library management system are noted, which the transfer to the all-Wales LMS system in 2018-19 should address.

3.3 Facilities and services (QI 9-12)

The service has not met any of the acquisition targets in 2017-18, with funding an identified issue for service investment, as previous budget reductions have impacted the materials budget. Overall spending has dropped by around 20%, with expenditure on Welsh language resources particularly affected, down to less than a third of 2016-17 levels. Spending on children's materials has also fallen, but this in part reflects a balancing of adult / children's stock following heavy investment on children's resources in previous years. It is acknowledged that these levels of investment are of major concern, and the Council has already committed to an increase in the stock purchasing budget in excess of 20% for 2018 -19. PC provision has increased slightly, but while ICT usage remains above the median for Wales, usage is falling – a trend seen in most services as customers increasingly use their own devices in conjunction with Wi-Fi facilities. Performance in relation to supply of requests has improved, and both targets here are met.

3.4 Expertise and capacity (QI 13-16)

Overall staffing levels and numbers of qualified staff are broadly similar to 2016-17, but with Neath Port Talbot one of thirteen library services not meeting either target. Qualified leadership is in place, and the service continues to meet the target for the proportion of staff time spent on professional development activities. The use of volunteers has increased in 2017-18, with a total of 31 each providing an average of 81 hours to the service, supporting paid staff to carry out their roles. Volunteers based at community-managed libraries are not included in the figures, although all volunteers are offered the same level of training and support as paid staff, and the service provides professional guidance and support to the community run services.

Total revenue expenditure has actually increased slightly in 2017-18, with much of this increase attributed to extra staff costs as a result of long term illness. It is encouraging that extra funding is to be allocated in 2018-19 to address the corresponding shortfall in the materials budget. Aggregate opening hours are unchanged, with the average per capita below the median for Wales, and Neath Port Talbot one of six authorities not achieving the target. It should be noted that the performance reported does not include the seven community-managed libraries.

4 Strategic context

As part of the return authorities are asked to report on how the library service is contributing to wider Welsh Government priorities and strategic goals. Neath Port Talbot notes the connection between the service's own strategic goals and the priorities set out in the authority's Corporate Plan, the objectives of which are aligned with the Well-being of Future Generations Act. A comprehensive narrative is offered in relation to the ten core themes of the Library Strategy, including provision of digital services; support for the local economy; services enabling health, independence and well-being; and support for education and lifelong learning.

5 Future direction

Reporting on the authority's future direction and plans for the library service over the following year, Neath Port Talbot cited the vision and core themes set out in its Library Strategy 2016-2021, and the aim to create a vibrant service that helps to address the Council's key priorities. Specific actions associated with the delivery of the strategy in 2018-19 could however have been detailed.

6 Conclusion

Neath Port Talbot library service continues to deliver effectively for its local community, despite some reductions in performance in 2017-18, notably with regard to cuts to the materials budget. It is encouraging that extra funding is to be allocated to address this downturn in 2018-19. The service also shows strength and leadership in a number of areas, and is to be commended for its contribution to sector developments around digital access and provision of e-resources in particular. The authority continues to support seven community-managed libraries (two less than in 2016-17), extending service reach beyond its eight official service points with consequent benefits for service users, although this contribution is not counted as part of statutory service performance.