Gwynedd Annual Assessment Report 2024-25

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

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Executive summary

Gwynedd meets all of the 13 Core Entitlements in full. Of the 5 quality indicators which have targets, Gwynedd is achieving 4 in full and 1 in part.

Gwynedd Libraries are clearly valued by customers who rate them highly. The service continues to perform well in a number of areas, including e-issues and virtual visits. Furthermore, Gwynedd is leading the implementation of the LMS Cymru project. Whilst formal training sessions remain well-received, the number of attendances reported has declined this year. Event attendance has also decreased, although the service has clearly made efforts to present a strong summer holiday offering. The most worrying aspect of this year's report is the decline in both total and qualified staff numbers. Whilst it is positive that members of staff are being supported through CILIP Chartership, which will hopefully impact on qualified staff numbers in the future, the continued reduction in staffing numbers is likely to have an impact on the service's ability to continue to meet customer needs to the high level it has done in the past.

- Gwynedd performs well for Making a difference, being at or above the median for all measures (QI1).
- E-issues are above the national median and continue to rise, being 57% higher than in 2023-24 and more than double the 2022-23 figure (QI8).
- Virtual visits per capita are above the median for Welsh library authorities and have increased by 31% compared to 2023-24 (QI8).

Note to the 2024-25 report

During 2024-25 local authorities in Wales migrated to a new all Wales Digital Library Platform. The process of migration caused some disruption to the operation of library services including the acquisition of new stock which had to be suspended for a period as individual services moved to the new system. There are also some slight differences in the configuration of the new platform which means that the user data across 2024-25 is not entirely consistent. The reports for 2024-25 do not therefore include the data detailed below for Quality Indicators 4, 8, 9 and 10.

QI 4 Support for health and well-being
c) the number of loans of titles from the Reading Well in Wales series

QI 8 Library use
c) the total number of active borrowers divided by the resident population, multiplied by 1,000
d) the total number of library members
e) the total number of book issues (adult and children separate)
f) the total number of audio-visual issues

QI 9 Up-to-date and appropriate reading material
a) minimum acquisitions rate
b) % spent on children's resources

QI 10 Welsh language resources

a) 4% minimum spend
b) Welsh issues per capita

All data will be reported and assessed for 2025-26 (the first year of Framework 7) and this data will be used to set the benchmark for the remaining years of the framework.

Performance against the standards

The standards framework comprises of Core Entitlements, quality indicators with targets, quality indicators with benchmarks and impact measures.

Core Entitlements

Gwynedd reported meeting all of the 13 Core Entitlements in full through self-assessment. Based on the detailed commentary provided, the independent assessor agrees with the self-assessment.

Quality indicators with targets

There are 12 quality indicators (QIs), of which 5 have constituent targets. Of these, Gwynedd is achieving 4 in full and 1 in part.

QI 4 (a) Support for health and well-being**, met in full ▲**
i) Reading Well scheme, **met**
ii) Designated health & well-being collection, **met**
iii) Information about healthier lifestyles and healthy behaviours, **met**
iv) Signposting to health & well-being services, **met**

QI 6 All static service points offer events/activities for users with special Requirements, **met in full ▲**

QI 7 Location of service points, **met in full ▲**

QI 13 Staffing levels and qualifications, **partially met ■**
i) Staff per capita, **not met**
ii) Qualified staff per capita, **not met**
iii) Head of service qualification/training, **met**
iv) CPD percentage, **not reported**

QI 16 Opening hours per capita, **met in full ▲**

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 required to carry out user surveys for QI1 once over the 2022-23 to 2024-25 period. Gwynedd conducted an adult survey and a children's survey in November 2023. The summary figures (lowest, median and highest) are based on all authorities providing data in the 2022-23, 2023-24 and 2024-25 returns. Rankings reflect the number of respondents, where 1 is the highest scoring authority.

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:	94%	=8/19	68%	94%	99%
e) % of adults who think that the library has made a difference to their lives:	88%	9/20	31%	86.5%	96%
QI 5 b) % of attendees of training sessions who said that the training had helped them achieve their purpose in attending:	100%	=1/18	75%	98.5%	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. Gwynedd provided an impact statement which was broad in coverage, describing a range of activities rather than a specific impact example. Through the provision of digital support, the library service helps people to access relevant information and assists residents to live full and safe lives in their communities. Specific examples include the provision of free SIM cards and data vouchers as part of the National Databank Scheme; basic digital skills sessions for social care workers; and workshops on applying for Pension Credit.

