



Merthyr Tydfil Public Libraries

Strategy Document 2019-21

Merthyr Tydfil Public Libraries

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1. Introduction

This strategy sets out the vision and ambitions for Merthyr Tydfil Public Library Service for the next year. This strategy will be reviewed in line with the review of 'Libraries Inspire – the strategic development framework for Welsh Libraries 2012-2016' and also in line with the 6th Framework of Welsh Public Library Standards.

Our vision in Merthyr Tydfil Public Libraries is a shared vision across Wales and incorporates the Libraries Inspire vision:

'Libraries will inspire the people of Merthyr Tydfil to enjoy reading, enhance their knowledge and skills, to enrich their quality of life and empower them to realise their full potential'.

This vision relates directly to the Merthyr Leisure Trust vision statement:

'Enhancing lives through leisure and culture'.

This vision will be realised by achieving the core offer of entitlements for both educational and public libraries across Wales:

- Be open to all members of their communities
- Be free to join
- Lend books for free
- Deliver free access to information
- Provide free use of the internet and computers
- Deliver free use of online information resources 24 hours a day
- Provide access to high quality resources in a range of formats, including those in the Welsh Language, reflecting changing forms of publication
- Ensure friendly, knowledgeable and qualified staff are on hand to help
- Provide a safe, attractive and accessible physical space with suitable opening hours
- Stage a range of activities to support learning, enjoyment and enable users to obtain the maximum benefit from the available resources
- Work in partnership to open up access to the resources of all Welsh Libraries
- Maintain a searchable catalogue of Welsh Library resources
- Co-operate to create a new bilingual digital content about Wales and its people
- Promote libraries to attract more people to benefit from their services
- Regularly consult users to gather their views on the service and information about their changing needs

The Welsh Public Library Standards will underpin the performance measures for the service as we operate in a time of austerity and funding cuts to public services. Having already undergone a series of staffing cuts, service cuts and reductions to budgets the service will strive to continue to provide top quality services to the people of Merthyr Tydfil.

2. Statutory Nature of Public Library Services

Local authorities are obliged by law to provide a “comprehensive and efficient” library service under the terms of the 1964 Public Libraries and Museums Act. The Act requires local authorities to provide a free lending and information service and appropriate access to meet the general and special requirements of adults and children who live, work or study in the area.

Wales also has a set of National Standards (currently not covered by legislation) called the Welsh Public Library Standards. These standards have been in existence for almost 15 years and the standards adapt and change to reflect the current situation libraries face themselves in. These standards have ensured that all 22 authorities across Wales are working to provide the same quality and access to Library services. However, within individual services there is also shaping of services through local policies and customer needs. The Minister with responsibilities for Libraries is able to intervene if they believe that the authority is failing in its statutory duties.

3. Where We Are Now

There are currently four service points in the County Borough of Merthyr Tydfil. These services points are located at Dowlais, Merthyr Tydfil, Aberfan and Treharris.

Dowlais, Merthyr Tydfil and Treharris Libraries are stand-alone buildings. They are all Carnegie buildings and are Grade 2 listed. In addition to the three stand-alone buildings, the service also operates a library service from Aberfan and Merthyr Vale Community Centre and Merthyr Tydfil Leisure Centre. 88% of the population in of Merthyr Tydfil is within 2.5 miles or 10 minutes travelling time on public transport of a public library. To complement the static service Merthyr Tydfil also operates a Home Links service for those unable to access normal library services, and has 24/7 access to a wide range of online services available to users from the comfort of their own homes.

Merthyr Tydfil is an area of high deprivation with low literacy levels. The population is around 59,000 and it is the smallest unitary authority in Wales. All four libraries in Merthyr have been refurbished through Welsh Government funding in the last 10 years and are now, despite limitations within the general buildings (being Grade 2 listed), as fit for purpose as they can be.

