



EDUCATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 11TH JANUARY 2021

**SUBJECT: CAERPHILLY COUNTY BOROUGH LIBRARY SERVICE
ANNUAL WELSH GOVERNMENT STANDARDS
ASSESSMENT 2018-19**

**REPORT BY: CORPORATE DIRECTOR FOR EDUCATION AND
CORPORATE SERVICES**

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To inform the Education for Life Scrutiny Committee of the progress made by the County Borough Library Service in seeking to meet the 6th Framework of Welsh Government Public Library Standards, Core Entitlements, and Qualitative Indicators, during 2018-19.
- 1.2 A guide to the features contained in the 2017-2020 Welsh Government Public Library Standards Framework is included for Member awareness as **Appendix 1**.

2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 This is the 2nd year of the Welsh Government Framework entitled, 'Connected and Ambitious Libraries 2017-2020.' The 6th Framework comprises of:
 - 12 Core Entitlements.
 - 16 Quality Indicators - 10 of which have targets assigned to them.
 - The Welsh Government Ranking Table comparing each Local Authority's Standards ranks Caerphilly as number 5 of 22.
 - Good impact Case Studies evidencing library service contribution to service users.
 - Strategic narrative demonstrating the library service contribution towards the wider Welsh Government priorities and strategic goals.
- 2.2 Caerphilly County Borough Library Service was assessed as meeting all 12 of the Welsh Government Core Entitlements.

Caerphilly County Borough Library Service was assessed as meeting in full, 8 of the 10 Quality Indicators for Wales that have assigned targets and 2 in part with no indicators failed in their totality.

The Welsh Government Ranking Table comparing each Local Authority's Standards ranks Caerphilly as number 5 of 22: a rise of 2 places from the 2017/18 return.

The four case studies assessing the impact of library use on people's lives were evaluated and agreed by the Assessor.

A detailed statement highlighting the synergy between library service activities and both the Council's Well-Being Objectives, and the goals of the Well-being of Future Generations Act was evaluated and agreed by the Assessor.

A copy of the formal Welsh Government assessment is included with this report as **Appendix 2**

2.3 The Welsh Government Standards Reference Group on assessing Caerphilly County Borough Library Service's submission for 2018-19 identified the following areas of particular strength in the Authority's performance.

- Caerphilly Library Service now meets all of the 12 Core Entitlements for the first time with the extension of Wi-Fi provision across all library services.
- All static service points provide a good range of support for skills development and health and well-being, with additional developments in 2018/19 in the provision of Dementia Friendly services.
- Increases in library membership and virtual visits remain the highest per capita in Wales.
- The CIPFA Adult User Survey conducted in May 2019, shows continuing high levels of satisfaction, with 99% of those surveyed rating the library 'good or 'very good' with the library service ranking as 1st in comparison with other library authorities.
- The service continues to meet the targets for provision of materials in the Welsh language with a strong commitment to its investment in Welsh language stock for adults and children and an associated rise in the issues of these materials.

2.4 The Welsh Government Public Libraries Standards Reference Group noted a number of other areas of performance that were below the average for Wales and that require further attention by the Borough Council in maintaining its capability to deliver a strong performing service in the future. These included:

- Whilst levels of ICT provision/access are high, Caerphilly offers the greatest proportion of Internet terminals for use by residents in Wales, the take up and actual use of Borough Digital Services in this format continue to decline in relative terms due in part to the wealth of choice local (high levels of PC's in libraries), residents presently have.
- On completion of the CIPFA Children and Young Adult Survey of 2018, Caerphilly continues to demonstrate continuing high levels of overall satisfaction with the service, although there has been a decline in the number who think that the library helps them 'learn and find things out'. The challenges of meeting the expectations of an increasingly digitally literate young generation have been noted.

- Attendance at pre-arranged user training sessions has continued to fall, in large part due to reductions in digital course provision by key partners. However the numbers helped by information training have increased.
- There has been a notable decline in book issues and in particular children's issues, although performance here is still amongst the highest per capita in Wales.
- The assessors, 'anticipate difficulties in maintaining performances in a number of areas, with proposal to reduce resource and staffing budgets in 2019/20. The impact of funding constraints on service capacity and delivery is something the authority should consider carefully, in ensuring that the service still has access to the resources required to enable it to meet the needs of its local communities.'

