

Welsh Public Library Standards Sixth Framework: Flintshire (Aura)

Annual Assessment Report 2022/2023

This report has been prepared based on information provided in Flintshire's annual return, impact statements and narrative report submitted to the Culture Division of the Welsh Government.

1. Executive summary

Flintshire met all of the 12 core entitlements in full. Of the 10 quality indicators which have targets, Flintshire is achieving 8 in full and 2 in part.

Flintshire performs well in a number of areas, including number of acquisitions and Welsh language acquisitions. Its children's issues and event attendance data is another positive feature of the service. In recent years, the service has focused on health and wellbeing, and provision for children and young people. It has introduced a number of new initiatives in these areas and it has clear plans to continue to develop these services in the forthcoming year. As the last user surveys were undertaken in 2018, it is important that surveys are undertaken as planned in 2023 to inform the development of these initiatives. Flintshire has also taken steps to upgrade digital provision and would appear to be relatively well-resourced in this area. Staffing levels are a concern, but the service demonstrates a commitment to staff development.

- The library service is introduced a number of initiatives designed to support Health and Wellbeing and tackle food poverty in Flintshire (Q14).
- Library events are popular amongst members of local communities; the service is above the median for attendance at events per capita (Q16).
- Welsh language provision is well-supported; Flintshire is in the top quartile of library authorities for the spend on Welsh language materials per capita Welsh speaker (Q10).
- Flintshire displays a commitment to professional development; it is above the median for percentage of staff time dedicated to training (Q13).

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 these areas. A narrative assessment of the authority's performance is provided in Section 3.

2.1. Core entitlements

Flintshire reported meeting all 12 of the Core Entitlements in full through self-assessment, providing detailed and helpful commentary within the return on each area covered. The independent assessor agreed with the self-assessment.

2.2. Quality indicators with targets

There are 16 quality indicators (QIs), of which 10 have constituent targets. Of these, Flintshire is achieving 8 in full and 2 in part.

Quality Indicator	Met?	
QI 3 Support for individual development:		Met in full
a) ICT support	✓	
b) Information literacy and skills training	✓	
c) E-government support	✓	
d) Reader development	✓	
QI 4 (a) Support for health and well-being		Met in full
i) Book Prescription Wales scheme	✓	
ii) Better with Books/Reading Well scheme	✓	
iii) Designated health & well-being collection	✓	
iv) Information about healthy lifestyles and behaviours	✓	
v) Signposting to health & well-being services	✓	
QI 6 all static service points offer events/activities for users with special requirements	✓	Met in full
QI 7 Location of service points	✓	Met in full
QI 9 Up-to-date and appropriate reading material		Met in full
Acquisitions per capita	✓	
<u>or</u> Materials spend per capita	-	
QI 10 Welsh Language Resources		Met in full
% of material budget spent on Welsh	✓	
<u>or</u> Spend on Welsh per capita	-	
QI 11 Online access:		Met in full
a) i) Public access to Internet	✓	
ii) Wi-Fi provision	✓	
QI 12 Supply of requests		Partially met
a) % of requests satisfied within 7 days	x	
b) % of requests satisfied within 15 days	✓	
QI 13 Staffing levels and qualifications:		Partially met
i) Staff per capita	x	
ii) Qualified staff per capita	x	
iii) Head of service qualification/training	✓	
iv) CPD percentage	✓	
QI 16 Opening hours per capita	✓	Met in full

2.3. Impact measures

The framework includes three indicators aimed at assessing the impact of library use on people's lives. These indicators do not have targets, and authorities were only required to carry out user surveys for QI1 once over the original three-year period of the framework (2017-20). The summary figures (lowest, median and highest) are

based on all authorities providing data in the 2022-23 return. Rankings reflect the numbers of respondents, where 1 is the highest scoring authority. However, it is important to bear in mind that some authorities have conducted surveys since 2020, whilst others report survey data from before the Covid pandemic. Some responses therefore reflect the situation several years ago, whilst others may have been affected by disruption during the pandemic period. As a result, there are limitations on the extent to which these data might be considered comparable.

Flintshire completed its adult and children’s user survey in November 2018. The next survey is planned for October 2023.

