

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

## Public Libraries in Wales

July 2014



Cynulliad  
Cenedlaethol  
Cymru

National  
Assembly for  
Wales

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Communities, Equality and Local Government Committee  
National Assembly for Wales  
Cardiff Bay  
CF99 1NA

Tel: 029 2089 8032  
Fax: 029 2089 8021  
Email: [CELG.Committee@wales.gov.uk](mailto:CELG.Committee@wales.gov.uk)

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## **Communities, Equality and Local Government Committee**

The Committee was established on 22 June 2011 with a remit to examine legislation and hold the Welsh Government to account by scrutinising expenditure, administration and policy matters encompassing: Wales's culture; languages; communities and heritage, including sport and the arts; local government in Wales, including all housing matters; and equality of opportunity for all.

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Welsh Labour  
Cynon Valley



**Leighton Andrews**  
Welsh Labour  
Rhondda



**Peter Black**  
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**Jocelyn Davies**  
Plaid Cymru  
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**Gwyn R Price**  
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Islwyn



**Jenny Rathbone**  
Welsh Labour  
Cardiff Central



**Rhodri Glyn Thomas**  
Plaid Cymru  
Carmarthen East and Dinefwr

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## Recommendations

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The Committee's recommendations to the Minister are listed below, in the order in which they appear in this report. Please refer to the relevant pages of the report to see the supporting evidence and conclusions.

**Recommendation 1.** We recommend that the Minister produces and publishes an annual report on the state of public libraries in Wales. (Page 15)

**Recommendation 2.** We recommend that the Minister makes arrangements for the central publication of disaggregated data showing the use of public libraries by demographic groups. (Page 15)

**Recommendation 3.** We recommend that the Minister works with partners to develop a contemporary definition of "comprehensive and efficient" library services for local authorities to deliver under the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964. Such a definition should include the provision of internet access which, we believe, should remain free of charge. (Page 15)

**Recommendation 4.** We recommend that the Minister considers developing a voluntary accreditation scheme for individual libraries in Wales. (Page 16)

**Recommendation 5.** We recommend that the Minister continues to work with local authorities and their partners to identify and promote further opportunities for collaboration and co-location arrangements in the delivery of library services. (Page 29)

**Recommendation 6.** We recommend that the Minister ensures that the necessary ongoing support and guidance is available in order to increase the long-term sustainability of community managed libraries. (Page 30)

**Recommendation 7.** We recommend that the Minister ensures adequate support and guidance continues to be available to local authorities to identify and pursue all available funding opportunities. (Page 31)

**Recommendation 8.** We recommend that, whilst core library services should remain free of charge, the Minister should explore with local authorities all other available options for libraries to raise revenue. (Page 31)

**Recommendation 9.** We recommend that the Minister works with local authorities and partners to promote better the wide range of services provided by public libraries. (Page 38)

**Recommendation 10.** We recommend that the Minister continues to pursue the case for additional funding from the UK Government in recognition of the increasing responsibilities for library staff in Wales in supporting the delivery of digital-by-default welfare reforms. (Page 38)

# 1. Libraries in Wales: progress against Programme for Government commitments

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## Background

1. In its Programme for Government,<sup>1</sup> the Welsh Government makes the following commitments relating to libraries:

- To widen access to our museums, libraries and heritage sites, particularly by targeting low income families and children to access our services;
- To strengthen regional collaboration in the delivery of library, museum and archive services and ensure that local authorities meet national standards of public library provision.

## *Evidence from respondents*

### Progress against Programme for Government commitments

2. Evidence on this matter provided a positive view of the Welsh Government's work to achieve its Programme for Government commitments relating to libraries.

3. Local authorities and professional bodies highlighted increasing visitor numbers as an indicator of this progress. The Society of Chief Librarians (SCL) in Wales told us:

“Library visitor numbers per head of population in Wales have been consistently higher than those in England, and continue to increase, rising by 11% since 2002/3, and reversing the English trend (Wales 13.25million 2002/3, 14.72m 2011/12, England 323m 2002/3, 306m 2011/12).”<sup>2</sup>

4. Respondents also told us that investments in libraries through grant funding provided by the Welsh Government had “been a critical ingredient for many public library services in Wales”<sup>3</sup> and had contributed to rising visitor numbers. We heard that funding from the Community Learning Libraries programme had enabled 89 libraries (out of a total of 280 libraries in Wales) to

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<sup>1</sup> [Programme for Government](#), Welsh Government

<sup>2</sup> Written evidence PL 08

<sup>3</sup> Written evidence PL 05

be remodelled over the past ten years<sup>4</sup>, and that these modernised libraries have subsequently experienced a “significant increase in the number of users.”<sup>5</sup> Grant funding is discussed in more detail in Chapter 2.

5. However, we heard from some respondents that libraries do not feature prominently in the Programme for Government. The SCL, as well as Swansea and Conwy Councils, commented that there were few mentions of public libraries in the Programme documentation, despite libraries playing “a key role in relation to Health, Supporting People, Poverty, Education, Learning, Digital Inclusion, Welsh Language and Rural Communities – all key chapters in the Programme for Government Report”.<sup>6</sup> On this point, the SCL told us:

“We strongly believe the role public libraries have to play in relation to key national policy areas should be more widely recognised and acknowledged.”

6. Powys County Council made a similar point about the links between library services and other key local and national policy agendas, arguing there was a “lack of a direct linkage between the legislative and policy frameworks relating to these other agendas which undermines the potential sustainability of library services.”<sup>7</sup>

## **The statutory and policy frameworks for libraries in Wales**

### ***Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964***

7. Under the ***Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964*** (“the 1964 Act”), local authorities in England and Wales must provide “comprehensive and efficient” public library services. There is a statutory role for Welsh Ministers to superintend, and promote the improvement of, the public library service provided by local authorities in Wales, and to secure the proper discharge by local authorities of the functions in relation to libraries conferred on them by the 1964 Act. The Act also gives Welsh Ministers the power to instigate an inquiry in cases where a local authority is failing to meet its statutory duties and to direct that authority to carry out its duties.

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<sup>4</sup> Written evidence PL 08

<sup>5</sup> Written evidence PL 28

<sup>6</sup> Written evidence PL 08

<sup>7</sup> Written evidence PL 27

8. We asked witnesses whether, given its age, there was a need to replace the 1964 Act and to modernise some of the references used in it, particularly to reflect recent digital advancements.

9. There was no overall support for replacing the 1964 Act, although respondents including the WLGA, Blaenau Gwent and Newport Councils commented on the lack of definition of a “a comprehensive and efficient” library service. There was a variety of views on the most appropriate way to deal with this; some respondents suggested that there should be a national debate about the definition, whilst others, including the WLGA, suggested that the Welsh Government should clarify further what it considers this term to mean. The WLGA argued that this was important in view of the powers available to the Welsh Ministers under the 1964 Act to intervene in cases where a local authority is failing to deliver such services.

### ***The Welsh Public Library Standards and Assessment Framework***

10. The Minister for Culture and Sport superintends the library services provided by local authorities through the non-statutory Welsh Public Library Standards and Assessment Framework (‘the Standards’). The purpose of the Standards is:

“to ensure a broad equity of service delivery, no matter where the person lives or accesses the library service. For library services, they provide a benchmark for provision, support service planning, and allow for the sharing of good practice.”<sup>8</sup>

11. The Standards were first introduced in 2002. This year (ending March 2014) is the last year of the fourth framework.

12. The previous Standards were generally regarded by respondents as having been a helpful tool that fleshed out the requirements under the 1964 Act and helped to drive improvements within the sector and measure performance. On this point, the WLGA said:

“... it has been recognised by all partners that the previous frameworks were extremely effective in making a positive contribution in ensuring a

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<sup>8</sup> *Libraries Inspire, The strategic development framework for Welsh libraries 2012-16*

more consistent and better quality of public library service across Wales and raising the standards of libraries.”<sup>9</sup>

13. However, we heard evidence from a number of respondents about the need for the next framework to have a change in focus. On this point, the WLGA told us:

“It has been recognised that under the emerging 5<sup>th</sup> framework that it is necessary to develop a more outcome based set of standards, demonstrating the wider contribution and value that public libraries make and allowing for greater reconfiguration along more innovative lines within local authorities.”<sup>10</sup>

14. Pembrokeshire County Council welcomed this change, saying that although the Standards were “in principle a positive force for continuous improvement”, their “historic focus on inputs rather than outcomes has to a certain extent acted as a straight-jacket to innovation and change.”<sup>11</sup>

15. Other respondents, including Gwynedd Council, agreed there was a need to change the focus of the Standards to outcomes rather than inputs, whilst Powys County Council argued that “a more flexible approach is going to be necessary to support and assist local authorities to develop alternative delivery models which seek to sustain equitable levels of service”.<sup>12</sup>

16. We also heard from some respondents, including Blaenau Gwent and Merthyr Tydfil Country Borough Councils, that there should be consequences for failure to meet the Standards. On this point, Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council said:

“There seems to be little sanction against poor performance to the WPLS ... If these standards are to be the interpretation of the Act, there should be further commitment by the Welsh Government to actively support authorities to deliver against them as there is a danger they will become

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<sup>9</sup> Written evidence PL 28

<sup>10</sup> Written evidence PL 28

<sup>11</sup> Written evidence PL 05

<sup>12</sup> Written evidence PL 27

an onerous paper exercise, with little real value to the people of Wales.”<sup>13</sup>

17. Further to this, we also heard evidence that, whilst the Standards assess the overall quality of library services in a local authority area, there could be provision made for standards to be assessed on a site-by-site basis. We heard that this would be particularly important in the case of community managed libraries (discussed in more detail in Chapter 2).<sup>14</sup>

18. CILIP Cymru Wales told us that, in addition to the annual report produced for each local authority in Wales to assess the performance of libraries against the Standards, the Minister should publish an all-Wales annual report “as a way of ensuring that libraries are kept to the forefront of the Government’s agenda”.<sup>15</sup>

### ***Role of CyMAL***

19. Respondents, including CILIP Cymru Wales, the WLGA and the Carnegie Trust, were very positive about the work undertaken by the Welsh Government through the Museums, Archives and Libraries Wales division (CyMAL), saying that it worked closely with the rest of the sector in Wales, and provided a useful coordinating and supporting role.

20. In England, public libraries are developed and supported by Arts Council England, separate from government. We heard no evidence to suggest that the work currently undertaken by CyMAL in supporting libraries in Wales should be undertaken by an organisation outside the Welsh Government.

### **Future financial pressures**

21. Although there was much support for the progress made by the Welsh Government in relation to its commitments to public libraries, the main concern amongst respondents about the sustainability of this progress related to financial pressures as a result of local authority budget reductions. Whilst respondents generally felt that Welsh library services had not been subjected to the same level of cuts facing libraries in England, CILIP Cymru Wales told us:

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<sup>13</sup> Written evidence PL 22

<sup>14</sup> Record of Proceedings (RoP), para 86-88, 5 March 2014 (*all references to the Record of Proceedings refer to the proceedings of the Communities, Equality and Local Government Committee*)

<sup>15</sup> Written evidence PL 19

“Our concerns for the continuation of this positive progress relate to the budget reductions faced by local authorities to core funding and the Welsh Local Government Association announcement in October 2013 of reductions of £175m in 2014/15 with a further £65m in 2015/16.”<sup>16</sup>

22. Both Pembrokeshire and Powys County Councils had similar concerns about the possible effects of budget cuts, with Pembrokeshire Council saying that “progress in the current climate will be very challenging.”<sup>17</sup>

23. Powys Council stated that the sustainability of library services will be determined by levels of community support for alternative delivery models, as well as financial pressures. Financial sustainability and future delivery models are discussed in more detail in Chapter 2.

### ***Evidence from the Minister***

24. Progress against the Programme for Government commitments in relation to libraries is measured by two key performance indicators:

- the number of visitors to heritage sites, local and national museums and libraries; and
- the number of libraries refurbished via CyMAL Community Learning Libraries Programme.

25. In December 2013, the Minister established an Expert Review of Welsh Public Library Services to “assess the impact of local authority reductions in expenditure on library services on their ability to maintain statutory provision”.<sup>18</sup> The Expert Review will also consider potential sustainable models of service delivery identified from research and stakeholder consultation on future trends in public library services; suitable models of service delivery; and suitable legislative frameworks. The initial findings are expected in July 2014.

