

Meeting of:	<b>Learning and Culture Scrutiny Committee</b>
Date of Meeting:	<b>Thursday, 15 April 2021</b>
Relevant Scrutiny Committee:	Learning and Culture
Report Title:	Welsh Public Library Standards performance 2019 - 2020
Purpose of Report:	<p>To recommend the Scrutiny Committee approve the Annual Return for 2019 - 2020 submitted to the Welsh Government.</p> <p>To inform Members of the feedback on the Library &amp; Information Service performance received from the Welsh Government.</p> <p>To inform Members about discussions regarding the reporting to Welsh Government for 2020 - 2021</p>
Report Owner:	Chris Edwards, Library Services Manager
Responsible Officer:	Paula Ham, Director of Learning and Skills
Elected Member and Officer Consultation:	Trevor Baker, Head of Strategy, Community Learning and Resources
Policy Framework:	The recommendations of this report are within existing policy frameworks and budget
<p><b>Executive Summary:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Library Service is usually asked to describe in detail how 12 core library entitlements have been met in full, in part or not at all during the reporting year. Because of the disruption caused by the coronavirus pandemic beginning March 2020 it was decided that for this year libraries would only be asked to self-report the number of entitlements achieved rather than provide a description. The Vale met 10 of the 12 core entitlements in full during 2019-2020, 1 was not achieved and 1 was partially achieved. As no library strategy was available on the library website at the time of reporting, CE12 was not met. Because the service had not run an adult survey in the previous year CE11 was only partly met.</li> <li>The Library Service met 6 of the 9 quality indicators with targets. One target was partially met, and two targets were unmet. The service, in common with every library service in Wales only partially met the staffing levels target QI 13. Along with 15 other authorities the Vale did not</li> </ul>	

meet the acquisitions or materials per capita target QI 9, or and we were one of 7 who did not meet the opening hours per capita target QI 16.

- In terms of benchmarking the Vale of Glamorgan Library Service against others in Wales, the service has a mixture of higher and lower rankings for performance indicators, with the majority being at the positive end of the scale. The Vale achieves one of the highest levels of active users, one of the highest levels of library visits per capita and the lowest number of unplanned closures. On the other hand, the Vale of Glamorgan has below average expenditure on staff (in part related to opening hours and volunteers), below average expenditure on buildings during 2019-2020 (due to no major building project or exceptional maintenance issues), and a below average number of virtual visits.
- The Annual Assessment Report 2019-2020 recognises that positive improvements have been made in library usage and visitor numbers, it notes that the revenue budget for libraries kept pace with service needs and that library staffing levels were maintained. Overall, the report presents a positive picture of the library service in the Vale and one of which we can be justifiably proud.

## **Recommendations**

1. That Members endorse the Annual Return for 2019 - 2020 submitted to the Welsh Government.
2. That Members note the current and anticipated performance of the Library and Information Service in relation to the Welsh Public Libraries Standards framework.

## **Reasons for Recommendations**

1. To comply with the requirements of the Welsh Government for formal approval of the Annual Return for 2019 - 2020.
2. To keep members informed of progress.

## **1. Background**

- 1.1 Members will be aware that the Council is a Library Authority under the terms of the Public Library and Museums Act 1964, and as such has a statutory duty to 'provide a comprehensive and efficient library service'. Welsh Public Library Standards were introduced by Welsh Government in 2001 as a common performance assessment framework for public library services in Wales. The aim is to provide information on the performance of public library services across Wales, improve the consistency of services, drive improvement in services and help identify any underlying factors affecting performance.
- 1.2 The Standards are reviewed and updated by Welsh Government on a 3 year cycle. The Annual Return submitted for 2019-2020 was the final report of the sixth quality framework of Welsh Public Library Standards 2017-2020. Named 'Connected and Ambitious Libraries', the sixth framework recognises the contribution libraries make to the goals of the Well-being of Future Generations Act. The framework also recognises the financial pressures on public services and the need to balance what is practical and what is possible.
- 1.3 The sixth framework, for the first time, provided guidance on which Community Managed Libraries may be considered part of the statutory service in relation to the Annual Return. The Community Libraries in the Vale of Glamorgan meet the criteria for inclusion and are therefore included along with Council run libraries in the Annual Return.
- 1.4 The Standards in the sixth framework are made up of 12 Core Entitlements, 16 quality indicators and a number of case studies.

