

Welsh Public Library Standards 2014-17

City and County of Swansea

Annual Assessment Report 2016-17

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

1) Executive summary

Swansea is continuing to meet all of the 18 core entitlements in full.

Of the 7 quality indicators which have targets, Swansea achieved 3 in full, 3 in part and did not meet 1.

Swansea's return shows continued strong performance on many of the traditional indicators of use, with high levels of active borrowers and audio-visual issues. There is good evidence of customer engagement. However, there are still some areas of concern, such as the declining levels of expenditure on Welsh language items and the low levels of staff and staff training along with the lack of investment in stock. The service demonstrates the positive impact it has on the public and any future cuts are likely to reduce performance in this aspect.

- Four impact studies provide excellent evidence of the impact of services in a variety of areas. 86% of adults and 69% of children think that the library has made a difference to their lives.
- Swansea carried out a user survey in November 2016 and there were slight changes compared with previous surveys. On average, children aged 7-16 rated the library 9 out of 10 – compared to an average of 8 out of 10 in the previous survey in October 2014. Attendance at pre-arranged training sessions fell slightly in 2016-17 and remains below the median for Wales as a whole.
- Visits have remained on a similar level to 2015-16, although the number of virtual visits per capita remains the lowest in Wales. The number of active borrowers per capita is the third highest in Wales. Attendance at activities and events organised by the library has increased compared to last year, although the per capita level remains one of the lowest in Wales.
- Swansea has met the replenishment rate target but fails to meet overall acquisitions targets. Owing to uncertainty with the materials budget, the proportion of materials expenditure accounted for by children's stock failed to meet its target, due to proportional overprovision, although this was not intentional. Materials expenditure on items in the Welsh language continues to fall.
- Provision of ICT facilities also fails to meet the target, although all service points provide Wi-Fi access for the public. The number of requests increased slightly in 2016-17, and the proportion of those satisfied within 7 days is the third highest in Wales.

- The number of overall staff per capita remains below target, although it was the third highest in Wales in 2016-17. The proportion of total expenditure accounted for by staff, at 75%, is the highest in Wales. Spending per capita remains below the median for Wales as a whole.

Considering the four areas in the framework (*Customers and communities; Access for all; Learning or life; and Leadership and development*) in comparison to the rest of Wales, Swansea has a mixed performance in the area of *Access for all*, with some indicators amongst the best in Wales. Performance on indicators in the areas of *Learning for life* and *Leadership and development* is generally below the median for Wales.

Compared to the previous year, there are some areas of encouragement, particularly in relation to library use, but the staffing situation remains fragile, and the future direction of the service remains uncertain, especially if proposed funding cuts are implemented.

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

Swansea 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, Swansea is achieving 3 in full, 3 in part and not achieving 1:

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:		Partially met
a) Acquisitions per capita	✗	
<u>or</u> Materials spend per capita	✗	
b) Replenishment rate	✓	
QI 9 Appropriate reading material:		Not met
a) % of material budget on children	✗	
b) % of material budget spent on Welsh	✗	
<u>or</u> Spend on Welsh per capita	✗	
QI 10 Online access:		Partially met

Quality Indicator	Met?	
a) All service points	✓	
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

There are some changes over last year when QI 9 was partially met.

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.

Swansea carried out an impact survey for both adults and children in November 2016.

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:	94%	9/19	68%	93%	100%
e) % of adults who think that the library has made a difference to their lives:	86%	10/19	36%	86%	97%
% of children who think that the library has made a difference to their lives:	69%	11/17	58%	82%	98%
QI 4 b) % of attendees of training sessions who said that the training had helped them achieve their goals:	n/a		80%	97%	100%

Swansea provided 4 outstanding impact case studies which showed the real difference the library service makes, including illustrative quotes from users:

- Integration of vulnerable adults into the community.
- A user who was helped to stay in contact with family via email.
- A mother of three who found out about training opportunities with free childcare through the library and now has a part time job as a result.
- A child with autism and another with Downs syndrome who have improved communication skills in various library activities.

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 Swansea'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	65%	12/19	23%	71%	93%				
c) health and well-being	54%	11/20	26%	56%	94%				
d) enjoyable, safe and inclusive	97%	12/19	93%	98%	100%				
QI 2 Customer satisfaction									
a) 'very good' or 'good' choice of books	91%	6/20	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	28	16	3	34	248	29	13	26	12
c) informal training per capita	n/a		1	156	712			22	20/21
QI 6 Library use									
a) visits per capita	4,604	6	2,453	4,033	6,751	4,616	5	4,718	7
b) virtual visits per capita	341	21/21	341	922	2,299	340	22	313	21
c) active borrowers per capita	211	3	77	153	235	231	2	235	2
QI 7 attendances at events per capita	80	21	62	214	496	69	21	61	19
QI 11 Use of ICT - % of available time used by the public									
a) equipment	37%	7/21	16%	32%	69%	40%	6	46%	6
QI 12 Supply of requests									
a) % available within 7 days	78%	3/21	48%	70%	82%	81%	3	70%	10
b) % available within 15 days	85%	12/21	65%	85%	96%	89%	7	87%	7
QI 13 Staffing levels and qualifications									
(v) a) total volunteers	24	11	0	24	209	25	8	30	5
b) total volunteer hours	1,603	6	0	798	5,156	1,900	4	2,375	2
QI 14 Operational expenditure									
a) total expenditure per capita	£11,589	12/21	£6,745	£11,979	£16,968	£12,234	12/21	£15,127	9
b) % on staff	75%	1/21	46%	58%	75%	70%	5/21	56%	12
% on information resources	12%	14/21	4%	13%	25%	13%	11/21	12%	13
% on equipment and buildings	3%	14/21	0%	4%	20%	2%	18/21	3%	15
% on other operational costs	9%	21/21	9%	22%	37%	16%	13/21	28%	6
c) capital expenditure per	£78	14/21	£0	£341	£16,692	£0	14/21	£40	14

