

Pecyn dogfennau cyhoeddus

Y Pwyllgor Cymunedau, Cydraddoldeb a Llywodraeth Leol

Lleoliad:
Ystafell Bwyllgora 2 – y Senedd

Dyddiad:
Dydd Iau, 20 Chwefror 2014

Amser:
09:00

Cynulliad
Cenedlaethol
Cymru

National
Assembly for
Wales



I gael rhagor o wybodaeth, cysylltwch â:

Sarah Beasley

Clerc y Pwyllgor

029 2089 8032

pwylgor.CCLII@cymru.gov.uk

Agenda

Cyfarfod preifat cyn y prif gyfarfod (09.00–09.15)

1 Cyflwyniad, ymddiheuriadau a dirprwyon

**2 Ymchwiliad i Lyfrgelloedd Cyhoeddus yng Nghymru: Sesiwn
Dystiolaeth 3 – Anabledd Cymru (9:15–10:00) (Tudalennau 1 – 27)**

Rhian Davies, Prif Weithredwr

Cathryn Marcus, Cyfarwyddwr Prosiect Cymunedau

3 Ymchwiliad i Lyfrgelloedd Cyhoeddus yng Nghymru: Sesiwn

Dystiolaeth 4 – Age Cymru (10:00–10:45) (Tudalennau 28 – 31)

Graeme Francis, Pennaeth Polisi a Materion Cyhoeddus

Ceri Cryer, Cyngorwr Polisi

Egwyl (10.45–11.00)

4 Ymchwiliad i Lyfrgelloedd Cyhoeddus yng Nghymru: Sesiwn

Dystiolaeth 5 Plant yng Nghymru (11:00–11:45) (Tudalennau 32 – 34)

Catriona Williams, Prif Weithredwr

Lynne Hill, Cyfarwyddwr Polisi

5 Cynnig o dan Reol Sefydlog 17.42 i benderfynu gwahardd y cyhoedd o'r cyfarfod ar gyfer y canlynol: Eitem 6

6 Trafod proses y gyllideb (11:45–12:15) (Tudalen 35)

Eitem 2

Communities, Equality and Local Government Committee
CELG(4)-06-14 Paper 1

Introduction;

1. As the national association of disabled people's organisations, Disability Wales strives to achieve equality, rights and independence for all disabled people, regardless of physical, sensory or neurological impairment, learning difficulty or mental health condition. We recognise that many disabled people have different identities and can face multiple-discrimination.
2. The Social Model of Disability is at the core of our value base, recognising that people are disabled more by poor design, inaccessible services and other people's attitudes than by their impairment. We are recognised as the lead organisation in Wales in promoting the understanding, adoption and implementation of the Social Model.
3. Disability Wales (DW) is pleased to respond to the Communities, Equality and Local Government Committee's inquiry into public libraries in Wales. We believe that disabled people, wherever they live, should have access to services that promote their inclusion in the community and enable them to live fulfilled and independent lives.

The extent to which the current legislative and policy frameworks are suitable to meet the challenges facing local authorities delivering library services in Wales;

1. DW welcomes the Welsh Government's (WG) framework 'Libraries Inspire 2012-2016' which seeks to enhance library services for the benefit of everyone in Wales.
2. In particular, we welcome the recognition of the important part that libraries play in introducing disabled people to digital technologies, activities and projects to support independent living in the community.

3. As the Welsh Government's lead partner in developing its *Framework for Action on Independent Living*, Disability Wales was instrumental in formulating the overarching strategic vision of: '*An enabling society in which disabled children and adults enjoy the right to independent living and social inclusion*'.¹
4. Independent Living does not mean that disabled people should have to live in isolation, do everything for themselves or be completely independent of services.
5. Independent Living enables disabled people to achieve their own goals and live their own lives in the way that they choose for themselves. Having the same freedom, choice, dignity, control and opportunities as any other citizen – at home, at work and in the community; being fully heard and included in all assessment, planning and decision making processes; and being valued and respected as a unique individual.
6. Article 19 of the UN Convention on the Rights of Disabled People (UNCRDP) is about living independently and being included in the community. It recognises: 'the equal right of all disabled people to live in the community, with choices equal to others, and to full inclusion and participation in the community'.

