


Through libraries to learning

The role of public library services across North Wales
in children and young people's attainment, participation and engagement



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Public libraries enhance and complement the education children receive in school by supporting most aspects of the curriculum and providing enrichment opportunities, contributing towards higher standards and an improved quality of life for children and young people. Libraries work closely with schools and education staff to ensure children have access to resources, learning support and community involvement.

This paper aims to demonstrate the contribution libraries make to standards and to highlight examples of good practice. Appendix 1 contains more detailed and comparative data. [Unless otherwise stated, all figures refer to 2010-11.]

1 Language, Literacy and Reading

Libraries provide activities to stimulate learning, literacy and reading for pleasure, as well as providing a wide range of high quality books and audiobooks. Libraries are supportive reading environments, where children can enjoy reading in their own space and in their own time, with help on hand when they need it from supportive staff. Children gain positive attitudes to reading through free access to a huge range of books; improved confidence and better reading and writing skills; better speaking, listening and critical communication skills, through talking about books.

- 14,279 children across North Wales participated in the annual Summer Reading Challenge (SRC) in 2011, which sustains and develops children's reading skills and motivation over the summer holiday break from school. This represents 21% of the primary population.
- Denbighshire, where the SRC is a key element of joint strategic planning between Education and Libraries, saw 56.3% of the primary school population participating in 2011, with the highest number of participants and the highest completion rate in Wales (68%) – the Welsh average is 55%.

The link between public library use and young people's reading and school attainment

Young people reading above the expected level for their age are twice as likely to be public library users, and young people reading below the expected level for their age are twice as likely not to be public library users.

Non library users are more than three times more likely to state that they cannot find anything to read that interests them to rate themselves as not very good readers compared to library users. Young people that use their public library are nearly twice as likely to be reading outside of class every day.

Public Libraries and Literacy : Young people's reading habits and attitudes to public libraries, and an exploration of the relationship between public library use and school attainment
Christina Clark a Lucy Hawkins, National Literacy Trust, February 2011

- Writing Squads offer gifted and talented young writers opportunities to work with top children's authors and poets to develop their skills through both Welsh and English. The Writing Squads in Gwynedd (3 squads), Denbighshire (4 squads) and Wrexham (2 squads) are a Library Service provision in partnership with schools and Education, and are part-funded by Literature Wales
- All Library Services organise visits by children's authors and illustrators to give children an opportunity to meet an author, an activity which has significant and long-term positive impact on children's motivation to enjoy reading and books. 14,000 children were involved in author visits organised by libraries, often centred around Children's Book Week and World Book Day.
- Gwynedd developed the Hei Hogia tour which commissions a group of actors to prepare a show of excerpts from a selection of books to encourage reading, particularly targeting boys. Conwy, Denbighshire and Anglesey bought the show in too.
- Annual Books Quizzes enable pupils and teachers to engage with contemporary children's books in both English and Welsh. All six authorities support the national books quizzes organised by the Welsh Books Council. In North-East Wales, 4 authorities work in partnership with the NE Wales Schools Library Service to organise the English Books Quiz.
- In Wrexham, children attend regular book clubs in local libraries to motivate them to enjoy reading for pleasure.
- The Reading Mentors project, run jointly between the Library Service and School Improvement in Denbighshire and funded by Basic Skills Cymru's Improving Boys' Literacy grant, targetted 41 underachieving Year 5 boys from 6 schools. They were given 1-1 support by young adult mentors as role models for reading enthusiasm, in school and in local libraries in the summer term. There was significant improvement in reading ages and 29% made progress of 12 months or more over the year. It is unlikely that this progress would have been made without this initiative.
- A second Improving Boys Literacy grant funded a programme of visits by top male children's authors to the newly refurbished Rhyl library. 578 KS 2 pupils from 4 local schools visited the library to meet the authors, tour the new facilities and join the library.
- Reluctant or failing readers from Flintshire's schools participate in projects (Reading Clubs, Graphic novel project) organised in partnership with Learning Advisors from the LEA, NE Wales Schools Library Service, and external organisations. Participating children are given the opportunity to work with top children's authors, poets, storytellers and artists to develop their skills.
- In Conwy, 397 children took part in fun summer author workshops, story time and craft activity sessions delivered by library staff and the Arts Officer from the Education service. The author sessions, which were funded by Basic Skills Cymru's Improving Boys' Literacy Grant, were delivered in libraries and at summer play schemes which allowed a wide range of children access to these.

"... our eight year old, has suddenly crossed the bridge to fluent reading and a big part of this is down to the encouragement of the [library] staff, who help her to choose and order appropriate books...I have lived in many communities...but I have never before encountered such a great library."

