

Appendix B

Impact statement and additional strategic narrative

1. The impact which the library has had on an individual, or on a group of individuals, during the year. Describe the use made of the service, and the difference that use made to the individual or group concerned. Indicative length 300 words (permission obtained)

Denbighshire Libraries have a dedicated Bookstart Team who run regular bilingual rhyme times in libraries and also do outreach work to ante natal classes etc. The sessions, which also include Makaton signing, give every baby the opportunity to develop an early love of sharing books and reading, and to become members of their local library. There are many benefits of developing a reading habit early in young families. Sharing books with children helps to develop a child's social skills and confidence, it supports the development of speech and language, it helps children develop empathy and encourages them to recognise and talk about their feelings.

The Bookstart Rhyme Times also have an important role to play in the mental health of new parents, giving them the chance to socialise with other mums and dads, as demonstrated by this feedback.

Mum, J, has attended Bookstart Rhymetimes with all of her 4 children over the last 10 years.

'I started bringing C when she was 11 days old because I know how beneficial Bookstart is for babies - all of my children love reading and the library thanks to the encouragement you gave them. C loves singing, dancing and reading thanks to the Bookstart team. We practice our Bookstart songs at home and it's lovely to hear her singing in English and Welsh. Her favourite thing is to sit down with a book and enjoy reading a story thanks to her ffrindiau. Also, I would say that having had PND with 2 of the others I really value the routine and the social contact and getting out of the house to a friendly face. It's not all about the books!'

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

Denbighshire Libraries have an important role to play in promoting the Welsh language, with Welsh speaking staff available in all libraries and a wide selection of Welsh language books, newspapers and magazines, available in print and also digitally. Some of our libraries hold Welsh language reading groups, such as Sgwrs a Sangria in Denbigh Library and Cylch Darllen Llyfrgell in Ruthin Library. Other libraries hold Paned a Sgwrs sessions, to help people practice their Welsh in an informal setting. We also held a number of Welsh language author events, including An Evening with Sian Rees at Denbigh Library. Bookstart Rhyme Times help to

introduce young families to Welsh from an early age, encouraging them to consider a Welsh medium education.

In our libraries we celebrate diversity. We were instrumental in developing and promoting the LGBT History Timeline for Denbighshire and in February we held a special event in Rhyl Library to celebrate LGBT+ History Month. There were displays and stalls from a variety of organisations, such as the Gay Outdoors Club, British Transport Police, Making Sense CIO and the Unique Transgender Network. Jenny-Anne Bishop OBE, from Unique Transgender Network gave an informative talk about the history of gender services in Wales and there was an entertaining performance about the Ladies of Llangollen through the eyes of their faithful friend and housekeeper, Mary Caryll.

In terms of promoting better mental health our libraries continue to highlight the Reading Well collections and we are also involved with the local Dementia Friendly Towns initiatives. We worked in partnership with local community interest organisation Making Sense on a project to create 5 new memory boxes, and run a series of Memory Cafes in our libraries. They also ran training sessions for care home staff, to show them how to use the memory boxes and make them aware of resources available in libraries.



During the winter months all our libraries offered a warm welcome, extending our usual offer to make free teas and coffees available to people visiting the library, and we introduced new social activities, such as Craft and Chat and Knit and Natter sessions, in a bid to help people who may be lonely or isolated.

Our libraries have continued to provide digital support to those who are excluded, whether this is supporting people to apply online for blue badges and bus passes, making tablets and chromebooks available for loan, and also giving out free sims to people who can't afford their monthly top up. We have also worked with Llandrillo College and Cwmpas to make digital courses available in our libraries.

Denbighshire County Council is committed to seeking to become a Net Carbon Zero and more Ecologically Positive Council by 2030, so in February 2023 the library service introduced a new electric powered van to support the delivery of the Home Library Service, and to reduce our carbon footprint. The Home Library Service delivers books and audiobooks to people who cannot make it to a library due to ill health, disability or caring responsibilities.



Rhyl Library have been developing a bee friendly garden and during the summer of 2023 they created a bug hotel, teaming up with Working Denbighshire, an employability service which supports Denbighshire residents who are at risk of poverty.



Future Direction

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

This has been a difficult period for the library service, as major cuts to the budget were announced in October 2023 and this meant that a lot of projects were put on hold. We didn't run a library survey, but a consultation was held on the proposed changes to the library opening hours in October 2023 and over 4500 responses were received. Lots of positive comments regarding the library service were received, including the following examples—

'I use Prestatyn Library on most days for information, company, warmth, and it is a complete lifeline for me. Please don't reduce its opening hours'.

'Prestatyn Library is, and has been, a focal point in this town for many years. We find a helpful and empathetic staff and the services rendered are considerably more varied than just handling and lending books. I believe even more variety can be provided in the future. Just one recent example is the provision of warm surroundings and a hot drink during the power crisis.'

'The new hours will heavily impact the local community in a negative way. The libraries are a hub, they are an escape that people use to relax and find comfort. The staff are the most welcoming people. Denbighshire will become a colder, less welcoming place without all the libraries being able to help those in need. A tragic loss and appalling idea. This will affect the most vulnerable in our communities.'

'This was the first group I joined after Covid and isolation. My mental health has improved greatly since joining. The staff are all friendly and helpful. I am partially sighted and cannot use a computer so this my library is my lifeline.

As I come to the book club on Thursday that is the day I come in. I would be isolated and have no help.'

We plan to build on this and carry out a full user survey in the autumn, once our new opening hours, which were introduced on 1st June, have bedded in. We will then use the results of this survey to inform our new Library Strategy, which we aim to have in place by spring 2025.

The Library Service contributes to the Council's Corporate Plan, which runs until 2027, and this will be reflected in the Library Strategy. The library particularly supports the themes 'A Prosperous Denbighshire' and a 'A healthier and happier, caring Denbighshire', with activities such as helping people get online, supporting Working Denbighshire to hold job clubs in our libraries, providing a safe, welcoming space for individuals and community organisations to meet up, and continuing to promote the Reading Well resources. Talking Points also continue to run weekly in our libraries, a collaboration with the Red Cross, Denbighshire County Council and Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board, which provides an opportunity for people to find health and support in their local area.

We will investigate ways we can continue to deliver a programme of activities and events to encourage children and adults to re-engage with their local library, looking to work more with partners as we operate on reduced staffing and opening hours.

We are also planning to apply for a Transformation Grant to refurbish one of our libraries, to make better use of the space and make it more relevant to the local community.