

Neath Port Talbot

Overview and location

Neath Port Talbot library service is operated by Neath Port Talbot Council and has eight static service points with one mobile library and a housebound service, plus six community-managed libraries. 90% of the population live within 2.5 miles of a library.

Library service performance

Neath Port Talbot provided evidence that it had fully met all 12 of the core entitlements. The independent assessment confirmed that it had fully met all of the core entitlements.

Core entitlement	Service self-Assessment	Independent assessment
1 Libraries in Wales will be free to join and open to all.	Fully met	Fully met
2 Libraries in Wales will ensure friendly, knowledgeable, and qualified staff are on hand to help.	Fully met	Fully met
3 Libraries in Wales will provide access to a range of services, activities and high-quality resources in a range of formats to support learning, personal well-being and development, community participation, and culture and recreation.	Fully met	Fully met
4 Libraries in Wales will provide appropriate services, facilities and information resources for individuals and groups with special needs.	Fully met	Fully met
5 Libraries will provide appropriate safe, attractive, and accessible physical spaces with suitable staffed opening hours.	Fully met	Fully met
6 Libraries in Wales will lend books for free and deliver free access to information, including online information resources available 24 hours a day.	Fully met	Fully met
7 Libraries in Wales will provide free use of the Internet and computers, including Wi-Fi.	Fully met	Fully met
8 Libraries in Wales will provide access to services, cultural activities and high-quality resources in the Welsh language.	Fully met	Fully met
9 Libraries in Wales will work in partnership to share catalogues and facilitate access to the resources of all Welsh libraries.	Fully met	Fully met
10 Libraries in Wales will work with a range of partners to promote and deliver services to new and diverse audiences, enabling more people to benefit from their services.	Fully met	Fully met

11 Libraries in Wales will regularly consult users to gather their views on the service and information about their changing needs.	Fully met	Fully met
12 Libraries in Wales will provide access to the library service's strategy, policies, objectives, and vision, in print and online, in a range of languages appropriate for the community.	Fully met	Fully met
Total – fully met	12	12
Total – partially met	0	0
Total – not met	0	0

Library use

Over the reporting year, the service had 96 active borrowers per 1,000 population, representing a 78% increase from the previous year. Adult book issues increased by 110% to 968 issues per 1,000 population, while children's book issues increased by 215% to 346 issues per 1,000 population. The use of electronic downloads also remained high.

Highlights

Highlights from the 2021/22 return period included:

- Extensive consultation to scope a new project to create a Makerspace in Port Talbot Library involving staff, library users, schools and colleges, artists, digital experts and designers.
- Permanent removal of fines for overdue items.
- 2021 saw the library service's most successful Summer Reading Challenge programme and a well-attended adult learners' week.
- Staff worked with colleagues in Child Development, Think Family Partnership, Neath Port Talbot Schools and Neath Port Talbot theatres to deliver Welsh Government-funded Winter of Wellbeing activities.
- A Social Media and Promotions group was set up in 2021 to work on various campaigns, marketing and the promotion of libraries. The group proactively worked with colleagues in NHS library services to deliver resources and library messages to staff and patients in local hospitals.

Materials, Welsh language and overall spend

Neath Port Talbot is in the bottom quartile for material spend per 1000 population. 18% of the budget is spent on children's resources which is the median for all services.

Welsh language stock selection policy is reviewed annually, and it changed its supply arrangements in 2021 to partner with a new local supplier to better meet local needs. 7% of the materials budget was spent on Welsh language items, a 4% increase from the previous return period. It is in the third quartile for acquisitions per 1000 Welsh speakers, and the median for issues per 1000 Welsh speakers. It worked with the Books Council of Wales and its reading groups, and introduced Welsh language song and rhyme time with Menter Iaith.

Staffing

The service has 7.5 full-time equivalent (FTE) posts filled by staff with library-related qualifications including the service manager. In addition, three main libraries all have a professionally qualified senior librarian. During 2021/22 Neath Port Talbot resumed face-to-face staff training sessions alongside maintaining opportunities for virtual training and staff spent 0.7% of their time on training. This is less than the previous year due to challenges around sickness, Covid-19 and having to concentrate on keeping branches open. Courses included diversity training, safeguarding, and first aid. Staff have annual performance appraisals to ensure that they are maximising their potential and these ensure the training courses being completed are relevant. The library service has a training budget to ensure that staff are able to continue their professional development. Many staff members enhanced their skills during the reporting period and are now better qualified.

Digital data

Neath Port Talbot provided digital data including online sessions held and number of individuals who viewed live/recorded sessions. It stopped collecting usage data on 'Click and Collect' orders in 2022, however the service remains operational. It provided 56 online sessions during the period which included live school sessions with participants, but the exact number of people is unknown due to large class sizes and attendance not being recorded. Other online content was provided through Facebook and YouTube. In terms of e-issues per 1,000 population, there was a 25% increase, moving its position up into the third quartile this year. Neath Port Talbot provided online health and well-being workshops for Council staff, using online stock on Borrowbox. It provided e-resources including Press Reader which gives access to 7,000 UK and international newspapers and magazines, and instant translation in up to 18 languages.

Future plans

Many of the recommendations from the 2019 Library Review have been implemented and continue to form the basis of future plans including an enhanced, more adaptable mobile library service that will be able to serve more communities and a refurbished home delivery service that will deliver improvements to some of the most vulnerable residents. A major proposal from the 2019 Review was a new central library for Neath. This is now nearing completion as part of Neath's town centre regeneration and was due to open in the autumn of 2022 but will now open early in 2023.

It intends to publish a new Library Strategy in 2023. Port Talbot Library will be developed into a Makerspace.

Case studies

Neath Port Talbot provided four extensive case studies with illustrative user feedback, including how the Service contributes to improving the well-being of children, young children and adults, and can help make people more independent and contribute to the community.