

Welsh Public Library Standards 2017-2020: Gwynedd Council

Annual Assessment Report 2019/20

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

1 Executive summary

Gwynedd met all of the 12 core entitlements in full.

Of the 9 quality indicators which have targets, Gwynedd achieved 8 in full, and 1 in part.

Gwynedd library service has continued to perform well, with a focus on delivering a service that meets the needs of its communities. There has been a continued emphasis on Welsh language provision with usage remaining in the top quartile in Wales. A focus on adult course provision and regular consultation with the public will ensure that the current model of services offered remain relevant and needed by the residents of Gwynedd. Although there has been a continuing decline in usage, the dramatic increase in e-resource usage and the service's intention to increase the availability of digital resources is a positive development. It remains essential that current staffing levels are protected to ensure the continued quality of the services offered.

- Gwynedd continues to meet all 12 of the Core Entitlements in full. A strength of the service is its regular consultation with users.
- Usage has generally fallen since 2017/18, with reductions in numbers of physical visitors, borrowing levels, and book issues.
- As with the majority of services in Wales, there has been a substantial increase in the total number of electronic downloads, which have increased by 151% since the first reporting year of the framework.
- As in the previous two years of the framework, Gwynedd continues to record one of the highest proportional spend on Welsh language resources, with Welsh language issues in the top quartile in Wales, despite a decrease since 2017/18.
- Total revenue expenditure has fluctuated over the course of the three year framework and has slightly decreased since 2017/18. Expenditure per capita remains above the median level.

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

Gwynedd continues to meet all 12 of the Core Entitlements in full. A strength of the service is its regular consultation with users. A survey is undertaken on an annual cycle and feedback is used to make changes to improve services for users. This ensures that libraries are able to manage and meet expectations. A further strength of the service is evidenced through a number of partnerships. A collaboration with Grŵp Llandrillo Menai has enabled Gwynedd to offer a number of activities to support lifelong learning and well-being. The service also leads on several all-Wales initiatives and has a strong contribution to health and wellbeing.

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 Gwynedd achieved 8 in full, and 1 in part.

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		Met in full
Acquisitions per capita	√	
<u>or</u> Materials spend per capita	x	
QI 10 Welsh Language Resources		Met in full
% of material budget spent on Welsh	√	
<u>or</u> Spend on Welsh per capita	√	
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	√	

Quality Indicator	Met?	
QI 13 Staffing levels and qualifications:		Partially Met
i) Staff per capita	x	
ii) Qualified staff per capita	x	
iii) Head of service qualification/training	√	
QI 16 Opening hours per capita	√	Met in full

There have been some changes in performance in this third year of the sixth framework.

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 respondents, where 1 is the highest scoring authority.

Gwynedd completes its surveys on an annual cycle, with activity split across three adult surveys, covering IT and Learning, Health and Wellbeing, and Customer Care, and a children's survey. Figures are therefore updated annually.

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:	93%	9/19	60%	90%	97%
e) % of adults who think that the library has made a difference to their lives:	90%	=6/19	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.

Gwynedd provided four such case studies, alongside wider feedback from users:

- Looking after myself week – Health and well-being. This is a service which aims to improve well-being for the people of Gwynedd. This is a collaborative partnership with Gwynedd Council's well-being service. Gwynedd libraries played an important role in showcasing a number of health and well-being events that were offered during a health and well-being week in 2019. The events were positively received and enabled the library to promote key resources.
- Renewing bus passes – impact of the support libraries in Gwynedd provided for individuals renewing their bus passes. The libraries were essential in helping individuals renew their bus passes, with 5440 individuals supported in this process. Library staff were able to encourage and assist users through this process. The contribution of the library service was invaluable.
- Adult Community Learning Courses – A series of adult learning events. A collaboration with a number of partners resulted in a variety of taster sessions and courses being offered, ranging from creative writing to mindfulness. Feedback from

participants showed the benefit and one individual commented on how it had a positive impact on their well-being and skills.

- Family history club – A weekly two hour genealogy club. Weekly group sessions enable individuals to effectively use resources such as Ancestry with help from library staff. Individuals are supported with their family history research whilst at the same time enjoying the social interaction of working with others with a shared interest.

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 Gwynedd'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	89%	6/18	25%	75%	94%	96%
c) health and well-being	69%	10/19	38%	69%	96%	57%
d) enjoyable, safe and inclusive	96%	=12/19	10%	92%	100%	99%
QI 2 Customer satisfaction						[Framework 6]
a) 'very good' or 'good' choice of books	90%	=14/18	78%	91%	99%	90%
b) 'very good' or 'good' customer care	97%	=13/18	88%	97%	100%	100%
c) 'very good' or 'good' IT facilities	94%	4/17	65%	85%	99%	91%
d) 'very good' or 'good' overall	99%	=2/18	85%	96%	100%	98%
e) users aged 16 & under rating out of ten	9.4	-3/19	8.0	9.1	9.5	9.5
QI 8 Library use ¹						
a) visits per capita	2,741	20/22	2429	3987	6874	2,900
b) virtual visits per capita	1,082	8/22	239	909	2131	1,083
c) active borrowers per capita	147	10/22	78	145	244	156
QI 10 Welsh issues per capita ²	913	4/22	19	140	541	1,159
QI 11 Online access						
b) Computers per 10,000	8	15/22	4	9	14	8
c) % of available time used by the public	20%	18/22	14%	30%	64%	20%
QI 14 Operational expenditure						
a) total expenditure per capita	£15,405	5/22	£7,260	£12,448	£23,333	£14,440
b) % on staff,	48%	22/22	48%	61%	76%	48%
% on information resources	12%	=11/22	5%	13%	22%	12%
% on equipment and buildings	5%	=11/22	0%	8%	28%	5%
% on other operational costs	35%	=1/22	1%	18%	35%	34%
c) capital expenditure per capita	£1,146	6/22	£0	£1,567	£13,027	£448
QI 16 Opening hours ³						
(iii) a) % hours unplanned closure of static service points	0.04%	19/22	0.00%	0.23%	3.96%	0.17%
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

