Welsh Public Library Standards 2017-2020: Rhondda Cynon Taf

Annual Assessment Report 2018/19

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

1   Executive summary

Rhondda Cynon Taf met all of the 12 core entitlements in full.

Of the 10 quality indicators which have targets, Rhondda Cynon Taf achieved 6 in full, 2 in part and did not achieve 2.

Rhondda Cynon Taf has consolidated its position in a number of areas in 2018/19, as the move to the all-Wales LMS has bedded in, and with positive investments in infrastructure, which should deliver improvements in 2019/20. Reported library usage continues to be mixed until then, with careful planning delivering improved or maintained performances in some areas, but declining figures in others. While materials expenditure has decreased in 2018/19, targeted investment has enabled achievement of QI 10 (Welsh language resources), and constraints on spending should ease in 2019/20. Staffing levels have fallen, but the service is supporting two members of staff to complete library qualifications. The authority is also continuing to invest in its service points, including a new flagship development in Pontypridd, and the relocation of two libraries within new Community Hubs. Further improvements can be anticipated as the benefits of these investments are realised, although the overall low resourcing of the service continues to be a limiting factor.

- All service points provide a full range of support for individual development and good support for health and well-being, with Dementia Friendly champions and services now in place at all branches. 97% of adults rated services as 'very good' or 'good' overall.

- Attendance at formal and informal training has been maintained, with 97% of attendees supported to achieve their learning goals.

- Usage figures have increased in some areas, as issues with reporting have been resolved, but continue to decline in other others, including overall visits, event attendance, and children's loans. The closure of service points for refurbishment may be a continuing influence on performance here.

- Spending on the materials budget has fallen, with the targets here not met; improved investment in Welsh language resources has however enabled achievement of QI 10. It is noted that the service expects constraints on spending to ease in 2019/20.

- Improved performances in relation to supply of requests meant that the 7 day target is now regarded as met, although work remains to achieve the 15 day target level.

- Staffing has fallen on 2017/18, with the loss of a small number of posts, although professional staff levels have been maintained and the service is supporting two members of staff to achieve qualifications; in neither case are the target levels met.

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

Rhondda Cynon Taf continues to meet all 12 core entitlements in full. The authority has maintained its provision of school, mobile and housebound services, and is investing in upgraded facilities, with a new purpose built library in Pontypridd, and relocation of two other service points as part of local hubs. The remodelling of the mobile service has also allowed for longer stop times, enabling users to benefit from a wider range of services. An updated Library Strategy and Action Plan 2019/2021 are available on the service website, setting out the vision and objectives for the service.

2.2 Quality indicators with targets

There are 16 quality indicators (QIs), of which ten have constituent targets. Of these, Rhondda Cynon Taf is achieving 6 in full, 2 in part and does not achieve 2.

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		Met in full
% of material budget spent on Welsh	✔	
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		Partially met
a) % of requests satisfied within 7 days	✔	
b) % of requests satisfied within 15 days	x	
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	x	Not Met

Rhondda Cynon Taf has improved its performance on 2017/18, with the requirements for Welsh language resources (QI 10) now fully met, and the 7 day target for QI 12 achieved.

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.

Rhondda Cynon Taf completed its user surveys for adults and children in autumn 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:	96%	*=3/13*	60%	94%	97%
e) % of adults who think that the library has made a difference to their lives:	90%	*=6/15*	38%	88%	95%
QI 5 b) % of attendees of training sessions who said that the training had helped them achieve their goals:	97%	*=10/20*	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. Rhondda Cynon Taf provided two such case studies, although stronger evidence could have been included of the impact on individuals / groups:

- Autism Awareness – provision of staff training to raise awareness of autism, and make the experience of using libraries easier for people on the autistic spectrum; the service will also be trialling 'Autism friendly' signage at one branch.

- Dementia Friendly Sessions – work during Dementia Action Week to deliver Dementia Friends sessions to the wider public (building on training already held for staff). Three sessions were held, with positive feedback from attendees.

