

## Bridgend County Borough Council – Awen Cultural Trust

### Overview and location

Library services in Bridgend are delivered by Awen Cultural Trust. There are 11 libraries, as well as a home delivery service, and 99% of residents live within 2.5 miles of a library.

### Library service performance

Awen provided evidence that showed it has fully met all 12 of the core entitlements.

Core entitlement	Service self-assessment	Independent assessment
1 Libraries in Wales will be free to join and open to all.	Fully met	Fully met
2 Libraries in Wales will ensure friendly, knowledgeable and qualified staff are on hand to help.	Fully met	Fully met
3 Libraries in Wales will provide access to a range of services, activities and high quality resources in a range of formats to support learning, personal well-being and development, community participation, and culture and recreation.	Fully met	Fully met
4 Libraries in Wales will provide appropriate services, facilities and information resources for individuals and groups with special needs.	Fully met	Fully met
5 Libraries will provide appropriate safe, attractive and accessible physical spaces with suitable staffed opening hours.	Fully met	Fully met
6 Libraries in Wales will lend books for free and deliver free access to information, including online information resources available 24 hours a day.	Fully met	Fully met
7 Libraries in Wales will provide free use of the Internet and computers, including Wi-Fi.	Fully met	Fully met
8 Libraries in Wales will provide access to services, cultural activities and high quality resources in the Welsh language.	Fully met	Fully met
9 Libraries in Wales will work in partnership to share catalogues and facilitate access to the resources of all Welsh libraries.	Fully met	Fully met
10 Libraries in Wales will work with a range of partners to promote and deliver services to new and diverse audiences, enabling more people to benefit from their services.	Fully met	Fully met
11 Libraries in Wales will regularly consult users to gather their views on the service and information about their changing needs.	Fully met	Fully met
12 Libraries in Wales will provide access to the library service's strategy, policies, objectives and vision, in print and online, in a range of languages appropriate for the community.	Fully met	Fully met
Total - fully met	12	12

Total - partially met	0	0
Total - not met	0	0

### Library use

Over the reporting year, the service had 85 active borrowers per 1,000 population, representing a 23% increase from the previous year. Adult book issues increased by 229% to 1,224 issues per 1,000 population, while children's book issues increased by 834% to 831 issues per 1,000 population. Awen provides a home delivery service for their customers to aid those who are unable to come to the libraries. The service is not limited to those who are incapacitated by illness, age or disability, but also includes carers and young families.

### Highlights

The service has been working to bring back services to pre-pandemic levels safely and carefully, as well as planning for the future with a new three-year strategy.

Highlights of the past year include:

- The return of services while also abiding to safety and supporting staff. This includes supporting staff that need to isolate, special measures such as wearing FFP2 standard masks for home delivery, and supporting staff who would prefer to wear masks;
- Working to improve digital literacy. This includes providing support for users such as help to apply for a bus pass, and general help for those digitally excluded or who have little confidence in using devices. Public PCs have also helped with employment support;
- The 'Bounce and Rhyme' programme has given the opportunity for people who may otherwise feel isolated to meet, especially single mothers;
- At Porthcawl Library, the existing reading group was at capacity; therefore a new group was started, and the Library worked to get zoom meetings up for the group called The Bookies.

### Materials, Welsh language and overall spend

Awen is in the second quartile for material spend per 1,000 population. 23% of this expenditure was on children's materials, for a population of which 17% are under 16 years old. This puts it in the top quartile for budget spent on children's resources, Awen has also invested in memory sticks with e-books downloaded that can be played on a Boombox (a portable speaker), allowing for greater accessibility to the service for those who are visually impaired.

Despite the difficulties of recovering from the pandemic, Awen has had over 33,000 people (children and adults) attend their events this past year, in both English and Welsh. These events have included Dungeons and Dragons, Carer Afternoons, Coding Clubs, and Knit and Natter

In terms of Welsh resources, the service has introduced three new bilingual Bounce and Rhyme sessions, as well as increased support for Bore Coffi (coffee morning) sessions. A review of resources has identified the need for more Welsh language newspapers and magazines, including those for children. Currently, the service is in the bottom quartile for spending on Welsh language materials, with a spend of only 2%. The service, however, does rank in the median of the services for the number of issues per 1,000 Welsh speakers, and Welsh issues saw an increase of 577%, greater than that of overall issues.

### Staffing

There are 15 members of staff with library-related qualifications and the operational manager of the library service holds a MCLIP qualification. All vacancies were filled by March 2022, and a new post of Heritage Manager, who oversees heritage work and local and family history resources, was added.

The time spent on staff training and development increased by 1.8% to 9.7% over the period. This training includes a three-month induction, training in first aid, Microsoft 365 and safeguarding. Staff are also encouraged to suggest courses that they are interested in, and feed back to the team for shared learning.

### Digital data

Awen provided digital data including click and collect, online sessions held and number of individuals who viewed live/recorded sessions. Awen saw a reduction in all three measures of use of digital services, as well as e-issues over the period. In terms of 'Click and Collect', they saw a reduction of 61% from 2021 to 2022 and ranked in the median across the services for click and collect per 1,000 population. The service ranked in the top quartile for online sessions even though the number of online sessions reduced by 46%, and the individuals taking part reduced by 73%. This fall can partially be attributed to Awen moving away from online resources to focus on in-person services. However, it remains committed to reaching vulnerable groups through its online services and by the 'Books on Wheels' programme. The number of e-issues per 1,000 population reduced by 33% and is in the first quartile across the services. The service partially claims that this is due to a change in eMagazine provider and the difference between the supplier's calibration of issues.

### Future plans

Under its new 2022-25 strategy, the service places social impact at the centre of all future plans, using milestones and SMART performance indicators to evaluate impact and change. Priorities for 2022/23 include the completion of Maesteg Town Hall development and the redevelopment of Pencoed library.

The service also aims to engage further with non-users and introduce a range of environmental initiatives including investigating the discontinuation of plastic book jackets, introducing non-plastic membership cards and the installation of solar panels and LED bulbs were possible.

The service will keep in discussion with customers and staff to evaluate events, activities, open hours, and the impact of the library plan.

## Case studies

Awen provided three extensive case studies with images and quotes from library users to illustrate the good work across the service. These included the importance of digital services as a key way to promote reading for individuals who may otherwise struggle to access services, and how use of the space has contributed to wellbeing and productivity for a homemaker