

Meeting of:	Learning and Culture Scrutiny Committee
Date of Meeting:	Monday, 08 July 2024
Relevant Scrutiny Committee:	Learning and Culture
Report Title:	Libraries Annual Report
Purpose of Report:	To brief elected Members on the performance of the Libraries Service between the period 2022/23 and 2023/24 and the impact of their work.
Report Owner:	Elizabeth Jones, Director of Learning and Skills
Responsible Officer:	Trevor Baker, Head of Strategy, Community Learning & Resources
Elected Member and Officer Consultation:	Councillor Rhiannon Birch
Policy Framework:	This report has been produced in line with the existing policy framework and budget.
<p>Executive Summary:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This report provides elected Members with an overview of library services activity between 2022/23 and 2023/24. • The purpose of the Libraries Annual Report is to provide an overview of how it operates, an evaluation of its key achievements and an evidence base for demonstrating the positive impact our library services has had on communities. • Full report attached in Appendix 1. 	

Recommendations

1. That Scrutiny Committee considers the content of the Libraries Annual Report and notes the progress and outcomes that the service has achieved during the period.
2. Refer any comments to Cabinet for their consideration and endorsement at the next available meeting.

Reasons for Recommendations

1. To ensure that Scrutiny maintains effective oversight of library service delivery and its performance and impact over the period.
2. To ensure that Cabinet has oversight of the performance of the Library Service and its impact during the period and takes into account any comments received from the Learning and Culture Committee.

1. Background

- 1.1 The last time the Committee received an annual update on Library Service delivery was in December 2022. Since then the Library Service has further strengthened and expanded its offering to residents with a number of exciting new developments achievements.
- 1.2 This report provides elected Members with an overview of Library Service activities between 2022/23 and 2023/24.
- 1.3 The purpose of the report is to showcase the service's key achievements, how it operates and the impact Library Services has had on our communities. It reflects the service's progress in keeping with the Wellbeing Objectives set out in the Corporate Plan and provides a strong evidence base for evaluating service delivery and for meeting requirements of the Welsh Public Library Standards.
- 1.4 As well as providing elected Members with oversight of service delivery, the report has been written for a wider audience that includes residents, staff and partners.

2. Key Issues for Consideration

- 2.1 The Annual Report provides a key mechanism through which the Council can evaluate its performance in relation to Vale Library Services. The format of the report has been refreshed and set out in a user-friendly style to maximise engagement with the intended audience to enable effective communication on how library services have performed and to evidence the impact of its work. The structure of the report is as follows:
- 2.2 **Our vision and values-** Provides a summary of how Library Services are contributing to the Council's vision and wellbeing objectives and more broadly the 7 Wellbeing Goals of the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act.

- 2.3 We love what we do-** Provides high level overview of what Library Services do and how it works in collaboration with partners to deliver services.
- 2.4 Performance snapshot-** Provides high level infographic of performance for the most recent period 2023/24.
- 2.5 Early Literacy & Creativity-** This section provides an overview of key achievements and performance relating to supporting early literacy in children and young people and delivering activities/events to promote creativity and learning. This section includes feedback from service users and a case study to demonstrate impact on children and young people and their families.
- 2.6 Age Friendly environments-** Provides an overview of how the libraries are continuously striving towards ensuring its resources, services and activities available are inclusive and accessible to older people. It provides insight on their Dementia Friendly status and the wealth of inclusive activities, events and support that is available to residents. This section also includes insight from services users and a case study.
- 2.7 Inclusion and connecting with communities-** This section focuses on providing an overview of how libraries play an integral role in bringing together people to support connected and inclusive communities. An overview is provided of how the libraries are facilitating digital inclusion, employability, supporting refugees, access to services, warm spaces, addressing period dignity, promoting wellbeing and celebrating diversity. This work is evidenced through feedback from service users and via case study examples.
- 2.8 Makerspaces-** Provides an overview of our flagship initiative across two branch libraries- Barry and Penarth. It outlines progress made to date along with evidence of impact through a case study.
- 2.9 Community libraries & Volunteers-**Outlines the volunteer work undertaken by our five community libraries across the Vale of Glamorgan as well as an overview volunteer delivery across our Council run branch libraries.
- 2.10 Welsh Public Library Standards-** This section of the report reflects back on the Council's previous year's(2022/23) Welsh Public Library Standards self-assessment, which has been validated by the Welsh Government. It provides an overview of how the Vale Libraries performed in 2022/23 and evidence of qualitative measures of customer impact.
- 2.11 Use of resources-** Provides an outline of how the Vale Library Service has used its resources effectively to deliver services that are reflective of community needs.
- 2.12** Full report attached in **Appendix 1.**

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

- 3.1** The work of the Vale Library Service as evidenced in this Annual Report has an intrinsic role in delivering the Council's Corporate Plan, Annual Delivery Plan and its Wellbeing Objectives of working with and for our communities, supporting

learning, employment and sustainable growth and supporting people at home and in their community.

- 3.2** Vale libraries focus on providing welcoming, inclusive and safe environments for people to connect, hubs for people to access advice and support and creative spaces to promote innovation and creativity and resources and activities to inspire a love of lifelong learning. All this contributes to meeting the Wellbeing Objectives of the Corporate Plan and contribute to the 7 national Wellbeing Goals. Throughout the report it is evident that the emphasis of the Libraries Services' work is on taking a longer-term approach to delivery sustainable services that are fit for purpose and future proof, with a focus on involvement and collaboration with partners to ensure libraries take a preventative approach to service delivery and maximise opportunities for service integration.

4. Climate Change and Nature Implications

- 4.1** There are no direct implications in relation to climate change arising from this report.

5. Resources and Legal Considerations

Financial

- 5.1** The report sets out financial climate within with the Library Service is operating and provides oversight of the use of resources during the period. All aspects of work and activities highlighted within the Annual Report were delivered within existing budget and/or supported via grant funding and volunteer capacity. There are no direct financial considerations/implications as part of this Annual Report.

Employment

- 5.2** There are no direct workforce related implications associated with this report.

