Welsh Public Library Standards 2017-2020: Carmarthenshire County Council

Annual Assessment Report 2019/20

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

1 Executive summary

Carmarthenshire met all of the 12 core entitlements in full.

Of the 9 quality indicators which have targets, Carmarthenshire achieved 7 in full, 1 in part and did not meet 1.

Carmarthenshire Library service has consistently performed well over the three years of the framework. Carmarthenshire has continued to record some of the highest per capita performances for visits and usage. The service is also only one of five authorities to meet the target in relation to qualified staff per capita. Carmarthenshire joined the all Wales LMS in April 2019 and continues to focus on an improved housebound service for its members. The proposal to recruit two Makerspace apprentices is an interesting development and has the potential to increase membership and impact positively on the digital skills of the local communities. Proposals for a remote locker solution are innovative and the impact of this will be interesting to note in future years.

- 98% of adults experience the library as an enjoyable, safe and inclusive place, which is above the median in Wales.

- Carmarthenshire has seen a 22% increase since 2017/18 in the number of library members but a decrease in active borrowers. Book issues for adults have fallen by just under 10% since 2018/19, but children's book issues increased 85% since last year.

- Staffing levels overall have increased slightly, but remain below the target level; the service continues to meet the requirements for qualified staff, one of only four authorities to do so.

- Carmarthenshire still remains in the top quartile in Wales for total revenue expenditure per capita.

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. The assessment has been limited to some degree by the fact that local authorities were only asked to comment on any changes to the previous year's return, alongside additional commentary on of partially/not met core entitlements.

2.1   Core entitlements

Carmarthenshire continues to meet all 12 of the Core Entitlements in full. Carmarthenshire joined the all-Wales LMS in April 2019. Carmarthenshire's five year Library Strategy 2017-2022 remains current and the survey of members undertaken in 2019 will inform the development of the new Strategy.

2.2   Quality indicators with targets

There are 16 quality indicators (QIs), of which ten have constituent targets. Due to the impact of Covid-19, three quality indicators have been removed for the 2019/20 reporting year, five, six and fifteen, of which number six has a constituent target. Of the **nine** remaining targets for 2019-20, Carmarthenshire achieved 7 in full, 1 in part and did not achieve 1 of the indicators.

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 7 Location of service points	√	Met in full
QI 9 Up-to-date and appropriate reading material		Met in full
Acquisitions per capita	√	
or Materials spend per capita	√	
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		Not met
a) % of requests satisfied within 7 days	x	
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	√	
iii) Head of service qualification/training	√	
QI 16 Opening hours per capita	√	Met in full

Carmarthenshire has broadly maintained its performance in this third year of the sixth framework. Of the nine targets, Carmarthenshire no longer achieves QI 12 (supply of requests). The service notes that this indicator was not met due to the implementation of the new LMS which restricted access during 2019/20 to the "requests module" until several months into the financial year, with no option to revise statistics. Full access to the reporting module is anticipated for any future reports. Carmarthenshire continues to remain one of the highest achieving authorities overall.

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. However, this measure has been affected by Covid-19 and some authority plans to undertake a survey in the first quarter of 2020 were cancelled. The summary figures (lowest, median and highest) are therefore based on those authorities indicating they completed their user survey during framework 6. Rankings reflect the numbers of respondents, where 1 is the highest scoring authority.

Carmarthenshire completed its adult user survey and children's survey in October 2019.

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:	95%	=5/19	60%	90%	97%
e) % of adults who think that the library has made a difference to their lives:	94%	=4/19	41%	85%	99%

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. Carmarthenshire provided two such case studies:

- Digital Inclusion – Following an enquiry from a Library member regarding eBooks for children with dyslexia, the Library was able to facilitate the addition of a curated collection of eBooks for dyslexic and reluctant readers to Borrowbox. This commitment to deliver the best digital experience for users ensures everyone has access to the information and skills they need, whilst also helping people address real-life issues.

- Iolo Morganwg – Carmarthen reference library hosted an exhibition to celebrate the bicentenary of Iolo's Morganwg's incorporation of the Bard's ceremony into the National Eisteddfod. This event gave two volunteers the opportunity to work in the Library, particularly using digital skills, which helped them gain in confidence and improve skills. The benefits also included engagement with local Schools. School children were impressed by library facilities such as the library Makerspace green screen. One of the volunteers went on to secure a job after the placement.

