

Appendix 2

Denbighshire Library Strategy 2025-30

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**"The only thing you absolutely have
to know, is the location of the
library."**

Albert Einstein

Introduction

Public libraries are trusted, welcoming and safe spaces. They play an important role in ensuring people have access to culture, reading, technology and learning within their local community. It is essential that our libraries can adapt to change and provide a relevant and meaningful service whilst being under pressure to operate within ever tighter budgets.

Our libraries have a good track record of working with partners to enable us to offer a range of services and opportunities within our buildings.

This Strategy outlines the vision for the Libraries and One Stop Service within Denbighshire over the next 5 years.

Context

Local councils have a statutory requirement to provide a 'comprehensive and efficient library service', as specified in the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964.

Libraries operate within the context of various local, regional and national policies and plans.

This includes the following-

Public Libraries Supporting Sustainable and Connected Communities. The seventh quality framework of Welsh Public Libraries Standards.2025

DCC Corporate Plan 2022 to 2027: The Denbighshire We Want

DCC Climate and Nature Strategy 2021-22 to 2029-30

Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015

Priorities for Culture in Wales 2025 to 2030

Anti-racist Wales Action Plan: 2024

Welsh Government LGBTQ+ Action Plan for Wales

Libraries in Denbighshire

There are 8 libraries in Denbighshire, with 4 larger libraries located in Rhyl, Prestatyn, Denbigh and Ruthin, and 4 smaller libraries in Corwen, Llangollen, St Asaph and Rhuddlan. The Home Library Service delivers books to people who can't visit a library in person due to age or infirmity. All of the libraries except Ruthin also offer a Council One Stop Shop service, helping people with Council related queries and issuing parking permits etc.

Libraries also provide a range of digital services 24/7, including free access to eBooks and audiobooks, digital newspapers and magazines, and the ability to

reserve books online. Libraries are managed within the Housing and Communities Service of the Council.

Key Statistics 2023-24

226,451 physical items were borrowed, this included:

- 90,306 adult fiction books
- 34,961 non-fiction books
- 15,392 large print books
- 60,638 children's book in English
- 14,380 children's books in Welsh
- 1,167 jigsaws

250,764 physical visits to library buildings

15,384 active users (people who used their library card within the last year)

218,290 physical items in stock

26,778 eAudiobooks borrowed via Borrowbox

18,161 eBooks borrowed via Borrowbox

21,765 sessions on the public access pcs

81,897 pages were printed out – this included 18,829 pages via our cloud printing service

“Reading isn’t important because it helps to get you a job. It’s important because it gives you room to exist beyond the reality you’re given.

It is how humans merge.

How minds connect.

**Dreams. Empathy. Understanding.
Escape. Reading is love in action.”**

— Matt Haig, Notes on a Nervous Planet

Our Key Offers

There are four universal library offers which underpin our library strategy. These are Reading; Information and Digital; Health and Wellbeing; Culture, Creativity and the Welsh Language.

Reading

Books and reading are at the heart of what we do. Reading helps you to escape into another world or learn new information. There are many health benefits to having a regular reading habit, including improved mental health and wellbeing and a reduction in stress levels. It also helps you to get a better night's sleep. Reading also increases empathy and gives you a better understanding of other people's feelings and different lived experiences. (State of the Nation's Adult Reading 2024: Focus on Reading, Health and Wellbeing, Reading Agency, 2024)

There is evidence to show that the pandemic had a negative impact on literacy levels in school children and reading is so important when it comes to improving life chances. A recent Booktrust Report showed how children who can read are more likely to overcome disadvantage caused by inequalities, are more likely to be healthier and happier, do better at school and develop empathy and creativity. (The Benefits of Reading, Booktrust 2023)

In our recent library survey over 60% of respondents said they had come to the library to borrow or return books that day, and 87% agreed that the choice of books was good or very good. (see Appendix 1)

Our commitment

- Provide a relevant, up to date selection of reading material in all of our libraries and digitally, in a variety of formats and languages.
- Offer a programme of bilingual activities to encourage people to keep reading. This will include reading groups, book promotions, school visits and author events.
- Provide a programme of Bookstart activities, including weekly rhyme time sessions, to give every baby the opportunity to develop an early love of sharing books and reading, and to become members of their local library.
- Support the annual Summer Reading Challenge, engaging with local schools and encouraging children to keep reading over the long summer break.
- Provide a Home Library Service to ensure people who can't make it to the library have access to books in a format to suit them, e.g. large print or audiobook on cd.