2.5 Overall the assessment of the County Borough Council's Public Library Service for 2018-2019 is that of, ' a provision that continues to deliver and has been maintained against a challenging back drop of continuing financial pressures linked to the Local Authority's Medium Term Financial Plan and anticipated further impacts to come in subsequent years of the 6th Framework period.' The County Borough's strong investment and commitment to the introduction of WI-FI at all service points is a positive assessment from the Standards Panel.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1 Education for Life Scrutiny Committee is asked to note the information contained in this report, which would normally have been presented to members in April 2020 but was delayed due the COVID pandemic. A summary of the Library Service performance has also been included within the Local Authority's Annual Performance Monitoring Report presented to Cabinet and full Council last month.

4. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 To inform Education for Life Scrutiny Members of the progress achieved by the County Borough Library Service in meeting the requirements of the 6th Framework of Welsh Government Public Library Standards, 2017-20.

5. THE REPORT

5.1 The Welsh Government Executive Summary assessment of Caerphilly Borough Council's performance against the 6th Standards Framework for Public Libraries during 2018/19 states,

'Caerphilly has continued to deliver effectively against the standards framework in 2018/19, maintaining strong performances in key areas. The extension of Wi-Fi provision across all library services is a welcome development, ensuring that the core entitlement in this area is now met.'

5.2 Caerphilly County Borough Library Service is assessed as meeting 12/12 of the Core Entitlements in full, the first year the library service has achieved this. The authority has prioritised investment into the Library Service to offer free Wi-Fi to residents at Library sites.

- 5.3 Caerphilly County Borough Library Service has met 8 of the 10 Quality Indicators (QI's) in full and 2 Quality Indicators have been partially met with no failed QI's.
- 5.4 The QI's that have been partially met include QI9 'Up-to-Date and Appropriate Reading Material' and QI13 'Staffing Levels and Qualifications.' It is important to note that due to changes to the recording method implemented by the Welsh Government Assessment Reference Group, part-way through the year, this impacted Caerphilly's performance. Subsequently the QI was not met by a small margin. Had the authority been provided with more notice on this change, this standard would have been met.
- 5.5 In the 2018-19 Assessment, only 6 of the 22 Local Authorities meet the professional staffing complement (QI13) and 5 of the 22 meet the criteria for the acquisitions to stock (QI9).
- 5.6 Detailed below are areas of the Assessment Framework that deserve specific mention in respect of good performance achieved by the Borough Library Service in 2018/19

Performance Indicator	2018/19	Rank	Lowest	Median	Highest	2017/18
QI 1 Making a difference d) enjoyable, safe and inclusive	99%	2/15	90%	97%	100%	99%
QI 2 Customer Satisfaction b) 'very good' or 'good' customer care	99%	3/14	93%	99%	100%	99%
d) 'very good' or 'good' overall	99%	1/14	93%	97%	99%	98%
e) users aged 16 & under rating out of ten	9.4	4/13	8.5	9.3	9.5	9.3
QI 11 Online access b) computers per capita	14	1/22	5	10	14	14

Rankings- 1 is the lowest scoring (best performing authority)

QI 1 Making a difference : % of adults who think that using the library has helped them develop their health and well-being Performance improved in 2018/19 from 26% to 33%
QI 5 User training : informal training per capita Performance improved in 2018/19 from 60 per 1,000 to 78 per 1,000 population
QI 8 Library use : virtual visits per capita Performance improved in 2018/19 from 473 per 1,000 to 509 per 1,000 population
QI 10 Welsh issues per capita Welsh language stock issues increased in 2018/19 from 685 to 903 per 1,000 population

5.7 Highlighted below are areas of below average performance

Performance Indicator	2018/19	Rank	Lowest	Median	Highest	2017/18
QI 1 Making a difference d) % of adults who think that using the library has helped them develop new skills	24%	15/15	24%	82%	96%	24%
QI 8 Library use a) Visits per capita	3,606	15/22	2,596	3,969	7,170	4,291
QI 11 Online access c) % of available time used by the public	18%	19/22	14%	25%	63%	20%
QI 14 Operational expenditure b) on staff	49%	20/22	47%	62%	78%	n/a

5.8 **Making a difference**

The Library Service has historically scored positively across a range of measures of customer satisfaction including the library as a 'safe and inclusive place'. Customer satisfaction for the range of health and well-being resources available to them has increased. The Assessors positively noted the additional expenditure for Dementia Friendly services.

