



**RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL  
MUNICIPAL YEAR 2019-20**

**RHONDDA CYNON TAF'S WELSH PUBLIC LIBRARY STANDARDS  
ASSESSMENT 2018-19**

**PUBLIC SERVICE DELIVERY, COMMUNITIES AND PROSPERITY SCRUTINY  
COMMITTEE**

**16<sup>TH</sup> JANUARY 2019**

**REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC HEALTH, PROTECTION AND  
COMMUNITY SERVICES**

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**1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to provide information to the Public Service, Communities and Prosperity Scrutiny Committee on the feedback received from Welsh Government in respect of the Library Service's performance against the Welsh Public Library Standards (WPLS) for the period 2018-19.

**2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is recommended that the Committee:

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

**3. BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 This is the second Report to be received under *Connected and Ambitious Libraries: The Sixth Quality Framework 2017-2020*.
- 3.2 The aims of the Sixth Quality Framework are to:
- Enable the Cabinet Secretary for Economy and Infrastructure 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 programme for government (*Taking Wales Forward 2016-21*) 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

3.3 The Sixth Framework of Welsh Public Library Standards includes 12 core entitlements and 16 Quality Indicators designed to monitor how well library services provide for the people of Wales. The Quality Indicators fall into 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 core entitlements 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 the wider community.

3.4 The core entitlements stipulate that libraries in Wales will:

- Be free to join and open to all (WPLSCE1);
- Have friendly, knowledgeable and qualified staff on hand to help (WPLSCE2);
- Provide access to a range of services, activities and high quality resources in a range of formats to support lifelong learning, personal well-being and development, and community participation, and culture and recreation (WPLSCE3);
- Provide appropriate services, facilities and information resources for individuals and groups with special requirements (WPLSCE4);
- Provide appropriate, safe, attractive and accessible physical spaces with suitable staffed opening hours (WPLSCE5);
- Lend books for free and deliver free access to information, including online information sources available 24 hours a day (WPLSCE6);
- Provide use of the internet and computers, including Wi-Fi;
- Provide access to services, cultural activities and high quality resources in the Welsh language (WPLSCE8);
- Work in partnership to share catalogues and facilitate access to the resources of all Welsh libraries (WPLSCE9);
- Work with a range of partners to promote and deliver services to new and diverse audiences, enabling more people to benefit from those services (WPLSCE10);

- Regularly consult users to gather their views on the service and information about their changing needs (WPLSCE11);
  - 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 (WPLSCE12);
- 3.5 A copy of the quality indicators can be seen in the attached Welsh Public Library Standards Assessment at Appendix 1.
- 3.6 Local authorities submit an Annual Return to the Museums, Archives and Libraries Division (MALD) of Welsh Government. An independent panel then assesses the return and the Library Service's performance against the core entitlements and quality indicators of the Framework. In addition the following are provided by the Library Service:
- Case studies which highlight the impact of the service on individuals and groups.
  - A narrative that demonstrates how the library service is contributing towards wider Welsh Government priorities and strategic goals.
  - A short statement about the future direction and plans for the library service.

These can be seen at Appendix 2.

#### **4. THE ANNUAL ASSESSMENT REPORT 2018/19**

##### **Core entitlements and quality indicators with targets**

- 4.1 Rhondda Cynon Taf's Library Service was assessed as follows:
- All 12 core entitlements were met in full;
  - Of the 10 quality indicators that have outcome targets, the service met 6 in full, 2 in part and failed to meet 2.
- 4.2 The 2 Quality Indicators with targets not met were the amount spent on acquisitions per capita (QI 9) and opening hours (QI 16), both of which are dictated by the budget allocated to the service. It should be noted that many libraries are used outside of the official opening hours by tutors and community groups. However, this use cannot be counted as part of the Annual Return to Welsh Government as there is no librarian on site during these periods.
- 4.3 Of the 2 Quality Indicators with targets that were partially met, there is scope to improve performance in respect of Quality Indicator 12b - % of requests satisfied within 15 days – and this will be a focus in the coming months. However, the very popularity of our reservation service with bestselling titles often having 150 – 200 reservations and the difficulty in meeting this target on mobile libraries due to their 3 week rota makes this target difficult to achieve.
- 4.4 The service will continue to only partially meet Quality Indicator 13 that relates to staffing levels and qualifications as the staffing level is dictated by the budget

allocated to the service while the number of qualified staff has been affected by three factors that are beyond the control of the service, namely:

- Retirement of staff who have the required professional qualification;
- The requirement to offer any vacant posts to staff displaced by restructures in other service areas who do not have a professional librarianship qualification;
- A workforce that is generally static with limited turnover so that there are few opportunities to recruit.

The percentage of qualified staff within the service is a concern in relation to workforce development and succession planning. Only 10 members of the Library Service have professionally recognised library-related qualifications. It is notable that the Panel highlighted the fact that the service is supporting 2 members of staff to complete professional librarianship qualifications in an attempt to improve performance under Quality Indicator 13. (This involves a considerable financial investment but one that is vital in respect of workforce planning).

- 4.5 Two posts were removed from the structure – the Graduate Officer post (the incumbent gained employment in another part of the country) and the apprentice post (the incumbent transferred to another service). However the service will submit an application at the required time for another apprentice if a suitable librarianship qualification pathway can be identified.

### **Performance indicators**

- 4.6 These do not have targets but allow services to benchmark their performance against that of other authorities. These can be seen at Appendix 1 (fourth page of the Welsh Public Library Assessment report). There are 22 public library authorities in Wales and Rhondda Cynon Taf's performance has been ranked against the performance of the other authorities. For example, Rhondda Cynon Taf Library Service is ranked third out of 22 for the percentage of its budget that is spent on staffing (76%) and sixth in respect of the amount of its budget that is spent on information resources (14%).
- 4.7 Library authorities undertake Customer Surveys every three years and the timescale for completion vary from county to county. Consequently, the ranking for QI1 and 2 are against a lower number of authorities. In general the customer feedback places the service around the median mark with the notable exception of the feedback from users aged 16 and under where the service is currently ranked first out of the 13 authorities that reported during this period.
- 4.8 The key area for focus for the service currently and going forward is the need to improve visitor numbers and attendances at events. It was a disappointment for the service that visitor numbers continued to drop in 2018/19 as strenuous efforts have been made by the team to work with partners to widen the offer available for customers at libraries. However, as indicated by the Assessment Panel, the closure of library buildings for refurbishment has contributed to this as in some areas there is evidence that usage has increased.

- 4.9 The recent developments at Yr Hwb (Ferndale) and Canolfan Pennar (Mountain Ash) show how changing models of delivery and co-locating can have a positive impact. In the latter case, visitor numbers to the library for June – October 2019 have risen to 34,470 compared to 18,416 in the same period in 2018. It is hoped that the developments planned for Porth and Pontypridd will have a similar impact on library visitor numbers over the longer term. However it should be noted that in both these instances there will likely be a requirement to close the venues for a short period of time to refurbish the former and relocate the latter which may have a detrimental impact on visitor numbers in the 2019/20 report.

## **Summary**

- 4.10 Overall, the Welsh Government's narrative assessment of the performance of the Library Service was positive with recognition given to areas that have been consolidated and the infra-structure investments that have been made. The Assessment was reviewing performance during the 2018/19 financial year. Consequently it did not receive data relating to the community hubs at Mountain Ash (Canolfan Pennar) and Ferndale (Yr Hwb) that were opened in June and July 2019 respectively. Nevertheless it does note that as two libraries are relocated to community hubs and the flagship development in Pontypridd is opened that *'further improvements can be anticipated as the benefits of these investments are realised...'* This is already evident in the increase in visitor numbers and new borrowers at the libraries in both hubs.
- 4.11 The Welsh Government's assessment of the Library Service's performance in 2017/18 indicated that Rhondda Cynon Taf had achieved 5 Quality Indicators in full, 1 in part and failed to achieve 4.