26. Noting that visitor numbers in Wales had increased overall in the last ten years, we asked the Minister about the availability of disaggregated data showing the use of libraries by different demographic groups, including young people, low-income families and disabled people. The Minister confirmed that

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<sup>16</sup> Written evidence PL 19

<sup>17</sup> Written evidence PL 05

<sup>18</sup> Written evidence, Communities, Equality and Local Government Committee, 13 March 2014, Paper 1

this data was collected by a number of means, including Carnegie UK Trust-commissioned research, annual surveys conducted by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy, as well as research commissioned by CyMAL.<sup>19</sup>

27. In relation to the 1964 Act, we asked the Minister whether this was still fit for purpose and whether he had given any consideration to revising it. He confirmed that a “significant aspect” of the work of the Expert Review would be to “look at our current statutory framework, and at whether any changes are needed.”<sup>20</sup>

28. Further to this, the Minister confirmed that he considered the use of his powers of intervention under the 1964 Act to be “a last resort”:

“Across the UK, there is no tradition of intervention using the government's statutory powers under legislation... The approach undertaken in Wales is to work with the local authority to improve areas which are identified as weak by the annual Welsh Public Library Standards assessment process.”<sup>21</sup>

29. He went on to say that, whilst the Standards were not statutory, they were “important in helping me decide whether the statutory requirements [for a comprehensive and efficient library service] are being met”. He confirmed that the Expert Review would be considering the Standards.

30. The Minister confirmed that the Standards had been reviewed recently and that the fifth three-year Standards and Assessment framework programme would begin on 1 April 2014. He said the new framework had been developed with the Welsh Local Government Association and local authorities, and had moved to “a more outcomes-based model”, which he told us would be “about the skills ... that people develop [including IT skills], and the knowledge that people are able to acquire.”<sup>22</sup>

31. As noted earlier, this move was welcomed by respondents, including the WLGA and Pembrokeshire County Council.

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<sup>19</sup> RoP, para 5-23, 13 March 2014

<sup>20</sup> RoP, para 67, 13 March 2014

<sup>21</sup> Written evidence, Communities, Equality and Local Government Committee, 13 March 2014, Paper 1

<sup>22</sup> Written evidence, Communities, Equality and Local Government Committee, 13 March 2014, Paper 1, and RoP, para 70-73, 13 March 2014

32. We asked the Minister whether he would agree to publish an annual report on the state of libraries in Wales, as suggested by CILIP Cymru Wales. He said that each local authority already published an annual report as part of the monitoring and assessment that takes place under the Standards. He was, however, prepared to consider publishing an all-Wales report.<sup>23</sup>

33. We also asked the Minister whether he had considered introducing site-by-site accreditation of libraries. Such a scheme would not just measure the quality of services on offer, but provide a public demonstration of the quality of those services. The Minister indicated this was a matter that could be considered as part of the work of the Expert Review.<sup>24</sup>

34. Finally, in relation to the role of CyMAL and its position within the Welsh Government, the Minister told us that “the model we have here in Wales is working very well”. He cited the findings of the Carnegie Trust-commissioned work<sup>25</sup> in support of this, saying that it “shows that public satisfaction with our library services is stronger and better in Wales than in England.”<sup>26</sup>

35. Further to this, the official supporting the Minister drew our attention to the staffing profile of CyMAL, saying that “three quarters of the staff (...) are from the sector or the profession themselves and are therefore very experienced in the sector’s work.”<sup>27</sup>

36. However, the Minister went on to say that, through the Expert Review and as part of other work, the Government would “continually assess where we are in Wales and how we make further improvement.”<sup>28</sup>

## **Our view**

37. Libraries have traditionally, and continue to, play a very important role in our communities and, as such, it is important that the Welsh Government acknowledges this by giving them a suitably prominent position in its Programme for Government, reflecting the contribution they make in a range of portfolio areas.

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<sup>23</sup> RoP, para 109-110, 13 March 2014

<sup>24</sup> RoP, para 74-79, 13 March 2014

<sup>25</sup> [www.carnegieuktrust.org.uk/publications/2012/a-new-chapter---discussion-paper](http://www.carnegieuktrust.org.uk/publications/2012/a-new-chapter---discussion-paper)

<sup>26</sup> RoP, para 98, 13 March 2014

<sup>27</sup> RoP, para 101, 13 March 2014

<sup>28</sup> RoP, para 98, 13 March 2014

38. We acknowledge that, under the current arrangements, each local authority reports annually to the Minister as part of the monitoring and assessment arrangements under the Welsh Public Libraries Standards. However, we believe that an all-Wales annual report by the Minister would enhance these arrangements and give a greater opportunity for public scrutiny.

**We recommend that the Minister produces and publishes an annual report on the state of public libraries in Wales.**

39. We welcome the overall growth in visitor numbers to libraries in Wales over the last ten years and are keen to see this continue in the future. As part of the Minister's arrangements for monitoring visitor numbers and assessing the extent to which the Government's efforts to target low-income families and children has been successful, we believe he should ensure that disaggregated data for these demographic groups is made publicly available. This could be done as part of an all-Wales annual report on the state of public libraries.

**We recommend that the Minister makes arrangements for the central publication of disaggregated data showing the use of public libraries by demographic groups.**

40. In relation to the 1964 Act, we note that there was no real appetite for this to be replaced, but we agree with respondents that there is merit in agreeing a contemporary definition of local authorities' statutory duty to provide a "comprehensive and efficient" library service. This is particularly important given the Minister's statutory power to intervene where such services are not being provided. We believe the Minister should lead this work.

**We recommend that the Minister works with partners to develop a contemporary definition of "comprehensive and efficient" library services for local authorities to deliver under the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964. Such a definition should include the provision of internet access which, we believe, should remain free of charge.**

41. In relation to the Standards, we note these have been reviewed recently and that the new assessment framework is now in place. We further note that respondents have welcomed the decision to make the new Standards more output focussed.

42. We note that, overall, the quality of library services in Wales is assessed against the Standards. However, we believe there is merit in assessing

performance at an individual library level via the development of a voluntary accreditation scheme similar to the UK wide scheme already in operation for museums, administered in Wales by the Welsh Government.

**We recommend that the Minister considers developing a voluntary accreditation scheme for individual libraries in Wales.**

43. We note the positive comments from respondents about the role of CyMAL. We further note that there was no evidence to suggest that CyMAL should be independent of the Welsh Government.

44. Finally, we welcome the establishment of the Expert Review and we trust our report will be a useful contribution to its work.

## 2. Financial sustainability and the future delivery of library services

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### Background

45. Although the provision of libraries is a statutory duty for local authorities, the funding for libraries is not currently ring-fenced in Wales. Libraries, therefore, have to compete for resources against other statutory and non-statutory services provided by local authorities.

### Evidence from respondents

46. There was a general acknowledgement by respondents that, in the current economic climate, local authorities would need to review how libraries and other public services are delivered in the future. On this point, the National Federation of Women's Institutes (NFWI) stated:

“Public services can no longer work in isolation; we envisage innovative, joined-up partnership approaches to the delivery of services meeting the needs of communities as the way forward. Models of provision will need to be flexible and responsive to community needs, for example, different approaches may be needed in rural and urban areas.”<sup>29</sup>

47. The WLGA reported that the impact of budget cuts had so far been mitigated as a result of close working with CyMAL and between local authorities, which had led to improvements in efficiencies.

48. Indeed, many respondents praised the strategic support provided by CyMAL. On this point, the Carnegie UK Trust said that the Welsh Government is in a “relatively strong position as a result of the role of CyMAL, which can make connections between libraries and other service providers, and encourage regional or national responses to issues which are most cost effective when dealt with at those levels.”<sup>30</sup>

49. However, the WLGA also explained that local authorities “have been and are continuing to look at a wide range of options to deliver new sustainable models of library provision”. It stated:

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<sup>29</sup> Written evidence PL 03

<sup>30</sup> Written evidence PL 16

“There are many innovative developments that are either in place or being put into place, including shared space, community managed and regional library management system. There has also been a root and branch investigation by local authorities on the use made of buildings and the historic nature of provision, which in some cases has been identified, as not fit for purpose and not viable.”

50. The WLGA reported that local authorities were currently reviewing library services and considering a range of options for the future delivery of those services “as a way of meeting both the financial challenges and identified community needs”. These options included greater collaboration with partners, community managed facilities, social enterprise models (including adopting ‘trust status’), relocation of libraries, enhanced housebound services, deposit collections in other centres and adapted mobile services.

51. We heard from individual authorities, including Carmarthenshire County Council, Powys County Council and the Isle of Anglesey, about specific examples of alternative models that had been adopted within their areas. Some of these are explored in more detail below.

### ***Collaboration***

52. Many respondents identified collaboration and partnership working as a potential option for improving financial sustainability of library services and service provision. There was much evidence of the emergence of collaborative working in the delivery of library services, both at national and regional levels.

53. CILIP Cymru Wales stated:

“Collaboration both within the library and information sector and across local authority services is key to ensuring future resilience [against public sector cuts].

“There are a number of reasons to promote collaboration but undoubtedly one is to secure savings by more efficient and effective working. It is also about increasing capacity and resilience in the sector to meet the challenges ahead and respond proactively to opportunities.”<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Written evidence PL 19

54. In commenting on existing collaborative arrangements, the SCL explained that funding from the Welsh Government and the influence of CyMAL had enhanced “the ability and will within the wider library sector to work on a national strategic level in order to negotiate the best access and resources for Welsh citizens”.<sup>32</sup>

55. A number of respondents, including the SCL and Newport City Council, reported collaboration of library services across all sectors, including local authorities, further and higher education and health. As an example, CILIP Cymru Wales referred to Walk-in Access Wales, which enables the public to access e-resources in Welsh Higher Education libraries. The scheme is supported by CyMAL in collaboration with the Wales Higher Education Libraries Forum.

56. Local authorities, including Flintshire and Carmarthenshire Councils, reported that collaborative arrangements were already in place across authorities in relation to procurement, staff training, inter-library loans and marketing and promotion.

57. Whilst it was widely accepted by authorities that collaboration could enable them to deliver services more cost effectively, and benefit from economies of scale, Newport City Council highlighted there were “few savings to be found on actual frontline service delivery”.<sup>33</sup>

58. In commenting on future arrangements, the SCL emphasised the need for authorities to build on existing regional and national partnerships to improve outcomes for users and attract new users of public libraries.<sup>34</sup>

59. On a similar note, CILIP Cymru Wales stated:

“Although the partnership and collaborative working achieved is impressive, and leads the UK, it needs to be accelerated and taken forward with even greater determination.”<sup>35</sup>

60. It believed that the development of a Library Management System across libraries in Wales “will unlock the possibility of greater administrative

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<sup>32</sup> Written evidence PL 08

<sup>33</sup> Written evidence PL 09

<sup>34</sup> Written evidence PL 08

<sup>35</sup> Written evidence PL 19

integration and sharing of expertise and management resources as envisaged in the Simpson report.”

### ***Co-location***

61. Co-location of libraries with other local authority services was a common theme among respondents, with authorities viewing this as a favourable option to both save money and attract new visitors.

62. In highlighting the benefits of co-location, Newport City Council stated:

“Continuing to work in partnership to offer library facilities from co-located service points improves the value for money from existing premises while maximising the footfall for the benefit of all partners.”<sup>36</sup>

63. A number of local authorities provided us with examples of innovative co-location projects in their areas, including incorporating libraries within sports centres and other community centres.

64. Bridgend County Borough Council told us that the evidence of such initiatives in its area “suggests that that has proved very successful for us”. It reported “3000 more visits per month to the new facility [at Bridgend life centre] than would have been the case at the old one.”<sup>37</sup>

65. Pembrokeshire explained there “is quite a big tradition of co-location”<sup>38</sup> within its area. However, it went on to state:

“[...] rather than just co-locating with another service, we are using the professional skills of librarians to fully take on another service. In Pembrokeshire, we are taking on tourist information, but rather than having a tourist information centre in a library, it is a library and information centre with generic-working staff. [...] There are other examples in library services where they take on benefit claims or police enquiries, because they harness the skills of librarians [...] there are real opportunities for that kind of generic working, which can make significant savings as well, as a whole authority.”<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Written evidence PL 09

<sup>37</sup> RoP, para 16, 12 February 2014

<sup>38</sup> RoP, para 117, 5 March 2014

<sup>39</sup> RoP, para 117, 5 March 2014

66. Carmarthenshire County Council reported that “co-location is becoming increasingly important”. In its experience, the co-location of libraries had achieved “varying degrees of success”.<sup>40</sup>

### ***Community managed libraries***

67. The potential role of community managed libraries was a common theme in evidence. A number of respondents referred to the growing trend in England in the development of community managed libraries, with an estimated 400 currently in operation. This was largely in response to reductions in local authority budgets, with councils in England increasingly looking at volunteers to avoid closures of public libraries and plug resource gaps.

68. The NFWI explained that its research report<sup>41</sup> into community managed libraries in England had found that:

“[...] the piecemeal development of community managed libraries, and the inadequate guidance on good practice had resulted in many volunteers receiving a chronic lack of support from local authorities, and facing unrealistic demands. Volunteers were navigating a complex obstacle course of responsibilities and often struggling to discharge these responsibilities effectively, raising questions about the long term sustainability of community managed libraries.”<sup>42</sup>

69. Similar points were raised by Pembrokeshire County Council, which reported that community managed libraries “[do] not work in all communities and that standards of service and sustainability are highly variable”.<sup>43</sup> It went on to report that, while there are currently very few community managed libraries in Wales, numbers are expected to rise significantly to an estimated 50 to 60 within the next two years.