Customer Satisfaction

As noted above, Caerphilly County Borough Council's Library Service remains popular and respected by the authority's resident population of users of all ages and socio-demographic backgrounds. Scores of 94% for choice of books and 99% for customer care are among the highest quartile in Wales and highlights the range of excellent services that residents are able to benefit from.

Support for Individual Development

During 2018/19, the library service has maintained all 18 library service points and its accompanying level of provision. However future years may prove challenging as increased financial pressures linked to the Local Authority's Medium Term Financial plan will directly affect resource allocations and employee numbers.

Support for Health & Wellbeing

Continued library support for stock, health promotions, partnership working and the library space offer relating to the health and wellbeing agenda has seen a rise in library customer's improving their health and wellbeing knowledge. During 2018/19 the library service were active most notably in the following areas:

- Continued investment in health and wellbeing library books in all formats.
- Health service providers using library spaces.
- 97% of library staff have trained as Dementia Friends and all 18 libraries have awarded the *Dementia Friendly* status by the Alzheimer's Society.

User Training

Caerphilly Library Service has seen its level of informal training per capita increase from 69 per thousand resident population in 2017/18 to 78 in 2018/19. Despite this rise the authority ranks the second lowest in Wales. Library services are now in the second full year of single staffing at a number of the Borough's smaller libraries. Staff at these service points have less time to support customers on a 'one to one' basis to develop IT skills or participate in other informal learning activities.

While it is important to note the increased satisfaction rate among learners who have been captured via a survey, it is also important to reflect on the significant decline in the total number of attendees at pre-arranged training sessions. These have declined by 26% in large part due to reductions in partner digital course provision as increasingly college franchises are retained in-house.

User attendance at Library Events

The increase of 14% this year in the number of adults and children taking part in events or activities in the Borough's libraries is a testament to the resilience, creativity, partnership working and hard work of all library staff at both multi-staffed and single-staffed sites.

Location of Service Points

The Local Authority has maintained its present number and distribution of static libraries where 98% of households are within 2 miles of a static service point.

Library Use

During 2018/19 the County Borough Library Service library usage figures remain mainly positive. A decrease of adult and junior stock loans was anticipated due in part:

- To a societal shift to eDigital services such as eBooks and eAudiobooks.
- UK national decrease in library book loans.
- Caerphilly Library Service audit of Community Loans.

Positive library usage figures reveal:

- Visits to the library website increased by 6,752 during this reporting year.
- The total number of library members increased by 3.9%.
- The total number of eDigital service downloads for eBooks, eAudiobooks, eMagazines and eComics increased by 27%.
- Despite a slight decrease in the total number of visits to library premises during the year, local and national levels have also declined. However Caerphilly remains competitive when compared to similar geographic areas of Wales.

Up-To-Date and Appropriate Reading Material

Caerphilly Library Service were disappointed to only partially meet this standard. A change in the reporting process by the Standards Reference Group led to a different calculation method of acquired titles, partway through the fiscal year. A reasoned reply from the Library Service outlining the timing of this announcement ensured we

were given a partial standard and not a fail. Despite this disappointment, the library service continues to meet the target of provision for the Welsh language and supply of library requests. The service remains strongly committed to its strategic aims for children and young adults and emphasis was placed this year on purchasing extra collections of KS1 life experiences titles and Welsh language provision.

Online Access

Caerphilly County Borough Library Service offers the most comprehensive number of Public Access Terminals for customer use in Wales. Whilst this ensures local residents can easily access excellent computer facilities free of charge in their communities the level of performance achieved is markedly lower than many comparable Local Authority's in Wales and remains an area for improvement. However please note that the lower performance is intrinsically linked to the high number of terminals the Borough Library Service has available and the Wi-Fi provision now available at all library sites. The library service are currently working with CCBC IT Department to formalise a Wi-Fi reporting mechanism for the 2019/20 WPLS return.

Supply of Requests

During 2018/19 the Borough Library Service received 64,237 requests for specific titles of stock which is an increase of 1% from the previous year.

Staffing Levels & Qualifications

The County Borough Library Service partially meets this standard. Whilst staff levels have remained consistent during 2018-19 when compared to the 2017/18 return, MTFP budget proposals are projected to affect the service during 2019/20. Qualified leadership is in place.

The library service continues its investment to workforce development with a slight time decrease of 0.1%.

Opening Hours

There has been no reduction in static library opening times during 2018/19 and due to the effectiveness of the Library Service Inclement Weather Policy, no unscheduled site closures occurred. This is testament to the professionalism and dedication of the employees and their respective managers.

