

# Welsh Public Library Standards 2014-17

Monmouthshire County Council

## Annual Assessment Report 2014-15

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

Monmouthshire's return was not approved by the authority prior to submission; such approval is expected in July 2015.

### 1) Executive summary

Monmouthshire met all of the 18 core entitlements in full.

Of the 7 quality indicators which have targets, Monmouthshire achieved 4 in full, 2 in part and failed to achieve 1.

Monmouthshire presents a mixed picture, suffering from recent budget cuts, yet maintaining performance in other areas. However, the authority should consider careful management to prevent a decline in performance in the future.

- Monmouthshire did not include the impact questions in its customer survey carried out in May 2014. Four case studies describe well-being impacts and financial savings using the customers' own words.
- 96% of customers are satisfied with the library service overall. Although high, this and other indicators of customer satisfaction are at or below the median for those authorities conducting surveys in 2014-15. Attendance at pre-arranged training sessions is low.
- Monmouthshire is 1 of only 2 authorities to report an increase in both physical visits and virtual visits compared to 2013-14. There was also a significant increase in attendance at library events. Indicators of library use are generally above the median for Wales.
- Stock acquisition is an area of concern, with a number of targets missed in this area. There has also been a disappointing fall in the speed of supply of requests. The authority appears aware of the issues, and notes an intention to address them during 2015-16. Online access is provided throughout the authority, although levels of use are relatively low.
- Overall staffing levels are below the current target, but professional staff and training targets are met. The use of volunteers is expected to increase. Budget cuts have fallen largely in the area of materials spend. Total expenditure per capita is below the median for Wales, and the average cost per visit was the third lowest in Wales, at £2.20.
- Compared to the rest of Wales, Monmouthshire is performing well on indicators in the broad area of *Access for all*, but relatively poorly on those in the area of *Learning for life*.

- Staffing levels continue to be an area of concern, and budget cuts have had a negative impact on the continued lack of investment in Welsh language materials.

## 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

Monmouthshire is meeting all of the 18 core entitlements in full.

### b) Quality indicators with targets

There are 16 quality indicators (QI) within the framework. Of the 7 which have targets, Monmouthshire is achieving 4 in full, 2 in part and is failing to achieve 1 of the indicators:

Quality Indicator	Met?
QI 3 Individual development:	Met in full
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	✗
or Materials spend per capita	✗
b) Replenishment rate	✓
QI 9 Appropriate reading material:	Not met
a) % of material budget on children	✗
b) % of material budget spent on Welsh	✗
or Spend on Welsh per capita	✗
QI 10 Online access:	Met in full
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	✓
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.

Monmouthshire did not include the impact questions in their PLUS survey, carried out in May 2014. The next survey is not expected until 2017, beyond the current framework.

Performance indicator	Monmouthshire	Rank	Lowest	Median	Highest
QI 1 Making a difference					
b) % of children who think that the library helps them learn and find things out:	n/a		63%	93%	95%
e) % of adults who think that the library has made a difference to their lives:	n/a		73%	87%	92%
% of children who think that the library has made a difference to their lives:	n/a		43%	79%	90%
QI 4 b) % of attendees of training sessions who said that the training had helped them achieve their goals:	n/a		80%	93%	100%

Four impact case studies were described:

- an active library user who benefits from the social participation and community feel of the library;
- a gentleman who estimated that using the library for newspapers and family history research saved him over £1,000 per year;
- the mutual support and friendship between members of a knit and natter group; and
- the sense of belonging engendered in a shared reading group.

#### ***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 Monmouthshire'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	Monmouthshire	Rank	Lowest	Median	Highest
QI 1 Making a difference					
a) new skills	n/a		55%	72%	93%
c) health and well-being	n/a		29%	58%	91%
d) enjoyable, safe and inclusive	n/a		84%	97%	98%
QI 2 Customer satisfaction					
a) 'very good' or 'good' choice of books	84%	9 / 10	82%	89%	97%
b) 'very good' or 'good' customer care	99%	6 / 10	93%	99%	99%