## **2. Key Issues for Consideration**

- 2.1** Key to note is that fact that Vale of Glamorgan Libraries have maintained good performance in relation to the standards during the period of the current 3-year framework. In respect of staffing, budget and usage, the Vale is well ranked against other authorities, and the services provided to Vale Library users is more varied and responsive to user needs as a consequence. The library service works closely with Community Managed Libraries and together we provide a varied and vibrant service to Vale residents and users.
- 2.2** As well as the positives there are a few areas for improvement which are mentioned in the Assessment.
- 2.3** The Library Service did not meet Core Entitlement CE11, the requirement to run an adult survey. Due to competing demands on time during the autumn of 2019 the need to run an adult survey was overlooked. This was a missed opportunity which will be put right as soon as possible. The adult survey will be conducted in 2021-2022 as soon as there is an opportune time to do so once libraries are fully open. The survey depends on a high sample of adult users at the library during a 2-week period and it is currently difficult to predict when this might happen in 2021 due to the pandemic. The Library Service has previously run a full Cipfa survey, which is the gold standard with price tag to match. The survey requires a great deal of planning, organisation and time and this is the reason why many authorities have switched to running their own surveys based on Library Standards questions. We will consider this as an option instead of a Cipfa survey when we run this next.
- 2.4** The Library service did not meet CE12 by publishing an up to date library strategy online. This will be put right in the coming year. A new Library Strategy will be required as we exit the coronavirus pandemic and look towards a fresh approach to addressing user and non user needs. The strategy will take into account the new library framework which Welsh Government are currently beginning work on, along with the role of new services which have been introduced during the pandemic period. For example, there has been a huge expansion in downloading books and audio books during the current year and this started to increase substantially before the pandemic began. During 2021-2022 the library service will launch a Library App giving far easier access to the library catalogue for people to reserve physical and online books. Our main eBook supplier will also introduce an App to make direct downloads from them much easier. We will also introduce Pressreader for daily newspapers online. Together with a continuing Click and Collect service and expanded online events and activities this will mean we will have a complimentary range of services for customers without the time or inclination to visit libraries as often.
- 2.5** Q1 9 asks for a report on the number of new books and other materials purchased. The way new books were counted for 2019-2020 changed at the start of the year and this negatively affected the Vale achieving the target for new titles. Previously the Vale, along with many other services, counted its own directly ordered new books along with all the new books purchased for the shared all Wales platform for eBooks. This year the calculation could only include

a small proportion of the new books on the shared platform as Vale books. The Vale was one of the few services in Wales which had consistently met the acquisitions target, but following the change only 5 services now meet the target in full and 16 services, including the Vale, failed to meet it. The Library Services Manager has recommended that Welsh Government looks at this target again so that it is at least potentially achievable by a reasonable proportion of authorities. They have indicated they will consider this.

- 2.6** QI 13, the quality indicator which covers staffing levels and qualifications was only partly met due to a shortfall in staffing per capita. The Vale was in the company of 20 other authorities who could only partly meet the target. No authorities met the target in full and one failed it completely. Volunteer staffing is not considered within this indicator, otherwise, with current good staffing levels, combined with a high number of volunteers in Community Libraries, the Vale would meet the target. The Library Service will make the point wherever necessary that volunteer staffing should be given more consideration within the standards.
- 2.7** The Vale did not meet QI 16 on opening hours. Along with 6 other authorities the Vale misses the target on staffed opening hours per capita as presently defined. Previous consultations in the Vale have confirmed that our opening hours and range of opening hours is good, and we believe that, along with the additional Open+ hours, we provide a satisfactory range of hours for the type, location and staffing of libraries in the Vale. Our commitment to looking at ways to extend opportunities for flexible hours will be shown again in 2021-2022 when we introduce Open+ to customers of Penarth Library.
- 2.8** The 6th Framework came to an end in 2020 but given the disruption caused by the pandemic during 2019-2020 and 2020-2021, little work has been undertaken by the Welsh Government to introduce a new framework, nor to develop a new Library Strategy for public libraries in Wales. This work will begin in 2021 and Welsh Government are already engaging with the Society of Chief Librarians to begin discussions. The seventh framework of quality indicators will be ready for 2022-2023 if not before.
- 2.9** The final decision has yet to be made on what statistics Libraries in Wales will be asked to provide for 2020-21 but these will be slimmed down and there will be an emphasis on narrative commentary and qualitative reports on how Libraries addressed the pandemic and how they met new challenges and new opportunities.
- 2.10** Highlights from 2019-2020 include the introduction of further bibliotherapy books to meet the health agenda. We launched the iPads loan scheme to customers and became the first library in Wales to do this. This generated much interest and loans were starting to pick up before lockdown. We appointed a new Children's Librarian. We secured a grant to refurbish the ground floor of Penarth library and also received funding to extend and build a makerspace at the library. The Vale led project to implement the shared library management system across Wales came to fruition with the final authorities joining or on the verge to join the system. The success of the LMS is due in great measure to