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 Rhondda Cynon Taf'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	75%	9/15	24%	82%	96%	84%
c) health and well-being	58%	=9/15	33%	62%	94%	59%
d) enjoyable, safe and inclusive	97%	=7/15	90%	97%	100%	99%
QI 2 Customer satisfaction						*[Framework 5]*
a) 'very good' or 'good' choice of books	92%	5/14	81%	91%	98%	94%
b) 'very good' or 'good' customer care	99%	=3/14	93%	99%	100%	99%
c) 'very good' or 'good' IT facilities	88%	8/13	65%	91%	95%	
d) 'very good' or 'good' overall	97%	=7/14	93%	97%	99%	96%
e) users aged 16 & under rating out of ten	9.5	=1/13	8.5	9.3	9.5	x
QI 5 User training						
a) attendances per capita	40	8/22	13	30	208	41
c) informal training per capita	95	17/22	15	199	433	93
QI 6 attendances at events per capita	175	19/22	91	295	689	186
QI 8 Library use[1]						
a) visits per capita	3,044	19/22	2,596	3,969	7,170*	3,355
b) virtual visits per capita	481	17/22	345	885	2,205	243
c) active borrowers per capita	58	22/22	58	150	251	204
QI 10 Welsh issues per capita[2]	458	15/22	95	602	1,424	420
QI 11 Online access						
b) Computers per capita[3]	8	18/22	5	10	14	8
c) % of available time used by the public	22%	=14/22	14%	25%	63%	24%
QI 13 Staffing levels and qualifications						
(v) a) total volunteers	29	12/21	3	30	214	22
b) total volunteer hours	1,334	13/21	90	1,477	9,806	2,442
QI 14 Operational expenditure						
a) total expenditure per capita	£9,434	18/22	£7,181	£12,145	£19,449	£9,994
b) % on staff,	76%	3/22	47%	62%	78%	68%
% on information resources	14%	6/22	8%	13%	21%	15%
% on equipment and buildings	2%	19/22	0.4%	4%	25%	4%
% on other operational costs	8%	19/22	0.3%	16%	37%	14%
c) capital expenditure per capita	£300	14/22	£0	£467	£8,829	£203
QI 15 Net cost per visit	£2.33	4/22	£1.18	£1.82	£2.52	£2.20
QI 16 Opening hours[4]						
(iii) a) % hours unplanned closure of static service points	0.00%	=1/22	0.00%	0.00%	0.25%	0.04%
b) % mobile stops / home deliveries missed	7.01%	19/20	0.00%	0.28%	7.99%	3.90%

[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)

Rhondda Cynon Taf completed its user surveys for adults and children in autumn 2018, with continuing high levels of customer satisfaction, but small declines in reported views on how the service supports skills development and health and well-being. 97% of adults still rated the library as 'very good' or 'good' overall, with younger users awarding a score of 9.5 out of 10, reflecting well on the work of the library youth services team. All static libraries continue to provide full support for individual development, and good support for health and well-being, with targets here met. All service points also now have Dementia Friendly champions and services in place. Numbers benefitting from both formal and informal training have broadly been maintained, with formal training levels above the median level, and 97% of attendees supported to achieve their learning goals. Informal training levels remain, however, among the lowest per capita in Wales.

3.2   Access and use (QI 6-8)

Rhondda Cynon Taf continues to meet the target for easy access to service points, with 13 static service points open 10+ hours per week, and provides events / activities for users with special requirements at all these branches. Usage figures remain at the very lower end of comparative performance however, with continued reductions in visitor numbers and event attendance, although the closure of library facilities for refurbishment work is an evident factor here. Numbers of active borrowers / library members have also fallen significantly, but it is noted that this represents more accurate reporting with errors in the data reported during the transition to the all-Wales LMS last year. Problems with reporting virtual visits and book issues have also been resolved, leading to a marked increase in performance in website use and adult book issues, although children's loans have fallen on 2017/18.

