

Welsh Public Library Standards 2014-17

Powys

Annual Assessment Report 2015-16

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

1) Executive summary

Powys met 17 of the 18 core entitlements in full and partially met 1.

Of the 7 quality indicators which have targets, Powys achieved 4 in full, 2 in part and failed to achieve 1.

The impact of the budget cuts on performance during the year is clear. Powys is to be commended for increasing use of audio-visual materials, and for maintaining a high level of professional staff, which should help it to move forward in the current financial climate and continue to deliver a high quality service.

- Powys reports the highest percentage of adult users who think that the library has made a difference to their lives amongst those authorities reporting impact surveys this year. Users' own words describe the impact of the services they value.
- Powys undertook a customer survey of adults in November 2015, with above average results for making a difference, but satisfaction with the service was relatively low.
- Powys meets the target for easy access to service points. The number of active borrowers has increased and is now above the median for Wales, although book issues have fallen, possibly as a result of cuts to opening hours. Visits to library premises have increased owing to the co-location of Llandrindod library. Both physical and virtual visits are above the median for Wales. Attendance at events per capita has increased, but remains below the median for Wales. Speed of supply of requests has improved slightly.
- Powys has failed to achieve the targets for overall acquisitions, despite increases compared to last year. This is likely to be the result of a spending freeze and cut to the book fund. The replenishment rate target has been met however. The spending freeze in the last quarter of the year affected the balance of spending on materials for children and in the Welsh language, which fail to meet the targets this year. ICT provision in branches is now good, but there is a lack of provision on the mobile fleet.
- Powys does not meet the overall target for staffing following cuts this year, but the level of professional staffing is the highest in Wales, and staff training is at an appropriate level. Volunteers have been used for the first time, and the authority plans to expand in this area. Overall spending saw a significant 30% cut, and the average net cost per visit is now £1.90, the second lowest in Wales.

Considering the four areas in the framework (*Customers and communities; Access for all; Learning for life; and Leadership and development*) in comparison to the rest of Wales, Powys performs relatively poorly on indicators in the area of *Learning for life*. Results in the remaining areas are more mixed, with some indicators showing a good performance, and

others rather poorer.

Compared to the previous year there have been many reductions in the indicators, associated with budget cuts. There have also been some improvements, particularly in the speed of supply of requests, and in the provision of reader development activities. The service is also bucking the Wales trend with its increase in audio-visual usage.

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 the core entitlements, the quality indicators which have targets, the quality indicators showing performance against others, and impact measures. A narrative assessment of the authority's performance is made in Section 3.

a) Core entitlements

Powys is meeting 17 of the 18 core entitlements in full and partially meeting 1. The entitlement which is only partially met this year is in *Learning for life*, where online information sources are not available via the mobile service at present.

b) Quality indicators with targets

There are 16 quality indicators (QI) within the framework. Of the 7 which have targets, Powys is achieving 4 in full, 2 in part and is failing to achieve 1 of the indicators:

Quality Indicator	Met?	
QI 3 Individual development:		Met in full
a) ICT support	✓	
b) Skills training	✓	
c) Information literacy	✓	
d) E-government support	✓	
e) Reader development	✓	
QI 5 Location of service points	✓	Met in full
QI 8 Up-to-date reading material:		Partially met
a) Acquisitions per capita	✗	
<u>or</u> Materials spend per capita	✗	
b) Replenishment rate	✓	
QI 9 Appropriate reading material:		Not met
a) % of material budget on children	✗	
b) % of material budget spent on Welsh	✗	
<u>or</u> Spend on Welsh per capita	✗	
QI 10 Online access:		Met in full
a) All service points	*	
Computers per capita	✓	
b) Wi-Fi provision	✓	
QI 13 Staffing levels and qualifications:		Partially met
a) Staff per capita	✗	
b) Professional staff per capita	✓	
c) Head of service qualification/training	✓	
d) CPD percentage	✓	

Quality Indicator	Met?
QI 16 Opening hours per capita	✓ Met in full

* Authorities are not penalised on this indicator if all static service points provide internet access but their mobiles do not.

