

Gwynedd Annual Assessment Report

2023-24

This report has been prepared based on information provided in Gwynedd’s annual return, impact statements and narrative report submitted to the Culture Division of the Welsh Government.

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Executive summary

Gwynedd meets all of the 13 Core Entitlements in full. Of the 7 quality indicators which have targets, Gwynedd is achieving 6 in full and 1 in part.

Gwynedd continues to perform well in many areas, including issues, acquisitions, Welsh language provision and customer satisfaction. Formal training sessions have expanded considerably this year and feedback demonstrates that they are well-received. Event attendance is also recovering strongly, and the service offers a wide range of activities. However, given the comparatively low rating given by children and young people (Q12e) and the fact that the Summer Reading Challenge is being cut from 2024, it may be worthwhile for the service to review its provision for young people, including consulting with this user group over the coming year to ensure the service is meeting their needs.

- Gwynedd performs well for Making a difference, being above the median for most survey measures (Q11).
- Customer training is well received, with all attendees surveyed saying they had achieved their purpose in attending (Q15).
- Per capita event attendance has increased more than threefold compared to 2022-23 and is now a little below the median for Welsh library authorities (Q16).
- Gwynedd is in the top quartile of library authorities for the proportion of the budget spent on Welsh language resources and for the number of Welsh language issues per capita (Q10).
- Despite a cut in service hours during 2023-24, Gwynedd remains in the top quartile of Welsh library authorities for this measure (Q16).

Performance against the standards

The standards framework comprises of Core Entitlements, quality indicators with targets, quality indicators with benchmarks and impact measures.

Core Entitlements

Gwynedd reported meeting all of the 13 Core Entitlements in full through self-assessment. Based on the detailed commentary provided, the independent assessor agrees with the self-assessment.

Quality indicators with targets

There are 12 quality indicators (QIs), of which 7 have constituent targets. Of these, Gwynedd is achieving 6 in full and 1 in part.

- QI 4 (a) Support for health and well-being, **met in full ▲**
 - i) Reading Well scheme, **met**
 - ii) Designated health & well-being collection, **met**
 - iii) Information about healthier lifestyles and healthy behaviours, **met**
 - iv) Signposting to health & well-being services, **met**
- QI 6 All static service points offer events/activities for users with special requirements, **met in full ▲**
- QI 7 Location of service points, **met in full ▲**
- QI 9 Up-to-date and appropriate reading material Acquisitions per capita, **met in full ▲**
- QI 10 Welsh Language Resources
% of material budget spent on Welsh, **met in full ▲**
- QI 13 Staffing levels and qualifications, **partially met ■**
 - i) Staff per capita, **not met**
 - ii) Qualified staff per capita, **not met**
 - iii) Head of service qualification/training, **met**
 - iv) CPD percentage, **not provided**
- QI 16 Opening hours per capita, **met in full ▲**

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 required to carry out user surveys for QI1 once over the 2022-23 to 2024-25 period. The summary figures (lowest, median and highest) are based on all authorities providing data in the 2022-23 and 2023-24 returns. Rankings reflect the number of respondents, where 1 is the highest scoring authority.

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:	94%	=6/15	68%	94%	99%
e) % of adults who think that the library has made a difference to their lives:	88%	9/16	31%	89.5%	96%
QI 5 b) % of attendees of training sessions who said that the training had helped them achieve their purpose in attending:	100%	=1/16	86%	98.5%	100%

Authorities are also asked to provide an impact statement describing the impact which the library service has had on an individual or on a group of individuals during the year. Gwynedd provided an impact statement which referred to partnership work funded through grants provided by providers aimed at attracting local residents to learning and training. Lack of confidence and poor mental health have been identified as barriers to people taking formal courses that will lead to further qualifications and work. As a result, Gwynedd Libraries is working with Grŵp Llandrillo Menai to offer informal courses as a step towards more formal learning. One example is the ten-week mindfulness courses that have been running at Caernarfon Library. The library provides a convenient, welcoming central location and the courses have proven popular and contributed to attendees' well-being. One attendee commented: *"I enjoyed all the sessions. The whole course made me feel better within myself."*

Quality indicators and benchmarks

The remaining indicators do not have targets but allow services to monitor their performance over time. The following table summarises Gwynedd's position for 2023-24. Rankings reflect the number of respondents, where 1 is the highest scoring authority. Indicators 'per capita' are calculated per 1,000 population unless otherwise noted.