## **5. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 There are no equality or diversity implications aligned to this report.

## **6. CONSULTATION**

- 6.1 There are no consultation implications aligned to this report.

## **7. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1 There are no financial implications aligned to this report.

## **8 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED**

- 8.1 Public Libraries in England and Wales are governed by the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964. This legislation requires local authorities to provide a 'comprehensive and efficient' library service. In Wales the Welsh Public Library Standards identify a range of core entitlements and quality indicators designed to provide guidance for library services.

## **9. LINKS TO THE COUNCIL'S CORPORATE PLAN/OTHER CORPORATE PRIORITIES/WELL-BEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS ACT**

- 9.1 The Library Service contributes to each of the Council's three key priorities and contributes to each of the Welsh Government's 7 well-being goals. These are clearly identified in the Welsh Government's Sixth Quality Framework.
- 9.2 Libraries are collaborative by nature and facilitate a wide range of provision delivered by training and advice providers at their premises. Increasingly with the move to community hubs, provision is integrated and there has been a significant focus recently to develop the workforce to promote a more integrated way of working. These developments ensure that there is a clear future for libraries over the longer-term and investments made both in buildings, facilities and equipment (especially digital technology) indicates how the service is planning with an eye to the future. Customers are involved increasingly in co-producing library programmes through their engagement with local librarians where they indicate what they would like to see being held at their local library; and many community groups meet at libraries while local volunteers help out and enhance the service's ability to meet customer needs through, for example, undertaking digitisation duties in the Local Studies section.

## **9. CONCLUSION**

- 10.1 It is pleasing to note that there has been an improvement in the Library Service's performance against the 10 Quality Indicators of the Sixth Framework of Welsh Public Library Standards over the past year and that the current assessment remains positive about further potential improvements that will be achieved once the new investments have been realised.
- 10.2 Notwithstanding the very welcome capital investment in library facilities, the continued commitment of the staff to deliver high quality services to customers remains the greatest asset of the service and efforts will be renewed this year to achieve Quality Indicator 12 in full in the coming year and to increase wherever possible visitor numbers so that more people can benefit from positive engagement with the range of services offered at our libraries.

# Welsh Public Library Standards 2017-2020: Rhondda Cynon Taf

## Annual Assessment Report 2018/19

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

### 1 Executive summary

Rhondda Cynon Taf met all of the 12 core entitlements in full.

Of the 10 quality indicators which have targets, Rhondda Cynon Taf achieved 6 in full, 2 in part and did not achieve 2.

Rhondda Cynon Taf has consolidated its position in a number of areas in 2018/19, as the move to the all-Wales LMS has bedded in, and with positive investments in infrastructure, which should deliver improvements in 2019/20. Reported library usage continues to be mixed until then, with careful planning delivering improved or maintained performances in some areas, but declining figures in others. While materials expenditure has decreased in 2018/19, targeted investment has enabled achievement of QI 10 (Welsh language resources), and constraints on spending should ease in 2019/20. Staffing levels have fallen, but the service is supporting two members of staff to complete library qualifications. The authority is also continuing to invest in its service points, including a new flagship development in Pontypridd, and the relocation of two libraries within new Community Hubs. Further improvements can be anticipated as the benefits of these investments are realised, although the overall low resourcing of the service continues to be a limiting factor.

- All service points provide a full range of support for individual development and good support for health and well-being, with Dementia Friendly champions and services now in place at all branches. 97% of adults rated services as 'very good' or 'good' overall.
- Attendance at formal and informal training has been maintained, with 97% of attendees supported to achieve their learning goals.
- Usage figures have increased in some areas, as issues with reporting have been resolved, but continue to decline in other others, including overall visits, event attendance, and children's loans. The closure of service points for refurbishment may be a continuing influence on performance here.
- Spending on the materials budget has fallen, with the targets here not met; improved investment in Welsh language resources has however enabled achievement of QI 10. It is noted that the service expects constraints on spending to ease in 2019/20.
- Improved performances in relation to supply of requests meant that the 7 day target is now regarded as met, although work remains to achieve the 15 day target level.
- Staffing has fallen on 2017/18, with the loss of a small number of posts, although professional staff levels have been maintained and the service is supporting two members of staff to achieve qualifications; in neither case are the target levels met.

