

Welsh Public Library Standards Sixth Framework: Bridgend Library Services (Awen Cultural Trust)

Annual Assessment Report 2022/2023

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

1. Executive summary

Bridgend met all of the 12 core entitlements in full. Of the 10 quality indicators which have targets, Bridgend achieved 5 in full and 2 in part. Two targets were not met and the final target is unknown as the service report that as a charitable trust they do not have access to the software to calculate this.

Bridgend continues to display a strong emphasis on library programmes, alongside staff development and continued partnership working with the local community, to ensure that the service remains resilient and continues to meet the needs of the community. The service also has a strong Welsh language offer in terms of staffing activities, despite not meeting the target for Welsh language acquisitions. Bridgend's commitment to community engagement and consultation is a significant strength and customers report high levels of satisfaction with the service. The service has identified a coherent set of priorities for the coming year and is taking steps to improve its digital and online provision, including improvements to its website and digital outreach provision.

- The service performs well in terms of customer satisfaction; 100% of adult user survey respondents rated the standard of customer care and the library overall as 'very good' or 'good' overall (Q12).
- Library events are well-attended; attendances at events per capita is in the top quartile of library authorities (Q16).
- The child's book stock is well-used; issues per capita are in the top quartile of Welsh library authorities (Q19).
- Professional development is well-supported; Bridgend is in the top quartile of library authorities for staff hours spent on training (Q13).

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.

2.1 Core entitlements

Bridgend reported meeting all of the 12 Core Entitlements in full through self-assessment, providing detailed and helpful commentary within the return on each area covered. The independent assessor agreed with the self-assessment.

2.2 Quality indicators with targets

There are 16 quality indicators (QIs), of which 10 have constituent targets. Of these, Bridgend is achieving 5 in full and 2 in part. Two targets were not met and the final target is unknown as the service report that as a charitable trust they do not have access to the software to calculate this.

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/Reading Well scheme	√	
iii) Designated health & well-being collection	√	
iv) Information about healthy lifestyles and behaviours	√	
v) Signposting to health & well-being services	√	
QI 6 All static service points offer events/activities for users with special requirements	√	Met in full
QI 7 Location of service points	Not provided	Unknown
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		Partially met
a) % of requests satisfied within 7 days	√	
b) % of requests satisfied within 15 days	x	
QI 13 Staffing levels and qualifications:		Partially met
i) Staff per capita	x	
ii) Qualified staff per capita	√	
iii) Head of service qualification/training	√	
iv) CPD percentage	√	
QI 16 Opening hours per capita	√	Met in full

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 were only required to carry out user surveys for Q11 once over the original three-year period of the framework (2017-20). The summary figures (lowest, median and highest) are based on all authorities providing data in the 2022-23 return. Rankings reflect the numbers of respondents, where 1 is the highest scoring authority. However, it is important to bear in mind that some authorities have conducted surveys since 2020, whilst others report survey data from before the Covid pandemic. Some responses therefore reflect the situation several years ago, whilst others may have been affected by disruption during the pandemic period. As a result, there are limitations on the extent to which these data might be considered comparable.

Bridgend completed its adult and children’s user survey in March 2020.

Performance indicator		Rank	Lowest	Median	Highest
Q1 1 Making a difference					
b) % of young people who think that the library helps them learn and find things out:	90%	=7/16	58%	90%	98%
e) % of adults who think that the library has made a difference to their lives:	89%	7/16	41%	86.5%	96%
Q1 5 b) % of attendees of training sessions who said that the training had helped them achieve their goals:	98%	=7/17	82%	96%	100%

Authorities are also asked to provide an impact statement describing the impact which the library service has had on an individual or on a group of individuals during the year.

Bridgend provided an impact statement which referred to the value of the Books on Wheels service to people facing challenges reaching a static library. The service delivers books, CDs and audio books to customers, and assists customers with accessing other services including online resources and iPads. One customer living alone with deteriorating sight referred to the sense of well-being, increased confidence and comfort that listening to the wide range of audiobooks using the BoomBox service provided. She also looked forward to the visits from the library service and valued the contact and interaction with the library staff.

