Welsh Public Library Standards 2014-17

Carmarthenshire County Council

Annual Assessment Report 2016-17

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

1) Executive summary

> Carmarthenshire now meets all of the 18 core entitlements in full, an improvement since last year.
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> Of the 7 quality indicators which have targets, Carmarthenshire achieved 6 in full and one in part -compared to last year where all 7 targets were achieved in full.
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> Carmarthenshire library service is generally performing well, and has seen marked improvements in a number of areas in the course of this framework, against the wider trend. However, overall staffing levels have dropped below the target set for this year. The service is well used with evidence of strategic planning and investment, and in this context, customer satisfaction, which is below the median for Wales, is disappointing. The service is to be commended for providing an excellent narrative in its return.

- Carmarthenshire conducted a customer impact survey in October/November 2016, with good results. 98% of attendees at training sessions said that attendance had helped them to achieve their goals this year. The impact case studies provided give clear descriptions of the activities offered, but evidence of the difference these activities made to the individuals taking part could be better articulated.

- Customer satisfaction has increased since the previous survey in 2013/14, but remains below the median for Wales as a whole.

- Levels of informal training have decreased compared to last year, however they remain the highest in Wales. The rate of attendances at events and activities organised by the library has increased compared to last year and is now above the median for Wales.

- Both physical and virtual visits continue to increase compared to last year, and the per capita levels are among the highest in Wales. Issues of audio-visual and electronic issues/downloads have increased significantly and they are now the highest per capita level in Wales and the increase is against the trend in Wales.

- Investment in ICT provision continues, and a 22% increase in the number of networked public access computers has resulted in the fourth highest provision of computers per capita in Wales.

- The overall number of staff has fallen in 2016-17 so that the target is no longer met. The number of professional staff has been maintained, however, and remains above the median for Wales.

- Expenditure per capita is the second highest in Wales, but high levels of visits

bring the net cost per visit below the median for Wales as a whole, suggesting a service which is operating in an efficient way.

Considering the four areas in the framework (*Customers and communities*; *Access for all*; *Learning for life*; and *Leadership and development*) in comparison to the rest of Wales, Carmarthenshire shows strength in all areas. It performs relatively poorly on customer satisfaction, however.

Compared to previous years, Carmarthenshire has continued to build on previous successes, and plans for further investment are welcomed. Evidence of the impact of the service has improved, but there remains scope to do more in this area.

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

Carmarthenshire now meets all of the 18 core entitlements in full, following the completion of the library strategy.

b) Quality indicators with targets

There are 16 quality indicators (QI) within the framework. Of the 7 which have targets, Carmarthenshire fully met 6 and partially met 1 – down on last year when all seven quality indicators with targets were met in full:

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	✔	

Quality Indicator	Met?	
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

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.

Carmarthenshire undertook a customer satisfaction survey of adults in October/November 2016 and an impact survey of children in January/February 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:	92%	11/19	68%	93%	100%
e) % of adults who think that the library has made a difference to their lives:	92%	6/19	36%	86%	97%
% of children who think that the library has made a difference to their lives:	93%	3/17	58%	82%	98%
QI 4 b) % of attendees of training sessions who said that the training had helped them achieve their goals:	98%	5/19	80%	97%	100%

Carmarthenshire provided three impact case studies:

- Workshops in association with the Summer Reading Challenge to design a t-shirt, one winner of which has been inspired to take up drawing and has aspirations to become an artist.

- Work with schools themed around the First World War which received excellent feedback from participating schools.

- A description of the Transparent language online system and its use to promote learning of the Welsh language in particular.

All three projects were very well described, but all would have benefited from additional direct evidence of impact and quotes from users.

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 Carmarthenshire'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	86%	5 /19	23%	71%	93%				
c) health and well-being	85%	4 /20	26%	56%	94%				
d) enjoyable, safe and inclusive	98%	8 /19	93%	98%	100%				
QI 2 Customer satisfaction									
a) 'very good' or 'good' choice of books	90%	8 /20	74%	90%	98%				
b) 'very good' or 'good' customer care	95%	17/20	90%	99%	100%				
c) 'very good' or 'good' overall	95%	15/20	92%	97%	100%				
d) child rating out of ten	8.7	16/19	8.6	9.1	10.0				
QI 4 User training									
a) attendances per capita	54	8	3	34	248	35	8	48	4
c) informal training per capita	712	1 /20	1	156	712	1,017	1/ 19	318	5 / 21
QI 6 Library use									
a) visits per capita	6,171	2	2,453	4,033	6,751	5,939	2	5,341	3
b) virtual visits per capita	1,476	3 /21	341	922	2,299	1,264	5	212	22
c) active borrowers per capita	190	6	77	153	235	191	5	133	15
QI 7 attendances at events per capita	218	11	62	214	496	138	16	55	20
QI 11 Use of ICT - % of available time used by the public									
a) equipment	22%	18/21	16%	32%	69%	21%	21	23%	22
QI 12 Supply of requests									
a) % available within 7 days	67%	17/21	48%	70%	82%	67%	19	66%	19
b) % available within 15 days	96%	1 /21	65%	85%	96%	96%	1	84%	16
QI 13 Staffing levels and qualifications									
(v) a) total volunteers	23	13	0	24	209	27	7	17	8
b) total volunteer hours	1,398	9	0	798	5,156	1,662	5	650	10
QI 14 Operational expenditure									
a) total expenditure per capita	£16,271	2 /21	£6,745	£11,979	£16,968	£16,586	5 / 21	£15,971	6
b) % on staff	47%	20/21	46%	58%	75%	44%	20 / 21	46%	21
% on information resources	15%	5 /21	4%	13%	25%	16%	7 / 21	13%	12
% on equipment and buildings	2%	17/21	0%	4%	20%	2%	17 / 21	7%	8
% on other operational costs	36%	3 /21	9%	22%	37%	39%	1 / 21	35%	3
c) capital expenditure per	£0.00	15/21	£0	£341	£16,692	£0	14 / 21	£0	16