Gethin Sheppard, the Vale Libraries staff member who was seconded to the grant funded post of All Wales LMS Project Manager.

- 2.11** The end of 2020 was somewhat overshadowed by the impending Covid-19 crisis. The Vale Library Service was quick to introduce new services in the first weeks of lockdown and many of these are now here to stay and will be developed further. Click and Collect was introduced as soon as the first lockdown eased. Our Digital Development Library Officer developed an online booking form for Click & Collect and to record bookings for browsing and PC use when these were needed. Before this, our LMS Project Officer led the way in setting up, across Wales, the technical solutions related to membership records, book return dates, fines and charges and also online membership on the shared system. This meant that within days of the first lockdown customers were able to join online for eBooks, all fines and charges were suspended, and the library catalogue was amended to show instructions. Other staff sprang into action in providing information on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram and many of the same staff were soon making short films and sharing stories and rhymes on YouTube and other social media platforms. Staff who had never been involved in these activities before have already become proficient in new skills and we look forward to informing the committee next year how our libraries have adapted to change with enthusiasm and new ways of thinking as a result.

### **3. How do proposals evidence the Five Ways of Working and contribute to our Well-being Objectives?**

- 3.1** The Welsh Public Library Standards report from the Vale of Glamorgan Library Service demonstrates the five ways of working and the pursuit of the Councils well-being objectives:
- The Annual Report demonstrates the Council's long-term commitment to maintaining library standards and collaborating in developing a consistency of service provision to all citizens in Wales.
  - The Library Standards help focus service delivery around key areas of performance which prevents a breakup of the national cooperation around many aspects of public library provision including the core entitlements of free internet use, free borrowing, free access to any book in Wales via inter-lending.
  - Integration: Much of the work of the Library Service is aligned to well-being objectives and Library Standards reflect these in the provision of open, accessible and free services.
  - The accessibility of libraries to all helps achieve cohesive communities. The range of content to be found in libraries and through library online resources helps foster a vibrancy of culture and a source of information, reading and activities in Welsh.
  - The Library Service collaborates with an incredible range of partners and organisations who offer their services in libraries and who help libraries deliver their objectives. Of particular note are the trustees and volunteers of the

Community Managed Libraries who now work on the same systems and with the same stock and many of the same resources to help deliver a library service to the Vale.

## **4. Resources and Legal Considerations**

### **Financial**

**4.1** There are no direct resource implications arising from this report

### **Employment**

**4.2** There are no employment issues arising from this report

### **Legal (Including Equalities)**

**4.3** There are no legal implications arising from this report

## **5. Background Papers**

- Appendix A - Welsh Public Library Standards - WPLS - Return 2019 – 2020
- Appendix B - Welsh Public Library Standards - WPLS - Case Studies 2019 – 2020
- Appendix C - Welsh Public Library Standards - WPLS - Assessment Report 2019 - 2020