Legal (Including Equalities)

- 5.3** There are no direct legal or equality implications arising from this report. The report provides a retrospective overview of performance over the last two reporting years, and as such there are no proposals contained within the report that would have a legal implication.
- 5.4** The Annual Report outlines how it has broadened access to vulnerable and socio-economically disadvantaged groups and in so doing provides an evidence base of how it is positively contributing to delivery of the Council's Strategic Equality Plan and contributing to meeting the socio-economic duty as part of the Equality Act 2010.

6. Background Papers

Welsh Public Library Standards Welsh Government Annual Assessment Report
2022/2023



Appendix 1



Vale of Glamorgan Libraries Annual Report





Foreword

I am pleased to present our Libraries Highlight report. The library collections, resources and services/activities support the Council's vision of 'Strong Communities with a Bright Future'.

Our libraries are at the heart of our communities and play a vital role in day to day lives. They are welcoming, friendly and safe spaces that bring people together to support their sense of health and well being and community cohesion. We are champions of literacy and lifelong learning to support and inspire our early and lifelong learners through our broad range of collections, resources and busy programme of activities and events. We remain committed to promoting both inclusion and diversity through the provision of a wide range of services and activities that support employability, digital inclusion and we promote age friendly initiatives and support for refugees. The wealth of resources, technology and expertise we have on hand inspires creativity and innovation across generations, with something on offer for everyone.

During the pandemic our libraries had to adapt their operating models, which despite the challenges it presented, was instrumental in reshaping how we deliver our library services now. Utilising our learning from the pandemic has enabled us to further expand the diversity of what we offer to meet the changing needs of our communities whilst continuing to deliver excellent services for all. An example of this is the establishment of our Makerspaces. These spaces in our libraries have been developed post pandemic to drive innovation and harness creativity and entrepreneurial approaches.

We are proud to empower our citizens to explore and be inspired by what we have to offer, and we continually review feedback from our users to further enhance and develop our services.

Illustrated throughout this report are numerous highlights from both 2022-23 and 2023-24 that showcases the fantastic work that we do. We are proud to celebrate these achievements, none of which would have been possible without the dedication of our staff, volunteers and key partners. Please read on to find out more about what we have achieved.

TREVOR BAKER

**HEAD OF STRATEGY, COMMUNITY
LEARNING AND RESOURCES**

Our vision and values

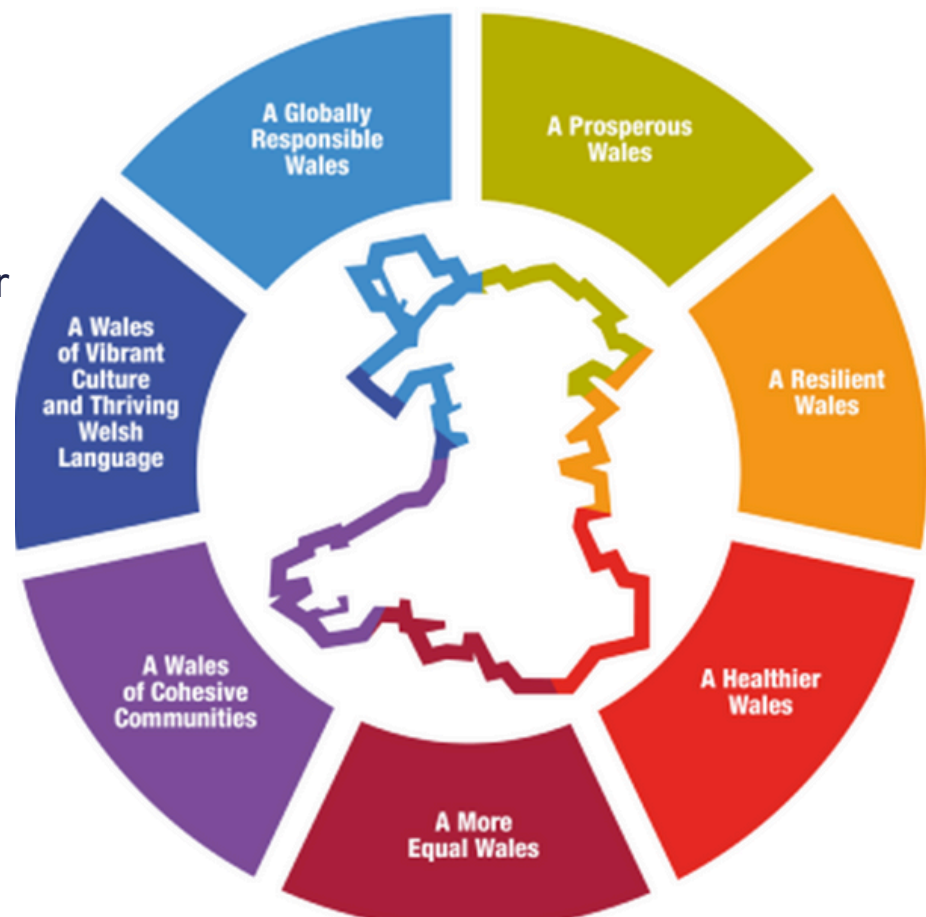
Our Libraries Services have an integral role in delivering the Council's Corporate Plan vision of:

'Strong Communities with a Bright Future'

Well-being Objective 1:	To work with and for our communities
Well-being Objective 2:	To support learning, employment and sustainable economic growth.
Well-being Objective 3:	To support people at home and in their community.
Well-being Objective 4:	To respect, enhance and enjoy our environment.

The Library Service plays a key contributory role in supporting the Council in meeting its well-being objectives.

The services we deliver all contribute to the 7 Well-being goals of the Well-being of Future Generations Act and our ways of working embed the Sustainable Development Principle where we ensure our resources, services and activities focus on the long term, prevention, integration, collaboration and involvement elements of delivery.



We what we do

Across the Vale of Glamorgan there are four Local Authority operated libraries, these include Barry, Penarth, Cowbridge and Llantwit. In addition to these there are also five community run libraries operated by a dedicated team of volunteers. These community libraries include St Athan, Rhoose, Dinas Powys, Sully (and Lavernock) and Wenvoe libraries.

We provide:

- ✓ Diverse and extensive range of reading collections to explore and inspire interest.
- ✓ Welcoming, inclusive and safe environments for people to connect.
- ✓ Warm hub to access advice and support.
- ✓ Courses and resources to promote a love of lifelong learning.
- ✓ Technology to promote innovation and creativity.
- ✓ Opportunities to enhance literacy.

