

Welsh Public Library Standards 2017-2020: Bridgend (Awen Cultural Trust)

Annual Assessment Report 2019/20

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

1 Executive summary

Bridgend met all of the 12 core entitlements in full.

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

Library services in Bridgend are delivered by Awen Cultural Trust on behalf of the local authority. The service has continued to perform well in this final year of the sixth framework, particularly in reducing barriers to access for the community. A strong emphasis on library programmes, alongside staff development and training and continued partnership working with the local community has ensured that the service remains resilient and continues to meet the needs of the community.

The opening of the new Maesteg Library offers an opportunity for further community engagement and the impact of this will be reported in 2021-22.

- All service points provide a full range of support for well-being and social inclusion. Five case studies demonstrate the positive impact on a range of individuals from the community.
- Bridgend has seen a substantial increase in new members this year, increasing from 346 per 1000 population in 2018/19 to 377 in 2019/20.
- Overall staff numbers have decreased slightly in 2019/20; while the target for staff per capita is not achieved, the service continues to meet the requirements in terms of numbers of qualified staff (one of only four services to do so).
- Usage levels, in terms of adult and children's book issues have increased with children's book issues increasing by 25% since 2017/18.
- Although PC provision has fallen, the upgraded software on public PCs and addition to Wi-Fi printing facilities ensures that community needs are met, resulting in a pleasing increase in customer satisfaction levels with the ICT provision.
- Total revenue expenditure has fallen again and is below the median level. However, aggregate annual opening hours remain the highest in Wales.

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

Bridgend continues to meet all 12 of the Core Entitlements in full. There is a clear emphasis on accessibility and breaking down barriers, and a continued commitment to staff training, with a variety of staff receiving disability awareness training in a number of areas. Barriers have also been removed for library members with the removal of fines and the introduction of automatic renewals on materials. Library membership has increased 10% in 2019-20. There continues to be a strong emphasis on partnership working which shapes the training offered throughout the year. There continues to be a strong emphasis on IT provision and tackling social exclusion. The Service continues to be the lead partner for the regional Books4U Scheme. The return provided excellent evidence of impact with quotes from their user survey.

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, Bridgend 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		Not met
% of material budget spent on Welsh	x	
<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	√	
iii) Head of service qualification/training	√	
QI 16 Opening hours per capita	√	Met in full

Bridgend has maintained its performance in this third year of the sixth framework, with no significant change.

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 authorities, where 1 is the highest scoring authority.

Bridgend completed its adult and children's user surveys in March, 2020.

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:	90%	=11/19	60%	90%	97%
e) % of adults who think that the library has made a difference to their lives:	89%	9/19	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. Bridgend provided five such case studies, alongside wider feedback from users:

- Booklink – Bridgend’s home delivery service. This is a service which supports those individuals who are unable to visit the library. This is a free service to members and provides a lifeline to those with a disability, health condition or illness.
- Bounce and Rhyme – these sessions encourage children and families of all ages to join in a story and rhyme time session in the libraries. These sessions help foster a love of books and reading. These free sessions also have a positive effect on the mental health and wellbeing of children and parents.
- Safe Space – library staff have supported a number of different generations within the same family in obtaining information for their hobbies and pursuits. The important role that libraries play in the lives of their communities is emphasized and through this, the role of librarians as navigators through the world of information.
- Mindfulness – this programme began in May 2019. For one adult the mindfulness sessions have enabled her to restore her wellbeing, reduce stress and sleep better.
- Dungeons and Dragons – library staff support table top role playing games. This club is supporting social learning amongst young adults. For one individual, attending these sessions has become a key part of her life, helping her to meet new people and develop new skills.

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 Bridgend’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	66%	=13/18	25%	75%	94%	84%
c) health and well-being	55%	16/19	38%	69%	96%	87%
d) enjoyable, safe and inclusive	97%	=7/19	10%	92%	100%	99%
QI 2 Customer satisfaction					[Framework 6]	
a) 'very good' or 'good' choice of books	99%	=1/18	78%	91%	99%	n/a
b) 'very good' or 'good' customer care	100%	=1/18	88%	97%	100%	n/a
c) 'very good' or 'good' IT facilities	99%	1/17	65%	85%	99%	n/a
d) 'very good' or 'good' overall	100%	1/18	85%	96%	100%	n/a
e) users aged 16 & under rating out of ten	9.3	=7/19	8.0	9.1	9.5	n/a
QI 8 Library use ¹						
a) visits per capita	3546	16/22	2429	3987	6874	3637
b) virtual visits per capita	677	14/22	239	909	2131	714
c) active borrowers per capita	198	4/22	78	145	244	193
QI 10 Welsh issues per capita ²	660	11/22	311	680	1468	567
QI 11 Online access						
b) Computers per 10,000	6	20/22	5	10	14	8
c) % of available time used by the public	14%	22/22	14%	30%	64%	19%
QI 14 Operational expenditure						
a) total expenditure per capita	£9,311	17/22	£7,260	£12,448	£23,333	£9715
b) % on staff,	70%	5/22	48%	61%	76%	69%
% on information resources	16%	5/22	5%	13%	22%	20%
% on equipment and buildings	1%	=20/22	0%	8%	21%	2%
% on other operational costs	13%	=16/22	1%	18%	35%	9%
c) capital expenditure per capita	£184	12/22	£0	£1,597	£13,027	£486
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	0.00%	=1/22	0.00%	1.07%	5.41%	0.00%

