

# Welsh Public Library Standards 2014-17

## Flintshire County Council

### Annual Assessment Report 2014-15

This report has been prepared based on information provided in Flintshire's annual return, case studies and narrative report submitted to Museums, Archives and Libraries Division of the Welsh Government.

Flintshire's return was approved by the Cabinet/Executive, on 26 June 2015.

#### 1) Executive summary

Flintshire met 17 of the 18 core entitlements in full, and partially met 1.

Of the 7 quality indicators which have targets, Flintshire achieved 2 in full and 5 in part.

More analysis in the return of areas of weaker performance would be beneficial and help provide context. The service has suffered from budget reductions and is now missing a substantial number of targets. Future progress could be static. However there are areas of strength, such as the request service and percentage of resources on materials.

- Flintshire carried out an impact survey in November 2014. 92% of children thought that the library helped them to learn and find things out; 81% of adults and 69% of children felt that the library made a difference to their lives. Four impact case studies described a variety of events for both adults and children, with some direct evidence of impact, although this could be better articulated.
- Flintshire carried out a customer survey in November 2014, and achieved high levels of overall satisfaction, with 99% of adults rating the service as 'good' or very good' and children giving a 10 out of 10 rating for the library that they use – the best scores obtained by any authority surveying this year. Ratings on individual elements of the service compare less favourably to other authorities, however. Provision of training across the service is somewhat limited, and this is reflected in low attendance figures.
- Flintshire meets the target for access to service points, but usage indicators have fallen compared to last year. The fall in the number of virtual visits and audio visual loans are of particular concern, with virtual visits the third lowest in Wales.
- Flintshire has prioritised materials for children in its acquisitions policy, and did not meet the target of the overall level of acquisitions. ICT provision is also limited, particularly in the area of Wi-Fi access for the public. Poor internet reception in some areas of the authority contributes to this. The low levels of ICT provision, and training offered, are a cause for some concern.
- Staffing levels do not meet the targets set, although there is appropriate investment in staff training. Only 3 authorities reported having fewer professionally qualified staff per capita. Flintshire did not use any volunteers during the year. Expenditure figures are not directly comparable to 2013-14 owing to different treatment of central services support costs. The average cost per visit was £2.48, below the median for Wales as a whole.
- Compared to the rest of Wales, Flintshire performs relatively poorly in the broad area of *Customers and communities*, despite high overall satisfaction levels, and in

*Leadership and development.* In the broad areas of *Learning for life* and *Access for all*, some indicators show good performance, whilst others are somewhat poorer.

- As in previous reports, staffing levels remain an area of concern.

## 2) Performance against the standards

The standards framework comprises of core entitlements, quality indicators with targets, quality indicators with benchmarks and impact measures. Section 2 summarises achievements against the core entitlements, the quality indicators which have targets, the quality indicators showing performance against others, and impact measures. A narrative assessment of the authority's performance is made in Section 3.

### a) Core entitlements

Flintshire is meeting 17 of the 18 core entitlements in full, and partially meeting 1. The area in which it fails to fully meet the core entitlements is *Learning for Life*; at present Flintshire is only able to provide Wi-Fi in 5 service points, although plans are in place to extend provision to all.

### b) Quality indicators with targets

There are 16 quality indicators (QI) within the framework. Of the 7 which have targets, Flintshire is achieving 2 in full and 5 in part:

Quality Indicator	Met?	
QI 3 Individual development:		Partially met
a) ICT support	✓	
b) Skills training	✗	
c) Information literacy	✗	
d) E-government support	✓	
e) Reader development	✓	
QI 5 Location of service points	✓	Met in full
QI 8 Up-to-date reading material:		Partially met
a) Acquisitions per capita	✗	
<u>or</u> Materials spend per capita	✗	
b) Replenishment rate	✓	
QI 9 Appropriate reading material:		Partially met
a) % of material budget on children	✗	
b) % of material budget spent on Welsh	✓	
<u>or</u> Spend on Welsh per capita	✗	
QI 10 Online access:		Partially met
a) All service points	✗	
Computers per capita	✓	
b) Wi-Fi provision	✗	
QI 13 Staffing levels and qualifications:		Partially met
a) Staff per capita	✗	
b) Professional staff per capita	✗	
c) Head of service qualification/training	✓	
d) CPD percentage	✓	