We do this through working with volunteers and our partners:



Employability Teams & Vale Learning Centre

Housing

Association/Housing teams



Local Banks and Credit Union

South Wales Police & Safer Vale



Family Information Service & Play team.

Health Services/NHS



Volunteers/Voluntary Organisations & GVS

Together we create engaged, inspired and creative communities.



Performance snapshot 2023-24



341,416
books and digital
books
were checked out.

17,082
active library
users.



4,559
activities/events
with **71,682**
participants.



10,611
participants
accessed
advice/support
sessions.



468,671
physical visits to
our libraries per
1,000 population.



107,836
website visits.



247
volunteers supported
delivery of
20,176
hours via our
Community and Local
Authority Libraries.



Early literacy & creativity



For many children the library is the place where they discover their passion for reading, they ignite their interest in books and they enjoy experiencing the fun and excitement of being part of a wider reading community.

Libraries provide children with the opportunity to experiment as readers, providing access to new genres, titles and authors. With greater choice often comes greater enjoyment, encouraging children to read more because they enjoy it. Reading challenges and reading groups add a new dimension to the reading experience and research has shown how they enable children to read more widely and have a more enjoyable and satisfying reading experience (The Reading Agency, 2004).

Across our nine library branches we hold **60,000**



items as part of the children & young people's stock.

During 2023-24 we hosted

2,049 children's events/activities attended by **28,219**



children and young people

Children's activities

All library branches across the Vale deliver children's services, both in the form of books and activities. The four main libraries maintain a regular weekly programme of activities for pre-school children, including:

- Story time sessions (English and Welsh);
- Wriggle & Rhyme sessions; and
- Rhyme & Sign sessions.

Since the post-covid return to normal service delivery, there has been a significant increase in demand for these activities, with some branches now offering extra sessions.

Weekly activities for older children include **Lego club**, guided after-school **Coding club** using the library public access computers. Several branches also host **Chatterbooks** groups as a way of encouraging children to reflect on and discuss what they've been reading, as well as broadening their reading goals and introducing them to new genres. A number of library branches have also recently reintroduced **Dungeons & Dragons** role-playing game sessions, which had always been popular prior to the pandemic.



Early literacy & creativity



Bookstart

Our Vale Libraries actively participate in the national Bookstart scheme, organised by BookTrust Cymru and funded by the Welsh Government, which supports clinics and health visitors in delivering specially designed book packs to encourage children's early development.

Every child in Wales is entitled to receive two Bookstart packs before the age of three that contain carefully chosen age appropriate bilingual books, ideas for activities to promote literacy and information on joining their local library and details of children's activities available at Vale libraries. The Children's Librarian acts as the Bookstart Co-ordinator in the Vale of Glamorgan.

**In 2022-2023,
Vale Libraries
supplied**

2,623



**Bookstart
packs to
clinics**



Further information on the Book Start scheme is available on their [website](#)

Summer reading challenge

The Summer Reading Challenge (SRC), presented by the Reading Agency and funded by the Welsh Government through the Books Council of Wales, is the UK's biggest reading programme for primary school aged children. The challenge was established to address the issue that one in five children aged 11 possesses poor literacy skills. The challenge is run annually by Vale Libraries to encourage children to continue reading for pleasure throughout the summer holidays.

Based on a different theme each year, the challenge offers incentives in the form of stickers and prizes, collected each time children return books to their local library. The challenge is one of the most popular events in the Vale Libraries' calendar, with a consistently high level of engagement from children across the Authority.

Early literacy & creativity



Summer reading challenge

Post-Covid, libraries across the Vale have recorded a significant rise in the number of children registering for the reading challenge. This was also the first year since before Vale libraries staff boosted engagement with the reading challenge by visiting schools to promote the school in assemblies, which had a positive effect participation rates this year.

1,164



children participated in the Summer Reading Challenge this year (2023).

619

children completed the Summer Reading Challenge in 2023.



At the end of the summer holidays, all children who completed the challenge were invited to a celebration evening across our libraries in recognition of their achievement. All children that completed their reading challenge were presented with a certificate.



Reading well

Organised by the Reading Agency, **Reading Well** aims to offer support in managing personal health and well-being through reading resources. Reading Well books are all recommended by health experts, as well as people with lived experience of conditions and topics covered.

Though the programme was initially aimed at adults, the Reading Agency has since introduced an equivalent for children and another for teens. The collections cover a diverse range of topics related to both mental and physical well-being, all of which are available to borrow for an extended period from Vale libraries. Individuals can browse the collection themselves, or a title may be recommended to them by a health professional, and many are available as e-books or audio books.

Reading Well is a shared programme with Libraries Connected as part of the Universal Public Library Health Offer, and Welsh Government have funded every library authority in Wales to deliver the scheme bilingually in Welsh and English.

Early literacy & creativity



Engagement with schools

The Vale Libraries has a strong relationship with schools across the county. Library staff have worked tirelessly post-pandemic to re-establish those links and engagement with schools.

Schools are encouraged to organise visits for school groups to their local branch, to introduce children to the library service, make them aware of what libraries have to offer in terms of materials and activities, and to establish the idea of reading for pleasure.

Our libraries

hosted **335**

School visit sessions

attended by **8,645**

children from
Vale schools.



On a broader level, the library service also organises county-wide events for schools, such as the **Book Slam competition**. This is a national tournament in which primary schools are invited to enter teams of four children who must choose two books from a set list, then devise a performance or presentation based on one of them and discuss the other in conversation with (in the Vale's case) the Children's Librarian, as Book Slam Coordinator. Winning schools from each participating authority go on to compete at a national final held annually in Aberystwyth.

48

children participated in
Book Slam competition
this year (2023)
representing four Vale
schools.



Children's events

In addition to its regular activities (as detailed above), Vale of Glamorgan libraries organise stand-alone events for children throughout the year. Some of these (particularly those hosted during the school holidays) will be tied to the theme of the Summer Reading Challenge; in recent years these have included ZooLab animal handling sessions, Mad Science workshops, Pedal Emporium bicycle-powered painting sessions, Fiery Jack's circus show, kite-making workshops, puppet theatre and Mr. Marvel's magic show.