## Compliance with Core Entitlements

Vale of Glamorgan

Entitlement	Compliance (please select)	Authority comments (List any changes to previous year's return and additional commentary on of part/not met CE)
1 Free to join, and open to all.		Not required to be completed for 2019-2020
2 Ensure friendly, knowledgeable and qualified staff are on hand to help.		
3 Provide access to a range of services, activities and resources to support lifelong learning, personal well-being and development, community participation, and culture & recreation.		
4 Provide appropriate services, facilities and information resources for individuals and groups with special requirements.		
5 Provide a safe, attractive and accessible physical space with suitable staffed opening hours.		
6 Lend books for free, and deliver free access to information, including online information resources available 24 hours a day.		
7 Provide free use of the Internet and computers, including Wi-Fi.		
8 Provide access to services, cultural activities and high quality resources in the Welsh language.		
9 Work in partnership to share catalogues and facilitate access to the resources of all Welsh libraries.		
10 Work with a range of partners to promote and deliver services to new and diverse audiences, enabling more people to benefit from their services.		
11 Regularly consult users to gather their views on the service and information about their changing needs.		
12 Provide access to the library service's strategy, policies, objectives and vision, in print and online, in a range of languages appropriate for the community.		



## 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:** Vale of Glamorgan

1. 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).

Please indicate if permission for the Welsh Government to re-use and/or publish the case studies has been obtained or not: Yes – real names not used.

- a) In October 2019 we were approached by Llamau, an organisation which supports young women who are homeless or abused. They had a young lady we'll call Delyth on their books and were looking to introduce her to the world of work through a voluntary position at the library. Delyth was very shy and needed experience to help her gain confidence and learn new skills. After speaking to her and finding out about some of her interests we felt that she would be an ideal candidate to volunteer on our digital project. This entailed scanning and uploading old photos on to the People's Collection Wales website. Delyth was happy with this suggestion and came to the library 3 times a week at agreed times to do this work. Melanie, our digital project coordinator, gave her training in how to scan and upload the photographs and how to input the accompanying data onto the website in the correct manner. Delyth soon picked up the skills she needed, and she got into some regular work habits. When she arrived at the library each day she signed in like any other member of staff, had conversations with staff and set about doing her work.

Libraries have always been a good provider of work experience, for school pupils, long-term volunteers and to provide a short-term boost of skill and confidence as with the example of Delyth. The example shows how the library service can respond to people's needs at a time when they are at their most vulnerable and in need of assistance. We were able to adapt and be flexible in what we could offer Delyth. Working on the reception desk and dealing with customers would have been too much of a jump for Delyth at the time, she needed a backroom job out of the public gaze with opportunities to chat to staff.

The job gave Delyth an insight into the world of work and a good routine. By showing a willingness to work, by feeling that she had a purposeful job to do and by learning new skills she gained some confidence for the next step. We hope this leads her into a career and a path to improved circumstances.

We do not know Delyth's full background but when she came to see us for the first time, she was very timid and shy. With the support of Melanie and the library staff we saw her gain in confidence, she opened up more and felt more relaxed in the work atmosphere. We're sure the structure a routine of work as well as mixing with new people improved her mental health

Another factor that was evident was Delyth's interest in community history. Alongside the technical skills she picked up she also learnt about her own community and local heritage and this she enjoyed very much. The case study shows how the library service can play its part in bringing the community together and helping it become just a little more cohesive and equal.

Delyth proved to be a keen and diligent worker and it was a pleasure to have her on board.

- b) In October 2019 Vale of Glamorgan Libraries launched the first tablet loan scheme in Wales. The scheme was run in Partnership with GTVO (Get the Vale Online), especially with partners Newydd Housing and Digital Communities Wales. GTVO had received funding to purchase iPads from Tesco's and this was supplemented by further and ongoing funding from Libraries. Each library in the Vale was provided with 2 iPads to loan out to users on a 3 week loan. The iPads came with filtering and tracking software and heavy duty protective cases. They were also preloaded with library apps (BorrowBox, RBDigital), health and wellbeing apps and other community information services. The iPads were available to anyone over the age of 18 without internet access at home who was a registered Vale Library member. Staff gave users an initial introduction to the iPad when it was collected as part of the registration process. If they felt they required more information on how to use the iPad the users could choose to book a more in-depth training session with the Digital Champions who provided free Digital Drop-in sessions at the library.

The iPads were loaned numerous times in the year prior to lockdown. Several people joined the library specifically to borrow a tablet. Several of our more regular PC users borrowed a tablet to be able to access the information they needed from home. There were others interested in trying out a tablet before deciding to buy one and some such as the following example wanted to make use of a tablet to fill a short-term need.

