

AGENDA ITEM 3

**RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNCIL
PUBLIC SERVICE, COMMUNITIES AND PROSPERITY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

15th December 2015

**RHONDDA CYNON TAF'S WELSH PUBLIC LIBRARY STANDARDS ANNUAL
ASSESSMENT REPORT 2014-2015**

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION AND LIFELONG LEARNING

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1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

The purpose of the report is to inform the Public Service, Communities and Prosperity Scrutiny Committee of the feedback received from Welsh Government in respect of the Library Service's performance against the Welsh Public Library Standards (WPLS) for the period 2014-2015.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Committee:

- 2.1 Receive and acknowledge the letter and the Annual Assessment Report received from Welsh Government;
- 2.2 Scrutinise the content of the report;
- 2.3 Consider whether they wish to scrutinise in greater depth any matters contained in the report.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The Welsh Government has developed a range of indicators (the Welsh Public Library Standards) against which the performance of library authorities in Wales can be measured. Progress against the standards is reviewed by Welsh Government on an annual basis in order to ensure that local

authorities are endeavouring to carry out their statutory responsibilities in the delivery of the core library service.

- 3.2 This is the first Assessment Report on the Library Service's performance under the Fifth Framework for the Welsh Public Library Standards which was introduced by the Deputy Minister for Culture and Sport in April 2014 where he noted that the new framework:

'has been prepared in consultation with the library sector and local authorities and reflects not only the difficult economic future, but also sets some aspirational targets.'

- 3.3 The aims of the Fifth Framework of Welsh Public Library standards are to:

- Enable the Deputy Minister for Culture and Sport to fulfil the statutory requirements of the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964 in respect of superintending the duty of local authorities to deliver a *'comprehensive and efficient'* library service;
- Provide a robust assessment of the performance of library services;
- Have clear links to the Welsh Government's agenda to ensure credibility across local government in Wales;
- Be relevant and useful to all local authority library services in Wales;
- Be transparent, easily understood and accepted by stakeholders;
- Incorporate outcome measures to show the benefits of using libraries;
- Act as a driver for improvements to library services and local communities; and
- Minimise the burden of data collection on library authorities

- 3.4 The Fifth Framework of Welsh Public Library Standards comprises of 18 core entitlements and 16 quality indicators (7 of which have outcome targets) designed to monitor how well library services provide for the people of Wales.

- 3.5 The Fifth Framework consists of 4 core service themes as follows:

- Customers and communities;
- Access for all;

- Learning for life; and
- Leadership and development.

Each theme has a number of core entitlements and quality indicators, and has been related to wider government agendas. The desired outcome of the Fifth Framework is that libraries offer all the services and facilities listed as core entitlements.

3.6 The core entitlements stipulate that libraries in Wales will:

- ensure friendly, knowledgeable and qualified staff at hand to help (WPLSCE1);
- Stage a range of activities to support learning, enjoyment and enable users to obtain the maximum benefit from the available resources (WPLSCE2);
- Provide access to a range of services and resources to support lifelong learning, personal well-being and development, and community participation (WPLSCE3);
- Be open to all members of their communities (WPLSCE4);
- Be free to join (WPLSCE5);
- Provide a safe, attractive and accessible space with suitable opening hours (WPLSCE6);
- Provide appropriate services, facilities and information resources for individuals and groups with special needs. Special needs can be caused by physical and health impairment, economic disadvantage (e.g. long term unemployment). Cultural difference (e.g. language, new arrivals), educational background, or other circumstances that require special library services. (WPLSCE7);
- Lend books for free (WPLSCE8);
- Deliver free access to information (WPLSCE9);
- Provide free use of the internet and computers including wi-fi (WPLSCE10);
- Deliver free use of online information resources 24 hours a day (WPLSCE11);
- Provide access to high quality resources in a range of formats, including those in the Welsh language, reflecting changing forms of publication (WPLSCE12);
- Share their catalogues to enable a single search of all Welsh library resources (WPLSCE13);
- Promote libraries to attract more people to benefit from their services (WPLSCE14);

- Regularly consult users to gather their views on the service and information about their changing needs (WPLSCE15);
- Work in partnership to open up access to the resources of all Welsh libraries (WPLSCE16);
- 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 (WPLSCE17);
- Provide a clear, timely and transparent complaints process if things go wrong (WPLSCE 18)

3.7 A copy of the quality indicators can be seen in the attached WPLS Framework document at Appendix A.

3.8 Local authorities submit an Annual Return and are assessed against the relevant Framework document, in this instance the Fifth Framework. An independent panel then assesses the return and the library service's performance against the core entitlements and the quality indicators. In 2014-15 case studies highlighting the impact of the service on two individuals were also required. These can be seen at Appendix B.

3.9 The Assessment Report including the letter sent to the Chief Executive can be seen at Appendix C.

4. RESULTS OF THE ANNUAL ASSESSMENT REPORT 2014-15

4.1 Rhondda Cynon Taf's Library Service was assessed as follows:

- All 18 core entitlements were met in full;
- Of the 7 quality indicators which have targets, Rhondda Cynon Taf achieved 3 in full, 2 in part and failed to achieve 2;
- ICT, stock acquisition and staffing were areas identified as requiring attention

The Report recognises that *'the library service appears aware of the challenges it faces, and has strategies in place to address these.'*

4.2 The Library Service achieved 8 out of 9 library standards under the Fourth Framework. However in 2014-15 in the face of significant funding reductions from the UK government, the Council decided to reduce the number of libraries from 26 to 13. The Library Service's Report to the Education and Lifelong Learning Scrutiny Committee in December 2014 indicated that the

service changes introduced during that year would have an effect on future performance – *‘The major reduction in funding to the service in 2014/15 will probably have an adverse impact on the number of standards that can be achieved as indicated in the outline business case and during the consultation process. However as this major change coincides with the introduction of new standards it is difficult to predict to what extent achievement of standards will be affected in the future.’* (Performance of the Rhondda Cynon Taf Library Service: Welsh Public Library Standards 2013/14, 11th December 2014, at 6.1).

- 4.3 Undoubtedly the major changes to the service introduced in May 2014 had an adverse impact on performance against some indicators as it takes time for restructures to embed. For example, although funding had been allocated for ensuring that wi-fi would be available in all the remaining service points, technical problems in some locations meant that this was not achieved within the required timescales but will hopefully be achieved in time for the next assessment.
- 4.4 Efforts have been made in this new financial year to ensure that the speed at which requests are supplied are improved. This was an area where library management erred on the side of caution during the restructure as it was difficult to assess the demand for books once 13 service points had been closed. The level of demand is clearer now and additional copies of popular books are purchased to ensure a swifter turnaround of requests. Also an additional driver has been appointed to cover for any absences so that any interruption to the service due to illness or leave is less likely.
- 4.5 Another indicator where improvement may be made is in attendance at events (Quality Indicator 7). It is suggested that the poor performance for 2014-15 may be due to our interpretation of the definition provided. The service’s performance statistics for 2014-15 indicates that there were 39,362 attendees at library events, only 4,999 were included in the WPLS return as meeting the definition in the guidance. Feedback has been requested from Welsh Government on whether we have defined this indicator more narrowly than other library services elsewhere in Wales.
- 4.6 Whilst we accept that there is work we can do to improve our position, we are concerned about the potential negative effect of some of the Quality Indicators on the delivery of a comprehensive library service, specifically services over and above static libraries.
- 4.7 Rhondda Cynon Taf will continue to fail on Quality Indicator 12 (supply of requests) if we maintain a mobile library service as the 2 week rota for mobiles does not allow users to collect or return heavily requested items as

quickly as a borrower using a static service. Similarly continuing to offer a mobile service will ensure that we fail to meet Quality Indicator 10 (online access) as wi-fi provision on **all** mobile libraries is required to meet the standard fully. The Council's ICT Service has considered this option and there is currently no cost effective and reliable means of providing internet access on all of our mobiles.

4.8 Consequently if the library service's only aim was to achieve more Welsh Public Library Standards next year, the easiest way to do this would be to remove our mobile provision. However this would result in a less comprehensive service and would certainly adversely affect customers who find visiting static libraries challenging due to disabilities, ill-health or transport issues.

4.9 At a time when local authorities are required to make best use of scarce resources some of the Quality Indicators do not appear to ensure a best-value approach:

- Most mobile library stops last for 15 minutes in which case there would be very little benefit in installing wi-fi in all mobile vehicles (any vehicles used for longer stops could be prioritised if need be);
- Computer usage in Rhondda Cynon Taf libraries in 2014/15 was 36% of available capacity based on 7.54 computers per 10,000 population. In order to meet the target for Quality Indicator 10 there would be a need to purchase more computers so that we had 9 computers per 10,000. As there is 64% of available time on the current number of computers, there can be no justification in spending additional resources on computers when funding could be better spent elsewhere in the service.

