

A Strategy for Flintshire's Libraries 2013-2016

1. Introduction

Flintshire's Libraries are at the heart of their communities. They contribute to the social and educational development and the wellbeing of the people of Flintshire. They are inclusive places where people of all ages, and from all social or economic backgrounds can benefit from the resources provided. Flintshire offers a library service via a network of 13 library buildings, a mobile library, a service for housebound people, and an online service accessible remotely.

2. Statutory background and drivers

The delivery of public library services in the UK is statutory, governed by the Public Libraries and Museums Act of 1964, which requires local authorities to deliver 'a comprehensive and efficient service'.

Since 2002, the Welsh Government, through CyMAL, its division for museums, archives and libraries, has set three-year Frameworks of Welsh Public Library Standards (WPLS). These measure specific aspects of service delivery which Welsh Government requires public library authorities to work towards and achieve. Flintshire Library and Information Service has made steady progress towards achieving these standards.

CyMAL has also set out its wider aspirations for library services in Wales in *Libraries Inspire – the strategic development framework for Welsh Libraries 2012-16* which focuses on the key themes of sustainable service delivery, access to resources, supporting investment in library buildings to meet the needs of the community, recognising libraries' contribution to information literacy and digital inclusion, investment in developing skills of library staff, coordinating a marketing programme and evaluating the quality of services against the Welsh Public Library Standards.

Libraries contribute to the implementation of Flintshire County Council's **Corporate Priorities for Change and Improvement**, especially **Priority 9**:

'to secure a modern and high performing range of learning, cultural, play and leisure opportunities for all ages with our schools, colleges and other partners'.

The **Lifelong Learning Directorate Plan** includes the following specific commitments, which are supported by the Library Service's objectives.

- "We are committed to serving the people of Flintshire by enabling lifelong learning, community development and wellbeing, through partnership working and excellence in the delivery of inclusive and accessible educational, cultural and leisure services.
- We will focus on meeting the needs of learners and the wider local community.

- We will promote active citizenship, healthy lifestyles and the conservation of our heritage and environment.”

3. Strategy

The purpose of the Library Strategy is to set out the key objectives and priorities for the library service over the next three years. This will be a challenging period with resources for all council services being scrutinised to ensure residents receive value for money. Financial resources are targeted to protect and enhance frontline library services. Collaboration with partners ensures cost effective services. An annual action plan details specific goals and targets to ensure that the objectives of the strategy are realised. The strategy is reviewed on an annual basis to inform the service plan.

The strategy is built upon 5 key objectives. Within each objective current activity is outlined, followed by what we aim to achieve over the three years of the strategy.

4. Performance measurement

Library services are focused on continually improving services to customers by collecting and using key performance data to inform service developments. Data can also be used to communicate the value and impact made by the library service. Performance data is also reviewed by the Welsh Government and measured against other public library services in Wales.

Performance data is collected against national Performance Indicators for Leisure and Culture – Libraries, and the Welsh Public Library Standards.

Overall customer satisfaction with library services proved to be consistently high during the period of the library strategy 2009-12. CIPFA Public Library User Surveys were carried out with adults in 2009 and children in 2011. 96% of adults rated their libraries good or very good. 99.9% of children indicated that they were satisfied or very satisfied with the library service provided.

5. Consultation

Library users, Flintshire residents and other interested groups have been consulted in the development of this strategy.

OBJECTIVE 1

To provide a relevant and responsive library service for Flintshire's communities

To ensure that our libraries are vibrant, welcoming public spaces which are easy to access.

... with a welcoming and skilled workforce so that using libraries is an enjoyable and enriching experience

What we currently do:-

- deliver static and mobile library services appropriate to community size
- provide an inclusive service available to all residents regardless of age, disability, gender, gender reassignment, race, religion and belief and sexual orientation.
- provide a bilingual service in accordance with the Flintshire County Council Welsh Language Policy.
- deliver a dedicated service to housebound users based on their expressed interests and needs
- work in partnership with other council departments and outside organisations to make effective use of our buildings, for example, museum collections in Buckley and Mold libraries, direct access JobCentre Plus phones in selected libraries, Career Wales Service delivered from Holywell Library, and a Tourist Information Centre in Mold Library
- promote libraries and library services to all residents via national and in-house marketing strategies
- provide publicly accessible computers and broadband access to the Internet, and accessible hardware and software for people with additional needs
- give residents access to a free round the clock virtual library, using their library card. Online resources currently include downloadable ebooks, audio books and magazines, together with access to free online reference resources: newspapers, encyclopaedias and other reference works, family history sources and driving theory test materials
- work within our ICT Strategy to ensure the service keeps up with, and takes advantage of, developments in ICT facilities and services for library users
- provide an enquiry service at all libraries, led and supported by the specialist staff and resources of the @nswers Centre in Mold Library and Museum
- disseminate information about Flintshire community groups and community events from our libraries and the Flintshire County Council web site

What we aim to do:-

- work with the corporate asset managers to link with the Flintshire Connects project and the school modernisation area reviews

- make better use of customer and residents' feedback to improve services
- market services more effectively
- keep pace with technological developments in publishing, information provision, social networking and mobile communications to ensure that services are responsive to the evolving needs and expectations of residents.
- work with other council departments to offer access to other services via our libraries in town centres
- provide WiFi access in Flintshire's libraries whilst maintaining the integrity of corporate website security
- consult communities on the opening hour patterns that they would find convenient for their local library, and, within available budgets, implement the findings