Llangollen parent



2 Early learning and pre-school development

Libraries are integral to each authority's Flying Start and/or Cymorth strategy, working in close partnership with health visitors, integrated children's centres, voluntary agencies and family support services.

2.1 Bookstart is the very first step in lifelong learning and introduces babies and their families to the world of books and libraries to give them a head start in life. Research has proven that children who are introduced to books from an early age make better progress when they get to school and that educational achievement is strongly influenced by children's attitudes towards learning. Regular Bookstart rhymetimes and Library Story Times in libraries and community venues in areas of need build up parents' confidence in sharing books and rhymes with their children, and make a positive impact on children's early language and social development.

- Every child in North Wales receives the gift of a Bookstart bag containing free books, advice for parents and an invitation to join the library at 8 months old and 2 years old as part of the universal Bookstart offer in Wales. The scheme is managed locally by Library Services and nationally by Book Trust Cymru with WG funding.
- 31,454 attendances at Bookstart rhymetimes and storytimes in libraries and community venues across North Wales
- The impact of Bookstart in Denbighshire was highlighted when it was quoted as an exemplar model for positive delivery in the 2010 Bookstart in Wales Impact Evaluation report by CRG Research. The work of the Bookstart team was also acknowledged when they won the inaugural Denbighshire Excellence Award for Customer Service (External) in 2010.
- Every child joining the library as a result of receiving a Bookstart pack is also given a free book by Gwynedd and Anglesey. 19% of children join the library as a direct result of Bookstart in Gwynedd.
- A yearly multi-agency Children's Festival/Gwyl Blant is held on Anglesey where more than 2,000 children regularly visit. The Library service always has a promotional and information stand at the festival.

"It is such a fab service it should be shouted from the rooftops and be advertised on every billboard to let others know"

"Bookstart has made my daughter learn that books are fun"

"I feel really good about taking my son to Bookstart. I learn how to be a better parent and I am incorporating many of the songs into everyday activities"

"I find it easier to approach staff and realise they are friendly especially for families"

"Brings a smile to their faces and has helped them develop speech through songs and reading"

Parents attending Bookstart rhymetimes in Denbighshire libraries

3 Diversity and Inclusion

3.1 Libraries are one of the most widely used community resources, shared community spaces that celebrate local diversity. By using libraries, children learn to interact with people of different ages and situations, and to share resources.

3.2 Special Education Needs: Large print books, audiobooks on CD and tactile books are available to borrow free of charge, and most libraries have computers with adaptive technology.

Specially tailored versions of the Bookstart pack are gifted to visually impaired (Book Touch) and hearing impaired (Bookshine) children and large versions of the Summer Reading Challenge materials are available for visually impaired children.

- Pupils from Ysgol Pen Coch and Ysgol Maes Hyfryd special schools visit Flint Library Learner's Centre, and pupils from Ysgol Tir Morfa and Ysgol Plas Brondyffryn make regular group visits to Rhyl and Denbigh libraries, to enjoy the books and resources and to develop skills in using community facilities
 - Pupils at special schools receive regular visits from the Lori Ni library service. Uned Gwyrfai (part of Ysgol Pendalar) attend a monthly library story time.
 - Denbighshire's Bookstart workers make visits to Ysbyty Glan Clwyd's children's ward and clinics to reach children with long-term ill-health.
 - Pupils from Ysgol Y Bont make twice weekly visits to Llangefni library to enjoy the books and resources and to develop skills in using community facilities.
 - Library staff across the region have received training in delivering multi-sensory storytime to children with severe and profound learning difficulties.
- 3.3 Looked-after children: Library Services make every effort to ensure that there are no barriers to looked-after children having full access to library services. The children are encouraged to be members of their local libraries with both their birth families and their foster families as appropriate, and foster families are able to borrow additional books and resources. Denbighshire and Wrexham have organised author visits for looked-after children and their foster families.
- 3.4 Travellers:
- Wrexham's Children's Librarian visits the official council traveller site each month.
- 3.5 Play:
- 707 children in Gwynedd took part in one of 35 sessions as part of Summer Fun in Libraries – educational activities in the summer holidays funded by Gwynedd's Play Grant. These educational sessions encouraged children and families to learn something new, and also acted as a means of welcoming people into libraries.
 - On Anglesey during the summer holidays, the Library Service arranges an annual varied programme of activities aimed at children of all ages. 673 children took part in this eagerly awaited programme and it has proven to be a successful method of introducing new users as well as a means of welcoming families into libraries.