Children's events

Vale libraries have also played host to a number of author visits, many of which have been arranged with involvement of schools across the Vale. In September 2023, poet and Waterstones **Children's Laureate Joseph Coelho** visited Llantwit Major Library as part of his Library Marathon across the UK. Joseph delivered a reading to children from St Illtyd's Primary School in Llantwit Major.

One of the most prominent authors to have worked with Vale libraries recently was writer and comedian **David Baddiel**. As part of the **Winter of Well-being scheme**, the Children's Librarian arranged for David to appear at the Memorial Arts Centre in Barry, interviewing David on stage and taking questions from an audience of approximately 900 children from schools across the Vale.

The event was a great success and, afterwards, Vale libraries offered schools the chance to order copies of David's books. These were supplied by two local independent bookshops (Griffin Books of Penarth and Cowbridge Bookshop), were signed by David and subsequently delivered to schools.



Early literacy & creativity



What do you tell us?



Thank you to all the staff for making St David's Day so special. The crafts for the children also coffee and Welsh cakes. My granddaughter loves the craft work, helped by dedicated ladies on the day. It was much appreciated.



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X had a fabulous time at Penarth Library this evening for Magic, Muggles and Mr Marvel Children's Entertainer. Huge thanks to the library staff and Mr Marvel for such a wonderful event.

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Thank you for all you do for our little ones @penarthlibrary - we're so lucky to have you!



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Case study



'Anna attends the weekly morning music session and the Lego Club with her two older boys. She describes the library as a lovely place that provides a reliable service to help structure her days. She finds it a welcoming and calm atmosphere, with wonderful staff.' And it has helped her 11-month-old to learn to socialise and sing. Her sons aged 5 and 7 attend the Lego sessions and take books out which she feels has really helped grow their interest and has increased their enjoyment and intrigue of books.'



Age friendly environments



As the Vale of Glamorgan has achieved age friendly status, we strive as a library service to ensure that our resources, services and activities on offer are inclusive and accessible to our older people. Fundamental to this is how through our service provision we ensure we embody the WHO's Age Friendly Communities Concept where there are 8 key areas of focus. Of these areas of focus our library services directly contribute to 5 of these in relation to community support/health services, communication/information, civic participation/employment, respect/social inclusion and social participation. Both Barry and Penarth have achieved Age Friendly status and Cowbridge and Llantwit Major are working towards renewing their status.

The library is a social hub where people come to attend events, connect with partner organisations, come for digital advice, and talk to friends and our friendly staff. In addition to this, we have a wealth of information and books for people to browse and borrow. Through the variety of services and activities we offer we can ensure that our residents can age well in our communities.

Across our breadth of services and activities we provide a variety of opportunities enhance our service users' well-being, promote social inclusion and tackle feelings of loneliness and isolation so that older people feel empowered to actively participate in their communities.

Dementia friendly

Our library services not only seek to be age friendly, but dementia friendly too. Across all our branches we offer a range of dementia friendly books along with a collection of books to support carers of family members with dementia. Alongside this we support the **Dementia Friendly initiative** through attendance at Dementia Friends Cafés and meetings to share information about our dementia friendly resources on offer. The libraries have also supported the initiative through offering our libraries as a location for information sharing events for key partners. All new library staff attend **dementia friendly training** and we as a service are actively working towards obtaining **Dementia Friendly status** in the Vale.



Age friendly environments



Picture the Vale

Our digitalisation project 'Picture the Vale' has been hugely popular and has seen the collation of historical images of the Vale from the 1880s to the present day. These images have also been used to create a dementia friendly resource, which is used by the local hospice and care homes to support their dementia patients and their families. The historical images used in the collection evoke memories and enable dementia patients and their carers to connect and communicate through these local images.

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VE DAY PLASSEY STREET



Age friendly activities & clubs

There are a variety of clubs and activities that are available to all ages, which have proven to be particularly popular and well attended by older people. These groups operate from our libraries are provided free of charge and play a vital role in **enhancing the well-being** of our residents and **promotes social inclusion**, breaking down the **barriers of isolation and loneliness**.

These clubs and activities include Crochet Club, Knit and Natter group, Feel Good Friday club/Jigsaw club and arts and craft groups.

Barry Library also operates a **Friends and Neighbours group**. The purpose of the group is to bring people together to share stories/information and to connect with one another. Although the group is not aimed at older people, many of those in attendance at the Barry group are 50+. It provides a friendly and safe environment to socialise and combat feelings of isolation. The Barry group meets once a week in the Lolfa part of Barry Library where they also have regular speakers in attendance.



2,198

Age friendly events have been delivered across our Libraries.

22,048

people attended our age friendly groups/club activities.



Age friendly environments



Hafod housing

We have formed effective ties with Hafod Housing who provide a drop-in service from our **Rhose, St Athan, Llantwit Major libraries**. Although the drop-in advice sessions are open to all, these sessions are tailored to the over 55s population.

Hafod provide impartial advice on a variety of housing related matters, so that residents can be signposted to additional support and services.

19 Hafod drop-in sessions were delivered across our libraries during 2023/24.

Home library service

Vale of Glamorgan Libraries operate a Home Library Service, with a team of **dedicated volunteers** delivering books to people who can no longer get to their local library. As well as bringing a supply of books, the volunteers can sometimes be the only social point of contact the customer may have that day or week.

This friendly, bespoke service gives people free access to books and enables them to continue what has often been a life-long habit, a love of reading.



Nine of our home library service volunteers regularly visited 32 residents providing 416 home visits



We have also established good relationships with our local care homes for the provision of books on loan to residential homes. We have established links with approximately **6 local care homes**, where we provide a selection of books on a three-month loan. These books are then returned by each of the care homes and refreshed with a new selection on a three-monthly basis. This ensures that we can be inclusive in our services to older people.

Age friendly environments



What do you tell us?

'I would like to thank...the staff of Cowbridge Library for all their help, kindness and concern. They are my lifeline. I have been housebound for several years and without the volunteers, who pick up my books, plus tapes for the partially sighted, my life would be bleak indeed. I look forward to their visits. Thank you from the bottom of my heart.'



"I just wanted to say how helpful the Digital Champion has been helping me with my phone and laptop. Nothing is too much trouble for him.

The library has become a social centre and the staff are friendly and helpful'.