Quality indicators and benchmarks

The remaining indicators do not have targets but allow services to monitor their performance over time. The following table summarises Gwynedd's position for 2024-25. Rankings reflect the number of respondents, where 1 is the highest scoring authority. 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	90%	=1/20	17%	70%	90%
c) health and well-being	76%	4/20	1%	63%	90%
d) enjoyable, safe and inclusive	98%	=7/20	93%	97%	100%
QI 2 Customer satisfaction					
a) 'very good' or 'good' choice of books	93%	=6/20	84%	90.5%	97%
b) 'very good' or 'good' customer care	99%	=2/20	92%	98%	100%
c) 'very good' or 'good' IT facilities	94%	2/20	60%	85%	99%
d) 'very good' or 'good' overall	99%	=2/20	85%	98%	100%
e) users aged 16 & under rating out of ten	8.0	18/18	8.0	9.4	9.7
QI 5 User support					
a) attendances per capita	3	=18/21	1	28	214
c) informal support per capita	105	12/20	15	150	608
QI 6 Attendances at events per capita	177	17/22	14	224.5	764
QI 8 Library use					
b) virtual visits per capita	1,120	6/21	5	766	6,035

Performance indicator		Rank	Lowest	Median	Highest
QI 13 Staffing levels and qualifications[1]					
(v) a) total volunteers	0	N/A	0	23	442
b) volunteer hours	0	N/A	0	883	22,706
QI 14 Operational expenditure					
a) total expenditure per capita	£21,543	2/21	£5,978	£12,646	£26,209
b) % on staff,	48%	21/21	48%	67%	80%
% on information resources	11%	=5/21	4%	9%	19%
% on equipment and buildings	3%	10/21	0%	2%	29%
% on other operational costs	38%	1/21	1%	15%	38%

Analysis of performance

The Core Entitlements and quality indicators can be divided into three key areas. This section of the report outlines performance under these areas.

Meeting customer needs (QI 1-2, 4-5)

Now that results are available from across the Framework 6 Extension period, Gwynedd is shown to perform well for Making a difference (QI1), being at or above the median for all measures and the highest ranked nationally for the percentage of adults who think that using the library has helped them develop new skills. The service also performs well with regard to Customer satisfaction (QI2), being above the median for all measures, with the exception of the rating out of 10 by children and young people, for which it is the lowest ranked Welsh library authority. As was stated in 2023-24, this is something the service may want to look at in more detail in its forthcoming surveys.

Per capita attendance at formal training sessions remains below the median for Welsh library authorities and after an impressive increase in 2023-24, the number of attendances has reduced by 33% this year. It is noted that third party provision and school visits are not included in the total. Training is well-received, with 100% of attendees surveyed (n=322) saying they had achieved their purpose in attending. Gwynedd was able to report on informal support attendance this year and this figure is also below the median for Welsh library authorities.

Access and use (QI 6-8)

Per capita event attendance has decreased by 9% this year and is below the median for Welsh library authorities (QI6). The 2023-24 annual report described the removal of funding for the Summer Reading Challenge. However, in 2024, the service held literary walking activities during the summer holidays with the Bala literary walk and Draw Dros y Don project - a self-guided tour based on the novel Bod Rhydderch by Lona Patel and associated workshops. In addition, Gwynedd held a Warm Welcome and a Children's Summer Fun programme which included crafting, face painting, a Balloon workshop, a graffiti workshop, and Mama G's Story Sessions.

[1] *Rankings are not included for volunteers as the implications of volunteer numbers are ambiguous.*

Virtual visits per capita are above the median for Welsh library authorities and have increased by 31% compared to 2023-24 (QI8). E-issues are also above the national median and continue to rise, being 57% higher than in 2023-24 and more than double the 2022-23 figure.