This represents an improvement over 2014-15, overall. Targets relating to reader development activities, replenishment rate, and computers per capita have been met this year, but those relating to appropriateness of reading material have been missed.

c) Impact measures

The framework contains three indicators which seek to gather evidence of the impact that using the library service has on people's lives. Through these and other indicators it is possible to see how the library service is contributing towards educational, social, economic and health and wellbeing local and national agendas. These indicators do not have targets. Not all authorities collected data for the impact indicators, and ranks are included out of the numbers of respondents stated, where 1 is the highest scoring authority.

Powys undertook an impact survey of adults in November 2015. A children's survey will be undertaken in autumn 2016.

Performance indicator	Rank	Lowest	Median	Highest	
QI 1 Making a difference					
b) % of children who think that the library helps them learn and find things out:	n/a	86%	93%	99%	
e) % of adults who think that the library has made a difference to their lives:	97%	1/13	36%	87%	97%
% of children who think that the library has made a difference to their lives:	n/a	57%	73%	93%	
QI 4 b) % of attendees of training sessions who said that the training had helped them achieve their goals:	92%	16/17	85%	97%	100%

Powys provided 4 impact case studies which showed the real difference the library service makes in users' own words:

- A visually impaired user who can enjoy reading books again, thanks to audio e-books
- A job-seeker who has saved money and become more involved with the community
- A young man with special needs who has obtained paid employment after undertaking work experience in the library
- An older lady who learnt digital skills and was able to arrange a visit to overseas family members and undertake a number of other online tasks

d) Quality performance indicators and benchmarks

The remaining indicators do not have targets, but allow performance to be compared between authorities. The following table summarises Powys' position for 2015-16. 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 obtained from customer surveys which only need to be carried out once during the three year framework period, or those where relevant data elements were not available to some authorities. Figures reported in respect of last year for QI 4 to QI 16 are repeated for convenience of comparison. Note that indicators 'per capita' are calculated per 1,000 population.

Performance indicator		Rank	Lowest	Median	Highest	2014/15	Rank
QI 1 Making a difference							
a) new skills	76%	6/13	23%	72%	92%		
c) health and well-being	69%	5/13	26%	58%	93%		
d) enjoyable, safe and inclusive	99%	2/13	84%	97%	100%		
QI 2 Customer satisfaction							
a) 'very good' or 'good' choice of books	74%	14/14	74%	89%	97%		
b) 'very good' or 'good' customer care	90%	14/14	90%	97%	99%		
c) 'very good' or 'good' overall;	95%	10/14	92%	97%	99%		
d) child rating out of ten	n/a		8.0	9.2	9.5		
QI 4 User training							
a) attendances per capita	33	10	5	30	390	26	11
c) informal training per capita	112	14/19	3	195	1017	162	11 / 21
QI 6 Library use							
a) visits per capita	4,611	7	2,467	3,967	6,185	4,540	8
b) virtual visits per capita	1,505	3	340	976	2,475	1,571	2
c) active borrowers per capita	161	10	45	157	273	97	21
QI 7 attendances at events per capita	122	18	60	223	666	68	18
QI 11 Use of ICT - % of available time used by the public							
a) equipment	34%	10	20%	31%	68%	37%	10
b) Wi-Fi services	n/a		20%	60%	90%	n/k	
QI 12 Supply of requests							
a) % available within 7 days	69%	16	57%	71%	86%	65%	20
b) % available within 15 days	82%	17	71%	86%	96%	80%	18
QI 13 Staffing levels and qualifications							
(v) a) total volunteers	95	2	0	18	103	0	17
b) total volunteer hours	418	14	0	582	3,699	0	17
QI 14 Operational expenditure							
a) total expenditure per capita	£12,749	11/21	£7,516	£12,749	£18,760	£18,278	3
b) % on staff	67%	7/21	40%	58%	79%	54%	15
% on information resources	10%	15/21	7%	13%	23%	7%	21
% on equipment and buildings	3%	11/21	1%	3%	20%	3%	18
% on other operational costs	20%	11/21	0%	20%	39%	37%	1
c) capital expenditure per capita	£1,236	6/21	£0	£272	£4,677	£1,873	3
QI 15 Net cost per visit	£1.90	20/21	£1.83	£2.43	£3.53	£2.74	5/11
QI 16 Opening hours (<i>see note</i>)							
(ii) a) % hours unplanned closure of static service points	0.00%	1	0.00%	0.00%	0.16%	0.03%	12
b) % mobile stops / home deliveries missed	2.81%	16/19	0.00%	0.71%	23.44%	3.3%	18 / 19

