



## **Consultation response on behalf of the Society of Chief Librarians Cymru**

### **Local Authority Library and Leisure Services**

#### **SCL Cymru**

The Society of Chief Librarians (Wales) is an association made up of the head librarian (or equivalent) of each public library authority in Wales. As an organization we provide a professional viewpoint on key issues relating to public libraries in Wales. Our aim is “to influence the statutory, financial and the decisions which relate to the effectiveness of public library services, and take a leading role in the national development of public library services”

Additionally SCL Cymru work very collaboratively in Wales on joint projects for the benefit of all Welsh Citizens including a current live project which aims to deliver a Digital Library Eco system for Wales.

The SCL: group is made up of Lead officers from Authorities adopting varying approaches to models of delivery including Trusts, Co-located (Hub) models, Community Libraries and standalone library services. It is important to note however that all are subject to the same performance assessment process that is managed by Welsh Government. As below:-

#### **The Public Library Act and the Welsh Public Library Standards**

Each library authority in Wales has a statutory duty under the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964 to deliver a ‘comprehensive and efficient’ service to its residents. This can be measured in a number of ways, including feedback from library users – are they getting what they want, within a reasonable time, by the most suitable means and at convenient and accessible service points?

#### **The quality framework**

The Welsh Government has statutory responsibility for the public library service in Wales. It has been gathering information and monitoring performance since 2002, when it issued its first framework of Welsh public library standards. The framework aims to provide a more consistent level of service throughout Wales and identify user entitlements clearly. Regular reviews of the framework have been undertaken, and the quality indicators updated to reflect changes to the ways in which public library services are used and delivered.

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addition, local authorities and residents must ensure that they are getting good value for money from their services. This can be measured, for example, by comparing performances between authorities. Information such as the number of users and the number of loans, visits and requests made by members of the public is compared in relation to the level of investment made in the service by each local authority.

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Library services contribute to a range of Welsh Government outcomes such as literacy, skills and learning, digital inclusion, poverty, health and well-being. Library provision spans these outcomes, offering a range of services which often support two or more of the outcomes simultaneously. Library services also support the Welsh Government's four pillars: prosperous and secure; healthy and active; ambitious and learning; and united and connected. The desired outcome of the framework is that libraries offer all the services and facilities listed as core entitlements. In order to assess the quality The quality indicators have been defined using statistics already being collected as far as possible, and in accordance with international standards. In some cases (for example, the provision of up-to-date reading material), targets have been set, based on an appropriate comparative level of performance across Wales, which library authorities will be expected to achieve over a three year period. In others (for example, customer satisfaction), targets are not appropriate, and comparison to previous years will monitor improvements in services

Because library services are the responsibility of local authorities, they should reflect local priorities, even though they are delivered within a statutory context. Libraries will not necessarily be able to achieve the top levels of performance in all areas, but are expected to achieve as many of the targets as possible and to seek improvements in those areas where performances are weaker. Authorities should also compare their performances with others in Wales and share best practice in order to bring about improvements. In addition, local authorities are asked specifically to consider and ensure that their library services contribute fully to the achievement of overall corporate aims, and that they are always linked to various key local, regional and national policy agendas and work programmes. Where public library services are delivered by a trust or other similar body, ultimate responsibility remains with the local authority

Authorities are also required to submit at least four case studies that evidence the wellbeing impact that the Library Service has had on the lives of an individual or a group of individuals.

### **The Welsh Public Library framework contributes to National wellbeing goals in the following way:**

**A Prosperous Wales** Development of a skilled and well educated population is a fundamental aspect of public libraries activity. Examples of how this is achieved include providing access to a world of lifelong learning through relevant book stock and online information, and the provision of free IT equipment, broadband and wi-fi, which supports education, small businesses and job seeking. Core

entitlements 2, 3, 6 and 7, and quality indicators 1, 3, 5, 7, 8, 9, 12, 13 and 15 all monitor aspects of public libraries contribution to this goal.

**A Resilient Wales** Social and economic resilience is supported by encouraging and promoting individual personal development, enabling people and society to adapt to changing circumstances. Regular consultation with users ensures that the services themselves are resilient and able to adapt to changing needs. Two core entitlements are particularly pertinent here, 3 and 11, together with quality indicators 4, 11 and 14. Examples of how this is achieved in practice include support for greater community involvement in running library services and book stock that encourages a more resilient lifestyle with access to IT so people can self-educate about the issues.

**A Healthier Wales** Physical and mental wellbeing is a key offer of public libraries, not only by providing information on which to base informed choices for the benefit of health in the future but also designated collections and schemes such as Book Prescription Wales titles loaned through libraries, which directly benefit individuals with health concerns. Relevant core entitlements for this goal are 3 and 4: quality indicators 1, 4 and 6 monitor activity.

**A More Equal Wales** Libraries are welcoming, inclusive and offer pro-active outreach and public engagement activities in deprived and socially excluded communities. Support for Government initiatives such as Universal JobMatch and Universal Credit enable those without IT skills or facilities fulfil their potential. Core entitlements 1, 2, 4, 6 and 7 and quality indicators 3, 4, 11, 13 and 14, all monitor public libraries contribution to this goal.

**A Wales of Cohesive Communities** Libraries offer a safe neutral place within the community which provides opportunities for people to connect with each other. The one-stop shop or hub model being developed in many areas further connects local communities with the services they need. Other examples of support for community involvement through the process of provision of information about the local area. Core entitlements 1, 3 and 5 and quality indicators 1, 6, 13 and 16 monitor aspects of public libraries contribution to this goal.

**A Wales of Vibrant Culture and Thriving Welsh Language** With explicit provision in the current framework covering the provision of material in the Welsh Language, libraries are well placed to contribute in this area. They promote and protect Welsh Culture and language, and encourage participation in the arts and recreation through the availability of a good range of stock in Welsh, and a host of cultural events and activities. Core entitlements include 2, 3, 6, 8, 9 and 10 and quality indicators 2, 6, 8, 9 and 10 are particularly relevant here.

**A Globally Responsible Wales** A commitment to make the most efficient use of resources is embodied in the quality indicators. The Culture division of Welsh Government works with the British Standards Institute and International Standards Organisation in developing and using quality indicators for Libraries that conform to ISO 11620. Further the borrowing of books is a great recycling tool, reducing the impact on the environment. Libraries in Wales work together in book purchasing consortia, digital e-book consortia and the All Wales Library Management system. Core entitlement 12 is directly related to global good practice, while quality indicators 14 and 15 are related to the balance and efficiency of service provision.

SCL would politely direct the Committee to the following reports

[Public library service annual reports 2019 to 2020 | GOV.WALES](#)

[Welsh Libraries report 2020 to 2021 \(gov.wales\)](#) – (collated report due to Pandemic)

The 2021-22 reports are due to be published shortly by the Culture Division of Welsh Government.