3.3   Facilities and services (QI 9-12)[i]

Spending on the materials budget has fallen, without the lump sum provided in 2017/18 to invest in stock for a new library; performance here remaining below the stipulated level for QI 9. The service has however targeted and improved its investment in Welsh language resources, introducing a more rigorous acquisition policy, and is now achieving the target for proportionate spend in this area, ensuring that QI 10 is met. PC provision has decreased slightly, with the removal of out of date equipment from service; usage levels continue to fall (in common with the experience across Wales), and the service notes that with increasing use of Wi-Fi additional PC provision is not planned. Performance in relation to supply of requests has improved, with the 7 day target now considered to be met, and the service continuing to review and develop its approach.

3.4   Expertise and capacity (QI 13-16)

Overall staff levels have fallen, with the loss of graduate and apprenticeship posts, and changes to mobile library staffing; it is noted that the service does not anticipate any significant improvement to these levels in the foreseeable future. Numbers of qualified staff have been maintained however, and the service is supporting two members of staff to complete distance learning studies, to augment professional staffing levels. Performance against this indicator may therefore improve in the future, but for the time being neither staffing target is met. Qualified leadership is in place, and the service continues to make effective use of volunteers, although volunteer hours have dropped in 2018/19 in line with the changing nature of the volunteering opportunities available.

Total revenue expenditure has fallen on 2017/18, and remains among the lowest per capita in Wales. There have been reductions in all areas except staffing, but it is noted that this reflects planned expenditure rather than specific cuts or efficiencies. There is also an expectation that the materials budget will increase in 2019/20 to previous levels. Aggregate annual opening hours are comparable with 2017/18 and remain just below the target level. A cluster service model continues to operate to ensure that users can access a local library on 6 days of the week. The number of mobile library stops missed has risen further in 2018/19, reflecting continued mechanical issues with the mobile fleet; two new vans became operational in early 2019 and this situation should now be resolved.

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. Rhondda Cynon Taf continues to report on its contribution to the Welsh Government's cross-cutting themes: *Prosperous and Secure*, supporting skills development, access to IT facilities, and volunteering; *Healthy and Active*, delivering bibliotherapy schemes and supporting social well-being; *Ambitious and Learning*, promoting readings skills for all ages; and *United and Connected*, enabling the development of digital skills. Much of this commentary relates to established services and initiatives, and some additional reflection on developments in 2018/19 would have been appropriate.

5   Future direction

Reporting on the authority's future direction and plans for the library service over the following year, Rhondda Cynon Taf notes the impact of continuing financial pressures, which require the library service to review the relevance and accessibility of its services, and innovate to ensure that it remains fit for purpose. Library service involvement in the ongoing development of Community Hubs is highlighted as key to improving facilities and embedding the service in larger neighbourhood networks, increasing service profile and opening up opportunities for partnership working. The relocation of Pontypridd Library, continued development of digital access, and introduction of self-service kiosks are also noted priorities for the coming year.

6   Conclusion

Rhondda Cynon Taf has consolidated its position in a number of areas in 2018/19, as the move to the all-Wales LMS has bedded in, and with positive investments in infrastructure, which should deliver improvements in 2019/20. Reported library usage continues to be mixed until then, with careful planning delivering improved or maintained performances in some areas, but declining figures in others. While materials expenditure has decreased in 2018/19, targeted investment has enabled achievement of QI 10 (Welsh language resources), and constraints on spending should ease in 2019/20. Staffing levels have fallen, but the service is supporting two members of staff to complete library qualifications. The authority is also continuing to invest in its service points, including a new flagship development in Pontypridd, and the relocation of two libraries within new Community Hubs. Further improvements can be anticipated as the benefits of these investments are realised, although the overall low resourcing of the service continues to be a limiting factor.

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[i] E-resources purchased through centrally-funded subscriptions have been excluded from acquisitions figures for QI 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.