

### Denbighshire Narrative 2021-22

#### 1. Case Studies

The impact which the library has had on an individual, or on a group of individuals, during the year. Describe the use made of the service, and the difference that use made to the individual or group concerned. Up to six case studies may be provided (indicative length: 500 words each), two of which can be digital. However, the digital case studies are not compulsory.

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

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#### Case study 1: Winter of Wellbeing Campaign

Public libraries delivered a major programme of activities for children through £500,000 direct funding secured by SCL Cymru (Society of Chief Librarians Cymru) from Welsh Government's Winter of Wellbeing campaign. A national programme of activity and marketing was enhanced by a local activity programme in each authority.

The aim was to reconnect children and young people with their local libraries, their communities and each other. It saw hundreds of children welcomed into our libraries to rediscover the magic inside and help them recover from the Covid-19 pandemic. The programme of events in Denbighshire Libraries prioritised in-person activities, emphasising the importance of children visiting and reconnecting with their local library and each other by attending exciting and diverse events.

Key impact data:

- 934 children and young people engaged in the Winter of Wellbeing campaign **in person** in Denbighshire.
- 17 schools visited Denbighshire Libraries during the campaign resulting in many rebooking class visits.
- Activities and events were held at all eight Denbighshire libraries with funding opportunities enabling rural schools to visit their local library.
- Extensive online social media coverage was posted locally and nationally for the project.
- Denbighshire Libraries worked successfully in partnership with artists, storytellers, community group, theatre company, and an author to produce a varied programme of events.
- Impressive increase in new members statistics: children under 12 memberships in Denbighshire more than doubled per month during the campaign:

January	47 new members
February	102 new members
March	210 new members

## Campaign highlights

**Mewn Cymeriad/In Character Interactive History Shows:** Working in partnership with Menter Iaith Sir Ddinbych and 'Mewn Cymeriad/In Character' theatre company, libraries welcomed 450 children from Denbighshire schools to enjoy lively, energetic and interactive workshops with 'Hari Hanes' The talented actor Sion Emyr brought famous and not so well-known historical characters in the book '10 stories from Welsh history' by Ifan Morgan Jones to life in the sessions. A total of 13 workshops were held at five Denbighshire Libraries with 11 schools participating in the Welsh and bilingual sessions. The funding enabled several rural Denbighshire schools to visit their local libraries and attend the workshops by supporting their transport costs. The positive impact of this part of the campaign has resulted in several of the schools who attended the workshops reconnecting with their local libraries and booking further class visits as a direct result of their experience.



An unsolicited review by Ffion Clwyd's PR service was published on the national news website nation.cymru:

<https://nation.cymru/culture/review-a-show-full-of-well-being-and-culture-for-denbighshires-children/>

**Family Art Workshops:** Denbighshire Leisure Limited's Active Communities team worked with the Library Service to provide hands-on art sessions for children at seven Denbighshire libraries, working with a variety of local artists on Saturday mornings and during half-term holidays. In total 7 local artists provided 24 sessions of artistic creativity for the participating children and their families. The art work ranged from creating pop-up books, developing sketchbook drawings, making miniature books and silhouettes, matchbox stories, collaging and making mobiles based on the books in the children's libraries.

*"Joseph enjoyed his visit so much to the library last week to the Winter of Wellbeing History show with school he wanted to visit again, so we booked this art workshop" (Parent)*

*'I would like to thank the Library Service for the opportunity to work together on the Winter of Wellbeing project. It was an opportunity for us to reach families across the County and introduce them to a variety of arts and crafts activities based on books and stories. Such face-to-face experiences for families have been very rare over the last two years and being able to work in small, safe groups was a privilege. There is strong evidence how engaging in creative activity can help support overall mental health and wellbeing, and our priority is to encourage such arts participation among children and young people. The partnership also provided us with the opportunity to employ a*

*number of local professional freelance artists after such a difficult time following the lock downs over the last two years'. (Sian Fitzgerald, Community Arts Manager)*

**Author and Story Sessions:** Children's author Damian Harvey visited four Denbighshire Libraries to talk about his work and read his books. Pupils from six Denbighshire schools had an opportunity to meet and work with the author in person.