Quality Indicator	Met?
QI 16 Opening hours per capita	✓ Met in full

### c) Impact measures

The framework contains three indicators which seek to gather evidence of the impact that using the library service has on people's lives. Through these and other indicators it is possible to see how the library service is contributing towards educational, social, economic and health and wellbeing local and national agendas. These indicators do not have targets. Not all authorities collected data for the impact indicators, and ranks are included out of the numbers of respondents stated, where 1 is the highest scoring authority.

Performance indicator	Flintshire	Rank	Lowest	Median	Highest
QI 1 Making a difference					
b) % of children who think that the library helps them learn and find things out:	92%	5 / 7	63%	93%	95%
e) % of adults who think that the library has made a difference to their lives:	81%	6 / 7	73%	87%	92%
% of children who think that the library has made a difference to their lives:	69%	5 / 6	43%	79%	90%
QI 4 b) % of attendees of training sessions who said that the training had helped them achieve their goals:	n/k		65%	93%	100%

Flintshire carried out an impact survey in November 2014. The authority described 4 impact case studies:

- a range of activities offered as part of a Summer Wellbeing Week, which were received with enthusiasm by participants;
- Going Batty Day – a Halloween themed event for children which has encouraged children to read more and brought new families into the library;
- a series of Shakespeare workshops which received positive feedback from participants, some of whom now wish to take this new interest further; and
- a description of class visits in the second year of the Every Child A Library Member project.

### d) Quality performance indicators and benchmarks

The remaining indicators do not have targets, but allow performance to be compared between authorities. The following table summarises Flintshire's position for 2014-15. Ranks are included out of 22, where 1 is the highest, and 22 the lowest scoring authority, unless stated otherwise. (Indicators where fewer than 22 authorities supplied data are obtained from customer surveys which only need to be carried out once during the three year framework period, or those where relevant data elements were not available to some authorities.)

Performance indicator	Flintshire	Rank	Lowest	Median	Highest
QI 1 Making a difference					
a) new skills	64%	6 / 9	55%	72%	93%
c) health and well-being	46%	6 / 9	29%	58%	91%
d) enjoyable, safe and inclusive	94%	6 / 7	84%	97%	98%

Performance indicator	Flintshire	Rank	Lowest	Median	Highest
QI 2 Customer satisfaction					
a) 'very good' or 'good' choice of books	89%	5 / 10	82%	89%	97%
b) 'very good' or 'good' customer care	96%	7 / 10	93%	98%	99%
c) 'very good' or 'good' overall;	99%	1 / 10	94%	96%	99%
d) child rating out of ten	9.4	1 / 9	8.0	9.2	9.4
QI 4 User training					
a) attendances per capita	5	21	2	24	278
c) informal training per capita	n/k		16	162	484
QI 6 Library use					
a) visits per capita	4,317	10	2,637	4,177	5,955
b) virtual visits per capita	403	20	212	923	2,449
c) active borrowers per capita	122	17	71	155	288
QI 7 attendances at events per capita	152	14	21	192	464
QI 11 Use of ICT - % of available time used by the public					
a) equipment	28%	19	23%	36%	70%
b) Wi-Fi services	n/k		4%	37%	74%
QI 12 Supply of requests					
a) % available within 7 days	75%	6	62%	69%	81%
b) % available within 15 days	88%	5	74%	84%	94%
QI 13 Staffing levels and qualifications					
(v) a) total volunteers	0	17	0	14	74
b) total volunteer hours	0	17	0	527	2696
QI 14 Operational expenditure					
a) total expenditure per capita	£11,695	19	£8,966	£14,054	£20,796
b) % on staff,	60%	9	45%	57%	77%
% on information resources	16%	5	5%	13%	21%
% on equipment and buildings	16%	4	0%	4%	27%
% on other operational costs;	7%	20	4%	22%	37%
c) capital expenditure per capita	£0	16	£0	£266	£2,126
QI 15 Cost per visit	£2.48	15	£2.07	£2.87	£3.92
QI 16 Opening hours ( <i>see note</i> )					
(ii) a) % hours unplanned closure of static service points	0.10%	16	0.0%	0.02%	0.52%
b) % mobile stops / home deliveries missed	0.42%	11 / 19	0.0%	0.4%	5.4%

Note: Rankings here have been reversed, so that 1 is the lowest scoring authority.

