

Welsh Public Library Standards return 2015/16, Powys Library Service

Support provided to Welsh Government priorities

Powys Library Service continues to contribute to Powys County Council and Welsh Government priorities and strategic goals, as evidenced below. The well-being goals outlined in the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 are addressed by public library services across the country, for example:

- A prosperous Wales; public libraries continue to make major contribution to the poverty agenda through providing everyone with local access to opportunities which are free at the point of delivery – the opportunity to read and develop literacy, to find out and learn, both formally and informally, which can lead to qualifications and improved employment prospects. The provision of free IT equipment, broadband and wi-fi, particularly in a rural area such as Powys, where broadband access is poor, supports both education, small businesses and jobseeking. Our library materials, which are used over and over again by many people without the need to travel out of their local area, demonstrate efficient use of resources. In the Powys libraries' adult public user survey Nov 2015, 76% of respondents agree that their library has helped them to learn something new, 48% said that the library has helped them with education, and 31% with jobseeking. 78% agreed that the library is of economic benefit to them, many commenting that it has saved them a fortune.
- A healthier Wales: public libraries contribute immeasurably to health and wellbeing, as an early intervention which prevents the need for more expensive services later. In the Powys libraries' adult public library user survey 2015, 69% of respondents said that they had found information about health and wellbeing from the library, and 91% of respondents said that going to the library makes them feel better. *"I love to visit the library as it gets me out of the house when feeling down,"* said a Brecon Library customer Nov 2015, and this was just one of many similar comments. The opportunity to interact with staff and other customers, and to read and learn stimulates mental health greatly. Examples of health related initiatives in Powys Library Service during 2015/16 include the launch of an online booklist of resources for people living with dementia and their families/carers; staff have been trained to become dementia aware, and the library service took part in outreach work to showcase and raise awareness of dementia related services within Powys County Council, at the Royal Welsh Show and the National Eisteddfod. Book Prescription Wales titles continue to be loaned through libraries, and in an initiative to support parenting, the library service has worked closely with Action for Children to loan resources in support of the Incredible Years parenting programmes across Powys. Loans of these titles have increased dramatically from previously, when Action for Children loaned them out themselves.
- A more equal Wales: by being open to everyone who lives, works or is educated within Powys, the library service contributes to offering an equality of opportunity to all, including those who live in poverty. This is extended into our most rural areas through the mobile library service. All service points, including the mobiles, offer good disabled access. There are few services which offer something for all ages and interests, in the way that public libraries do. The opportunity to obtain resources for studying, or to use facilities to do so, supports everyone in their efforts to achieve their potential. A library customer commented

that the library “opens doors”, in the most recent user satisfaction survey. The online catalogue means that all stock in both Welsh and English can be browsed and ordered from across the county, from home or from the library, and brought to the customer’s locality for collection. Fully bilingual signage and notices, and the availability of Welsh speaking staff in the more Welsh speaking areas of Powys contribute to equality.

- A Wales of cohesive communities: in the Powys Library Service adult user survey 2015, 90% of respondents said that the library makes them feel part of their community, and 99% agreed that it is a safe, friendly and enjoyable environment. The provision of good broadband, either using library computers or the wifi, contributes to enabling people to be digitally connected. Customer comments evidence the contribution that our libraries make to people: *“At a time when I am long term unemployed it is a place of friends, activities, education humour and welcome.”*
“I know we are lucky to have a Library, with all the cuts etc and I think it’s a much needed part of our community. I use it for loan of books, access to computers, to encourage my children to read and take part in activities and to find out about local events: I would say that is definitely of benefit to my life and my children’s - thank you”
- A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language: the availability of a good range of stock in Welsh, and a host of cultural events and activities which celebrate books, reading and learning in a myriad of ways supports this goal. Author visits this year included Myrddin ap Dafydd’s visit to Welshpool, while in Llanfair Caereinion library, some wonderful bilingual raps were created around the theme of the rugby world cup. Twf and Mentrau Iaith in both Montgomeryshire and Brecon & Radnor continue to be strong partners, supporting us to deliver Welsh language events for children in our libraries, whilst Welsh for Adults courses and conversational sessions for adults are held in many libraries.

The evidence given above is also applicable to the aims of the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014, which highlights the need for preventative services which contribute to the wellbeing of those who live in our communities, places where they can feel safe, welcome, find the information they need (with help from trained staff), interact with others and feel part of their communities – library users tell us that public libraries provide all of this, yet they are still not recognised for this work through adequate protected funding from Welsh Government. 97% of respondents to the library user survey stated that using their library makes a difference to their lives.

“The Library is the only social outlet I have and I find that now the Library closes on a Wednesday that I feel isolated.” Library user, November 2015.