2.4   Quality indicators and benchmarks

Whilst Covid-19 restrictions remain challenging to all library services in Wales, staff resilience, professionalism and care for the community they serve has been outstanding. Although digital services have increased, we know from evidence provided that customers are missing their library services. They are missing the staff, browsing the shelves, IT provision, community spaces and groups such as knit and natter. The importance of the

library as a physical place and the impact on the wellbeing of their customers through interaction with library staff cannot be underestimated.

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 Carmarthenshire's position for 2019/20. 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 second 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	*2018/19*
QI 1 Making a difference						*[Framework 6]*
a) % of adults who think that using the library has helped them develop new skills	84%	*7/18*	25%	75%	94%	*n/a*
c) health and well-being	86%	*5/19*	38%	69%	96%	*n/a*
d) enjoyable, safe and inclusive	98%	*=5/19*	10%	92%	100%	*n/a*
QI 2 Customer satisfaction						*[Framework 6]*
a) 'very good' or 'good' choice of books	91%	*=7/18*	78%	91%	99%	*n/a*
b) 'very good' or 'good' customer care	98%	*=10/18*	88%	97%	100%	*n/a*
c) 'very good' or 'good' IT facilities	88%	*=10/17*	65%	85%	99%	*n/a*
d) 'very good' or 'good' overall	97%	*=10/18*	85%	96%	100%	*n/a*
e) users aged 16 & under rating out of ten	8.5	*=17/19*	8.0	9.1	9.5	*9.1*
QI 8 Library use[1]						
a) visits per capita	6,291	*2/22*	2429	3987	6874	*6,524*
b) virtual visits per capita	1,233	*2/22*	239	909	2131	*1,627*
c) active borrowers per capita	128	*13/22*	78	145	244	*89*
QI 10 Welsh issues per capita[2]	671	*10/22*	310	680	1468	*636*
QI 11 Online access						
b) Computers per 10,000	11	*4/22*	4	9	14	*11*
c) % of available time used by the public	22%	*14/22*	14%	30%	64%	*25%*
QI 14 Operational expenditure						
a) total expenditure per capita	£17,693	*4/22*	£7,260	£12,448	£23,333	*£19,449*
b) % on staff,	53%	*18/22*	48%	61%	76%	*47%*
% on information resources	13%	*=6/22*	5%	13%	22%	*13%*
% on equipment and buildings	4%	*=13/22*	0%	8%	28%	*3%*
% on other operational costs	31%	*3/22*	1%	18%	35%	*37%*
c) capital expenditure per capita	£0.00	*=22/22*	£0	£1,567	£13,027	*£7.044*
QI 16 Opening hours[3]						
(iii) a) % hours unplanned closure of static service points	1.00%	*21/22*	0.00%	0.23%	3.96%	*0.04%*
b) % mobile stops / home deliveries missed	2.58%	*19/22*	0.00%	1.07%	5.41%	*0.64%*

[1] 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 [2] per 1,000 Welsh speaking resident population 1,000
[3] 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 and second year of the sixth framework (2017/18 and 2018/19).

3.1 Meeting customer needs (QI 1-5)[i]

Carmarthenshire completed its adult and children's survey in October 2019. The results of the survey broadly remain the same since the last survey was undertaken in 2016/17. 98% of adults experience the library as an enjoyable, safe and inclusive place, which is above the median in Wales. 95% of children thought the library helped them learn and find things out, and they awarded the library an average overall score of 8.5 out of 10. This has fallen slightly since the last survey undertaken. All static libraries continue to provide the full range of support for individual development, and health and well-being is also well-supported.

3.2 Access and use (QI 6-8)[ii]

Library usage has also been impacted by the closure of all Libraries on March 20th 2020 due to Covid-19.The temporary closure of Crosshands library for refurbishment has also impacted visitor figures in Carmarthenshire, which have seen a decrease of just under 3% since the last reporting year. However, visits per capita remain the second highest in Wales. Carmarthenshire continues to meet the target for easy access to service points. Carmarthenshire has seen a 22% increase since 2017/18 in the number of library members but a decrease in active borrowers. Although book issues for adults have fallen by just under 10% since 2018/19, Carmarthenshire's performance in this area still remains the highest in Wales. Children's book issues have increased by 85% since last year and are now just below the median for Wales. The service reported that the large increase to children's book issued was achieved through the correction of catalogue records misplaced during the merger of the All Wales LMS. Additionally, during 2019-20, Carmarthenshire libraries increased their capacity to host regular school visits, and developed a new initiative and as a result, schools were able to borrow unlimited quantities of stocks based on curriculum requirements. There has been a decrease in virtual visits and electronic downloads, although Carmarthenshire remains in the top quartile in Wales.