Pantomime dame Mama G held a fun family friendly story time session at Prestatyn Library and storyteller John Kirk led wild and exciting online interactive story scavenger hunts.

**Lego Workshops:** We worked in partnership with Menter Iaith Sir Ddinbych to provide bilingual Lego Workshops for children and young people at four libraries. The participants had an opportunity to build and learn about historical buildings in their localities of Corwen, Llangollen, Prestatyn and Rhyl while completing tasks and challenges. The libraries provided space and an opportunity for them to develop social skills while expressing themselves through play with their friends and peers.

*'A huge Diolch to the young builders who joined us this afternoon at #Rhyl library to re-create Gruffydd's 'Ilys' (Rhuddlan) in #Lego. Welsh history is fun! #WinterOfWellbeing'* (Twitter user)

### **Winter of Wellbeing National Events**

The Reading Agency teamed up with public libraries nationally to provide a programme of national online events to promote the benefits of reading for wellbeing. The national campaign included a book survey to create a wellbeing book list, competitions, a social media campaign and a programme of online events with popular authors, illustrators and stars from the literary world, including a session with the current Children's Laureate Wales author and poet, Connor Allen.

Denbighshire Libraries' library assistant Lois Jones of Ruthin Library chaired a Winter of Wellbeing national online event 'Express Yourself' in which Ysgol Borthyn pupils hosted the event which featured children's books illustrators Jackie Morris and Cathy Fisher.

For many younger children, their visit to the library for Winter of Wellbeing was their first ever visit, and for many classes it was their first visit to a community facility outside their school post-pandemic. The Winter of Wellbeing campaign celebrated what libraries and reading can do for wellbeing, to deliver events to support the social, emotional and mental wellbeing of the children during the winter months, with a focus on re-engaging face to face with children and young people in Denbighshire by bringing them into our libraries safely following a long period of isolation.

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## Case Study 2: Supporting local authors

Denbighshire Libraries has been committed to supporting and working with authors for many years, with a particular focus on authors local to the area and to books set in the area. As well as providing authors with an opportunity to engage with local readers to raise awareness and sales of their books, and thus build their readership audience, library events also enable new authors to gain experience of speaking to an audience, and confidence in themselves as writers. For the library we are able to introduce new writing and a wider choice for readers, and of course we make the books available for loan to readers. Author events in the library are often part of a wider community festival such as Gwyl Rhuthun and the Denbigh Midsummer Festival which helps us to engage and raise the library's profile in the community and provides a popular event for the festivals. Local and regional media often feature the events, and by working in partnership with a local bookshop for book selling, we also contribute to the local economy. Following are testimonials from some of the authors we have worked with recently:

### Rebecca Roberts

*Gafodd tri allan o fy chwe nofel eu lansio neu eu hybu mewn digwyddiad llyfrgell (ac yn ystod y cyfnod clo trefnodd Gwasanaeth Llyfrgelloedd Sir Ddinbych 'lansiad' rhithiol ar Trydar) – ac mi ydw i'n ddiolchgar iawn am y gefnogaeth, a'r cydweithrediad rhwng y llyfrgelloedd, y gweisg a'r siopau lyfrau. Mae digwyddiadau o'r math yn bendant yn cael effaith cadarnhaol ar yr ymateb i'r nofel (y 'bwrlwm' ar y cyfryngau cymdeithasol) a'r gwerthiant. Does ddim tystiolaeth feintiol gadarn gen i ar hyn o bryd – ond yn dilyn dau ddiwyddiad gyda llyfrgelloedd yn ddiweddar, cyrhaeddodd fy nwy nofel ddiweddaraf top y rhestr 'gwerthwyr gorau' Cyngor Llyfrau Cymru. Rydw i'n ddiolchgar iawn i wasanaeth llyfrgelloedd Sir Ddinbych am fy hyrwyddo fel awdur lleol, trwy gynnig gofod a marchnata nosweithiau awdur, a thrwy fy hyrwyddo ar bodlediadau (e.e. Caru Darllen) a rhestrau darllen (e.e. casgliad Cymreig Diwrnod Empathi). Mae hyn oll yn gwneud fy llyfrau'n fwy amlwg, sydd yn eu tro yn arwain at nifer uwch o adolygiadau, fwy o werthiant, ac yn y pendraw – rhagor o gomisiynau gan y Cyngor Llyfrau a'r gweisg, sy'n fy nghaniatáu i ddal ati efo'r sgwennu!*