Performance indicator		Rank	Lowest	Median	Highest
QI 1 Making a difference					
a) % of adults who think that using the library has helped them develop new skills	90%	=1/16	17%	70%	90%
c) health and well-being	76%	4/16	1%	66.5%	90%
d) enjoyable, safe and inclusive	98%	=6/16	90%	97%	100%
QI 2 Customer satisfaction					
a) 'very good' or 'good' choice of books	93%	=6/16	56%	91.5%	97%
b) 'very good' or 'good' customer care	99%	=1/16	86%	98.5%	99%
c) 'very good' or 'good' IT facilities	94%	1/15	47%	87%	94%
d) 'very good' or 'good' overall	100%	=1/15	74%	98%	100%
e) users aged 16 & under rating out of ten	8.0	15/15	8.0	9.4	9.7
QI 5 User support					
a) attendances per capita	4	17/21	1	20	209
c) informal support per capita	Not provided	N/A	12	137	449
QI 6 Attendances at events per capita	197	13/22	3	224.5	620
QI 8 Library use					
b) virtual visits per capita	867	9/21	158	743	7,851
c) active borrowers per capita	140	7/22	57	123	233
QI 9 Up-to-date and appropriate reading material					
b) % material budget children's resources	17%	=10/22	12%	17%	26%
c) % material budget electronic resources	4%	22/22	4%	15.5%	49%
QI 10 Welsh issues per capita	996	5/22	161	631.5	2,725

Performance indicator		Rank	Lowest	Median	Highest
QI 13 Staffing levels and qualifications ¹					
(v) a) total volunteers	0	N/A	0	15.5	358
b) volunteer hours	0	N/A	0	671.5	20,176
QI 14 Operational expenditure					
a) total expenditure per capita	£18,904	3/22	£6,046	£12,023	£24,685
b) % on staff,	51%	21/22	50%	67%	78%
% on information resources	15%	5/22	5%	11%	22%
% on equipment and buildings	3%	=11/22	1%	3%	27%
% on other operational costs	31%	=2/22	0%	16.5%	34%

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.

Meeting customer needs (QI 1-2, 4-5)

Gwynedd performs well for Making a difference (QI1), being above the median for most survey measures. The service also performs well with regard to Customer satisfaction (QI2), being above the median for all measures, with the exception of the rating out of 10 by children and young people. Given this is lower than might be expected given the rest of the responses, it is something the service may want to look at in more detail in future surveys. Although per capita attendance at formal training sessions is below the median for Welsh library authorities, the number of attendances has risen by 153% compared to 2022-23 and it is noted that third party provision is not included in the total. Training is well-received, with 100% of attendees surveyed saying they had achieved their purpose in attending. Gwynedd does not currently record informal support provision.

Access and use (QI 6-8)

Per capita event attendance has increased by more than threefold compared to 2022-23 and is now a little below the median for Welsh library authorities (QI6). Events include Lego BricQ sessions; Clwb Creu; men's chess sessions; Warm Welcome; rhyme and song sessions; and Coffee and Chat sessions to introduce literary works to those learning Welsh. In 2023-24, Gwynedd Libraries ran a range of holiday activities as part of the Summer Reading Challenge, so it is unfortunate that the Summer Reading Challenge will be cut as part of the Council's savings plan from 2024, as approved by Cabinet. The removal of funding for the Summer Reading Challenge is likely to impact on visitor and borrowing figures over the summer and this is something that the library service should monitor.

