

# Welsh Public Library Standards 2017-2020: Neath Port Talbot

## Annual Assessment Report 2018/19

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 7 in full, 1 in part and did not achieve 2.

Neath Port Talbot library service has consolidated and improved its performance in a number of areas in 2018/19, with dedicated staff and careful planning contributing to a well-managed service. There is a continuing emphasis on extending the range of events and activities on offer, catering for a growing range of community needs, and physical visits to library premises remain among the highest in Wales. Increased investment in the materials budget has enabled much-needed improvement, and the standard for expenditure on Welsh language resources is now met. It is noted however that there are no guarantees that budgets can be maintained at this level in 2019/20, and it would be disappointing to see these positive gains reversed. The current review of library service provision, which is due to report later in 2019, has a noted aim of ensuring the continued delivery of a relevant, cost effective and sustainable library service over the next five years. The importance of appropriate resourcing levels will be a key consideration in ensuring that the service can be shaped to meet this aim, allowing it to build on the strengths evident in this year's assessment report.

- The finding from user surveys demonstrate both the positive impact of the library on people's lives and continued high satisfaction rates with services and resources.
- A refocused customer training offer has seen a reduction in formal training sessions, with a greater emphasis on informal IT support to meet user demand. Informal training is now the second highest per capita in Wales.
- Attendance at events and activities organised by the library has continued to increase, with performance per capital now the highest in Wales.
- While visitor numbers have fallen slightly, performance here is still comparatively high; book issues have increased and are now at or close to the median level.
- There has been a welcome increase in the materials budget in 2018/19, improving performance, although the acquisition targets for QI 9 are still not met. Targeted investment in Welsh language resources has enabled achievement of QI 10.
- Staff numbers and aggregate annual opening hours have been maintained at 2017/18 levels but in both areas are below the stipulated targets. The authority continues to support seven community-managed libraries, extending the reach of its services.

### 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 continues to provide a detailed and considered response to the requirements of the framework, meeting all 12 core entitlements in full, with an emphasis on ensuring that services are fully supported by knowledgeable and qualified staff. A wide range of services and activities are delivered, working closely with communities to ensure that the service offer meets local needs. The service provides support to seven non-statutory community libraries, and leads on the all-Wales purchasing consortium for e-resources. A five year strategy (2016-2021) is in place, but following public consultation on budget proposals in 2018, a comprehensive library review is now underway.

## 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 7 in full, one in part and does not achieve 2.

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		Met in full
% of material budget spent on Welsh	✓	
<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

Neath Port Talbot has improved its performance in 2018/19 with the target for proportionate spend on Welsh language materials achieved, and QI 10 met in full.

## 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 2017/18 or 2018/19. Rankings reflect the numbers of respondents, where 1 is the highest scoring authority.

Neath Port Talbot carried out its user surveys of adults and children in February 2019, with pleasing results.

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:	97%	=1/13	60%	94%	97%
e) % of adults who think that the library has made a difference to their lives:	95%	=1/15	38%	88%	95%
QI 5 b) % of attendees of training sessions who said that the training had helped them achieve their goals:	98%	=7/20	80%	97%	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:

- Health and Well-being – the role of the library in supporting the well-being of otherwise isolated library customers. For one elderly gentleman, staff became aware of issues with his living conditions, and acting on his behalf secured grants and assistance to upgrade his heating system and install safety hand rails at his home.
- Volunteering – the impact of volunteering at the library service for one young adult; improving their self-confidence, reading and communication skills, to the point where they now plan and run activities for children, and are confident to try new things.
- Community Support – the value of the library service for one young mother at different stages of her life; enabling online access to services, learning new skills, providing a safe environment to socialise and make new friends, encouraging a love of reading, and latterly providing the venue for family activities and time together.
- Reading Group – the impact of joining a library reading group for one individual, both in enjoyment of reading, and in the friendship and support provided by the group. The library has also enabled them to gain new digital skills and build confidence in this area, as well as combatting feelings of loneliness and isolation.

## 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 2018/19. 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. Figures from the first year of the sixth framework or relevant previous surveys have also been included for comparison. Indicators 'per capita' are calculated per 1,000 population unless otherwise noted.

