

Welsh Public Library Standards 2017-2020: Conwy

Annual Assessment Report 2018/19

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

1 Executive summary

Conwy continues to meet 11 of the 12 core entitlements in full, and partially meets 1.

Of the 10 quality indicators which have targets, Conwy achieved 8 in full, 1 in part, and did not achieve 1.

Conwy has seen some improvement in service use and reach in this second year of the sixth framework, although there are evident reductions in both capacity and resources. Responding to corporate priorities and financial pressures on the service a restructure will also see changes to the management and professional staffing of the service in 2019/20. The restructured management team will be developing a new library service strategy, seeking to ensure that the service can deliver on identified priorities and deliver required savings. Conwy has performed well against the library frameworks and in delivering for its communities in recent years; adequate resourcing is however key to ensuring that it can continue to develop and respond to changing user needs. The authority should consider carefully its future investment in the service, to enable it to maintain and build on its achievements.

- All service points continue to provide good support for individual development and for health and well-being. 97% of adults rate the library as 'very good' or 'good' overall.
- Take-up of the service's user training and events / activities offer has stabilised, with performances broadly maintained at 2017/18 levels.
- Levels of library usage have generally improved, notably in areas of digital engagement with services.
- There has been a significant reduction in the materials budget in 2018/19, and Conwy no longer meets the expenditure target for up-to-date reading materials (QI 9). The service has however maintained its investment in Welsh language resources (QI 10) and the target here is still met.
- Overall staff numbers have fallen further, in line with budget constraints, although the service still meets the target for professional staffing. Comparatively performances here remain amongst the highest in Wales, however new staffing structures, put in place for 2019/20, will impact further on achievement in next year's return.
- Total revenue expenditure has continued to fall, and this is a matter for concern if the service is to maintain delivery outcomes for its communities.

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

Conwy continues to meet 11 of the 12 core entitlements in full, providing a thorough and detailed return to facilitate assessment. While it is clear that the current strategic direction of the service is well-planned, there remains no up-to-date published document to inform users of the wider strategy for the service, and CE 12 therefore remains partially met. It is noted that the library management team will be working on the development of a new strategy over the coming year, and CE 12 may be fully met in 2019/20. Conwy continues to deliver effectively in all other areas, consulting extensively on service developments, and leading on the development of the all-Wales LMS online registration system.

2.2 Quality indicators with targets

There are 16 quality indicators (QIs), of which ten have constituent targets. Of these, Conwy is achieving 8 in full, 1 in part, and does not achieve 1.

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	✓	
iii) Head of service qualification/training	✓	

iv) CPD percentage	✓	
QI 16 Opening hours per capita	✓	Met in full

In 2018/19, to ensure consistency between authorities and to reflect individual service performance, centrally procured e-resources were excluded from reporting against acquisitions for QI 9 at the assessment stage. This has impacted on Conwy's performance and taken with the drop in materials expenditure, QI 9 is no longer 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 2017/18 or 2018/19. Rankings reflect the numbers of respondents, where 1 is the highest scoring authority.

Conwy completed its user surveys of adults and children in November 2018, demonstrating continuing high levels of satisfaction with the service, with positive indicators of the impact the service has on people's lives.

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:	90%	=9/13	60%	94%	97%
e) % of adults who think that the library has made a difference to their lives:	87%	9/15	38%	88%	95%
QI 5 b) % of attendees of training sessions who said that the training had helped them achieve their goals:	90%	=18/20	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. Conwy provided three such case studies:

- Shared Reading – the impact of the Shared Reading group for MIND service users on one individual with mental health issues. From her initial anxiety in joining the group, she gained confidence, contributing actively to sessions, developing a stronger sense of self, and discovering a love of reading. She has since completed training to run her own group, and feels that the experience has given her back her life, only better.
- Coding Club – the benefits of attending the Conwy Library group Coding Club for one student. She developed her knowledge, skills and confidence, and benefited from the support and encouragement of library staff.
- School Partnership – joint working between Llandudno Library and a local secondary school, from the initial 'Pageturners' project (encouraging reading and library use in year 7), to a weekly 'Mad About Books' lunchtime club for all ages and abilities, encouraging the children to try new genres, and make better use of the library.

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 Conwy'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	82%	8/15	24%	82%	96%	83%
c) health and well-being	74%	7/15	33%	62%	94%	76%
d) enjoyable, safe and inclusive	97%	=7/15	90%	97%	100%	98%
QI 2 Customer satisfaction						[Framework 5]
a) 'very good' or 'good' choice of books	91%	=6/14	81%	91%	98%	89%
b) 'very good' or 'good' customer care	98%	=9/14	93%	99%	100%	98%
c) 'very good' or 'good' IT facilities	95%	1/13	65%	91%	95%	95%
d) 'very good' or 'good' overall	97%	=7/14	93%	97%	99%	97%
e) users aged 16 & under rating out of ten	9.0	=11/13	8.5	9.3	9.5	8.7
QI 5 User training						
a) attendances per capita	30	12/22	13	30	208	31
c) informal training per capita	280	7/22	15	199	433	278
QI 6 attendances at events per capita	176	18/22	91	295	689	177
QI 8 Library use ¹						
a) visits per capita	3,300	17/22	2,596	3,969	7,170*	3,270
b) virtual visits per capita	1,562	4/22	345	885	2,205	1,270
c) active borrowers per capita	163	8/22	58	150	251	165
QI 10 Welsh issues per capita ²	857	7/22	95	602	1,424	802
QI 11 Online access						
b) Computers per capita ³	11	5/22	5	10	14	11
c) % of available time used by the public	33%	=4/22	14%	25%	63%	35%
QI 13 Staffing levels and qualifications						
(v) a) total volunteers	65	5/21	3	30	214	68
b) total volunteer hours	1,989	8/21	90	1,477	9,806	1,806
QI 14 Operational expenditure						
a) total expenditure per capita	£13,655	7/22	£7,181	£12,145	£19,449	£14,128
b) % on staff,	72%	7/22	47%	62%	78%	68%
% on information resources	11%	17/22	8%	13%	21%	15%
% on equipment and buildings	1%	21/22	0.4%	4%	25%	2%
% on other operational costs	16%	11/22	0.3%	16%	37%	15%
c) capital expenditure per capita	£5,529	4/22	£0	£467	£8,829	£1,168
QI 15 Net cost per visit	£2.19	5/22	£1.18	£1.82	£2.52	£2.41
QI 16 Opening hours ⁴						
(iii) a) % hours unplanned closure of static service points	0.25%	22/22	0.00%	0.00%	0.25%	0.48%
b) % mobile stops / home deliveries missed	0.59%	12/20	0.00%	0.28%	7.99%	0.05%