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)ⁱ

Bridgend completed its adult user survey for QI 1 and QI 2 in March 2020. Although there has been a decrease in the ratings for skills development, health and wellbeing and making a difference to people's lives, an online only survey was piloted, which may have impacted on the results as it made it more visible to a wider base of customers, and results tend to be lower than on paper/ in-person. Their innovative approach is praised, along with the high scores for elements of customer satisfaction. Although 2019 saw the

relocation of Ty'r Ardd in Bridgend a full range of support for individual development, and for health and well-being is evidenced through user comments. A children's survey, undertaken in March 2020 clearly demonstrates the positive impact of the library service on the lives of children in the area. Bridgend have invested heavily in their IT facilities and continue to perform well in this area.

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. The relocation of Ty'r Ardd in October 2019 has also impacted visitor figures, which have seen a decrease of just under 2% since the last reporting year. Bridgend continues to meet the target for easy access to service points. Bridgend has continued to see an increase in the number of active borrowers, alongside an increase in library membership. The positive impact of a variety of partnerships and the pro-active use of social media to engage new members has resulted in an increased level of children's book issues, which are now above the median level. Children's book issues have increased by 44% since 2017/18 and adult book issues are also up. There has continued to be a strong increase in e-resources usage.

3.3 Facilities and services (QI 9-12) ⁱⁱⁱ

The materials budget has decreased by just over 25% in 2019/20 compared with the previous year, however, the figure for overall acquisitions has risen, although neither target for acquisitions is met. Bridgend is one of seventeen authorities who have not met the acquisitions target (QI 9) in 2019/20. The Service notes that due to the impact of Covid-19, stock ordered in February and March did not arrive before Libraries closed and as a result, this stock, is not included. The percentage of materials expenditure for children has remained the same at 15%, which is line with Bridgend's Library Strategy. There has been an increase in the expenditure on Welsh language materials, and although this remains below target levels there is a pleasing increase in Welsh book loans. The closure of Ty'r Ardd and its IT Suite has impacted on the number of PCs and PC provision has fallen, but this has not impacted negatively on the service. All public PCs have been upgraded to Windows 10, alongside WiFi/Bluetooth printers. Performance in relation to supply of requests continues to improve, with both targets met.

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

Due to Covid-19, QI 15 was removed for the 2019/20 reporting year, alongside training and volunteer hours. Overall staff numbers have decreased slightly in 2019/20 and it is noted that this is as a result of the closure of Ty'r Ardd and a re-structure at management level. The overall target for staff per capita is not achieved, although is now at the median level. The total number of staff identified as holding recognised qualifications has remained the same and is one of the highest in Wales.

Total revenue expenditure has fallen slightly on 2018/19 and has decreased by 7% since 2017/18. Expenditure per capita remains below the median level. Aggregate annual opening hours have broadly been maintained and the average per capita is still the highest in Wales. There were no reported unstaffed opening hours, unplanned service closures, or missed mobile library stops. The service reports that the home delivery service has been

expanded and has resulted in additional capacity due to removing the mobile van and improving the house service to include carers and other vulnerable people.

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 the Trust to: improve the literacy of people of all ages; support reading for pleasure and to enhance wellbeing is noted as reflecting the priorities and goals set out in several Welsh Government strategies including The Well-being of Future Generations Act.

The service engages with local communities to ensure that its activity and engagement programme successfully aligns with the needs of the community. Specific examples are given of how service priorities align with wider strategic policies, notably in promoting well-being, education and social inclusion.

5 Future direction

Reporting on the authority's future direction and plans for the library service over the following year, it is noted that the wider vision for the service is laid out in the Library Plan (2017-22) which has now been published.

Continued investment in library spaces is identified as central to the delivery of the strategy, with plans to continue to develop the layout and character of Maesteg Town Hall Library. The authority will continue to build on the home library service which should have a positive impact on isolated individuals and families.

The service intends to build on its successful programme of collaboration with local schools, alongside the continued investment in the winter and summer reading challenges.

6 Conclusion

Library services in Bridgend are delivered by Awen Cultural Trust on behalf of the local authority. The service has continued to perform well in this final year of the sixth framework, particularly in reducing barriers to access for the community. A strong emphasis on library programmes, alongside staff development and training and continued partnership working with the local community has ensured that the service remains resilient and continues to meet the needs of the community. The opening of the new Maesteg Library offers an opportunity for further community engagement and the impact of this will be reported in 2021-22.

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

ⁱⁱ Due to Covid-19, QI 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 QI 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, QI 15 was removed for the 2019/20 reporting year, alongside training and volunteer hours.