Performance indicator		Rank	Lowest	Median	Highest
QI 1 Making a difference					
b) % of young people who think that the library helps them learn and find things out:	90%	=7/16	58%	90%	98%
e) % of adults who think that the library has made a difference to their lives:	86%	9/16	41%	86.5%	96%
QI 5 b) % of attendees of training sessions who said that the training had helped them achieve their goals:	Not provided	-	82%	96%	100%

Authorities are also asked to provide an impact statement describing the impact which the library service has had on an individual or on a group of individuals during the year.

Flintshire provided an impact statement which referred to its wellbeing offer, with approximately 100 people accessing formal support and 190 taking part in wellbeing activities each month. This includes providing a warm welcome space and offering hot food and drinks. Members of the library team achieved their Food Safety qualification so that they can cook the food in the community kitchen. This has created an enhanced sense of community, with individuals being able to be in company as well as offering a place where organisations such as Communities for Work and the Salvation Army can offer informal support and signposting. One individual example of impact included a family who were new to the area experiencing a warm supportive environment and getting support to find employment and voluntary work as well as taking part in library-based activities and making new friends. Another example concerned a homeless man who became a member of the library and accessed computers and other resources which led to him getting one to one advice through the Wellbeing Hub as well as finding employment and permanent accommodation.

2.4. Quality indicators and benchmarks

The remaining indicators do not have targets but allow services to monitor and benchmark their performance over time, in comparison with other authorities. The following table summarises Flintshire’s position for 2022-23. 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 those where relevant data was not available from some authorities. Indicators ‘per capita’ are calculated per 1,000 population unless otherwise noted.

Performance indicator		Rank	Lowest	Median	Highest
QI 1 Making a difference					
a) % of adults who think that using the library has helped them develop new skills	83%	4/16	24%	69.5%	90%
c) health and well-being	79%	3/16	35%	66.5%	94%
d) enjoyable, safe and inclusive	99%	=4/16	93%	97%	100%
QI 2 Customer satisfaction					
a) 'very good' or 'good' choice of books	91%	=8/16	80%	91%	99%
b) 'very good' or 'good' customer care	99%	=2/17	92%	98%	100%
c) 'very good' or 'good' IT facilities	91%	=3/16	65%	86%	99%
d) 'very good' or 'good' overall	97%	=10/17	94%	98%	100%
e) users aged 16 & under rating out of ten	9.3	=8/16	8.0	9.3	9.7
QI 5 User training					
a) attendances per capita	7	=13/22	1	10.5	222
c) informal training per capita	125	12/19	5	131	424
QI 6 attendances at events per capita	211	10/22	13	165	559
QI 8 Library use					
a) visits per capita	2,090	12/21	781	2,106	4,814
b) virtual visits per capita	494	12/22	124	537.5	7,979
c) active borrowers per capita	98	=15/22	43	106.5	167
QI 10 Welsh issues per capita	51	13/22	13	53	864
QI 11 Online access					
a) Computers per 10,000	9.35	7/22	3.32	7.99	16.99
b) % of available time used by the public	7%	=17/19	7%	11%	77%
QI 13 Staffing levels and qualifications ¹					
(v) a) total volunteers	70	-	0	8	256
b) volunteer hours	583	-	0	583.5	14,014
QI 14 Operational expenditure					
a) total expenditure per capita	£7,923	20/21	£6,726	£11,476	£27,330
b) % on staff,	70%	=5/21	46%	64%	78%
% on information resources	21%	=1/21	5%	12%	21%
% on equipment and buildings	3%	=11/21	1%	3%	29%
% on other operational costs;	6%	18/21	1%	15%	35%
c) capital expenditure per capita	£0	=12/21	-£479	£145	£2,865
QI 15 Net cost per visit ²	Not provided	-	£0.41	£2.76	£6.22
QI 16 Opening hours ³					
(iii) a) % hours unplanned closure of static service points	0	=1/22	0%	0.05%	0.95%
b) % mobile stops / home deliveries missed	2.37	17/20	0%	0%	3.74%

¹ Following discussion with the peer review group it was decided not to include rankings for volunteers as the implications of volunteer numbers are ambiguous.

² Rankings here have been reversed, so that 1 is the lowest scoring (best performing) authority.

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3. Analysis of performance

The core entitlements and quality indicators can be divided into four key areas. This section of the report outlines performance under these areas.

