

Welsh Public Library Standards 2017-2020: Monmouthshire

Annual Assessment Report 2017-18

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

1 Executive summary

Monmouthshire met 10 of the 12 core entitlements in full, partially met 1, and failed to meet 1.

Of the 10 quality indicators which have targets, Monmouthshire achieved 7 in full, 1 in part and failed to achieve 2.

Monmouthshire library service has gone through a period of change over the past year, bringing together library and adult learning services to create a single point of access for communities. It is regrettable that its return did not provide fuller commentary to explore the impact of this merger. The failure of systems around stock purchase during the year undoubtedly had a negative impact on performance in some areas, although it is noted that these issues have now been resolved. Professional input into planning for future development is something to which the authority now needs to give careful consideration. The development of a Library Service Strategy, and time and resources to stabilise the new arrangements, will be imperative in consolidating the service offer.

- All service points provide a full range of support for individual development, and for health and well-being. Three case studies demonstrate the impact of the service on individuals from the community.
- Both formal and informal training levels have increased significantly, with attendance at pre-arranged sessions per capita the third highest in Wales.
- Issues with the system for the purchase of stock have impacted on acquisition targets, with performance falling significantly in a number of areas; it is noted that these issues have now been resolved.
- The targets for Welsh language provision are not met by some margin, but this is acknowledged, and it is encouraging that there are plans to increase spending here in the next financial year.
- PC provision has increased, and usage levels have been broadly maintained, where the trend in many other authorities has seen a fall in take-up.
- Overall staffing levels have increased slightly with the average per capita the second highest in Wales; Monmouthshire is one of only two library services to meet this target. It should be noted however that the service merger has impacted positively on these figures, with staff increases covering both adult learning and library service delivery.
- Total revenue expenditure has increased slightly on 2016-17, but now represents expenditure for the merged service and not solely the library function.

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

Monmouthshire is meeting 10 of the 12 core entitlements in full, partially meets 1, and without a library strategy in place does not meet CE 12. Regrettably, there was insufficient detailed evidence provided on the return to comment further on how the service addresses the requirements of these core entitlements. However, the service is aware that a written strategy needs to be developed, and this is in progress; it is anticipated that the service will be able to report on this in its next return.

2.2 Quality indicators with targets

There are 16 quality indicators (QIs), of which ten have constituent targets. Of these, Monmouthshire is achieving 7 in full, 1 in part and is failing to achieve 2 of the indicators.

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	
or Materials spend per capita	x	
QI 10 Welsh Language Resources		Not met
% of material budget spent on Welsh	x	
or 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	✓	

Quality Indicator	Met?	
QI 13 Staffing levels and qualifications:		Partially met
i) Staff per capita	✓	
ii) Qualified staff per capita	x	
iii) Head of service qualification/training	x	
iv) CPD percentage	✓	
QI 16 Opening hours per capita	✓	Met in full

There has been no significant change in Monmouthshire's overall 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.

Monmouthshire indicated their user surveys will be carried out during autumn 2018 (children) and autumn 2019 (adult). The service was also unable to report figures for user evaluation of its training offer in 2017-18.

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:	n/a	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. Monmouthshire provided three such case studies from individual users:

- Digital Skills – support provided by library staff for an older library user to use his iPad and access the Books4U system; highlighting the importance of the library's digital support role.
- Community Hub – a family using Chepstow Community Hub for learning, research, and social activities; showing how the library is a warm, welcoming central hub for the community, with services offered for all ages.
- Summer Reading Challenge – the impact of entering the summer reading challenge on one child; improving confidence, reading skills and motivation.

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 Monmouthshire'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 also 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%		
c) health and well-being	n/a	33%	65%	95%	30%	
d) enjoyable, safe and inclusive	n/a	90%	98%	100%		
QI 2 Customer satisfaction						
a) 'very good' or 'good' choice of books	n/a	88%	91%	98%	79%	
b) 'very good' or 'good' customer care	n/a	93%	99%	100%	97%	
c) 'very good' or 'good' IT facilities	n/a	74%	86%	94%		
d) 'very good' or 'good' overall;	n/a	93%	97%	99%	93%	
e) users aged 16 & under rating out of ten	n/a	8.5	9.1	9.2	9.1	
QI 5 User training						
a) attendances per capita	84	3/22	10	32	238	48
c) informal training per capita	128	15/22	15	199	473	59
QI 6 attendances at events per capita	191	14/22	82	228	684	236
QI 8 Library use						
a) visits per capita	4,614	3/22	2,501	4,047	7,014	5,035
b) virtual visits per capita	465	18/22	243	866	2,211	1,114
c) active borrowers per capita	145	15/22	100	154	229	196
QI 10 Welsh issues per capita*	12	21/22	4	68	663	
QI 11 Online access						
b) Computers per capita [^]	10	7/22	5	9	14	9
c) % of available time used by the public	26%	12/22	14%	27%	67%	25%
QI 13 Staffing levels and qualifications						
(v) a) total volunteers	50	8/21	3	31	196	43
b) total volunteer hours	1,346	11/21	40	1,346	11,939	1,408
QI 14 Operational expenditure						
a) total expenditure per capita	£15,242	5/21	£7,047	£11,915	£17,771	£15,201
b) % on staff,	74%	2/21	44%	63%	75%	73%
% on information resources	8%	20/21	4%	13%	25%	9%
% on equipment and buildings	3%	16/21	0%	4%	20%	4%
% on other operational costs;	15%	13/21	0%	18%	37%	14%
c) capital expenditure per capita	£473	10/20	£0	£338	£17,432	£557