4.10 Library Services across Wales have developed in different ways over the past three years as local authorities have adopted different approaches to funding their services in the light of budget reductions. As a result, many Councils no longer offer the full range of specialist services such as mobile libraries, housebound services and schools library services, which Rhondda Cynon Taf has maintained along with a network of 13 static service points. It is difficult therefore to compare performance across Wales or to have a set of national benchmarks that measures the performance of library services in a meaningful way.

4.11 A breakdown of the performance of Library Services across Wales however can be seen at Appendix D. Rhondda Cynon is one of only 8 authorities that meet all the 18 core entitlements. 3 library authorities met less than 3

standards in full while 6 (including Rhondda Cynon Taf) gained 3 in full. The best performing library authorities for 2011-15 was the Vale of Glamorgan which met 7 standards in full and 17 core entitlements.

- 4.12 As a Service we recognise that we will continue to be unable to meet the Quality Indicators that relate specifically to expenditure (such as purchasing materials and the number of staff employed) without a significant increase in financial resources. We would however question whether this measurement necessarily indicates the quality of delivery and whether other indicators might be more appropriate. More financial investment does not always result in more efficient services. (It is notable that 99% of attendees at training sessions in our libraries indicated that the training had helped them to achieve their goals and in this area we ranked 2nd out of the 17 authorities that returned the data.)
- 4.13 In 2016 Rhondda Cynon Taf Library Service will undertake a customer survey of library users and will request feedback on the quality of the services provided. This information will enable the service to better assess the impact of the service changes on provision and what action needs to be undertaken to better meet users' expectations, where possible.
- 4.14 The Chief Executive has requested a meeting with Welsh Government's Director of Museums, Archives and Libraries to discuss the Assessment Report and the Welsh Public Library Standards. Despite the council meeting all the core entitlements and met or met in part 5 of the 7 Quality Indicators that have targets, the report is particularly negative. The Assessment fails to take into account the pragmatic approach adopted by the Minister for Culture and Sport in introducing the new library standards recognising the difficult economic climate and that many of the quality standards are '*aspirational*.'

5. POTENTIAL IMPACT OF PROPOSED SERVICE CHANGES 2015-16

- 5.1 The proposed reduction of £327,000 in the Library Service budget will provide a further challenge for the service and, should the proposals be approved after the public consultation, there will be an impact on the service's ability to improve upon its current performance. Areas that will be affected should the current proposals be approved are stock acquisition, opening hours per capita, staffing and operational investment. It should be noted that even without the current proposals the service will continue to fail to meet the required indicator on staffing and operational expenditure.
- 5.2 What the Library Service has sought to maintain throughout its recent changes and those that are currently proposed, is a comprehensive service

that provides access to static libraries, mobile provision, housebound service, deposit collections, and the Schools Library Service.

- 5.3 It should be noted that the Library Service has retained the post of Children and Youth Services Librarian as recommended by the Working Group that was established by the Education and Lifelong Learning Scrutiny Committee to investigate the issue of 'sick-lit.'

6. CONCLUSION

- 6.1 During a year of significant change to its service provision, the Library Service has met all 18 Core Entitlements and either fully or partly achieved 5 of the 7 Quality Indicators set by Welsh Government. The staff have worked diligently to meet the needs of library customers during this period of change which has been a challenging time. Nevertheless it is recognised that there are opportunities for further improvement in some areas highlighted in the current report.
- 6.2 The proposals for further changes to the Library Service that are currently being consulted upon will have an impact on the service's performance for the period 2016-17 if they are approved. The risks have been outlined in the business case and potential ways to mitigate some of the proposed changes have been included. Nevertheless, should all the proposals be approved after consultation with the public, the Library Service's performance against the Welsh Public Library Standards will be adversely affected.

Appendix A: Fifth Quality Framework

Appendix B: Case Studies – Welsh Public Library Standards

Appendix C: Letter to Chief Executive and Assessment Report

Appendix D: Performance of Library Authorities in Wales

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Libraries making a difference

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The fifth quality framework of Welsh
Public Library Standards 2014-2017



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Foreword



I know from my many visits and from meeting people at events that the public library is a very important and valued service at the heart of communities. It provides a friendly space for learning and leisure, for meeting people and taking part in events. The modern library is also available 24/7 through online services such as e-books, e-magazines, and other digital resources. In poorer parts of Wales, libraries provide vital free access to digital services including information about welfare benefits and jobs.

The economic forecast for the next three years represents a challenge for us all. I appreciate that local authorities will have to make difficult decisions about the services they provide. However, public libraries are a statutory service as laid out in the *Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964*. For over a decade the Welsh Government has implemented successive assessment frameworks which have helped bring a more consistent level of public library provision across Wales. I want everyone in Wales to continue to benefit from effective and relevant public library services and resources.

April 2014 sees the start of the next assessment framework. It has been prepared in consultation with the library sector and local authorities and reflects not only the difficult economic future, but also sets some aspirational targets. The framework includes impact and outcome measures for the first time. This will help to reveal the wide range of benefits that can result from using the public library service such as improvements to people's literacy skills, digital skills and health and wellbeing.

I am therefore pleased to publish this fifth framework of the Welsh Public Library Standards and to also acknowledge the continuing partnership between the Welsh Government and local authorities. Together we can work to ensure that library services in Wales remain at the heart of our efforts to improve the lives of the people of Wales.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John Griffiths".

John Griffiths AM
Minister for Culture and Sport
April 2014



1. Introduction

“Public, educational, and workplace libraries, are at the heart of their communities. The very reason for their existence is to inspire and assist people to make a positive difference to their lives. Libraries contribute to the social, educational, cultural and economic well being of the people of Wales.”¹

1.1. The benefits of using public libraries

Library service engagement with individuals and with the wider community drives benefits in many of the Welsh Government’s outcome areas such as literacy, digital inclusion, cohesive communities, poverty, and health and well being. How the library interacts with its stakeholders – chiefly the users (and potential users) of the service – is key to the provision of a quality service. User perceptions of the services available derive from their experiences. Libraries which engage appropriately with their customers will provide the maximum benefits both for individuals and the community. As well as providing training and learning support for individuals, libraries contribute to society in other ways, such as providing access to computers and e-government for digitally excluded members of the community.

The public library may be the only place in the community where users can spend time in a safe and neutral environment. Supporting job-seekers in their search for work contributes to the local – and national – economy. By providing specialist facilities and services for those in the community who might have special needs, libraries contribute to health and well-being. Such benefits will only be achieved if the library provides equality of access for all. Much information is now more easily accessible online, and some is only available online, and libraries are uniquely positioned to facilitate access to resources which may be too costly for individuals (e.g. the cost of the basic hardware, Internet access or the resource subscription).

Libraries play a key role in providing information, promoting knowledge and developing skills for people of all ages and all walks of life. From children’s first steps in listening to stories and learning to read, to providing quiet spaces for study, and supporting older people in using new technologies, libraries contribute to the delivery of literacy targets, information literacy and digital inclusion.

Good libraries play an important part in shaping people’s views of their local authority. In order to deliver quality, sustainable services to the public, libraries need active leadership and a programme for development enabling them to respond in a timely way to the changing information and cultural needs of their local communities. Staff must have the skills, knowledge and confidence to deliver services and meet customer needs, demonstrated by appropriate professional qualifications. Libraries have the opportunity to contribute to a range of wider local and national government agendas, but this will only happen if the library is pro-active in promoting its role, based on a strong vision linked to those agendas.

1.2. What this means for the people of Wales

The fifth framework of Welsh public library standards comprises 18 core entitlements and 16 quality indicators to monitor how well library services realise these benefits for the people of Wales. The mapping between benefits and indicators is not a simplistic one, as measuring outcomes and impacts at a service-wide level cannot be achieved directly, but must be inferred from broader indicators. The table below shows the indicators in this framework which are most directly related to some of the key benefits of using public libraries. Libraries which perform well on these indicators will be engaging appropriately with their customers to make a difference to their lives.

¹ CyMAL (2011) *Libraries Inspire: The strategic development framework for Welsh libraries 2012-16*, p 7 Available at <http://wales.gov.uk/topics/cultureandsport/museumsarchiveslibraries/cymal/libraries/librariesinspire/?lang=en>

Outcomes and impacts	Core entitlements	Quality indicators
I am able to increase my knowledge/skills having used the library	1, 2, 3	1, 3, 4
I am able to take part in reading and other cultural events organised by the library service	3	8, 9
I feel part of a community using the library service	3, 15	1, 5, 6
I am able to take advantage of the opportunities offered in the digital world using the library service	1, 10, 11	8, 12, 13
My health and well-being is enhanced by using the library	3, 7	1
I can participate more fully in local affairs via the facilities in the library	3, 11	3, 12

Other core entitlements and quality indicators are concerned with the effective management of services, which underpins the effective delivery of the outcomes and impacts.