3.1. Meeting customer needs (QI 1-5)

Flintshire meets the targets for Support for individual development (QI3) and for health and well-being (QI4). 2022-23 saw the reintroduction of a full programme of activities and events designed to support people's overall health and wellbeing, including jigsaw clubs, craft and chat, mindfulness art sessions and quizzes etc. The service has introduced a number of new interventions aimed at encouraging library use amongst children and young people. 'Fit, Fed and Read' ran in the Easter and Summer holidays of 2022. The programme is designed to support Health and Wellbeing and tackle food poverty in Flintshire. Many of the children and families who took part were not regular library users. Two science and technology sessions ran in each branch as part of the 2022 Summer activities programme, delivered by external providers. Flintshire was below the median for attendance per capita at both formal and informal training (QI5).

3.2. Access and use (QI 6-8)

Flintshire holds a range of events, including author visits, a Family Arts Festival in partnership with Theatr Clwyd, STEM workshops, Lego clubs, mindfulness art sessions, ICT courses and employability sessions. The service is above the median for attendance at events per capita (QI6). Flintshire is slightly below the median for visits and virtual visits per capita (QI8). The service is also below the median for active borrowers per capita, but issues of children's books per capita are above the median.

3.3. Facilities and services (QI 9-12)

Flintshire meets the target for number of acquisitions per capita and it is above the median for materials spend per capita (QI9). In addition, it is in the top quartile of library authorities for the spend on Welsh language materials per capita. It is close to the median for issues of Welsh language materials per capita (QI10). Flintshire partially meets the target for supply of requests as the target for supply within 7 days is not met (QI12).

Flintshire is above the median for the number of PCs per capita. However, public access computers are not particularly well-used and it is in the bottom quartile for the percentage of available time used by the public (QI11). This is likely to be, in part, due to the fact that the service does not have data for the usage of laptops, tablets etc. that account for around 70% of available devices. The service has made a number of improvements to IT provision, including the upgrade of public access Wi-Fi, upgraded Wi-Fi aboard the mobile library, wireless printing and a Digital Loan Scheme.

3.4. Expertise and capacity (QI 13-16)

Flintshire is in the bottom quartile of library authorities for both overall staffing per capita and qualified staff per capita (QI13). However, it does retain a qualified operational manager and shows a commitment to staff professional development,

being above the median for percentage of staff time dedicated to training. Operational expenditure per capita is below the median (Q114). The service meets the target for opening hours per capita, but is below the median for missed mobile stop/home deliveries.

4. Strategic context

As part of the return, authorities are asked to report on how the library service is contributing to wider Welsh Government priorities and strategic goals. Flintshire's return highlights participation in the Welsh Government funded 'Living Well in Wales' programme which supports people's health and wellbeing in four areas: Places to Connect; Age Well with Welsh Libraries: Dip into Reading; Growing Together (supporting the development of babies and young children). The service also draws attention to the Summer Reading Challenge activities; Adult Community Learning programme; digital loan scheme; and cultural and creative activities and experiences.

5. Future direction

Reporting on the authority's future direction and plans for the library service over the following year, Flintshire describes how its focus over the forthcoming 12 months will be on developing the role libraries play in supporting health and wellbeing, through services, resources and sites. Alongside continuing Warm Welcome hubs; reading; and activities and events to connect people and tackle social isolation and loneliness, the service will be working to promote the benefits of library use for speech and language development in babies and young children, as well as the literacy and communication skills of children and young people. The service is a stakeholder in the new Place Making plans currently underway in Flintshire, which will support town centre regeneration and community wellbeing.

6. Conclusion

Flintshire performs well in a number of areas, including number of acquisitions and Welsh language acquisitions. Its children's issues and event attendance data is another positive feature of the service. In recent years, the service has focused on health and wellbeing, and provision for children and young people. It has introduced a number of new initiatives in these areas and it has clear plans to continue to develop these services in the forthcoming year. As the last user surveys were undertaken in 2018, it is important that surveys are undertaken as planned in 2023 to inform the development of these initiatives. Flintshire has also taken steps to upgrade digital provision and would appear to be relatively well-resourced in this area. Staffing levels are a concern, but the service demonstrates a commitment to staff development.