How well-prepared the Welsh Government and local authorities are to mitigate the impact of public sector cuts on library services;

1. Under the Public Libraries and Museums Act (1964), local authorities are required to provide a 'comprehensive and efficient public library service'.
2. DW understands that local authorities must find the balance between competing needs for local services, the financial resources available and the general community wellbeing provided by the local library.

¹ <http://wales.gov.uk/docs/caecd/publications/120920consultationframework4independentlivingcover.pdf>

3. We are concerned that in spite of attempts to mitigate the impact of public sector cuts on library services, there are some which are under threat of closure across Wales; Rhondda Cynon Taff,² Wrexham,³ Merthyr Tydfil and Ceredigion.⁴
4. Whilst recognising that any proposal to close community libraries has been driven by the need to meet budget requirements, the closure of a library is the loss of a major community asset which has a disproportionate effect on the most disadvantaged members of society.
5. It is a significant loss to the community which cannot be entirely and adequately replaced by an alternative or substitute service.
6. Any reduction in library services would lead to an increase in isolation for disabled people and would impact on their ability to engage in social, cultural and community activities. Ultimately, it will affect disabled people's ability to participate fully in society and to live fulfilled and independent lives.
7. It is not only library closures but all budget reductions in library services and their specific impact on disabled people that must be considered. For example, in order to be able to read, visually impaired library users need access to reading material in accessible formats such as braille, large print, giant print, audio and e-books. Research conducted by Loughborough University found that 93% of printed books published in the UK are not accessible to three million people.⁵

Options for improving the financial sustainability of library services, including alternative models of provision;

1. DW understands that Home Delivery Services may be offered to disabled and older library users as an alternative model of provision.

² WalesOnline (15/01/14) RCT Cuts: 'We fear for future of the Valleys'

³ BBC News North East Wales (14/01/14) Brymbo and Gresford libraries closer to shutting in Wrexham cuts.

⁴ WalesOnline (15/01/14) More than 200 jobs under threat at Merthyr council as authority seeks £15.3m savings. <http://www.walesonline.co.uk/news/more-200-jobs-under-threat-6512405>

⁵ <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201012/cmselect/cmcomeds/writev/library/lib043.htm>

2. The overarching outcome that the *Framework on Action for Independent Living* aims to achieve is: 'An enabling society in which disabled children and adults enjoy the right to Independent Living and social inclusion'⁶
3. Whilst recognising that for some, a Home Delivery Service will be a vital and most welcome service, it nevertheless removes the freedom, choice and control that is afforded to other citizens, and could lead to disabled people becoming excluded within their communities.

The contemporary and community role of public libraries in Wales;

1. Welsh Government has recognised the need to address the digital divide and particularly those issues faced by disabled people. Disabled people are one of the identified 'protected characteristics' and work is well underway to tackle the digital exclusion of disabled people in Wales as set out in 'Delivering Digital Inclusion: A Strategic Framework for Wales' (2010).
2. Person centred technology is an important element of the WG's *Framework for Action on Independent Living* and '*Strategic Equality Plan*' 2012-2016 to tackle barriers and support disabled people so that they can live independently and exercise choice and control in their daily lives through technology.⁷
3. The current complex system of working-age benefits and Tax Credits is to be replaced by a new benefit called Universal Credit. This will have a major impact for disabled people and for libraries. Disabled people will be expected to be 'Digital by Default' and being online will not be an option as everyone will be expected to claim via the internet.
4. Disability Wales leads on the *Digital Lives* project under the Communities 2.0 portfolio to support disabled people to develop internet skills and to get them prepared for Universal Credit.

