



SCRUTINY : TRANSFORMATION, COMMERCIALISATION AND CORPORATE CENTRE MEETING

4.30 PM TUESDAY, 14TH SEPTEMBER, 2021

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Please note that this supplement only contains background papers that have been provided by the responsible departments.

Anyone requiring information should contact the Democratic Services Department on (01685) 725203 or democratic@merthyr.gov.uk

3. Welsh Public Library Standards

To consider the attached report

3 - 14

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Annual return pro-forma: Year ending 31 March 2021

Guidance notes

The return is to be made over three worksheets, together with a Word document. Authorities should take note of the following:

The *Definitions and guidelines for data collection and reporting* document provides guidance for completing the return.

Where data are included in the annual public library actuals return to CIPFA, the same figure should be used for this return.

Only those cells where data are required can be selected; other areas of the return are shaded. The tab key can be used to move to the next available cell.

Culture and Sport reserve the right to request evidence of the information provided in the return to assist with the assessment process.

Context

This sheet requires some descriptive details for the authority, and contact details for the person to whom any queries should be addressed.

Core entitlements

This sheet deals with the 12 core entitlements for the public. Authorities should select their (self-assessed) level of compliance from the drop-down box, and provide further information in the space provided.

Quality indicators

This sheet covers 6 public library standard quality indicators. For some indicators authorities are required to enter the raw data from which quantitative standards are derived

There are no targets to be met in 2020-21

A comparative figure for the year ending 31 March 2020 should be provided for each annually reported PI. Space is provided for authorities to comment on any decline in their performance over the previous year.

Submission

When completed, the return should be submitted via email to Culture and Sport:

CultureAndSport@gov.wales

Closing date for receipt of returns:

Friday 16th July 2021

For more information please contact:

Amanda Bennett

Amanda.Bennett@gov.wales

0300 0252054 (direct line)

0300 062 2112 (C&S main number)

Carys Dawson

Carys.Dawson2@gov.wales

0300 062 2095 (direct line)

0300 062 2112 (C&S main number)

Contextual data

Year ending 31 March 2021

	Merthyr Tydfil
Authority	
Resident population	60,326
Percentage of population aged under 16	19.2%
Percentage of population able to speak and read Welsh (see notes)	7.3%
No. of static service points open 10+ hours per week	5
No. of static service points open for less than 10 hours per week	0
No. of Mobiles	0
No of housebound delivery vans	1
In addition, community libraries open 10+ hours per week	0
<i>No. of community managed libraries</i>	0
<i>No. of community supported libraries</i>	0
<i>No. of commissioned libraries</i>	0
in addition, community libraries open for less than 10 hours per week	0
<i>No. of community managed libraries</i>	0
<i>No. of community supported libraries</i>	0
<i>No. of commissioned libraries</i>	0
How many, if any, of these community libraries are included in this return (see notes)?	0
No. of Independent Community Libraries	0
<u>Contact details for queries regarding this return</u>	
Name	Jane Sellwood
Telephone	01685 727418
Email	jan.sellwood@wellbeingmerthyr.co.uk
Has this Annual Return been approved by the authority prior to its submission to Culture and Sport?	No

Entitlement	Compliance (please select)	Authority comments
1 Free to join, and open to all.	Fully Met	<p>The service is free to join and has users from across the County Borough. Access to services is not limited to those with permanent addresses and we use a variety of ways including community loans to ensure everyone is able to access services. Transitional lending allows children to join without parental consent (which has been a barrier with some users) and allows them to build up to full borrowing rights. Library services in Merthyr welcome all sections of the community and make available where appropriate dual language and other resources to ensure that services are relevant to the demographic served by each of the service points. We have a lot of information about the social and demographic make up of our areas and use this to look at what we provide in the way of activities and events. We are looking at how to best engage with non-traditional users and the development of co-located service points in our leisure centres is part of this work. We have child friendly areas in all libraries and ensure that what we do always keeps the people we serve currently and those who may wish to use at at the forefront of developing new ideas, spaces or activities. We are widely used by a large cross section of people, irrespective of age, ethnicity, sexual orientation or other factors and work hard to promote our inclusiveness. Again, the fact that a large proportion our users believe us to be a safe welcoming place goes a long way to assert this.</p>

