Welsh Public Library Standards 2014-17

Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council
(Merthyr Tydfil Leisure Trust)

Annual Assessment Report 2016-17

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.

1) Executive summary

Merthyr Tydfil continues to meet all of the 18 core entitlements in full.

Of the 7 quality indicators which have targets, Merthyr Tydfil achieved 6 in full and 1 in part.

Merthyr Tydfil is a generally strong performer, with excellent support from its customers. Low staffing levels in such a small authority present challenges but the evidence of increased use and outreach and engagement achieved are welcomed. There is good evidence of the impact of the service, and the return included a comprehensive narrative to support the data. It is hoped that the authority and the Trust are able to maintain the investment in the future to ensure residents continue to benefit from its services.

- Merthyr Tydfil carried out an impact survey in March 2017, with some increased scores compared to the previous year. 99% of children think that the library helps them to learn, while 93% of adults and 92% of children think it has made a difference to their lives. 96% 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 March 2017, 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. 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 meets the target for easy access to service points. There have been welcome increases in all indicators of use (bucking the Wales trend), although levels of book issues are disappointing given the high customer satisfaction score for the choice of books. Attendance at events has fallen following the end of grant funding, but remains above the median for Wales.

- Book budgets have been protected and the targets for acquisitions have been met. ICT provision is good, and well used. Speed of delivery of requests has been maintained whilst numbers of requests have increased, and the percentage delivered within 7 days is now the highest in Wales.

- There have been no further cuts to staff numbers, but the targets are not met, and this is the only target the service fails to achieve. Overall staffing levels remain below

the median for Wales, and the note that no changes are planned within current budgets is welcomed. Volunteers are well supported. The average net cost per visit was £1.93, 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, performance has been steady, with welcome improvements in levels of use.

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

Quality Indicator	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

This is unchanged from last 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 March 2017. Improvements have been recorded in the percentages from the children's survey, last carried out in February 2016, more frequently than was required.

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:	99%	*3/19*	68%	93%	100%
e) % of adults who think that the library has made a difference to their lives:	93%	*5/19*	36%	86%	97%
% of children who think that the library has made a difference to their lives:	92%	*5/17*	58%	82%	98%
QI 4 b) % of attendees of training sessions who said that the training had helped them achieve their goals:	96%	*12/19*	80%	97%	100%

Merthyr Tydfil provided 3 good impact case studies:

- A letter from a staff member of Volunteering Matters describing her experiences of three separate libraries.

- A participatory arts and heritage project on First World War history in two libraries which was clearly enjoyed by the quoted participants.

- A project aimed at increasing social inclusion for workers from Eastern Europe in a biscuit factory. Participants were enthusiastic, and lessons were learned for taking forward future projects of this kind.

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 2016-17. 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 elements were not available to some authorities. Figures reported in respect of the first two years of the framework 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	*2015/16*	*Rank*	*2014/15*	*Rank*
QI 1 Making a difference									
a) new skills	93%	*1 /19*	23%	71%	93%				
c) health and well-being	85%	*4 /20*	26%	56%	94%				
d) enjoyable, safe and inclusive	99%	*2 /19*	93%	98%	100%				
QI 2 Customer satisfaction									
a) 'very good' or 'good' choice of books	96%	*2 /20*	74%	90%	98%				
b) 'very good' or 'good' customer care	99%	*4 /20*	90%	99%	100%				
c) 'very good' or 'good' overall;	99%	*2 /20*	92%	97%	100%				
d) child rating out of ten	9.0	*12 /19*	8.6	9.1	10.0				
QI 4 User training									
a) attendances per capita	248	*1*	3	34	248	390	*1*	278	*1*
c) informal training per capita	334	*4 /20*	1	156	712	344	*3 / 19*	336	*3 / 21*
QI 6 Library use									
a) visits per capita	3,706	*14*	2,453	4,033	6,751	3,493	*15*	3,667	*17*
b) virtual visits per capita	994	*10 /21*	341	922	2,299	869	*14*	635	*17*
c) active borrowers per capita	161	*9*	77	153	235	145	*14*	156	*11*
QI 7 attendances at events per capita	292	*6*	62	214	496	666	*1*	278	*7*
QI 11 Use of ICT - % of available time used by the public									
a) equipment	55%	*3 /21*	16%	32%	69%	57%	*3*	56%	*2*
QI 12 Supply of requests									
a) % available within 7 days	82%	*1 /21*	48%	70%	82%	82%	*2*	80%	*3*
b) % available within 15 days	90%	*4 /21*	65%	85%	96%	90%	*5*	88%	*6*
QI 13 Staffing levels and qualifications									
(v) a) total volunteers	66	*5*	0	24	209	52	*4*	28	*6*
b) total volunteer hours	640	*13*	0	798	5,156	978	*9*	846	*8*
QI 14 Operational expenditure									
a) total expenditure per capita	£9,330	*18 /21*	£6,745	£11,979	£16,968	£9,655	*19 / 21*	£10,931	*20*
b) % on staff,	58%	*12 /21*	46%	58%	75%	58%	*12 / 21*	55%	*13*
% on information resources	24%	*2 /21*	4%	13%	25%	23%	*1 / 21*	21%	*1*
% on equipment and buildings	4%	*9 /21*	0%	4%	20%	3%	*12 / 21*	5%	*10*
% on other operational costs;	14%	*15 /21*	9%	22%	37%	16%	*12 / 21*	18%	*14*
c) capital expenditure per capita	£1,351	*4 /21*	£0	£341	£16,692	£0	*14 / 21*	£1,801	*4*
QI 15 net cost per visit	£1.93	*17 /20*	£1.50	£2.33	£3.30	£2.13	*17 / 21*	*	
QI 16 Opening hours *(see note)*									
(ii) a) % hours unplanned	0.00%	*1*	0.00%	0.00%	0.48%	0.00%	*1*	0%	*1*