4 Supporting the curriculum

4.1 Class visits:

- 10,556 children across 4 authorities visited their local library on a class visit to be introduced to the services available; to browse, choose and borrow books to read; to learn how the library is able to support their homework and learning; to enroll in the Summer Reading Challenge; and to develop the habit of visiting the library regularly

4.2 ICT: Free access to computers and the internet to support study and homework gives children the opportunity to develop their ICT skills and access information and services outside the classroom.

- 99,751 computer sessions by children and young people across 5 authorities

4.3 History: Libraries have a wide range of local history resources reflecting the county's rich historical experience, with gazeteers, maps, old newspapers, pamphlets and periodicals, local directories and writings by local authors. Libraries work in partnership with Archives Service to enable children and schools to access original documents and records.

- Access to family history websites such as Ancestry and Find my Past is free in libraries.

4.4 Creativity and Arts: Libraries provide creative spaces and experiences for children and families. Visits by children's authors and the Writing Squads improve reading and creative writing skills. Several libraries have art galleries, museum facilities, exhibition spaces and meeting rooms and provide access for local schools to exhibitions of international and local significance, art classes, and facilities to display and showcase children's own creative work.

4.5 Music: Some authorities have collections of printed music - vocal scores, musicals, operas, songs, instrumental solos and miniature scores available for loan to schools, choirs, orchestras and individual students.

4.6 Cross-curricular and themed projects and research: Libraries support children with homework and research, providing online resources, books, primary sources, maps and DVDs, as well as support and help to develop independent learning skills.

- Wrexham Library has a collection of homework help packs specially put together on a range of curriculum topics

4.7 Personal and social education: Joining and using the library promotes a sense of belonging and responsibility. Children are encouraged to visit and use library services as individual young citizens, developing their sense of community involvement and individual responsibility. Using the library is an important first step in local citizenship and community responsibility.

“ Mi rydw i yn hoffi'r llyfrgell, nid bod o yn adeilad i fynd ar cyfrifiaduron, i fynd ar safwe fel Facebook, ond i ddarllen, ac canolbwyntio ar y effaith mae llyfrau yn cael ar ein ymenydd a dennyg (sic) o'r byd erchyll sef 'reality'”
Sylw darllenydd ifanc- cerdyn Canmoliaeth? Cwyn?

4.8 Transition:

- Conwy provides support for pupils working on the English Literacy Transition Project in the summer holidays wishing to access material on the internet and in books.
- The Summer Reading Challenge is promoted as a vehicle to support transition from Infants to Junior schools in Denbighshire

5 Strategic Planning

Libraries and schools have a long tradition of working together to promote reading, information literacy and community engagement. Levels of strategic planning of this work, and the measuring of its impact, is varied. In some authorities all activity is part of a strategic partnership plan, whilst in others specific activities and schemes are part of specific plans.

- Denbighshire Library Service has agreed a strategic 'Libraries' Partnership with Schools' Plan with School Improvement and Inclusion colleagues, which plans, implements and evaluates joint activity to support literacy and encourages schools to write partnership working with libraries into their school improvement plans.
- The Library Service in Gwynedd leads a 'Literacy and Literature Group', an inter-departmental group which jointly arranges and monitors activities to promote literacy and the enjoyment of reading.
- Across the region, library services work in close partnership with schools, and with advisory and early years staff.

"Just 14% of variation in individuals' performance is accounted for by school quality. Most variation is explained by other factors, underlining the need to look at the range of children's experiences, inside and outside school, when seeking to raise achievement."
Donald Hirsch, Experiences of poverty and educational disadvantage
(Joseph Rowntree Foundation 2007)

6 Supporting families

Family Information Services (FIS), managed by the Library Service in Conwy, Denbighshire, Gwynedd, and Wrexham, are a statutory requirement for authorities. They provide free information, advice and support for families on any issues relating to children, childcare and families. Parents are offered information when choosing schools and childcare, accessing places for 3 year olds, moving into the county, and accessing support services. The FISs work in close partnership with Early Years Services and with multi-agency partners within the Cymorth and Flying Start programmes.

- Gwynedd and Flintshire libraries provide special collections of children's books dealing with special situations to assist children and young people to overcome the many challenges they may encounter.
- Libraries in Denbighshire, Conwy and Flintshire have collections of books on parenting, child development and family life
- Libraries work in partnership with Child and Adult Mental Health Services (CAMHS) to provide book prescription services for people with mental health issues or parenting issues



7 The library offer

7.1 Library membership is free and available to every child from the day s/he is born

- 38% of 0-15 year olds in north Wales are active members of the library (45,967 individuals)
- 10,327 children and young people joined the library last year
- Children do not pay fines for returning books late and under 5s do not pay for lost or damaged books.