Resources

The library service is part of the all Wales Purchasing Consortium which procures contracts for supply of English language materials, ensuring best value for money is achieved. Local contracts for the supply of large print and audiobooks are renewed annually to ensure choice and value for money.

Public libraries across North Wales share a library catalogue and items can be reserved, borrowed and returned to any library in Conwy, Flintshire, Gwynedd, Anglesey and Wrexham, as well as Denbighshire. This gives readers access to a wider range of stock and reservations are free of charge.

Libraries Wales offers a range of all Wales digital resources, including eBooks and audiobooks, digital newspapers and magazines.

Knowledgeable staff are able to advise readers and help them with book choices and also create book displays in libraries to encourage people to try something new.

Measures

Statistics are monitored on a regular basis, this includes number of issues of books, eBook downloads etc, number of active library members and visits to library buildings.

User surveys are undertaken every 3 years as part of the Welsh Public Library Standards.

Outcome

People's lives will be enriched by reading for pleasure and families will enjoy sharing books together from an early age.

'It's given me the chance to read hundreds of books over my life for free, which I wouldn't have been able to read otherwise. It definitely helped me develop my reading quicker when I was little. And gives me the chance to explore new worlds through books now because of this'.

'INVALUABLEI have broadened my taste in literature. The library has a large selection of many different types of books and with the ability to order books in the online catalogue is fantastic.'

(Quotes – Library User Survey 2024)

Information and Digital

Libraries have an important role to play in ensuring that our local communities can access quality information and digital services, learn new digital skills and feel safe online.

Our commitment

- Free access to computers, the internet and Wi-Fi in all libraries
- A range of digital library services available 24/7, including eBooks, audiobooks, digital magazines and newspapers.
- Venues for partners to offer learning and information sessions
- 7 out of 8 of our libraries are also One Stop Shops and offer local access to Council services.
- Support for customers who need help accessing digital services, for example, Blue Badge and bus pass applications.
- Work with the Good Things Foundation to distribute free SIMs and mobile data to local people living in data poverty, via the National Databank scheme.

Resources

Up to date technology and trained, knowledgeable staff.

Talking Points operate in all 8 of our libraries, giving residents the opportunity to speak to a Community Navigator and gain help and support in their local area.

We work with partners, such as Llandrillo College and Digital Confidence Wales to make a range of digital learning opportunities available in our libraries.

Measures

Statistics on number of IT sessions in libraries, number of individual users and number of pages printed via our Cloud Printing Service.

Record the number of people who access digital services such as Ancestry.com and Find My Past.

Outcome

Communities are supported to improve their digital skills and access the services they need online.

‘Got me started on Ancestry which in turn lead me to uncover many things about my family/ancestors.’

‘I could not otherwise print or copy important documents’.

‘Been there for me and my children when we couldn’t afford Internet or computers.’

(Quotes – Library User Survey 2024)

Health and Wellbeing

Supporting the health and wellbeing of communities through services that inform, engage and connect.

Our commitment

- Our libraries participate in the Reading Well scheme, offering collections of books which help people support their own wellbeing through recommended reading. There are currently four collections – Reading Well for Mental Health, Reading Well for Dementia, Reading Well for Children and Reading Well for Young People.
- As well as offering free hot drinks during the winter libraries also offer regular social mornings and opportunities for people to have a chat.
- Libraries also host partner organisations who support the health and wellbeing of residents, including Talking Points, Help to Quit, Adferiad, Autism Awareness and Audiology volunteers who provide support with NHS hearing aids.
- Relevant stock is highlighted with displays and social media promotions throughout the year, for example, Children's Mental Health Week in February, Mental Health Awareness Week and Dementia Action Week in May.
- Care homes and people living with dementia are supported with activities such as reminiscence sessions and the provision of Memory Boxes and Memory Bags for loan.

