

Welsh Public Library Standards 2014-17

Gwynedd

Annual Assessment Report 2015-16

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

Gwynedd's return was approved by a Cabinet Member and the Head of Economy and community on 29th June 2016.

1) Executive summary

Gwynedd met 16 of the 18 core entitlements in full and partially met 2.

Of the 7 quality indicators which have targets, Gwynedd achieved 4 in full and 3 in part.

Gwynedd is a large, sparsely populated authority, with the challenge of delivering an equitable service to all under financial and staffing constraints. Some targets which were missed last year have now been achieved; however despite these efforts there are signs of a service in a vulnerable situation. The assessors are concerned that the level of cuts to be implemented in 2016/17 is likely to result in the service failing to meet key targets in the final year of the framework.

- All attendees at training sessions said that they had been helped to achieve their goals. Four excellent case studies give evidence of the impact of the service for a variety of users.
- Due to their small size and staffing level, several service points do not provide the full range of support for individual development, and this impacts on the numbers of people attending training, which are among the lowest in Wales.
- Both visits to library premises and virtual visits have increased compared to last year, but remain below the median for Wales. Book issues per capita are the second highest in the country. Audio visual issues have increased but remain amongst the lowest in Wales.
- Gwynedd has met the targets for overall acquisitions, and the percentage spent on Welsh language material is the second highest in Wales, with emphasis given to materials for children. ICT provision has met the targets, although internet access is not yet available for the public on the mobile fleet.
- The staffing situation is described as "very fragile" and Gwynedd fails to meet the targets for staffing per capita. Expenditure per capita is above the median for Wales, and at £3.00 the average cost per visit is the third highest in Wales.

Considering the four areas in the framework (*Customers and communities; Access for all; Learning for life; and Leadership and development*) in comparison to the rest of Wales, Gwynedd continues to perform poorly in the area of *Customers and communities*, but places emphasis on ensuring access to basic core services in smaller service points. Results in the remaining areas are mixed, with individual indicators showing some relatively good, and some poorer, areas of performance.

Compared to the previous year, there have been some notable improvements, e.g. in visitor numbers, collection development and ICT provision. The perennial problem of low staffing

levels is noted again. It is disappointing to see the service in a fragile situation, after many years of high achievement, and it is hoped that the proposed restructuring does not adversely affect the service provided. It is a matter of concern that cuts to the bookfund approved in March 2016 are expected to have an adverse effect on performance.

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 the core entitlements, the quality indicators which have targets, the quality indicators showing performance against others, and impact measures. A narrative assessment of the authority's performance is made in Section 3.

a) Core entitlements

Gwynedd is meeting 16 of the 18 core entitlements in full and partially meeting 2. This is unchanged from last year. The area in which two entitlements are recorded as only partially met is *Customers and communities*, concerning staff and the range of activities offered. The authority noted that the staffing situation is fragile, and it is increasingly difficult to maintain service quality. In terms of activities, a varied programme is planned for the larger libraries and national campaigns are supported in all libraries.

b) Quality indicators with targets

There are 16 quality indicators (QI) within the framework. Of the 7 which have targets, Gwynedd is achieving 4 in full and 3 in part:

Quality Indicator	Met?	
QI 3 Individual development:		Partially met
a) ICT support	✓	
b) Skills training	✗	
c) Information literacy	✗	
d) E-government support	✓	
e) Reader development	✗	
QI 5 Location of service points	✓	Met in full
QI 8 Up-to-date reading material:	✓	Met in full
a) Acquisitions per capita	✓	
or Materials spend per capita	✓	
b) Replenishment rate	✓	
QI 9 Appropriate reading material:		Partially met
a) % of material budget on children	✗	
b) % of material budget spent on Welsh	✓	
or Spend on Welsh per capita	✗	
QI 10 Online access:		Met in full
a) All service points	*	
Computers per capita	✓	
b) Wi-Fi provision	✓	
QI 13 Staffing levels and qualifications:		Partially met
a) Staff per capita	✗	
b) Professional staff per capita	✗	
c) Head of service qualification/training	✓	