OBJECTIVE 2

To inspire a community of readers and learners

Engaging people with books, reading and learning by providing them with an inspiring collection and high quality information content

Creating opportunities to share the enjoyment of reading and learn together in a relaxed and informal environment

What we currently do:-

- provide access to a range of books and other library materials to widen opportunities for Flintshire residents to engage in creative and enjoyable reading experiences, and enable them to share in the educational, economic and social benefits reading can provide
- deliver and support library activities for children under five and their parents and carers, such as Rhymetime and Chatterbox sessions, and, in partnership with local health visitors, the national Bookstart scheme to support literacy from an early age
- work with schools and families to help children independently explore their reading choices and improve their reading skills. Participate in and promote national and regional reading initiatives, such as World Book Day, the annual Summer Reading Challenge, and the North East Wales Schools Books Quiz
- deliver a programme of library activities during school holidays
- provide author visits to promote reading to a wider audience
- train staff in supporting readers through the nationally recognised Frontline reader development training programme
- work in partnership with other library authorities to increase the opportunities for adults to read for pleasure by means of a programme of events to share and extend their reading experiences

What we aim to do:-

- increase individual's and schools' participation in reading initiatives
- work with schools, through a programme of information literacy sessions, to increase young people's awareness of the resources available to them in libraries
- develop library web pages for children and young people
- extend the range of creative reading opportunities for children and adults by supporting self-managed reading groups for adults and programming live literature events.
- promote reading and literacy as part of a nationwide library strategy by committing to the Universal Reading Offer from Libraries to the Public with The Reading Agency as lead partner.

OBJECTIVE 3

To provide and promote a suitable collection of resources to meet the needs of Flintshire's communities.

What we currently do:-

- work within a regularly reviewed Stock Selection and Maintenance Policy to provide customers with an appropriate range of stock in a variety of formats which will enable people with different needs to benefit from resources.
- provide Flintshire residents with equal access to the stocks of both library services through a formal partnership with Denbighshire County Council,
- select stock from specialist library suppliers, working within the Wales Purchasing Consortium to secure best value
- participate in regional and national interlibrary lending schemes to deliver books which are out of print or otherwise difficult to obtain
- regularly review and edit stock to ensure users are provided with relevant, up to date collections in good physical condition
- provide books in standard and large print, audio books, DVDs, and music CDs, and access to downloadable audio books ,e-books and magazines
- provide residential homes, nurseries and playgroups with collections of stock which are changed regularly
- make effective use of our stock using SmartSM – an evidence based management tool, in order to manage collections more efficiently and improve service to customers

What we aim to do:-

- make more effective use of readers' feedback in stock selection

- develop the web based library management system to improve the information available to users about stock holdings, and enhance library users' experience when accessing the library catalogue to manage their loans remotely

OBJECTIVE 4

To provide opportunities for lifelong learning and self-development

To contribute to the quality of life and wellbeing of the residents of Flintshire by providing the information and resources for self development and promoting local heritage and cultural diversity.

To assist people of all ages in identifying and achieving their lifelong learning goals

What we currently do:-

- ensure that our library buildings are welcoming, accessible places where people can come to use high quality resources, learn, study, enjoy and take part in activities in a safe and relaxing environment
- deliver library-based cultural events, directly and with partners, including book launches and author visits
- offer exhibition and display facilities for local artists and community groups, encouraging children and adults to express themselves creatively
- provide activities and resources reflecting the history and heritage of the county
- offer high quality learning experiences and opportunities for progression, within the community, working with Flintshire Community Learning Network to provide advice and guidance, taster courses and venues
- support learners accessing courses at the Library Learners' Centres at Connah's Quay, Flint and Holywell libraries
- promote digital inclusion by provision of assistance to computer users, and by delivering a programme of ICT taster sessions in selected libraries utilising resources provided by organisations such as Learndirect
- work in partnership with other organisations to provide additional services, for example funding and administering the RNIB's talking books service, and delivering the Welsh Government Books on Prescription Scheme, whereby health professionals 'prescribe' specific self-help books for collection from patients' local libraries
- provide information literacy support for users of all ages and abilities in line with goals of the Welsh Information Literacy project. These are: to enable residents to locate, evaluate and communicate information in education, the workplace and the wider community.

What we aim to do:-

- develop the range and take up of e-resources to include online resources providing information, reading for pleasure and interactive learning
- seek further opportunities to develop libraries as community learning centres
- continue to enhance access to and content of library web pages
- develop the range of ICT facilities for people with particular access requirements
- signpost and refer learners to the opportunities offered by learning providers both within and beyond Flintshire
- work in partnership with health providers to make health and wellbeing information available and accessible in a variety of formats, including digital
- work with partners to assist vulnerable residents to set up and manage online accounts for employment and social benefit claims

OBJECTIVE 5

To ensure services are well managed and efficient, with high levels of customer service provided by courteous and knowledgeable staff

What we currently do:-

- recruit, develop and manage our workforce to meet customer needs, in accordance with corporate policies
- provide new staff with an induction programme appropriate to the needs of their posts
- support staff who wish to gain new skills and library qualifications
- operate the corporate appraisal process to identify and deliver, within available budgets, staff development and training needs
- deliver service specific training, independently and in partnership with other library authorities
- hold regular team and workplace meetings to promote effective communication

What we aim to do:-

- seek to improve career progression in order to retain staff in whom we have invested training and development
- respond to emerging training needs as they arise
- encourage staff to take up opportunities for managerial and supervisory development training