A short user guide for the public and local authority members is available from CyMAL.²

1.3. Fulfilling the statutory duty

The *Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964*³ makes it a duty of the relevant Welsh Ministers (currently the Minister for Culture and Sport) *“to superintend and promote the improvement of the public library service provided by local authorities...and to secure the proper discharge by local authorities of the functions in relation to libraries conferred upon them as library authorities under this Act”*. Under the same Act, library authorities are required to *“provide a comprehensive and efficient library service for all persons desiring to make use thereof”*.

Since 2002, the Welsh Ministers have fulfilled this duty through the Welsh Public Library Standards (WPLS, or, the Standards). The first framework ran from 2002 to 2005 with subsequent frameworks covering the periods 2005-08, 2008-11 and 2011-14. Each individual framework evolved to reflect the changing needs and expectations of public library users. In addition to the fulfilment of statutory duties, the WPLS framework plays

a valuable role in supporting the development of public library services. There is general consensus among stakeholders concerned with the provision of public library services in Wales that these performance measurement frameworks, introduced and administered by the Welsh Government for the sector, have helped public library services to improve in a number of ways and in key areas. For example, as a result of the Standards, there have been significant improvements in service areas such as the delivery of requests and provision of ICT facilities and services, leading to enhanced outcomes for library customers.

Local authorities also have a statutory duty (under section 7 of the Act) to provide a library service and encourage both adults and children to make full use of that library service. The performance indicators listed here will assist the Welsh Government in assessing whether or not local authorities in Wales are complying with their duties under the 1964 Act, and in assessing the comprehensiveness and efficiency, in terms of the manner of delivery, of library services in Wales.

1.4. The fifth quality framework

The aims of this new, fifth, framework of Welsh Public Library Standards are to:

² See <http://www.wales.gov.uk/cymal> for details

³ Available at <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1964/75/contents>

- enable the Minister for Culture and Sport to fulfil the statutory requirements of the 1964 Act in respect of superintending the provision of a 'comprehensive and efficient' library service by local authorities;
- provide a robust assessment of the performance of library services;
- have clear links to the Welsh Government's agenda, to ensure credibility across local government in Wales;
- be relevant and useful to all local authority library services in Wales;
- be transparent, easily understood and accepted by all stakeholders;
- incorporate outcome measures to show the benefits of using libraries;
- act as a driver for improvements to library services and local communities; and
- minimise the burden of data collection on library authorities.

Introduced at a time of budgetary constraint, this framework provides opportunities for libraries to deliver services in innovative ways and the flexibility to make best use of the resources available to them. The framework has been developed using a variety of quality performance models as a basis to create a unique framework for Wales, incorporating input and output measures, as well as qualitative and impact/outcome elements.

It will come into operation on 1st April 2014, and libraries will make their first report against its requirements in the summer of 2015. This document describes the new framework in detail. It is appreciated that some areas of the framework may be more or less relevant in particular authorities and it is appreciated that library services will need to regard local priorities.

Library services contribute to a range of Welsh Government outcomes such as literacy, skills and learning, digital inclusion, poverty, health and well-being. Library provision spans these outcomes, offering a range of services which often support two or more of the outcomes simultaneously. The new quality framework has therefore been themed around four core service aspects:

- customers and communities;
- access for all;
- learning for life; and
- leadership and development.

Each aspect has a number of core entitlements and quality indicators associated with it, and has been related to wider government agendas. The desired outcome of the fifth framework is that libraries offer all the services and facilities listed as core entitlements. In order to assess the quality of these services and facilities, a range of performance indicators and outcome-based impact measures are



described, to show how people are better off as a result of using the library service.

A set of **core library entitlements** for Welsh citizens is set out in *Libraries Inspire*, the strategic development framework for Welsh libraries for 2012-16. These have been formally incorporated into this fifth quality framework, and a small number of additional entitlements included. These additional entitlements will help to promote the wider societal role of public libraries, ensuring inclusivity and sustainability of the service.

The **quality indicators** included are of three broad types.

- Input indicators are concerned primarily with what the library service will provide for the citizens of Wales in key areas in order that the core entitlements described above can be delivered.

- Output indicators are concerned with levels of use. When considered alongside input indicators, they can give an indication of the efficiency of delivery of the service.
- Outcome and impact indicators measure the direct or indirect effects of the library service on its users, and on the wider community. They show the difference libraries make to people's lives.

Some indicators have been developed from previous frameworks; others are new, reflecting an increasing emphasis on the outcomes and impact of the public library service for the people of Wales. Most will be reported every year; some may be reported once in the three year period, for example, where user survey data are required. For some indicators, formal targets are set, although such targets are not appropriate in all cases. Libraries will be expected to compare their performance on all indicators with previous



years, and to meet the targets where these are set. Benchmarking of authorities will be possible when all results are available.

The nature of the geography, distribution of population and other factors within individual authorities can cause significant variations in the approaches necessary to the planning and delivery of library services. For this reason, Welsh library authorities are offered alternatives against which to measure their services in some of the indicators described, and should choose the most appropriate to reflect their circumstances.

Definitions of the various terms and methods of data collection are not specified in this document; however these will be included with the reporting template provided to library services, and are available on request.⁴ In all cases, detailed guidance on data collection and calculation will be provided to

library authorities to ensure consistency and comparability. Existing data will be utilised wherever practicable. Where appropriate, international standard definitions and methods have been adopted.

A final section of this document details the reporting requirements, which include an element of self evaluation and descriptive reporting in addition to key service statistics and the performance indicators, and describes the monitoring and assessment process. A holistic view of assessment will be taken. Library performance will be judged on all the aspects of the framework, including compliance with the core entitlements, ranking on the quality indicators, how many performance targets are met, and the narrative providing evidence of the impact of the service on individuals and the community.



⁴ See <http://www.wales.gov.uk/cymal> for details



2. Customers and communities

Entitlements and indicators in this service aspect are designed to ensure that the library service engages with its customers and potential users, providing opportunities for individual and community development.

2.1. Core entitlements

WPLSCE 1

Libraries in Wales will ensure friendly, knowledgeable and qualified staff are on hand to help.

WPLSCE 2

Libraries in Wales will stage a range of activities to support learning, enjoyment and enable users to obtain the maximum benefit from the available resources.

WPLSCE 3

Libraries in Wales will provide access to a range of services and resources to support lifelong learning, personal well being and development, and community participation.

2.2. Quality indicators

WPLSQI 1 Making a difference

This selection of indicators assesses the impact of library use on people's lives in a variety of ways. Although some are relevant to other areas of this framework, they are grouped together here as being key to the overall customer experience.

Authorities will report, at least once in the three year period:

- a) the percentage of adults who think that using the library has helped them develop new skills;
- b) the percentage of children who think that the library helps them learn and find things out;
- c) the percentage of adults who have found helpful information for health and well-being at the library;
- d) the percentage of adults who experience the library as an enjoyable, safe and inclusive place;
- e) the percentage of adults and the percentage of children who think that the library has made a difference to their lives.

Data will be collected from user surveys of adults and of children, which should be conducted in accordance with good statistical practice, at least once during the three year period of this framework. Authorities will be given guidance on the conduct of the survey and wording of questions to ensure comparability. Authorities may conduct annual surveys if they wish to do so and report accordingly.

WPLSQI 2 Customer satisfaction

Customer satisfaction is a key element of library performance. As with the indicators concerned with library impact (QI 1), some of these are relevant to other areas of this framework, but are grouped together here as being key to the overall customer experience.

Authorities will report:

- a) the percentage of adults who think that the choice of books available in the library they use is 'very good' or 'good';
- b) the percentage of adults who think that the standard of customer care in the library they use is 'very good' or 'good';
- c) the percentage of adults who think that the library they use is 'very good' or 'good' overall;
- d) the average overall rating out of ten awarded by users aged 16 or under for the library they use.

Data will be collected from user surveys of adults and of children, which should be conducted in accordance with good statistical practice, at least once in the three-year period of this framework. It is appreciated that not all authorities wish to use the CIPFA PLUS suite of survey instruments (from which the above indicators are drawn), and guidance will be issued to ensure that authorities which choose to use their own surveys will have comparable results. Authorities may conduct annual surveys if they wish to do so and report accordingly.