QI 15 net cost per visit	£2.40	2/21	£1.24	£1.82	£2.41	£2.40
QI 16 Opening hours [#]						
(iii) a) % hours unplanned closure of static service points	n/a		0.00%	0.02%	1.28%	
b) % mobile stops / home deliveries missed	1.24%	12/20	0.00%	0.35%	11.24%	1.2%

^{*} 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.

It is acknowledged that service costs (QI 14 and 15) now relate to the merged library and adult learning service, and are not directly comparable with other library authorities.

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)

Monmouthshire has yet to conduct its user surveys; it is noted that these are due to be carried out in autumn 2018 and 2019. All static libraries provide a full range of support for individual development, and good support for health and well-being, with targets here both achieved. Both formal and informal training levels have increased significantly, with attendance at pre-arranged sessions per capita the third highest in Wales.

3.2 Access and use (QI 6-8)

Monmouthshire continues to meet the target for easy access to service points, and offers events / activities for users with special requirements at all static libraries. Attendance at library events and activities has decreased however, as has the number of overall physical visits, book issues and the number of active borrowers recorded. Systems issues, now resolved, were a contributory factor here, and visits per capita still remain one of the highest in Wales. Monmouthshire is one of fifteen library services recording a decrease in virtual visits, although the usage figures here do not correspond to the full year. In contrast, electronic downloads have increased, in-line with the general trend across most Welsh library services.

3.3 Facilities and services (QI 9-12)

Issues with the system for the purchase of stock (now resolved) impacted on acquisition over the period, resulting in a reduction in the overall materials budget allocated, with Monmouthshire one of thirteen authorities not meeting the targets in this area. Expenditure on children's materials has more than halved, and the amount spent per 1,000 Welsh-speaking resident population has also fallen dramatically. The targets for Welsh language provision are not met by some margin as a result, with Monmouthshire's level of investment the lowest in Wales. The service acknowledges the particularly low financial spend on Welsh language reading materials, and plans to increase this in the next financial year. PC provision has however increased, and usage levels have been broadly maintained, where the trend in many other authorities has seen a fall in take-up. There has been a welcome recovery in performance regarding supply of requests, where both targets are now met.

3.4 Expertise and capacity (QI 13-16)

Overall staffing levels have increased slightly with the average per capita the second highest in Wales, and Monmouthshire one of only two library services to meet this target. It should be noted however that the service merger has impacted positively on these figures, with staff increases covering both adult learning and library service delivery.

Monmouthshire is also one of the few library services recording an increase in qualified staff, although the average per capita remains somewhat lower than the median for Wales and no other library service reports that the Head of Service does not hold a relevant library qualification. The number of volunteers has increased with all receiving in-house training, although total hours have fallen.

Total revenue expenditure has increased slightly on 2016-17, but now represents expenditure for the merged service and not solely the library function; figures here are not therefore directly comparable with other library authorities. Aggregate opening hours have been maintained, with 1.2% of home deliveries missed owing to mechanical faults and staff illness.

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. Monmouthshire reported on the merger of its Strategic Library Service, Community Hub Service, and Community Education. The narrative provided identifies how these services align with the Well-being of Future Generations Act; providing inclusive and free access to a range of public information and services; supporting health and well-being; enabling learning opportunities and skills development; and fulfilling a vital role in helping public services reach out to communities.

5 Future direction

Reporting on the authority's future direction and plans for the library service over the following year, Monmouthshire noted how it intends to continue to work with partners and the community to develop the service through its Community Hubs and Libraries. Plans include formalising an extension to arrangements for Gilwern Library, a review of the Home Delivery Service to ensure it is sustainable and cost effective, and developing the digital offer to provide business support and consolidate existing social media channels. Services to children through Bookstart and the Summer Reading Challenge, and an extension of the health offer, through launching the Books on Prescription Dementia Collection, were also identified areas for development.

6 Conclusion

Monmouthshire library service has gone through a period of change over the past year, bringing together library and adult learning services to create a single point of access for communities. It is regrettable that its return did not provide fuller commentary to explore the impact of this merger. The failure of systems around stock purchase during the year undoubtedly had a negative impact on performance in some areas, although it is noted that these issues have now been resolved. Professional input into planning for future development is something to which the authority now needs to give careful consideration. The development of a Library Service Strategy, and time and resources to stabilise the new arrangements, will be imperative in consolidating the service offer.