Performance indicator	Rank	Lowest	Median	Highest	2015/16	Rank	2014/15	Rank
capita								
QI 15 Net cost per visit	£2.19	14/20	£1.50	£2.33	£3.30	£2.32	13/21	*
QI 16 Opening hours (<i>see note</i>)								
(ii) a) % hours unplanned closure of static service points	0.00%	1	0.00%	0.00%	0.48%	0.00%	1	0% 1
b) % mobile stops / home deliveries missed	n/a		0.00%	0.13%	8.33%	n/a		n/a

*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

Swansea carried out a user survey of adults and children in November 2016 and there were some slight changes compared to the survey conducted in October 2014. There have been slight reductions in the proportion of adults that found helpful information for health and well-being, and the proportion of adults viewing the library as a safe and inclusive place and both are below the median for Wales as a whole. On average, children rated the library they use as 9 out of 10, compared to 8 out of 10 in the survey carried out in October 2014. All service points offer the full range of support for individual development. Attendance at pre-arranged training sessions has fallen slightly compared to 2015-16 and the per capita level remains below the median for Wales.

b) Access for all

Swansea meets the target for easy access to service points. Both physical visits to library premises and external visits to the library's website have remained on a similar level to last year, although the number of virtual visits per capita was the lowest in Wales in 2016-17.

The total numbers of both library members and active borrowers have both decreased compared to last year and it is noted that the last membership data cleanse was carried out during 2016. However, the number of active borrowers per capita is the third highest in Wales. There has been a slight fall in issues, but they remain above the median for Wales, and audio-visual and electronic issues per capita are the second highest in Wales. The service should be praised for these achievements. Despite a 17% increase in attendance at events and activities organised by the library, the per capita level remains one of the lowest in Wales, although the authority expressed concern that this figure is also under-reported.

c) Learning for life

Total materials expenditure is 10% down on last year and the per capita level is one of the lowest in Wales; however, the number of acquisitions increased slightly, although it

remains below the target. The lending stock replenishment rate target has been met. The proportion of materials expenditure accounted for by children's stock does not meet the target as it exceeds the proportion of the population accounted for by the under 16's by more than two percentage points; however, it is noted that this is due to uncertainty with the overall materials budget rather than any changes in the level of children's provision. Spending on material in the Welsh language has fallen by 24% compared to last year and at less than half of the target level this remains an area of concern.

ICT facilities do not meet the target, and the number of PCs per capita is the one of the lowest in Wales. The authority notes that this position is unlikely to improve given space constraints at smaller libraries. All service points provide ICT facilities and all offer Wi-Fi access for the public. ICT facilities are well used, but the Wi-Fi system does not allow usage time to be monitored, although the number of log-ins is recorded, and has increased compared to last year. The number of requests has increased slightly compared to last year, and the proportion of these satisfied within 7 days is the third highest in Wales.

d) Leadership and development

The overall number of FTE staff has fallen slightly in 2016-17 and remains slightly below the target. Despite this, the number of staff per capita was the third highest in Wales in 2016-17, although it is noted that there are some vacancies and frozen posts within the figures given. The number of professional staff has increased slightly compared to last year, however, the per capita level remains below the median for Wales as a whole, and it is noted that further losses of professional posts are expected in 2017-18. The target for staff training has been missed again this year and the authority notes the increasing difficulty in releasing staff for training, and this area of the return is of some concern. A total of 24 volunteers each provided an average of 67 hours of service.

Total revenue expenditure includes an element for central charges that comes from the Corporate Building Service budget. Spending per capita has fallen by 5% compared to last year and remains below the median for Wales. The proportion of total expenditure accounted for by staff was 75% in 2016-17 and was the highest in Wales. The target for opening hours has been met and there were no unplanned closures or missed mobile library stops.

4) Strategic context

Swansea provided a clear narrative describing the service's contribution to Welsh Government priorities and strategic goals in the areas of access to information, pupil achievement, community and digital inclusion.

5) Future direction

The library service remains subject to review, and is facing further austerity challenges. It is encouraging that the service is included as a stakeholder in reviews of other council services. The library service will continue to use the WPLS framework, and apply resources to address digital literacy issues and the ambitions of the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act.

6) Conclusion

Swansea's return shows continued strong performance on many of the traditional

indicators of use, with high levels of active borrowers and audio-visual issues. There is good evidence of customer engagement. However, there are still some areas of concern, such as the declining levels of expenditure on Welsh language items and the low levels of staffing and staff training along with the lack of investment in stock. The service demonstrates the positive impact it has on the public and any future cuts are likely to reduce performance in this aspect.