

## Swansea Libraries WPLS 2021-22

### Appendix 2 – case study template and additional strategic narrative

Good impact case studies are expected to include evidence that the library service has made a positive difference to an individual (or group of individuals). This would normally go beyond a description of services provided and their use, to show the outcome, and may include testimony from the customers concerned.

#### Authority: Swansea Council

The impact which the library has had on an individual, or on a group of individuals, during the year. Describe the use made of the service, and the difference that use made to the individual or group concerned. Up to four case studies may be provided (indicative length: 500 words each), two of which can be digital. However, the digital case studies are not compulsory.

Please indicate if permission for the Welsh Government to re-use and/or publish the case studies has been obtained or not: Permission not obtained for any case studies.

#### a) **Working with Kurds All Wales Association at Morriston Library**

Local volunteers with the Kurds All Wales Association (a not for profit organization aiming to provide help and support to all the BAME communities across Wales, especially the Kurds) were looking for an accessible and welcoming place in their local community to use to provide free Kurdish classes for children aged between 6 and 8 years.

A representative of the group identified the library as such a place and after their approach the Library Manager was able a free community meeting space on a weekly basis. In addition, staff could support the class organisers with other services such as printing and copying of materials and library memberships and other wider service benefits for the families who were attending.

As well as the immediate benefit of a welcoming place in the locality with open access for those who wished to attend; the use of this base in the library at the centre of the community helped the group to share information and demonstrate evidence about the impact and success of the classes. This base was then used to access additional funding with which they were able to hire a larger space, which was better able to accommodate the class for a greater number of families as it grew in size. The good relationship the library built with the group and families who attended classes continues and the new customers who had not accessed the library before continue to benefit from its services, including access to reading material in English (and Welsh) for those associated with the group for whom English is a second language.

#### b) **YGG Tirdeunaw Wellness Reading Group at Penlan Library**

Penlan Library have taken the opportunity to strengthen ties with a local Welsh medium primary school, following a move to a new build site close to the library. Previously the distance from the library made it difficult to establish regular library visits. However, since the move (and with the support of the Winter of Wellbeing Grant grant) a weekly bilingual reading group was established for the nurture/rainbow group children who all have

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different emotional support needs. Each session started with a bilingual empathy story read in English by library staff and then reading by the children in Welsh. Activities such as crafts, parachute play and some yoga were also incorporated into the story sessions. The confidence of the group members grew weekly and they all thoroughly enjoyed expressing themselves through the craft or movement part of the session. Topics explored included sharing, being a friend, being individual, trying new things, growing and feelings and this offered an opportunity to engage the children with material from the library empathy collections and the Reading Agency, Reading Well material. Through the introduction of the library through the reading group, some children from the group have visited the library after school with their families, attended library events, becoming regular library customers.

Following the success of the group the library is initiating these sessions to other nurture groups from different schools in the community.

Here are some examples of the school's social media posts following reading group sessions.



**Tirdeunaw** @Tirdeunaw · Mar 23



A wonderful wellbeing session by Jodi for the pupils at Penlan library today as part of the Winter of Wellbeing by @Discovermore #PenlanLibrary #Tirdeunaw #lles



**Tirdeunaw** @Tirdeunaw · Mar 23



Sesiwn lles gwyb i ddisgyblion gan Jodi yn llyfrgell Penlan heddiw fel rhan o weithdy Gaeaf Llawn Lles @Darganfodmwy #Tirdeunaw #lles

### c) **Multiple benefits of library membership to a senior customer at Gorseinon Library**

LD is a 76-year-old lady who has been an avid library user throughout her life. She suffers from Chronic Fatigue Syndrome and other health problems that have led to her having difficulty concentrating and reading as well as carrying on her work as an aspiring author.

Previously she used the Central Library to aid in her Masters degree and teaching role, but in more recent years has been a frequent customer of Gorseinon.