Expertise and capacity (QI 13-14 &16)

Gwynedd does not meet the targets for total staff or qualified staff per capita (QI13). The total staffing figure has declined by 3.6 FTE this year and the service reports facing further cuts which will affect staffing hours in the coming year. The number of qualified staff has been reduced by 2.5 FTE. This means that Gwynedd is no longer in the top quartile of Welsh library authorities for total staff and qualified staff per capita, although it is slightly above the median for both. It is positive that 3 members of the library team have started the process of CILIP Chartership. As in previous years, Gwynedd reports having no formal way of recording staff hours spent in training or personal development.

The service is in the top quartile of Welsh library authorities for total expenditure per capita and this has increased by 14% compared to 2023-24. Even though the book fund has decreased by 17% compared to 2023-24, Gwynedd is the highest ranked nationally for per capita book fund (although, as the service notes, the materials figure includes resources other than reading materials) (QI14). Gwynedd meets the target for opening hours per capita and is in the top quartile of Welsh library authorities for this measure (QI16). The total number of staffed opening hours reported is unchanged from 2023-24, but self-service hours have increased.

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. Gwynedd identified a range of ways in which it contributes to national priorities, particularly those outlined in the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015. Examples include:

- **Promoting reading for pleasure and literacy** e.g. Gwynedd ran over 100 summer activities for children with support from the North Wales Shared Prosperity Fund and delivered the highly successful “Hei Hogia” tour to 38 schools, reaching approximately 3,200 pupils in year 5-8.
- **Supporting health and well-being** e.g. well-being related activities within the community delivered by two well-being promotion officers transferred to the library service.
- **Digital support** e.g. One-to-one digital support sessions delivered both in libraries and in people’s homes. At a national level, Gwynedd is leading the implementation of the LMS Cymru project, contributing to the goals of the Digital Strategy for Wales.
- **Reducing environmental impact** e.g. eliminating the use of plastic book jackets; using electric vehicles for the home library delivery service; working with community initiatives such as Dolan and Benthyg through the Library of

Things service to support the Welsh Government's Circular Economy Strategy.

- **Promoting the Welsh language and culture** e.g. regular Welsh-medium rhyme and story family sessions, community language events and projects such as Dewch am Dro (Come for a Walk) and Draw Dros y Don (Across the Waves) supported by the North Wales Shared Prosperity Fund; supporting Welsh learners through informal sessions such as Paned a Sgwrs (Tea and Chat); and working with partners such as Grŵp Llandrillo Menai and Adult Learning Wales to administer the Adult Community Education grant and develop strong community networks.

Future direction

Reporting on the authority's future direction and plans for the library service, Gwynedd outlined their vision for the next five years in their plan Llyfrgelloedd Llawn Bywyd 2023–28 (Living Libraries). Despite ongoing challenges for public services, the service remains committed to developing goals in the areas of Reading, Health and Well-being, Welsh Language and Culture, and Information and Digital, providing a responsive, comprehensive and efficient offer that aligns with both local and national priorities. The service remains focused on delivering a strong community offer. Future plans also include strengthening partnerships with organisations such as the Circular Economy Network and Grŵp Llandrillo Menai, particularly around community education and sustainability.

The loss of the Schools Library Service in March 2025, following funding withdrawal by the Education Department, represents a notable change. However, Gwynedd plans to explore new collaborative models with schools, building on successful initiatives such as Hei Hogia and the Family Reading Scheme, and will secure annual support from the Education Department to fund Summer Reading Challenge materials.

Gwynedd reports that the coming year will see the implementation of a new staffing structure as the new Library Leadership Team sets priorities within the context of the Library Plan. Gwynedd will continue as the lead authority for the LMS Cymru Consortium project.

Conclusion

Gwynedd Libraries are clearly valued by customers who rate them highly. The service continues to perform well in a number of areas, including e-issues and virtual visits. Whilst formal training sessions remain well-received, the number of attendances reported has declined this year. Event attendance has also decreased, although the service has clearly made efforts to present a strong summer holiday offering. The most worrying aspect of this year's report is the decline in both total and qualified staff numbers. Whilst it is positive that members of staff are being supported through CILIP Chartership, which will hopefully impact on qualified staff numbers in the future, the continued reduction in staffing numbers is likely to have an impact on the service's ability to continue to meet customer needs to the high level it has done in the past.

It is positive that Gwynedd has been able introduce systems to capture previously missing data relating informal support. This is helpful to provide a fuller picture of the service and its activities. However, the lack of a staff CPD percentage remains a gap in the Gwynedd return.