70. We also heard that there were “risks around equality and diversity” with community managed libraries, including “whether the library staff or volunteers are representative of the communities that they serve”. Pembrokeshire County Council said:

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<sup>40</sup> RoP, para 119, 5 March 2014

<sup>41</sup> *On Permanent Loan? Community Managed Libraries: The Volunteer Perspective*, NFWI Research, January 2013

<sup>42</sup> Written evidence PL 03

<sup>43</sup> Written evidence PL 05

“All the evidence suggests that it tends to be quite a narrow demographic. It tends to be elderly, usually retired, white females.”<sup>44</sup>

71. In this context, Pembrokeshire County Council outlined three key issues that it believed should be considered if community managed libraries in Wales are to be used more widely. These were:

- the introduction of quality standards that focus on sites at an individual level (unlike the Welsh Public Library Standards that measure the performance of library services across Wales);
- the consideration by local authorities of sustainable models: for example forming partnerships with other organisations with access to reliable funding streams; and
- the provision of ongoing support and professional advice, including a team of Wales-wide “library development officers”.<sup>45</sup>

72. Carmarthenshire County Council reported that it had one volunteer-run library within its area and that there was potential for this model to be further explored and extended.

73. Conwy County Borough Council explained that it had used grant funding from CyMAL to recruit a Community Library Development Officer, whose role would be to develop community libraries within the authority. It had formed partnerships with a range of organisations, including the Police, Town and Community Councils and the Citizen’s Advice Bureau and, as such, “a range of provision will be available in community libraries in addition to library services”.<sup>46</sup>

### ***The role of volunteers more generally***

74. There was widespread acknowledgement of the support provided by volunteers in the delivery of library services. It was suggested that volunteers could be used to develop additional services, helping sustain the library and enhance particular projects. A number of respondents believed that the use of volunteers would add value to library services. In addition, Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council explained:

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<sup>44</sup> RoP, para 100, 5 March 2014

<sup>45</sup> RoP, para 90, 5 March 2014

<sup>46</sup> Written evidence PL 23

“... the use of volunteers adds value not only to our service but to the wider community around us, helping people to develop new skills in a safe and welcoming environment.”<sup>47</sup>

75. Notwithstanding the above, there was consensus among respondents, focus group participants and survey respondents that volunteers should only be used to supplement the work of professional staff. In commenting on this issue, the SCL stated:

“... volunteers cannot be relied upon to provide the core service delivered by trained professionals (...) volunteers could be used to enhance services provided by staff but not to replace them.”<sup>48</sup>

76. Newport City Council echoed the above and emphasised the need for trained professionals to recruit, support, train and supervise volunteers “to ensure that the public are receiving a safe and appropriate service”.<sup>49</sup>

77. UNISON raised concern about the “significant rise in the use of volunteers in library services”, which it believed “can contribute to the undermining of a high quality public service”. In referring to the experience in England, it stated

“This is a wholly unsustainable model and goes against the statutory requirement for councils to provide a “comprehensive and efficient” service as part of the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964. UNISON would be strongly against the promotion of community run libraries in Wales and maintain that library services are most effective when run directly by democratically accountable local councils.”<sup>50</sup>

### ***Possible reductions in library services and closures***

78. We heard evidence from a number of respondents, including NFWI Wales, Pembrokeshire County Council and CILIP Cymru Wales, that the scale of the proposed budget reductions meant that cost-saving measures such as co-locations and national procurement strategies would only partially meet the level of savings required. Such measures would not be sufficient to prevent the deterioration of library services, including reduced opening hours, and closures.

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<sup>47</sup> Written evidence PL 22

<sup>48</sup> Written evidence PL 08

<sup>49</sup> Written evidence PL 09

<sup>50</sup> Written evidence PL 04

It was also suggested to us that, in some circumstances, local authorities may fall short in the delivery of their statutory duties.

79. Whilst respondents generally accepted that library services should not be insulated from budget reductions, we heard evidence that emphasised the need for local authorities to consider the broad social value of libraries when considering cuts to services, and the extent to which spending on libraries can reduce further costs to the public sector, in areas such as the health service. On this point, Disability Wales said:

“Whilst recognising that any proposal to close ... 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.”<sup>51</sup>

80. Further to this, we also heard from respondents, including Swansea and Newport Councils, CILIP Cymru Wales and the SCL, who highlighted the small proportion of local authority expenditure (estimated to be less than 1 per cent) spent on library services, arguing that library services should not be subjected to disproportionately large cuts, particularly as such cuts would not involve significant savings for local authorities.

81. A number of respondents, including Disability Wales, Age Cymru and NFWI Wales, highlighted the importance of local authorities consulting fully and carrying out impact assessments in relation to proposals to reduce library services so as to gain a clear understanding of the potential impact of such decisions on vulnerable members of society. Children in Wales told us that they did not feel this was happening enough at the moment.<sup>52</sup>

### ***Grant funding***

82. In addition to evidence about the impact of local authority budget reductions, we heard from respondents about the importance of grant funding and how this has been used to improve facilities and, as a result, increase visitor numbers. On this point, Pembrokeshire County Council told us:

“Welsh Government’s grants programmes have been a critical ingredient for many public library services in Wales, in helping to realise the vision

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<sup>51</sup> Written evidence PL 31

<sup>52</sup> Written evidence PL 33

within Libraries Inspire. (...)The continuation of grant programmes during this period will be a critical factor in stimulating development.”<sup>53</sup>

83. Witnesses from the SCL agreed that grant funding received by libraries had made a difference to the way that services could be provided:

“For example, within my own authority, without the grant funding we would not have had the rooms available for these enhanced services that allow us to further engage with the community. That grant funding has been very important in allowing us to provide the added-value activities that we need to, and which our communities are now expecting from us.”<sup>54</sup>

84. We also heard about the significance of the match-funding element required to access grants. Both Conwy and Pembrokeshire Councils highlighted this, with Pembrokeshire Council telling us that the match-funding requirement ranging from 10% to 25% would be “a particular problem over the next few years”. It suggested:

“A temporary period in which grant schemes offer 100% funding with only an ‘in-kind’ contribution should be considered by Welsh Government to stimulate development.”<sup>55</sup>

85. In addition to improving facilities, we heard that grant funding “has improved opportunities relating to training and development of staff and the provision of learning opportunities for the public through libraries.”<sup>56</sup>

86. Finally, there was praise for CyMAL in terms of the support it provided around grant funding. On this point, the SCL told us:

“Without the support of the staff and CyMAL, which provides us with an awful lot of support through the grant funding programmes, we would struggle.”<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Written evidence PL 05

<sup>54</sup> RoP, para 283, 12 February 2014

<sup>55</sup> Written evidence PL 05

<sup>56</sup> Written evidence PL 08

<sup>57</sup> RoP, para 173, 12 February 2014

## ***Raising revenue and charging for services***

87. We asked a number of respondents whether there was scope for libraries to raise revenue by providing ‘add-on services’, e.g. hiring rooms and facilities to local businesses, in order to help sustain and support core services.

88. In commenting on the above, the WLGA suggested that consideration could be given to services such as room rental in cases where libraries have the capacity to do so. However, much would depend on libraries’ business models and the buildings within which they were located.<sup>58</sup>

89. On a related issue, there was no support among respondents for raising revenue by charging for core services. Disability Wales believed any attempt to charge would have “quite considerable implications” and “could become a disincentive for the kind of people we are trying to encourage into libraries”.<sup>59</sup>

90. Similar views were expressed by Children in Wales, which said that that charging would defeat the purpose of open access.<sup>60</sup>

## **Evidence from the Minister**

### ***Collaboration***

91. The Minister explained that the Welsh Government’s current libraries strategy, *Libraries Inspire*, “encourages the sector to innovate and seek new ways of collaboration, maximising the opportunities provided by new technology.” Its key objectives are, among other things:

- to work together to review current models of service delivery in response to the current economic climate, and develop new innovative models of delivery; and
- to develop partnership working in procuring and improving access to resources.

92. He went on to explain:

“The current financial context requires a renewed commitment to ensure that library services deliver relevant and resilient services through

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<sup>58</sup> RoP, para 97, 12 February 2014

<sup>59</sup> RoP, para 104, 20 February 2014

<sup>60</sup> RoP, para 308-309, 20 February 2014

collaboration and joint working. There are many excellent examples of where this has been achieved under the Welsh Government's national strategy for libraries. However the challenges of the future will require a consideration of alternative service delivery models at the local, regional and national level.”<sup>61</sup>

93. The Minister confirmed that the Expert Review will “consider potential sustainable models of service delivery identified from research and stakeholder consultation”.<sup>62</sup>

94. He explained that there are currently three regional partnerships in Wales “that are very much about pulling together those that provide library services and making sure that there is access to all of those libraries for the community in general”.

95. The Minister believed that the All-Wales Library Management System, which the Welsh Government was in the process of procuring, “will be a very important development”. The system would enable an individual to access public libraries across Wales with a single library card. He stated it would be “more cost effective” and “improve [service] quality”. The Minister confirmed that the first phase of the project would be rolled out in North Wales in the 2014/15 financial year.<sup>63</sup>

### ***Co-location***

96. In relation to co-location, the Minister stated that this could “increase the value of the work that [libraries] do, by reaching new audiences and increasing usage quite substantially while at the same time saving money, because they are sharing overhead costs with other services”.<sup>64</sup>

97. He explained that “new and exciting” co-location models, involving a range of local authority services as well as external partners, were emerging. The Minister provided examples of what he believed to be successful co-location models in Caerphilly County and Bridgend County Borough Councils.

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<sup>61</sup> Written evidence, Communities, Equality and Local Government Committee, 13 March 2014, Paper 1

<sup>62</sup> Written evidence, Communities, Equality and Local Government Committee, 13 March 2014, Paper 1

<sup>63</sup> RoP, para 29, 120 and 121, 13 March 2014

<sup>64</sup> RoP, para 48, 13 March 2014

## ***The role of volunteers***

98. In commenting on the role of volunteers, the Minister stated:

“[Volunteers] currently play a very important part in library service provision in Wales and that is absolutely right. There is no reason why we should not look to develop that volunteer involvement. However, we are very clear that it is a professional library service and in striking the appropriate balance, there must be that professional oversight.”<sup>65</sup>

99. He explained that guidance on the use of volunteer staff in the delivery of library services was available and that the role of volunteers would be considered as part of the Expert Review.

## ***Grants and alternative sources of funding***

100. In relation to grant funding, we asked the Minister about the announcement in April 2014 that the Community Learning Libraries grant funding had been reduced from £3 million to £1 million per year.<sup>66</sup> Responding to this, the Minister said:

“It is really a matter of available resource at any particular time. ... as we are all acutely aware, ... the financial situation is very difficult for us and local government. ... Although the money has reduced, there will still be schemes in Wales moving forward. It is really important that we still have a capital grant scheme in current circumstances. Although the amounts involved will vary from year to year, we will ensure that that money is well used and we will continue to partner with local authorities around the bidding process.”<sup>67</sup>

101. We also asked the Minister about alternative sources of funding for local authorities looking to modernise their libraries. He confirmed that there was a variety of funding sources available to local authorities which included European funding as well as possible Lottery funding. He said he would explore these.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> RoP, para 128, 13 March 2014

<sup>66</sup> Welsh Government, £2.2million investment for Welsh libraries, archives and museums, 9 April 2014

<sup>67</sup> Rop, para 53, 13 March 2014

<sup>68</sup> RoP, Para 55, 13 March 2014

102. Further to this, the official supporting the Minister provided us with a number of examples of libraries that had been renewed with regeneration funding, including:

“...in Bargoed with European funding and in Bangor with lottery money. I know that Cardiff has developed libraries with funding from planning funds—planning benefits and so on. A variety of sources have been used and, obviously, we are looking for any new ones to support the development of local library services.”<sup>69</sup>

103. The Minister also highlighted the availability of other funding which, he suggested, may be able to be accessed by local authorities to improve library facilities:

“Jeff Cuthbert, the Minister for Communities and Tackling Poverty, announced a £10 million pot of money for community facilities and their development. There are possibilities. Local authorities are able to borrow as well. We work with local authorities to explore this potential and to spread best practice and point them in the right direction, as it were.”<sup>70</sup>

104. The Minister’s official confirmed that this money was capital funding, “a one-off payment to develop community services, rather than recurrent funding”.<sup>71</sup>

## **Our view**

105. We welcome the arrangements that local authorities have already put in place in relation to collaboration and co-location in their delivery of library services, and we heard evidence of some good examples of this across authorities.