Inclusion & connecting with communities



Our libraries are warm welcoming environments where inclusion and connecting with communities is at the very heart of what we do. We are passionate about creating inclusive environments that promote equity, celebrate diversity, break down barriers to lifelong learning/skills development and are places of sanctuary for refugees that have resettled in our communities.

Through our work we constantly explore ways in which we can create spaces that are inclusive and reflective of our diverse communities to champion diversity and inclusion for all.

The library hosts a broad range of events/activities that help bring people together and aids their feeling of being connected to their communities all of which creates a positive contribution toward our resident's well-being and opens up access to services.

Digital inclusion

Digital inclusion is about ensuring that everyone has equitable access to the internet, digital technology and services. People can become digitally excluded if they don't have the skills, or confidence to access technology and/or don't have no/limited access to equipment to enable connectivity. Across the Vale of Glamorgan, our libraries seek to break down the barriers associated with digital exclusion. We play a central role in supporting the digital inclusion and developing the digital literacy of our citizens.

Through our network of **Digital Champions**, we have been able to support all ages to access digital technology and services whilst promoting messages around online safety. Promoting digital inclusion, widens access to services, creates opportunities for employment and skills development whilst enhancing people's confidence to embrace technology. Across our branches our volunteer digital champions run 'Digital Drop ins' on a weekly basis to provide help and support with a mobile phones, tablets and laptops

**Across our
branches we
have delivered**

357
digital 1-1
sessions.

During 2023-24

318
residents have been
supported with digital
support via the drop-in
service.



Inclusion & connecting with communities



Employability

We have successfully engaged a variety of partners to utilise our libraries to promote employability opportunities to our residents. Pobl operates from our Barry Library to provide one to one support and advice sessions. Communities for Work (CfW) also run a Jobs Club every Monday from Barry Library IT suite and the CELT+ project has also commenced drop-in advice sessions on Mondays, Thursdays and Fridays to support individuals with advice on eligibility for grants, benefits, support with accessing work placements as well as assisting with applications for bus passes. The Vale Learning Centre is also permanently situated on the first floor of Barry Library and often brings in classes of ESOL students for class tours around the library, introductory sessions and to attend other library events.

Grant funding from the Adult Education Reengagement Grant was used to organise a Job and Employability skills fair in Barry Library in October 2022, which was attended by 45 local employers as well as employability organisations. Stalls were spread out across the floors of the library which also included the opportunity for attendees to participate in some craft sessions. The fair saw approximately 400 more people attend the library than the average figure for a Wednesday at that time. It was felt that the central location of the library helped to contribute to the event's success. Following on from this success similar fairs have also been held for Welsh Language jobs (organised by Adult Education), a Mid-Career Change Fair (organised by Careers Wales) and a Family Information Day (organised by the Vale's Family Information Service).



Supporting refugees

We pride ourselves on providing a warm welcome to all refugees that have been displaced due to conflict, persecution, violence and human rights violations. We want our libraries to be safe havens where there is equitable access to our library services and where people can seek help and support people when needed.

More recently our library branches have been involved with supporting Ukrainian refugees. From our Barry branch, the Council's Refugee Support service runs two advice drop-ins on Tuesdays and Thursdays that are targeted for supporting Ukrainian Refugees. Library staff have also regularly visited a local hotel where some refugees were living in temporary accommodation to provide some outreach support in the form of rhyme and sign sessions for young children.

Inclusion & connecting with communities



Celebrating diversity

Our libraries continuously look at ways we can promote and celebrate diversity through the variety of activities we have on offer across our services. More recently we ran a successful series of Drag Queen story time sessions across all our library branches hosted by Aida H D. It provided an opportunity for children and young people to come together to listen to one of Aida's stories that focus on breaking down prejudice and discrimination.



Banking services

With the closure of a number of banks on our high streets, there have been real concerns by residents and small local businesses on how they could access banking services face to face. In response to this at our Barry and Penarth branches we have been piloting a banking hub where Barclays and HSBC to run a pop up bank to support residents and small businesses that prefer to access banking support face to face. This model has proved to be successful, and we will be working with other banking partners to explore opportunities to expand this to more branches.

Warm spaces

Our libraries have played a fundamental role in supporting the 'Warm Spaces' initiative in response to the Cost of Living crisis. The Council works closely with its partners to establish a network of venues/locations, which included our libraries across the Vale, to offer warm spaces to people to meet and get a hot drink without the worry of staying in a cold home at a time when fuel costs were escalating. Establishing our libraries as warm spaces also helped attract people back to their local libraries following the pandemic. Our library branches ran a series of Warm Welcome sessions that became increasingly popular as time went on. In the first week there were 8 attendees, which increased to 40 within a fortnight. The increase in visitor numbers we have witnessed can in part be attributed to the Warm Welcome sessions.



29% increase

in average visitor numbers to Barry Library on Fridays in March 2023 compared to March 2022.

Inclusion & connecting with communities



Period dignity

Period dignity is about removing the stigma associated with periods, promoting understanding of periods, as well as addressing inequality of access to period products due to period poverty. Our libraries have been a hub for promoting period dignity. Throughout all our library branches we stock a variety of period products to ensure no woman or young girl faces period poverty. Our stock of period products is freely available to anyone who requires them. We are proud to support this initiative and during 2023-24 and to date we supported the distribution of 3,566 period products across our library branches.

Supporting well-being

During 2022-23, we successfully accessed a variety of grant funding to enhance the well-being of both adults and children and young people. We utilised Welsh Government funding from the Summer of Fun and Winter of Well-being grant streams to offer a comprehensive range of activities aimed at children and young people to recover from the impact of the pandemic and support their well-being. These activities were run throughout the school holidays and included facilitated sessions such as Drag Queen Story Time, Mr Marvel's magic show, Graffiti art by Hurts so Good and sound recording with Pykka.



Our libraries also successfully bid for Adult Education Re-engagement grant funding that enabled the provision of a variety of activities aimed at adults to support their skills development and well-being. These activities included sessions on creative writing, Yoga, graffiti art for adults, letter press, spring wreath making, wire flowers and leather journal cover craft sessions. Other activities have included arranging talks by local authors/artists as well as talks on exercise for peri-menopausal and menopausal women.


What do you tell us?




'On Tuesday we had a wonderful time at @dragqueenstoryhouruk with @penarthlibrary. @aidahdeedrag was amazing as always bringing the pantomime vibes to educational reading'.