<b>Performance indicator</b>	<b>Monmouthshire</b>	<b>Rank</b>	<b>Lowest</b>	<b>Median</b>	<b>Highest</b>
c) 'very good' or 'good' overall;	96%	8 / 10	94%	96%	99%
d) child rating out of ten	9.2	5 / 10	8.0	9.2	9.4
QI 4 User training					
a) attendances per capita	38	8	2	26	278
c) informal training per capita	122	13 / 21	16	162	484
QI 6 Library use					
a) visits per capita	4,898	6	2,637	4,177	5,955
b) virtual visits per capita	1,225	5	212	923	2,449
c) active borrowers per capita	219	4	71	155	288
QI 7 attendances at events per capita	249	8	21	192	464
QI 11 Use of ICT - % of available time used by the public					
a) equipment	33%	15	23%	36%	70%
b) Wi-Fi services	n/k		4%	37%	79%
QI 12 Supply of requests					
a) % available within 7 days	67%	16	62%	69%	81%
b) % available within 15 days	79%	20	74%	84%	94%
QI 13 Staffing levels and qualifications					
(v) a) total volunteers	44	3	0	14	74
b) total volunteer hours	906	7	0	527	2696
QI 14 Operational expenditure					
a) total expenditure per capita	£13,478	13	£8,966	£14,054	£20,796
b) % on staff,	74%	2	45%	57%	77%
% on information resources	10%	19	5%	13%	21%
% on equipment and buildings	8%	7	0%	4%	27%
% on other operational costs;	8%	19	4%	22%	37%
c) capital expenditure per capita	£723	9	£0	£266	£2,126
QI 15 Cost per visit	£2.20	20	£2.07	£2.87	£3.92
QI 16 Opening hours ( <i>see note</i> )					
(ii) a) % hours unplanned closure of static service points	0.01%	10	0.0%	0.02%	0.52%
b) % mobile stops / home deliveries missed	0%	1 / 19	0.0%	0.0%	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. The return notes that the library service is undergoing a period of significant change, and there are several references to plans for 2015-16.

#### a) Customers and communities

Although Monmouthshire carried out a customer survey for adults in May 2014, questions relating to QI1, making a difference, were not included, and the next survey is not due until 2017, which is outside the timescale of this framework. This limits their capacity to demonstrate the impact of the service. Customer satisfaction is generally at or below the

median for Wales. All service points provide the full range of support for individual development. Attendance at pre-arranged training sessions is above the median for Wales. Data on achievement of goals were only collected from a small sample of attendees, and have not been included here as they are thought to be unreliable. These data will be captured more systematically in the future. Informal training per capita is also below the median for Wales.

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

Monmouthshire meets the target for easy access to service points, and there has been a slight increase in visits per capita compared to last year, which are above the median for Wales. Virtual visits have also increased, although issues have fallen slightly, and the authority notes that a range of strategies to address this will be investigated by the new library team. Attendances at library events have increased five-fold compared to the previous year. These indicators of use are all above the median for Wales.

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

The overall targets for acquisitions per capita or in terms of budget have not been met, and the authority notes a cut of £40,000 in the resources budget and instructions to purchase a 'minimal number of items' after December 2014. Only two authorities spent less per capita on materials than Monmouthshire in 2014-15. This is an area of some concern. Despite the low spend, the replenishment target for lending stock has been achieved, suggesting low base levels of stock in the service. The target for materials expenditure for children was only just missed, at 18.8% compared to 16.7% of children in the population. The authority notes that stock acquisition policies will be reviewed during 2015-16. Speed of supply of requests has deteriorated since last year, and is below the median for Wales. The authority plans to investigate the current process during 2015-16.

ICT provision meets all targets, although at 33% the proportion of time for which this is used has fallen slightly since last year. The authority does not measure use of the Wi-Fi network, but notes that this is increasing, and may contribute to the falling use of fixed equipment.

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

Overall staffing levels are below the current target, but Monmouthshire meets the professional staff targets and the head of service is a Chartered Librarian. The number of volunteers has doubled compared to 2013-14, and is expected to increase further. Volunteers generally come from the library friends groups, and give an average of 20 hours per year. They receive training alongside library staff.

A budget cut of around 14% compared to 2013-14 has fallen largely on materials spend, as noted above. Total expenditure per capita is slightly below the median. The increase in visits means that the average cost per visit has fallen by 18%, to £2.20, and is the third lowest in Wales.

The authority meets the target for opening hours, and recorded only 1 hour of unplanned closure, caused by a heating breakdown.

### **4) Strategic context**

Monmouthshire provided a clear narrative describing the library service's contribution to

six key priority areas for the county in 2014-15. Reading promotion activities and Every Child A Library Member contribute to literacy; information literacy events promote lifelong learning, and a number of initiatives support health and well-being. The library also supports the development digital skills through the Communities 2.0 project, and provides services for job seekers. Community engagement has been a priority with new friends groups established in three libraries.

## **5) Conclusion**

Monmouthshire presents a mixed picture, suffering from recent budget cuts, yet maintaining performance in other areas, particularly library use. However, the authority should consider careful management to prevent a decline in performance in the future.