### 2 Performance against the standards

The standards framework comprises of core entitlements, quality indicators with targets, quality indicators with benchmarks and impact measures. Section 2 summarises

achievements against these areas. A narrative assessment of the authority's performance is provided in Section 3.

## 2.1 Core entitlements

Rhondda Cynon Taf continues to meet all 12 core entitlements in full. The authority has maintained its provision of school, mobile and housebound services, and is investing in upgraded facilities, with a new purpose built library in Pontypridd, and relocation of two other service points as part of local hubs. The remodelling of the mobile service has also allowed for longer stop times, enabling users to benefit from a wider range of services. An updated Library Strategy and Action Plan 2019/2021 are available on the service website, setting out the vision and objectives for the service.

## 2.2 Quality indicators with targets

There are 16 quality indicators (QIs), of which ten have constituent targets. Of these, Rhondda Cynon Taf is achieving 6 in full, 2 in part and does not achieve 2.

Quality Indicator	Met?	
QI 3 Support for individual development:		Met in full
a) ICT support	✓	
b) Information literacy and skills training	✓	
c) E-government support	✓	
d) Reader development	✓	
QI 4 (a) Support for health and well-being		Met in full
i) Book Prescription Wales scheme	✓	
ii) Better with Books scheme	✓	
iii) Designated health & well-being collection	✓	
iv) Information about healthy lifestyles and behaviours	✓	
v) Signposting to health & well-being services	✓	
QI 6 all static service points offer events/activities for users with special requirements	✓	Met in full
QI 7 Location of service points	✓	Met in full
QI 9 Up-to-date and appropriate reading material		Not met
Acquisitions per capita	x	
or Materials spend per capita	x	
QI 10 Welsh Language Resources		Met in full
% of material budget spent on Welsh	✓	
or Spend on Welsh per capita	x	
QI 11 Online access:		Met in full
a) i) Public access to Internet	✓	
ii) Wi-Fi provision	✓	
QI 12 Supply of requests		Partially met
a) % of requests satisfied within 7 days	✓	
b) % of requests satisfied within 15 days	x	
QI 13 Staffing levels and qualifications:		Partially met
i) Staff per capita	x	
ii) Qualified staff per capita	x	



iii) Head of service qualification/training	✓	
iv) CPD percentage	✓	
QI 16 Opening hours per capita	x	Not Met

Rhondda Cynon Taf has improved its performance on 2017/18, with the requirements for Welsh language resources (QI 10) now fully met, and the 7 day target for QI 12 achieved.

## 2.3 Impact measures

The framework includes three indicators aimed at assessing the impact of library use on people's lives. These indicators do not have targets, and authorities are only required to carry out user surveys for QI 1 once over the three-year period of the framework. The summary figures (lowest, median and highest) are therefore based on those authorities indicating they completed their user survey during 2017/18 or 2018/19. Rankings reflect the numbers of respondents, where 1 is the highest scoring authority.

Rhondda Cynon Taf completed its user surveys for adults and children in autumn 2018.

Performance indicator		Rank	Lowest	Median	Highest
QI 1 Making a difference					
b) % of young people who think that the library helps them learn and find things out:	96%	=3/13	60%	94%	97%
e) % of adults who think that the library has made a difference to their lives:	90%	=6/15	38%	88%	95%
QI 5 b) % of attendees of training sessions who said that the training had helped them achieve their goals:	97%	=10/20	80%	97%	100%

Authorities are also asked to provide up to four case studies describing the impact which the library service has had on an individual or on a group of individuals during the year. Rhondda Cynon Taf provided two such case studies, although stronger evidence could have been included of the impact on individuals / groups:

- Autism Awareness – provision of staff training to raise awareness of autism, and make the experience of using libraries easier for people on the autistic spectrum; the service will also be trialling 'Autism friendly' signage at one branch.
- Dementia Friendly Sessions – work during Dementia Action Week to deliver Dementia Friends sessions to the wider public (building on training already held for staff). Three sessions were held, with positive feedback from attendees.