Quality Indicator	Met?
d) CPD percentage	✓
QI 16 Opening hours per capita	✓ Met in full

** Authorities are not penalised on this indicator if all static service points provide internet access but their mobiles do not.*

This is an improvement over the position last year. QI 8 and QI 10 have been met in full this year, with investment in stock and computers.

c) Impact measures

The framework contains three indicators which seek to gather evidence of the impact that using the library service has on people's lives. Through these and other indicators it is possible to see how the library service is contributing towards educational, social, economic and health and wellbeing local and national agendas. These indicators do not have targets. Not all authorities collected data for the impact indicators, and ranks are included out of the numbers of respondents stated, where 1 is the highest scoring authority.

Gwynedd has not yet carried out a customer survey under the present framework, but plans to do so in 2016-17. The figure for the percentage of attendees at training sessions who said that the training had helped them achieve their goal is based on a small sample of 50 responses.

Performance indicator		Rank	Lowest	Median	Highest
QI 1 Making a difference					
b) % of children who think that the library helps them learn and find things out:	n/a		86%	93%	99%
e) % of adults who think that the library has made a difference to their lives:	n/a		36%	87%	97%
% of children who think that the library has made a difference to their lives:	n/a		57%	73%	93%
QI 4 b) % of attendees of training sessions who said that the training had helped them achieve their goals:	100%	1/17	85%	97%	100%

Gwynedd provided 4 outstanding impact case studies which showed the real difference the library service makes:

- A user of the Macmillan information service who was helped to apply successfully for relevant state benefits
- The enjoyment and development of families attending literacy scheme sessions
- Testimony from an older user whose quality of life is enriched by using the library
- A widow who has learned to use her laptop for communication and online transactions with help from the library

d) Quality performance indicators and benchmarks

The remaining indicators do not have targets, but allow performance to be compared between authorities. The following table summarises Gwynedd's position for 2015-16. 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 obtained from customer surveys which only need to be carried out once during the three year framework period, or those where relevant data elements were not available to some authorities. Figures reported in respect of last year for QI 4 to QI 16 are repeated for convenience of comparison.

Note that indicators 'per capita' are calculated per 1,000 population.

Performance indicator		Rank	Lowest	Median	Highest	2014/15	Rank
QI 1 Making a difference							
a) new skills	n/a		23%	72%	92%		
c) health and well-being	n/a		26%	58%	93%		
d) enjoyable, safe and inclusive	n/a		84%	97%	100%		
QI 2 Customer satisfaction							
a) 'very good' or 'good' choice of books	n/a		74%	89%	97%		
b) 'very good' or 'good' customer care	n/a		90%	97%	99%		
c) 'very good' or 'good' overall;	n/a		92%	97%	99%		
d) child rating out of ten	n/a		8.0	9.2	9.5		
QI 4 User training							
a) attendances per capita	7	21	5	30	390	8	19
c) informal training per capita	n/a	15/19	3	195	1017	88	18 / 21
QI 6 Library use							
a) visits per capita	3,156	19	2,467	3,967	6,185	3,090	20
b) virtual visits per capita	944	12	340	976	2,475	839	13
c) active borrowers per capita	146	13	45	157	273	203	5
QI 7 attendances at events per capita	222	12	60	223	666	218	10
QI 11 Use of ICT - % of available time used by the public							
a) equipment	31%	12	20%	31%	68%	35%	12
b) Wi-Fi services	See 3c		20%	60%	90%	n/k	
QI 12 Supply of requests							
a) % available within 7 days	70%	14	57%	71%	86%	69%	11
b) % available within 15 days	86%	9	71%	86%	96%	86%	8
QI 13 Staffing levels and qualifications							
(v) a) total volunteers	7	19	0	18	103	3	15
b) total volunteer hours	250	16	0	582	3,699	150	16
QI 14 Operational expenditure							
a) total expenditure per capita	£13,530	9/21	£7,516	£12,749	£18,760	£15,421	8
b) % on staff	53%	16/21	40%	58%	79%	46%	20
% on information resources	16%	6/21	7%	13%	23%	14%	9
% on equipment and buildings	20%	1/21	1%	3%	20%	15%	2
% on other operational costs	11%	18/21	0%	20%	39%	24%	15
c) capital expenditure per capita	£1,633	5/21	£0	£272	£4,677	£893	8
QI 15 Net cost per visit	£3.00	3/21	£1.83	£2.43	£3.53	£3.68	1 / 11
QI 16 Opening hours (<i>see note</i>)							
(ii) a) % hours unplanned closure of static service points	0.13%	20	0.00%	0.00%	0.16%	0.29%	21
b) % mobile stops / home deliveries missed	0.00%	1/19	0.00%	0.71%	23.44%	1.6%	14 / 19