Resources

All of our libraries have skilled, empathetic staff, who have received autism friendly and dementia friendly training.

Our Home Library Service delivers books and audiobooks to people who can't get to the library due to ill health or caring responsibilities.

Leaflets promoting the Reading Well collections are distributed to relevant organisations.

Measures

An increase in the number of Reading Well titles borrowed from libraries, and an increase in the number of people attending wellbeing activities.

Outcome

A healthier, happier, caring Denbighshire, with people of all ages supported to live well.

‘Staff very friendly and welcoming but also very ready to help to find appropriate books or information. Also safe and warm space especially for older lonely people. I always see older people sitting in the foyer reading the paper and chatting to others or the librarians who make a point of welcoming them. This is a vital service for well-being.’

‘I bring people living with dementia down to the St Asaph library. The ladies that work there could not be more accommodating or friendly, they welcome us with open arms and make the visit an extremely pleasant one.’

(Quotes – Library User Survey 2024)

Culture, Creativity and the Welsh Language

Enabling local communities to enjoy high-quality arts and cultural experiences through libraries. Many of our libraries hold local history collections, allowing people to find out about the history of their local area.

Our commitment

- Provide a wealth of Welsh language books and resources.
- Run a programme of Welsh language activities, including Paned a Sgwrs, Welsh Reading Groups, bilingual Bookstart Rhymetimes and author events.
- Work with partners such as Denbighshire Leisure to provide high quality art activities for children during school holidays.
- Facilitate regular social groups, such as Craft and Chat, Knit and Natter.
- The Library Service will support the Welsh Language Strategy 2023-28 in Denbighshire by ensuring that everyone can access library and Council One Stop Shop services through the medium of Welsh naturally, and at every stage of their lives.
- Support children and families during their early years to develop confidence in using the Welsh language.
- Local residents will have the opportunity to participate in cultural activities and enjoy cultural experiences.

Resources

Bilingual staff in all service points.

Working with partners, such as Menter Iaith and Cymraeg I Blant, to support further events in Cymraeg.

Identify sources of funding to enable us to offer a range of free author events and craft activities.

Measures

Number of people who attend events and the number of Welsh titles which are borrowed from the libraries.

Outcome

Everyone can access services and cultural activities through the medium of Welsh naturally, and at every stage of their lives.

‘Sense of belonging and community, access to experiences e.g. author visits, Welsh events, reading that I would not otherwise have experienced and which have enhanced my life’.

‘We come to the Bookstart classes which has helped me develop a little Welsh through the nursery rhymes and my daughter really enjoys and looks forward to the sessions’.

(Quotes – Library User Survey 2024)

How we will report on our performance and progress

We will support a report to Welsh Government every year in accordance with the Welsh Public Library Standards. This Framework sets out a set of core entitlements and quality indicators for Welsh citizens. This report is also then submitted to the Scrutiny Committee of the Council.

We will also undertake User Surveys every 3 years and collect feedback following events and activities.

Next Steps

To ensure the library service can continue to develop and grow a range of services and activities in the face of budget constraints we will work to identify alternate sources of funding.

We will work to develop ‘Friends of the Library’ groups who will support library activities and help to fundraise.

We will look to increase income from hire of library facilities, particularly building on commercial room hire charges.

We will continue to develop relationships with existing partners and seek out new relationships with organisations who complement our services and can benefit from our position as trusted, safe spaces within the community.

We will support the Council's Climate and Nature Strategy by taking positive action where appropriate, for example we have already switched to biodegradable library cards and operate an electric van for the Home Library Service. We are also looking to develop wildlife gardens outside appropriate library buildings.

We will review our library stock to ensure it is up to date and relevant, and audit it to ensure that it is diverse and reflective of our local communities, supporting the move towards anti-racist practice in Wales.

We will maintain our library buildings and apply for funding to upgrade buildings where appropriate, while also investigating new technology to improve access.