(Feedback from Drag Queen Story Time)

Inclusion & connecting with communities




' I wanted to take the time to convey my gratitude to you and your team for their effectiveness and support in planning and hosting the Learning & Employment event at Barry Library on Wednesday 20th September which made it a great success and for all the support provided at previous events hosted at Barry Library. We saw 40 organisations attend on the day which included employers recruiting, learning, and training providers and support services. We are very lucky in the Vale to have developed amazing partnerships with a wide range of stakeholders including the Libraries, ACL, Careers Wales/Working Wales, and DWP Job Centre Plus to be able to offer such events that benefit the local communities in the Vale. The library is such a great venue as it is accessible, welcoming and promotes lifelong learning'. (Employer Liaison Officer Communities for Work Plus feedback on Employability event).



'We always get a lovely welcome at the Colouring Club. The staff are very accommodating to us all. The individuals we support are looked after by the staff offering them tea, coffee and biscuits. The activity they do is enjoyed by them all, plenty of drawings and a nice selection of colouring pencils and crayons.

(Feedback from the Learning Disability Teams, Vale of Glamorgan Adult Services, Hen Coleg).



Thank you so much for organizing these craft sessions! They have been a delight! Well chosen, perfect level of skill, free, wonderful themes, great timing and very inspiring to teach/pass on.

Also, great use of the library, and inspirational to enjoy looking at the variety and a range of books in the library. e.g. Scottish heritage.

Many thanks, again. Best wishes, please do more. (Feedback from Warm Welcome workshops).

Inclusion & connecting with communities



Case study



Case Study- Support for refugee families

In March 2022, the Vale of Glamorgan Library Service was contacted by a Tenant Support Officer for Taff Housing, requesting support for the children of Afghan refugees being temporarily housed at a local hotel.

Following conversations with Barry Library staff, it was agreed that the library would offer a weekly rhyme session, along with a craft activity. It was clear that a degree of trial-and-error would apply to these sessions, at least initially, as the children were of a broad age group. A further consideration was the likely language barrier, since the children were predominantly Dari and Pashto speakers, with only basic English.

Following a preliminary visit to the hotel to discuss any special requirements with representatives of the community, the first session was held in May. Three members of the Barry Library staff, along with the Children's Librarian, attended to deliver a session to approximately 80 children, ranging from toddlers to around 10 years old. The session consisted of rhyming and singing, engaging with puppets and musical instruments, followed by a craft activity, planting sunflower seeds in decorated flower pots.

The session was well received and successful, though a number of points were identified as needing to be addressed and rethought before the following week. The more interactive elements were challenging, as the language barrier made it very difficult for those delivering the activities to communicate what they wanted the children to do at any given time.

It was arranged that a few adults from the community would attend sessions, to help and to act as interpreters. These sessions have been hugely successful and continue to be delivered and be well attended, having proved extremely popular with the children. One of the community's representatives commented that the children frequently ask "when are the library people coming again?"

The library service is also working with Flying Start on this project, and Dari and Pashto materials have been made available to the community through the Vale's Bookstart scheme, in collaboration with Book Trust Cymru.



Inclusion & connecting with communities



Case study



Case Study on Warm Spaces and supporting well-being

This case study demonstrates how the Warm Welcome initiative attracted someone to the library for the first time, in this case a lady with dementia. Attending the library regularly has meant that she is no longer spending most of her days alone. It has helped her gain confidence around other people and has increased her feelings of social well being.

Barry Library applied for and received a grant from the Warm Welcome Initiative. The grant allowed it to start offering free tea and coffee for three afternoons a week from December 2022 onwards. Within a week of offering the free tea and coffee, a lady started to visit the library. She is in her 70s living with dementia. Because of the cost-of-living crisis she couldn't afford to stay home all day. So, she would spend most of her days travelling around on buses with her free bus pass or if the weather was good, walking around Barry Island. Some of the bus drivers were extremely concerned about her being on her own all the time, especially as she could appear confused sometimes. One of them suggested to her that she could go to the free tea and coffee sessions that had just started in the library.

She started to attend regularly, as she enjoyed chatting to the staff and they encouraged her to take part in some of the activities. She became more confident and started to chat to other regular library users. She now attends the library every day. She has a group of friends that she sits with, who are all regular library visitors and they particularly enjoy chatting about local history.

The Warm Welcome Sessions were extremely successful at the Vale libraries. It attracted a lot of people who hadn't visited the library before. Because of this success, it was decided that the free tea and coffee sessions would continue at the library for the rest of the year.



Makerspaces



Creating opportunities for developing digitally creative skills has been at the centre of our Makerspace concept. Developing digital skills has numerous benefits to our communities, from increasing skill sets, improving economic potential and opportunities for enterprise through to enhancing personal well-being and developing a sense of community. Our remit is to promote and improve digital literacy and upskill our staff and library members/local community.

During 2022-23, we initially refurbished and part extended a space at Penarth Library to house a range of equipment for adults and children to progress some digital creative ideas. This resulted in Penarth Library Makerspace opening in May 2022 with a series of open days and taster sessions.

Using the blue print from the Penarth model, in April 2023 the new Makerspace opened in Barry Library. The library received a Transformation Capital Grant from the Welsh Government via MALD to transform a room in the old part of the building into an attractive, modern, and accessible Makerspace facility to attract users of all ages and abilities. The £98,290.50 grant went toward the purchase of new equipment for the area while the library service provided the match funding for the building work and installation of the glass door

The Makerspace provides equality of opportunities for people to develop and advance their digital skills and creativity in an area where there is a lot of social deprivation. We have equipment to support 4 core subject areas: 3D design and printing, laser cutting and engraving on recycled cardboard, wood and acrylic, Coding and Robotics and digital design (both audio and visual). Makerspace aims to provide a pathway of learning in these core areas that supports anyone regardless of skill level and background.

Our technology includes:

- Software for photo and film editing, along with a digital photography kit.
- Software and equipment for recording podcasts and editing music.
- TinkerCAD and a 3D printer, along with laser cutter for making and engraving objects.
- A Cricut for cutting felt, vinyl and other fabrics.
- Heat presses for putting designs on T-shirts, tea-towels, bags and mugs.
- Apple Macs and software for the best design opportunities.
- Virtual Reality headsets and programmable robots to spark creativity.
- Access to Raspberry Pi computers.