WPLSQI 3 Support for individual development

Libraries shall ensure that the following services are offered in all static service points open for 10 hours per week or more:

- a) basic support in the use of the ICT infrastructure provided (including Wi-Fi) and in accessing the range of electronic information resources available;
- b) training to improve literacy, numeracy, information and digital skills. Training programmes may be developed and delivered with appropriate partners outside the library service;
- c) information literacy sessions for users (i.e. assistance in developing or enhancing capabilities to: identify and access appropriate resources efficiently and effectively; critically evaluate information; and apply information appropriately to further objectives, such as educational, employment, health and well-being);
- d) support for users to access local and national e-government resources;
- e) reader development programmes/activities for both adults and children.

The format of the support offered and frequency of any specific timetabled sessions should be appropriate both for the size of the service point and local community needs.

WPLSQI 4 User training

This indicator assesses the extent to which sessions offered match local need and would include: reader development sessions; literacy, numeracy, information and digital skills sessions; ICT sessions, etc., including sessions arranged in collaboration with partner agencies. User training may have a general audience, or be targeted towards specific sub-groups of the population e.g. children, carers, unemployed persons, etc. Sessions may require advance registration, or be open to all on a drop-in basis.

Authorities will report:

- a) the total number of attendances at pre-arranged training sessions organised and/or hosted by the library service at its own service points or at other locations within the authority during the year, divided by the resident population, multiplied by 1,000;
- b) the percentage of attendees at such sessions who said that attendance helped them to achieve their goals;
- c) the number of customers helped by means of informal training during the year, divided by the resident population, multiplied by 1,000.

Part (b) of this indicator should be derived from a simple feedback form offered to all attendees. Part (c) of the indicator may be derived by sampling. Authorities will be provided with guidance to ensure consistency of reporting.





3. Access for all

Entitlements and indicators in this service aspect are designed to ensure that library services are delivered from buildings and facilities which are welcoming, inclusive and fit for purpose.

3.1. Core entitlements

WPLSCE 4

Libraries in Wales will be open to all members of their communities.

WPLSCE 5

Libraries in Wales will be free to join.

WPLSCE 6

Libraries in Wales will provide a safe, attractive and accessible physical space with suitable opening hours.

WPLSCE 7

Libraries in Wales will provide appropriate services, facilities and information resources for individuals and groups with special needs. Special needs can be caused by physical and health impairment, economic disadvantage (e.g. long term unemployment), cultural difference (e.g. language, new arrivals), educational background, or other circumstances that require special library services.

3.2. Quality indicators

WPLSQI 5 Location of service points

Authorities shall ensure that they meet the following criteria for the location of service points and mobile library stops, according to their population density:

Population density	% of households	Distance from library
20 or more persons per hectare:	At least 95%	within 2 miles of a static service point
Between 1.1 and 19.9 persons per hectare:	At least 75%	within 2.5 miles (or 10 minutes travelling time by public transport) of a static service point, or within ¼ mile of a mobile library stop
1.0 person or fewer per hectare:	At least 70%	within 3 miles (or 15 minutes travelling time by public transport) of a static service point, or within ¼ mile of a mobile library stop

No stipulation is made with regard to minimum opening hours of static libraries (on a site by site basis) however, authorities are asked to consider the viability of service points which are open for fewer than 10 hours per week. Equally, no stipulation is made with regard to length or frequency of mobile library stops, however it is expected that mobile libraries will visit each scheduled stop at least 12 times per year.

WPLSQI 6 Library use

Three measures of use of the library are required, covering the physical and the electronic resources provided. Together, they assess the library's success in attracting users to its services.

Authorities will report:

- the total number of visits to library premises during the year divided by the resident population, multiplied by 1,000;
- the total number of external visits to the library's website during the year divided by the resident population, multiplied by 1,000;
- the total number of active borrowers divided by the resident population, multiplied by 1,000.

The data used should be those as reported to CIPFA for the public library actuals return. This is a performance indicator in the National Strategic Indicators, Leisure and Culture, for Wales (LCL/001), and the guidance for the collection of data and calculation of this

performance indicator is substantially the same for both frameworks.

WPLSQI 7 User attendances at library events per 1,000 population

The purpose of this indicator is to estimate the attraction of library events for the library's population to be served, and the extent to which such events meet local need.

Authorities will report:

- The total number of attendances at events and activities organised by the library service at its own service points or at other locations within the authority during the year, divided by the resident population, multiplied by 1,000.

Events include events with literary, cultural or educational intent, e.g. author visits, reading groups, literary discussions, digital and information literacy workshops, genealogy workshops, health literacy, financial literacy, job seeking etc. Events specifically for children are included, such as storytelling, poetry, music. Authorities may choose to report separately concerning events targeted at specific sections of the population, e.g. visually impaired readers; socially excluded groups.



4. Learning for life

Entitlements and indicators in this service area are designed to ensure that the library service provides a range of resources and services to meet people's needs.

4.1. Core entitlements

WPLSCE 8

Libraries in Wales will lend books for free.

WPLSCE 9

Libraries in Wales will deliver free access to information.

WPLSCE 10

Libraries in Wales will provide free use of the Internet and computers, including Wi-Fi.

WPLSCE 11

Libraries in Wales will deliver free use of online information resources 24 hours a day.

WPLSCE 12

Libraries in Wales will provide access to high quality resources in a range of formats, including those in the Welsh language, reflecting changing forms of publication.

WPLSCE 13

Libraries in Wales will share their catalogues, to enable a single search of all Welsh library resources.

4.2. Quality indicators

WPLSQI 8 Up-to-date reading material

a) Library authorities should achieve

either a minimum of 243 items acquired per 1,000 resident population

or a minimum spend of £2,180 per 1,000 resident population annually.

Books and e-books, periodicals, audio-visual material and electronic resources are all included.

b) Acquisitions during the year of materials for loan (including electronic materials for loan) should be equivalent to at least 11% of the lending stock at the start of the year.

WPLSQI 9 Appropriate reading material

This indicator is designed to ensure an appropriate balance of resources across various sections of the community.

a) The percentage of the material budget spent on resources for children should reflect the percentage of children in the resident population, within ± 2 percentage points.

b) **Either** a minimum of 4% of the material budget,
or a minimum of £750 per 1,000 Welsh speaking resident population,

should be spent on the purchase of Welsh Language materials.

WPLSQI 10 Online access

a) Every static library and mobile library should provide a minimum of one device giving public access to the Internet and networked digital content. Authorities should achieve an aggregate total across the authority of no fewer than 9 such devices per 10,000 resident population. Computers, laptops, tablets, and other mobile devices are all included.

b) All static service points should provide Wi-Fi access for users to bring their own laptops or mobile devices.

WPLSQI 11 Use of ICT – % of available time used by the public

Authorities will report:

a) the percentage of available time allocated for use of public access ICT equipment (i.e. library-provided computers and other devices) actually taken up by users.

- b) the percentage of time during which Wi-Fi services are available that they are used by the public.

This should be aggregated across all libraries in the authority, including mobiles.

WPLSQI 12 Supply of requests

This indicator measures the efficiency of the public library service in responding to requests for material which is not immediately available.

Authorities will report:

- a) the percentage of requests for material which are notified to the user as being

available within 7 calendar days of the request being made;

- b) the percentage of requests for material which are notified to the user as being available within 15 calendar days of the request being made.

Requests for pre-publication material shall be counted from the date of publication. Material which is not owned by the library but must be acquired by purchase or by inter-library loan is included in the calculations.



5. Leadership and development

Entitlements and indicators in this service aspect are designed to ensure that the library service is professionally managed with adequate resources.

5.1. Core entitlements

WPLSCE 14

Libraries in Wales will promote libraries to attract more people to benefit from their services.

WPLSCE 15

Libraries in Wales will regularly consult users to gather their views on the service and information about their changing needs.

WPLSCE 16

Libraries in Wales will work in partnership to open up access to the resources of all Welsh libraries.

WPLSCE 17

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.

WPLSCE 18

Libraries in Wales will provide a clear, timely and transparent complaints process if things go wrong.

5.2. Quality indicators

WPLSQI 13 Staffing levels and qualifications

- a) Library authorities shall achieve total establishment staffing levels for the service of 3.6 (full time equivalent) per 10,000 resident population. Staff who do not work directly in service provision, e.g. cleaners, are excluded.
- b) The total number of staff (full time equivalent) holding recognised qualifications in librarianship, information science or information management per 10,000 resident population should not fall below 0.65. Staff with qualifications in cognate areas, such as ICT, heritage or leisure management or education and learning may be included in the calculations if they occupy posts on the library staff establishment which require those qualifications, and when the qualifications held are relevant to their current roles and functions within the library service.
- c) The designated operational manager of the library service shall,
 - either** be the holder of recognised qualifications in librarianship, information science or information management
 - or** have undertaken relevant library management training within the last 3 years.

