

Entitlement	Compliance (please select)	Authority comments
1 Free to join, and open to all.	Fully Met	<p>The Library Service meets its statutory obligation of being free to join and free to access the core range of services of book borrowing and accessing information - this includes access to all our services, both physical and on line and is not restricted to branch library users. Housebound users can join the library and also get access to the full range of resources available via the Home library Library Service. Fines for overdue items were suspended as a result of COVID in March 2020 and have since been permanently abolished, removing a barrier to free and open access for all. Membership of Neath Port Talbot Libraries gives all users access to libraries managed by the Library Service in addition to all community managed libraries in NPT. Users are able to join the library either through their local branch library or via the online joining form. Any visitors, and this would include travellers and the homeless, can take out an introductory membership as a short term measure which gives them full access to all library resources. The only restriction is that they are unable to borrow the full entitlement of books and/or other items. Once they have satisfied the full membership criteria they would be enlisted as a permanent member of the Library Service. The Service is wholly committed to providing activities and resources to all residents and visitors to Neath Port Talbot. Our libraries are set up in a way to ensure that differing user needs are catered for. This includes providing child friendly spaces for children and their families/carers. An important feature for us in the new Neath Library project is enhancing the children's area of the library.</p>
2 Ensure friendly, knowledgeable and qualified staff are on hand to help.	Fully Met	<p>The Library Service conducted a full user survey in February 2019. What the results from this survey showed was that the public value both the library service and library staff very highly. Annual performance appraisals are completed for all staff to ensure that they are fully able to maximise their potential and continue their professional development. Ensuring training is up to date and relevant to what staff and users need is a key part of the library training programme. The Library Service has a training budget to ensure that staff are able to continue their professional development and to meet new challenges - none more so than the challenges presented over the last two years. Many staff members have enhanced their skills during the last year and are now better qualified and equipped to carry out their roles. In addition to qualified professional, specialist staff at Library Headquarters, the three main libraries all have a professionally qualified senior librarian backed up by a library staff that boasts a wealth of experience. Moreover, paid library staff are available for 100% of the hours at every service point, ensuring that we are able to maintain a consistent level of delivery at all times. Professional advice and support is made available to community managed libraries and a professionally qualified librarian is always on duty.</p>

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<p>3 Provide access to a range of services, activities and resources to support lifelong learning, personal well-being and development, community participation, and culture &amp; recreation.</p>	Fully Met	<p>In contributing to Neath Port Talbot's Corporate priorities, the Library Service remains focused on delivering services and resources in the areas of digital inclusion, health and well being, children's literacy and lifelong learning. These areas of work are vital and are addressed in our Service Recovery Plan for 2022-23. Over the course of 2021-22 we gradually increased our range of activities and events in libraries in line with Covid restrictions at the time. Where we were not able to stage a library based event we ensured the activity took place online. For the most part these were events and activities with schools. In the latter half of 2021-22 we did fully resume physical song and rhyme sessions, local history talks, reading and writing groups and other community engagement events. As part of the Winter of Wellbeing project we staged a wide range of children's events through February and March 2022. In addition, working in tandem with Think Family Partnership we delivered a successful Christmas Santa Song and Rhyme sessions in December 2021. All of these events had well-being, community participation and recreation at the heart of the activity.</p>
<p>4 Provide appropriate services, facilities and information resources for individuals and groups with special requirements.</p>	Fully Met	<p>A range of services are provided for all individuals and groups with special needs. The Home Library Service (over 600 members) provides books (including large print) and spoken word directly delivered to people's homes. The addition of a new electric vehicle in 2021 has enhanced the efficiency of this service, while ensuring we reduce our carbon footprint at the same time. As a result of the partnership with British Wireless for the Blind users now have access to a range of specially adapted equipment for clients with visual impairments. Digital services enables 24-hour access to information resources as well as ebooks, emagazines and eaudio resources. There is a wide range of assistive technology and hardware available at all Neath Port Talbot managed libraries. Libraries have worked with refugees to assist in their language and technology skills, and have provided support to users who have English as a second language. A collection of resources aimed at people with dementia and their carers is also in place. The Library Service participates in the bibliotherapy scheme for children - Better with Books. The new Mobile Library - a smaller, more versatile vehicle, fully equipped for wheelchair access - has meant that we have been able to meet the needs of even more users in the remote areas of Neath Port Talbot. We trialled a tablet lending scheme in 2021-22 but found that it was competing against many other similar gifting initiatives in Neath Port Talbot. As a result of the trial we have decided to use these tablets to support visitors to the library and demonstrate the range of on line services. Additionally, we have run a project to loan MP3 players to visually impaired people with eaudio books of their choice from our online collection.</p>