Case Studies

Four case studies on the impact and value of the Borough Library Service were submitted and assessed by the Welsh Government. The case studies reflect the library impact has made to an individual or group of individuals through the year. These included:

1. Intergenerational Dementia Friends Engagement – extending an existing project where shared reading and poetry sessions with residents of local care homes with dementia related conditions. Local school children visited and interacted with residents. This project proved beneficial to both parties, improving social, communication and literacy skills.

2. Family Support – the role of the library in providing a welcoming place for one family to access resources and share activities which they otherwise cannot afford.
3. RecRock Initiative – partnership with a recreational rock social enterprise at Bargoed Library, enabling members of the community to engage in a range of music-based activities. Participants benefited from improvements in self-esteem, mental health as well as learning new skills.
4. Delivering Learning Opportunities – facilitating the work of partner services across Caerphilly providing learning activities for young people unable to work in a formal school setting. The libraries provide a safe learning environment and teaching space, and the professionalism and engagement of library staff, helps reinforce learning and skills development.

Contribution to Council Strategic Priority Themes

A statement on the contribution the Borough Library Service makes to a number of Welsh Government Strategies and Local Authority's priority areas was submitted as part of the 2018/19 return. The Standards Reference Group state,

'Caerphilly provides a detailed statement highlighting the synergy between library service activities and both the Council's Well-being objectives, and the goals of the Well-being of Future Generations Act. Key themes focus on improving education opportunities, enabling employment, supporting healthy lifestyles, and supporting independent living and improved well-being.'

Please refer to **Appendix 3(B)** for the impact case studies and strategic statement in Full.

Conclusion

- 5.9 The Caerphilly County Borough Library Service Annual Welsh Government Standards Assessment 2018/19 has been assessed by the Welsh Reference Panel.
- 5.10 Caerphilly Library Service has been deemed to meet all 12 Core Entitlements, meeting in full 8 QI's and meeting 2 QI's in part with no indicators failed in their totality.
- 5.11 The four case studies assessing the impact of library use on people's lives were evaluated and agreed by the Assessor.
- 5.12 A detailed statement highlighting the synergy between library service activities and both the Council's Well-Being Objectives, and the goals of the Well-being of Future Generations Act was evaluated and agreed by the Assessor.

6. ASSUMPTIONS

- 6.1 No assumptions have been made in this report.

7. LINKS TO RELEVANT COUNCIL POLICIES

7.1 Shared Ambitions 2019-2022
Education Directorate Service Improvement Plan 2018-2019

7.2 **Corporate Plan 2018-2023.**

The Caerphilly Service Welsh Public Library Standard report for 2018/10 identifies in the *Compliance with Core Entitlements* (please refer to **Appendix 4 – Welsh Public Library Caerphilly Standards Return 2018/19**), how its content contributes towards / impacts the Corporate Well-being Objectives

The Welsh Public Library Standards (WPLS) *Quality Indicators* for Caerphilly also identifies the importance and ethos of the library service – its buildings, library spaces, library stock, inclusivity, IT provision and staff to partner organisations to continue to deliver improved education to all residents (**Appendix 4**).

Objective 1 - Improve education opportunities for all

Free to join and open for all.

Ensure friendly, knowledgeable and qualified staff are on hand to help.

Provide a safe, attractive and accessible physical space with suitable staffed opening hours.

Provide access to services, cultural activities and high quality resources in the Welsh language.

Work in partnership to share catalogues and facilitate access to the resources of all Welsh libraries.

Objective 2 - Enabling employment

Lend books for free, and deliver free access to information, including online resources available 24 hours a day.

Provide free use of the internet and computers, including Wi-Fi.

Objective 5 - Creating a county borough that supports a healthy lifestyle in accordance with the sustainable Development Principle within the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015

Provide access to a range of services, activities and resources to support life-long learning, personal well-being and development, community participation and culture and recreation.

Objective 6 - Support citizens to remain independent and improve their well-being

Provide appropriate services, facilities and information resources for individuals and groups with special requirements.



Work with a range of partners to promote and deliver services to new and diverse audiences, enabling more people to benefit from the services.





