

Welsh Public Library Standards 2017-2020: Denbighshire County Council

Annual Assessment Report 2019/20

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

1 Executive summary

Denbighshire met all of the 12 core entitlements in full.

Of the 9 quality indicators which have targets, Denbighshire achieved 7 in full, 1 in part and did not achieve 1.

Denbighshire's vision is to ensure that "libraries are the beating hearts of the communities they serve – trusted neutral places where everyone is welcome regardless of their age, background or financial circumstances". Denbighshire has broadly maintained its performance throughout the sixth framework and has a strong commitment to health and wellbeing. Although there has been an overall decrease in usage, the increasing importance of the digital resources offered by Denbighshire can be clearly seen. Staffing levels have broadly been maintained, although the service notes that ongoing budget pressures will impact on future development. The development of a volunteering strategy launched in 2019 should continue to positively impact on the sustainability of the service. There are likely to be further budget pressures in the immediate future, but the intention to focus on the development of staff should enable Denbighshire libraries to remain at the heart of their communities and continue to deliver services effectively.

- A children's survey was undertaken in February/March 2020. The rating out of ten awarded by users 7-16 has increased and is above the median in Wales.
- Although figures for many areas of library use have fallen since the first reporting year of the framework this can in part be attributed to the impact of Covid-19. Denbighshire still records an above average performance per capita in these areas and remains above the median for Wales. Electronic downloads have increased by 153% since 2017/18.
- Although there has been a slight decrease in the materials budget in 2019/20, the materials budget is 9.5% higher than the first reporting year of the framework.
- Denbighshire achieves the Welsh language provision target and ranks first in Wales for issues per 1,000 Welsh speaking resident population.
- There has been no significant change to staffing since 2018/19. Figures remain largely the same as reported in the first year of the framework. The targets for staffing (QI 13) are partially met.
- There has been no significant change to opening hours since 2018/19. Figures remains largely the same as reported in the first year of the framework and the target is met.

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

Denbighshire continues to meet all 12 of the Core Entitlements in full. Links with health and well-being partners have been strengthened with Denbighshire receiving funding from the Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board to raise awareness of the successful Reading Well scheme and embed it within the primary care service. The service has a continued commitment to ensuring customers can access the information sources they need and a regional delivery system has been developed to enable more effective interlending in North Wales.

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 Denbighshire achieved 7 in full, 1 in part and did not achieve 1 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	√	
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	√	
QI 13 Staffing levels and qualifications:		Partially Met
i) Staff per capita	x	
ii) Qualified staff per capita	x	
iii) Head of service qualification/training	√	
QI 16 Opening hours per capita	√	Met in full

Denbighshire has maintained its performance in this third year of the sixth framework, with no significant change since 2017/18.

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.

Denbighshire completed its adult user survey in November 2018 and the children’s survey in February/March 2020 on paper and online. The percentage of children who think that the library helps them learn and find things out has improved since the previous survey undertaken in framework five.

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:	87%	16/19	60%	90%	97%
e) % of adults who think that the library has made a difference to their lives:	78%	=16/19	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. Denbighshire provided four such case studies:

- Employment partnership – Denbighshire’s partnership with Working Denbighshire. The close partnership with *Working Denbighshire* is highlighted. Mentors from this organisation meet participants in the library. The value of the library space to a young adult is highlighted. The library was able to provide this individual with a safe and friendly environment, of which he had no knowledge prior to meeting his mentor.
- Volunteering – Denbighshire’s libraries volunteering strategy. The strategy aims to increase and improve volunteering opportunities for people in libraries. For many people, volunteering provides an opportunity to contribute to the local community, whilst at the same time, volunteers enable the library to be more responsive and flexible in their approach.
- Safe Space – library staff have supported a number of different generations within the same family in obtaining information for their hobbies and pursuits. The important role that libraries play in the lives of their communities is emphasized and through this, the role of Librarians as navigators through the world of information.
- Social isolation – the impact of a library craft club on one individual. For one individual new to the area, the craft group in the library has been a lifeline. She now has a support network that wouldn’t have materialised without this initiative. This has resulted in an improvement to her wellbeing.

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 Denbighshire’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	55%	17/18	25%	76%	94%	55%
c) health and well-being	44%	18/18	38%	69%	96%	44%
d) enjoyable, safe and inclusive	93%	17/17	10%	92%	100%	93%
QI 2 Customer satisfaction					[Framework 6]	
a) 'very good' or 'good' choice of books	82%	16/18	78%	91%	99%	82%
b) 'very good' or 'good' customer care	96%	15/18	88%	97%	100%	96%
c) 'very good' or 'good' IT facilities	65%	17/17	65%	85%	99%	65%
d) 'very good' or 'good' overall	94%	16/18	85%	96%	100%	94%
e) users aged 16 & under rating out of ten	9.3	=7/19	8.0	9.1	9.5	n/a
QI 8 Library use ¹						
a) visits per capita	4,031*	9/22	2429	3987	6874	4,216
b) virtual visits per capita	1,383	5/22	239	909	2131	1,318
c) active borrowers per capita	186	5/22	78	145	244	192
QI 10 Welsh issues per capita ²	1468	1/22	311	680	1468	1424
QI 11 Online access						
b) Computers per 10,000	10	8/22	4	9	14	10
c) % of available time used by the public	21%	15/22	14%	30%	64%	10
QI 14 Operational expenditure						
a) total expenditure per capita	£12,901	9/22	£7,260	£12,368	£23,333	£9715
b) % on staff,	60%	10/22	48%	61%	76%	69%
% on information resources	10%	=15/22	5%	13%	22%	20%
% on equipment and buildings	5%	=11/22	0%	8%	28%	2%
% on other operational costs	25%	=8/22	1%	18%	35%	9%
c) capital expenditure per capita	£590	9/22	£0	£1,567	£13,027	£486
QI 16 Opening hours ³						
(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%