Performance indicator	Rank	Lowest	Median	Highest	2015/16	Rank	2014/15	Rank
closure of static service points								
b) % mobile stops / home deliveries missed	0.00%	1 /19	0.00%	0.13%	8.33%	0.00%	1 / 19	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.

Data on Wi-Fi usage has only been provided by three authorities for 2016-17 and so is not included in the table above.

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 two years of the framework.

a) Customers and communities
Merthyr Tydfil carried out customer surveys in March 2017, and achieved similar results to the previous survey in 2016. Satisfaction levels with the choice of books are the second highest in Wales, with the highest proportion of adults thinking the library helps them gain new skills. All libraries offer the full range of support for individual development, and ICT access is considered particularly important for the community. Formal user training continues to be well supported with the highest level of per capita attendance in Wales.

b) Access for all
Merthyr Tydfil meets the target for easy access to service points. All indicators of use have increased compared to last year, although book issues per capita remain amongst the lowest in Wales. Following a year in which grant funding allowed a range of activities to be held outside of the traditional library environment, attendance rates have fallen this year, but remain above the median for Wales.

c) Learning for life
Merthyr Tydfil meets the targets for acquisitions overall, and has the second highest replenishment rate in Wales. It also meets targets for spending on children's materials and materials in the Welsh language, but records that more needs to be done to promote the use of this Welsh language stock. Targets for online services are met, and the facilities continue to be well used. There has been an increase in the number of customers using the Wi-Fi network on their own devices, but the authority is unable to measure this formally. The number of requests is continuing to increase, particularly online, and the speed of delivery has been maintained.

d) Leadership and development
Staff numbers have been maintained at last year's levels, which do not meet the targets set, and the service has no plans to change this within current budgets. The target for staff training has been met and the service is committed to CPD for all staff. Merthyr Tydfil has increased the number of volunteers, with 66 during the year, each giving an average of 10 hours to the service. Volunteers are well managed, with written role descriptions, site specific induction and relevant training.

There has been a further slight fall in revenue expenditure, with the proportions for staff and stock being maintained. Average cost per visit has also fallen, by 9%, owing in part to the increase in visits, and is among the lowest in Wales. The extended opening hours trialled last year have been maintained, and 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 four key outcome areas, learning and developing skills to maximise potential, a strong, sustainable and diverse economy, healthier and better quality lives, and a safe and sustainable place to live and work.

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. Trust status has allowed more cross-sectional working for staff and provides opportunities for joint working practices.

6) Conclusion
Merthyr Tydfil is a generally strong performer, with excellent support from its customers. Low staffing levels in such a small authority present challenges but the evidence of increased use and outreach and engagement achieved are welcomed. There is good evidence of the impact of the service, and the return included a comprehensive narrative to support the data. It is hoped that the authority and the Trust are able to maintain the investment in the future to ensure residents continue to benefit from its services.