Authorities will also report:

 - i. where this post sits within the local authority management structure;
 - ii. the post held by the most senior professional librarian (where different); and
 - iii. where that post sits within the local authority management structure.
- d) A minimum of 1% of aggregate staff working hours should be spent in training and personal/professional development during the year. All library staff should be encouraged to undertake relevant training and development.
- e) Library authorities may offer members of the community the opportunity to volunteer to support additional library services. Such opportunities can, for example, enhance the life skills and employability of individuals, contributing to tackling poverty outcomes.

Where there is community involvement in delivering the library service at a branch level, we expect there to be paid staffing working alongside the volunteers in the libraries.

Library authorities that use volunteer staff to deliver additional services shall ensure:

- a designated volunteer coordinator from the library service's permanent professional staff coordinates those parts of the service involving volunteer workers;
- each volunteer receives a written role description;
- legal requirements are met for each volunteer in relation to their role;
- both induction training and continuing training is provided for all volunteers;
- volunteers are appropriately supervised; and
- they have achieved, or are actively working towards, Investing in Volunteers accreditation.⁵

Authorities will report:

- i. the total number of volunteers

- ii. the total number of volunteer hours during the year

- iii. whether they have accreditation status relating to the NOS or are working towards this accreditation.

WPLSQI 14 Operational expenditure

In the current economic climate it is not thought appropriate to set a target for library expenditure, but spending on the public library service will continue to be scrutinised closely.

Authorities will report:

- a) the total revenue expenditure per 1,000 resident population;
- b) the percentages of this total spent on staff, materials and information resources, maintenance, repair and replacement of equipment and buildings, and other operational costs;
- c) total capital expenditure per 1,000 resident population.



WPLSQI 15 Cost per visit

This indicator is useful for justifying expenditure of public funds, giving a proxy for value for money, but it must be interpreted in conjunction with demographic indicators and quality indicators relating to use. It measures the cost of the library service related to the number of library visits, including virtual visits.

Authorities will report:

- The total revenue expenditure divided by the sum of the number of physical visits to library premises (including mobiles) plus the number of visits to the library web site during the year.

Authorities which complete the CIPFA public library actuals return should use the same data here.

WPLSQI 16 Opening hours

- a) Welsh public libraries should achieve a level of aggregate opening hours across all service points administered by the authority (defined as those that provide access to materials, staff and a range of library services) of no less than 120 hours per

annum per 1,000 resident population.

- b) This part of the indicator is concerned with the adequacy of the library service's maintenance programme and staffing strategy.

Authorities will report:

- i. the total number of hours of unplanned and emergency closure of static service points as a result of building failure or staff unavailability as a percentage of the total planned opening hours of all static service points during the year;
- ii. the number of mobile library stops and/or home delivery services missed as a result of vehicle failure or staff unavailability, as a percentage of the total number of planned mobile library stops and/or home delivery services during the year.

Scheduled opening hours not open as a result of adverse weather conditions, or any other cause beyond the library's control, are not included.





6. Reporting, monitoring and assessment

The statutory requirements of public library service provision in Wales are enshrined in the *Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964*. The performance indicators listed here will assist the Welsh Government in assessing whether or not local authorities in Wales are complying with their duties under the 1964 Act, and in assessing the efficiency of the manner of delivery of library services in Wales.

6.1. Reporting requirements

Each year, local authorities will be required to report their performance against the various elements of the framework. The return will include a compliance rating against the core entitlements – indicating whether these are fully met, partially met, or not met, with appropriate description/explanation where relevant. For all entitlements which are not fully met, the return should also include a comparison to the previous year, and a plan for improvement in the following year.

Individual authority returns will also include data showing performance against the quality indicators included in this framework, together with a comparison for the previous year. Where performance has declined, the return should include the authority's strategy to halt the decline. Where targets are not met, the return should include a narrative outlining proposals and a timescale to achieve these targets. These data will be drawn together to provide an overview of Welsh public library services as a whole, to assist with identification of good practice, and of areas where action may be required to bring about improvements.

Measurement of the impact of public library services – the difference those services make to people's lives – is not easily quantifiable. For this reason, a qualitative element will be included in the reporting. Each authority's return should include at least one, but no more than four, specific case studies describing the impact which the library service has had on an individual, or on a group of individuals, during the year. This is expected to describe

the use made of the service, and the difference that use made to the individuals or group. Guidance will be provided on the format of the case studies and appropriate material to include. Such case studies will build into a valuable source of evidence of impact and value, and will further promote the spread of good practice across Wales.

A second qualitative element of reporting will be a narrative that demonstrates how the library service is contributing towards both local authority agendas and wider Welsh Government priorities and strategic goals. The purpose of this strand of reporting is to encourage libraries to be aware of the wider social drivers (e.g. health and well-being; digital inclusion including information literacy; literacy, including reading and the connection with digital literacy; community engagement and community benefits, including families, children and young people, older people, welfare reform; Welsh language and culture), to which their service should be able to demonstrate a contribution, and to make explicit their relevance and value to policy makers at local, regional and national level.

Authorities will also be required to confirm that feedback in the form of opinion on the year's performances achieved by each library service has been adequately considered by the member with responsibility for library services and by the relevant management, scrutiny and performance monitoring procedures. A reporting template will be provided to authorities to ensure that reporting is consistent and comparable across Wales.

6.2. Monitoring and assessment procedures

The process of monitoring and assessing will be led by CyMAL: Museums Archives and Libraries division of the Welsh Government, and will follow the pattern established in earlier frameworks. Annual returns should be submitted by the deadline each year, and will be scrutinised for completeness by an

independent reviewer and a peer reference group. The independent reviewer will then prepare a formal written feedback report, covering all aspects of the framework, including all quality indicators and narrative elements, which will be delivered to each authority in the autumn, in time to address any issues raised as part of their formal service planning process. This feedback will be formally disseminated to library authority chief executives and also to council leaders, scrutiny officers or performance managers as well as to the managers of library services. The annual reports will be made public, via the CyMAL web pages.

The independent reviewer will prepare a summary overview each year, including an analysis of overall performances, and significant trends within those performances, against the entitlements and quality indicators. The highest, lowest and median performances in Wales will be calculated for each indicator. The overall analysis will be disseminated to all local authorities. At the end of the framework period a summary report will be published via the CyMAL web site.

The findings of these processes will be brought to the attention of the relevant Minister annually, highlighting achievements and trends and also problem areas, such as declining performances, incidences of non-compliance

or recurring failure, together with a diagnosis of the causes wherever possible. Noteworthy improvements in performances and improving trends will also be drawn to the Minister's attention.

The core entitlements and quality indicators set out in this framework deal with aspects of the library service which are considered by the Welsh Government to be necessary – but are not necessarily sufficient – for the delivery of a comprehensive and efficient library service under the terms of Section 10 of the *Public Libraries Act 1964*.

As the ultimate sanction in the cases of failure to deliver a comprehensive and efficient library service, the Welsh Government can institute an inquiry, issue a direction and transfer the library functions of a library authority to itself or to another authority/organisation. Sanctions would be invoked in cases where, for example, a significant number of the core entitlements and performance targets are not reached, there is a failure consistently to reach the average performance of comparable Welsh authorities with no evidence of improvement over time, or performance across the service as a whole is consistently falling year on year.

To date, it has not been necessary to implement any of these sanctions due to constructive discussion between the relevant parties.



Appendix: List of core entitlements and indicators

Customers and communities	13	Learning for life	19
Core entitlements	13	Core entitlements	19
Ensure friendly, knowledgeable and qualified staff are on hand to help.		Lend books for free	
Stage a range of activities to support learning, enjoyment and enable users to obtain the maximum benefit from the available resources.		Deliver free access to information	
Provide access to a range of services and resources to support lifelong learning, personal well-being and development, and community participation.		Provide free use of the Internet and computers, including Wi-Fi.	
Quality indicators	13	Deliver free use of online information resources 24 hours a day.	
Making a difference	13	Provide access to high quality resources in a range of formats, including those in the Welsh language, reflecting changing forms of publication.	
Customer satisfaction	13	Share their catalogues, to enable a single search of all Welsh library resources.	
Support for individual development	14	Quality indicators	19
User training	14	Up-to-date reading material	19
		Appropriate reading material	19
		Online access	19
		Use of ICT – % of available time used by the public	19
		Supply of requests	20
Access for all	17	Leadership and development	21
Core entitlements	17	Core entitlements	21
Be open to all members of their communities.		Promote libraries to attract more people to benefit from their services.	
Be free to join.		Regularly consult users to gather their views on the service and information about their changing needs.	
Provide a safe, attractive and accessible physical space with suitable opening hours.		Work in partnership to open up access to the resources of all Welsh libraries.	
Provide information resources for individuals and groups with special needs.		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.	
Quality indicators	17	Provide a clear, timely and transparent complaints process if things go wrong.	
Location of service points	17	Quality indicators	21
Library use	17	Staffing levels and qualifications	21
User attendances at library events per 1,000 population	18	Operational expenditure	22
		Cost per visit	23
		Opening hours	23

Authority: Rhondda Cynon Taf

1. The impact which the library has had on an individual, or on a group of individuals, during the year. Describe the use made of the service, and the difference that use made to the individual or group concerned. Up to four case studies may be provided (indicative length: 500 words each).

a) Case Study: Alternative Reading Group

A need was identified to host an alternative form of reading group for Blind and Visually Impaired people within RCT Libraries.

