Welsh Public Library Standards 2017-2020: Swansea

Annual Assessment Report 2017-18

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

1 Executive summary

Swansea met 11 of the 12 core entitlements in full, and failed to meet 1.

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

Swansea library service continues to perform well in many areas, although with some evidence of decline in service usage. Improvements in monitoring and reporting are noted, ensuring that data is robust and provides a sound basis for future planning. Although the targets are not yet met, the service has also committed to increasing its investment in Welsh language resources, and to promoting their use. Levels of staffing, and particularly professional staff, are of concern however. The planned review of service viability, including staffing, should inform the development of a clear strategy for the future sustainability of the service.

- All service points provide a full range of support for individual development, and for health and well-being. Four case studies demonstrate the impact of the service on groups and individuals.

- Improved monitoring and reporting has enabled the service to provide more robust figures for informal training, attendance at library events / activities, and website use.

- Usage generally remains above the median for Wales, although there are reductions in the number of physical visits, active borrowers and overall book issues.

- Targets for overall acquisitions and for materials in the Welsh language are still not met, although the service is increasing its investment in Welsh language resources, with a greater emphasis on encouraging their use.

- Overall staff numbers, and the level of professional staffing have both fallen, and neither target is met. Numbers of professional staff are now close to the lowest in Wales, and the service is increasingly reliant on agency staff to maintain service delivery. The planned review of work plans / staffing needs will be key to ensuring service sustainability in this area.

- Total revenue expenditure has increased on 2016-17, with the average per capita investment in library services at the median level.

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

Swansea is meeting 11 of the 12 core entitlements in full, but with no overall library strategy that articulates the vision and objectives of the service fails to meet CE 12. It is noted that library service delivery is closely aligned with published corporate priorities and strategies, but there is no direct link to relevant documentation on the library service website to inform users about the strategic direction of the service, and little detail within the corporate documents to identify the service's role and contribution. The planned review of service sustainability, including staffing, should inform the development of a clear strategy for the future delivery of the service.

2.2   Quality indicators with targets

There are 16 quality indicators (QIs), of which ten have constituent targets. Of these, Swansea is achieving 7 in full, one 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	
<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	✔	Met in full	

There has been a slight change to the last year of the fifth framework, with the target for the proportion of staff time spent in personal / professional development now met.

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.

Swansea is planning to undertake its user surveys in November 2018.

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:	99%	2/17	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. Swansea provided four such case studies:

- Books n' Hooks - a weekly crochet and knitting group that meets in a local library; members share their skills and knowledge, find friendship and support, and have started fundraising for local charities.

- Reading Stars - a literacy scheme encouraging primary age 'reluctant readers' to enjoy books; the children were introduced to a range of fiction, non-fiction and poetry, completing a log book of tasks and book reviews, and meeting the library's reading dog. They enjoyed the project, and its aims to engage them with reading were met.

- Digital Literacy - supporting an elderly couple to learn how to shop online so they could get groceries delivered; library staff helped them learn how to use their tablet and gain confidence in ordering online, signing them up to a six-week tablet course so they could continue to develop their knowledge and skills.

- Skills Exchange - a group of mental health nursing students ran a skills exchange session with a library-based knitting group, the students taught the knitting group basic digital skills and learnt the basics of knitting and crochet. Two different communities worked together, learning new things and enjoying themselves.

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 Swansea'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%	*65%*
c) health and well-being	n/a		33%	65%	95%	*54%*
d) enjoyable, safe and inclusive	n/a		90%	98%	100%	*97%*
QI 2 Customer satisfaction						
a) 'very good' or 'good' choice of books	n/a		88%	91%	98%	*91%*
b) 'very good' or 'good' customer care	n/a		93%	99%	100%	*99%*
c) 'very good' or 'good' IT facilities	n/a		74%	86%	94%	
d) 'very good' or 'good' overall;	n/a		93%	97%	99%	*99%*
e) users aged 16 & under rating out of ten	n/a		8.5	9.1	9.2	*9.0*
QI 5 User training						
a) attendances per capita	25	*14/22*	10	32	238	*28*
c) informal training per capita	215	*11/22*	15	199	473	*n/a*
QI 6 attendances at events per capita	398	*5/22*	82	228	684	*80*
QI 8 Library use						
a) visits per capita	4,342	*5/22*	2,501	4,047	7,014	*4,604*
b) virtual visits per capita	1,047	*8/22*	243	866	2,211	*341*
c) active borrowers per capita	196	*5/22*	100	154	229	*211*
QI 10 Welsh issues per capita*	51	*14/22*	4	68	663	
QI 11 Online access						
b) Computers per capita^	8	*16/22*	5	9	14	*7*
c) % of available time used by the public	33%	*8/22*	14%	27%	67%	*37%*
QI 13 Staffing levels and qualifications						
(v) a) total volunteers	36	*10/21*	3	31	196	*24*
b) total volunteer hours	1,802	*9/21*	40	1,346	11,939	*1,603*
QI 14 Operational expenditure						
a) total expenditure per capita	£11,915	*11/21*	£7,047	£11,915	£17,771	*£11,589*
b) % on staff,	73%	*4/21*	44%	63%	75%	*75%*
% on information resources	14%	*9/21*	4%	13%	25%	*12%*
% on equipment and buildings	3%	*18/21*	0%	4%	20%	*3%*
% on other operational costs;	10%	*17/21*	0%	18%	37%	*9%*
c) capital expenditure per capita	£534	*8/20*	£0	£338	£17,432	*£78*