**We recommend that the Minister continues to work with local authorities and their partners to identify and promote further opportunities for collaboration and co-location arrangements in the delivery of library services.**

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<sup>69</sup> RoP, Para 60, 13 March 2014

<sup>70</sup> RoP, Para 57, 13 March 2014. Launch of Communities Facilities Programme: <http://wales.gov.uk/newsroom/communities/2014/10m-capital-fund-to-support-projects-to-tackle-poverty/?lang=en>

<sup>71</sup> RoP, Para 60, 13 March 2014

106. We note that, across local authorities, there are a number of institutions that have libraries facilities, including universities and school library services. We believe that more needs to be done to enable and promote sharing these valuable resources. We ask the Minister to give consideration to this.

107. We note that, in relation to England, the rise in the number of community managed libraries has largely been as a consequence of significant local authority budget reductions. Given the scale of budget reductions facing Welsh authorities, it would not be unreasonable to assume a similar trend could follow in Wales.

108. We recognise the valuable contribution that volunteers can, and do, make in the delivery of library services within their communities and we believe that they should continue to have a role to play in determining and delivering local services. However, it was clear from the evidence that community managed libraries should not, in themselves, be the solution to the problems caused by cuts in local authority budgets. In our view, the delivery of library services in Wales should be led by professionals who bring the necessary knowledge and expertise to the role.

109. However, given the likely increase in the number of community managed libraries in Wales in the future, we believe it is important that the Minister takes the necessary action to prepare for this. We draw the Minister's attention, and that of his Expert Review Panel, to the evidence we have received about the experiences in England and recommendations from Pembrokeshire County Council about how to ensure delivery of high-quality services by community managed libraries in Wales. We ask that consideration is given to these recommendations.

**We recommend that the Minister ensures that the necessary ongoing support and guidance is available in order to increase the long-term sustainability of community managed libraries.**

110. Whilst we acknowledge the financial pressures facing local authorities, we believe that reduced services and closures should always be a last resort, particularly given the broad social value that libraries have in our communities. Impact assessments and public consultation are important, particularly in cases where significant changes to library services are proposed, and always in the case of proposals for closure.

111. Future budget reductions will mean that accessing other methods of funding will become increasingly important to local authorities in delivering library services. The application process for different types of funding can be lengthy and complicated, and local authorities and others would benefit from ongoing professional support in this matter.

**We recommend that the Minister ensures adequate support and guidance continues to be available to local authorities to identify and pursue all available funding opportunities.**

112. In relation to grant funding, whilst we welcome the announcement by the Minister for Communities and Tackling Poverty of a £10 million Communities Facilities Programme, we have some concerns about the ability of local authorities to access this funding for the use by public libraries. We would welcome clarification from the Minister on this point. Further to this, should such funding be available for libraries, we also have concerns about their ability to sustain services in the years following a one-off payment.

113. In relation to revenue-raising options for libraries, we agree with respondents that core library services in Wales, including internet access, should remain free of charge. (Digital inclusion is discussed in more detail in Chapter 3).

114. We note the evidence that there are limited opportunities for libraries to raise revenue in other ways, for example by room hire. However, we believe there is some merit in exploring these options further.

**We recommend that, whilst core library services should remain free of charge, the Minister should explore with local authorities all other available options for libraries to raise revenue.**

### 3. The contemporary and community role of public libraries in Wales

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#### Evidence from respondents

115. We received a considerable amount of evidence about the contemporary and community role of public libraries. Many respondents emphasised the significant contribution made by libraries to the communities which they serve. On this point, NFWI Wales described libraries as “the hub of community life” and Pembrokeshire County Council told us that a library is a “safe, neutral, cost-free and welcoming space that brings the community together.”<sup>72</sup>

116. This view emerged strongly from our focus group participants, one of whom said:

“The local library isn’t just a repository of books; it’s a safe place I can go where I’m always greeted by friendly, helpful, professional staff.”<sup>73</sup>

117. Further to this, a number of respondents, including the SCL, CILIP Cymru Wales, Macmillan Wales and Newport City Council highlighted the contribution made by modern libraries to a broad range of Welsh Government policy areas, including regeneration, growth and jobs, education, health and well-being, tackling poverty, digital inclusion, safe communities, promoting culture and equality and inclusiveness. The SCL stated:

“to significantly reduce the number of public libraries would critically undermine the comprehensive infrastructure and the community links that can help to deliver key national agenda strands.”<sup>74</sup>

118. Both UNISON and Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council told us that well-run libraries can support other public services, provide access to the democratic process and disseminate important information. This view was supported by participants in our focus groups, who discussed their use of libraries to access local authority services such as bus timetables, council plans or information about meeting their local councillors.

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<sup>72</sup> Written evidence PL 03

<sup>73</sup> Focus group evidence available in Annexe 3

<sup>74</sup> Written evidence PL 08

119. The Wales Higher Education Libraries said that libraries support those studying in local communities (including through reciprocal borrowing schemes) and are part of the transition to higher education and lifelong learning. They pointed out that many public libraries hold valuable local history collections, and that the future care and provision of these resources needed to be considered in light of the potential cuts to library services.<sup>75</sup>

120. We also received evidence about the delivery of modern library services, including digital resources such as e-magazines and click-and-collect services, and other community initiatives including the Summer Reading Challenge and National Libraries Day.

121. In relation to the free digital e-magazine service, we heard that the all-Wales scheme, which includes university, further education and health libraries as well as public libraries, offers library members free of charge access to 250 different magazines.

### ***Digital inclusion***

122. We received much evidence about the important contribution made by libraries towards digital inclusion. CILIP Cymru Wales stated that “libraries should have a crucial role in connecting people in a digital world and ensuring universal access to literacy, learning and information”. They went on to argue that this “role is needed more than ever today as part of ensuring that the divide between rich and poor in society does not increase and we build strong communities.”<sup>76</sup>

123. Digital services were also considered particularly important to older and disabled people, who would otherwise be unable to access library services.

124. Disability Wales said that libraries acted as a “gateway”, enabling people without internet access at home to access a range of public services online, thereby enabling the public sector to save money by delivering services online. However, they felt that local authorities needed to be clearer about their aims to maintain and improve library services for disabled people and be more

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<sup>75</sup> Written evidence PL 14

<sup>76</sup> Written evidence PL 19

aspirational in this regard.<sup>77</sup> CILIP Cymru Wales noted that digital services needed to be properly supported.

125. We heard from the Open University that the availability of free internet access in libraries played a “vital role” in offering informal learning opportunities by enabling people to access free online learning resources. The OU told us that they worked with libraries to encourage people to access these e-learning resources.<sup>78</sup>

126. Participants in our focus groups noted that demand for access to computers in libraries often outstrips the current level of supply. Some non-library users suggested that if there were more computers, including modern tablet devices, they would visit libraries more frequently.

### ***Delivering UK Government welfare reforms***

127. We heard evidence about the particular importance of libraries in delivering UK Government digital-by-default welfare reforms. On this point, CILIP Cymru Wales stated:

“... with more and more access to benefits coming online, libraries will be really important to help deliver things like universal credit.”<sup>79</sup>

128. The WLGA told us that over the past decade, libraries had taken on a “more direct role” in addressing poverty by working with Jobcentre Plus to help people back into employment. It went on to say that, more recently, libraries had become an important community resource in helping people claim Universal Benefit and enable them to take advantage of a broad range of statutory and voluntary support.”<sup>80</sup>

129. Disability Wales highlighted the importance of libraries to disabled people who would be in receipt of Universal Credit once it is rolled out:

“This will have a major impact for disabled people and for libraries. Disabled people will be expected to be ‘Digital by Default’ and [not]

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<sup>77</sup> RoP, para 26, 20 February 2014

<sup>78</sup> Written evidence PL 20

<sup>79</sup> RoP, para 284, 12 February 2014

<sup>80</sup> Written evidence PL 28

being online will not be an option as everyone will be expected to claim via the internet.”<sup>81</sup>

### ***The value of libraries to vulnerable members of society***

130. We heard that public libraries are a particularly valuable service to vulnerable members of society, such as disabled people, young and older people, and those seeking employment, and particularly to those living in rural areas. A number of respondents, including the Isle of Anglesey Library Service, described the specific help provided by libraries for disabled and disadvantaged individuals, including a book delivery service for housebound people, provision of talking books and other accessible versions, and the Books on Prescription Service.

131. Age Cymru told us that 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.”<sup>82</sup>

132. We heard from RNIB Cymru that, when they are accessible to blind or partially sighted people, libraries can help to reduce isolation and social exclusion.<sup>83</sup>

133. Disability Wales highlighted the negative consequence of public library closures for disabled people, which could lead to isolation; disengagement from their communities; and reduced involvement in social and cultural activities.

134. We also heard about the importance of libraries for vulnerable low-income families who may not have the resources to buy many books for their children, and for whom their local library also provides a valuable opportunity for social interactions.<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> Written evidence PL 31

<sup>82</sup> Written evidence PL 24

<sup>83</sup> Written evidence PL 21

<sup>84</sup> Written evidence PL 01

## Evidence from the Minister

### *Digital inclusion and delivering UK Government welfare reforms*

135. The Minister told us that the Welsh Government’s digital inclusion strategy ‘Delivering Digital Inclusion: A Strategic Framework for Wales’ recognises the important role that public libraries play in providing online access and developing ICT skills in communities.

136. In relation to the ‘digital-by-default’ welfare reforms, the Minister told us that Welsh Government had “tried to work with DWP to make clear that these are additional responsibilities for our library staff in Wales and that there are training aspects in terms of library staff fulfilling a role that was not traditionally one that they delivered and that has funding implications.” He went on:

“... our case to DWP is and will be that it should provide funding to recognise these additional requirements.”<sup>85</sup>

137. We asked the Minister about the impact of reduced library services on access to DWP services via digital routes. Responding to this, he said:

“...provision of online services and help with the necessary skills is in place right across Wales and has not been damaged, as yet, by any of the changes that have taken place or been proposed in terms of people’s ability to do what is required of them as part of universal credit and universal jobmatch.”<sup>86</sup>

138. Further to this, the Minister’s official referred to a collaborative project between Communities 2.0, Jobcentre Plus and public libraries.<sup>87</sup>

139. In relation to the free digital e-magazine service, the Minister confirmed this had been procured as an all-Wales service and that it was part grant-funded and part funded by local authorities. He told us that the numbers using the service had “trebled in three months ... from the start”, and that in January 2014, there had been 15,800 downloads of magazines through the scheme.<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>85</sup> RoP, para 148, 13 March 2014

<sup>86</sup> RoP, para 141, 13 March 2014

<sup>87</sup> RoP, para 142, 13 March 2014

<sup>88</sup> RoP, para 44, 13 March 2014

### ***The value of libraries to vulnerable members of society***

140. We asked the Minister whether he was satisfied that reductions in library services resulting from decreased local authority budgets would not be disproportionately detrimental to vulnerable members of society. Responding to this, he said:

“we work with local authorities very closely, and I have regular meetings with the lead officials and cabinet members. Of course, our officials are constantly working with local authorities to understand their current thinking and plans ... but local authorities obviously have their autonomy.”

141. He went on:

“However, as part of any changes that they might make ... we expect proper consultation and we expect impact assessments to be made. They would be very much about understanding the potential impact on the more vulnerable people in our communities.”<sup>89</sup>

### ***Publicising library services***

142. The Minister said that “the promotional aspect of library services is important” for the Welsh Government. He told us:

“Wrexham library service is leading across Wales in terms of doing some work and taking action around social media, for example, and newspaper advertisements to get the central message across about what our library services offer today.”<sup>90</sup>

### **Our view**

143. It was clear from the evidence we received that people feel a contemporary library is far more than a place to borrow books. It is a safe, cost-free public space providing a range of valuable services to the community.

144. Libraries are unique in their contribution to so many areas of community life, including education, health and wellbeing, tackling poverty and social exclusion. In our view, not enough is done to publicise this or the wide variety

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<sup>89</sup> RoP, para 113-114, 13 March 2014

<sup>90</sup> RoP, para 150, 13 March 2014

of services that modern libraries offer. This was particularly clear to us in the example of the e-magazine service which, despite offering library members free electronic access to a significant number of magazines, does not seem to be widely known about.

**We recommend that the Minister works with local authorities and partners to promote better the wide range of services provided by public libraries.**

145. We acknowledge the excellent examples of work undertaken by libraries across Wales in relation to digital inclusion. Being able to get online and access services digitally is something that is only going to increase in importance in the future. Libraries will have an important role to play in supporting their communities to do this. It is for this reason that we believe it is vital that internet access in libraries in Wales should remain free of charge.

(Recommendation 3 refers to this).

146. We note the Minister's evidence about the additional responsibilities for library staff in relation to supporting the delivery of Universal Credit and Universal Jobmatch, and the funding implications associated with this.

**We recommend that the Minister continues to pursue the case for additional funding from the UK Government in recognition of the increasing responsibilities for library staff in Wales in supporting the delivery of digital-by-default welfare reforms.**

## **Annexe 1: Our inquiry**

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1. On 20 November 2013, the Committee agreed to undertake an inquiry into public libraries in Wales.