⁶ See i

⁷ <http://wales.gov.uk/docs/caecd/publications/120405sepfinal.pdf>

5. This project plays a vital role in raising awareness of the assistive technologies that enable disabled people to get online, increasing disabled people's confidence and knowledge in relation to Information Computer Technology and encouraging disabled people and their organisations to reap the benefits of online services and communication.
6. Without this bespoke intervention there is a risk that disabled people will become further disadvantaged from a financial and digital perspective.
7. During our work, we encounter many disabled people who experience barriers to digital inclusion. For them, libraries are not an indulgence, but the only place they can go to in order to access vital information, claim benefits, search and apply for jobs, and update their skills.
8. According to the Office of National Statistics, in 2013, 3.8 million disabled people over the age of 16 had never accessed the internet. Disabled people are just over three times more likely never to have used the Internet than non-disabled people.⁸
9. The fundamental aims and values underpinning public library services, as set out in the Public Libraries and Museums Act (1964) remain valid for the 21st century digitally networked world. Far from being obsolete by technology, libraries are an integral part of our communities and an integral part in an enabling society in Wales.

Contact:

Rhian Davies

Chief Executive, Disability Wales

Bridge House, Caerphilly Business Park, Van Road, Caerphilly, CF83 3GW

Email: Rhian.Davies@disabilitywales.org

Tel: 02920887325

⁸ http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/dcp171778_300874.pdf

Mae cyfyngiadau ar y ddogfen hon

Eitem 3

Communities, Equality and Local Government Committee
CELG(4)-06-14 Paper 2



Consultation Response

Inquiry into Public Libraries in Wales

**National Assembly for Wales
Communities, Equality and Local Government Committee**

17 January 2014

Introduction

1. Age Cymru is the leading charity working to improve the lives of all older people in Wales. We believe older people should be able to lead healthy and fulfilled lives, have adequate income, access to high quality services and the opportunity to shape their own future. We seek to provide a strong voice for all older people in Wales and to raise awareness of the issues of importance to them.
2. We are pleased to respond to the Communities, Equality and Local Government Committee's inquiry into public libraries in Wales. We believe that older people, wherever they live, should have good access to services and amenities that promote their health and wellbeing, and enable them to live fulfilled and independent lives for as long as possible.
- **The extent to which progress has been made by the Welsh Government towards achieving its Programme for Government commitments relating to libraries, and how sustainable any progress is in the current climate;**
3. The Programme for Government makes references to maintaining free admission to the National Library of Wales, widening access to libraries, strengthening regional collaboration in the delivery of library services and ensuring that local authorities meet national standards of library provision. We note that the number of visits to libraries is monitored, and that the number of people visiting libraries has risen, although we are not aware of any specific targets. The Programme for Government has made limited commitments in terms of protecting the continuity of the extent of public library services.
4. We welcome the capital funding invested via the Welsh Government's Community Learning Libraries Programme to modernise selected public libraries in Wales, and the continued investment in the Programme in 2014/15, although we note a reduction in the funding available for 2014/15. We note that the number of libraries refurbished is

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The new force combining

AGE Cymru
Concern

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Help the Aged in Wales

monitored. We welcome the free IT facilities made available in over 280 libraries in Wales.

- **The extent to which the current legislative and policy frameworks are suitable to meet the challenges facing local authorities delivering library services in Wales;**

5. Under the Public Libraries and Museum Act 1964, libraries are a statutory service that local authorities in Wales are obliged to provide.¹
6. We welcome the Welsh Government's framework 'Libraries Inspire 2012-2016' which seeks to enhance library services in Wales for the benefit of everyone; one of the priorities of the framework is to aim to develop new innovative, sustainable and collaborative models of service delivery.
7. We welcome the recognition in the 'Libraries Inspire' framework of the importance of libraries in introducing older people to digital technologies (Skills for life 1.7.4), and the importance of activities and projects within public libraries to help to support older people to live independent lives (2.3 Promoting well-being).