Virtual visits and active borrowers per capita are both above the median for Welsh library authorities and have changed very little since last year (QI8). Adult and children's book issues are above the median and have also changed little compared

¹ *Rankings are not included for volunteers as the implications of volunteer numbers are ambiguous.*

to 2022-23. Electronic issues are also above the median, but unlike physical issues, these are increasing, having risen by 31% compared to 2022-23.

Facilities and services (QI 9-10)

Gwynedd meets the target for rate of acquisitions and is above the median for this measure. Whilst the proportion of the budget allocated to children's resources is around the median, Gwynedd has the highest spending per head for under 16s. However, the service is the lowest in Wales for the percentage of budget allocated to electronic resources (QI9). Gwynedd is in the top quartile of library authorities for the proportion of the budget allocated to Welsh language resources and for the number of Welsh language issues per capita (QI10). Welsh language issues have increased by 23% compared to 2022-23. The library service collaborates with North Wales Society for the Blind, to provide Welsh language audiobooks for adults and children. Over 90% of library activities are predominantly Welsh or bilingual.

Expertise and capacity (QI 13-14 &16)

Gwynedd does not meet the targets for total staff or qualified staff per capita. The total staffing figure has declined by 0.9 FTE this year and the service reports facing further cuts which will affect staffing hours. However, it is in the top quartile of Welsh library authorities for total staff and qualified staff per capita (QI13). Gwynedd reports having no formal way of recording staff hours spent in training or personal development. The service is in the top quartile of Welsh library authorities for total expenditure per capita (QI14). Gwynedd meets the target for opening hours per capita and is in the top quartile of Welsh library authorities for this measure. It also has a small proportion of unstaffed opening hours (QI16). Total service hours have reduced by 3% this year. In addition, the opening hours of Nefyn and Bangor Libraries have been revised following consultation with users.

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. Gwynedd identified a number of ways it contributes to government priorities in particular those of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015. Gwynedd's network of libraries offer access to materials and events that support the reading for pleasure requirements of adults and children in both English and Welsh. The service also supports users' health and well-being information needs through its Read Better collections. Gwynedd is committed to working in an environmentally friendly way, including reducing plastic jackets on adult books. Digital support sessions are offered to help boost digital skills and reduce digital poverty. To help tackle poverty, the library service has been working with Cyngor Gwynedd's Inclusion and Tackling Poverty Unit and Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board to issue free SIM cards to clients, and food packages have been distributed by the food bank through Dolgellau and Porthmadog libraries. The service provides a range of materials and activities to support learning and the promotion of the Welsh language and culture, and works in partnership to support the provision of adult education in its communities. As lead on the All Wales LMS project, Gwynedd is undertaking collaboration at a national level supporting a goal of the Digital Strategy of Wales.

Future direction

Reporting on the authority's future direction and plans for the library service over the following year, Gwynedd reports that it has set out its vision in the Library Plan-Living Libraries which covers 2023-28. The service notes that the period is a challenging one in which it will focus on the Reading, Health and Well-being, Welsh Language and Culture and Information and Digital areas. Gwynedd is the Lead Authority for the delivery of the LMS Wales Consortium and reports that the year ahead will have a focus on managing that. In line with the Council's savings plan, a service assessment will be undertaken. At this stage, the outcome and implications are unknown, but the service anticipates technological solutions as one option for service delivery.

Conclusion

Gwynedd continues to perform well in many areas, including issues, acquisitions, Welsh language provision and customer satisfaction. Formal training sessions have expanded considerably this year and feedback demonstrates that they are well-received. Event attendance is also recovering strongly, and the service offers a wide range of activities. However, given the comparatively low rating given by children and young people (Q12e) and the fact that the Summer Reading Challenge is being cut from 2024, it may be worthwhile for the service to review its provision for young people, including consulting with this user group over the coming year to ensure the service is meeting their needs.

It is positive that Gwynedd has provided a fuller data set this year, allowing the independent assessor to make a more comprehensive assessment. However, it would be helpful if the service could introduce systems to capture missing data, in particular, staff training and informal support, as noted above.