### **Terms of reference**

2. The Committee agreed the following terms of reference for the inquiry:

To consider—

- 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;
- the extent to which the current legislative and policy frameworks are suitable to meet the challenges facing local authorities delivering library services in Wales;
- how well-prepared the Welsh Government and local authorities are to mitigate the impact of public sector cuts on library services;
- options for improving the financial sustainability of library services, including alternative models of provision; and
- the contemporary and community role of public libraries in Wales.

### **Method**

3. Between 21 November 2013 and 17 January 2014, the Committee conducted a public consultation to inform its inquiry, based on the agreed terms of reference.

4. 33 written responses were received and have been published on the Assembly's website. A list of respondents is available at Annexe 2.

5. In addition, the Committee held oral evidence sessions with a number of stakeholders. Details are available in Annexe 2.

### **Outreach work**

6. In late 2013 and early 2014 the Assembly's Outreach Service organised a number of focus groups with library users. In addition, a survey about the

inquiry was promoted through the Assembly's social media streams and with the help of relevant external organisations. Paper-based versions of the survey were circulated where requested.

7. The results of the survey (including demographic data) and an account of the findings of the focus groups are attached at Annexe 3.

## **Annexe 2A: Witnesses**

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The following witnesses provided oral evidence to the Committee on the dates noted below.

### **12 February 2014**

Dr Chris Llewelyn, Director of Lifelong Learning, Leisure & Information	Welsh Local Government Association
Peter Gomer, Policy Adviser, Leisure, Culture, Tourism & Heritage	Welsh Local Government Association
Richard Hughes, WLGA Adviser & Interim Head of Healthy Living, Bridgend County Borough Council	Welsh Local Government Association
Carol Edwards, Chair of CILIP Wales	Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals
Mandy Powell, Policy Officer, CILIP Wales	Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals
Jane Sellwood, Society of Chief Librarians, Wales	Chartered Institute of Library and information Professionals

### **20 February 2014**

Rhian Davies, Chief Executive	Disability Wales
Cathryn Marcus, Director of the Welsh Government's Communities 2.0 Digital Inclusion Project	Communities 2.0
Graeme Francis, Head of Policy and Public Affairs	Age Cymru

Ceri Cryer, Policy Advisor	Age Cymru
Lynne Hill, Policy Director	Children in Wales
Catriona Williams, Chief Executive	Children in Wales

#### **5 March 2014**

Mike Cavanagh, Head of Cultural Services	Pembrokeshire County Council
Jane Davies, Senior Cultural Services Manager	Carmarthenshire County Council
Mark Jewell, Library Services Manager	Carmarthenshire County Council

#### **13 March 2014**

John Griffiths AM, Minister for Culture and Sport	Welsh Government
Linda Tomos, CyMAL Director	Welsh Government
Huw Evans, CyMAL Library Development Team	Welsh Government

## Annexe 2B: List of written evidence

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The following people and organisations provided written evidence to the Committee. All written evidence can be viewed in full at:

[www.senedd.assemblywales.org/mgIssueHistoryHome.aspx?Ild=8295](http://www.senedd.assemblywales.org/mgIssueHistoryHome.aspx?Ild=8295)

<b>Organisation</b>	<b>Reference</b>
Charmaine Rolland	PL 01
Carmarthenshire County Council	PL 02
National Federation of Women's Institutes–Wales	PL 03
UNISON	PL 04
Pembrokeshire County Council	PL 05
Paul Hobbs	PL 06
Flintshire County Council	PL 07
Society of Chief Librarians in Wales	PL 08
Newport City Council	PL 09
Wales Audit Office	PL 10
Bridgend County Borough Council	PL 11
Royal National Institute of Blind People	PL 12
Stuart Cliffe	PL 13
Wales Higher Educations Libraries	PL 14
Isle of Anglesey Library Services	PL 15
The Carnegie UK Trust	PL 16
Macmillan Cancer Support	PL 17
Blaenau Gwent Libraries	PL 18
Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals Cymru	PL 19
Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals Cymru	PL 19a
The Open University Wales	PL 20

City and County of Swansea	PL 21
Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council	PL 22
Conwy County Borough Council	PL 23
Age Cymru	PL 24
Monmouthshire County Council	PL 25
Gwynedd Council	PL 26
Powys County Council	PL 27
Welsh Local Government Association	PL 28
WLGA: Additional Info	PL 28a
Save Pennard Library Action Group	PL 29
Older People's Commissioner	PL 30
Disability Wales	PL 31
Wales Council for Voluntary Action	PL 32
Children in Wales	PL 33

## Annexe 3: Focus Group Evidence

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### Inquiry into Public Libraries Communities, Equality and Local Government Committee

#### Library User Groups

**Group:** Library Reading Group – Abergele Library  
**Constituency:** Clwyd West  
**Region:** North Wales  
**Participants:** 9

*The group meets once a month at Abergele Public Library to discuss books that they have read in the past month and to exchange notes on any books they feel were particularly good. The group were a mix of middle aged and elderly males and females. All of them lived in the town or in the rural area surrounding it.*

**Group:** Builth Wells Reading Group – Builth Wells Library  
**Constituency:** Brecon and Radnorshire  
**Region:** Mid and West Wales  
**Participants:** 6

*The Builth Wells Reading Group is a group which meets once a month to discuss a book of their choice at the local library. The Group also runs an online blog: <http://builthwellsreadinggroup.blogspot.co.uk/> encouraging the public to attend their meetings, and gives further information on the library and the texts they have available for loan. “#BuilthBooks” via Twitter is used to promote the Reading Group. The group were a mix of middle aged and young women who either live centrally to the town or on its outskirts. All were still in full-time employment.*

**Group:** Cardiff Conversation Club, Cardiff Library  
**Constituency:** Cardiff Central  
**Region:** South Wales Central  
**Participants:** 8

*A group that meets every week at Cardiff Central Library. It is designed to allow people who are learning English to get together to improve their language skills through informal conversation and chat. The group were a mix of young male and female international participants. Some had only recently moved to the UK to look for employment or undertake study.*

**Group:** Clydach Knitting Group, Clydach Library  
**Constituency:** Gower  
**Region:** South Wales West  
**Participants:** 8

*The library runs a variety of groups and clubs for members to attend and regularly invites new groups to hold sessions to review their popularity within the community. The group were made up of both middle aged and senior women. Some members of the group had recently retired, and others suffered from ill-health and physical difficulties.*

**Group:** Babis Bach Blaenau, Blaenau Ffestiniog Library  
**Constituency:** Dwyfor Meirionydd  
**Region:** Mid and West Wales  
**Participants:** 6

*A group of mothers and babies from Blaenau Ffestiniog and the surrounding area. The group meets at the library twice weekly, on Monday afternoon for Babis Bach Blaenau and Friday morning for Story Time. This was a group of young mothers who lived in the area.*

**Group:** Welsh learners reading group, Rhosneigr Library  
**Constituency:** Ynys Môn  
**Region:** North Wales  
**Participants:** 3

*A group of individuals who attend a reading group for Welsh learners once a month on a Thursday afternoon. The members of this group also attend a Welsh class once a month to learn the language. A group of middle-aged women who were learning Welsh. Living in Rhosneigr or the surrounding area.*

**Group:** Newport Library Reading Aloud Group, Newport Central Library  
**Constituency:** Newport West  
**Region:** South Wales East  
**Participants:** 2

*Read Aloud is a group that meets once a week at Newport Central Library. Read Aloud is part of the Reader Organisation's "Get Into Reading" initiative which encourages shared (rather than academic) reading. It is a drop-in session which does not require any preparation to attend.. Some participants who attend are visually impaired, socially isolated, highly dependent on public transport and have mental health and/or additional learning needs. The group were made up of two senior women: one lady lived independently and the other lived in a residential block of flats.*

**Group:** Ruthin Reading Group, Ruthin Library  
**Constituency:** Clwyd West  
**Region:** North Wales  
**Participants:** 13

*Ruthin Library Reading Group meet on the 2nd Wednesday of the month at 7:30pm to have a discussion about a selected book. The group were a mixed group of males and females. The majority were senior but there were a few young individuals too. The majority of the group spoke Welsh with others learning. The majority live in the Ruthin area or the rural area around it.*

### Non-library User Groups

**Group:** Equal Voice Project (West Monmouth School)  
**Constituency:** Torfaen  
**Region:** South Wales East  
**Participants:** 5

**Background Information:** *The Equal Voice Project is a Youth Forum for young people from the Gypsy Traveller Community. The project is based at West Monmouth School.*

**Group:** English Language Group  
**Constituency:** Cardiff South and Penarth  
**Region:** South Wales Central  
**Participants:** 4

**Background Information:** *The family who took part in the focus group wished to remain anonymous. They have lived in Cardiff for nearly 3 years, having moved from both Egypt and Somalia in the early 2000's. They have weekly tutoring lessons for English language and literature.*

**Name:** Taran  
**Constituency:** Ynys Môn  
**Region:** North Wales

**Participants:** 2

**Background Information:** *Taran is an organisation that provide a voice for disabled people and provide them with opportunities to lead a more independent life by offering training, support, social skills development and confidence building. The focus group consisted of one member of staff and one Service user.*

### Library User Group Evidence

<b>Question 1: How often do you use public libraries?</b>	
<i>Abergele Library Reading Group</i>	<p>The majority of the group use Abergele and Colwyn Bay Library at least once a month to attend the monthly reading group, use the photocopier or borrow books.</p> <p>One of the participants also uses the mobile library once a month which she finds useful.</p>
<i>Babis Bach Blaenau – Blaenau Ffestiniog Library</i>	<p>Each member of the group said that they used the library twice a week to attend the Babis Bach Blaenau group and Story Time on Fridays.</p> <p>One member of the group said that she used the library around four times a week, for the baby groups but also so that her son, who’s at school, could use the computers to print his homework and use the internet.</p>
<i>Builth Wells Reading Group</i>	<p>The group’s use of the library ranged from daily through the library’s online resources, and access via Powys Libraries “Shelf-life” magazine, to weekly and fortnightly visits to the library itself.</p> <p>One participant works from home and utilises the library’s online resources daily, whilst a second participant physically visits the library at least once a week with her work as a carer for an adult with learning difficulties.</p>

<i>Cardiff Conversation Club</i>	The majority of the group used libraries at least once a week in order to take part in the Conversation Club. A number of participants used the library as often as every day, and usually several times a week.
<i>Clydach Knitting Group</i>	The group all stated that they used the local library at Clydach regularly: from every day, most days, weekly and fortnightly.
<i>Rhosneigr Library Welsh learners reading group</i>	Two members of the group use the library once a month to borrow books and to attend the reading group and the Welsh class.  They mentioned that the other two members of the group used the library more often than they did.
<i>Newport Library Read Aloud Group</i>	The participants use Newport Central Library (or their local Library) at least once a week. Both attend the Read Aloud sessions weekly, and suggested that they may use the library for lending books every fortnight.
<i>Ruthin Library Reading Group</i>	Most participants used the library at least once a week, with one participant using it once every three weeks and another on a monthly basis.
<b>Question 2: Why do you use the library?</b>	

<p><i>Abergele Library Reading Group</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attending reading groups;</li> <li>• Photocopying;</li> <li>• Borrowing books;</li> <li>• Read Which? Best Buy reports which are available for them to read for free from the library - this saves them having to pay to see each new report;</li> <li>• Gathering information on local events or activities for example information about the rotary club;</li> <li>• Bus timetables;</li> <li>• Bags for recycling;</li> <li>• Ordering books from other libraries - a service they find very helpful. One participant said that she could not find one book anywhere and the staff at Abergele Library were able to get her a copy from a library in Liverpool - she did have to pay a minimal fee as it came from Liverpool. One participant noted that there wouldn't be a fee if it came from a library within Wales.</li> <li>• Using computers;</li> <li>• One participant uses the library to use audio books and e-books.</li> </ul> <p>The group also spoke about other services that were available from the library but that they personally do not use. Things such as the drop off service for people unable to go to the library themselves.</p>
<p><i>Babis Bach Blaenau – Blaenau Ffestiniog Library</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• For the baby group;</li> <li>• To use the computer and the printer;</li> <li>• To attend other groups.</li> </ul>

<p><i>Builth Wells Reading Group</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Borrowing books, e-books and e-magazines: many of the participants felt that it would be far too expensive to buy the number of books that they read, as “<i>the stock kept in Builth Wells Library is good and varied</i>”;</li> <li>• Reading the local newspapers;</li> <li>• Borrowing DVDs (Builth Wells Library is the only place in the town where DVDs can now be borrowed/rented);</li> <li>• Accessing Wi-Fi – one of the participants felt that this was an absolute critical service as she does work from home. This enables her to do her work outside of her home should she wish);</li> <li>• Group meetings;</li> <li>• Ordering books in if there aren’t any publications in stock.</li> </ul>
<p><i>Cardiff Conversation Club</i></p>	<p>The majority of the group used the library to borrow books. All participants attend the Conversation Club on a weekly basis.</p> <p>A number of participants used the library computers, and newspapers.</p>
<p><i>Clydach Knitting Group</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Borrowing books;</li> <li>• Attend group meetings (knitting, reading, and family history for example) and meeting new people/socialising – the group focused on the importance of this for older people. The groups and library service is a way for them to share knowledge and enhance/continue their learning experience, as well as a way of deterring isolation and loneliness;</li> <li>• Using the computers – the computers are very popular in the library and booking them in advance is usually necessary.</li> </ul>