A pensioner we'll call Jayne was a dependent on her old laptop to keep in touch with family around Wales, a family member she could not visit in person due to a family illness. When Jayne's laptop finally gave up the ghost, soon after her boiler had been replaced, there was no prospect of Jayne being able to replace the laptop in the short-term. Jayne had seen a poster advertising the iPad loan scheme during a regular visit to the library and asked if she could borrow one. As she is fairly IT literate, she only required an introduction to the iPad from the library staff and was able to walk off with it with little bother. It so happens that Jayne was one of the last people to borrow an iPad before the lockdown on 23/03/20 so was able to continue to keep in contact with her family and use it for information, shopping and entertainment throughout the

lockdown period. She said that “the iPad has been a lifeline for me in a very difficult period and I have no idea how I would have then survived lockdown without it”. She intends to keep borrowing the iPad as often as it is available until she is able to purchase one for herself.

This case study illustrates that we are always looking to try something new in libraries and take a bit of a risk. We are open to approaches from other organisations and individuals in the community who have ideas that we can help put into action. There was some opposition or chortling at the idea of libraries loaning iPads. Some of it from within libraries but much of it from elsewhere in the Council or amongst partners who felt that they would surely be damaged or stolen, especially without a hefty deposit. There were other concerns about the” wrong sort of people” being attracted to borrow them and for them to be misused in many different and creative ways. In actuality the tablets have not attracted the level of interest some of us hoped for and others feared. The technical issues related to resetting the tablets between users caused staff some problems which meant we became too cautious in promoting them heavily. Once this issue was overcome their use started to pick up and we found that the people we most expected to loan them were the people that came forward to do so. These were mostly current library users in the older age brackets who had no smartphone or internet access at home. Most of them had some IT skills and wanted to gain more. They were mostly curious and interested to find out if a tablet was the right step for them while others like Jayne were looking to fill a short-term gap in personal access or wanted to use a device at home to save them coming to the library for a couple of weeks.

A full evaluation of the scheme has not yet been undertaken but we will do so sometime during 2020/21.

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).

The Vale of Glamorgan Library Service works hard to provide library services which meet the needs of the community we serve. Our staff continually develop new and creative ways to meet the needs of differing age groups and a multitude of interests. We provide unique public spaces for people to spend time and meet that exist almost nowhere else apart from in public libraries. Our service provision is necessarily broad from providing toddler sessions to author visits and coffee mornings for the older population. We also have a wide range of facilities including free internet, local studies materials, access to old newspapers and a reservation system which is supported by the public library system around Wales and the UK. In 2015 the Welsh Government introduced the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act which aims to improve the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales. The Welsh

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Government also produced 'Taking Wales Forward 2016 -2021' which identified four areas which can impact the goals of the Well-being of Future Generations Act. These include 'Prosperous and Secure', 'Healthy and Active', 'Ambitious and Learning' and 'United and Connected'.

We hope that it can be seen from our submission this year that our library service contributes to each of these areas:

**Prosperous and Secure:** The library service offers the skills and experiences people need to thrive and prosper. We do this by providing free resources to foster learning, by providing space for learning to take place and by offering informal and sometimes more formal learning opportunities on a wide range of subjects. The availability of community meeting rooms and access to free ICT facilities makes us the go-to partner for partnership work. Sessions offered in 2019/20 included Basic Skills Training, Job Clubs and drop-in help. We also continue to support volunteering by offering opportunities including Work Placements, Welsh Baccalaureate placements and specific Library Volunteer placements for instance in delivering books to housebound people. We should also not forget the numerous volunteers who run the community libraries.

**Healthy and Active:** Healthy and active lifestyles impact the individual and have long term national economic benefit. Library users and medical professionals make use of our Book Prescription Wales' scheme and the 'Reading Well schemes for Dementia and Mental Health launched during 2019/20. Library users also attend various health and wellbeing events at libraries along with several patient groups that also meet in libraries. Libraries are recognised as places that promote inclusion and lessen social isolation, they are a safe place to meet people, join into activities and chat with staff. We have customers who visit most days of the week and others who spend much of the day in libraries and gain a sense of social wellbeing by being part of a community at their library.

