

Welsh Public Library Standards 2014-17

Carmarthenshire County Council

Annual Assessment Report 2015-16

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

1) Executive summary

Carmarthenshire is meeting 17 of the 18 core entitlements in full, and partially meeting 1 Of the 7 quality indicators which have targets, Carmarthenshire achieved all 7 in full, an improvement compared to last year. It is also one of only two authorities to achieve this in 2015 16 and is to be praised for this.

Carmarthenshire library service is generally performing well, and has seen marked improvements in areas which were previously giving cause for concern. In this context, customer satisfaction which is below the median for Wales is disappointing, especially given that the service is bucking the general trend with an increase in physical visits and new members.

- Carmarthenshire conducted an impact survey in February 2016. 98% of attendees at training sessions said that attendance had helped them to achieve their goals this year. The impact case studies provided give clear descriptions of the activities offered, but evidence of the impact of these activities on the individuals taking part could be better articulated.
- Carmarthenshire carried out a customer survey in January/February 2015, with mixed results, detailed in last year's report. Levels of informal training have increased compared to last year, and are now the highest in Wales.
- Both physical and virtual visits have increased compared to last year, as have the numbers of members and active borrowers, increases which go against the trend across Wales. Issues have fallen however, by 40% in the case of audio-visual and electronic material, which the assessors find disappointing, given the range of online resources now offered by the service. Attendance at events remains below the median for Wales.
- Carmarthenshire has made considerable improvements in the area of *Learning for life*, with all targets in this area now being met. ICT provision has improved, and the percentage of requests supplied within 15 days is the highest in Wales.
- Staffing levels continue to meet the targets for both overall numbers and professionally qualified staff, and this is another area of strength. There has been a slight increase in revenue expenditure compared to 2013-14, and the average net cost per visit was £2.18, below the median for Wales.

Considering the four areas in the framework (Customers and communities; Access for all; Learning for life; and Leadership and development) in comparison to the rest of Wales, Carmarthenshire shows strength in all areas. It performs relatively poorly on customer satisfaction, however. Compared to the previous year, Carmarthenshire has made notable improvements across the service. Its plans for the future are expected to build on current

activity to grow services in a user-focussed way.

2) Performance against the standards

The standards framework comprises of core entitlements, quality indicators with targets, quality indicators with benchmarks and impact measures. Section 2 summarises achievements against the core entitlements, the quality indicators which have targets, the quality indicators showing performance against others, and impact measures. A narrative assessment of the authority's performance is made in Section 3.

a) Core entitlements

Carmarthenshire is meeting 17 of the 18 core entitlements in full, and 1 in part. The area in which the entitlement is only partially met is *Leadership and development*, where the library strategy is due to be completed during March 2017.

b) Quality indicators with targets

There are 16 quality indicators (QI) within the framework. Of the 7 which have targets, Carmarthenshire is one of only two authorities this year to achieve all 7 in full:

Quality Indicator	Met?	
QI 3 Individual development:		Met in full
a) ICT support	✓	
b) Skills training	✓	
c) Information literacy	✓	
d) E-government support	✓	
e) Reader development	✓	
QI 5 Location of service points	✓	Met in full
QI 8 Up-to-date reading material:		Met in full
a) Acquisitions per capita	✓	
<u>or</u> Materials spend per capita	✓	
b) Replenishment rate	✓	
QI 9 Appropriate reading material:		Met in full
a) % of material budget on children	✓	
b) % of material budget spent on Welsh	✓	
<u>or</u> Spend on Welsh per capita	✗	
QI 10 Online access:		Met in full
a) All service points	✓	
Computers per capita	✓	
b) Wi-Fi provision	✓	
QI 13 Staffing levels and qualifications:		Met in full
a) Staff per capita	✓	
b) Professional staff per capita	✓	
c) Head of service qualification/training	✓	
d) CPD percentage	✓	
QI 16 Opening hours per capita	✓	Met in full

This is an improvement over last year, when QI 9 was not met.

c) Impact measures

The framework contains three indicators which seek to gather evidence of the impact that using the library service has on people's lives. Through these and other indicators it is possible to see how the library service is contributing towards educational, social, economic and health and wellbeing local and national agendas. These indicators do not have targets. Not all authorities collected data for the impact indicators, and ranks are included out of the numbers of respondents stated, where 1 is the highest scoring authority.