- **How well-prepared the Welsh Government and local authorities are to mitigate the impact of public sector cuts on library services;**

8. We have serious concerns about how well-prepared the Welsh Government and local authorities are to mitigate the impact of public sector cuts on library services. Regardless of the commitments made, for example, under the Programme for Government and the 'Libraries Inspire' framework, library services are under threat of closure across Wales, for example, Rhondda Cynon Taf,² Wrexham,³ Merthyr Tydfil,⁴ Ceredigion.⁵ Given the spending challenges facing Welsh local authorities we are concerned that this will simply represent the tip of the iceberg.
9. Cuts in library services would lead to an increase in isolation and loneliness for older people, and affect their ability to participate fully in society. A reduction in library services would impact on older people's ability to engage in social, cultural and educational activities (e.g. lifelong learning), and may inhibit the learning of new skills such as digital technology.

- **Options for improving the financial sustainability of library services, including alternative models of provision;**

¹ Memorandum from the Welsh Assembly Government. Constitutional Law: Devolution, Wales. Proposal for a Legislative Competence Order on Culture and other fields. June 2009. <http://www.assemblywales.org/lco-ld7557-em-e.pdf>

² WalesOnline (15/01/14) RCT Cuts: 'We fear for future of the Valleys' <http://www.walesonline.co.uk/news/local-news/rct-cuts-we-fear-future-6507527>

³ BBC News North East Wales (14/01/14) Brymbo and Gresford libraries closer to shutting in Wrexham cuts. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-wales-north-east-wales-25731827>

⁴ WalesOnline (15/01/14) More than 200 jobs under threat at Merthyr council as authority seeks £15.3m savings. <http://www.walesonline.co.uk/news/more-200-jobs-under-threat-6512405>

⁵ BBC Wales News (14/01/14) Volunteer plan to avoid closure of Tregaron library <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-wales-25727142>

10. We feel it is essential to maintain library services in both urban and rural/deep rural areas. In the event that libraries are under threat of closure, particularly in rural/deep rural areas, we would urge that consideration is given to providing / extending mobile library services. We also welcome initiatives where housebound people and carers can register for books to be taken to their homes.
11. In terms of improving the financial sustainability of library services, neighbouring local authorities may wish to consider exploring the feasibility of combining some of their mobile library services.
12. We also believe it is important that local authorities consult with local communities regarding proposed changes in the delivery of public library services. Given the obligation on local authorities to provide services we believe it is essential that libraries or library services are accessible to people. Depending on geography, centralised provision may not meet the test of accessibility.

- **The contemporary and community role of public libraries in Wales**

13. The decline in local services over the past few decades has caused problems for many older people, particularly those who face additional barriers such as declining mobility, poor health, low incomes or limited social contact. This decline has been characterised by closures of libraries, along with local shops, banks, post offices, pubs, day centres, etc.
14. Public spaces such as libraries where people can meet and take part in community activities are vitally important. Such opportunities are greatly valued by many older people and can help to prevent isolation, loneliness and health decline. Increasing opportunities to take part locally can do much to boost independence and combat loneliness.
15. Later life should represent a time of enjoyment and fulfilment when people are able to participate in the community, learn new skills or take up new activities. The Strategy for Older People in Wales 2013-2023 underlines the importance of older people being full participants in society. However, many older people come up against barriers that prevent their participation, and what should be an enjoyable stage of life can become a time of loneliness and isolation.
16. Enabling social interaction and the capacity for older people to take part in activities such as lifelong learning is central to promoting positive mental health and can help to reduce the need for intensive health and social care support. Research from NIACE⁶ provides evidence of the importance of learning for older people, reporting that there are real benefits in terms not only of personal enjoyment, but also for physical and mental health, social engagement and ability to manage their lives.