7.2 Libraries are open outside school hours and throughout school holidays.

- 417,612 visits were made by children to libraries in 4 authorities (4901 per 1000 population on average)
- 72 libraries provide physical access to resources and facilities over 6 days a week, and the 24-hour online library gives access to information sources and the library catalogue.
- On average 67% of libraries are open on Saturdays to give children access to resources, IT and study space

“I am very impressed with Bangor Library. It is clean, fresh, airy and the childrens area is appropriate, engaging and appealing. I have felt enabled as a parent to help my children learn. It is an excellent learning environment.”

7.3 Libraries provide free access to books and information

Library Service have a wide range of books and information sources to support learners of all ages and interests, from picture books to popular fiction and the classics, and from topic and subject guides to reference and research materials.

All libraries provide large collections of good quality contemporary books in English and Welsh for children in a variety of formats including board books for babies and toddlers, picture books for book sharing, early readers and learning to read books, fiction for reading for pleasure, and information books to support learning, hobbies and interests. Large print books and books on CD or MP3 are also available for loan. Conwy, Gwynedd and Anglesey have collections of storybags for loan to families and early years settings.

- £288,417 is spent p.a. on 56,212 books and other resources for children across the six authorities.
- Expenditure on books and other resources for children, per 1000 population aged 0-15, ranges from £1,483 to £3,443
- 976,613 books and items are borrowed by children and young people in north Wales each year

Library services across Wales work in partnership to open up access to the resources of all Welsh libraries. In north Wales there is a specific partnership, LINC y Gogledd which involves all 6 public library services and the FE and HE sector. A library customer in Wales can borrow and return, free of charge, any item in the lending stock of any library. Libraries have a similar agreement to develop online resource provision and e-books collaboratively.

7.4 24-hour Online library

Library web pages provide an extension of information and reading services well beyond opening hours, and are accessible anytime and anywhere. Online catalogues list all library resources, and users can request and renew items. There is also access to a range of online encyclopaedias, dictionaries, national newspapers, biographies and directories.

- Her y We is a virtual children's library set up by Gwynedd Library Service in partnership with Anglesey Library Service. It offers a safe area for primary school aged children to find out about books and authors, it has suitable links to curricular topics and also games and activities linked to books and literacy. The site is currently being developed with activities based on books relevant to the Foundation Phase. The secondary school site is a toolkit for librarians and teachers working to promote books and literacy in the secondary sector.

7.5 Learning facilities to support study and homework

Libraries offer space, books and IT resources, and staff help, to support children and young people with their homework, projects and coursework studies, in an atmosphere conducive to study. They are neutral shared spaces and facilities offering an alternative option to young people for whom school or home facilities are not available or suitable.

The Welsh Government's Community Learning Libraries programme has invested in the refurbishment and modernisation of many libraries across the region, creating modern, attractive facilities, with technological advances such as free Wi-fi and self-service facilities, which children and young people want to visit.

"For children, libraries are a place that isn't tested or limited or assigned, a place where children can find surprising paths and guidance if they want it.
"Librarians open up the world. Knowledge is useless if you don't even know where to begin to look. How much more can you discover when someone can point you in the right direction, when someone can maybe even give you a treasure map, to places you may not have even thought you were allowed to go? This is what librarians do."
Patrick Ness, on winning the Carnegie Medal 2011

8 What children say

Children are regularly consulted for their opinion on their local library and the service offered. Under the Welsh Public Library Standards framework, authorities are required to conduct a CIPFA Children's Public Library User survey every three years. Recent surveys in Flintshire, Gwynedd and Anglesey demonstrate the impact of libraries on children:

Using the library has helped me to:

	Read better	Do better at school	Use computers better
Flintshire	66%	45%	17%
Gwynedd	69.1%	49.8%	30.9%
Anglesey	75%	46%	14%
UK	60%	39%	20%





9 Schools Library Services

Schools Library Services provide specialised services to support the curriculum and children's formal learning in school. Services include short and long term loan of books and other resources, advisory services to support school libraries, and activities to promote literacy and learning skills.

There are two different models of provision in North Wales:

North East Wales Schools Library Service providing to Flintshire (lead authority), Denbighshire, Wrexham and Conwy.

Subscription based integrated service with public library service to children and young people in Gwynedd and Anglesey.