Note: 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 are divided into four key areas. This section of the report outlines performance against the quality indicators within these four areas, and compares results with those from the first year of the framework.

a) Customers and communities

Gwynedd has not yet carried out a customer survey for the current framework. The full range of support for individual development is not available in all service points, with training sessions and information literacy only available in 6 of the 15 libraries open for 10 hours or more per week, and reader development activities in 9. With low staffing levels, the authority places emphasis on ensuring access to core services and basic support. This necessarily impacts on attendance rates at training, which are the second lowest in Wales.

b) Access for all

Gwynedd meets the target for access to service points. Visitor numbers have recovered after a fall last year, but remain below the median for Wales. Virtual visits have also increased. The number of active borrowers is close to the median for Wales, as is the attendance at events. Book issues per capita have fallen compared to last year, but remain the second highest in Wales. Audio-visual and electronic issues have increased compared to last year, but remain amongst the lowest in Wales.

c) Learning for life

Gwynedd has met all the targets for levels of acquisitions overall this year. Spending for children exceeds the target compared to the proportion of children in the population, and the authority notes that emphasis is placed on the purchase of Welsh medium materials for children. Gwynedd's percentage spend of the materials budget on materials in the Welsh language is the highest in Wales. Almost two-thirds is on material for children, and the authority notes that the use reflects the investment. ICT access is provided in all static libraries, but not on mobiles, although consideration will be given to this in 2016-17 if funding can be secured. The Wi-Fi network, which is available 24/7 in all static libraries, was utilised for 84346 sessions, each lasting an average of 44 minutes. The authority notes that the percentage usage figure this generates (i.e. over 100%) is misleading, as it includes usage outside of library opening hours. There has been a further slight improvement in the speed of supply of requests compared to last year.

d) Leadership and development

The staffing situation in Gwynedd is described in the return as 'very fragile', and remains an ongoing cause for concern. Overall staffing levels have been held at last year's levels and remain below the median for Wales. The head of service is a Chartered Librarian. Staff training is well supported, with a range of opportunities offered. Gwynedd used 7 volunteers during the year, giving an average of 36 hours each to the service, holding IT sessions for users needing one-to-one support. There has been a 12% fall in expenditure per capita compared to last year, and the level is above the median for Wales. Cost per visit, at £3.00, has fallen by 22% compared to last year, owing to increased visits. Opening hours meet the target, and are the third highest in Wales.

4) Strategic context

Gwynedd detailed its contribution towards a range of wider Government priorities, including anti-poverty and community cohesion, health & welfare, education and literacy, language and culture, information literacy and sustainable public services.

5) Future direction

Significant budget cuts are expected for the library service in the future. The effect of a 25% expenditure cut from April 2016 on the sustainability of a service which is already vulnerable, and the implications for the standard of service offered to the public, are a matter of some concern. The authority notes that it is not possible to maintain the current network under the

proposed budget, and details a proposed delivery model comprising nine catchment libraries, four community libraries, four 'link' services and mobile services, with streamlined opening hours. Implementation is expected from April 2017 and MALD will be seeking reassurance that this will not unduly disadvantage sectors of the population.

6) Conclusion

Gwynedd is a large, sparsely populated authority, with the challenge of delivering an equitable service to all under financial and staffing constraints. Some targets which were missed last year have now been achieved; however despite these efforts there are signs of a service in a vulnerable situation. The assessors are concerned that the level of cuts to be implemented in 2016/17 is likely to result in the service failing to meet key targets in the final year of the framework.