## 2.4 Quality indicators and benchmarks

The remaining indicators do not have targets, but allow services to monitor and benchmark their performance over time, in comparison with other authorities. The following table summarises Rhondda Cynon Taf's position for 2018/19. Ranks are included out of 22, where 1 is the highest, and 22 the lowest scoring authority, unless stated otherwise. Indicators where fewer than 22 authorities supplied data are those where relevant data was not available to some authorities. Figures from the first year of the sixth framework or relevant previous surveys have also been included for comparison. Indicators 'per capita' are calculated per 1,000 population unless otherwise noted.

Performance indicator		Rank	Lowest	Median	Highest	2017/18
QI 1 Making a difference						[Framework 5]
a) % of adults who think that using the library has helped them develop new skills	75%	9/15	24%	82%	96%	84%
c) health and well-being	58%	=9/15	33%	62%	94%	59%
d) enjoyable, safe and inclusive	97%	=7/15	90%	97%	100%	99%
QI 2 Customer satisfaction						[Framework 5]
a) 'very good' or 'good' choice of books	92%	5/14	81%	91%	98%	94%
b) 'very good' or 'good' customer care	99%	=3/14	93%	99%	100%	99%
c) 'very good' or 'good' IT facilities	88%	8/13	65%	91%	95%	
d) 'very good' or 'good' overall	97%	=7/14	93%	97%	99%	96%
e) users aged 16 & under rating out of ten	9.5	=1/13	8.5	9.3	9.5	x
QI 5 User training						
a) attendances per capita	40	8/22	13	30	208	41
c) informal training per capita	95	17/22	15	199	433	93
QI 6 attendances at events per capita	175	19/22	91	295	689	186
QI 8 Library use <sup>1</sup>						
a) visits per capita	3,044	19/22	2,596	3,969	7,170*	3,355
b) virtual visits per capita	481	17/22	345	885	2,205	243
c) active borrowers per capita	58	22/22	58	150	251	204
QI 10 Welsh issues per capita <sup>2</sup>	458	15/22	95	602	1,424	420
QI 11 Online access						
b) Computers per capita <sup>3</sup>	8	18/22	5	10	14	8
c) % of available time used by the public	22%	=14/22	14%	25%	63%	24%
QI 13 Staffing levels and qualifications						
(v) a) total volunteers	29	12/21	3	30	214	22
b) total volunteer hours	1,334	13/21	90	1,477	9,806	2,442
QI 14 Operational expenditure						
a) total expenditure per capita	£9,434	18/22	£7,181	£12,145	£19,449	£9,994
b) % on staff,	76%	3/22	47%	62%	78%	68%
% on information resources	14%	6/22	8%	13%	21%	15%
% on equipment and buildings	2%	19/22	0.4%	4%	25%	4%
% on other operational costs	8%	19/22	0.3%	16%	37%	14%
c) capital expenditure per capita	£300	14/22	£0	£467	£8,829	£203
QI 15 Net cost per visit	£2.33	4/22	£1.18	£1.82	£2.52	£2.20
QI 16 Opening hours <sup>4</sup>						
(iii) a) % hours unplanned closure of static service points	0.00%	=1/22	0.00%	0.00%	0.25%	0.04%
b) % mobile stops / home deliveries missed	7.01%	19/20	0.00%	0.28%	7.99%	3.90%

<sup>1</sup> figures for co-located services are marked with an asterisk; performances for these services are likely to reflect higher footfall, and will not therefore be directly comparable with stand-alone library provision

<sup>2</sup> per 1,000 Welsh speaking resident population; figures from 2017/18 reports corrected following a calculation error

<sup>3</sup> per 10,000 resident population <sup>4</sup> Rankings here have been reversed, so that 1 is the lowest scoring (best performing) authority.