2.4 Quality indicators and benchmarks

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 2022-23. 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 from some authorities. Indicators ‘per capita’ are calculated per 1,000 population unless otherwise noted.

Performance indicator		Rank	Lowest	Median	Highest
QI 1 Making a difference					
a) % of adults who think that using the library has helped them develop new skills	66%	11/16	24%	69.5%	90%
c) health and well-being	55%	10/16	35%	66.5%	94%
d) enjoyable, safe and inclusive	97%	=8/16	93%	97%	100%
QI 2 Customer satisfaction					
a) 'very good' or 'good' choice of books	99%	1/16	80%	91%	99%
b) 'very good' or 'good' customer care	100%	1/17	92%	98%	100%
c) 'very good' or 'good' IT facilities	99%	1/16	65%	86%	99%
d) 'very good' or 'good' overall	100%	=1/17	94%	98%	100%
e) users aged 16 & under rating out of ten	9.3	=8/16	8.0	9.3	9.7
QI 5 User training					
a) attendances per capita	7	=13/22	1	10.5	222
c) informal training per capita	5	19/19	5	131	424
QI 6 attendances at events per capita	559	1/22	13	165	559
QI 8 Library use					
a) visits per capita	1,645	17/21	781	2,106	4,814
b) virtual visits per capita	468	14/22	124	537.5	7,979
c) active borrowers per capita	106	=12/22	43	106.5	167
QI 10 Welsh issues per capita	52	12/22	13	53	864
QI 11 Online access					
a) Computers per 10,000	4.46	20/22	3.32	7.99	16.99
b) % of available time used by the public	8%	16/19	7%	11%	77%
QI 13 Staffing levels and qualifications ¹					
(v) a) total volunteers	36	-	0	8	256
b) volunteer hours	1,292	-	0	583.5	14,014
QI 14 Operational expenditure					
a) total expenditure per capita	£9,828	14/21	£6,726	£11,476	£27,330
b) % on staff	72%	4/21	46%	64%	78%
% on information resources	14%	6/21	5%	12%	21%
% on equipment and buildings	4%	=9/21	1%	3%	29%
% on other operational costs	10%	15/21	1%	15%	35%
c) capital expenditure per capita	£1,733	3/21	-£479	£145	£2,865
QI 15 Net cost per visit ²	£2.88	11/19	£0.41	£2.76	£6.22
QI 16 Opening hours ³					
(iii) a) % hours unplanned closure of static service points	0%	=1/22	0%	0.05%	0.95%
b) % mobile stops / home deliveries missed	0%	=1/20	0%	0%	3.74%

¹ Following discussion with the peer review group it was decided not to include rankings for volunteers as the implications of volunteer numbers are ambiguous.

² Rankings here have been reversed, so that 1 is the lowest scoring (best performing) authority.

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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.

3.1 Meeting customer needs (QI 1-5)

Bridgend appreciates the importance of responding to customer needs, for example, using data from annual surveys to ensure post-Covid opening hours meet the needs of its communities and conducting research to help plan Pencoed's redevelopment. The service is at or above the median for customer satisfaction targets, including 100% of adult user survey respondents who rated the standard of customer care and the library overall as 'very good' or 'good' overall (QI2). As part of this responsive approach, it is noted that libraries within the Trust are allocated an annual budget to allow staff to respond to customer or staff feedback to improve small details of the library, such as comfy seating for Warm Welcome areas and providing pop-up travel cots. Both formal and informal training attendances per capita are below the median (QI5). However, this may be related to adjustments post-Covid, as noted by a number of library services this year. The percentage of attendees who said that the training had helped them achieve their goals is above the median. Bridgend is also above the median for the percentage of adults who think that the library has made a difference to their lives (QI1)

3.2 Access and use (QI 6-8)

Bridgend held almost 1,000 adult events and over 1,600 children's events during the year, as well as eight online events. These included new social activities introduced in response to the cost-of-living crisis. Attendances at events per capita is in the top quartile of library authorities (QI6). Whilst the number of visits per capita is below the median, the number of active borrowers per capita is around the median and child book issues per capita are in the top quartile of Welsh library authorities (QI8). Although virtual visits per capita is below the median, Bridgend reports an increase in the number of users, new users and sessions on its website, along with an increase in average session duration. Actions taken to stimulate this increase include: improved the Google Analytics tracking across the website; more regular updating of the website with news, events etc.; more pages added to the website; improved SEO; and the use of Google Ad campaigns.