*Mae hefyd yn brofiad braf iawn cwrdd â'm ddarllenwyr ac yn wir, mae nosweithiau fel y rhai a drefnir gan lyfrgelloedd yn teimlo fel gwobr ar ôl oriau maith o deipio a syllu ar sgrin!*

*[Three of my six novels were launched or promoted in library events (and during lockdown Denbighshire Libraries organised a virtual launch on Twitter) – and I am very grateful for the support, and the co-operation between the libraries, the publishers and the bookshops. Events like these definitely have a positive impact on the response to the novel (the social media 'buzz') and on sales. I don't have any concrete evidence at the moment but after two library events recently my two latest novels reached the top of the Books Council of Wales' bestsellers list. I am very grateful to Denbighshire Libraries for promoting me as a local author, by offering the*

*space and marketing author evenings, and through promoting me on podcasts (eg Caru Darllen) and book lists (eg Empathy Collection for Wales). This all makes my books more visible, which then leads to more reviews, more sales and in the end, more commissions from the Books Council and the publishers, which enables me to carry on writing!*

*It is also so enjoyable to meet with my readers, and honestly, the events like the ones the library organises feel like a rewards after hours on end of typing and staring at a screen!]*

**Rebecca Roberts**

*'On Badon Field' is a novel that is set primarily in the historic market town of Ruthin in North Wales, so it was great to have the support from the local library team for the launch. Taking advantage of a lull in the pandemic conditions we were able to stage a small exhibition, a book signing and reading event within the library. I'm a self-published author so I don't have the large-scale commercial backing of one of the big publishing houses and an event like this is one of the few ways for me to connect with the public and potential readers. In turn, many readers very much enjoy the opportunity to meet authors and gain a deeper insight into their writing and the Ruthin launch was perfect for this. As part of the launch event, I teamed up with Siop Elfair a local book shop which proved to be mutually beneficial as the partnership produced additional trade for a local business and raised the profile for me as an author and for the book. Overall, the event was a great success resulting in the sale of all of the first print run for 'On Badon Field'.*



**Martin Kaye**

*As a new novelist, marketing my book was top of my priority list. It is notoriously difficult for an author to raise awareness of a debut novel. My starting point was Ruthin Library, especially since 'Bread and Buttermilk' is an historical novel set near Ruthin in 1922-23 so it has considerable local interest. Lacking confidence, I approached the library with trepidation. I needn't have worried. From the beginning, the staff were highly supportive, helping me plan the book launch and readings and buying copies for the library itself. They liaised with Siop Elfair, who agreed to stock the book and make copies available in the library foyer.*

*The library showed continued interest in the progress of my book and gave me the confidence to progress to a stall in the Xmas market and to apply and gain acceptance by the Books Council of Wales who are now marketing the book. Their encouragement has resulted in my book now being available at Amazon,*

*Waterstones, Barnes and Noble, Smashwords, Apple ibooks, Kobo, Scribd, Blackwells and many other online and high street retailers with sales increasing all the time.*

**Helen Payton (Carolyn May)**

**Sharon Tyers**

*Certainly the excellent turn out on the day of the launch at Denbigh Library and the positive questioning from the audience helped me enormously as a new author. It has significantly improved my confidence seeing so many purchasing the book on the day and book sales have continued since at the many outlets that now stock the book in Denbighshire. The Welsh Book Council have also now agreed to promote and distribute my novel and I am actively seeking new activities with creative writing workshops and further opportunities to promote 'Linen and Rooks'. It is a story which has some important points to air about the plight of Denbighshire people throughout the 19th century. I am particularly delighted to know that it is available on loan at Denbigh Library and I am indebted to the staff there for their help and enthusiasm with its promotion.*

**Sharon Tyers**

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## **Contribution to wider Welsh Government priorities and strategic goals**

**Please provide a narrative that demonstrates how the library service is contributing towards wider Welsh Government priorities and strategic goals (indicative length: 500 - 1,000 words).**

### **Better Mental Health**

For many in our communities, the library is their safe haven, a place to visit regularly to be part of a shared experience, with no obligation to make a purchase and no stigma associated with their visit. Reading groups, art and craft groups, and learning opportunities support people to maintain or recover their mental health. Reading in itself is beneficial to mental health and the local library within the community provides access to a vast range of reading experiences for all tastes, in physical and digital formats. During 21-22 in-person access to our libraries was re-established and group activity gradually restarted as people became more confident to engage with local services and with other people.