### 3 Analysis of performance

The core entitlements and quality indicators can be divided into four key areas. This section of the report outlines performance under these areas, and compares this performance with the first year of the sixth framework (2017/18).

### **3.1 Meeting customer needs (QI 1-5)**

Rhondda Cynon Taf completed its user surveys for adults and children in autumn 2018, with continuing high levels of customer satisfaction, but small declines in reported views on how the service supports skills development and health and well-being. 97% of adults still rated the library as 'very good' or 'good' overall, with younger users awarding a score of 9.5 out of 10, reflecting well on the work of the library youth services team. All static libraries continue to provide full support for individual development, and good support for health and well-being, with targets here met. All service points also now have Dementia Friendly champions and services in place. Numbers benefitting from both formal and informal training have broadly been maintained, with formal training levels above the median level, and 97% of attendees supported to achieve their learning goals. Informal training levels remain, however, among the lowest per capita in Wales.

### **3.2 Access and use (QI 6-8)**

Rhondda Cynon Taf continues to meet the target for easy access to service points, with 13 static service points open 10+ hours per week, and provides events / activities for users with special requirements at all these branches. Usage figures remain at the very lower end of comparative performance however, with continued reductions in visitor numbers and event attendance, although the closure of library facilities for refurbishment work is an evident factor here. Numbers of active borrowers / library members have also fallen significantly, but it is noted that this represents more accurate reporting with errors in the data reported during the transition to the all-Wales LMS last year. Problems with reporting virtual visits and book issues have also been resolved, leading to a marked increase in performance in website use and adult book issues, although children's loans have fallen on 2017/18.

### **3.3 Facilities and services (QI 9-12)<sup>i</sup>**

Spending on the materials budget has fallen, without the lump sum provided in 2017/18 to invest in stock for a new library; performance here remaining below the stipulated level for QI 9. The service has however targeted and improved its investment in Welsh language resources, introducing a more rigorous acquisition policy, and is now achieving the target for proportionate spend in this area, ensuring that QI 10 is met. PC provision has decreased slightly, with the removal of out of date equipment from service; usage levels continue to fall (in common with the experience across Wales), and the service notes that with increasing use of Wi-Fi additional PC provision is not planned. Performance in relation to supply of requests has improved, with the 7 day target now considered to be met, and the service continuing to review and develop its approach.

### **3.4 Expertise and capacity (QI 13-16)**

Overall staff levels have fallen, with the loss of graduate and apprenticeship posts, and changes to mobile library staffing; it is noted that the service does not anticipate any significant improvement to these levels in the foreseeable future. Numbers of qualified staff have been maintained however, and the service is supporting two members of staff to complete distance learning studies, to augment professional staffing levels. Performance against this indicator may therefore improve in the future, but for the time being neither staffing target is met. Qualified leadership is in place, and the service continues to make effective use of volunteers, although volunteer hours have dropped in 2018/19 in line with the changing nature of the volunteering opportunities available.

Total revenue expenditure has fallen on 2017/18, and remains among the lowest per capita in Wales. There have been reductions in all areas except staffing, but it is noted that this reflects planned expenditure rather than specific cuts or efficiencies. There is also an expectation that the materials budget will increase in 2019/20 to previous levels. Aggregate annual opening hours are comparable with 2017/18 and remain just below the target level. A cluster service model continues to operate to ensure that users can access a local library on 6 days of the week. The number of mobile library stops missed has risen further in 2018/19, reflecting continued mechanical issues with the mobile fleet; two new vans became operational in early 2019 and this situation should now be resolved.

## 4 Strategic context

As part of the return authorities are asked to report on how the library service is contributing to wider Welsh Government priorities and strategic goals. Rhondda Cynon Taf continues to report on its contribution to the Welsh Government's cross-cutting themes: *Prosperous and Secure*, supporting skills development, access to IT facilities, and volunteering; *Healthy and Active*, delivering bibliotherapy schemes and supporting social well-being; *Ambitious and Learning*, promoting readings skills for all ages; and *United and Connected*, enabling the development of digital skills. Much of this commentary relates to established services and initiatives, and some additional reflection on developments in 2018/19 would have been appropriate.