**Ambitious and Learning:** Gaining early reading skills is seen by Welsh Government as a key factor in best outcomes for children. Libraries put a tremendous amount of energy and enthusiasm into promoting reading to children and young people along with people of all ages and reading levels. Story time sessions, reading groups, author visits and literary based events and promotions are all part of this activity. We support regular reading activities such as Bookstart, the Summer Reading Challenge and World Book Day and we promote books throughout the year, hanging a promotion on any moving target, celebration or theme.

**United and Connected:** The Welsh Government aims to improve digital skills throughout Wales to prepare people for work and leisure. We support this aim with free internet access, good quality facilities, training sessions and the support provided by staff. This has been a role for libraries since the start of the internet and we continue to provide direct support or signposting for all who need advice. We have volunteer digital champions to help with digital inclusion at all libraries. Cooperation between library services in Wales is particularly strong and in the last year the Vale,

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through the post of Project Manager, signed up and supported the 20<sup>th</sup> authority in Wales to join the shared Library Management System. Where so many major joint IT systems fail this one has proved a success due to the commitment of many individual staff and all 20 authorities who have been able to join to date.

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

The end of the year was brought to a sudden end in February and March 2020 when the Coronavirus hit these shores. Libraries in Wales closed on the 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2020. Although we kept busy with online activities and the promotion of online collections our doors did not open with any kind of physical service until the end of June 2020. It seemed like the whole landscape had changed during this time and our services had to be rethought. Like most services, we made a comeback with Click and Collect book selections. We moved on to become one of the first library services in Wales to open our doors to browsers and PC users on the 10<sup>th</sup> August 2020. We are now planning the next stage of recovery and hope that the rest of the year will be one of slow steps towards something close to the normal we used to know.

Quite where the next 6 months will take us nobody can quite predict but we expect challenges around funding and some concern and also excitement around new ways of working. Most importantly we want to create a safe and trusted place for library users to return to and we want to reach out to people who have great need to use their libraries.

# Welsh Public Library Standards 2017-2020: Vale of Glamorgan

## Annual Assessment Report 2019/20

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

### 1 Executive summary

The Vale of Glamorgan met 10 of the 12 core entitlements in full, 1 in part and did not meet 1.

Of the 9 quality indicators which have targets, the Vale of Glamorgan achieved 6 in full, 1 in part and did not achieve 2.

Service levels in the Vale of Glamorgan have broadly remained the same throughout the sixth framework. Maintenance of staffing levels, increases in usage and an increased revenue budget in 2019/20 are all positive developments. Opening hours remains comparably low, although the service provides additional unstaffed out-of-hours opening at its central library via Open+ which is valued by a group of users, and the extension of this service to other branches will bring benefits to those communities. The lack of completion of an adult user survey in 2019/20 is disappointing and customer feedback will be essential in order to continue to improve the service. Plans to publish a library strategy in 2018/19 have not materialised due to timings with a wider Council strategy that the library service hoped to align to. A framework for the future development of the service is essential as libraries experience a time of change as a result of the impact of Covid-19.

- Usage has increased in all areas apart from external visits to the library website. Visits to library premises have increased by 27% since 2018/19, mainly due to additional council services delivered via libraries.
- Electronic downloads have increased by 165% since 2017/18 in common with all services in Wales.
- The target for acquisitions per capita (QI 9) has not been met by the service for the first time during the sixth framework, mainly due to a standards reporting change in the calculation for the addition of electronic resources for the 2019/20 reporting year.
- There has been a decrease in the expenditure on Welsh language materials, although the service still meets the proportionate spend target, enabling continued achievement of QI 10.
- Overall staff numbers and professional staffing levels have broadly been maintained in 2019/20, with a very slight decrease in the total number of staff. Staffing levels are above the median level in Wales and the Vale of Glamorgan is one of only four services in Wales to meet the professional staffing target.

### 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

The Vale of Glamorgan continues to meet 10 of the 12 core entitlements in full, one in part and does not meet CE12 without a library strategy currently in place. The service partially meets CE 11 as it did not complete its adult user survey during the framework.