Entitlement	Compliance (please select)	Authority comments
<p>2 Ensure friendly, knowledgeable and qualified staff are on hand to help.</p>	<p>Fully Met</p>	<p>The previous years, where we have exceeded the set staff training targets, have stood us in good stead moving forward into new ways of operating, with an incredible staff team rising to every obstacle thrown at them during this pandemic Our ongoing results for customer service speak for themselves with 99% of respondents giving scores of good or very good against this question. The majority of compliments we receive are about the staff and the welcome people have at the library. One of the ongoing issues we have with the level of 'qualified librarians' is that we feel this is often misguided. The value and input of frontline staff who are enthusiastic and capable and provide an excellent service should not be undervalued or unrecognised due to the lack of a formal library qualification. The public rarely have any idea that the staff they see every day are not 'qualified librarians' and assume they are because of the skills and knowledge they demonstrate. While there may not be so many staff to help, the staff who are there work hard and provide excellent services. Regular one to one meetings with every staff member, the chance to be part of a wider staff forum, and a training budget that does not limit staff only to their current place of work all ensure that staff have good opportunities. We may not meet the staffing level as outlined but the results outlined within this return, despite of this, speak for themselves and we are immensely proud of the staff who show such commitment to the people and what they need every day. In survey results, not only have the public marked the questions highly where they are specific to staff, they have felt the need to further talk about that when asked for any other comment. We are proud to have been able to maintain this level through the extended framework, and will be workign hard through the pandemic recovery to ensure this is the case afterwards.</p>
<p>3 Provide access to a range of services, activities and resources to support lifelong learning, personal well-being and development, community participation, and culture & recreation.</p>	<p>Fully Met</p>	<p>We will be working throughout the recovery periods now to reinstate the level of pre-pandemic work and activity in a safe way. Even through the pandemic, (when restrictions allowed) staff have continued their support of their local communities with involvement in the delivery of free school meals, homelinks delivery services and befriending of those on our Homelinks service. Having extended that service to all members of the community in the pandemic saw new and old members have what has been described as a 'lifeline'. During the last year we have continued to run many sessions digitally that aimed to support learning, enjoyment and enable our users to obtain the maximum benefit from available resources, both physical and virtual. We worked with individuals and groups of all ages.</p>

Entitlement	Compliance (please select)	Authority comments
<p>4 Provide appropriate services, facilities and information resources for individuals and groups with special requirements.</p>	<p>Fully Met</p>	<p>Our Home Links service provides a vital service for a number of housebound borrowers who are unable to visit conventional service points. In addition to the specially chosen selections we also use special boxes of browsing stock that customers can use to choose an extra book or two. Allowing a free choice of books in this way allows customers to feel engaged with the service and can also help us to improve the selections and choices given in their main loans. Carers Loans are in operation, for those who can still use services but may need additional support or longer loan periods to remain active members. We are also looking at other groups who may find traditional services difficult to engage with and further work is ongoing. In addition to the services described above, we provide disabled access in all of our buildings. We have disabled toilets in two buildings. We think about all users when investing in new furniture or services to ensure accessibility and have offered adaptive technology on PCs in all buildings since 2002, and have various other adaptive signage and services such as hearing loops. We have good contact with local disabled groups and the Equalities Officer for the authority. We sit on the local Health and Wellbeing Forum as well as the local Carers Forum. Where full access is not available due to restrictions within the buildings (3 x Grade 2 listed Carnegie Libraries) services are duplicated as much as possible across both floors. The pandemic has demonstrated locally a range of further inequalities in relation to health and wellbeing and we will be planning how we can contribute to this moving forward.</p>
<p>5 Provide a safe, attractive and accessible physical space with suitable staffed opening hours.</p>	<p>Fully Met</p>	<p>Over the last 10 years all county borough libraries have undergone refurbishment through Welsh Government funding and have been updated and modernised to provide excellent facilities for our users. Our opening hours exceed the minimum laid down in the Welsh Public Library Standards and we have very good physical assets across the service points. These buildings are not without problems as three of five service points are listed Carnegie buildings. However, where the physical accessibility of the libraries have proved difficult, the modernisation that has taken place through grant funding has allowed us to make provision for areas which previously were not DDA compliant. All service points have accessible access and services are available to all. Where issues are recognised we make changes to the physical environment to compensate, for example, in one building spread over two floors, where something is available on the first floor, only accessible by stairs we have mirrored provision on the ground floor. Where we have co-located services accessibility is good. There are no plans to change how and where we operate our services from moving forward (other than those imposed due to use of buildings for other purposes - such as the Library offer in the leisure centre which is currently a vaccination centre).</p>