## 5 Future direction

Reporting on the authority's future direction and plans for the library service over the following year, Rhondda Cynon Taf notes the impact of continuing financial pressures, which require the library service to review the relevance and accessibility of its services, and innovate to ensure that it remains fit for purpose. Library service involvement in the ongoing development of Community Hubs is highlighted as key to improving facilities and embedding the service in larger neighbourhood networks, increasing service profile and opening up opportunities for partnership working. The relocation of Pontypridd Library, continued development of digital access, and introduction of self-service kiosks are also noted priorities for the coming year.

## 6 Conclusion

Rhondda Cynon Taf has consolidated its position in a number of areas in 2018/19, as the move to the all-Wales LMS has bedded in, and with positive investments in infrastructure, which should deliver improvements in 2019/20. Reported library usage continues to be mixed until then, with careful planning delivering improved or maintained performances in some areas, but declining figures in others. While materials expenditure has decreased in 2018/19, targeted investment has enabled achievement of QI 10 (Welsh language resources), and constraints on spending should ease in 2019/20. Staffing levels have fallen, but the service is supporting two members of staff to complete library qualifications. The authority is also continuing to invest in its service points, including a new flagship development in Pontypridd, and the relocation of two libraries within new Community Hubs. Further improvements can be anticipated as the benefits of these investments are realised, although the overall low resourcing of the service continues to be a limiting factor.

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<sup>i</sup> E-resources purchased through centrally-funded subscriptions have been excluded from acquisitions figures for QI 9 in 2018/19 to ensure that the standard accurately reflects individual authority strategy, investment and performance. In some cases this has impacted on achievement against the standard in comparison with 2017/18. CIPFA Statistics Returns continue to include figures for centrally-procured resources.

## Appendix 2 – case study template and additional strategic narrative

Good impact case studies are expected to include evidence that the library service has made a positive difference to an individual (or group of individuals). This would normally go beyond a description of services provided and their use, to show the outcome, and may include testimony from the customers concerned.

**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).

Please indicate if permission for the Welsh Government to re-use and/or publish the case studies has been obtained or not: Yes - obtained / No – not obtained

a) **Case Study: Autism Awareness**

**Background:**

The library Service received a complaint from a library member regarding how staff members dealt with a situation in a branch library where a child with autism had been told to stop making a noise by another library user.

The library service contacted the National Autistic Society who provided information sheets, posters and leaflets for all of our branch libraries. Along with this several staff awareness sessions were organised in conjunction with the councils Specialist Teacher in Autism. In these sessions staff were given an overview of the many forms autism can take and were given practical advice on how as library staff operating within a frontline service we can make the experience of using libraries easier for people on the autistic spectrum. It is believed this will have long term benefits for people on the autistic spectrum who use our library services.

**The Way Forward:**

The library service will continue to arrange periodic training sessions for new staff to ensure everyone understands the issues and we are currently planning to trial 'Autism friendly' libraries at one branch. This will entail producing a leaflet of simple information, colour coding different types of books in the library, for example putting a red square at the end of shelves containing fiction, and a blue circle on those with non-fiction to show what these shelves contain. It has also been suggested that a 'quiet morning' with subdued lighting be tried.

b) **Case Study: Dementia Friendly Sessions**

**Background:**

Throughout 2018 RCT libraries facilitated several Dementia Friends sessions for staff. Working in conjunction with the Alzheimer's Society Dementia Champions staff spent time discussing what they thought dementia was and how it impacts on the individual, carers and loved ones.

As part of the library services focus on Dementia Action Week it was decided to build on the success of these sessions and to offer them to the public through library venues. Books and displays on the subject supported each of these sessions and awareness was raised via press releases and social media posts.

