



Merthyr Tydfil Public Libraries

Welsh Public Library Standards Narrative 2020-21

Libraries have a massive part to play in the Wellbeing agenda across Wales and to this end, Merthyr Tydfil Public Libraries support the 7 wellbeing objectives through a range of services. The 7 objectives highlighted in the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act (Wales) as listed are:

A prosperous Wales

A resilient Wales

A healthier Wales

A more equal Wales

A Wales of cohesive communities

A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language

A globally responsible Wales

In light of this the local authority has developed its own focus on four key objectives:

Best Start to Life (BS)

Children get the best start to life

Children and young people are equipped with the skills they need to be successful learners and confident individuals

Working Life (WL)

Making skills work for Merthyr Tydfil: Developing the workforce of the future

Developing the environment and infrastructure for business to flourish

Environmental Wellbeing (EW)

Communities protect, enhance and promote our natural environment and countryside

Communities protect, develop and promote our heritage and cultural assets

Living Well (LW)

Developing safer communities

People have good physical and mental health

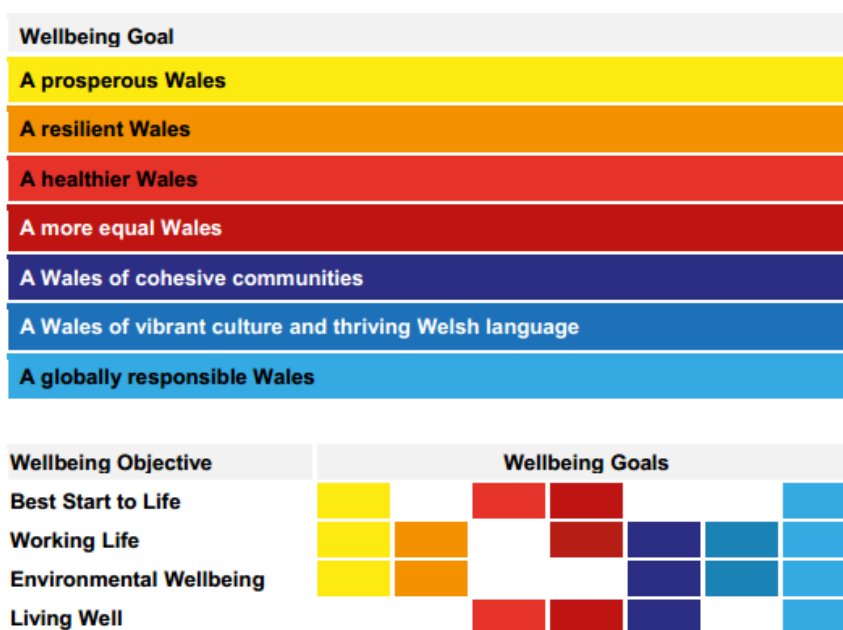


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People live independently

The authority has further developed its visual representation of how this fits with the wellbeing plan:



All priority outcomes link through to the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act and so by concentrating on those which are specific to Merthyr Tydfil’s Local Wellbeing plan we are also contributing to the wider agenda in Wales. The contribution of Library services in its generic form to each of the wellbeing goals has been clearly documented through the document ‘Connected and Ambitious Libraries’ and how the framework further supports this. Prior to the lockdown restrictions coming into force, each of the local objectives within Merthyr Tydfil is able to be clearly supported by activity and contributions from Library services. The list is certainly not exhaustive and each aspect fits more than one of the key priority outcomes on a local level, so have been grouped together to avoid duplication:

- We have maintained and expanded our online free reference facilities for all members. As far as possible we make them available for home use 24/7, so that they are there whenever the user might wish to use them.