L visited the library creative writing group which started her journey of writing poetry, and often used the public access PCs to type documents for publication. She has found access to help using the PCs invaluable, as well as general guidance provided by staff which has helped her complete her work as well as providing a source of information and inspiration through borrowing books relevant to her studies:

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*“To me the service is immeasurable, it’s like gold. It’s such a valuable benefit, I couldn’t have done it without you. You have such a wealth of knowledge and have given me help with such a broad range of topics.”*

L struggled during the COVID-19 pandemic when the library was briefly closed and had a reduced service. Suffering from isolation and Covid related cognitive disability she was having difficulty reading simple texts and she missed the library. However, adaptations made once the service could operate again, such as extended loans and renewals and suspending overdue charges, reportedly helped remove some of anxiety she was experiencing and helped her complete her writing.

The impact and benefit to L of the service provided by Gorseinon Library in terms of free access to a PC and printing, digital support to produce her work to a standard, the writing skills and social interaction from the writing group attendance

*“On so many occasions I’ve worked here all day... I accomplished something – you’re helping a writer to be published.”*

*“(during COVID and library closure) it was completely bleak. I could get books to read. You were always very kind and didn’t mind if I kept renewing (books). I hated the fines, so was so pleased I didn’t have to pay any – the really heavy burden was gone.”*

*“I would really miss you if you were closed again. You’re open to different requests and have so much knowledge.”*

### d) **Digital Support and information and signposting for a customer at St Thomas Library**

In late 2021 a gentleman approached the library for help with an IT issue as he had limited IT skills. He had not used the library for quite some time and was in particular need of help due to extremely difficult personal circumstances.

The presenting need was to retrieve information from a mobile phone and print out multiple copies as the information was required as part of an ongoing police investigation and would potentially be ongoing for some time to complete.

The library staff were able in the first instance to show the customer how to use the public PC to access the information needed and transfer it to a suitable format maximising the print space and drastically reduce the amount of printing and associated costs when on a limited budget. The customer then disclosed other issues he was dealing with, and the library staff were able to signpost to other local support, including the local MP, Local Area Coordinator, church and the food bank. The confidentiality offered and trust engendered by library staff was key to the gentleman due to the nature of his issues.

This new customer has been using the library almost daily since their initial visit and is extremely grateful for the opportunity to use a convenient and welcoming space to both work on their dossier and to meet with various service providers. It has made an enormous difference to their self-worth and wellbeing to know that they have access to a safe space, as this is paramount due to their personal circumstances. They have thanked staff many times for the peace of mind that comes from using the library. The initial query for help to use a PC has become a much wider example of how, with a customer centred approach to our work, a library can offer a wide range of support and discreet signposting to relevant services.

2. Please provide a narrative that demonstrates how the library service is contributing towards wider Welsh Government priorities and strategic goals (indicative length: 500 - 1,000 words).

During this reporting period, Swansea Libraries worked to demonstrate how the service contributed to Welsh Government's Programme for Government.

Supporting wellbeing and mental health continued to be a priority this year with continued high levels of anxiety and isolation. Swansea Council Libraries have continued to support and promote the Reading Well for Mental Health schemes in all our libraries and have also agreed to support the Education Programmes for Patients (EPP) service, who provide a variety of free self-management courses for people living with any long-term health conditions or people in a caring role. We have continued to deliver library services to the most vulnerable via our housebound delivery service. During the pandemic, we expanded our service to deliver to residents who are anxious and have also changed our qualifying criteria to include carers (including young carers).

We continue to support people to develop new skills, gain employment and create better lives. This is achieved through providing access to information, skilled trained staff and the provision of free internet access and Wi-Fi in our libraries. With the easing of restrictions, through our partners in Workways +, we were able to reintroduce sessions in libraries for those who are seeking employment. We successfully bid via the Good Things Foundation, Online Network Centres to deliver digital support for members of the community who could not otherwise engage to complete the 2021 Census online. Following the completion of Digital Champions training for a core cohort of staff in 2021 we have begun to work with the Swansea Council for Voluntary Services to investigate the role of digital volunteers being based in the library as part of the Our Neighbourhood Project.

