

Welsh Public Library Standards 2017-2020: Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council

Annual Assessment Report 2019/20

This report has been prepared based on information provided in Neath Port Talbot's annual return, case studies and narrative report submitted to the Culture and Sport Division of the Welsh Government.

1 Executive summary

Neath Port Talbot met all of the 12 core entitlements in full.

Of the 9 quality indicators which have targets, Neath Port Talbot achieved 6 in full, 1 in part and did not achieve 2.

Library services in Neath Port Talbot continue to be delivered effectively in 2019/20. The review of library service provision noted in 2018/19 has now been undertaken and commitments achieved through this process should ensure that the library service continues to deliver an improved and sustainable service for the people of Neath Port Talbot over the next five years. The development of a new library for Neath as part of the town centre regeneration has the potential to revitalise library services. There is a continued emphasis on developing a strong professional team that are able to advise and support community libraries. Whilst the community managed libraries are not included in the annual report, the library service continues to provide an extensive level of support to these libraries and all its users. Although budget pressures still exist, and several elements of usage have fallen, the strength of leadership, alongside a clear commitment from the Council to support the new vision of Neath Port Talbot libraries is encouraging for the development of libraries in Neath Port Talbot over the next five years.

- Neath Port Talbot continues to meet all 12 of the Core Entitlements in full.
- Levels of customer satisfaction remain high.
- Although there has been a general decrease across most areas of usage, the total number of library members has increased slightly and members per capita are above the median level in Wales.
- The service responded to previous concerns around levels of expenditure particularly for Welsh and children's stock and meets the Welsh language materials target.
- The service continues to meet the target for ICT provision including Wi-Fi and has invested in provision in the relocated Skewen library.
- Overall staff numbers and numbers of qualified staff remain unchanged and unfortunately do not meet the targets. However, the level of the standard of customer care remains very high.
- Aggregate opening hours remain unchanged, and below the target level, in common with six other services. However it continues to meet the location target.

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. The assessment has been limited to some degree by the fact that local authorities were only asked to comment on any changes to the previous year's return, alongside additional commentary on of partially/not met core entitlements.

2.1 Core entitlements

Neath Port Talbot continues to meet all 12 of the Core Entitlements in full. The service has provided a considered and comprehensive response and the relocation/refurbishment of Skewen library has resulted in an improvement to the IT offer. This has also led to an improved offer in relation to cultural events and activities at Skewen. A wide range of services and activities are delivered across libraries in Neath Port Talbot. There has also been an improvement to the expenditure on Welsh language resources, impacting positively on CE 8. The service continues to lead on the all-Wales purchasing consortium for e-resources.

The service continues to provide extensive support to the 7 Community Managed Libraries, but due to the guidance surrounding inclusion of CMLs in the annual return, they are not included here. This may affect performance for example, materials expenditure includes stock which is used by the CMLs, but no loans made in CMLs are included.

2.2 Quality indicators with targets

There are 16 quality indicators (QIs), of which ten have constituent targets. Due to the impact of Covid-19, three quality indicators have been removed for the 2019/20 reporting year, five, six and fifteen, of which number six had a constituent target. Of the **nine** remaining targets for 2019-20 Neath Port Talbot achieved 6 in full, 1 in part and did not 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 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	x	
iii) Head of service qualification/training	√	
QI 16 Opening hours per capita	x	Not met

Neath Port Talbot has maintained its performance with no significant change throughout the framework.

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. However, this measure has been affected by Covid-19 and some authority plans to undertake a survey in the first quarter of 2020 were cancelled. The summary figures (lowest, median and highest) are therefore based on those authorities indicating they completed their user survey during framework 6. Rankings reflect the numbers of respondents, where 1 is the highest scoring authority.

Neath Port Talbot completed its adult and children’s user surveys in February 2019, with positive results.