Compliance with Core Entitlements

Merthyr Tydfil

Entitlement	Compliance (please select)	Authority comments
<p>6 Lend books for free, and deliver free access to information, including online information resources available 24 hours a day.</p>	Fully Met	<p>We do not make any charges for requests or reservations at all. There are no associated charges for book loans at all other than fines which are at the lowest level in Wales (and UK). All online services are linked through from both the Library catalogue and the main site and promoted widely through social media as well. There are no point of contact charges associated with any of the services provided, including online resources.</p>
<p>7 Provide free use of the Internet and computers, including Wi-Fi.</p>	Fully Met	<p>All Internet and wi-fi use is free, there are no associated charges other than printing costs. There are no charges for however long someone is using the internet for and we do not normally limit session time although do promote frequent rests and breaks away from the screen. We use a variety of methods to promote the internet and wifi services alongside the myriad of classes and activities we run to people outside of the library buildings including through our website and social media channels. Having good social networks such as Job Centre Plus, and several local third sector organisations sees many of our tweets and posts regarding training or access shared more widely, which in turn helps us to promote to a wider audience.</p>
<p>8 Provide access to services, cultural activities and high quality resources in the Welsh language.</p>	Fully Met	<p>We work with local partners to strengthen our offer in the Welsh language and have some Welsh speaking staff who deliver activity. We have invested in a new Support Assistant role and now the majority of activities are being delivered bilingually. We have a partnership with the local Welsh Centre and work closely with them across a range of services, not just libraries. We are fully bilingual in both printed and online promotional material and work to ensure this standard is maintained. . Physical resources include books, newspapers and magazines such as Lingo and we work with local schools and groups wherever we are able. We began work with the Local Authority and are a key partner in their new Welsh Language Strategy and look forward to continuing partnership in the coming year.</p>
<p>9 Work in partnership to share catalogues and facilitate access to the resources of all Welsh libraries.</p>	Fully Met	<p>We are happy to make our resources available and the enhanced features on our catalogue has resulted in greater use of the service. While we have not yet joined the All Wales Library Service provision, there are sound reasons behind this, including the non-extension of the tender time frame, which gives rise to a lot of risk for us to join this late. We are however, committed to joining at a later date. We actively promote and work on inter-lending with colleagues across the region.</p>

Entitlement	Compliance (please select)	Authority comments
<p>10 Work with a range of partners to promote and deliver services to new and diverse audiences, enabling more people to benefit from their services.</p>	<p>Fully Met</p>	<p>As previously highlighted we continue to use many local links and partnerships to promote and deliver services. The network of buildings under the portfolio of the Leisure Trust allow a lot of cross working to take place and gives a variety of avenues for promotion to less traditional members such as those using the Leisure Centre and the Park. Marketing budgets are centralised which allows more fluid use and piggy backing on other campaigns. Social media especially Twitter and Facebook are used widely to promote but traditional print based materials are also used. Maintaining a good relationship with the local authority corporate communications team also allows advertising through internal corporate channels.</p>
<p>11 Regularly consult users to gather their views on the service and information about their changing needs.</p>	<p>Fully Met</p>	<p>Survey consultations are normally undertaken once a year, in accordance with good practice and as part of our contractual duties via the local authority. Due to the pandemic this has not been possible for this year, however, we continue to gather views and information from customers around the services we are providing. We have customer comments and suggestions cards freely available at all sites as well as welcoming feedback through the library catalogue, our website and social media. We used much feedback from the regular user surveys to shape the refurbishments and modernisation programme we have been undergoing and have used some non-user feedback to shape the co-location projects we have undertaken. We have a 'You asked, we did' board in Libraries and use this to let people know about the progress on suggestions they have made, and what the reasons are if we haven't been able to act on their suggestion. We also use opportunities at events and activities to gather thoughts and information from users through feedback forms available at every event. This also gives us information on where people are finding out about us and feeds into how we promote what we do.</p>
<p>12 Provide access to the library service's strategy, policies, objectives and vision, in print and online, in a range of languages appropriate for the community.</p>	<p>Fully Met</p>	<p>Documents are available online in both languages and in both formats. Link is: http://www.merthyrlibraries.co.uk/about-us.aspx. However we are in the process of updating and changing the website over to a new one.</p>

WPLSQI 7 Location of service points	2020-21	2019-20
Population density (persons per hectare)	5.8	£ 6
	88%	88%