In the last year, Swansea Council Libraries have been actively looking at ways to work towards net zero. We have trialled the use of recycled cardboard library cards and intend to further roll these out to replace our plastic library cards for new customers or as replacements. We have entered into discussions with our stock suppliers about how we can decrease the use of plastics in our book servicing and have started work on a pilot de-jacketing project. We have been encouraging our staff to be creative when offering craft activities in libraries, making use of recycled products and controlling our spending where possible.

Swansea Council Libraries continue to support children's literacy through several methods. School visits have begun to restart within our buildings, but libraries have also supported schools with library staff undertaking virtual visits on Teams. We continue to promote our book banded sections, which help parents/carers choose books that support children's reading levels in schools. Libraries have created book bags at different book band levels, making it easier for parents to select books. We also continued to support and promote the Summer Reading Challenge throughout the summer, with added support from an internal Summer of Fun grant from our Play team. We also encouraged children's creativity with a wide range of activities and events, funded by Welsh Government's Winter of Wellbeing grant scheme.

Swansea Council Libraries continue to work towards the de-colonisation of our collections and ensure that we are selecting stock that reflects all our residents and communities. We are using Collection HQ to monitor the levels of diverse stock which includes stock that represents Black, Asian and minority cultures and our LGBTQIA+ communities across our libraries. Our aim is to ensure that diverse stock becomes embedded into our collection as normal practice and not just for special displays or promotions. Several of our staff have received training on promoting

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library services to the LGBTQIA+ community, including in cataloguing and categorisation of stock to allow for easier searching. The service is working towards becoming a Library of Sanctuary and is developing improved networks with refugees and those in need in our communities

All our staff undertake mandatory training in safeguarding for vulnerable people and children, VAWDASV (Violence against Woman, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence) to ensure that we are protecting the most vulnerable in our communities. In this reporting period we have also revised the application of our membership procedures to make it easier for individuals with no permanent address (effectively homeless) to make use of a library membership as part of our work with a local homelessness charity on the launch of their new community information app.

Swansea Council Libraries have committed to increase spend on Welsh language resources for adults and children. This year, we have concentrated spend on books to support those learning the Welsh language and those for school age children. We are also actively promoting our Welsh language material with displays and promotions and hope to foster greater relationships with Welsh medium primary schools to respond to the needs of their pupils.

Work has started on relocating Central Library to a city centre hub supported by Transforming Towns funding. Looking forward, Swansea Council Libraries continues to seek opportunities for further capital investment and Levelling Up funding. This will help to improve library buildings and develop new services in communities, in order to support communities across all Swansea to become better places to live.

3. Please provide a short statement about the future direction and plans for the library service (indicative length 200 words).

Reflecting on the past year Swansea Library service is showing positive signs of emerging from the Covid period and regaining some of the performance and visitors which have been lost. As a service we chart many key performance indicators and trajectories are looking positive in many areas.

For the year 2022-23 we will be building on this emerging recovery. Work has been undertaken to remove library fines and charges through funding from the council's Covid Emergency Recovery Fund. We will be campaigning to have these permanently removed in the long term to support the poverty agenda in Swansea especially as we are moving into such challenging cost of living times.

We are continuing to look at ways of delivering the actions in our library plan. This year we are particularly hoping to work with local schools to support the new Wales School Curriculum. The relocation of the Central Library will take up considerable resource and we will be working towards making this a transformative library in a community hub space. Swansea's new cabinet have also indicated ambitions to look at the feasibility of more community hubs in Swansea which will include library service points.

Our priority of supporting local ageing well initiatives continue, and we will be embracing ways of being age friendly across the service.

This year will see the service host a new Cultural Community Coordinator role expanding opportunities to introduce art and culture to wider communities and target diverse groups in our areas. This post will also support the digital inclusion priorities for the service. We will also continue to look at ways we can support our council and Welsh Governments net zero ambitions.