Performance indicator		Rank	Lowest	Median	Highest	2015/16	Rank	2014/15	Rank
capita									
QI 15 Net cost per visit	£2.07	15/20	£1.50	£2.33	£3.30	£2.18	15 / 21	*	
QI 16 Opening hours *(see note)*									
(ii) a) % hours unplanned closure of static service points	0.16%	7	0.00%	0.00%	0.48%	0.13%	19	0.52%	22
b) % mobile stops / home deliveries missed	0.99%	8 /19	0.00%	0.13%	8.33%	1.04%	14/19	1.5%	13/19

Note: Rankings here have been reversed, so that 1 is the lowest scoring (best performing) authority.
* Income data for 2014-15 not available 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

Carmarthenshire conducted a customer satisfaction survey in October/November 2016 which saw reductions on the previous survey (conducted in 2013-14) in the areas of new skills and health and well-being, although they remain above the median for Wales. Customer satisfaction has increased since the previous survey, but the percentage of adults who rate both customer care and the library overall as very good or good remains below the median for Wales. Levels of formal training have increased this year, with 98% of attendees saying they had been helped to meet their goals – a similar level to last year. Following a large increase in 2015-16, the rate of informal training has reduced by 30% in 2016-17; however, Carmarthenshire maintains the highest level of informal training in Wales. All static service points open for 10 hours or more per week offer the full range of services in support of individual development.

b) Access for all

Carmarthenshire is a sparsely populated county, but meets the target for access to service points. Both physical and virtual visits continue to rise, with Carmarthenshire currently reporting the second highest levels of visits in Wales. Following a marketing initiative to promote Carmarthenshire's wide range of online resources, the number of audio-visual and electronic issues/downloads almost tripled and is now the highest level per capita in Wales. The rate of attendances at events and activities organised by the library has increased by 58% compared to last year and is now above the median for Wales.

c) Learning for life

Carmarthenshire has achieved all three quality indicators with targets in this area, for up-to date and appropriate reading materials and online access, one of only five authorities to do so this year. Spending on the Welsh language has maintained the levels achieved last year and remains above the median for Wales overall. Investment in the book stock is reflected in the proportion of customers who rate the choice of books as good or very good.

All libraries continue to offer public access computers and Wi-Fi. Continued investment in IT equipment has resulted in a 22% increase in the number of networked open access computers, so that Carmarthenshire currently has the fourth highest provision of PC's per capita in Wales. There has been a slight increase in the proportion of time for which public access ICT facilities are used, however, it remains one of the lowest usage rates in Wales, partly as a result of higher availability. The 2016-17 usage rate for public access Wi-Fi was 71%.

The number of request for specific items has tripled since last year, with the percentage of requests satisfied within 15 days the highest reported in Wales.

d) Leadership and development

Total staff has fallen again this year, and Carmarthenshire has failed to meet the staff per capita target. The number of professional staff has been maintained, however, and the per capita level remains above the median for Wales. Carmarthenshire has also experienced a reduction in the number of volunteers, with 23 each giving an average of 61 hours to the service. The percentage of staff time spent training has increased slightly and is the second highest in Wales.

There has been a slight decrease in total revenue expenditure compared to last year, however, only one authority spent more per capita in 2016-17. The net average cost per visit is £2.07, down from £2.18 last year, largely as a result of increased visitor numbers.

4) Strategic context

Carmarthenshire is to develop its service around the five universal offers which promote core messages linking with government policy, library strategies and frameworks, adapted to local needs and priorities.

5) Future direction

A number of service investments are described. A new mobile library fleet will address issues of rural deprivation, digital inclusion, poverty and literacy in rural areas. Funding has been received to develop and enhance Ammanford library. Consultation is taking place to develop a new Archives and Reference Service.

6) Conclusion

Carmarthenshire library service is generally performing well, and has seen marked improvements in a number of areas in the course of this framework, against the wider trend. However, overall staffing levels have dropped below the target set for this year. The service is well used with evidence of strategic planning and investment, and in this context, customer satisfaction, which is below the median for Wales, is disappointing. The service is to be commended for providing an excellent narrative in its return.