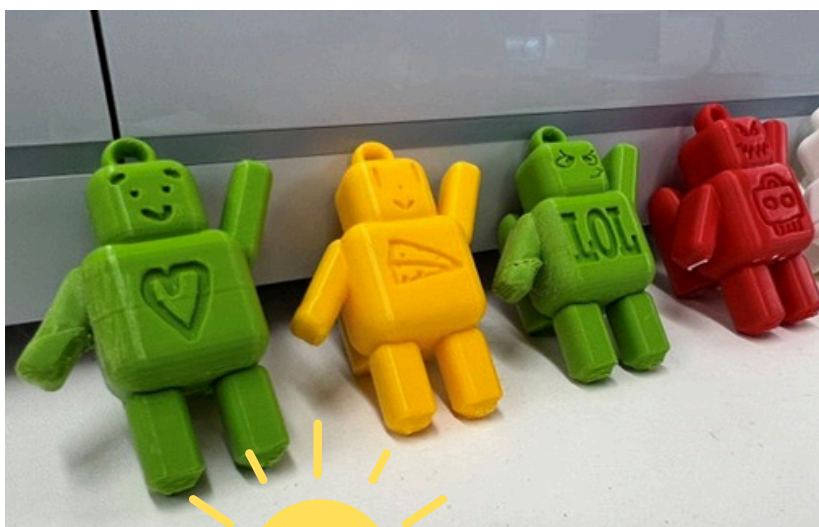
Makerspaces



We are staffed by a Makerspace Development Officer and a Makerspace Technician who are available to offer advice, training, and supervision on the equipment at both our Penarth and Barry Library Makerspace sites. Our hope is to spark imagination and to set people off on a creative path for personal learning and enjoyment but also perhaps as a first step to creating a business or product design.

During 2022-23 and to date, our Makerspaces have been used for a variety of activities including:

- Hosting 3D printing sessions and live gaming workshops with the Penarth and District Wargamers Society.
- Manchester University's Print City staff visited us to give staff and volunteers 3D printing training.
- Hosting 3D printing, robot coding and game design sessions for teenagers with our teen-led group 'VOG BOTS' working toward an entry in the BAFTA Cymru Young Game Designers Awards 2023.
- Operating a volunteer-run arts/camera club 'Lens Friends' that meet on a regular basis.
- Running 3D printing, laser cutting and card craft courses in partnership with our Vale Courses Adult Learning Programme as well as partnering with Adult Community Learning to host Get Back on Track digital employability courses.



During the first year of our Makerspaces

1,418

people participated in

275

Makerspace events.



Makerspaces



To build on the success of the new Makerspaces and the ongoing sustainability of the initiative, we have actively developed partnerships with both Vale Adult Learning and local groups/organisations. We have worked with Benthg Cymru and Urban-Vertical to promote sustainability themed arts projects for adults and children. We have also worked with the Welsh Games Academy to offer video game coding lessons for teenagers.

Case study



Case Study-Makerspace Partnership working

In spring 2023 in partnership with Urban-Vertical CIC we launched the CILIP grant funded project Lle Y Dyfu (<https://urban-vertical.org.uk/penarth-maker-space>) This was a series of arts workshops for all ages themed around local sustainable food production. Our workshops zine-making, photography, digital collage, cyanotype printmaking and kids collage sessions. We are hoping to use these as a 'proof-of-concept' and roll the project out across our other VOGC and community-led libraries in 2023/24.



Community libraries

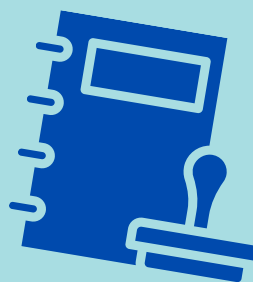


In 2016 our village libraries were subject to a Community Asset Transfer. This is where an asset that was once managed by a public body (such as the Council) is transferred into community management which includes the delivery of any associated services. This affected all five village libraries that include St Athan, Dinas Powys, Sully/Lavernock, Wenvoe and Rhoose. These community libraries are run and managed by volunteers, and each community library has its own management team of Trustees to oversee the operation. All community libraries are equipped with a variety of books and other resources as well as IT equipment, photocopiers and printers and free WiFi access.

Although the community libraries are volunteer run, they continue to be supported by the Local Authority's Library service with the provision of a variety of new book stock and access to online resources. The Local Authority also has two Peripatetic Library Support Officers that provide ongoing support to our community libraries. The Peripatetic Library Support Officers are a key point of contact between the library service and volunteers. They provide training to volunteers and advice on day-to-day operations as well as promoting and supporting community library events such as the summer reading challenge. Over the course of a year, the Peripatetic Officers provide support across all our community libraries.

Like our Local Authority managed libraries, our community libraries offer a wealth of activities and events throughout the year including: Art and photography groups, Lego Club, local society meetings, story time, yoga classes, sensory play sessions, talks from local experts, well-being groups, arts and craft groups, a breastfeeding support group, drop in/advice sessions with partners such as Hafod and employability support via CELT+, Welsh language courses/groups, Code Club, book clubs as well as a peer support group for carers of those living with dementia.

Across our community libraries during 2022-23 we had 4,034 registered users. During 2023-24 we had 4,493 registered users



Across our community libraries during 2022-23 30,474 items were issued. During 2023-24, 45,506 items were issued.

Across our community libraries we were supported by 171 volunteers during 2023-24.

16,614 volunteer hours were delivered and between 2023-24



Community libraries, volunteers & partners



Spotlight on Dinas Powys Community Library

Dinas Powys Library has been a community run library managed by volunteers since 2016. In 2028, it successfully obtain £160K grant funding to remodel the library as a meeting/activity venue and café. This remodeling was completed in April 2019 and the new community library/meeting space was launched.

The library is managed by approximately 64 volunteers and offers a wide breadth of activities/events suitable for all ages of the local community such as Lego Club, Yoga classes, Scrabble club, arts and crafts group, talks from local experts, local society meetings, sensory play sessions, story times, health and well-being promotion group, training and a Breastfeeding and weaning support group led by a Health Visitor. The library also has a dedicated gallery space to deliver art and photography exhibitions that aims to support local artists. The creation of a community cafe has also been a welcome addition, where people can meet, socialise and connect with friends. Volunteers at the library recently won a Local Heroes award in a public vote coordinated by Dinas Powys Community Council. The award was in recognition of the commitment, selflessness, and unwavering support the volunteer team provide to their community. The volunteers were described as having left an 'indelible mark on the community'.



