Welsh Public Library Standards 2014-17

Merthyr Tydfil

Annual Assessment Report 2015-16

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

Merthyr Tydfil's return was approved by the Scrutiny committee, prior to its submission to MALD.

1) Executive summary

> Merthyr Tydfil continues to meet all of the 18 core entitlements in full.
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> Of the 7 quality indicators which have targets, Merthyr Tydfil achieved 6 in full and 1 in part.
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> Merthyr Tydfil provided a very comprehensive return with excellent detail on the services provided and evidence of impact embedded throughout. The range of training and activities offered is commended, and customer feedback is positive. However, low staffing levels limit what can be achieved and some indicators of stock use in particular are disappointing.

- Merthyr Tydfil carried out an impact survey in February 2016, with increased scores compared to the previous year. 98% of children think that the library helps them to learn, while 94% of adults and 57% of children think it has made a difference to their lives. 97% of attendees at training sessions felt that they had been helped to achieve their goals. Three case studies showed the impact of the service on individuals and groups.

- Merthyr Tydfil carried out customer surveys in February 2016, and has achieved high levels of customer satisfaction, with adult scores in the top 4 authorities for all measures. All libraries offer the full range of support for individual development, and ICT access is considered particularly important for the community. User training is well supported with the highest level of attendance at formal training sessions in Wales, and a high level of informal training.

- Merthyr Tydfil has been able to open a new service point in a local leisure centre, and meets the target for easy access to service points. There has been a slight fall in physical visits compared to last year, which is somewhat surprising in the light of increased opening hours. There was a further increase in visits to the library's web site, but both figures remain below the median for Wales. There has been a considerable increase in attendances at library events, which include a variety of different activities and outreach events. It is disappointing that issues per capita are among the lowest in Wales, however, this may in part reflect the wider socio-demographic characteristics of the catchment population.

- Book budgets have been protected to some extent and the targets for acquisitions have been met. ICT provision is good, and well used. Speed of delivery of requests has been further improved, and the percentage delivered within 7 days is the second highest in Wales.

- There have been further cuts to staff, and the targets are unlikely to be met within this framework. Overall staffing is no longer the lowest in Wales, but as the third lowest it remains an area of concern. Volunteers are well supported. The average net cost per visit was £2.13, below the median for Wales as a whole.

Considering the four areas in the framework in comparison to the rest of Wales, Merthyr Tydfil performs well on *Customers and communities*, and *Learning for life*, but less well on *Access for all* and *Leadership and development.*

In comparison to last year, there have been many improvements particularly in areas of strength, such as customer satisfaction and delivery of requests. The increase in opening hours is welcomed.

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

Merthyr Tydfil is continuing to meet 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, Merthyr Tydfil is achieving 6 in full and 1 in part:

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:		Met in full
a) Acquisitions per capita	✔	
or Materials spend per capita	✔	
b) Replenishment rate	✔	
QI 9 Appropriate reading material:		Met in full
a) % of material budget on children	✔	
b) % of material budget spent on Welsh	✘	
or Spend on Welsh per capita	✔	
QI 10 Online access:		Met in full
a) All service points	✔	
Computers per capita	✔	
b) Wi-Fi provision	✔	
QI 13 Staffing levels and qualifications:		Partially met
a) Staff per capita	✘	

Quality Indicator	Met?	
b) Professional staff per capita	✘	
c) Head of service qualification/training	✔	
d) CPD percentage	✔	
QI 16 Opening hours per capita	✔	Met in full

This is a similar performance to last year; additionally, Merthyr Tydfil has achieved the target for CPD this year.

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.

Merthyr Tydfil carried out an impact survey of both adults and children in February 2016. They have some concerns that some children are confused by the question on making a difference to their lives, although this indicator has increased since the last survey in 2015.

Performance indicator		Rank	Lowest	Median	Highest
QI 1 Making a difference					
b) % of children who think that the library helps them learn and find things out:	98%	2/12	86%	93%	99%
e) % of adults who think that the library has made a difference to their lives:	94%	2/13	36%	87%	97%
% of children who think that the library has made a difference to their lives:	57%	11/11	57%	73%	93%
QI 4 b) % of attendees of training sessions who said that the training had helped them achieve their goals:	97%	8/17	85%	97%	100%

Merthyr Tydfil provided 3 excellent impact case studies which showed the real difference the library service makes:

- A book club member who had regained her love of reading

- Participants in an online energy saving workshop who made savings on their energy bills

- Young volunteers gaining work experience and writing for local newspapers

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 Merthyr Tydfil's position for 2015-16. Ranks are included out of 22, where 1 is the highest, and 22 the lowest scoring authority, unless stated otherwise. Indicators where fewer than 22 authorities supplied data are obtained from customer surveys which only need to be carried out once during the three year framework period, or those where relevant data elements were not available to some authorities. Figures reported in respect of last year for QI 4 to QI 16 are repeated for convenience of comparison. Note that indicators 'per capita' are calculated per 1,000 population.