QI 15 Net cost per visit	£1.80	*12/21*	£1.24	£1.82	£2.41	*£2.19*
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	n/a		0.00%	0.35%	11.24%	*n/a*

* 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)

Swansea has yet to conduct its user surveys; it is noted that these are due to be carried out in November 2018. 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. Attendance at pre-arranged user training sessions has fallen slightly on 2016-17, with 99% of those surveyed saying that attendance helped them achieve their goals. Improvements to monitoring of informal training delivered by staff have enabled the service to submit data for this indicator in 2017-18, with the reported performance above the median level.

3.2   Access and use (QI 6-8)

Swansea 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 also increased significantly in 2017-18 with performance now the fifth highest per capita in Wales; it is noted that this reflects improved reporting systems, confirming that figures in previous years were being under-reported. While usage figures otherwise are generally above the median for Wales, there is some evidence of decline, with reductions in the number of physical visits, active borrowers, and overall book issues. Library membership has increased, and there is a notable rise in the number of visits recorded to the service website, although it is noted that this reflects a change in the methodology used, ensuring greater consistency with other authorities.

3.3   Facilities and services (QI 9-12)

There has been an apparent increase in spending on materials in 2017-18, reflecting better management of the materials budget, although Swansea remains one of thirteen authorities not meeting either of the acquisitions targets. The service has increased its investment in Welsh language materials and resources, although the targets here are still not met. It is noted that the service intends to continue to improve spending in future years, and there is a welcome emphasis on encouraging greater use of the Welsh language collections. Performance in relation to supply of requests has also improved, with both targets met. Reported PC provision has increased, with the inclusion of all internet enabled devices provided for use by the public. ICT usage has however fallen, in common with most other library services, with more customers using their own devices and the Wi-Fi facilities provided.

3.4   Expertise and capacity (QI 13-16)

In common with a number of other services in Wales, Swansea is not meeting either of the per capita staffing targets. Overall staffing levels have fallen slightly, as financial pressures have curtailed recruitment, although comparatively they are still the third highest in Wales. It is noted that service delivery is heavily reliant on agency staff and overtime hours as a result, although a new Relief Staff scheme has proved beneficial. Numbers of professional staff have also fallen with the average per capita here now close to the lowest in Wales, although the service emphasises its continuing support for staff to obtain qualifications. A new Library Service Manager is being recruited whose role will include reviewing work plans / service staffing, and an element of transformation is expected as the service considers its sustainability needs in this area. Qualified leadership is in place, and the service has improved its performance in terms of staff development / training, so the requirements here are now met. The number of volunteers has increased, with some 36 individuals each contributing an average of 50 hours to the service.

Total revenue expenditure has increased on 2016-17, with the average per capita investment in library services at the median level. Aggregate annual opening hours have been maintained and continue to meet the target set.

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. Swansea's narrative notes how the service contributes to the cross-cutting themes set out in Taking Wales Forward: Prosperous and secure, supporting people to develop new skills and gain employment; Healthy and active, supporting health and well-being; Ambitious and learning, improving literacy and digital skills; and United and connected, improving support for the Welsh language and for digital inclusion.

5   Future direction

Reporting on the authority's future direction and plans for the library service over the following year, Swansea highlights the recruitment of a new Library Service Manager, whose remit will include looking at the long term sustainability of the service. It is noted that the council remains committed to sustaining its library hubs and district community libraries, and that the service continues to work with other departments and local communities. Digital literacy services remain a priority, and one of the community libraries will act as a pilot for a new Community Hub project. Budget has also been identified to refresh IT hardware and software, and the service will join the all-Wales LMS in 2018-19.

6   Conclusion

Swansea library service continues to perform well in many areas, although with some evidence of decline in service usage. Improvements in monitoring and reporting are noted, ensuring that data is robust and provides a sound basis for future planning. Although the targets are not yet met, the service has also committed to increasing its investment in Welsh language resources, and to promoting their use. Levels of staffing, and particularly professional staff, are of concern however. The planned review of service viability, including staffing, should inform the development of a clear strategy for the future sustainability of the service.