¹ 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 ² per 1,000 Welsh speaking resident population; figures from 2017/18 reports corrected following a calculation error ³ per 10,000 resident population ⁴ 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)

Conwy completed its user surveys of adults and children in autumn 2018 as planned, with the findings reflecting well on how the service is meeting customer needs. All static libraries continue to provide the full range of support for individual development, and good support for health and well-being. There have been some minor changes in numbers benefiting from the service's training offer, but with performances broadly maintained at 2017/18 levels, and at or above the median per capita for Wales. The percentage of attendees who helped to achieve their goals has improved and is now at 90%.

3.2 Access and use (QI 6-8)

Conwy continues to meet the target for easy access to service points, maintaining 10 branches (five of which are community supported) open for 10 or more hours per week. Attendance at events / activities organised by the library is similar to 2017/18, with the service continuing to provide activities for users with special requirements at all 10 service points. Usage in other areas has either improved or been maintained, apart from a small decline in the number of adult book issues. There has been a notable increase in the number of visits to the service website, and to electronic downloads, indicative of a continuing growth in users' digital engagement with services.

3.3 Facilities and services (QI 9-12)ⁱ

A change in the approach to the assessment of acquisitions, taken with a close to 32% drop in Conwy's expenditure on materials, means that quality indicators for stock acquisition / expenditure (QI 9) are not met in 2018/19. Proportionate spending on material for children, and Welsh language resources has however been maintained, and the target for QI 10 is still met. The effect of protecting spending in these areas can be seen in increased issues, in contrast to the drop in adult loans. Performance in relation to supply of requests continues to meet the requirements and at an improved level, with figures based on requests satisfied within the authority. PC provision has been maintained at 2017/18 levels, but with a note that this will reduce in 2019/20, reflecting changing usage patterns, as customers use their own devices and the free Wi-Fi service.

3.4 Expertise and capacity (QI 13-16)

Overall staffing levels have continued to fall, reflecting the impact of financial efficiencies asked of the service, although comparative performance remains amongst the highest in Wales. It is noted that the staffing structure has been reviewed to ensure that the service is positioned to continue to meet corporate priorities while achieving the necessary savings. Professional staffing levels have been maintained in 2018/19 with the target here still met, however the staff restructure will see changes to the designated management and professional team in 2019/20. Qualified leadership is in place, and the service continues to meet the requirements for staff training / professional development, although at a reduced level. Volunteer activity has been maintained, with 65 individuals each

contributing around 30 hours, and Conwy acting as a test site and lead for the volunteer-led national Reading Friends project, engaging with older people and those living with dementia.

Total revenue expenditure has fallen again in 2018/19, although investment in the service remains above the median level. Aggregate annual opening hours have been maintained, with the target here still met.

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. Conwy outlines how library services can contribute widely to national level strategies, with more detailed consideration of its specific role in delivering for local regional strategies, and Conwy's Corporate Plan. The work of the library in supporting mental well-being, community empowerment, health agendas, digital inclusion and poverty initiatives, literacy, skills and learning are all highlighted.

5 Future direction

Reporting on the authority's future direction and plans for the library service over the following year, Conwy references the final phase of work on its Modernising Libraries Strategy, and the positive report from the Wales Audit office on this work, which will conclude with the opening of the new Culture Centre at Conwy in autumn 2019. A review of the mobile and home library services is noted as ongoing, following a public consultation in early 2019, with proposals to amalgamate the two services, and place some limits on mobile provision. The outcomes of this review are yet to be formally agreed, but will be reflected in the service's 2019/20 return. The service reports also on revisions to its staffing structure, in responding to corporate priorities and the need make savings. A new library management team has been established as part of this restructure, and will be working on the development of a new strategy for the service over the coming year.

6 Conclusion

Conwy has seen some improvement in service use and reach in this second year of the sixth framework, although there are evident reductions in both capacity and resources. Responding to corporate priorities and financial pressures on the service a restructure will also see changes to the management and professional staffing of the service in 2019/20. The restructured management team will be developing a new library service strategy, seeking to ensure that the service can deliver on identified priorities and deliver required savings. Conwy has performed well against the library frameworks and in delivering for its communities in recent years; adequate resourcing is however key to ensuring that it can continue to develop and respond to changing user needs. The authority should consider carefully its future investment in the service, to enable it to maintain and build on its achievements.

ⁱ 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.