<p><i>Rhosneigr Library Welsh learners reading group</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Borrowing books;</li> <li>• Attend reading group;</li> <li>• Attend Welsh class;</li> <li>• Coffee mornings;</li> <li>• Art groups – once a week;</li> <li>• Session with the local Councillor to discuss local issues informally – once a week;</li> <li>• Accessing computers and Wi-Fi;</li> <li>• Tea group.</li> </ul>
<p><i>Newport Library Read Aloud Group</i></p>	<p>The participants primarily use the library to borrow books. Newport Central Library is found in a building which contains a Museum, Gallery and Tourist Information. Because of this, the participants stated that they also use the library:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To attend a new exhibition in the Gallery;</li> <li>• To attend a talk by authors;</li> <li>• To use the reference section for general queries; and</li> <li>• To attend group like “Reading Aloud”.</li> </ul> <p>Both participants said that they had attended one or more of these events over the last year. Melanie Sheridan, group leader for the “Reading Aloud” group gave some background information:</p> <p><i>“The weekly Shared Reading with clients in the first stages of dementia was an amazing experience. We had learned that reading was a skill retained longer than imagined for these clients and over the 3 months we visited the Hillside Centre we witnessed people who often struggled to hold a conversation read quite fluently and comment on what they had read.</i></p> <p><i>The session brought a sense of togetherness to a group of people who were in danger of being socially isolated as a result of their developing condition. The responses they made to what they had heard were often nostalgic, biographical and humorous – that is to say just like any other group of people we had read with. Fundamentally the reading gave them pleasure”.</i></p>

	<p>The “Read Aloud” model of reading allows for people to participate anonymously, without needing to make a commitment to a book/prose before a meeting takes place. This accommodates for people who may suffer from physical or mental conditions, as well as carers for example who may often be at risk to becoming socially isolated and gives them an improved sense of health and wellbeing.</p>
<i>Ruthin Library Reading Group</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Borrowing books;</li> <li>• Keeping in touch with county council plans as they are all laid out in the library;</li> <li>• Reading magazines and newspapers</li> <li>• The reference library;</li> <li>• Art exhibitions;</li> <li>• Reading Groups;</li> <li>• Welsh Learners Groups;</li> <li>• <i>Twf</i> activities with baby;</li> <li>• Booking tickets for the local theatre;</li> <li>• Help with IT</li> <li>• As a comfortable space to breastfeed their baby;</li> <li>• The good range of art books;</li> <li>• Borrowing DVDs for free.</li> </ul> <p>A couple of the participants noted that even though they don’t use it for the purpose themselves, the computers with internet access were always in use.</p>
<b>Question 3: What do you use your library for most?</b>	
<i>Abergele Library Reading Group</i>	<p>For the reading groups and to borrow books occasionally. The majority of the group use other services available to them when they need to use them, for example when they need a new recycling bin.</p>
<i>Babis Bach Blaenau –Blaenau Ffestiniog Library</i>	<p>For the baby groups and to use the computers.</p>

<i>Builth Wells Reading Group</i>	For books (this included e-books and e-magazines). In addition, the group felt that the library was a crucial point of contact for people in the community to see what's going on in the town and on the event board which is on display there.
<i>Cardiff Conversation Club</i>	For the purposes of the Conversation Club, a type of club that does not exist elsewhere in Cardiff. Other activities that they attended included the live music performances on a Saturday afternoon.  A number of participants said that the resources, especially the books were the main reason that they use the library.
<i>Clydach Knitting Group</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Borrowing books;</li> <li>• Group meetings;</li> <li>• Using the computers;</li> <li>• For the range of activities they have (talks, discussions, exhibitions etc.)</li> </ul>
<i>Rhosneigr Library Welsh learners reading group</i>	For the reading groups, the Welsh class and to borrow books.
<i>Newport Library Read Aloud Group</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Borrowing books/audio books (one participant was partially sighted);</li> <li>• Recreational purposes;</li> <li>• Reference work.</li> </ul>
<i>Ruthin Library Reading Group</i>	The participants used the library most for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Borrowing books;</li> <li>• Referencing;</li> <li>• Group activities;</li> <li>• Notice board with details of local groups and events.</li> </ul>

<b>Question 4: What do you value most about your library?</b>	
<i>Abergele Library Reading Group</i>	<p><b>The social aspect:</b> The ability to socialise with other people through attending the reading group and feel a part of the community.</p> <p><b>Staff professionalism:</b> The friendly, helpful and useful staff at the library. One participant said that she wanted to borrow books written by an author and the library staff went and found them all for her. The staff go that extra mile to help them.</p> <p><b>Accessibility:</b> The services that are free for them to use.</p> <p><b>The books:</b> The fact that they are able to borrow books for free for a month at a time. They find this better as a group than buying books which could prove to be expensive and take up a lot of space.</p> <p><b>Parking:</b> The ample parking available to them, it makes going to the library much easier.</p>
<i>Babis Bach Blaenau -Blaenau Ffestiniog Library</i>	<p><b>Community venue to hold meetings and the availability of IT:</b> Having a venue for their group to meet, and being able to use computers there.</p>

<p><i>Builth Wells Reading Group</i></p>	<p><b>Inter-library loans:</b> The group really valued the inter-library loan scheme which is run through CyMAL's mid/mid and west Wales region. This has meant that members can access alternative texts held at other public, as well as academic, libraries (including the National Library in Aberystwyth). Similar schemes are run across Wales (Link y Gogledd for North Wales and Books for You in South). This has allowed readers to access academic textbooks and continue with learning outside the University setting. One participant stated that it has proved popular in Powys and readership is seen to be above the national average.</p> <p><b>Accessibility:</b> Because of the library's location on Builth Wells High Street, participants really valued the library's convenience and accessibility. This has been enhanced by the presence of Powys Council's customer services which were recently moved to the library. This has meant that in addition to library services, library staff also provided services with regards to rent, council tax services, blue badge applications, refuse bags and tourist information. As one of the participants highlighted: <i>"It's not just a library anymore...it's a community base"</i>. The library is <i>"valuable to the community generally"</i>, which gives local information on walks, bus timetables and events in the community.</p> <p><b>Staff professionalism:</b> The participants valued the staff and their professionalism: their ability to recommend books and advice. Their professionalism also extends to monitoring their turnover of books and selection. In the case of fiction, <i>"if the book hasn't been taken out over 6 months we'll rotate with another library"</i>. It was felt that the use of volunteers would diminish this expertise - the staff know their members readership and this is valued highly.</p> <p><b>The social aspect:</b> One of the participants focused on the rural nature of the area. As she works from home, she valued the opportunity the library gave her (through various groups that met there) to meet new people and stopped the isolation she may have felt otherwise.</p>
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<p><i>Cardiff Conversation Club</i></p>	<p><b>The building:</b> as space to read and study; also a social space to meet friends and hangout;</p> <p><b>Staff professionalism:</b> A number of participants commended the helpful and friendly staff.</p> <p><b>Access to resources:</b> Access to language resources – dictionaries, thesauruses and grammar books.</p>
<p><i>Clydach Knitting Group</i></p>	<p><i>“The library is an absolute lifeline for me, without it I don’t know what I’d do.”</i></p> <p><b>Staff professionalism:</b> The group valued the staff’s professionalism and helpfulness highly: <i>“the staff go out of their way to help you. The service you receive is second-to-none and is certainly something you wouldn’t get if you were to purchase a book at a book shop”</i>. Because the staff are aware of your borrowing habits and come to know borrowers on a personal basis, they are able to recommend books and order them in: <i>“because you are known by staff, the welcome you receive [to the library] is warmer and they develop a personal knowledge and rapport with you...this enhances your experience there”</i>.</p> <p><b>The social aspect:</b> The participants also valued the social aspect of the library. The welcome, the interaction and the educational value was central to their enjoyment of the library. All of the participants value life-long learning and by joining the groups that meet at the library, they are able to <i>“exercise their brain”</i> and give members hope and improved health especially if they are living alone.</p> <p><b>Children’s activities:</b> The library also allows young school children to attend during school time, which encourages people to become familiar with the library setting at a young age.</p>
<p><i>Rhosneigr Library Welsh learners reading group</i></p>	<p><b>The social aspect:</b> They stressed that the library was a big part of the community in Rhosneigr. If the library were to close, they didn’t know where people would go to socialise, and socialising is something that they value themselves when visiting the library.</p> <p><b>Staff professionalism:</b> The staff are very friendly and the building is nice and welcoming.</p>

<i>Newport Library Read Aloud Group</i>	<p><b>Staff professionalism:</b> The group felt that the staff were all very friendly, eager to help with requests and have a large amount of subject knowledge. This meant going so far as to take you to your books of interests, rather than pointing you in the right direction.</p> <p><b>The library service generally:</b> One participant felt that Wales is exceptionally lucky to have not suffered from the same level of cuts to library services as in England and that library services should be valued and protected.</p>

*Ruthin Library Reading Group*

**The social aspect:** Many lived in rural communities so felt the library brought people together and a chance to meet a range of people you might not otherwise meet. The library is the hub of the town.

**Staff Professionalism:** The participants agreed that the library had lovely and helpful staff

**Access to Resources and Inter-library loans:** One participant had recently completed a degree and said the resources she had used from Ruthin Library were the envy of others. If the book is not available in Ruthin Library the staff will contact other libraries to source the book (in Wales and beyond). Borrowers can also borrow welsh children's books (even though their parents did not speak welsh). The group felt that they could not afford to buy the amount of books that they borrow.

**Opening Hours:** The group valued the library's opening hours. It is open late on a Tuesday and Saturday Morning, which works well for full-time workers.

**Exhibitions:** The library exhibits work from local people in the foyer which is an added interest and publicity for their work.

**The Building Itself:** The group felt that the library was an inclusive space for all.

**Question 5: How could library services in your area be better?**

<p><i>Abergele Library Reading Group</i></p>	<p><b>Improved advertising of library services:</b> Everyone in the group agreed that there was nothing wrong with the services available and they didn't feel that any services needed to be better. The problem they felt was the advertising of the services that are actually available. They felt that the advertising and publicising of services was pretty non-existent. It was suggested that the library should have information screens in the foyer window so that people passing by can see what services are available to them and what events and activities are coming up in the area. Better online promotion.</p> <p><b>Improved advertising of Council Services:</b> There are so many services available in the library such as the recycling bins, bus timetables, information about local activities and events, buying a flash drive, senior citizen railcard discount, exhibitions, guest library cards and a cup of coffee that are there for everyone within a community. But, nobody knows anything about them unless they go to the library to attend a reading group or other groups. Unless somebody else tells them they are available, they do not know.</p> <p><b>More local information:</b> It was suggested that the library should put up posters around the library but also in places such as the local supermarket, doctors surgery, chemists, post offices, small shops, nursing homes, care homes.</p> <p><b>Flexible use of library card:</b> One participant said that if one service needed to be made better it would be the flexibility of using his library card within different counties in North Wales. He goes to libraries in Conwy County but lives on the border of Denbigh County, but cannot use his library card to borrow books from Conwy County libraries.</p>
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<p><i>Babis Bach Blaenau – Blaenau Ffestiniog Library</i></p>	<p><b>Improved advertising of library services:</b> The group members stressed that they weren't aware of the services available at the library until they decided to go to Babis Bach Blaenau on Mondays after talking about it amongst themselves.</p> <p><b>More children's activities:</b> It was suggested that an after school art and craft group at the library might be useful for children.</p> <p><b>More computers:</b> It was also suggested that more computers were needed at the library. There are only five or six available to use and people can use them in half hour slots.</p>
<p><i>Builth Wells Reading Group</i></p>	<p><b>Re-organising library opening hours:</b> Some participants felt that library services in the area could be improved by re-organising the library's opening hours to accommodate members who work during the day and would like to use the services after work. Builth Library is often "one-manned" and must be closed during the lunch hour which can prove difficult for members who may want to visit during their lunch hour.</p> <p><b>Less time spent on council services:</b> One participant stated that more time should be given for "<i>staff to be involved with library orientated work and for them to not have to spend time with local authority tasks</i>". Whilst customer services has improved the community's interaction with the library "<i>the transfer of these duties to library staff has meant borrowers have to sometimes wait</i>" to speak to their librarian.</p>
<p><i>Cardiff Conversation Club</i></p>	<p><b>Improved advertising of library services:</b> More information should be provided online including information on renewing books, membership etc.</p> <p><b>Increase free services:</b> One participant suggested that they would like to see free access to CDs and DVDs.</p> <p><b>Increased activities:</b> Setting up book clubs in other languages to help English speakers to develop modern language skills.</p>