### 3) Analysis of performance

The core entitlements and quality indicators are divided into four key areas. This section of the report outlines performance against the quality indicators within these four areas.

#### a) Customers and communities

Flintshire carried out a customer survey in November 2014. Performance is mixed, with several ratings below the median of those authorities conducting a survey this year, although 99% of adults in Flintshire view the library as 'good' or 'very good' overall – the highest level achieved. This perception is echoed by the young people surveyed, who gave the library a remarkable 10 out of 10 rating, again the highest achieved amongst those surveying this year.

There has been a slight improvement in the number of libraries offering services in support of individual development, although training sessions to improve literacy, numeracy, and digital skills, and information literacy, were only available in 4 of the authority's 12 service points open for 10 hours or more per week. This low level of provision is reflected in the low numbers of attendances at formal training sessions – only one authority reports fewer. Flintshire did not record the number of people helped informally, but estimates this at around 10,000 for the year, 65 per 1,000 population.

#### ***b) Access for all***

Flintshire meets the target for easy access to service points, and although visits per capita have fallen slightly compared to 2013-14 they remain above the median for Wales as a whole. The total number of external visits to the library's web site has also fallen, as has the number of active borrowers, although this figure does not include those who use only electronic resources. The fall in virtual visits is of particular concern, and only two authorities reported fewer virtual visits per capita this year.

#### ***c) Learning for life***

Flintshire has not met the target for overall levels of acquisitions, although the replenishment rate of lending stock is above the target. The authority prioritised material for children during 2014-15, spending 34% of the budget compared to 27% of the population. The target for the percentage of spending on material in the Welsh language has been met, and spending per capita falls only just short of the target level, at £746 per person able to read Welsh, compared to a target of £750. There is one small library, open for less than 10 hours per week, which does not provide ICT facilities, and these facilities are also not available on the mobile library. Issues with poor internet reception contribute to this. There has been a small increase in the percentage of time for which public access ICT is used compared to 2013-14; this remains below the median for Wales as a whole. Only 5 libraries offer public access Wi-Fi; further investment is required to extend this service. Use of the Wi-Fi network is not recorded. There has been a slight fall in the proportion of requests met within 7 days, but a slight increase in the proportion met within 15 days; both figures are above the medians for Wales.

#### ***d) Leadership and development***

Staffing has been reduced compared to 2013-14, and Flintshire fails to meet the targets for staffing levels overall and for professional staff. The head of the service is a Chartered Librarian. Flintshire meets the target for staff training, and provides a range of opportunities, including support and mentoring towards qualifications. Flintshire did not use any volunteers during the year, but plans to start doing so in 2015-16 to support programmes such as the Summer Reading Challenge.

Flintshire appears to have suffered a substantial cut to its budget in 2014-15, of close to 25%; however, this year's figure does not include central services support costs which were included in 2013-14, and represented 11% of the total that year, making direct comparison difficult. Total expenditure per capita is below the median for Wales. The average cost per visit in 2014-15 was £2.48, also below the median.

Opening hours have been maintained during the year, and meet the target set. The authority notes that housebound visits are re-scheduled when missed. One library was closed during the winter for emergency heating repairs.

#### **4) Strategic context**

Flintshire library service contributes to a number of Welsh government priorities and strategic goals, delivered in part through programmes of events. Partnership working is also central to supporting communities and learners. Health and wellbeing activities include a variety of programmes focussed on children, as well as reading groups, author visits and the Books on Prescription and Expert Patient Programme resources.

#### **5) Conclusion**

More analysis in the return of areas of weaker performance would be beneficial and help provide context. The service has suffered from budget reductions and is now missing a substantial number of targets. Future progress could be static. However there are areas of strength, such as the request service and percentage of resources on materials.