⁶ Age Cymru (2013) EnvisAGE No.10. Active ageing in Wales. Article by Stephen McNair 'How important is learning for older people?', <http://www.ageuk.org.uk/cymru/professional-resources/envisage/>

17. Libraries are an important educational resource, and are vitally important as places where older people can access computer technology, and therefore have an important role in promoting digital inclusion. The Cross Party Group on Older People and Ageing (November 2012) discussed digital inclusion and barriers to digital inclusion experienced by older people. Evidence heard by members of the Group strongly indicated the value of Skype, as well as social networking sites such as Facebook, in transforming some older people's ability to speak with family members on a regular basis. However, some local authorities in Wales often restrict access to social media sites on public computers as a result of local authority policies. We would welcome further development in this area to encourage consistency across all local authorities to support access to social media sites on computers in public libraries.

We hope these comments are useful and would be more than happy to provide further information if required.

Eitem 4

Communities, Equality and Local Government Committee
CELG(4)-06-14 Paper 3



Children in Wales
Plant yng Nghymru

Inquiry into public libraries.

Children in Wales the national umbrella organisation in Wales, bringing organisations and individuals from all disciplines and sectors together. Its role is to make the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child a reality in Wales. Children in Wales fights for sustainable quality services for all children and young people, and special attention for children in need, as well as ensuring children and young people have a voice in issues that affect them.

Children in Wales has around 200 organisations in membership, including the major voluntary children's agencies, professional associations, local authorities and health bodies, as well as many smaller community groups. Children in Wales facilitates a variety of forums across Wales and works in partnership with the National Children's Bureau in England and Children in Scotland, and internationally is active in Eurochild and the International Forum for Child welfare.

Children in Wales welcomes this opportunity to contribute to The National Assembly for Wales' Communities, Equality and Local Government Committee inquiry into public libraries in Wales.

The Libraries Inspire Strategy outlines the Welsh Government's plans to ensure that libraries are at the heart of communities, contributing to and supporting people to make a difference to their lives. Library services promote and support the Welsh Government's Programme of Government including child poverty and education.

The priorities of **Libraries Inspire** are to:

- work together to review current models of service delivery in response to the current economic climate, and develop new innovative models of delivery
- develop partnership working in procuring and improving access to resources, including new online services such as e-books

- modernise public library buildings to meet the changing needs of their users
- maximise the contribution of libraries in developing people's skills to help everyone reach their potential, reduce inequality, and improve economic and social well-being
- invest in developing the skills of library staff
- implement a co-ordinated audience development programme across Wales to enrich the lives of individuals and communities
- ensure the provision of a high quality service through initiatives such as the Welsh Public Library Standards.

For Children and young people and their families, libraries are engaging in a range of actions and activities to address these priorities.

Libraries lead through the ensuring access to information, inspiring life-long learning and reading for enjoyment. They work to meet the needs of children, young people and their families through activities for young children, and their parents to support early language development and confidence in reading. In terms of poverty, is not just about income but, vitally for families, also about the effective exclusion of people from ordinary living patterns, customs & activities. Libraries can provide opportunities for children, young people and families to access information via the internet, supported by staff skilled in delivering advice and guidance.

There is a very clear role for Library services in Wales to support child poverty solutions addressing some of the challenges faced by families living in poverty. Access to information and engagement in activities for children, particularly young children can help to break the poverty cycle, and protect children better from the effects of poverty

Parents have a pivotal role in helping children and young people to attain language and cognitive development, health, social and emotional wellbeing, and research has shown that parental stress and consistency are the two variables most associated with child outcomes and that the negative effects of low income are mainly mediated by parenting factors. Access to advice and information can be one element in helping families cope. Libraries, particularly those with established links to their local Family Information service, and Flying Start programme can contribute to supporting parents to support children and young people.

Libraries must be part of the Local Authority education plan, while every child in Wales has the right to realise their potential through education, libraries can have a significant role in supporting children and families to achieve, for example the summer reading Challenge.

Lynne Hill
Children in Wales.

Eitem 6

Mae cyfyngiadau ar y ddogfen hon