<p><i>Clydach Knitting Group</i></p>	<p>Many of the participants felt that there was little that could be improved with regards to the library service</p> <p><b>Re-organising library opening hours:</b> One participant felt that Clydach Library could benefit from extended opening hours at least once a week to accommodate working professionals.</p> <p><b>More computers:</b> Some other participants also felt that the library could benefit from having more computers as the service is very popular.</p>
<p><i>Rhosneigr Library Welsh learners reading group</i></p>	<p><b>Increase borrowing times:</b> One member liked to take a lot of books home with her once a month, but felt that as she was getting older, she could no longer read as fast as she used to.</p> <p><b>Re-organising library opening hours:</b> The group appreciated that this costs money. They would prefer that the opening hours remain as they are, and that library continues to be available, than for money to be spent on keeping the library open for longer, which could mean that it would have to close down completely.</p> <p>The library was threatened with closure three or four years ago, so the community and friends of the library have worked closely together in the past to try to provide more services to avoid closing the library, e.g. a tourist information service – Rhosneigr attracts many tourists to the area in the summer.</p>
<p><i>Newport Library Read Aloud Group</i></p>	<p><b>A greater range of literature:</b> There could be a more up-to-date selection of books available to loan from the library;</p> <p><b>Improve the library service generally:</b> The library service had deteriorated somewhat since being assigned to the Leisure rather than Education Department within the Council. This has had an effect on the availability of reference books within the library.</p> <p><b>Re-organising library opening hours:</b> The library’s opening and closing hours could be better to accommodate working individuals, even if this meant closing the library for a</p>

	<p>morning and opening later.</p> <p><b>Increase the use of mobile libraries:</b> Mobile libraries could be utilised in an area such as Newport, which has a high number of residential care homes.</p> <p><b>Improved advertising of library service:</b> More of a presence on the web through the libraries own website (rather than Council's) and Blogs – one of the participants discussed a Blog run by another Reading Club based in Builth Wells.</p> <p><b>Reinstate telephone renewals:</b> The library has also recently stopped members from renewing their books over the phone – this has meant that it can only be done physically in the library or online. Many of the library's users do not have access to the internet/computer at home, and so it was felt that this should have continued.</p>
<i>Ruthin Library Reading Group</i>	<p><b>Re-organise library opening hours:</b> The participants felt that having increased opening hours on the weekend which might attract more families and an extra late night.</p> <p><b>Online presence:</b> Internet search site so that you could search for books from home.</p>
<b>Question 6: How do you think the council could save money whilst providing library services?</b>	
<i>Abergele Library Reading Group</i>	<p><b>Utilise school premises:</b> One participant said that school libraries are not used a lot: “<i>why not share it with the community, the school is empty from 4pm onwards</i>”.</p> <p><b>Share resources and partnership working:</b> There is a community centre next door, why hold groups and activities there and in the library when one could be used for everyone.</p> <p><b>Generate revenue:</b> The group suggested that having a shop and coffee room within the library would bring money into the library then they wouldn't need to rely on money from local authorities as much. They said that Rhyl Library have a shop and coffee room. They felt</p>

	<p>that having these services would maybe encourage more people to have a look around the library. The library could also sell books that are no longer in use.</p> <p><b>Book donations:</b> Ask people to donate books</p> <p><b>Purchase cheaper stock:</b> The staff at the library say that they have to buy the books at full price, but how about using Amazon and eBay?</p>
<i>Babis Bach Blaenau –Blaenau Ffestiniog Library</i>	<p><b>Use of volunteers:</b> It was suggested that it might be an idea for volunteers to run the library. But the group didn't think there were many volunteers in the area and didn't feel that people would be ready to volunteer if need be.</p>
<i>Builth Wells Reading Group</i>	<p><b>Generate revenue:</b> The participants generally agreed that rather than focusing on how councils could save money, they could think about how libraries can generate money instead. This could be through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Selling old stock (old stock is currently sold but in central libraries only, e.g. Brecon, Llandrindod Wells, Newtown etc.);</li> <li>• Rent free space to groups (NB: Builth Wells Library does not have a free space which could be reserved for a group to rent. However, the group could identify how this could be done in other libraries);</li> </ul> <p>Selling arts and crafts and hot drinks through a vending machine were ideas also put forward</p> <p><b>Charging for additional services:</b> Some members of the group added that they would be happy to pay more for additional services (like renting DVDs/using WiFi for example) as opposed to charging for borrowing books.</p>
<i>Cardiff Conversation Club</i>	N/A
<i>Clydach Knitting Group</i>	<p><b>Generating revenue:</b> The group did not object to library generating revenue by holding coffee mornings or having a coffee shop as a more sustainable way of securing the library's finances.</p> <p><b>Use of volunteers:</b> Although the group were opposed to the use of volunteers because of</p>

	<p>their lack of expertise, they said that volunteers could be used to run the coffee shop. Alternatively, volunteers could be employed provided that they were under the supervision of a permanent and qualified member of staff.</p>
<i>Rhosneigr Library Welsh learners reading group</i>	<p><b>Charging for additional services:</b> Paying a small fee to use the computers for a period of time; paying to use audio books.</p> <p><b>Generate revenue:</b> Selling old books and DVDs.</p>
<i>Newport Library Read Aloud Group</i>	<p><b>Re-organising library opening hours:</b> Closing the library for a morning/afternoon a week. This wouldn't affect people who work during the day, and would simply compel library users to visit the library at a time/day which it was open.</p> <p><b>Fewer DVD/CD purchases:</b> Limit the number of DVDs/CDs purchased by the library for people to loan.</p> <p><b>Use of volunteers:</b> The possibility of using volunteers (rather than permanent members of staff) was discussed. It was generally felt that professional paid staff were an asset to the library. One participant stated opposition to the use of volunteers as a matter of principle whilst the other participants stated that if volunteers were needed, they should be under the charge of a permanent member of staff. This could be done to save money in smaller branch libraries across Newport.</p>
<i>Ruthin Library Reading Group</i>	<p><b>Council should save money by cutting costs elsewhere:</b> Participants felt that the LA should look at wider administration costs within the LA and other areas first.</p> <p><b>Use of volunteers:</b> The library could look at possibly subsidising some of the staff time with volunteers, but highlighted that it was essential to have the specialism of a librarian there. The local Tourist Information has recently started using volunteers, and many in the group noted how it was shut a lot of the time due to lack of volunteers, so not sure how reliable that resource would be within a library.</p>

	<p><b>Charging for additional services:</b> Some suggested that groups similar to the reading groups should pay a minimal fee to cover e.g. heating costs for the time that they use the room in the library, but highlighted that it should not exclude anyone from attending and that children's activities should not be charged. They felt that they would rather pay than lose the group, and some suggested that paying for something might make people appreciate it more.</p> <p><b>Re-organising library opening hours:</b> We discussed reducing opening hours, but the group felt that this should only be considered if the alternative is to close the library.</p>
<b>Question 7: Have you seen any new and interesting ways of providing library services that you think should be used more?</b>	
<i>Abergele Library Reading Group</i>	<b>Information sharing:</b> Libraries and local councils should share ideas and best practice with each other.
<i>Babis Bach Blaenau – Blaenau Ffestiniog Library</i>	N/A
<i>Builth Wells Reading Group</i>	<p><b>The Library as an information point:</b> The participants felt that since the introduction and re-allocation of customer services to the library, there has been a greater use of the library by the community. The library as an information point for the local council is an excellent way of promoting the use of the library.</p> <p><b>Cross-sector partnership working:</b> One participant described that the use of cross sector partnership working as an interesting and novel way of providing library services, which should be bankrolled nationally rather than just regionally. <i>“The Welsh Government via CyMAL funds the Libraries for Life strategy which focuses on delivering cross sector staff training. This type of partnership working and staff training should be used more in the future [to] relieve the burden on one sector”.</i></p>
<i>Cardiff Conversation Club</i>	<p><b>Borrowing laptops:</b> Allow users to borrow laptops (for use within the libraries and to take away for a few hours). This idea is similar to a service available in Spain.</p> <p>The group generally felt that libraries in Wales compared very favourably with libraries in other EU countries. They described the following aspects as particularly good when compared with their home countries:</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Libraries in Wales are more user-friendly;</li> <li>• More stock is available to browse;</li> <li>• There are more events and activities available to library users.</li> </ul> <p>The majority of the group praised Cardiff Central Library in particular.</p>
<i>Clydach Knitting Group</i>	<b>Increased activities:</b> The participants generally agreed that the various activities held in the library were an interesting way of providing library services which should be used more. The rooms that are available for hire are booked every day.
<i>Rhosneigr Library Welsh learners reading group</i>	<p><b>Use of tablets:</b> They thought it was important to keep up with the times and embrace new technology. Anglesey library service will be introducing iPads at Rhosneigr library over the next few weeks. In order to fund this, they have stopped providing paper copies of magazines in the library, but these will still be available on the iPads.</p> <p><b>Amazon service:</b> The leader of the group had heard of a new service being offered at a library in Cornwall. Amazon service – if an individual wishes to buy a book from Amazon but doesn't have the internet facility to do so, the library can buy the book on their behalf.</p>
<i>Newport Library Read Aloud Group</i>	N/A
<i>Ruthin Library Reading Group</i>	<p><b>Library coffee shops:</b> Liverpool and Rhyl libraries have a coffee shop, which could be explored on a voluntary or at no expense to the library.</p> <p><b>Touchscreen technology:</b> One participant had visited a library where there was a large touchscreen table, where information could be viewed.</p>
<b>Question 8: What would you miss most about your local library services if it was stopped?</b>	

<p><i>Abergele Library Reading Group</i></p>	<p>The group felt that they would miss a lot of things if their library services were stopped:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Staff;</b></li> <li>• <b>Book services;</b></li> <li>• <b>Socialising;</b></li> <li>• <b>Knowing what's going on in their local community.</b></li> </ul> <p>One participant said '<i>I would miss everything</i>'</p>
<p><i>Babis Bach Blaenau – Blaenau Ffestiniog Library</i></p>	<p><b>The social aspect:</b> Members of the Babis Bach Blaenau group and the Friday Story Time group felt that mothers in the area wouldn't get an opportunity to socialise without those groups.</p> <p><b>Access to resources:</b> Access to computers was useful for their children to do their homework as they couldn't afford to buy a printer to use at home.</p>
<p><i>Builth Wells Reading Group</i></p>	<p><b>The social aspect:</b> The participants, during the course of the session, highlighted that many people would be isolated without the local library service, and would be unable to access community information as well as information needed on the local council. Three of the participants were relatively new to the area, and described how the library was their "first port of call" when moving in to the area. One participant said "<i>...local library service isn't just a repository of books; it's a safe place I can go where I'm always greeted by friendly, helpful, professional staff. Losing the building would be a detriment to our high street but losing that environment would be even worse</i>".</p> <p>They felt that Wales had the best public library services in the UK, and one participant felt that library services have already faced cuts. One participant highlighted that any further cuts to library services would do nothing to help the poor (and declining) literacy levels in Wales.</p>
<p><i>Cardiff Conversation Club</i></p>	<p><b>Access to resources:</b> The group would miss the books and the resources available to them. A number of participants described how the resources were a necessity in terms of improving their English.</p> <p>They unanimously felt that they would miss the Conversation Club, especially as no such club exists elsewhere in the city.</p>

<i>Clydach Knitting Group</i>	<p><b>The social aspect:</b> As mentioned previously, many members of the group highlighted the mental and physical benefits of attending the library, as a way for older generation to continue interacting and socialising: <i>“coming into such a friendly atmosphere deters depression”</i>. Many of the group would find it difficult accessing library services outside of Clydach because of their physical conditions.</p> <p>One participant discussed the local council’s commitment to “ring-fence” services which support vulnerable people in the community from the financial cuts. She expressed that libraries are now of significant social and educational importance and serve the social needs of the community. The library (as outlined above) preserves the health and mental well-being of the community and encourages older people to remain socially engaged.</p> <p><b>Re-organising library opening hours:</b> Some of the participants were disappointed by the library’s closure over the Christmas period. As many of the group are dependent on the interaction they have in the library setting, many were isolated. <i>“The library is a place of safety for many people...I know if my mother was having any difficulties, the library staff would call me”</i>. Closing the library on some days or shortening the opening hours is only a short term way of saving money, however.</p>
<i>Rhosneigr Library Welsh learners reading group</i>	<p><b>The social aspect and access to resources:</b> the opportunity to socialise, the opportunity to borrow books free of charge. One of the few places available to them free of charge where they can make use of free services.</p>
<i>Newport Library Read Aloud Group</i>	<p><b>The social aspect:</b> Both participants stated that they would miss the social interaction if their local library services were stopped.</p>