Note: 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 are divided into four key areas. This section of the report outlines performance against the quality indicators within these four areas, and compares results with those from the first year of the framework.

a) Customers and communities

Powys undertook a customer survey of adults in November 2015. Measures under QI 1 are

above the median for those authorities reporting surveys this year, but customer satisfaction levels are relatively low. The authority notes that reduced opening hours have been influential in this. Support for individual development is now available at all service points. Powys works with a number of partner organisations to deliver training, and attendance at formal training sessions has increased compared to last year. Informal training levels per capita have fallen, however, and are now below the median for Wales. 92% of attendees at training sessions said that the training had helped them achieve their goals, below the median for Wales.

b) Access for all

Powys continues to meet the target for easy access to service points, and despite reductions in opening hours and the frequency of mobile visits, the number of visits to library premises per capita has increased compared to last year. The authority notes that Llandrindod library has been relocated to a shared building, and it is not possible to distinguish library users, although the majority approach the library desk for information. The fall in virtual visits is attributed to website changes resulting in fewer automated hits; the level is still one of the highest in Wales. The number of active borrowers has increased, and is now above the median for Wales. Book issues have fallen, but audio-visual and electronic issues have increased and Powys is to be praised for bucking the Wales trend and the activities undertaken to achieve this. A wide variety of events were held in libraries during the year, with a significant increase in attendance, although this remains below the median for Wales.

c) Learning for life

Despite a spending freeze in the last quarter of the year and required efficiency savings, Powys has increased its levels of acquisitions and book spending compared to last year. However, it failed to achieve the targets for overall levels of acquisitions. Powys has achieved the target for replenishment rate this year, and gives priority to maintaining good quality stock circulated between service points. The spending freeze also impacted on spending for children's materials, which does not include any allowance for consortium purchases of children's e-books, and on material in the Welsh language. The authority notes low usage of Welsh language titles.

The authority has achieved the target for PCs per capita, and notes an additional 21 PCs for children with restricted internet access, and a bank of 20 tablet devices used for educational purposes. All static sites provide access to the internet and Wi-Fi connectivity; however connectivity issues in rural areas preclude internet access on the mobile libraries. A new vehicle has the capacity to introduce this as broadband connectivity improves. Data on usage of the Wi-Fi network is not available, but observation suggests it is well used. Figures for speed of supply of requests have been based on a full year, and have improved compared to last year. They remain below the median for Wales as a whole, however.

d) Leadership and development

There have been further reductions in staffing, with reduced opening hours and fewer mobile vehicles. The service meets the targets for professional staffing, with the highest level of professional staffing per capita in Wales, and the head of service is a Chartered Librarian. The target for staff training has been met with a variety of training undertaken during the year. Powys reported using volunteers for the first time this year, with 95 each giving an average of 4.4 hours to the service. This included a number of Reading Hacks young volunteers. Powys notes that the volunteer support has been very successful, and plan to build on this volunteer base.

Gross expenditure per capita has fallen by 30% and is now at the median for Wales. This is the largest cut reported by any authority this year. Capital expenditure includes a new mobile library. Net cost per visit has fallen to £1.90, the second lowest in Wales.

Opening hours have been cut by 20%, but continue to meet the target set. Disruption to mobile services has been reduced by keeping a spare vehicle when the number of vans was reduced, and customers are always notified.

4) Strategic context

Powys provided a clear statement of the support provided to Welsh Government priorities, linked to areas of the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act - a prosperous Wales; a healthier Wales; a more equal Wales, a Wales of cohesive communities, and a Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language.

5) Future direction

Some savings will be found from a restructure of management and back office functions. The service is currently consulting over the future of 11 branch libraries, and co-location remains a key strategy. Other options are being explored, but the timescale for achieving savings is challenging, and the proposed levels of cut are a concern.

6) Conclusion

The impact of the budget cuts on performance during the year is clear and future substantial cuts are likely to have a negative effect on aspects of performance. Powys is to be commended for increasing use of audio-visual materials, and for maintaining a high level of professional staff, which should help it to move forward in the current financial climate and continue to deliver a high quality service.