We continued to provide reading material in a range of physical and digital formats to enable people to choose the format that best suits their needs. Our Order and Collect Service was available but its use declined slowly over the year as people returned to libraries to select their own books. The service is still available for people who need it.

Reading groups restarted their meetings in person, as did several of our social engagement groups as people sought opportunities to meet others and have social contact.

We provide access to the full range of Reading Well schemes (supporting dementia, adult mental health and children's mental health and emotional wellbeing) and work with partners to raise awareness of the schemes and how they can benefit readers. The project funded by the BCUHB Mental Health Strategy transformation funds to embed Reading Well into Primary Care practice, working in partnership with Conwy Libraries and Public Health Wales, was reshaped to reach potential beneficiaries as services started to re-open. The Community Navigators working on the project were able to refer people to their local library to access the books.

Library staff are trained in Dementia Awareness, Autism Awareness and Makaton signing awareness. Our Memory Bags support people with dementia and their carers and a collection of dementia friendly jigsaws for loan was established with funding from the Dementia Aware Denbighshire programme.

### **Skills and Employability**

Working Denbighshire, the council's employability support service, works in close partnership with libraries, has its office base in Rhyl Library, and makes use of facilities in all our libraries to meet with their clients on a 1-1 or small group basis.

They make use of our public access ICT facilities to support people to learn digital skills.

We employed an additional member of staff via the fully-funded Workstart scheme and were able to give that person valuable job experience in a range of library areas of work.

## **Digital**

Libraries offer free physical access to computers, broadband and Wi-Fi internet connection, and access to scanning and printing. Crucially, library staff offer help and support to use a computer, to get online and access websites, to develop basic digital skills, often to people with no or very limited skills.

In 21-22 we delivered an investment programme to upgrade and extend our public access ICT facilities. We procured and installed a new PC management system (Netloan), upgraded all the public access computers through the corporate refresh programme, and installed new self-service print facilities and new flatbed scanners. A new cloud printing facility enables library customers to upload documents from their device from any location then visit the library to collect their prints. Customers can now also make online bookings for a computer or scanner.

Libraries are a key partner in Denbighshire County Council's Digital Exclusion project which aims to identify how the council can reduce digital exclusion. A Digital Transformation project funded by the Cultural Recovery Fund in 20-21 was completed and has enabled us to purchase portable devices to support customers on the library floor, to demonstrate e-resources and apps on android and Apple devices. We conduct a digital skills audit of our staff annually to ensure they keep up with developments and demands, and we work with Digital Communities Wales on training and projects.

Staff have resumed providing informal digital assistance to help people get online, use their own device or find the right website for their needs. Our long-standing partnership with Coleg Llandrillo continues with the Second Chance Centre in Rhyl Library and sessions in Prestatyn Library's Ffrith Learning Suite and at St Asaph and Rhuddlan Libraries providing literacy, numeracy and digital skills classes

Our e-resources offer continues to grow and benefits from the collaborative working across all of Wales' public library services with the National Library of Wales and Welsh Government.

## **Early Years & Literacy**

Weekly Bookstart Rhymetimes develop young children's language, learning and social skills and have a significant impact on parental mental health, and on parents' skills and confidence as their child's first educators. They introduce many families to the Welsh language, and many families go on to choose Welsh-medium childcare or education as a result of their early experiences in the library. The informal and non-



stigmatised group sessions also create a social network for new parents who may be at risk of isolation, mothers dealing with post-natal depression, and foreign national families. By attending sessions families are also introduced to the range of other services on offer at the library.

The Summer Reading Challenge remains our key activity to help children aged 4-12 develop their love of reading for pleasure and choosing independently, maintain their reading skills over the summer holiday, and discover new books and authors to enjoy. The hybrid model enables children to participate in person and online. We delivered a programme of activities for children for the Winter of Wellbeing campaign which focussed on Welsh culture and history (see Case Study 1).