Performance indicator		Rank	Lowest	Median	Highest
Q1 1 Making a difference					
b) % of young people who think that the library helps them learn and find things out:	97%	=1/19	60%	90%	97%
e) % of adults who think that the library has made a difference to their lives:	95%	=2/19	41%	85%	99%

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. Neath Port Talbot provided four such case studies:

- The Library for the family – the role of the library in supporting the family. The impact of the library on a family is described, ranging from song and rhyme sessions for the children to a quiet space to study for exams for dad and a place providing PC access for all. A family has benefited from using the library in a number of ways. The importance of the library to the community is illustrated.
- Looking for work – the impact of the library on the unemployed. For one individual the library is a key element of his daily routine. The library has enabled him to meet others in a similar situation; reducing isolation and improving mental health.
- Bookstart – the benefits of Bookstart sessions. Bookstart sessions in the library have been invaluable for one mum and have provided an opportunity to meet other mothers and learn new activities to undertake with her son. The sessions have provided ideas for family activities in the home and built confidence through social interaction.
- Recovering from PTSD – the library’s impact on feelings of isolation and loneliness. For one adult, who had suffered a number of bereavements, the library helped to combat feelings of social exclusion. The library staff provided valuable social contact for this individual and family history resources available in the library also contributed to the wellbeing and satisfaction of the individual.

2.4 Quality indicators and benchmarks

Whilst Covid-19 restrictions remain challenging to all library services in Wales, staff resilience, professionalism and care for the community they serve has been outstanding. Although digital services have increased, we know from evidence provided that customers are missing their library services. They are missing the staff, browsing the shelves, IT provision, community spaces and groups such as knit and natter. The importance of the library as a physical place and the impact on the wellbeing of their customers through interaction with library staff cannot be underestimated.

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 Neath Port Talbot’s position for 2019/20. 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 second 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	2018/19	
QI 1 Making a difference					[Framework 6]	
a) % of adults who think that using the library has helped them develop new skills	90%	=4/18	25%	75%	94%	90%
c) health and well-being	87%	4/19	38%	69%	96%	87%
d) enjoyable, safe and inclusive	97%	=7/19	90%	96%	100%	97%
QI 2 Customer satisfaction					[Framework 6]	
a) 'very good' or 'good' choice of books	96%	3/18	78%	91%	99%	96%
b) 'very good' or 'good' customer care	99%	=3/18	88%	97%	100%	99%
c) 'very good' or 'good' IT facilities	91%	=5/17	65%	85%	99%	91%
d) 'very good' or 'good' overall	98%	=5/18	85%	96%	100%	98%
e) users aged 16 & under rating out of ten	9.3	=7/19	8.0	9.1	9.5	9.3
QI 8 Library use ¹						
a) visits per capita	4,175	7/22	2429	3987	6874	4,428
b) virtual visits per capita	703	13/22	239	909	2131	920
c) active borrowers per capita	87	19/22	78	145	244	123
QI 10 Welsh issues per 10,000	356	19/22	311	680	1468	425
QI 11 Online access						
b) Computers per 10,000	6	21/22	4	9	14	6
c) % of available time used by the public	32%	6/22	14%	30%	64%	32%
QI 14 Operational expenditure						
a) total expenditure per capita	£12,969	8/22	£7,260	£12,448	£23,333	£12,051
b) % on staff,	59%	=11/22	48%	61%	76%	63%
% on information resources	10%	=15/22	5%	13%	22%	13%
% on equipment and buildings	3%	=15/22	0%	8%	28%	0.4%
% on other operational costs	27%	7/22	1%	18%	35%	23.6%
c) capital expenditure per capita	£0	=22/22	£0	£1,567	£13,027	£0
QI 16 Opening hours ³						
(iii) a) % hours unplanned closure of static service points	0.00%	=1/22	0.00%	0.23%	3.96%	0.00%
b) % mobile stops / home deliveries missed	1.54%	17/22	0.00%	1.07%	5.41%	1.92%

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 ²per 1,000 Welsh speaking resident population

³ 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 and second year of the sixth framework (2017/18 and 2018/19).

3.1 Meeting customer needs (QI 1-5)¹

Neath Port Talbot completed its adult and children's user surveys in February 2019, with positive results. All static libraries continue to provide a full-range of support for individual development and good support for health and well-being. Partnership working is identified as a strength in Neath Port Talbot and individual development is supported by a range of formal and informal training. Furthermore, health and well-being is supported in a variety

of ways, through partnerships with organisations such as Macmillan and dementia friendly events held in Port Talbot Library.