Case study

Feedback on Dinas Powys Breastfeeding & Weaning Support Group



The breastfeeding group provided me with vital advice and support when I was struggling to breastfeed my baby due to pain, discomfort, exhaustion and latching problems. The group has a specialist health visitor and peer support for women who are breastfeeding or combination feeding. Groups like this are vital as the UK has one of the lowest breastfeeding rates in the world and the World Health Organisation recommends a child is breastfed until the age of 2.

This group helped me through some tough times and I am still able to feed my baby who is now 18 months.

An attendee of the weekly Breastfeeding & Baby Weaning group



Volunteers



As well as the network of volunteers across our community libraries we are fortunate to have a well established and dedicated group of volunteers who regularly support our activities in our main local authority run branches. Outlined below is a summary of volunteer delivery over the last year (2023-24).



76 dedicated volunteers across our five Local Authority libraries. Delivered **3,562** volunteer hours.



35 Duke of Edinburgh and Welsh Baccalaureate volunteers on placement. Delivered **1,050** volunteer hours.

Nine

Volunteers supported delivery of **448 hours** of the Home delivery service.



Eight

Volunteers supported delivery of **716 hours** of the Digital Champions initiative.



Three

Volunteers supported delivery of **484 hours** of the Picture the Vale project.



One

Volunteer supported delivery of **40 hours** of Code Club.

15 Volunteers supported the Friends of Penarth Library with **720 hours**

One

Volunteer supported delivery of **24 hours** of Lens Friends.



One Volunteer supported delivery of **60 hours** of VoGBOTs.

Two

Volunteer supported delivery of **4 hours** of Penarth Local History events.



One volunteer supported delivery of **16 hours** of Feel Good Fridays.



Welsh Public Library Standards



What is the Welsh Public Library Standards?

Annually the Local Authority is required to submit a return to the Welsh Government on Welsh Public Library Standards (WPLS). The WPLS framework provides a mechanism for the LA to undertake a self assessment on how it is delivering its library services and meeting its statutory duties to "provide a comprehensive and efficient library service".

The WPLS framework outlines 12 core entitlements and 16 associated quality indicators that Local Authority Library Services must assess themselves against in terms of performance. The Core Entitlements set out a series of 12 standards for library services to enable the public to understand what services they can expect to see. The 16 quality indicators provide a means to measure performance to support monitoring and benchmarking. The annual self-assessment to Welsh Government must outline how the Local Authority is performing in relation to 12 core entitlements of the WPLS framework, record performance against 16 quality indicators of the WPLS, provide a narrative on the future direction and strategic context of how it is contributing to wider Welsh Government priorities and strategic goals, and provide examples of the impact the service has had on individuals or groups.

How did we do?

The most recent WPLS submission relates to the 2022-23 period the findings from which are summarised below:

- The Local Authority met 10 of the 12 core entitlements in full. The LA's self-assessment stated that two Core Entitlements were not met, but the independent assessor judged one of these to have been met in part. This related to providing access to the library service's strategy, policies, objectives and vision, in print and online, in a range of languages appropriate for the community, where it was deemed this was not met. The need to consult users regularly for their views on the service delivery and changing needs was deemed partially met by the independent assessor. The feedback report identified the need to conduct user surveys and in particular an adult survey in the coming year to gather user feedback.
- There are 16 quality indicators, of which 10 indicators have targets against which performance can be judged. During 2022-23, the LA achieved 70% of its quality indicators (7 out of 10 quality measures met/exceeded target), 10% (1) target was partially met and for 20% (2) of indicators the target was not met. Performance was partially met target in relation to staffing levels where it did not meet the target for staff per capita.
- Feedback identified that the Local Authority performs well in a number of areas, being above the median for Welsh library authorities for attendance per capita at events, visits per capita and active borrowers per capita. It also performs well for the number of qualified staff per capita. Staffing is supplemented by a large number of volunteers.
- The feedback acknowledged the impact of financial pressures on provision and that services are being asked to generate more income. The feedback report identified the potential impact of introducing charges for attending activities and other fees/charges and cautioned the need for this to be carefully monitored in terms of impact.

Welsh Public Library Standards



Customer impact



95%
overall
satisfaction
with Library
Services

85%
satisfaction
with choice of
books available



81%
satisfaction
with IT
facilities.



96%
people who attended
training sessions said
it helped them achieve
their goals



Young people
rated our libraries

9 out of 10



89%
of young people felt that
the library helps them to
learn and find things
out.



99%
of adults thought
our libraries are
enjoyable, safe and
inclusive
environments.



41%
thought libraries
made a difference
to their lives.



Use of resources



Ensuring that we use resources effectively and efficiently is fundamental to ensuring the sustainability of services both now and in the future. We are mindful of the current financial climate, where the emphasis needs to be on balancing needs against finite resources. Consequently our focus has been on ensuring value for money and that our resources in terms of both our finances and people are utilised responsibly. The cost of living has had a noticeable impact on our communities and on our budgets. To address ongoing budgetary pressures, we are looking at income generating opportunities but ensuring this is fair and proportionate for the communities we serve. Our staff remain our greatest asset. We wouldn't be able to operate such a diverse range of services and activities without them. They are at the very heart of what we do and through their dedicated and creative efforts they continue to shape and evolve library services that is reflective of community needs.

Outlined below is a summary of our use of resources during 2023-24.



Total number of staff (FTEs) **37.9**

Number of staff with library qualifications **5**



Budget overview for 2023/24

Expenditure on staff	£1,228,684.94
Total materials expenditure	£187,410.32
Total maintenance/replacement equipment, furniture/IT (includes capital items)	£135,659.92
Total other operational costs	£515,631.94
Total gross revenue expenditure	£2,067,387.12
Total income generated (Revenue only)	£60,319.79
Total revenue budget	£2,007,067.33
Total capital expenditure (Relates to Capital Grant Funding)	£17,181





Visit one of our libraries today

www.valeofglamorgan.gov.uk/libraries