### **Support for wellbeing and social care**

The Home Library Service provides a personalised service to individuals who cannot access their local library due to disability, illness or caring responsibilities. The monthly home visits are eagerly awaited, providing not only a range of books to read but social interaction and a gateway to other council services for people who are socially isolated.

Talking Points are community-led information sessions where citizens meet with health and social care staff, third sector support services and peers, to have a person-centred conversation about their health and wellbeing needs. Talking Points are gradually being reintroduced as in person activity after the pandemic, and the Community Navigators who run them work closely with library staff to refer citizens and to promote the sessions.

Libraries provide a digital assistance service for online Blue Badge applications and help people apply online for their discretionary travel passes (bus passes).

We are rebuilding our programme of social engagement activities which encourage people to get together in libraries to combat the risk of social isolation – such as craft groups, Welsh conversation groups, and social mornings – and our reading groups have now returned as in person activities after going online for the last couple of years.

### **Cymraeg**

The local library is often the only place in a community where people can access Welsh language resources such as books and magazines, and where they can engage with staff in Welsh and attend Welsh activities. Our self-service kiosks, online catalogue and the PORI app enable library members to choose a Welsh language option to manage their library account.

We provide the full range of Welsh language books, magazines and e-resources for borrowing and downloading and work with publishers, Books Council for Wales and the National Library of Wales to ensure the widest possible choice of resources for readers.

Bookstart Rhymetimes and storytimes introduce many families to Welsh and they are encouraged to consider bringing up their children bilingually. The Summer Reading Challenge is fully bilingual and we work closely with schools to encourage children to borrow and read Welsh books.

We work with Menter Iaith Sir Ddinbych and a range of community and cultural groups to put on and promote events and activities, such as children's activities, performance poetry, book launches, and reading groups. We host Welsh cultural events in partnership with local community festivals and we have regular columns in papurau bro to promote the library offer. Our Winter of Wellbeing programme in Feb/March 2022 focussed on Welsh culture and language workshops and activities for children.

### **Community Resilience**

Denbighshire's vision for libraries is that they are the beating hearts of their communities, where local people can access services in their local community; a shared, trusted and welcoming facility with friendly knowledgeable staff. We continue to work collaboratively with local town councils to ensure service sustainability, and with partners to provide services and opportunities locally – from digital learning to social and interest groups; from benefits and rights advice to health support groups; from baby rhymetimes to adult reading groups; from access to elected members to engagement with public consultations.

From August 2021 to March 2022, our libraries contributed to Covid infection control measures by distributing 30,000 LFT test kits to the public.

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## 2. Future Direction

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

Libraries are key to the delivery of Denbighshire's Corporate Plan, and the Library Strategy 2019-22 sets a clear direction for the service. Activities and developments in the 2022-23 Service Business plan include:

- Delivering a programme of activities and events to encourage children and adults to re-engage with their local library, to support engagement and wellbeing and to combat social isolation and loneliness
- Positioning libraries as community focal points for zero-carbon and biodiversity information
- Working in partnership with Education, local schools and EmpathyLab to deliver a project teaching children and young people empathy skills through characters in books
- Seeking opportunities to expand the Bookstart programme to address child development and parental wellbeing needs post-pandemic
- Reviewing library membership and terms to ensure equity of access for all
- Updating the Library Strategy in the light of the new Corporate Plan

We will also continue to further develop our service in others areas, including

- Continuing to explore opportunities to further develop the Health and Wellbeing offer and strategic collaboration with Public Health Wales and Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board services to embed libraries' contribution to health strategic plans outcomes, particularly mental health, with a focus on the rollout of the Reading Well for Teens scheme into the health, youth and education sector.
- Launching a new cloud printing and online PC booking system
- Working with partners to reduce digital exclusion.
- Developing co-working facilities at 2 libraries in partnership with CoWork Local
- Further developing library facilities as flexible, adaptable and safe spaces to facilitate the delivery of 1:1 and small group support services and to enable people to engage socially with each other

The Council will be developing its new Corporate Plan during 2022-23 and the Library Strategy will be reviewed to ensure it reflects how the Libraries can contribute towards the ambitions and pledges of the new Corporate Plan.