3.2 Access and use (QI 6-8)ⁱⁱ

Library usage has also been impacted by the closure of all Libraries on March 20th 2020 due to Covid-19. Neath Port Talbot continues to meet the target for easy access to service points, with services also provided through its seven community-managed libraries (not included as part of the statutory service). Although there has been a general decrease across most areas of usage, the total number of library members has increased slightly and members per capita are above the median level in Wales. There has also been an improved performance regarding the number of electronic downloads, which has increased by 87% since 2017/18. As noted by many services the social media presence of Neath has continued to grow and many users now prefer to interact through a variety of social media channels.

3.3 Facilities and services (QI 9-12)ⁱⁱⁱ

The materials budget has risen by 15.7% since 2017/18 and there has been a 5% increase on the percentage of materials expenditure for children, which is higher than the median spend in Wales. However, the acquisition targets for QI 9 are still not achieved. Neath Port Talbot is one of seventeen authorities who have not met the acquisitions target (QI 9) in 2019/20. It was noted in 2018/19 that spending on Welsh language resources quadrupled, following a long period of low investment. This has been maintained in 2019/20 with a slight increase in expenditure and QI 10 (Welsh language resources) has been met. PC provision has increased and facilities are improved due to the new library in Skewen. ICT usage remains the same and is above the median in Wales. Performance in relation to supply of requests has declined slightly (partly as a result of the recommended method of calculation) but both targets continue to be met.

3.4 Expertise and capacity (QI 13-16)^{iv}

Overall staff numbers and numbers of qualified staff remain unchanged, although FTE hours have fallen slightly due to voluntary changes to contracts, and Neath Port Talbot, in line with most other library authorities, does not meet either of the staffing targets. The total number of qualified staff per 10,000 remains above the median in Wales. Qualified leadership remains in place.

There has been an increase in the total revenue expenditure per 1000 population in 2019-20. This is, in part, attributable to the costs of the relocation/refurbishment of Skewen library and to the significantly higher costs for utilities in this year. Aggregate opening hours remain unchanged, and below the target level, in common with six other services. It should be noted that reporting does not include provision through community-managed libraries.

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. The strategic vision of Neath Port Talbot is set out in its library strategy 2016-2021. These include access to online services, learning and development, health and well-being and literacy.

Developments in these areas are aligned with the corporate priorities and national well-being goals. As services recover from Covid-19 there will be an increased emphasis on improving digital services to develop the local economy and environment so that the well-being of people can be improved.

5 Future direction

Reporting on the authority's future direction and plans for the library service over the following year, Neath Port Talbot outlined the outcomes of the review of library service provision undertaken in 2019/20. The vision to provide a strong, sustainable network of public libraries, both statutory and community managed, together with a digital online library that adapts to the needs of users has been endorsed by the council. Immediate priorities include the development of a new library in Neath town centre, a new mobile library, a new vehicle for the home delivery service, the relocation of library headquarters and a pilot project to review opening hours. These developments will potentially provide a number of opportunities for the service and are encouraging in the current climate and show clear and thorough planning. The service will also continue to deliver against the aims and recommendations of its current library Strategy (2016-2021), with a new Strategy due in the autumn of 2021.

6 Conclusion

Library services in Neath Port Talbot continue to be delivered effectively in 2019/20. The review of library service provision noted in 2018/19 has now been undertaken and commitments achieved through this process should ensure that the library service continues to deliver an improved and sustainable service for the people of Neath Port Talbot over the next five years. The development of a new library for Neath as part of the town centre regeneration has the potential to revitalise library services. There is a continued emphasis on developing a strong professional team that are able to advise and support community libraries. Whilst the community managed libraries are not included in the annual report, the library service continues to provide an extensive level of support to these libraries and all its users. Although budget pressures still exist, and several elements of usage have fallen, the strength of leadership, alongside a clear commitment from the Council to support the new vision for Neath Port Talbot libraries is encouraging for the development of libraries in Neath Port Talbot over the next five years.

ⁱ Due to Covid-19, local authorities were only asked to report any change in provision since the last reporting year for Q1 3&4.

ⁱⁱ Due to Covid-19, Q1 5&6 were removed for the 2019/20 reporting year.

ⁱⁱⁱ E-resources purchased through centrally-funded subscriptions have been included in the acquisitions figures for Q1 9 in 2019/20. Each authority has added 201 to their total acquisitions from centrally funded subscriptions. CIPFA Statistics Returns continue to include figures for centrally-procured resources.

^{iv} Due to Covid-19, Q1 15 was removed for the 2019/20 reporting year, alongside training and volunteer hours.