WPLSQI 8 Library use	2020-21	Per 1,000 pop'n	2019-20
Total number of external visits to the library's web site during the year	102,798	1,704	1,055
Total number of active borrowers during the year	1,657	27	145
Total number of library members	49,671	823	804
Total number of adult book issues	32,450	538	2,373
Total number of children's book issues	6,988	116	652
Total number of audio-visual issues	5,719	95	216
Total number of electronic downloads	15,410	255	152

Authority comment (include names of any shared service points with shared counting mechanisms and date of last membership data cleanse; please also provide a note of any statistics collected on social media use, and how this data is counted):

The figures are sobering to read regarding the lack of use over the last year, but does see significant improvement in digital statistics. We have not counted social media statistics within the counting. As we were able to resume Homelinks delivery services the audio visual loans have not dropped as much as the other physical stock loans. There is much work to be done now to bring the levels back to pre-pandemic levels and this will

WPLSQI 9 Up-to-date and appropriate reading material	2020-21	Per 1,000 pop'n	2019-20
Total number of items acquired	8,176	136	249
Total materials expenditure (from WPLSQI 14)	£48,041	£796	£1,648

Total expenditure on material purchased for children	£3,459		
Does this figure include expenditure on a Schools Library Service?	#REF!		
Percentage of materials expenditure for children	7%		% 15%

Authority comment

Demand for childrens stock was lower in the periods between lockdown and with no visits or schools activity promoting services it was not prudent to spend on stock at that point in the way we normally would have

WPLSQI 10 Welsh language resources	2020-21	Per 1,000 pop'n	2019-20
Total expenditure on materials in the Welsh language	£1,291		
Percentage of materials expenditure on materials in the Welsh language	3%		% 4%
Spend per 1,000 Welsh-speaking resident population	£21		£

Demand was low for Welsh language material and the situation made it almost impossible to promote as we would have if not subject to restrictions with our local Welsh Centre also closed and not opening until 2021.

Total number of issues of Welsh language material	249	4	30
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Authority comment

Unsurprisingly low based on the comment above

WPLSQI 13 Staffing levels & qualifications	2020-21	Per 10,000 pop'n	2019-20
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Total number of staff (FTE)	13.9	2.30	13.9
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Authority comment (including information about shared staff):

There are currently no shared staff in the system although we do share buildings with other service areas such as leisure. There are no current plans to change the staffing levels however, there is also no likelihood for increases to staffing. Despite being low on staffing, staff are used to the best advantage, work is carefully planned and this management means the service provided is comprehensive and efficient. There is currently one vacant post which requires a library qualification.

Number of staff holding recognised library related qualifications (FTE) (including cognate areas)	2.0	0.33	2.0
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There is currently one vacant post requiring a library qualification

Number of staff holding qualifications in cognate areas (FTE)	0.0		
Number of posts which require a library qualification	2.0		
Number of staff with library qualifications in posts which do not require a library qualification (FTE)	0.0		

Authority comment:

There are no qualified librarians in roles which do not require it, neither are there staff qualified in other disciplines.

Does the designated operational manager of library services hold a formal qualification in librarianship or information science or information management?

#REF!

Please give details of current qualifications held:

BSC Econ Library and Information Management (Hons)

#REF!

Where does this post sit within the local authority management structure?	The post is not part of the local authority structure as we operate as a Trust.		
What is the post held by the most senior professional librarian (if different from the above)?	N/A		
Where does the post held by the most senior professional librarian sit within the local authority management structure (if different from the above)?	N/A		
Total staff working hours during the year	24,925		
Number of staff hours spent in training & personal/professional development	0		
% of time spent in training & personal/professional development	0.0%		

The number of hours staff were paid for has been exactly the same during the pandemic with the Trust ensuring that staff who were furloughed had their pay topped up to 100%

WPLSQI 14 Operational expenditure	2020-21		2019-20
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Expenditure on staff	£333,876	76%	54%
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Total materials expenditure	£48,041	11%		21%
Expenditure on maintenance, repair & replacement of equipment & buildings	£9,296	2%		10%
Total other operational costs	£48,976			15%
Total revenue expenditure	£440,189			
Total revenue expenditure per 1,000 population	£7,297		£7,798	
Total capital expenditure	£0			
Total capital expenditure per 1,000 population	£0		£0	

Authority comment:

The furlough payments received to support the organisation through the lockdowns amounted to £174393.00, while work was done to supply new stock during the periods the service was allowed to open this of course was much greatly reduced as was demand.

Digital Data

2020-21

Click and Collect: the number of times a request and collect has been made by a library borrower online or via the telephone

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Total number of online sessions held

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The number of individuals who viewed or took part in a live or recorded session

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