Carmarthenshire undertook an impact survey of both adults and children in January/February 2015.

Performance indicator		Rank	Lowest	Median	Highest
QI 1 Making a difference					
b) % of children who think that the library helps them learn and find things out:	92%	7/12	86%	93%	99%
e) % of adults who think that the library has made a difference to their lives:	89%	4/13	36%	87%	97%
% of children who think that the library has made a difference to their lives:	93%	1/11	57%	73%	93%
QI 4 b) % of attendees of training sessions who said that the training had helped them achieve their goals:	98%	4/17	85%	97%	100%

Carmarthenshire provided 3 impact case studies which showed the real difference the library service makes:

- Library reminiscence sessions for people living with dementia, which have had positive outcomes for both the participants and the library staff
- Use of the Ziptales literary resource with school groups which has received positive feedback from teachers
- A community partnership with a professional rugby union club

All three projects were very well described, but the third in particular was lacking in evidence of direct beneficial impact on users.

d) Quality performance indicators and benchmarks

The remaining indicators do not have targets, but allow performance to be compared between authorities. The following table summarises Carmarthenshire's position for 2015-16. 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 obtained from customer surveys which only need to be carried out once during the three year framework period, or those where relevant data elements were not available to some authorities. Figures reported in respect of last year for QI 4 to QI 16 are repeated for convenience of comparison. Note that indicators 'per capita' are calculated per 1,000 population.

Performance indicator		Rank	Lowest	Median	Highest	2014/15	Rank
QI 1 Making a difference							
a) new skills	93%	1/13	23%	72%	93%		
c) health and well-being	89%	2/13	26%	58%	93%		
d) enjoyable, safe and inclusive	96%	9/13	84%	97%	100%		
QI 2 Customer satisfaction							

Performance indicator		Rank	Lowest	Median	Highest	2014/15	Rank
a) 'very good' or 'good' choice of books	85%	10/14	74%	89%	97%		
b) 'very good' or 'good' customer care	93%	12/14	90%	97%	99%		
c) 'very good' or 'good' overall	94%	13/14	92%	97%	99%		
d) child rating out of ten	8.7	12/13	8.0	9.2	9.5		
QI 4 User training							
a) attendances per capita	35	8	5	30	390	48	4
c) informal training per capita	1,017	1/19	3	195	1017	318	5/21
QI 6 Library use							
a) visits per capita	5,939	2	2,467	3,967	6,185	5,341	3
b) virtual visits per capita	1,264	5	340	976	2,475	212	22
c) active borrowers per capita	191	5	45	157	273	133	15
QI 7 attendances at events per capita	138	16	60	223	666	55	20
QI 11 Use of ICT - % of available time used by the public							
a) equipment	21%	21	20%	31%	68%	23%	22
b) Wi-Fi services	72%	3/8	20%	60%	90%	36%	6/8
QI 12 Supply of requests							
a) % available within 7 days	67%	19	57%	71%	86%	66%	19
b) % available within 15 days	96%	1	71%	86%	96%	84%	16
QI 13 Staffing levels and qualifications							
(v) a) total volunteers	27	7	0	18	103	17	8
b) total volunteer hours	1,662	5	0	582	3,699	650	10
QI 14 Operational expenditure							
a) total expenditure per capita	£16,586	5/21	£7,516	£12,749	£18,760	£15,971	6
b) % on staff	44%	20/21	40%	58%	79%	46%	21
% on information resources	16%	7/21	7%	13%	23%	13%	12
% on equipment and buildings	2%	17/21	1%	3%	20%	7%	8
% on other operational costs	39%	1/21	0%	20%	39%	35%	3
c) capital expenditure per capita	£0	14/21	£0	£272	£4,677	£0	16
QI 15 Net cost per visit	£2.18	15/21	£1.83	£2.43	£3.53	*	
QI 16 Opening hours (see note)							
(ii) a) % hours unplanned closure of static service points	0.13%	19	0.00%	0.00%	0.16%	0.52%	22
b) % mobile stops / home deliveries missed	1.04%	14 /19	0.00%	0.71%	23.44%	1.5%	13/19

Note: Rankings here have been reversed, so that 1 is the lowest scoring (best performing) authority.