Starting Point

The library service has for many years provided reading groups for members of the public. These are mostly used by sighted people within the local community.

Reading groups provide a great social interaction as well as the chance to broaden your reading horizons.

Work Undertaken

The Senior Librarian for Mobiles and Community Services has worked in partnership with RNIB community Co-ordinators to promote the reading group to local people on the RNIB news.

A group was set up in Rhydyfelin Library as there is a strong presence in the area with a local group meeting at a local community centre.

Staff visited the group and talked to them about starting a group and we provide audio books on CD for the group to listen to and then discuss.

Outcome

The group at Rhydyfelin has become well established with 5-6 regular members attending, one of the group is not keen on books but comes for the social experience and to meet other blind or visually impaired people to make new friends.

"I always feel better for attending the Alternative Reading Group in Rhydyfelin. It's lovely to interact with people. I look forward to coming as it gets me out. As well as enjoying the reading I love the social aspects."

As a parent of a visually and physically disabled son, local and mobile libraries are very useful to both of us. Recently we have joined a reading group at Rhydyfelin library and we are enjoying meeting new people, and enjoy be introduced to new books, which perhaps we would not have thought to try."

"Attending the alternative reading group at Rhydyfelin Library opens my mind to different styles of books which I wouldn't otherwise access. I enjoy the social aspect, which is very important for my

health and wellbeing. I enjoy the discussions with the other members and find the feedback stimulating.”

Next Step

It is intended to expand the reading group to another area within RCT.

b) Sineah Bevan – E-Teens User

Sineah Bevan is twelve years old and lives in Cwmparc, a Communities First area which is less than a mile away from Treorchy Library. She lives with her mothers and younger brother Morgan. Since leaving primary school and moving to the local Comprehensive School she has become a regular visitor to the E-Teen room at Treorchy Library. Her family do not own a computer so Sineah relies on the computer facilities at the library to do her homework. She also attends the after-school Homework Club where she receives help and advice from library staff.

“If I didn’t have the library I wouldn’t be able to do my homework as I haven’t got a computer or printer in the house. When I do my homework in the library there is always someone to help me.”

Sineah also uses the library for leisure purposes attending the free activities we provide at the library. She enjoys our weekly film club and since moving to Treorchy last summer has taken part in all of our various holiday activities such as scavenger hunts, bingo, Wii/X Box tournaments and team-building games such as ‘The Marshmallow Challenge’. She has also learned new skills such as glass engraving, clay sculpture, bag designing, loom band making and origami.

“I enjoy making things and have learned how to engrave glass and make things with clay. If I wanted to do these things outside the library they would probably be quite expensive but at the library they are free.”

Sineah has also benefitted from activities run by external organisations. In February she attended a three-day Digital Storytelling workshop taken by Rhys Milsom, published author and editor of youth website Wicid. She has also developed her writing skills through fortnightly meetings of our youth creative writing group held by former teacher Lesley Coburn. As RCT Libraries are currently taking part in the ‘Rugby Stories’ project run by the WRU and Welsh Libraries to commemorate the Rugby World Cup, we have organised a series of events that will give young people the chance to immerse themselves in Welsh culture and hopefully inspire them to write a rugby-themed short story. Since the project started, Sineah has enjoyed a cartoon drawing lesson, writing class and a talk on the history of Welsh rugby history by local rugby expert, Professor Gareth Williams. Over the course of the next few weeks she will be one of several young people visiting local rugby clubs and the iconic Grogg workshop in Pontypridd.

Sineah loves to read but can’t afford to buy books of her own and since joining the library she regularly borrows books from our selection of Teen fiction. We always try to stock a wide variety

of literature and this has given Sineah the opportunity to broaden her literary tastes so that they now include graphic novels and Japanese manga.

“In Treorchy library there are lots of books available and i love that i can borrow up to ten books at the same time and if they don’t have one they will order them for us.”

Sineah was one of the first members of our youth reading group. Since joining the group last year she has grown in confidence, not only with regard her reading choices but also in her ability to speak to others about the books she reads. This was demonstrated when, along with the rest of the reading group, she helped to organise an event for World Book Night in April, during which she distributed books to members of the public. This year, RCT Libraries are taking part in the Reading Agency’s ‘Reading Hack’ programme and Sineah will be putting the skills she has acquired to use as one of our Summer Reading Challenge Young Volunteers. She will be given the chance to talk to younger children about the books they borrow, help library staff co-ordinate crafts and games, create displays and take responsibility for an online blog documenting the experience.

“I have met new people and a lot of the friends that I now have in school I met here”

c) Case Study: Parent and baby group

The need was identified for activity groups for pre-school children within Rhondda Cynon Taf Libraries.

Starting point

Two staff members at Aberdare library, set up a once weekly ‘Story and Craft Time’ group aimed at the target age group of pre-schoolers (under-threes).

The staff members liaised with the library services Schools and Children’s librarian who advised them on suitable stories and games to play with the children and various simple craft activities that could be attempted by both parent and child. Craft materials were supplied by the Children’s librarian and a small amount of funding was granted from central funds to purchase musical instruments and toys.

Two members of staff were sent on short courses with ‘Bookstart’ and ‘Language and Play’ in order to help them to successfully run the group.

Since the inception of these groups the Toy Library Service has loaned items which may be borrowed in the same way as books. This takes place after the group activities have finished.

Outcome

The group at Aberdare has become well established and regularly sees between 25 – 30 participants each week. The staff members involved along with the parents and children find the

group rewarding and fun, the group has helped the parents to get out to a safe, clean, welcoming venue where they meet and make friends contributing to their wellbeing, comments have included:

My 20 month old daughter really enjoys her time at the library. She is learning vital social; learning skills and it gives structure to our weekly routine.

It gets myself out of the house and have some adult conversation which contributes to overall happiness. My daughter has fun and enrichment.

Me and my 13th month old son love coming to the library. We look forward to a Wednesday and the time is perfect.

We look forward to a Wednesday and my son loves singing time. It is nice to meet other parents and I myself have made new friends.

(The group makes me feel) Happy – he gets to play with other children, I get to socialise, it breaks up the day and it's easy to get to as we can walk from home.

The Group helps us get out, get fresh air, exercise (as we walk!) and stimulates our minds.

I've been going to storytime with my grandson for almost a year and we've both enjoyed it very much. We've made a lot of new friends and look forward to it every week. The staff are all extremely helpful and friendly. We also take out books to read and DVDs.

Going brightens up your day. The walk over (to the library) keeps me fit and active. I'm more active now than I have been for years.

The group at Aberdare library has been so successful that further groups using this model have been established at Treorchy, Pontypridd and Pontyclun libraries.

Why was it successful?

This group has been successful because the library staff were quick to identify a need and were willing and very proactive in meeting this need. The enthusiasm and drive of the staff been the major factor in the continuing success of the group. Their knowledge of the library, stock and their local community has helped to break down barriers with parents.

d)

2. Please provide a narrative that demonstrates how the library service is contributing towards wider Welsh Government priorities and strategic goals (indicative length: 500 - 1,000 words).

Rhondda Cynon Taf library service has worked hard in recent years to create libraries that respond to community needs and play a key role in the communities they serve. Our service provision is very broad as it is driven by the information and cultural requirements of the communities we serve. We provide community space that is free and accessible to everyone, access to a wide range of facilities including free internet and computer usage, easy access to information and advice, books and learning activities and very importantly we facilitate social interaction. Therefore whilst it is difficult to measure our importance in financial terms we are valuable and valued community resources that underpin and develop a number of Welsh Government priorities and strategic goals.