3.3 Facilities and services (QI 9-12)

Bridgend did not meet the target for acquisition of reading materials (QI9). It is noted that the increased spend on children's stock in the previous year budget meant that the service moved some of this budget in 22-23 to satisfy the growing number of requests for eBooks and eAudiobooks. Although Bridgend has not met the target for budget spend on Welsh language resources, the number of Welsh issues per capita is close to the median (QI10), and the service is informed by the needs of customers in the purchase of Welsh language resources, including buying stock at the request of the Welsh Language Discussion Group.

Bridgend meets the targets for online provision, but it is below the median for computers per capita and available time that computers are in use (QI11). However, opening times were shortened for periods of 22-23 and fewer PCs were available as

the library readjusted following Covid. The service has extended its IT outreach provision, with the iPads for Carers scheme being extended to all those in need of at-home digital provision and a partnership with the Good Things Foundation to offer free data to those in need. Bridgend partially met the target for supply of requests (Q112). Its performance in this area was impacted by more requests than would be usual being supplied through inter library loan, whilst two libraries were closed for refurbishment/to facilitate a move.

3.4 Expertise and capacity (Q1 13-16)

Although the overall target for staff per capita was not achieved, Bridgend is above the median for this target (Q113). The percentage of operational expenditure allocated to staffing is above the median (Q114). All vacancies that arose during 22-23 were filled, and a part-time library assistant post was added to the structure. Furthermore, two library volunteers went on to employment with the service. Staff training and development continues to be a priority, with Bridgend implementing a comprehensive staff training programme and being in the top quartile of library authorities for staff hours devoted to training. By focusing on training in key library skills, the service reports a rise in staff confidence in dealing with queries and managing stock. Cost per visit is close to the median (Q115). Bridgend kept its Covid opening hours through 22-23. Following a period of consultation, new opening hours will be introduced in 23-24. The service did not experience any emergency closures or missed home deliveries (Q116).

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. Bridgend highlights its new Social Impact Objectives, namely:

- **To create better life chances** by engaging with more people, improving literacy and digital literacy, supporting reading for pleasure, promoting independence and reducing social isolation.
- **To create memorable and positive experiences** by offering space to the community that meets their needs, offers flexibility, is welcoming and safe, and able to host different activities.
- **To support social regeneration and improve wellbeing** by improving access to health information, reducing social isolation and improving the wellbeing of participants.
- **Increase life skills and opportunities** through formal and informal training. Have a positive impact on literacy and information literacy.
- **To reduce energy consumption** and reduce our impact on the environment.

5. Future direction

Reporting on the authority's future direction and plans for the library service over the following year, Bridgend refers to the service's 2022-25 Library Plan. The identified priorities for 2023-24 are:

- Develop a consistent wellbeing activity programme, working with staff and partners.

- Identify training opportunities for staff to deliver wellbeing-related sessions e.g. Mindfulness, Shared Reading.
- Introduce a social programme for BOW users to reduce isolation.
- Launch Friends panel to engage with children and young people over a longer period.
- Conduct user and non-user surveys around the offer for children and young people.
- Carry out programme of author visits for schools.
- Continue installation of LED bulbs and solar panels where possible.

In addition, Maesteg Town Hall is currently undergoing a large re-development that will house Maesteg Library as well as the Local and Family History collection.

6. Conclusion

Bridgend continues to display a strong emphasis on library programmes, alongside staff development and continued partnership working with the local community, to ensure that the service remains resilient and continues to meet the needs of the community. The service also has a strong Welsh language offer in terms of staffing activities, despite not meeting the target for Welsh language acquisitions. Bridgend's commitment to community engagement and consultation is a significant strength and customers report high levels of satisfaction with the service. The service has identified a coherent set of priorities for the coming year and is taking steps to improve its digital and online provision, including improvements to its website and digital outreach provision.