4. Challenges Faced

The service is in a time of flux. There are various pressures to public library services in Wales, which are primarily driven by financial pressures. However, the following areas have been identified as those most applicable to the service in its current state:

- The need to market the services more effectively
- The need to modernise the service and update equipment

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- Spending constraints in a time of austerity for local government and therefore the Trust
- Ensuring partnerships remain strong in light of reducing staffing
- Managing developing technologies such as e-books and their impact on services
- A need to manage tensions between users who want to see changes to services and those who do not and to manage the different expectations of the different user and age groups
- Areas of deprivation and low literacy levels which impact on service engagement
- Under use of libraries by disadvantaged groups especially those with lower literacy levels

5. What We Will Do

We commit to deliver the strategy through the areas as outlined in the Sixth Framework of the Welsh Public Library Standards, ‘Connected and Ambitious Libraries’, and paying particular attention to the impact the services have on the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act:

- 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

These priorities also feed directly into Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Councils Corporate Strategic Plan whose priority areas are as follows:

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

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Living Well (LW)

Developing safer communities

People have good physical and mental health

People live independently



6. How Does Our Strategy Compare To What Is Happening Nationally?

It is widely recognised within Wales, through the Welsh Public Library Standards that Libraries in Wales play a key role in providing information, promoting knowledge and developing skills for people of all ages and all walks of life. Libraries contribute to the delivery of literacy targets, information literacy and digital inclusion. As well as providing training and learning support for individuals, libraries contribute to society in other ways, such as providing access to computers and e-government for digitally excluded members of the community.

As the service will now form a part of the Merthyr Tydfil Leisure Trust, and not be delivered directly by the Authority, there are a series of management agreements in place to ensure that the service continues to deliver its statutory responsibilities. These are also taken from the Welsh Public Library Standards in recognition of their value in ensuring quality services are delivered.

The aims of the Standards framework are as follows:

- Enable the Cabinet Secretary for Economy and Infrastructure to fulfil the statutory requirements of the 1964 Act in respect of superintending the provision of a comprehensive and efficient library service by local authorities

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- Provide a robust assessment of the performance of library services
- Have clear links to the Welsh Government's programme for government to ensure credibility across local government in Wales
- Be relevant and useful to all local authority library services in Wales
- Be transparent, easily understood and accepted by all stakeholders
- Incorporate outcome measures to show the benefits of using libraries
- Act as a driver for improvements to library services and local communities
- Minimise the burden of data collection on library authorities

By using the 6th Framework of the Welsh Public Library Standards as a basis for our strategy, alongside the 'Wellbeing of Future Generations Act, we are confident that the delivery of this strategy will put us in a strong position in relation to the national agenda for libraries in Wales.

7. How Will We Deliver & Measure the Success of Meeting The Priorities?

The priorities will be delivered using the WPLS as a framework for activity undertaken in the Library service; success will be measured through the use of qualitative and quantitative data as supplied to Welsh Government as per under the Core Entitlements from the framework:

Priority Areas:			
Actions/Requirements	Outcomes	How will it be measured?	Who will we work with?
Develop separate user surveys aimed at adults and children to answer the relevant questions as required by the WPLS report	Outcome will be a functional user friendly survey to allow reporting Surveys will include an area/space for reporting of individual stories which can be used as case studies	Percentage reporting on the following as required by WPLS: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Adults who think that using the library has helped them develop new skills• Children who think that the Library helps them learn and find things out• Adults who have found helpful information for health and wellbeing at the Library• Adults who experience the	Local Authority Welsh Government Local Health Board (health and wellbeing information) Internal partners (Leisure Services)

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		<p>library as an enjoyable, safe and inclusive place</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adults and children who think the Library has made a difference to their lives • Adults who think the choice of books available in the library is good or very good • Adults who think the standard of customer care is good or very good • Average overall rating out of 10 by users aged 16 or under 	
Conduct surveys according to good statistical practice once every year	<p>Outcome will be surveys completed and counted</p>	<p>Survey results stored and compared against previous</p>	Local Authority
Offer a range of appropriate services in each static service point to meet the requirements of WPLSQI 3 – Support for individual development	<p>Programme of activities/services to be developed alongside partner organisations to deliver sessions aimed at individual development</p>	<p>Reporting will take place on the number and frequency of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sessions offered & support provided for basic ICT use • Training sessions aimed at literacy, numeracy, information and digital skills • Information literacy sessions • Support for e- 	Local Authority Communities 2.0 Get Merthyr Online WEA Merthyr College Local primary and secondary schools VAMT Flying Start Bookstart Chatterbooks (Reading Agency) Job Centre Plus Open University

