

# Welsh Public Library Standards 2014-17

## Powys County Council

### Annual Assessment Report 2016-17

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 5 in full, 1 in part and failed to achieve 1.

Low levels of investment in staffing and stock are reflected in below average customer satisfaction in these areas, and this is an area of concern. Powys is to be commended on improving its performance against the targets across this framework in challenging circumstances and during ongoing budget reductions, 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 valued service. Care is needed to ensure that any future cuts or changes do not impact on the quality of the service.

- Powys reports the highest percentage of adult users who think that the library has made a difference to their lives, and all children surveyed felt the library helped them learn and find things out. Four case studies demonstrated the value of the library to a variety of users.
- Powys undertook a customer survey of adults in November 2015 and of children in October 2016, with above average results for making a difference, but satisfaction levels were below the median for Wales.
- Powys meets the target for easy access to service points. The number of library members has increased, and AV / electronic issues have also increased for which the library service should be praised, but other indicators of use have fallen. Virtual visits per capita remain among the highest in Wales, however. Attendance at events remains low, and there has been a disappointing decline in the speed of supply of requests.
- Powys has failed to achieve the targets for overall acquisitions, associated with inexperienced staff and changing supplier during the year. There is an appropriate balance of spending on materials for children and in the Welsh language this year. ICT provision in branches is good, with equipment used for 32% of available time.
- There have been further cuts to overall staffing levels this year, which are close to the median for Wales and do not meet the target set. The level of professional staffing is one of the highest in Wales, and staff training is at an appropriate level.
- Overall spending was under-reported last year, and the average net cost per visit this year of £2.44 compares to a corrected figure of £2.22 last year.

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 areas of *Customers and communities*, and *Learning for life*. Results in the remaining areas are more mixed, with some indicators showing a good performance, and others rather poorer.

Compared to previous years the service appears static, with continued decline in some indicators being balanced by improvements elsewhere.

## 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, unchanged from last year. The entitlement which is only partially met again 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 5 in full, 1 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:		Not met
a) Acquisitions per capita	✗	
or Materials spend per capita	✗	
b) Replenishment rate	✗	
QI 9 Appropriate reading material:		Met in full
a) % of material budget on children	✓	
b) % of material budget spent on Welsh	✓	
or 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

Quality Indicator	Met?
a) Staff per capita	✗
b) Professional staff per capita	✓
c) Head of service qualification/training	✓
d) CPD percentage	✓
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 is an improvement over 2015-16, overall. The target for replenishment rate has been missed this year, but the targets relating to appropriateness of reading material have been achieved.

### 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 and of children in October 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:	100%	1/19	68%	93%	100%
e) % of adults who think that the library has made a difference to their lives:	97%	1/19	36%	86%	97%
% of children who think that the library has made a difference to their lives:	58%	17/17	58%	82%	98%
QI 4 b) % of attendees of training sessions who said that the training had helped them achieve their goals:	93%	17/19	80%	97%	100%

Powys provided four impact case studies which showed the real difference the library service makes:

- A poetry group member who enjoys the literary and social exchange and stimulation.
- Library support for Syrian refugees, including language support and provision of a safe space to meet.
- A year 5 pupil who was inspired to write his own story after attending an author visit event.
- The use of local studies resources to develop information and research skills for primary school pupils.

#### 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 2016-17. 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 elements were not available to some authorities. Figures reported in respect of the first two years of the framework 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	2015/16 Rank	2014/15 Rank		
QI 1 Making a difference									
a) new skills	76%	9 /19	23%	71%	93%				
c) health and well-being	69%	7 /20	26%	56%	94%				
d) enjoyable, safe and inclusive	99%	2 /19	93%	98%	100%				
QI 2 Customer satisfaction									
a) 'very good' or 'good' choice of books	74%	20/20	74%	90%	98%				
b) 'very good' or 'good' customer care	90%	20/20	90%	99%	100%				
c) 'very good' or 'good' overall;	95%	15/20	92%	97%	100%				
d) child rating out of ten	8.8	15/19	8.6	9.1	10.0				
QI 4 User training									
a) attendances per capita	34	12	3	34	248	33	10	26	11
c) informal training per capita	98	15/20	1	156	712	112	14 / 19	162	11 / 21
QI 6 Library use									
a) visits per capita	4,316	9	2,453	4,033	6,751	4,611	7	4,540	8
b) virtual visits per capita	1,410	4 /21	341	922	2,299	1,505	3	1,571	2
c) active borrowers per capita	157	10	77	153	235	161	10	97	21
QI 7 attendances at events per capita	122	19	62	214	496	122	18	68	18
QI 11 Use of ICT - % of available time used by the public									
a) equipment	32%	11/21	16%	32%	69%	34%	10	37%	10
QI 12 Supply of requests									
a) % available within 7 days	63%	19/21	48%	70%	82%	69%	16	65%	20
b) % available within 15 days	80%	17/21	65%	85%	96%	82%	17	80%	18
QI 13 Staffing levels and qualifications									
(v) a) total volunteers	78	3	0	24	209	95	2	0	17
b) total volunteer hours	438	15	0	798	5,156	418	14	0	17
QI 14 Operational expenditure									
a) total expenditure per capita	£14,817	6 /21	£6,745	£11,979	£16,968	£12,749	11 / 21	£18,278	3
b) % on staff	54%	14/21	46%	58%	75%	67%	7 / 21	54%	15
% on information resources	8%	20/21	4%	13%	25%	10%	15 / 21	7%	21
% on equipment and buildings	8%	3 /21	0%	4%	20%	3%	11 / 21	3%	18
% on other operational costs	29%	5 /21	9%	22%	37%	20%	11 / 21	37%	1