By promoting reading for pleasure, well being and learning we play a key role in supporting literacy strategies. As well as providing access to literature that is targeted at children, young people, adults and users with poor literacy levels we run story time sessions, reading groups, host author visits and other literary based events. We also support reading promotions and strategies such as Bookstart, the Summer Reading Challenge and World Book Day.

Digital inclusion is supported by the provision of free internet access, ICT training sessions and informal advice and guidance by staff members, enabling residents without home computers the facility to access the internet. The UK Government's plan to make many services 'digital by default' means that access to the internet is vital for the more deprived sections of our community if they are not to be excluded.

The Welsh Government's strategies to tackle poverty and promote growth and sustainable jobs rely on individuals obtaining more skills, a higher general level of education and making informed decisions with regard to their personal development. Our libraries facilitate this by not only offering the resources required for learning to take place but by providing informal and formal classes on a wide range of subjects. The availability of community meeting rooms and spaces with access to IT facilities makes us the ideal location for partnership work with organisations such as the Workers' Educational Association and the Basic Skills Agency. We offer assistance by signposting and advertising in relation to learning and our libraries often provide the first step onto the informal and formal learning journey.

We continue to play a key role in promoting the history, culture and language of Wales by providing materials for loan, collecting, preserving and making available local history materials, both in a physical and digital format, as well as hosting exhibitions and talks on events of national and local significance to Wales. Use of the Welsh language is promoted through Welsh classes, Welsh language reading groups and Welsh conversational groups who all make use of our facilities.

Our libraries continue to operate as a multi-purpose service open to all aspects of the community. They are places that people visit to choose books, use a computer and attend group meetings or classes and as such they are institutions that promote inclusion and prevent social isolation. Specialised services such as the Schools Library Service and Housebound Service encourage literacy and serve some of the most isolated people in our communities.

Our library service is instrumental in supporting the delivery of Welsh government strategies and policy agendas including health and wellbeing, poverty, education and skills, growth and sustainable jobs, digital and social inclusion, equality, and the promotion of the Welsh language and culture. We can however only continue to be properly financed and staffed with staff who possess the requisite skills and experience.



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Steve Merritt
Chief Executive
Rhondda Cynon Tâf County Borough Council
Council Offices
The Pavilions
Tonypandy
CF40 2XX

25 September 2015

Dear Mr Merritt,

Fifth Assessment Framework for Welsh Public Library Standards: Annual Return 2014-15

The Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964 sets out the statutory duties of public library authorities to "*provide a comprehensive and efficient library service*" and makes it a duty of the Welsh Ministers "*to superintend and promote the improvement*" of public library services in Wales. In accordance with these statutory requirements the Welsh Government has completed its assessment of your authority's library service Annual Return for 2014-15, and the full report is attached to this letter.

This is the first year of assessment under the fifth framework. The independent assessor, in consultation with a Reference Group comprising Welsh Government officials and three heads of library services, found that:

- Rhondda Cynon Taf met all of the 18 core entitlements in full.
- Of the seven quality indicators which have targets, Rhondda Cynon Taf achieved three in full, two in part and failed to achieve two.
- The library service appears aware of the challenges it faces, and has strategies in place to address these.
- The main areas of concern are in stock acquisition, ICT provision, and staffing.

I am grateful for the support from your library service in submitting this year's return and liaising with the independent assessor and MALD officials on this important piece of work.

Should you have any queries concerning the report or the assessment process,

please contact Alyson Tyler, Libraries Development Programme Manager, tel: 0300 062 2103, email: alyson.tyler@wales.gsi.gov.uk.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Linda Tomos". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping tail on the letter 's'.

Linda Tomos

**Director
Museums, Archives and Libraries Wales**

**CC: Head of Library Service
Scrutiny Officer**



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Steve Merritt
Prif Weithredwr
Cyngor Bwrdeistref Sirol Rhondda Cynon Tâf
Swyddfeydd y Cyngor
Y Pafiliynau
Tonypandy
CF40 2XX

25 Medi 2015

Annwyl Mr Merritt,

Y Pumed Fframwaith Asesu ar gyfer Safonau Llyfrgelloedd Cyhoeddus Cymru: Ffurflen Flynyddol 2014-15

Mae Deddf Llyfrgelloedd Cyhoeddus ac Amgueddfeydd 1964 yn nodi dyletswyddau statudol ar awdurdodau llyfrgelloedd cyhoeddus i “*ddarparu gwasanaeth llyfrgell cynhwysfawr ac effeithlon*” ac yn ei gwneud yn ddyletswydd ar Weinidogion Cymru “*i oruchwylio a hybu gwelliannau*” i wasanaethau llyfrgelloedd cyhoeddus yng Nghymru. Yn unol â'r gofynion statudol hyn, mae Llywodraeth Cymru wedi asesu'r Ffurflen Flynyddol 2014-15 a gyflwynwyd gan wasanaeth llyfrgell eich awdurdod, ac mae'r adroddiad llawn ynghlwm wrth y llythyr hwn.

Dyma flwyddyn gyntaf yr asesiad o dan y bumed fframwaith. Isod ceir canlyniadau'r asesydd annibynnol, mewn ymgynghoriad â Grŵp Cyfeirio sy'n cynnwys swyddogion Llywodraeth Cymru a thri phennaeth gwasanaethau llyfrgell:

- Roedd Rhondda Cynon Taf wedi cyflawni pob un o'r 18 hawl graidd yn llawn.
- O'r 7 dangosydd ansawdd sydd â thargedau, roedd Rhondda Cynon Taf wedi cyflawni tri yn llawn, dau yn rhannol ac wedi methu â chyflawni dau.
- Mae'r gwasanaeth llyfrgell yn ymwybodol o'r heriau sydd o'i flaen, ac mae ganddo strategaethau ar waith i fynd i'r afael â'r rhain.
- Mae'r prif feysydd sy'n peri pryder yn ymwneud â derbyniadau stoc, darpariaeth TGCh, a staffio.

Rwy'n ddiolchgar am gefnogaeth eich gwasanaeth llyfrgell wrth gyflwyno'r ffurflen eleni ac am gydlynu â'r asesydd annibynnol a swyddogion yr Is-adran Amgueddfeydd, Archifau a Llyfrgelloedd ar y darn pwysig hwn o waith.

Os oes gennych unrhyw ymholiadau ynghylch yr adroddiad neu'r broses asesu,

cysylltwch ag Alyson Tyler, Rheolwr Rhaglen Datblygu Llyfrgelloedd, ffôn: 0300 062 2103, e-bost: alyson.tyler@cymru.gsi.gov.uk.

Yr eiddoch yn gywir

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Linda Tomos". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping tail on the final letter.

Linda Tomos

**Cyfarwyddwr
Amgueddfeydd, Archifau a Llyfrgelloedd Cymru**

**CC: Pennaeth Gwasanaeth Llyfrgell
Swyddog Craffu**

Welsh Public Library Standards 2014-17

Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council

Annual Assessment Report 2014-15

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

Rhondda Cynon Taf's return was approved by the Head of Community Learning, on 29 June 2015.

1) Executive summary

Rhondda Cynon Taf met all of the 18 core entitlements in full.

Of the 7 quality indicators which have targets, Rhondda Cynon Taf achieved 3 in full, 2 in part and failed to achieve 2.

The recent restructuring and loss of libraries combined with other cuts indicate a declining service quality and levels of performance. Matters of ICT, stock and staffing all require attention.

- 99% of attendees at training sessions said that they had been helped to achieve their goals. Three case studies provide clear evidence of the impact of core services as well as activities for groups.
- With a major service restructure during the year, and loss of 13 service points, Rhondda Cynon Taf did not carry out any customer surveys during 2014-15.
- There has been a drop in usage in terms of visits, virtual visits and active borrowers, as might be expected following the restructure. Attendance at events has been less severely affected, but is now the lowest in Wales.
- Rhondda Cynon Taf fails to meet any of the targets set in the area of *Learning for life*, and this is a cause for concern. There has also been a disappointing fall in the speed of supply of requests compared to 2013-14, and these are the lowest in Wales.
- Targets for staff numbers are not met, and this is further cause for concern, although staff training is at appropriate levels. Expenditure has fallen substantially owing to the restructure, although detailed comparisons with previous years are affected by the timing of this. Only one authority spends less per capita than Rhondda Cynon Taf. Average cost per visit was £2.31, below the median for Wales. Rhondda Cynon Taf did not use volunteers in 2014-15.
- The authority appears aware of the issues it faces in terms of attracting users following the restructure, and the return indicates some strategies which should help to address these.
- Compared to the rest of Wales, Rhondda Cynon Taf performs poorly on indicators in the areas of *Access for all*, *Learning for life*, and *Leadership and development*.
- Despite achieving 8 out of 9 standards in the previous framework, Rhondda Cynon

Taf is failing to meet a number of the targets in this framework. The loss of around half of its branch libraries is affecting the performance and usage of the library service.