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		<p>government access & local government resources</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Reader development programmes for adults and children 	
Offer a range of services appropriate to local need at each static service point to meet the requirements of WPLSQI 4 – User Training	Programme of activities/services to be developed alongside partner organisations to deliver sessions aimed at training users	<p>Reporting will take place on the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Total number of attendances at pre-arranged training sessions ● Percentage of attendees at such sessions who said that attendance helped them to achieve their goals ● Number of customers helped by informal training during the year per 1,000 population 	As above
Location of service points	Ensure coverage of at 75% of the County Borough of Merthyr Tydfil during each year of the current framework	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Visitor numbers to each area ● Issue at each branch 	Local Authority Trustees
Maintain and improve on Library visits to static service points and website	Assess the library's success in attracting users to its service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Total number of visits to Library premises ● Total number of visits to Library website 	Local authority Trustees
Maintain and improve promotion of service	Assess the library's success in attracting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Total number of active 	Local authority

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to attract new borrowers & retain existing borrowers	users to its service	borrowers	Trustees
Maintain and improve the quality and relevance of events organised by the Library service to ensure local relevance and ensure compliance against activity for those with additional needs or requirements	Assess the attraction of library events for the library's population to be served and the extent to which such events meet local need	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Total number of attendances at events and activities organised by the library service at its own service points or at other locations within the authority during the year 	Local authority Trustees Local businesses Local groups and organisations as appropriate
Provide up to date reading material for the people of Merthyr Tydfil	Material provided is relevant, up to date and appropriate to meet the needs of the people the library service serves	<p>Either:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A minimum of 243 items acquired per 1,000 resident population A minimum spend of £2180.00 per 1,000 resident population 	Library suppliers Appropriate booksellers Appropriate providers of online services
Provide appropriate reading material for the people of Merthyr Tydfil	Ensure that there is an appropriate balance of materials/resources across various sections of the community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Percentage of the material budget should reflect the percentage of children in the resident population within +/- 2 percentage points <p>Either:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minimum of 4% of the material budget Minimum of £750.00 per 1,000 Welsh speaking resident population 	Library suppliers Appropriate booksellers Appropriate providers of online services Siop y Ganolfan (local Welsh centre)

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		To be spent on Welsh Language materials	
Provide online access in the form of PCs/laptops/tablets as well as Wi-Fi facilities	Ensure that those who are digitally excluded at present have access to digital services free of charge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide 9 devices per 10,000 population at static service points (appropriate to needs of static point) Provide Wi-Fi facilities at all static service points 	Local authority Trustees/Trust Appropriate suppliers
Ensure ICT usage is appropriate for the needs of the population served	Ensure that there is walk in and bookable access for anyone wishing to make use of the service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Percentage of available time allocated for use of public access ICT equipment actually taken up by users Percentage of time during which Wi-Fi services are available 	Local authority Trustees/Trust Appropriate suppliers
Maintain/work towards a staffing level that achieves the recommended minimum by Welsh Government	Ensure that there are enough staff to continue to offer a quality service to the people of Merthyr Tydfil	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staffing level to achieve 3.6 FTE per 10,000 population Total number of staff holding recognised qualifications in Librarianship should not fall below 0.65 	Trustees/Trust
Ensure that staff are suitably trained for the role they are carrying out	Ensure that the people of Merthyr are able to access suitably trained staff to attend to them	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Designated operational manager should hold recognised qualifications in appropriate field Minimum of 1% of aggregate staff working 	Trustees/trust Appropriate training providers

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		hours should be spent in training and development during the year	
Provide volunteer opportunities exist for local people to become involved with services	Ensure that volunteer opportunities exist to allow members of the local community to participate in appropriate services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Total number of volunteers • Total number of volunteer hours during the year 	VAMT Local volunteers Trustees
Provide quality services at low costs	Ensure cost per visit is scrutinised alongside other factors to ensure services are providing value for money	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revenue expenditure divided by the sum of physical and web visits during the year 	Local authority Trust
Provide adequate opening hours	Ensure opening hours meet or exceed minimum targets as outlined by Welsh Government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aggregate opening hours do not fall below 120 hours per annum per 1,000 population • Total number of unplanned and emergency closure as a percentage of opening hours • Number of missed home delivery service stops 	Trustees/Trust