Performance indicator		Rank	Lowest	Median	Highest	2015/16	Rank	2014/15	Rank
c) capital expenditure per capita	£341	11/21	£0	£341	£16,692	£1,236	6/21	£1,873	3
QI 15 Net cost per visit	£2.44	8/20	£1.50	£2.33	£3.30	£1.90	20/21	£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%	0.48%	0.00%	1	0.03%	12
b) % mobile stops / home deliveries missed	0.13%	4/19	0.00%	0.13%	8.33%	2.81%	16/19	3.3%	18/19

*Note: Rankings here have been reversed, so that 1 is the lowest scoring (best performing) authority.*

Data on Wi-Fi usage has only been provided by three authorities for 2016-17 and so is not included in the table above.

### 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 two years of the framework.

#### a) Customers and communities

Powys undertook a customer survey of adults in November 2015, reported in detail last year, and of children in October 2016. Adult satisfaction with the choice of books and customer care is the lowest in Wales and is reflected in the missed targets in QI 8. The authority notes that children may have had difficulty understanding some of the concepts, with many 'don't know' responses. The percentage of attendees who said that training helped them achieve their goals has increased compared to last year, but remains below the median for Wales. Levels of informal training per capita have fallen for the second year.

#### b) Access for all

Powys continues to meet the target for easy access to service points. Physical and virtual visits, book issues and active borrowers per capita have all fallen compared to last year, but the numbers of library members and AV/electronic issues have increased. The authority notes that increased use of apps which give access to e-resources without going through the web site may have contributed to the fall in virtual visits, which remain among the highest in Wales. Attendance at events has remained static, and is one of the lowest in Wales, but this perhaps reflects the rural nature of the authority. The authority has a number of small, single staffed libraries which make it difficult to run an extensive events programme, and is beginning to build volunteer support to help in this area.

#### c) Learning for life

Supply delays while joining the Welsh Purchasing Consortium and new staff affected acquisitions targets this year, which were not met, but the authority anticipates a smoother process for next year. Powys continues to give priority to maintaining good quality stock circulated between service points. Targets for materials for children and in the Welsh language were met this year, children continue to be a priority group, and promotion of the Welsh language is strong.

The authority has achieved the target for PCs per capita, and notes 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. Data on usage of the Wi-Fi network is not available, but observation suggests it is well used, and that usage is increasing. There has been a slight fall in the speed of supply of requests, affected by mechanical problems and staff sickness.

#### **d) Leadership and development**

There have been further reductions in staffing, following a restructure of back office staff. Staffing resources are prioritised on the frontline branch libraries and mobiles. The service meets the targets for professional staffing, with one of the highest level of professional staff 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 fewer volunteers this year, with 78 each giving an average of 5.6 hours to the service. From the description of the training provided to volunteers, including those on work experience placements, the assessors consider that the contribution they make may be underestimated.

Revenue expenditure per capita has apparently increased, but the authority notes that corporate recharges were incorrectly omitted from the return last year. Net cost per visit last year should have been reported at £2.22; this has increased to £2.44, owing in part to reductions in both income and visits. Opening hours are unchanged from last year.

#### **4) Strategic context**

Powys submitted a clear statement of the support provided to the county council and Welsh Government priorities and strategic goals, in four broad areas: prosperous and secure; healthy and active; ambitious and learning; and united and connected.

#### **5) Future direction**

Five key strands have been identified to achieve the savings targets identified in the council's medium term financial plan. These are further development of community delivery partnership models; development of volunteer opportunities; co-location to reduce running costs; improvements in ICT; and staff development.

#### **6) Conclusion**

Low levels of investment in staffing and stock are reflected in below average customer satisfaction in these areas, and this is an area of concern. Powys is to be commended on improving its performance against the targets across this framework in challenging circumstances and during ongoing budget reductions, 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 valued service. Care is needed to ensure that any future cuts or changes do not impact on the quality of the service.