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- We maintain free computer facilities in our buildings, open and available whenever the libraries are.
- We have subscriptions to ebook, emagazine and eAudio service which is free for all our members. Whilst the majority of items included are recreational fiction or non fiction, it also includes a selection of study aids and self help stock, which are free to access and use.
- We continue to develop our links with organisations and community groups using the facilities in all borough libraries.
- We provide outreach sets of quick reads, graded readers and other materials for adult learners at all levels.
- We hold large collections of Welsh learners materials, and work to provide as much stock in Welsh as we can, and to promote its use to those in the area.
- We continue to promote recreational personal reading as well as reading linked to study, as is evidenced in our significant investment of staff and time in the annual summer reading scheme for children.
- We actively promote digital inclusion across all libraries through a variety of classes, activities and events. These are run through a variety of volunteer and staff sessions. All are involved in learning themselves and encouraging learning for life in others.
- We work closely with Voluntary Action Merthyr Tydfil (VAMT) to find, teach and develop the use of volunteers in many areas of the library service, so that we benefit from their experiences and knowledge, and they benefit from working with us and developing their skills.
- We have hosted a variety of classes for adults, ranging from computing, Crochet and Knitting, Stop Smoking, Mindfulness, ESOL and many others. The occasional events have included poetry afternoons, writing workshops and local history walk and talk days.
- We are a key player in the promotion and delivery of the Bookstart scheme locally, and use our contacts to encourage family learning amongst the recipients of the packs.
- We have good relationships with many local schools and teachers and have developed these relationships further through reading groups in schools, young librarian training days, writing and reading activities and many other events and activities.



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- We make sure that the recognised sets of Books on Prescription and Reading Well titles are not only easily available for all buildings when a prescription is presented, but also that the most commonly used titles are also available on open shelves for anyone to access and borrow, even without a prescription.
- We have specific staff task groups who do outreach work promoting literacy within the community, working with schools and other groups.
- We have special stock collections to support work on the various possible 'life issues' such as eating disorders, bullying, addictions.
- We are continuing our work with the national GP exercise referral scheme co-ordinators.
- Staff have undertaken training to deliver physical literacy sessions. In addition staff have undertaken Health Walk training and are using this to develop a set of sessions based around local history, with the title 'From Talking Books to Walking Books' and based on the local history stock items.
- We now loan packs for parents and children based on physical literacy and reading to get active at home, which include games and play ideas.
- We promote and train users to access sites such as 'Add to Your Life' to help empower people to make the right choices towards healthier lifestyles.
- We work hard to ensure that no-one is excluded from being able to use our services. We have the transitional lending scheme so that even children whose parents are unwilling to complete a membership form may still borrow from us.
- We work with many groups such as Drink Wise Age Well, Stop Smoking and MIND to deliver sessions in libraries
- We are Dementia Friendly throughout the Library with 100% of the staff having undertaken the Dementia Friends training
- We have a specific home delivery service to anyone who cannot otherwise gain access to library stock.
- We provide stock in Polish specifically to cater for the many migrant workers in the area, as well as a number of dual language books for children.
- We also have Portuguese stock for adults and children.



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- We provide, where required and available, dual language Bookstart books in Bookstart packs.
- The Library Service manages the main local studies collection for the local area and has significant underlying involvement with tourism.
- We operate a bookshop that sells any in-print publications on Merthyr Tydfil alongside our own publications.
- Internet services are widely used by migrant workers and students.
- We play a key role in the development of events and celebrations of cultural diversity in Merthyr Tydfil County Borough, particularly annual events such as Holocaust Memorial Day run by the Library service.
- We support job seekers and claimants through targeted classes and drop in sessions and signpost users to agencies and organisations that can further help them

Library services in Merthyr Tydfil are supporting the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act (Wales) and corporate priority outcomes across the authority, with 88% of households able to access a building with full services. The value of what we do is generally recognised corporately and support for services has grown over many years. However, the service is currently challenged to keep levels where there are with reducing budgets especially in staffing. The service is committed to providing a quality customer experience and will continue to do this to the best of its ability.

Much of the work carried out in the last year and moving forward into the next will naturally feed into each of the goals but will continue to have more focus on the following key areas as we develop our work with children and young people and community engagement:

- Best start to life
- Living Well

There is a general feeling however in the area that the focus on these wellbeing objectives has been a good thing for Libraries and has raised the profile internally around the contributions made through the services provided.

As the restrictions ease and we move towards something which more resembles what we had prior to the pandemic the service believes we will again develop the types of support outlined above. In addition we are developing work around the Welsh Language Strategy in partnership with the local authority.



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