

Rhondda Cynon Taf Library Service Strategy 2019/21

The Vision for Libraries in Rhondda Cynon Taf - Supporting people and communities to achieve their full potential.

Context

The library service is a statutory service. The Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964 requires each local authority to provide a 'comprehensive and efficient' library service. Library services in Wales are regulated by the Welsh Government through the Welsh Public Library Standards. In 2017/18 Rhondda Cynon Taf met all of the 12 core entitlements in full. Of the 10 quality indicators which have targets, Rhondda Cynon Taf achieved 5 in full, 1 in part and failed to achieve 4. The full WPLS Assessment Report can be found on the Welsh Government website.

The financial pressures experienced by local authorities in recent years have resulted in the library service reviewing every aspect of its offer to ensure that it:

- remains relevant in an increasingly technological age,
- provides access to the range of opportunities required by residents,
- embraces change and adopts an innovative approach to problem-solving to ensure the service is fit for purpose for the longer term.

Despite pressures on local authority finances across Wales, Rhondda Cynon Taf Council has maintained a mixed model of delivery that includes:

- 3 Area Libraries.
- 10 Branch Libraries.
- A recently re-modelled Mobile library provision.
- A @homelibraryservice.
- A Schools Library Service that offers a loan and advisory service to all primary schools. A Children and Youth Librarian that develops programmes and activities that promotes reading and information literacy among young people.

The Library Service supports the Council's corporate strategies and contributes to strategic priorities as identified in the Council's Corporate Plan – The Way Ahead 2016-2020:

Economy – building a strong economy

People – promoting independence and positive lives for everyone

Place – creating neighbourhoods where people are proud to live and work

The Library Service is guided in everything it does by themes identified by the Welsh Government in 'Connected and Ambitious Libraries,' the Sixth Quality Framework of Welsh Libraries 2017/20 whereby local authorities are encouraged to ensure that the public can benefit from:

- the provision of suitable and appropriate access to public library service points
- a suitable and appropriate range of materials and activities available
- access to adequate levels of staffing and a skilled workforce
- adequate capital investment in buildings, effective ICT and efficient management systems for their library service.

Libraries also play a key role in supporting the local authority to meet the 7 well-being goals identified in the Well-being of Future Generations Act.

Vision

Our vision for Rhondda Cynon Taf Libraries reflect the Universal Offers developed by the Society of Chief Librarians for library services.

DIGITAL: To narrow the digital divide between those who regularly access information online and those who don't.

READING: To help create a more literate and confident society by developing, delivering and promoting reading activities in the library.

HEALTH: To help people manage their health and well-being.

INFORMATION: Ensure that all library users are supported to access quality information and online services in key areas such as careers, health, personal finance and benefits.

LEARNING: Libraries are present throughout a person's learning journey to build confidence, support education, increase creativity and improve digital skills.

CULTURE: More people have access to quality and diverse cultural experiences and events through libraries, especially those less likely to access arts and culture.

Library Service 2017/18

People visiting libraries – 799,101 visitors

Library members – 65,031 members

Loans of books and other materials – 439,094 loans

Volunteer hours – 2442 hours

% usage of Public access PC – 24%

Usage of Wi-Fi in hours – 881,070 hours

Average opening hours each week – 524 hours

% user satisfaction with the service – 96%

Key priorities

- keeping the service relevant in a rapidly changing environment

- embedding new models of service delivery
- improving the library experience for customers

In order to achieve these priorities the service will:

- enhance the programme of digitisation of resources and make these available online so that customers can access collections at any time
- Harness new IT developments to improve the customer experience at static, mobile and through the @homelibraryservice
- ensure that all staff have the skills required to provide a service that remains relevant at a time when innovations in technology and changing patterns of usage are having an impact on how customers want to engage with the service
- Invest in infra-structure improvements including co-location with other services in community hubs
- embed new models of delivery and monitor customer feedback to ensure they achieve their objectives
- ensure that residents have access to a broad range of learning opportunities
- work with partners to provide a wider range of information, advice and support on well-being and health
- work with partners and volunteers in the heritage, arts and cultural sectors to develop a range of cultural activities

Outcomes and impacts

The service will work towards ensuring the following outcomes and impacts:

- People will be able to increase their knowledge/skills having used the library
- People will be able to take part in reading and other cultural events organised by the library of their choice
- People will feel part of a community using the library service
- People will be able to take advantage of the opportunities of the digital world through using the library
- Personal health and well-being will be enhanced by using the library
- People can participate more fully in local affairs via the facilities in the library