¹ 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 ²per 1,000 Welsh speaking resident population ³ 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)ⁱ

Denbighshire completed its adult user survey in November 2018. Figures for customer satisfaction remained at a high level. A children's survey was undertaken in February/March 2020 in paper and online. The rating out of ten awarded by users 7-16 has increased and is above the median in Wales. All static libraries provide the full range of support for individual development and health and well-being, with all libraries stocking the full set of Reading Well: Books on Prescription for Mental Health.

3.2 Access and use (QI 6-8)ⁱⁱ

Library usage has also been impacted by the closure of all Libraries on March 20th 2020 due to Covid-19. Denbighshire continues to meet the target for easy access to service points with no changes since the first reporting year of the framework. Although figures for many areas of library use have fallen since the first reporting year of the framework this can in part be attributed to the impact of Covid-19. Denbighshire still records an above average performance per capita in these areas and remains above the median for Wales. In line with the majority of service in Wales, the number of electronic downloads has increased by 153% since 2017/18. The service notes that this is now 11.25% of total borrowing. There has also been an increase of 5.2% in the number of virtual visits to the library's web site since 2017/18.

3.3 Facilities and services (QI 9-12)ⁱⁱⁱ

There has been a slight decrease in the materials budget in 2019/20, but the materials budget is 9.5% higher than the first reporting year of the framework. However, neither target under QI 9 is met, with the service noting that this budget has been affected by the spend on acquiring the full sets of Reading Well titles in both English and Welsh at every library. Denbighshire is one of seventeen authorities who have not met the acquisitions target (QI 9) in 2019/20. Despite a slight decrease in expenditure on children's resources the service remains above the median for children's book issues per capita. The service records the highest level of Welsh language issues per capita in Wales, with all requirements for QI 10 met. PC provision has remained the same since 2018/19, with usage falling slightly, in line with much of Wales as more people use their own devices and the library Wi-Fi. Performance in relation to supply of requests has continued to be met.

3.4 Expertise and capacity (QI 13-16)^{iv}

There has been no significant change to staffing since 2018/19. Figures remain largely the same as reported in the first year of the framework. The targets for staffing (QI 13) are partially met. Denbighshire staffing levels are slightly below the median in Wales. The service notes that only 50% of the actual staffing levels are reported as some staff spend 50% of their time on customer service roles. Qualified leadership remains in place.

Total revenue expenditure has increased by 5% on 2018/19, mainly due to staff pay awards and increments. Expenditure per capita remains above the median level. Aggregate annual opening hours have remained the same and above the median level in Wales. There has been no disruption to the static or home delivery service.

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 service has provided a comprehensive narrative on its contribution in this area. Priorities included are: health; employability; digital inclusion; literacy; the Welsh language and community resilience. Health and wellbeing is a strength of the Service and it is noted that strategic partnerships with a number of organisations ensure that the library service contributes well to a number of strategic priorities in this area, particularly the Well-being of Future Generation (Wales) Act 2015.

5 Future direction

Reporting on the authority's future direction and plans for the library service over the following year, Denbighshire notes the challenges of re-introducing services during the Covid-19 pandemic, particularly in relation to group activities and training sessions. Denbighshire continues to be committed to the priorities outlined in the Denbighshire Library Strategy 2019-22, those of reading; health and well-being; digital services and culture. The impact of the pandemic means that service will now focus on further developing the health and wellbeing offer; developing a new library website, enhancing the service's digital offer, the professional development of staff and ensuring buildings are safe as libraries gradually reopen. Digital resilience will be a key priority for all services in Wales in the immediate future.

6 Conclusion

Denbighshire's vision is to ensure that "libraries are the beating hearts of the communities they serve - trusted neutral places where everyone is welcome regardless of their age, background or financial circumstances". Denbighshire has broadly maintained its performance throughout the sixth framework and has a strong commitment to health and wellbeing. Although there has been an overall decrease in usage, the increasing importance of the digital resources offered by Denbighshire can be clearly seen. Staffing levels have broadly been maintained, although the service notes that ongoing budget pressures will impact on future development. The development of a volunteering strategy, launched in 2019, should continue to positively impact on the sustainability of the service. There are likely to be further budget pressures in the immediate future, but the intention to focus on the development of staff should enable Denbighshire libraries to remain at the heart of their communities and continue to deliver services effectively.

ⁱ Due to Covid-19, local authorities were only asked to report any change in provision since the last reporting year for Q1 3&4.

ⁱⁱ Due to Covid-19, Q1 5&6 were removed for the 2019/20 reporting year.

ⁱⁱⁱ E-resources purchased through centrally-funded subscriptions have been included in the acquisitions figures for Q1 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.

^{iv} Due to Covid-19, Q1 15 was removed for the 2019/20 reporting year, alongside training and volunteer hours.