Performance indicator	Rank	Lowest	Median	Highest	2017/18	
QI 1 Making a difference					[Framework 5]	
a) % of adults who think that using the library has helped them develop new skills	90%	3/15	24%	82%	96%	88%
c) health and well-being	87%	=3/15	33%	62%	94%	86%
d) enjoyable, safe and inclusive	97%	=7/15	90%	97%	100%	99%
QI 2 Customer satisfaction					[Framework 5]	
a) 'very good' or 'good' choice of books	96%	2/14	81%	91%	98%	98%
b) 'very good' or 'good' customer care	99%	=3/14	93%	99%	100%	100%
c) 'very good' or 'good' IT facilities	91%	=4/13	65%	91%	95%	
d) 'very good' or 'good' overall	98%	=4/14	93%	97%	99%	100%
e) users aged 16 & under rating out of ten	9.3	=6/13	8.5	9.3	9.5	9.7
QI 5 User training						
a) attendances per capita	42	7/22	13	30	208	77
c) informal training per capita	394	2/22	15	199	433	372
QI 6 attendances at events per capita	689	1/22	91	295	689	526
QI 8 Library use <sup>1</sup>						
a) visits per capita	4,428	4/22	2,596	3,969	7,170*	4,520
b) virtual visits per capita	920	11/22	345	885	2,205	910
c) active borrowers per capita	123	15/22	58	150	251	190
QI 10 Welsh issues per capita <sup>2</sup>	425	16/22	95	602	1,424	378
QI 11 Online access						
b) Computers per capita <sup>3</sup>	6	21/22	5	10	14	6
c) % of available time used by the public	32%	8/22	14%	25%	63%	34%
QI 13 Staffing levels and qualifications						
(v) a) total volunteers	22	=16/21	3	30	214	31
b) total volunteer hours	1,424	12/21	90	1,477	9,806	2,525
QI 14 Operational expenditure						
a) total expenditure per capita	£12,051	12/22	£7,181	£12,145	£19,449	£12,139
b) % on staff,	63%	11/22	47%	62%	78%	61%
% on information resources	13%	=10/22	8%	13%	21%	10%
% on equipment and buildings	0.4%	22/22	0.4%	4%	25%	0%
% on other operational costs	23.6%	8/22	0.3%	16%	37%	29%
c) capital expenditure per capita	£0	=17/22	£0	£467	£8,829	£0
QI 15 Net cost per visit	£1.59	=14/22	£1.18	£1.82	£2.52	£1.38
QI 16 Opening hours <sup>4</sup>						
(iii) a) % hours unplanned closure of static service points	0.00%	=1/22	0.00%	0.00%	0.25%	0.00%
b) % mobile stops / home deliveries missed	1.92%	15/20	0.00%	0.28%	7.99%	2.02%

<sup>1</sup> figures for co-located services are marked with an asterisk; performances for these services are likely to reflect higher footfall, and will not therefore be directly comparable with stand-alone library provision <sup>2</sup> per 1,000 Welsh speaking resident population; figures from 2017/18 reports corrected following a calculation error <sup>3</sup> per 10,000 resident population

<sup>4</sup> 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 with the first year of the sixth framework (2017/18).

#### **3.1 Meeting customer needs (QI 1-5)**

Neath Port Talbot completed both its user surveys (adult and children) in February 2019, with results demonstrating both the positive impact of the library on people's lives and continued high satisfaction rates with services and resources. The high satisfaction rate (91%) with IT provision is highlighted as reflecting well on work to upgrade facilities in this area. All static libraries continue to provide a full-range of support for individual development and good support for health and well-being. Attendance at pre-arranged training sessions has fallen by some margin in 2018/19; it is noted that this reflects a focus on delivering a smaller number of higher quality sessions, while extending informal support to meet user demand. As a result of this approach, numbers benefitting from informal training have risen, with performance here still among the highest in Wales.