“Learning that takes place in activities outside school tends to be seen as auxiliary to the education process. Yet evidence...suggests that it is crucial. Such activities can help children develop confidence in learning, to become active learners and to develop a different kind of relationship with adult instructors or supervisors;...they become used to seeing learning as a partnership;...young people from families in poverty participate in fewer organised out-of-school activities than their more affluent peers.”

*Donald Hirsch, Experiences of poverty and educational disadvantage
(Joseph Rowntree Foundation 2007)*

10 Conclusion

Library Services in North Wales are committed to supporting improvement in children's educational standards and personal development. They work in close partnership with schools and LEA staff to develop effective and appropriate services and activities to improve learning and well being for children and young people of all ages and abilities. They also work closely with voluntary and statutory agencies to offer stimulating and motivating out-of-school services to support children and their families.

Appendix 1	Anglesey	Gwynedd	Conwy	Denbighshire	Flintshire	Wrexham	North Wales
0-15 population Mid-Year estimates 2010	12,289	20,765	19,052	17,248	28,130	24,980	122,464
Language, Literacy and Reading							
Summer Reading Challenge 2011 participation	547	2000	1782	4859	3953	1138	14279
% of 4-11s participating in SRC (based on 50% of 0-15s)	4.5%	19.3%	9.4%	56.3%	14.0%	4.5%	23.30%
Completion rate Wales average 2010 55%	56%	70.7%	59%	68%	55.7%	47%	61.68%
Writing Squads	nil	3 squads – 9-11, 12-14, 15+ ages	Not a Library Service provision	4 squads – 9-11, 11-14 in both languages	nil	2 squads	
Author and book events attendances	2,500 children	2802 children	720+ children	2453 children	3499 children	2,000+ children	13,974
Bookstart rhymetimes and library story times	n/k	2,770 attendances est.	2,741 attendances	13,835 attendances	5,646 attendances	6,462 attendances	31,454
Supporting the curriculum							
Class visits to libraries	n/k	n/k	704 children	3306 children	2061 children	4,485 children	10,556
Access to computers	n/k	30,000+ 2009/10	20,756 2009/10	8,691	19,125 2009	21,179	99,751
Number of sessions by 0-15s	n/k	26%	16.32%	11%	15.75%	21%	
Supporting families							
Family Information Services	6,380 visits	11894 visits 2009/10	20,641 visits 996 enquiries	n/k	n/a		

The public library offer								Anglesey	Gwynedd	Conwy	Denbighshire	Flintshire	Wrexham	North Wales
Children aged 0-15 active library members	3,637	7,668	4,741	8,574	10,681	10,666	45,967							
% of 0-15s who are active library members	30%	37%	25%	50%	38%	43%	38%							
Members per 1000 population 0-15	295	369	248	497	379	426	375							
As a % of total library membership	26%	25%	n/k	32%	34%	29%	29%							
New members	919	1,241 2009/10	1,667	1,921	2,384	2,235	10,327							
Visits to libraries by under 16s	n/k	110,814 2009/10	57,775	92,243	156,780	n/k	417,612 4 authorities							
Visits per 1000 population 0-15	n/k	5,336	3,032	5,348	5,573	n/k	4,901 4 authorities							
Access to libraries	10 libraries 1 mobile library 70% open Saturdays	17 libraries 4 mobile libraries 65% open Saturdays	12 libraries 1 mobile library 58% open Saturdays	8 libraries 88% open Saturdays	13 libraries 1 mobile library 69% open Saturdays	12 libraries 1 mobile library 50% open Saturdays	72 libraries 8 mobiles 67% open Saturdays							
Management lead for service to children	Children and Young People's Librarian	User Services Manager	Lifelong Learning Librarian	Reading Services Manager	Lifelong Learning Librarian	Children's Librarian	-							
Expenditure on books and resources	£28,898	£62,500 2009/10	£33,400	£29,701	£71,999	£70,203	£296,701							
% of Library Service's total resource budget	25%	22.5%	20%	21.6%	24.4%	20.8%	Average 22.38%							
Expenditure per 1000 population 0-15	£2,351	£3,009	£1,753	£1,721	£2,560	£2,810	£2,422							
Number of books and other items purchased	6,209	9,478	5,767	7,801	12,021	11,323	56,212							
Books borrowed	78,902	187,499 2009/10	91,536	158,562	289,443	172,075	976,613							
% of total loans	27%	29%	16%	28.4%	37%	25%	27%							
Loans per 1000 population 0-15	6,420	9,029	4,804	9,193	10,289	6,888	7,974							

[Unless otherwise stated, all figures refer to 2010-11.]