## 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 had a constituent target. Of the **nine** remaining targets for 2019-20 the Vale of Glamorgan achieved 6 in full, 1 in part and did not achieve 2 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	Not met
Acquisitions per capita	x
<u>or</u> Materials spend per capita	x
QI 10 Welsh Language Resources	Met in full
% of material budget spent on Welsh	√
<u>or</u> 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	Met in full
a) % of requests satisfied within 7 days	√
b) % of requests satisfied within 15 days	√

Quality Indicator	Met?	
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	x	Not met

The Vale of Glamorgan has improved its performance in 2019/20 with QI 3 (Support for individual development) now fully met. Training to improve literacy, numeracy, information literacy and digital skills is now offered at all service points.

## 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.

The Vale of Glamorgan did not undertake its adult user survey during the current framework. The last adult survey was undertaken during framework 5. The service is one of only five not to have run an adult survey in this framework. A children's survey was undertaken in February 2020.

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:	89%	15/19	60%	90%	97%
e) % of adults who think that the library has made a difference to their lives:	n/a	n/a	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. The Vale of Glamorgan provided two such case studies:

- Collaboration with Llamau – a volunteering opportunity for an individual. An individual contributed to a digital project in the library, which involved scanning and uploading photos to the People's Collection Wales website. This experience had a very positive impact on the individual involved; an improvement in confidence and mental health.
- Digital partnership – a tablet loan scheme. A scheme to lend Wi-Fi enabled tablets to members to reduce digital exclusion. This project has removed barriers for those individuals without access to the internet and those without digital skills. For one retired lady, the loaned iPad has been a lifeline, enabling her to keep in contact with her family, alongside shopping online, finding information and entertainment.



## 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 Vale of Glamorgan'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	n/a	25%	75%	94%	n/a	
c) health and well-being	n/a	38%	69%	96%	n/a	
d) enjoyable, safe and inclusive	n/a	10%	92%	100%	n/a	
QI 2 Customer satisfaction					[Framework 6]	
a) 'very good' or 'good' choice of books	n/a	78%	91%	99%	n/a	
b) 'very good' or 'good' customer care	n/a	88%	97%	100%	n/a	
c) 'very good' or 'good' IT facilities	n/a	65%	85%	99%	n/a	
d) 'very good' or 'good' overall	n/a	85%	96%	100%	n/a	
e) users aged 16 & under rating out of ten	9.0 =15/19	8.0	9.1	9.5	n/a	
QI 8 Library use <sup>1</sup>						
a) visits per capita	5,333	3/22	2429	3987	6874	4,293
b) virtual visits per capita	240	21/22	239	909	2131	345
c) active borrowers per capita	226	2/22	78	145	244	221
QI 10 Welsh issues per capita <sup>2</sup>	829	9/22	311	680	1468	783
QI 11 Online access						
b) Computers per 10,000	9	12/22	4	9	14	9
c) % of available time used by the public	30%	=8/22	14%	30%	64%	33%
QI 14 Operational expenditure						
a) total expenditure per capita	£14,811	6/22	£7,260	£12,448	£23,333	£14,614
b) % on staff,	58%	=13/22	48%	61%	76%	56%
% on information resources	11%	=13/22	5%	13%	22%	11%
% on equipment and buildings	4%	=13/22	0%	8%	28%	6%
% on other operational costs	28%	6/22	1%	18%	35%	27%
c) capital expenditure per capita	£138	13/22	£0	£1,567	£13,027	£146
QI 16 Opening hours <sup>3</sup>						
(iii) a) % hours unplanned closure of static service points	0.00%	=1/22	0.00%	0.23%	3.96%	0.00%
b) % mobile stops / home deliveries missed	0.00%	=1/22	0.00%	1.07%	5.41%	0.00%

<sup>1</sup> 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 <sup>2</sup>per 1,000 Welsh speaking resident population

<sup>3</sup>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)<sup>i</sup>

The Vale of Glamorgan has yet to complete its adult user surveys which were planned to take place in 2019/20. A children's survey was undertaken in February 2020. There has been a slight decrease in the percentage of children who think that the library helps them learn and find things out, but the average overall rating out of ten has remained the same. The Vale of Glamorgan has improved its performance in 2019/20, with QI 3 (Support for individual development) now fully met. Good support is provided for health and well-being

at all libraries, with targets (QI 4) in this area fully met. Furthermore, all libraries undertook at least one mental health awareness activity during the year.