#### **3.2 Access and use (QI 6-8)**

Neath Port Talbot continues to meet the target for easy access to service points, with services also provided through its seven community-managed libraries (not included as part of the statutory service). Attendance at events and activities organised by the library has increased further in 2018/19, with performance per capita now the highest in Wales. The service has continued to focus its efforts here, broadening the range of activities on offer, and catering for a growing range of community needs. Library use has improved in some areas, but with declining indicators in others, and performance generally at or around the median level. While the overall number of visitors to library premises has fallen slightly performance here is still one of the highest in Wales, and book issues for adults and children have both risen. The service notes the increased accuracy of reporting from the new all-Wales library management system, where a data cleanse has also seen a drop in reported membership levels.

#### **3.3 Facilities and services (QI 9-12)<sup>i</sup>**

Additional resources were found to support materials expenditure in 2018/19, recognising the impact of previous cuts in this area. Overall spending has risen by over 30%, impacting positively on book issues, but it is noted that there are no guarantees that budgets can be maintained at this level, and the acquisition targets for QI 9 are still not achieved. Spending on Welsh language resources has more than quadrupled, as the service has targeted investment in this area, enabling achievement of QI 10 in 2018/19. This has also had a positive impact on performance in relation to issues of Welsh language materials. PC provision has broadly been maintained, and the new Skewen Library will incorporate a dedicated IT suite. ICT usage has fallen slightly, but remains above the median for Wales. The service continues to meet the requirements in relation to supply of requests, with both targets here met.

#### **3.4 Expertise and capacity (QI 13-16)**

Overall staff numbers and numbers of qualified staff remain unchanged, although FTE hours have fallen slightly due to voluntary changes to contracts, and Neath Port Talbot, in common with most other library authorities does not meet either of the staffing targets. Qualified leadership is in place, and the service continues to meet the requirements for the

proportion of staff time spent on professional development. Volunteer input within the service's eight statutory service points has fallen in 2018/19, with a total of 22 individuals each contributing an average of over 64 hours to support specific areas of the service.

Total revenue expenditure has fallen slightly, reflecting operational efficiencies in areas other than the staff and materials budgets, which have both increased on 2017/18. Aggregate opening hours remain unchanged, and below the target level, although reporting does not include provision through community-managed libraries. Opening hours will also be considered as part of the current review of library provision.

## **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 continues to report on how the service contributes to the core themes of its Library Strategy, linking developments to wider corporate priorities, and the national Well-being Goals. Much of the work detailed is continued delivery of established services and initiatives, with developments in establishing new working partnerships, and extending the range of project activity.

## **5 Future direction**

Reporting on the authority's future direction and plans for the library service over the following year, Neath Port Talbot notes that work has begun on a major review of its library services, due to report at the end of 2019. This follows on from the huge public response received to 2018 budget proposals, which would have seen the transfer or closure of a number of branch libraries. It is noted that the purpose of the review is to ensure that the library service can continue to deliver a relevant, cost effective and sustainable service over the next five years. In the meantime the service is continuing to deliver against the aims and recommendations of its current Library Strategy (2016-2021), and delivery of plans to relocate Skewen Library in 2019.

## **6 Conclusion**

Neath Port Talbot library service has consolidated and improved its performance in a number of areas in 2018/19, with dedicated staff and careful planning contributing to a well-managed service. There is a continuing emphasis on extending the range of events and activities on offer, catering for a growing range of community needs, and physical visits to library premises remain among the highest in Wales. Increased investment in the materials budget has enabled much-needed improvement, and the standard for expenditure on Welsh language resources is now met. It is noted however that there are no guarantees that budgets can be maintained at this level in 2019/20, and it would be disappointing to see these positive gains reversed. The current review of library service provision, which is due to report later in 2019, has a noted aim of ensuring the continued delivery of a relevant, cost effective and sustainable library service over the next five years. The importance of appropriate resourcing levels will be a key consideration in ensuring that the service can be shaped to meet this aim, allowing it to build on the strengths evident in this year's assessment report.

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<sup>i</sup> E-resources purchased through centrally-funded subscriptions have been excluded from acquisitions figures for Q1 9 in 2018/19 to ensure that the standard accurately reflects individual authority strategy, investment and performance. In some cases this has impacted on achievement against the standard in comparison with 2017/18. CIPFA Statistics Returns continue to include figures for centrally-procured resources.