Gwynedd updated its surveys between May 2019 and October 2019. The results of the online questionnaire helped to inform the future direction of the service. The results remain positive, although there has been a very slight decline in some areas. All static libraries continue to provide the full range of support for individual development, and good support for health and well-being. A number of informal and formal partnerships ensures that

Gwynedd is able to provide a range of services to support well-being, and has a strong commitment to equalities. A significant number of people advise that the courses offered had a positive and significant impact on their well-being and mental health.

3.2 Access and use (QI 6-8)ⁱⁱ

Library usage has been impacted by the closure of all Libraries on March 20th 2020 due to Covid-19. Gwynedd continues to meet the target for easy access to service points with no changes to the number of branches since 2017/18. Usage has generally fallen since 2017/18, with reductions in numbers of physical visitors, borrowing levels, and book issues. However, adult and children book issues per capita remain above the median level in Wales, with children's loans the seventh highest in Wales. As with the majority of services in Wales, there has been a substantial increase in the total number of electronic downloads, which have increased by 151% since the first reporting year of the framework.

3.3 Facilities and services (QI 9-12)ⁱⁱⁱ

One element of the acquisitions target (QI 9) is met (number of items acquired per capita), Gwynedd is one of five authorities who have met the acquisitions target (QI 9) in 2019/20. There has been an increase in the expenditure on stock since 2017/18. The total expenditure on materials for children has increased and is above the median in Wales, and the service continues to prioritise children's services. As in the previous two years of the framework, Gwynedd continues to record one of the highest proportional spend on Welsh language resources, with Welsh language issues in the top quartile in Wales, despite a decrease since 2017/18. The service continues to meet the targets for supply of requests with no significant change since 2017/18. PC provision and usage has been maintained at 2018/18 levels, and the mobile libraries offer 3G remote online access where geographically possible, but problems with Wi-Fi provision on its mobile libraries have not been resolved.

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

Staffing levels continue to be a challenge. Overall staff numbers have decreased slightly in 2019/20, but it is noted that there are vacancies, including a professional level post. The overall target for staff per capita is not achieved, although is at the median level. Qualified leadership remains in place.

Total revenue expenditure has fluctuated since 2017/18. Expenditure per capita remains above the median level. The authority has also continued to invest in the service from its capital budget. There have been no changes to annual opening hours throughout the framework and minimal disruption to planned services.

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 service provides a comprehensive outline of its contribution to Welsh Government cross-cutting themes of prosperous and secure; healthy and active; ambition and learning; the Welsh language; digital inclusion and sustainable public services.

Collaboration with further education Colleges and the Gwynedd and Môn Adult Learning

Partnership are notable, alongside an increased offer of learning provision. This partnership enables the service to successfully engage with local communities.

Gwynedd continues to play a substantial role in co-ordinating national Welsh language large print and audio book schemes, alongside a close working relationship with other local authorities across Wales.

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 work began on a new five year library plan for Gwynedd libraries. However, Covid-19 has directly affected the development of a new library plan. The social and economic challenges of 2020 have resulted in all services in Wales reflecting on current and future plans.

Key priorities include: increased collaboration to increase the availability of digital resources; adult course provision; IT provision and staff training opportunities. The service also intends to build on its successful delivery of click and collect services and a review of the current model of the mobile and home services will be undertaken to ensure that these services meet the needs of the community.

There are potential opportunities for further collaboration with the development of Neuadd Dwyfor's facilities and a potential increase in the opening hours of Pwllheli library. The service outlines a number of opportunities to enhance provision, which has the potential to positively impact the residents of Gwynedd.

6 Conclusion

Gwynedd library service has continued to perform well, with a focus on delivering a service that meets the needs of its communities. There has been a continued emphasis on Welsh language provision with usage remaining in the top quartile in Wales. A focus on adult course provision and regular consultation with the public will ensure that the current model of services offered remain relevant and needed by the residents of Gwynedd. Although there has been a continuing decline in usage, the dramatic increase in e-resource usage and the service's intention to increase the availability of digital resources is a positive development. It remains essential that current staffing levels are protected to ensure the continued quality of the services offered.

ⁱ Due to Covid-19, local authorities were only asked to report any change in provision since the last reporting year for Q1 3&4.

ⁱⁱ Due to Covid-19, Q1 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 Q1 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, Q1 15 was removed for the 2019/20 reporting year, alongside training and volunteer hours.