8. WELL-BEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS

8.1 The multi-faceted and comprehensive Welsh Public Library Standards Report for Caerphilly 2018/19 contributes to all the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act 2015 themes:

- A prosperous Wales
 - A resilient Wales
 - A healthier Wales
 - A more equal Wales
 - A Wales of cohesive communities
 - A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh Language
 - A globally responsible Wales
- Libraries contribute to developing a skilled and well-educated population.
 - An interconnected library service / system which supports social, economic and ecological resilience and the capacity to adapt to change.
 - A free service to enable those in society to fulfil their potential no matter what their background or circumstances (including their socio-economic circumstances).
 - A library service which helps and supports people's physical and mental well-being and allows free choices and behaviours to be considered.
 - Continuing to provide a cohesive, attractive, safe, viable and well-connected library service to all.
 - A library service which continues to promote and protect culture, heritage and the Welsh language, and which encourages people to participate in the arts, and sports and recreation.
 - A library service which, when doing anything to improve the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales, takes into account residents' comments and views on whether the service makes a positive contribution to personal and global well-being.

The Welsh Public Library Standards Report 2018-19 outlines how it is consistent with the five ways of working as defined within the sustainable development principle in the Well-Being of Future Generations Act 2015.

	Sustainable Development Principle (WGFA 2016)	Libraries Deliver
	Long term Planning to achieve targets and aspirations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Professionally planned and managed Library Service targeted at supporting the residents and communities of Caerphilly County Borough. • Free book lending service with wide range of titles and mature depth of resources. • Free Internet Access. • Free Wi-Fi Access. • Sustainable PC provision.

	Integrate how we work and deliver	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integrated and well managed Library offer open to all. • Work closely with a wide range of partners, stakeholders, and complementary service areas including Customer Services and Leisure. • Integrated 'Smart' joint Library and Leisure access card. • All-Wales approach for the LMS, Web-Library Catalogue and suite of e-resources.
	Involving staff and residents in service developments and current delivery challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of training / support materials for staff and customers. • Annual programme of public consultation via Adult and Child Public Library User Surveys. • Greater use of regular feedback via Social Media. • Online evaluations and staff consultation.
	Collaborate with partners and others to provide the best community focused services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working with groups and organisations that promote the same value to support residents. • Collaborate in the direct delivery of services to residents, with Customer Services Team and a number of other Council Departments. • Collaborate with other Local Authorities in Wales and UK as a whole to offer the very best services to customers from inter-lending to joint procurement of resources at maximum discount.
	Prevent waste of materials and better utilise the skills of our present workforce	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use of online training tools, less printed paper or travel costs and time to course venues. • A responsive workforce and development strategy. • Share training costs and events with local Council partners to assist in maximising the benefit per head. • Free book lending and request service that re-circulates and uses stock economically to meet customer needs at the minimum cost or waste.

9. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

9.1 An Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA) is not required at this time. The issues covered in this report are for information purposes only, seeking to update Members with regard to the Authority's performance in respect of the Welsh Government Public Library Standards.

10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

10.1 There are no financial implications linked to this report.

11. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

11.1 There are no personnel implications linked to this report.

12. CONSULTATIONS

12.1 The report reflects the views of the consultees.

13. STATUTORY POWER

13.1 Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964.

Author: Karen Pugh - Acting Senior Manager Library Services.

Consultees: Cllr. Ross Whiting, Cabinet Member for Learning and Achievement
Cllr. Teresa Parry, Chair of Education Scrutiny Committee
Cllr. Carol Andrews, Vice Chair of Education Scrutiny Committee
Christina Harrhy, Chief Executive
Richard Edmunds, Corporate Director for Education and Corporate Services
Sue Richards, Head of Education Planning and Strategy
Mark S Williams, Interim Corporate Director – Communities
Dave Street, Corporate Director Social Services and Housing
Robert Tranter, Head of Legal Services & Monitoring Officer
Lynne Donovan, Head of People Services
Steve Harris, Head of Financial Services and Section 151 Officer
Anwen Cullinane, Senior Policy Officer, Equalities, Welsh Language and Consultation
Ros Roberts, Business Improvement Manager
Keri Cole, Chief Education Officer

Appendices:

Appendix 1 How Good Is Your Public Library Service – A Summary Guide to the Performance Measurement and Assessment Framework For Public Libraries in Wales.

Appendix 2 Caerphilly County Borough Library Service Final Assessment Report 2018-19

Appendix 3(B) Case Studies and Additional Strategic Narrative 2018-19 Annual Standards Return

Appendix 4 CyMAL - Welsh Public Caerphilly Library Standards - Framework 6, 2018-19