* Income data for 2014-15 not available to calculate this figure.

3) Analysis of performance

The core entitlements and quality indicators are divided into four key areas. This section of the report outlines performance against the quality indicators within these four areas, and compares results with those from the first year of the framework.

a) Customers and communities

Carmarthenshire carried out a CIPFA survey in 2013/14, with an additional survey in January/February 2015. The authority scores well in the areas of new skills and health and well-being information, being ranked second amongst those authorities reporting survey data this year on both measures. Customer satisfaction under QI 2 is below the median of those authorities reporting survey data this year, and Carmarthenshire has the second lowest score

for overall satisfaction. A further survey is planned for the final year of the framework which is expected to show improved satisfaction. Levels of formal training have fallen slightly this year, with 98% of participants saying they had been helped to meet their goals, up from 94% last year. Reported levels of informal training have tripled compared to last year, and are now the highest in Wales. All static service points open for 10 hours or more per week offer the full range of services in support of individual development.

b) Access for all

Carmarthenshire is a sparsely populated county, and meets the target for access to service points. Both the numbers of physical and virtual visits have increased compared to last year, as have the number of library members and active borrowers. Resource use is lower than last year, however with a fall of over 40% in audio-visual and electronic issues. Attendance at library events has more than doubled compared to last year, but remains below the median for Wales.

c) Learning for life

Carmarthenshire has achieved both quality indicators with targets in this area, for up-to date and appropriate reading material, one of only 4 authorities to do so this year. Spending on material in the Welsh language has increased four-fold compared to last year, and with the fourth highest percentage of Welsh speakers in Wales, this is welcomed.

All libraries now offer public access computers and Wi-Fi, which was upgraded during the year. There has been a slight fall in the proportion of time for which public access ICT facilities are used, which remains one of the lowest levels of usage recorded in Wales. The Wi-Fi network is well used, however.

There has been a further significant improvement in the speed of supply of requests, notably the percentage supplied within 15 days, which is now the highest in Wales.

d) Leadership and development

Staffing levels have fallen slightly compared to last year, but Carmarthenshire is one of only two authorities meeting all the targets set for staffing this year. Carmarthenshire has increased its use of volunteers, with 27 each giving an average of 62 hours to the service. Levels of staff training are the third highest in Wales.

There has been a further increase in revenue expenditure per capita, of 3.8% compared to 2014-15, most notably in the materials fund, which stands at 16% of the total in 2014-15. Spending overall is above the median for Wales, with the highest proportion in Wales being spent on other operational costs. The gross average cost per visit is £2.30, down from £2.88 last year, largely as a result of the increased visitor numbers.

Carmarthenshire had the highest proportion of unplanned closures of static service points in Wales in 2014-15, and there has been a marked improvement in both the rates of unplanned closures and missed mobile stops compared to last year. The target for opening hours has been met.

4) Strategic context

Carmarthenshire provided details of a number of ways in which the service supports key government agendas, including promoting literacy through reading groups and library activities, giving people the opportunity to learn digital skills, and working with external partners to promote health and well-being,

5) Future direction

Carmarthenshire libraries expect to continue to develop services and resources, building on the current offer with new services to encourage innovation and creativity.

6) Conclusion

Carmarthenshire library service is generally performing well, and has seen marked improvements in areas which were previously giving cause for concern. In this context, customer satisfaction, which is below the median for Wales is disappointing, especially given that the service is bucking the general trend with an increase in physical visits and new members.