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5 Provide a safe, attractive and accessible physical space with suitable staffed opening hours.	Fully Met	All eight of our libraries have been refurbished via Welsh Government capital funding grants over the last decade. The work that has been undertaken to enhance the library environment at all static service points is borne out by our survey results with high levels of satisfaction. Opening hours at libraries are reviewed frequently and adjusted to cater for local needs. Planned changes to opening hours at three of our libraries were suspended in 2020-21 but were reinstated in 2021-22. These changes are in direct response to community feedback. Library space has been constantly monitored over the year to ensure compliance with relevant COVID safety measures. Since reopening fully at the beginning of April 2021 there have been no enforced closures of libraries, in spite of considerable staffing challenges. In December 2019 a full review of the Library Service was presented to elected Members. The outcome of this Review was a commitment to a new Neath Library building, relocating it from the present building to the town centre development. This project is now well underway and is due to complete by the end of 2022. In early 2022 we submitted a new bid to the capital funding programme to develop a Makerspace area at Port Talbot Library. As a result of the successful bid Port Talbot Library be revitalised in 2022 providing visitors with a new, exciting facility.
6 Lend books for free, and deliver free access to information, including online information resources available 24 hours a day.	Fully Met	The free lending and reservation of books remains an important element of our core service. In 2020 we suspended fines for overdue items and in 2021-22 permanently abolished them in recognition of the barrier they present to library users. We continue to provide a free request service for books on order and in stock within Neath Port Talbot libraries and from other library services across Wales (free interlending). This free request service is also extended to the seven community managed libraries. Free access to information remains a core library service available through the internet, our non-fiction stock or reference collection material. This also includes free access to a full range of physical newspapers and magazines, including e-newspapers (PressReader) and e-magazines (Libby). The Service has actively promoted Neath Port Talbot's community directory - an online resource for all community information needs and Digital by Choice as well as continuing to support the Passport scheme which opens up academic libraries, including Swansea University, to Neath Port Talbot's library members. The Service actively participates in and supports Books4u, the regional interlending scheme.

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7 Provide free use of the Internet and computers, including Wi-Fi.	Fully Met	Using the internet and our public computers, including wifi, at all eight statutory branch libraries is free irrespective of the length of session. There are no charges relating to time used. Library members may use a PC for up to 2 hours daily (bookable, if needed) and additional hours can be requested if there is free space / availability. In 2021-22 we safely managed the reintroduction of our ICT services at all of our libraries. We promote a range of formal and informal IT and digital literacy training and support, provided by library staff and Digital Communities Wales. Over the course of the year we reintroduced a programme of digital training and support at all our libraries. At a number of libraries there are now regular classes and drop-in help sessions to support library users with their digital skills. Any sessions relating to computer use and IT training are advertised internally and externally through a variety of means including adverts, social media, partner organisations and via our website. NPT libraries introduced WiFi printing at all 8 of our libraries during 2021-22 as a direct result of customer feedback during COVID recovery.
8 Provide access to services, cultural activities and high quality resources in the Welsh language.	Fully Met	Our Welsh language stock selection policy is reviewed annually. As a result we made changes to our supply arrangements in 2021. We have now established a new relationship with a local supplier that will greatly improve our Welsh language books offer and better cater to local community needs. This change contributed to a 136% increase in the spend on Welsh language books and other resources in 2021-22. The Library Service will often liaise with the Books Council of Wales on stock requirements as well as its Welsh language reading groups. We offer a wide range of formats- these include large print, audio books, ebooks, emagazines and eaudio. The Library Service provides a wide variety of material in all formats, both written and digital for all ages in a wide variety of languages. Once we reintroduced our Song and Rhyme sessions we included a series of Sesiwn Ganu events - Welsh language song and rhyme sessions in partnership with Menter Iaith.