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

Rhondda Cynon Taf is meeting all of the 18 core entitlements in full.

b) Quality indicators with targets

There are 16 quality indicators (QI) within the framework. Of the 7 which have targets, Rhondda Cynon Taf is achieving 3 in full, 2 in part and is failing to achieve 2 of the indicators:

Quality Indicator	Met?	
QI 3 Individual development:		Met in full
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:		Not met
a) Acquisitions per capita	✗	
<u>or</u> Materials spend per capita	✗	
b) Replenishment rate	✗	
QI 9 Appropriate reading material:		Not met
a) % of material budget on children	✗	
b) % of material budget spent on Welsh	✗	
<u>or</u> Spend on Welsh per capita	✗	
QI 10 Online access:		Partially met
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	✓	
d) CPD percentage	✓	
QI 16 Opening hours per capita	✓	Met in full

* In this first year of the new framework, MALD agreed that authorities would not be penalised on this indicator if all static service points provide internet access but their mobiles did not.

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.

Performance indicator	Rhondda Cynon Taf	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		63%	93%	95%
e) % of adults who think that the library has made a difference to their lives:	n/a		73%	87%	92%
% of children who think that the library has made a difference to their lives:	n/a		43%	79%	90%
QI 4 b) % of attendees of training sessions who said that the training had helped them achieve their goals:	99%	2 / 16	80%	93%	100%

Rhondda Cynon Taf did not conduct an impact survey in 2014-15. The authority described 3 impact case studies:

- a reading group for blind and partially sighted users which has reduced feelings of social isolation amongst participants;
- a schoolgirl who relies on the ICT facilities at her local library to complete her homework, as well as learning new skills and gaining confidence from participating in other activities in the library; and
- a parent and baby group which provides support and friendship to the adults attending as well as encouraging social and learning skills amongst the children.

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 Rhondda Cynon Taf's position for 2014-15. 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.)

Performance indicator	Rhondda Cynon Taf	Rank	Lowest	Median	Highest
QI 1 Making a difference					
a) new skills	n/a		55%	72%	93%
c) health and well-being	n/a		29%	58%	91%
d) enjoyable, safe and inclusive	n/a		84%	97%	98%
QI 2 Customer satisfaction					
a) 'very good' or 'good' choice of books	n/a		82%	89%	97%

Performance indicator	Rhondda Cynon Taf	Rank	Lowest	Median	Highest
b) 'very good' or 'good' customer care	n/a		93%	99%	99%
c) 'very good' or 'good' overall;	n/a		94%	96%	99%
d) child rating out of ten	n/a		8.0	9.2	9.4
QI 4 User training					
a) attendances per capita	39	6	2	26	278
c) informal training per capita	124	12 / 21	16	162	484
QI 6 Library use					
a) visits per capita	3,790	15	2,637	4,177	5,955
b) virtual visits per capita	937	11	212	923	2,449
c) active borrowers per capita	97	20	71	155	288
QI 7 attendances at events per capita					
	21	22	21	192	464
QI 11 Use of ICT - % of available time used by the public					
a) equipment	36%	11	23%	36%	70%
b) Wi-Fi services	40%	3 / 8	4%	37%	79%
QI 12 Supply of requests					
a) % available within 7 days	62%	22	62%	69%	81%
b) % available within 15 days	74%	22	74%	84%	94%
QI 13 Staffing levels and qualifications					
(v) a) total volunteers	0	17	0	14	74
b) total volunteer hours	0	17	0	527	2696
QI 14 Operational expenditure					
a) total expenditure per capita	£10,921	21	£8,966	£14,054	£20,796
b) % on staff,	68%	4	45%	57%	77%
% on information resources	14%	8	5%	13%	21%
% on equipment and buildings	12%	5	0%	4%	27%
% on other operational costs;	6%	21	4%	22%	37%
c) capital expenditure per capita	£35	15	£0	£266	£2,126
QI 15 Cost per visit					
	£2.31	19	£2.07	£2.87	£3.92
QI 16 Opening hours (<i>see note</i>)					
(ii) a) % hours unplanned closure of static service points	0%	1	0.0%	0.02%	0.52%
b) % mobile stops / home deliveries missed	0.4%	10 / 19	0.0%	0.40%	5.4%

Note: Rankings here have been reversed, so that 1 is the lowest scoring 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. Financial pressure led to the closure of 13 service points in June 2014, and changes have been felt across the authority. One library in the authority is described as an independent community library; it is not included in the return.

a) Customers and communities

Rhondda Cynon Taf did not carry out a user survey in 2014-15, but plans to do so for adults in 2015-16, when the new service structure has become established. All remaining

service points provide the full range of support for individual development. Almost all attendees at training sessions were helped to achieve their goals. Attendance at formal training per capita is above the median for Wales.

b) Access for all

Despite a reduction in the number of service points, Rhondda Cynon Taf meets the standard for easy access to services. However, there has been a considerable drop in usage, as a consequence of branch closures. The authority is aware of the need to increase use by developing services at the remaining libraries, and reach out to areas which have lost static branches, and the enhanced mobile service is attracting some of these users. Attendance at library events has fallen slightly compared to last year, and is the lowest in Wales. Less than 10% of the population are active borrowers, one of the lowest levels in Wales.

c) Learning for life

Rhondda Cynon Taf fails to meet any of the targets set in this area (WPLSQI 8, 9 and 10), which gives cause for concern. Only one authority has a lower replenishment rate, and the overall level of acquisitions per capita is the third lowest in Wales. Appropriate stock is vital to maintain customers.

Despite the transfer of some computers from closed libraries to those remaining open, and the acquisition of 23 laptops, the authority provides an average of 7.54 computers per 10,000 population, compared to a target level of 9. Internet access is not available on the four mobile libraries, and three service points do not provide Wi-Fi access, although work is in hand to provide this.

There has been a disappointing fall in the speed of supply of requests compared to last year, and these are now at the poorest levels in Wales. Three different circumstances are thought to have contributed to this – purchase of fewer copies of popular titles; more customers reliant on the mobile service; and the long-term sickness of a delivery driver. The authority has plans in place to mitigate the first and last of these, which it is hoped will result in an improvement next year.

d) Leadership and development

The library service review and closure of 13 service points has led to a reduction in staffing levels, which fail to meet the targets set. The authority does meet the target for staff training, however. Rhondda Cynon Taf did not use volunteers in 2014-15, but has introduced a volunteer policy and expects to identify and advertise appropriate opportunities during 2015-16.

Total revenue expenditure fell by 22% compared to last year, although detailed comparisons are complicated by the changes to the service during the year. Average cost per visit was £2.31 – an increase of 5.4% compared to 2013-14. Expenditure per capita is the second lowest in Wales, and cost per visit is below the median for Wales.

Rhondda Cynon Taf continues to meet the target for aggregate annual opening hours, and the return commends the commitment and flexibility of staff in keeping static service points open for all the advertised hours.

4) Strategic context

Rhondda Cynon Taf provided a clear narrative concerning its strategic contribution, noting the importance placed on facilitating social interaction. Policies specifically noted were literacy, digital inclusion, promoting growth, social inclusion, and promoting the history and culture of Wales. The need for adequate funding and appropriately skilled staff to continue this contribution was also noted.

5) Conclusion

The recent restructuring and loss of libraries combined with other cuts indicate a declining service quality and levels of performance. Matters of ICT, stock and staffing all require attention.

Appendix D : Welsh Public Library Standards 2014-15 Performance across Local Authority Areas

Authority	Core entitlements met in full	Core entitlements met in part	Core entitlements failed	PIs met in full	PIs met in part	PIs failed
Blaenau Gwent	17			4	1	2
Bridgend	18			4	3	
Caerphilly	17	1		6	1	
Cardiff	17	1		4	2	1
Carmarthenshire	18			6		
Ceredigion	16	1	1	4	3	
Conwy	18			6	1	
Denbighshire	17	1		3	4	
Flintshire	17	1		2	5	
Gwynedd	16	2		2	5	
Isle of Anglesey	14	4		4	3	
Merthyr Tydfil	18			6	1	
Monmouthshire	18			4	2	1
Neath Port Talbot	17	1		3	3	1
Newport	16	1	1	4	3	
Pembrokeshire	18			5	1	1
Powys	17	1		3	3	1
Rhondda Cynon Taf	18			3	2	2
Swansea	18			3	4	
Torfaen	16	2		3	2	2
Vale of Glamorgan	17	1		7		
Wrexham*	14	2	2	1	4	1

*one indicator not reported on