All of the other ten libraries in RCT supported these sessions by displaying books and information.

Three sessions were planned across the library service as part of the week.

**Personal Perspective:**

Attendees at the groups stated:

*"The Session was very informative, I learnt a lot of things I was unaware were associated with dementia, it was upsetting but enlightening."*

*"I thought having the session in the library was really good, it was informal and I was able to pick up a few books on the subject after."*

*"I never really thought of taking books with photos in but I will in the future, local books with pictures will be really good to use as we can talk about the past with them."*

**The Way Forward:**

The library service intends to build on the success of the public events and will continue to schedule sessions right across the authority throughout the remainder of the year. We hope that the links made with local Dementia Champions will allow us to expand our understanding of Dementia and allow us to share this with our local communities.

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).

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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.

In 2015 the Welsh Government introduced the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act which is about improving the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales. In addition to this the Welsh Government has produced a document entitled 'Taking Wales Forward 2016 -2021' which identifies four areas where the Welsh Government can have the biggest impact in obtaining the goals of the Well-being of Future Generations Act. These include 'Prosperous and Secure', 'Healthy and Active', 'Ambitious and Learning' and 'United and Connected'. It can clearly be seen from the following that our library service contributes to each of these areas.

**Prosperous and Secure:** The Welsh Government states that it is committed to offering the skills and experiences people need to thrive and prosper in our times'. 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. Sessions offered in 2018/19 included Basic Skills Training, Job Clubs and Rathbone training sessions. We also continue to support volunteering by offering opportunities including Work Placements, Welsh Baccalaureate placements and identified Library Volunteer placements, e.g. local history and digitisation volunteers.

**Healthy and Active:** Users of our library service can benefit directly by making use of some of our 'Health Schemes' such as 'Book Prescription Wales', 'Better with Books' and 'Reading Well – Dementia and Mental Health (launching in June 2019), by attending health and wellbeing events at libraries or by simply picking up information about healthy lifestyles and behaviours. Our libraries are places that promote inclusion and prevent social isolation, they provide physical spaces within which people can socialise and interact thereby gaining a sense of social wellbeing. Specialised services such as the Schools Library Service and Housebound Service encourage literacy and serve some of the most isolated people in our communities.

**Ambitious and Learning:** Establishing an early foundation for reading skills has been identified by the Welsh Government as being a crucial factor in providing children with the best start in life. 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

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support reading promotions and strategies such as Bookstart, the Summer Reading Challenge and World Book Day.

United and Connected: The Welsh Government aims to help 95% of people gain at least the basic digital skills needed for the 21st century by 2021. We support this aim by the providing 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 introduction of Digital Friday sessions into all 13 of our libraries has contributed greatly to the digital inclusion strategy within RCT.

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. As such they are instrumental in supporting and contributing to Welsh Government strategies and policies both at a national and local level. Continued investment in library services is required however if we are to sustain our contribution.

3. Please provide a short statement about the future direction and plans for the library service (indicative length 200 words).

The financial pressures experienced by local authorities in recent years have resulted in the library service reviewing every aspect of its offer to ensure that it:

- remains relevant in an increasingly technological age,
- provides access to the range of opportunities required by residents,
- embraces change and adopts an innovative approach to problem-solving to ensure the service is fit for purpose for the longer term.

The Council has began a programme of investment in community services across the County Borough through the development of Community Hubs. The library service is playing a key part in this strategy with Mountain Ash and Ferndale Libraries having relocated to new sites within hubs and Porth Library due to relocate in the Autumn. In terms of development for the Library Service these moves have improved facilities at two of our libraries by the addition of community meeting rooms and IT suites. The hubs are seen as being much more than just central buildings from which services are provided and they form a key part of a larger neighbourhood network. Library involvement in these networks has increased our profile in the communities we serve and increased opportunities for partnership working.



The relocation of Pontypridd Library into a purpose build library at the new Taff Vale development and increased provision of digitised services including the digitisation of local history collections and the introduction of self service kiosks are also high priorities.

