

Welsh Public Library Standards 2014-17

Torfaen CBC

Annual Assessment Report 2015-16

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

Torfaen's return was approved by the Portfolio Member, prior to its submission to MALD.

1) Executive summary

Torfaen met 17 of the 18 core entitlements in full and partially met 1, an increase over last year.

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

Torfaen is a small authority, which performs well in a number of areas, and is to be commended particularly on improvements in opening hours and supply of requests. It is delivering a service which makes a difference to the community, on very little resource, and has good customer satisfaction levels. However, it remains in a precarious position and proposed cuts could seriously damage the service to the extent that it may be unable to deliver many benefits for the people of Torfaen. Given the current performance and fragile nature of the service, the proposed cuts are a serious cause for concern.

- Torfaen carried out an impact survey of adults in April 2015, and of children in November 2015. Based on a small sample, all attendees at training sessions said that they had been helped to achieve their goals. The case studies provided show clear evidence of the benefits of the service to a variety of individuals.
- Torfaen carried out an adult customer survey in April 2015 and of children in November 2015, who gave the service an average rating of 9.3 out of 10. Attendance at pre-arranged training has more than doubled compared to last year, and is now close to the median for Wales.
- The number of visits to library premises has increased following co-location to the Blaenavon World Heritage Centre. There has been an increase in audio-visual and electronic issues, bucking the Wales trend, but other indicators of use are falling. Attendance at library events has increased compared to last year, and this is another welcome development.
- Although Torfaen meets the target set for replenishment rate and for spending on material for children, it fails to meet targets for overall levels of spending, and material in the Welsh language. ICT provision has fallen below the target set this year, but the Wi-Fi network is well used. The authority has delivered a marked improvement in the speed of supply of requests compared to last year.
- Overall staffing levels do not meet the target set, but professional staff and staff training levels are both above the minimum. The average cost per visit is £2.90, above the median for Wales. Despite an increase in overall opening hours at Blaenavon, Torfaen continues to fail to meet the target set for opening hours.

Considering the four areas in the framework (*Customers and communities; Access for all; Learning for life; and Leadership and development*) in comparison to the rest of Wales, Torfaen is performing well in the area of *Customers and communities*. The authority sits below the median on many of the indicators under *Access for all*, while performance under *Learning for life* and *Leadership and development* is mixed, with pockets of good performance. Opening hours are the lowest in Wales.

Compared to the previous year, Torfaen reports some notable improvements, although broadly declining levels of use remain a cause for concern, as do the historic levels of low investment which may be exacerbated by further funding cuts.

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

Torfaen met 17 of the 18 core entitlements in full and partially met 1. This is an improved position compared to last year. The area where Torfaen only partially meets the core entitlements is in *Leadership and development*, where Welsh translations of a range of documents have been commissioned but are not yet available on the web site.

b) Quality indicators with targets

There are 16 quality indicators (QI) within the framework. Of the 7 which have targets, Torfaen is achieving 2 in full, 4 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	✗	
<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

Quality Indicator	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	✗ Not met

Compared to last year, this is an apparent decline in performance, but in terms of the individual targets within the indicators, the same number have been met. Torfaen has met the target for the percentage of the materials budget on children, but missed the target for computers per capita this year.

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.

Torfaen undertook an impact survey of adults in April 2015 and of children in November 2015. The figure for the percentage of attendees at training sessions who said that the training had helped them achieve their goals is based on a relatively small sample of 54 responses from 156 attendees during the sample period.

Performance indicator		Rank	Lowest	Median	Highest
QI 1 Making a difference					
b) % of children who think that the library helps them learn and find things out:	96%	4/12	86%	93%	99%
e) % of adults who think that the library has made a difference to their lives:	88%	5/13	36%	87%	97%
% of children who think that the library has made a difference to their lives:	69%	7/11	57%	73%	93%
QI 4 b) % of attendees of training sessions who said that the training had helped them achieve their goals:	100%	1/17	85%	97%	100%

Torfaen provided 3 excellent impact case studies which showed the real difference the library service makes:

- A new resident to Wales who has been helped to integrate into the community, find housing and gained experience for returning to work
- Praise from the Alzheimer's Society, and the award of Dementia Friendly status to the library service in recognition of its work
- A shared reading group in a residential home contributing to the well-being of residents

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 Torfaen's position for 2015-16. 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. Figures reported in respect of last year for QI 4 to QI 16 are repeated for convenience of comparison. Note that indicators 'per capita' are calculated per 1,000 population.