Performance indicator		Rank	Lowest	Median	Highest	2014/15	Rank
QI 1 Making a difference							
a) new skills	92%	1/13	23%	72%	92%		
c) health and well-being	88%	3/13	26%	58%	93%		
d) enjoyable, safe and inclusive	100%	1/13	84%	97%	100%		
QI 2 Customer satisfaction							
a) 'very good' or 'good' choice of books	94%	2/14	74%	89%	97%		
b) 'very good' or 'good' customer care	99%	2/14	90%	97%	99%		
c) 'very good' or 'good' overall;	99%	4/14	92%	97%	99%		
d) child rating out of ten	9.0	9/13	8.0	9.2	9.5		
QI 4 User training							
a) attendances per capita	390	1	5	30	390	278	1
c) informal training per capita	344	3/19	3	195	1017	336	3 / 21
QI 6 Library use							
a) visits per capita	3,493	15	2,467	3,967	6,185	3,667	17
b) virtual visits per capita	869	14	340	976	2,475	635	17
c) active borrowers per capita	145	14	45	157	273	156	11
QI 7 attendances at events per capita	666	1	60	223	666	278	7
QI 11 Use of ICT - % of available time used by the public							
a) equipment	57%	3	20%	31%	68%	56%	2
b) Wi-Fi services	n/a		20%	60%	90%	n/k	
QI 12 Supply of requests							
a) % available within 7 days	82%	2	57%	71%	86%	80%	3
b) % available within 15 days	90%	5	71%	86%	96%	88%	6
QI 13 Staffing levels and qualifications							
(v) a) total volunteers	52	4	0	18	103	28	6
b) total volunteer hours	978	9	0	582	3,699	846	8
QI 14 Operational expenditure							
a) total expenditure per capita	£9,655	19/21	£7,516	£12,749	£18,760	£10,931	20
b) % on staff,	58%	12/21	40%	58%	79%	55%	13
% on information resources	23%	1/21	7%	13%	23%	21%	1
% on equipment and buildings	3%	12/21	1%	3%	20%	5%	10
% on other operational costs;	16%	12/21	0%	20%	39%	18%	14
c) capital expenditure per capita	£0	14/21	£0	£272	£4,677	£1,801	4
QI 15 net cost per visit	£2.13	17/21	£1.83	£2.43	£3.53	*	
QI 16 Opening hours *(see note)*							
(ii) a) % hours unplanned closure of static service points	0.00%	1	0.00%	0.00%	0.16%	0%	1
b) % mobile stops / home deliveries missed	0.00%	1/19	0.00%	0.71%	23.44%	0%	1 / 19

Note: Rankings here have been reversed, so that 1 is the lowest scoring (best performing) authority.

* Income data for 2014-15 not provided to calculate this figure.

3) Analysis of performance

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

a) *Customers and communities*

Merthyr Tydfil carried out customer surveys in February 2016, and achieved improvements in satisfaction levels compared to the previous survey in 2015. Satisfaction levels with the choice of books and with customer care are the second highest amongst those authorities conducting surveys this year. Work to improve issues of anti-social behaviour has resulted in the maximum score for the library as a safe and enjoyable place. All libraries offer the full range of support for individual development, and ICT access is considered particularly important for the community. User training continues to be well supported with the highest level of attendance in Wales, and the third highest level of informal training per capita.

b) Access for all

Merthyr Tydfil has been able to open a new service point co-located in a leisure centre, and meets the target for easy access. There has been a slight fall in physical visits compared to last year, but a further increase in visits to the library's web site. Both figures are below the median for Wales. There has been a slight fall in both book and audio visual issues compared to last year, and the levels are disappointingly low (although no longer the lowest in Wales) given the satisfaction rates noted above. The decline in use is somewhat surprising given the new service point and extended opening hours reported this year. There has been a considerable increase in attendances at library events, which are the highest in Wales, and include library-run events in the community.

c) Learning for life

Merthyr Tydfil meets the targets for acquisitions overall, for children's materials and those in the Welsh language, although the authority notes low use of the latter materials, and plans to address this with promotion of the collection. Book budgets continue to be protected, and this is reflected in high levels of customer satisfaction in this area, but unfortunately not in use of the collection, possibly reflecting the socio-demographic characteristics of the area. The count of PCs includes tablets used for outreach activities as well as traditional PCs. Facilities are well used, with only two authorities recording a higher rate of use, although at present Merthyr Tydfil is unable to calculate use of the Wi-Fi network as systems are shared, depending on the building.

The number of requests is continuing to increase, particularly through the online catalogue. The authority suggests this may account in part for the drop in visits, as users now check the catalogue online before visiting. The speed of delivery has been improved slightly and the percentage available within 7 days is the second highest in Wales.

d) Leadership and development

There have been further cuts to staffing, which do not meet the targets set, and the service does not foresee any improvement during the current framework. Only 2 authorities have lower levels of staffing overall, and the number of professional staff is below the median for Wales. Both of these matters are a cause for concern. The head of service is professionally qualified, and the authority notes a reluctance amongst staff to gain qualifications with no prospect for promotion as a result. The target for staff training has been met using various types of training including online courses, and is above the median for Wales. Merthyr Tydfil has increased its use of volunteers, with 52 during the year, each giving an average of 19 hours to the service. Volunteers are well managed, with written role descriptions, site specific induction and relevant training.

A reduction in total revenue expenditure of almost 12% was reported to be owing mainly to VAT implications. Percentages on staff and stock have both been increased. The gross average cost per visit in 2015-16 was £2.21, compared to £2.54 last year, and is below the

median for Wales as a whole. Opening hours per capita have been extended with the opening of the new service point in a local leisure centre, and the service hopes to extend this further with a self-service option in the future. There have been no unplanned closures during the year.

4) Strategic context

Merthyr Tydfil provided a clear narrative describing the library service's contribution in two key outcome areas, learning and developing skills to maximise potential, and healthier and better quality lives. Ongoing work within the library service underpins all areas of the corporate plan.

5) Future direction

The service is aware of the challenges presented by low staffing levels, which are unlikely to change. They are looking at different staffing models alongside colocation of service points to develop services and encourage greater use.

6) Conclusion

Merthyr Tydfil provided a very comprehensive return with excellent detail on the services provided and evidence of impact embedded throughout. The range of training and activities offered is commended and customer feedback is positive. However, low staffing levels limit what can be achieved and some indicators of stock use in particular are disappointing.