3.3 Facilities and services (QI 9-12)[iii]

Although materials expenditure has fallen slightly in 2019/20, alongside a decrease in the total number of items acquired per capita, the service notes that this figure was affected by the cancellation of book deliveries in March due to Covid-19.

The percentage of materials expenditure for children has remained the same at 15%, which is in line with Carmarthenshire's Library Strategy. The service continues to invest strongly in up-to-date reading materials, maintaining the second highest acquisitions spend per capita of library services in Wales. The target for QI 9 (acquisitions) continues to be met. Carmarthenshire is one of five authorities who have met the acquisitions target (QI 9) in 2019/20.   Budget allocations for children's resources and for material in the Welsh language have both decreased, but QI 10 (Welsh language) is fully met. Issues of Welsh language resources also remain above average in comparison to other authorities.

PC provision has increased slightly, alongside a slight decrease in usage. Performance in relation to supply of requests has fallen considerably and the targets for QI 12 are no longer met. The authority notes that calculations are based on regional libraries only. Some additional consideration of the factors at work here would be beneficial.

3.4   Expertise and capacity (QI 13-16)[iv]

Overall staff levels have increased again in 2019/20 and remain above the median level, with Carmarthenshire reporting the second highest number of staff per capita in Wales. However, the target for staff per capita has not been met. Number of qualified staff have slightly increased, with Carmarthenshire one of only four to achieve the stipulated target in this area. Qualified leadership remains in place, and the service continues to invest in staff training and professional development.

Carmarthenshire still remains in the top quartile in Wales for total revenue expenditure per capita, but has seen a decrease in income generation since 2017/18, which can partly be attributed to the cancellation of services and the closure of buildings in Feb/March 2020, due to Covid-19. Opening hours have decreased but it is noted that opening hours would only have been 3% lower than the 2018/19 reporting year if services had not closed as a result of Covid-19.This is mainly due to one library being closed on a temporary basis for relocation. The service is one of five authorities to include unstaffed opening hours as part of its provision.

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. Plans are informed by the aspirations outlined in the library Strategy, which is focused on the five universal offers of learning, information, reading, digital and health. The alignment of these goals are apparent to a number of Welsh Government Strategies, such as the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, but Carmarthenshire did not reference Government policy in its narrative.

5   Future direction

Reporting on the authority's future direction and plans for the library service over the following year, it is noted that the wider vision for the service is laid out in the Carmarthenshire Libraries Service update (2017-22). There are further pans to continue to develop the successful Makerspace initiative. Carmarthen are hoping to recruit two Makerspace Apprentices in partnership with the local college. This addition has the potential to enhance the Carmarthenshire Libraries team and develop a service that is key to the wider role of library Services in Carmarthenshire. There is an intention to focus on digital spaces and services moving forward. There are also plans to introduce a remote locker solution to Carmarthenshire. This service will offer members a self-service holds pick-up at locations and times more convenient to them in a safe environment where social distance can be maintained.

6   Conclusion

Carmarthenshire Library service has consistently performed well over the three years of the framework. Carmarthenshire has continued to record some of the highest per capita

performances for visits and usage. The service is also only one of four authorities to meet the target in relation to qualified staff per capita. Carmarthenshire joined the all Wales LMS in April 2019 and continues to focus on an improved housebound service for its members. The proposal to recruit two Makerspace apprentices is an interesting development and has the potential to increase membership and impact positively on the digital skills of the local area. Proposals for a remote locker solution are innovative and the impact of this will be interesting to note in future years.

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[i] *Due to Covid-19, local authorities were only asked to report any change in provision since the last reporting year for QI 3&4.*

[ii] *Due to Covid-19, QI 5&6 were removed for the 2019/20 reporting year.*

[iii] *E-resources purchased through centrally-funded subscriptions have been included in the acquisitions figures for QI 9 in 2019/20. Each authority has added 201 to their total acquisitions from centrally funded subscriptions. CIPFA Statistics Returns continue to include figures for centrally-procured resources.*

[iv] *Due to Covid-19, QI 15 was removed for the 2019/20 reporting year, alongside training and volunteer hours.*