Performance indicator		Rank	Lowest	Median	Highest	2014/15	Rank
QI 1 Making a difference							
a) new skills	77%	5/13	23%	72%	92%		
c) health and well-being	63%	6/13	26%	58%	93%		
d) enjoyable, safe and inclusive	97%	7/13	84%	97%	100%		
QI 2 Customer satisfaction							
a) 'very good' or 'good' choice of books	90%	6/14	74%	89%	97%		
b) 'very good' or 'good' customer care	96%	8/14	90%	97%	99%		
c) 'very good' or 'good' overall;	96%	8/14	92%	97%	99%		
d) child rating out of ten	9.3	5/13	8.0	9.2	9.5		
QI 4 User training							
a) attendances per capita	29	14	5	30	390	13	16
c) informal training per capita	309	5/19	3	195	1017	319	4 / 21
QI 6 Library use							
a) visits per capita	3,095	20	2,467	3,967	6,185	2,783	21
b) virtual visits per capita	895	13	340	976	2,475	910	12
c) active borrowers per capita	116	17	45	157	273	118	19
QI 7 attendances at events per capita	189	14	60	223	666	123	16
QI 11 Use of ICT - % of available time used by the public							
a) equipment	29%	15	20%	31%	68%	40%	9
b) Wi-Fi services	48%	6/8	20%	60%	90%	n/k	
QI 12 Supply of requests							
a) % available within 7 days	73%	9	57%	71%	86%	66%	18
b) % available within 15 days	89%	6	71%	86%	96%	79%	21
QI 13 Staffing levels and qualifications							
(v) a) total volunteers	10	16	0	18	103	15	11
b) total volunteer hours	435	13	0	582	3,699	1,314	4
QI 14 Operational expenditure							
a) total expenditure per capita	£11,957	14/21	£7,516	£12,749	£18,760	£12,734	16
b) % on staff	71%	4/21	40%	58%	79%	77%	1
% on information resources	12%	12/21	7%	13%	23%	12%	16
% on equipment and buildings	6%	5/21	1%	3%	20%	1%	21
% on other operational costs	10%	20/21	0%	20%	39%	10%	18
c) capital expenditure per capita	£1,224	7/21	£0	£272	£4,677	£0	16
QI 15 Net cost per visit	£2.90	4/21	£1.83	£2.43	£3.53	*	
QI 16 Opening hours (<i>see note</i>)							
(ii) a) % hours unplanned closure of static service points	0.00%	1	0.00%	0.00%	0.16%	0%	1
b) % mobile stops / home deliveries missed	0.00%	1/19	0.00%	0.71%	23.44%	0%	1 / 19

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

* Income data for 2014-15 not provided to calculate this figure.

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, and compares results with those from the first year of the framework.

a) Customers and communities

Torfaen carried out an adult customer survey in April 2015, and the results were reported in detail last year. A children's survey was conducted in November 2015, with an average rating of 9.3 out of 10, above the median for Wales. The full range of support for individual development is offered in all 3 libraries. Informal user training is well recorded, and above the median for Wales. Attendance at pre-arranged training has more than doubled compared to last year, and is now close to the median for Wales.

b) Access for all

Torfaen meets the standard for easy access to service points, and the number of visits to library premises has increased by 11%, following the development of co-located services which have generated increased footfall. The level remains below the median for Wales, however. There have been small falls in virtual visits, active borrowers and book issues, although there is an increase in audio-visual and electronic issues, which is to be praised as being against the current Wales trend. Attendance at library events has again increased substantially compared to last year, across a range of events.

c) Learning for life

Torfaen meets the target for lending stock replenishment, but overall acquisitions are low. The target for spending on children's material has been met this year, although not that on material in the Welsh language. The authority notes that in a climate of continued austerity, resource-based targets are unlikely to be achieved. There has been a fall in the number of publicly accessible computers available, which now fails to meet the target set, and the percentage of time for which they are used has declined compared to last year. This fall is attributed in part to extended opening hours at one library increasing the total hours of availability. All libraries provide Wi-Fi access, and the network is well used, although the figure this year is based on a sample period of three months. Torfaen has delivered a marked improvement in the speed of supply of requests, which is to be commended.

d) Leadership and development

Overall staff numbers remain unchanged from last year, but do not meet the overall staffing target. Torfaen does meet the target for professional staff, and for staff training, and the head of service is professionally qualified. Torfaen used 10 volunteers during the year, each giving an average of 44 hours to the service. This is a reduction compared to last year, and volunteers are used to deliver a one-to-one service to housebound readers.

Overall spending per capita has fallen by some 6% compared to last year, and is below the median for Wales. The gross average cost per visit for 2015-16 was £2.98, compared to £3.45 last year, above the median for Wales. Opening hours in Torfaen libraries have increased compared to last year owing to the co-location with the Blaenavon World Heritage Centre. This is an example of a change generated by the need to make savings having a positive impact on service delivery, and is to be commended. They remain the lowest in Wales, however. No hours were lost to unplanned closures.

4) Strategic context

Torfaen library service works within the Libraries Inspire strategy, and provided a clear

narrative as to how this is operationalised. Key areas described were sustainable models of service delivery, resources for all, space for all, skills for life, investing in people, attracting the audience and delivering a quality service.

5) Future direction

A budget reduction of some 29% is proposed for 2017-18, and it is likely that this will affect all three libraries rather than focus upon a single location. A substantial cut of this nature, on top of low investment, is likely to have serious implications for the performance of the service and what it can deliver and achieve for the people of Torfaen. There are currently no plans to move to a community managed library model, nor any discussions about the adoption of a trust model for libraries.

6) Conclusion

Torfaen is a small authority, which performs well in a number of areas, and is to be commended particularly on improvements in opening hours and supply of requests. It is delivering a service which makes a difference to the community, on very little resource, and has good customer satisfaction levels. However, it remains in a precarious position and proposed cuts could seriously damage the service to the extent that it may be unable to deliver many benefits for the people of Torfaen. Given the current performance and fragile nature of the service, the proposed cuts are a serious cause for concern.