### **3.2 Access and use (QI 6-8)<sup>ii</sup>**

The Vale of Glamorgan continues to meet the target for easy access to service points. Usage has increased in all areas apart from external visits to the library website, as more people go direct to the e-resource apps instead. Visits to library premises have increased by 27% since 2018/19. This can partially be attributed to libraries becoming the main distribution point for new recycling bags, and many people coming to the library for help with the online renewal of bus passes. The Vale of Glamorgan are now in the top quartile in Wales in relation to physical visits per capita, and the service capitalised on these new visitors as it saw a rise in its active borrowers. Active borrowers per capita are above median levels in Wales. Despite an increase in adult and children's book issues, figures per capita are below median levels in Wales. Electronic downloads have increased by 165% since 2017/18 in common with all services in Wales.

### **3.3 Facilities and services (QI 9-12)<sup>iii</sup>**

Total materials expenditure, along with expenditure on materials purchased for children have both increased slightly during 2019/20. The target for acquisitions per capita (QI 9) has not been met by the service for the first time during the sixth framework due to a central agreed change in the allocation of centrally-purchased electronic resources for the 2019/20 reporting year. The Vale of Glamorgan is one of seventeen authorities who have not met the acquisitions target (QI 9) in 2019/20. The materials spend per capita also continues to be unmet this year. There has been a decrease in the expenditure on Welsh language materials, although the service still meets the proportionate spend target, enabling continued achievement of QI 10. PC provision and usage have broadly been maintained with a slight decrease in usage, in common with other services as members increasingly use their own devices and the free library Wi-Fi. The service continues to meet the requirements for supply of requests (QI 12), with a very slight change.

### **3.4 Expertise and capacity (QI 13-16)<sup>iv</sup>**

Overall staff numbers and professional staffing levels have broadly been maintained in 2019/20, with a very slight decrease in the total number of staff in post. Staffing levels are above the median level in Wales. However, the target for staff per capita (QI 13) has not been met. The number of qualified staff has slightly decreased, but the Vale of Glamorgan is one of only four services to achieve the stipulated target in this area. Qualified leadership remains in place.

Total revenue expenditure has increased marginally since 2018/19. Expenditure per capita remains above the median level. The Vale has invested in new IT equipment in preparation for an upgrade to Windows 10 and has continued to invest in its library estate. Aggregate annual opening hours have broadly been maintained and remain well below the target level and in the bottom quartile in Wales. The service continues to provide 16 'out of hours' unstaffed hours per week at one library using Open+ technology and these hours are not included in the return. It is noted that they are valued by the users who visit the library during these hours.

## 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. The Vale of Glamorgan's narrative demonstrates how the service contributes to Welsh Government's programme, Taking Wales Forward 2016 – 2021. This includes a variety of health and wellbeing events at libraries along with several patient groups (*Healthy and Active*). The service also offered basic skills training, job clubs and drop in help sessions (*Prosperous and Secure*). Other areas noted, included that of *Ambitious and learning* (supporting the literacy of young children) and *United and connected* (volunteer digital champions are available to help with digital inclusion at all libraries).

## 5 Future direction

Reporting on the authority's future direction and plans for the library service over the following year, the Vale of Glamorgan highlights the importance of realigning library provision in light of the impact of Covid-19. The service intends to build on the promotion of its online services and develop new ways of working to meet changes to customer expectations. The service will continue to extend its successful Open+ model providing additional 'out of hours' unstaffed access across further branches. The development of Penarth Library will continue with the refurbishment of the first floor in 2021.

## 6 Conclusion

Service levels in the Vale of Glamorgan have broadly remained the same throughout the sixth framework. Maintenance of staffing levels, increases in usage and an increased revenue budget in 2019/20 are all positive developments. Opening hours remains comparably low, although the service provides additional unstaffed out-of-hours opening at its central library via Open+ which is valued by a group of users, and the extension of this service to other branches will bring benefits to those communities. The lack of completion of an adult user survey in 2019/20 is disappointing and customer feedback will be essential in order to continue to improve the service. Plans to publish a library strategy in 2018/19 have not materialised due to timings with a wider Council strategy that the library service hoped to align to. A framework for the future development of the service is essential as libraries experience a time of change as a result of the impact of Covid-19.

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

<sup>ii</sup> Due to Covid-19, QI 5&6 were removed for the 2019/20 reporting year.

<sup>iii</sup> 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.

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