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<p>9 Work in partnership to share catalogues and facilitate access to the resources of all Welsh libraries.</p>	Fully Met	<p>The Library Service's catalogue has seen much improvement in recent years. Users now get a much better experience featuring images, information about the book and links to reservations similar to those offered by the retail sector. In addition the all -Wales Pori app has benefitted many library users, providing easy access to the library and our stock catalogue from a mobile device. The Library Service works in partnership across South Wales on the Books4u inter lending scheme and also provides access to academic libraries through the Passport scheme. This facilitates open access to university and college libraries within South West Wales. A link to Access to Research is available on the Service's website and staff are encouraged to promote a range of national library services and resources to users. The implementation of the new all-Wales Library Management System allows access to Neath Port Talbot's stock catalogue. We also provide a link to enable residents to easily join the National Library of Wales.</p>
<p>10 Work with a range of partners to promote and deliver services to new and diverse audiences, enabling more people to benefit from their services.</p>	Fully Met	<p>Prior to the pandemic library staff regularly attended a number of external events throughout the County and actively promoted the library service through a number of methods - activities, information sessions, performances and projects. These events promoted the service to both users and non-users through events and programmes including World Book Day, National Libraries Week, Adult Learners Week, Every Child a Library Member, Summer Reading Challenge, Better With Books, Bookstart Week, Margam Park events, Aberafan Beach Festival and Pontardawe Festival. Over the course of the last twelve months we have taken steps to reintroduce much of this work. 2021 saw our most successful Summer Reading Challenge programme and a well attended adult learners week. We have worked with colleagues in Child Development, Think Family Partnership, NPT Schools and NPT theatres to deliver Winter of Wellbeing activities. A NPT library service Social Media and Promotions Group was set up in 2021 to work on various campaigns, marketing and the promotion of libraries. The Group has been proactively working with colleagues in NHS library services to help deliver both resources and the library message to staff and patients in local hospitals. A designated marketing budget is used to promote the library Service during these occasions. The Service has also worked alongside partners to promote and deliver to different audiences - Social Services, Flying Start, Schools, Third Sector. Social media now plays an active role in the communications policy of the Library Service. The Library Service has an Instagram, Facebook and Twitter account as well as a YouTube channel and is currently exploring options for a TikTok account to extend the reach of our marketing to non users.</p>

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<p><b>11</b> Regularly consult users to gather their views on the service and information about their changing needs.</p>	Fully Met	<p>User and Non-user surveys are usually undertaken every 2 years (February 2019 being the most recent due to Covid restrictions). These seek the views of both adults and children at all eight statutory libraries. In addition, surveys are carried out for specific aspects of the service, such as IT services, opening hours and at external events. We undertook an extensive user consultation exercise in 2021 as part of the application process for the Port Talbot Library Makerspace project. In this we consulted with staff, library users, schools and colleges, artists, IT specialists, neighbouring library services and designers. Users are consulted through feedback forms, social media contact and via Neath Port Talbot's Comments, Compliments and Complaints procedure. Staff also collect anecdotal feedback at a number of external events which enable us to engage with both users and non users. Feedback has led to the upgrading of both computer hardware and software at all libraries in recent years, as well as implementing a WiFi printing service at all libraries during the past year. Following consultation on budget proposals in 2018 an exceptionally high number of responses was received opposing the possible option of transferring or closure of a number of branch libraries. This led to the Library Review which was published in December 2019. Integral to this Review were public meetings with users at all of our libraries together with Elected Members and focus groups with school children at a number of schools. This year, the library service has also engaged with NPT's Youth council as a means of evaluating library services to teenagers. Our next full library user survey is scheduled before March 2023 and the results will be included in our 2023 return.</p>
<p><b>12</b> 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.</p>	Fully Met	<p>In 2016 the Service produced a five-year library strategy. This was published in 2016 and can be found on the Library Service's home page in both English and Welsh. The Library Service strategy brought together and updates a number of library policies and outlined the vision and objectives up to 2021 in conjunction the Council's corporate priorities. <a href="https://npt.gov.uk/default.aspx?page=15631">https://npt.gov.uk/default.aspx?page=15631</a></p> <p>In consultation with both our former and present Cabinet Members, and with the Head of Service, it was recommended that the existing library Strategy roll over to March 2023 as the aims and objectives outlined are still relevant and related to the Council's overall aims and objectives. Furthermore, given the developments that are taking place both in Neath Port Talbot with work underway to develop a new Culture and Heritage Strategy, and strategic developments across Wales, such as the development of a new Welsh Government Culture strategy and framework 7 of the Welsh Public Library Standards framework, it was decided that producing a new library strategy at this time is not the most prudent of actions. There are also changes emerging in library usage patterns as the service recovers following COVID which will impact on any future strategy.</p>