<i>Ruthin Library Reading Group</i>	<b>The library service generally:</b> The group unanimously agreed that they would miss all of the library's services.
<b>Question 9: How do you think people could be encouraged to use their libraries more?</b>	
<i>Abergele Library Reading Group</i>	<p><b>Improved advertising:</b> People need to know what services are available to them in order to be encouraged to use their library more. Posters up in supermarkets, local shops, chemists, doctors surgeries. The group felt that maybe a display of the week's top 10 books in the window would encourage people to come in. Advertise deliver at home service in doctor's surgeries and care homes and advertise in local newspapers - Rhyl journal has all sorts of information about the services available in that area. Mail drop - post leaflets to people's houses with information about the services. Maybe once a month, like a newsletter or brochure.</p> <p><b>Increase attendance by children:</b> "Start them young" - the group felt that using a library should be a part of a child's school life from pre-school. The group felt that the library should be working more with schools in order to promote the services available.</p> <p><b>Coffee mornings:</b> Tempt parents in with coffee, chat groups. This would then encourage them to look at books and use some of the services available.</p> <p><b>Improve the library building:</b> The group felt that the library itself as a building is not very inviting from the outside and that this was maybe a reason why people do not come in.</p> <p><b>Online presence:</b> There should be a website for the library alone to tell people what's going on at the library and what services are available - currently they do not have this. The only information about Abergele Library is on the County website and that is never updated.</p>

<p><i>Babis Bach Blaenau –Blaenau Ffestiniog Library</i></p>	<p><b>Improved advertising:</b> The group felt that the services already available at the library weren't advertised well enough – some members of the group weren't aware of Babis Bach Blaenau until someone told them about it in the local shop.</p> <p><b>Increase advertising of library services:</b> The group agreed that library services should continue to be provided, but felt it was a big problem that the services and groups available weren't advertised enough in the village.</p> <p><b>Re-organise library opening times:</b> The group didn't want to reduce opening hours – if anything, they felt that the library should be open at more appropriate times. The library closes for lunch each day. The group felt that keeping the library open during lunch would make it more convenient for people who want to use it during their lunch break from work, as they wouldn't be able to use the library before or after work because the opening hours are 10.00 – 17.00.</p> <p><b>Improved online presence:</b> It was suggested that the library should have Facebook and twitter accounts, to provide more information about what's happening at the library.</p> <p>But some members of the group tried to look at the other side of the argument – it was suggested that there is little demand for information about such groups. If people don't show an interest of their own accord, would they really want to attend? Some of the mothers who attend the baby group had been invited to join.</p>

<i>Builth Wells Reading Group</i>	<p><b>Improved advertising:</b> The group agreed that promotion needed to be done outside of the library.</p> <p><b>Increase attendance by children:</b> Although use of the library could be cultural or generational, more could be done to encourage the younger generation to become familiar with using the library, as well as the library setting. Children in Powys are invited to joining the library by Health Visitors.</p> <p><b>Use of academic librarians:</b> Academic libraries are very good at teaching students how to access online resources and journals. One participant discussed that academic librarians could be employed to attend public libraries to teach library users how to become digitally literate and access such resources online.</p>
<i>Cardiff Conversation Club</i>	N/A
<i>Clydach Knitting Group</i>	<p>The participants highlight the following ways in which people could be encouraged to use their libraries more:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Improved advertising;</b></li> <li>• <b>Re-organising library opening hours</b> – to accommodate working borrowers;</li> <li>• <b>More activities for children:</b> building the future generation of library users and encourage parents to bring their children by creating library competitions (Summer</li> </ul>

	<p>Reading Challenge for example).</p> <p><b>Change the perception of the library:</b> The group discussed popular misconceptions of what the library is. Many people do not understand how libraries have changed over the last generation. More should be done to draw attention to the fact that <i>“the library isn’t a place just to order books anymore”</i>.</p>
<p><i>Rhosneigr Library Welsh learners reading group</i></p>	<p><b>Increase attendance by children:</b> The group felt that it was important to get children into libraries at a young age so that they continue to use the services as they grow older. The group felt that there should be more activities available for children in the summer.</p> <p><b>Library coffee shops:</b> The group liked the idea of having a cafe at the library but envisaged problems with staffing and health and safety.</p> <p><b>The library as a meeting space:</b> The group liked the idea of giving people the chance to use the library as a meeting space.</p> <p><b>Increase advertising of library services:</b> The library isn’t easy to find – so people visiting the area wouldn’t know where it is.</p>
<p><i>Newport Library Read Aloud Group</i></p>	<p><b>Improved advertising:</b> Advertisements and advertising proved to be the most important aspect to encouraging more people to use their libraries more. Many of the advertisements are only shown in the library – which only informs the people who already use their library, rather than people who do not. One participant felt that more should be done to encourage the younger generation to use their local libraries, and as such, more groups and clubs should be held for them.</p>

<p><i>Ruthin Library Reading Group</i></p>	<p><b>Improved advertising:</b> The local post office has an advertising screen and that library facilities and events could be advertised there. In general, the group felt that there should be better publicity of what's on offer- people don't realise what's on offer there. Media coverage is generally only on the events happening in the library, rather than publicising them.</p> <p><b>More activities for children:</b> Essay writing competitions that would bring children into the library to research</p> <p><b>Shared resources:</b> a better coordination between the library and other buildings I the town e.g. craft centre, archives, tourist information.</p> <p><b>More courses/groups:</b> An ancestry course for example (there has been a previous course but only lasted 1 term).</p> <p><b>Improved website:</b> webpage could be improved e.g. for the book club it does not list what books are being discussed.</p>
<p><b>Question 10: Is there anything that stops you using your library?</b></p>	
<p><i>Abergele Library Reading Group</i></p>	<p>The group felt that their local library was very accessible with regards to the services available and the parking available.</p> <p><b>Restricted opening hours:</b> the council gave them the choice of two different sets of opening hours, both of which participants felt were not ideal. Changes to opening hours (which differ from day to day) were implemented, but were not effectively advertised, leaving a lot of people confused. One participant said that she had seen queues outside on a Saturday.</p> <p>One participant did feel that attendance figures may have dropped because of the change in opening hours following the survey and the lack of publicising the new opening hours.</p>
<p><i>Babis Bach Blaenau – Blaenau Ffestiniog Library</i></p>	<p><b>Lunchtime closure:</b> Nothing in particular was stopping this group, but one or two members felt that closing the library over lunch could be frustrating for other people, especially those</p>

	<p>who work all day. It was suggested that staff could work different shifts at the library to overcome this problem.</p> <p><b>Accessibility:</b> Some said that the library's location could cause problems – the library is outside of the main area of Blaenau Ffestiniog and it's quite difficult to get there by car. The group felt it was difficult for people who didn't live locally to find the library.</p> <p><b>Lack of resources:</b> There are only five or six computers available and people sometimes have to wait for someone else to finish before a computer becomes available.</p>
<i>Builth Wells Reading Group</i>	<p>The participants outlined the following barriers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Restricted opening hours;</b></li> <li>• <b>inadequate study space;</b></li> <li>• <b>Weekly limits to internet use</b> (but some discretion is allowed by staff in certain circumstances);</li> <li>• <b>Cultural barriers</b> – if young people have not grown-up with libraries as part of their lives, they would be much less inclined to use library services.</li> </ul>
<i>Cardiff Conversation Club</i>	N/A
<i>Clydach Knitting Group</i>	<b>Restricted opening hours:</b> The participants felt that the only barrier that stopped them from using the library more was its opening hours.
<i>Rhosneigr Library Welsh learners reading group</i>	N/A
<i>Newport Library Read Aloud Group</i>	<p><b>Service users health:</b> It is predominantly the participant's physical condition which stops them using their library as often as they would like.</p> <p><b>Accessibility:</b> The participants felt that, the distance to walk to/from their local library, availability of public transport and the location of their local library were barriers in their ability to use the library service.</p>

<i>Ruthin Library Reading Group</i>	N/A

### Non-library User Group Evidence

<b>Question 1: How often do you use public libraries?</b>	
Equal Voice Project	The participants stated that they never use the public library in their area (Torfaen/Pontypool).
English Language Group	The participants stated that they rarely use the public library in their area (Grangetown).

Taran	<p>One participant had not visited the library for years, following development with web related resources available.</p> <p>One participant visited the library monthly where he would use the computers and book lending service. He noted that the facilities were great.</p>
<b>Question 2: Why do you not use public library services?</b>	
Equal Voice Project	<p>Many of the participants outlined that although they do not have access to computers or the internet at home, and they tended to use their smartphones. Many within the group felt that the library was “boring and full of books and nothing for young people to do”.</p> <p>None of the participants had an interest in reading, although all had a high level of literacy.</p>
English Language Group	<p>All of the participants said that they didn’t use the library more because “it was boring” and “very small”. They also explained that there aren’t many computers there, so they are unable to book them to use in advance. Because of the opening hours, the group have difficulty going there after school and on the weekend.</p>
Taran	<p>It was mentioned that the older generation now trust the internet a lot more and are also more comfortable using devices and therefore visit the library’s less.</p> <p>The group noted that they had had no negative feedback regarding access to Anglesey libraries.</p>
<b>Question 3: How could library services in your area be better?</b>	
Equal Voice Project	<p>The participants said that they couldn’t answer this question honestly, as they never use or access the library services in their area.</p> <p>One participant said that they would be encouraged to visit if there were events being held in the library that they would be interested in.</p>

English Language Group	The participants felt that their local library service could be better if there was increased access to computer, up to date technology like iPad's and later opening hours.
Taran	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Having a small café area for visitors to browse at books;</li> <li>• Lift restrictions on booking computer slots.</li> </ul> <p><b>Increase e-resources:</b> The libraries could look at increasing the range of electronic resources (e.g. e-books) that they offer. We discussed the option of being able to access a database on the web and then downloading a book with the possibility of a 20-30 day limit.</p> <p><b>Outreach services:</b> The service could be enhanced, the participants thought, by introducing a wider outreach service by having a mobile unit that takes the library and its services to the community - there is currently a van that visits villages with books but this could be enhanced to include technology so that users could access the web (laptops and tablets etc.). By working in partnership with organisations such as Taran, who offer IT courses to their members, they could ensure that they reach out to the groups that are likely to make use of such a service. Social interaction is important to Taran members and social networking provides an important source for this.</p> <p><b>The social aspect:</b> The social element of the library is important- for many it is the only place they feel comfortable and an important social venue.</p>
<b>Question 4: How do you think the council could save money whilst providing library services?</b>	

Equal Voice Project	The participants were unable to answer this question, as they don't use the library services.
English Language Group	The group had difficulty in answering this question. One of the participants felt that it was " <i>unfair</i> " to make cuts to other council services (street cleaning for example) so as to save money to provide better library services: " <i>there is a lot of rubbish on the streets in Grangetown...more needs to be done here</i> ".
Taran	<p><b>Generate revenue:</b> By introducing a café area, the money could be used to improve services available and bring in new customers who might not have visited a library before.</p> <p><b>Increase e-resources:</b> If more books were available electronically, this would free up floor space in the library which could be utilised for events or in partnership with other organisations. This would cut down staff costs.</p> <p><b>Use of volunteers:</b> We discussed using volunteers to help staff the library which was seen to be a viable option as it would provide opportunities for the disadvantaged groups to gain experience and to get involved in their communities. Retired people were also considered to be a resource, often having specialist knowledge within a subject and could help recommend books and reference material.</p>
<b>Question 5: How do you think people could be encouraged to use their libraries more?</b>	
Equal Voice Project	<p>As mentioned previously, the majority of the participants thought that they would be encouraged to use their libraries more if relevant events of interest to them were held there. These included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wedding planning events;</li> <li>• Beauty classes; and</li> <li>• Nail art classes.</li> </ul>

English Language Group	<p>The group felt that the following could help encourage people to use their libraries more:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More computers;</li> <li>• Longer opening hours;</li> <li>• More information on how to use the library;</li> <li>• More up to date technology (for example, touch screen technology);</li> <li>• More fun activities for kids (after school club for example).</li> </ul>
Taran	<p><b>Improve perception:</b> Participants thought that libraries have a stigma attached to them (old building full of books), and this needs to be changed to attract more people to use the library.</p> <p><b>Increase events:</b> The libraries could look at introducing more events similar to the Good Health Day event that will be held in Llangefni this month where organisations have a stand and people are invited to come and find out more about a certain health related topic. However the participants thought that the library must consider effects on other library users who may want the library to be kept as a quiet area.</p>
<b>Question 6: Is there anything that stops you using your library?</b>	
Equal Voice Project	The participants all said that there was nothing stopping them from using their local library, and the majority felt that going there would be “ <i>boring</i> ”.
English Language Group	The group stated that the primary reason which stops them from using their library is its opening hours.
Taran	Members said that not having support workers available to take them to libraries was a common issue that stops people using their library.

<b>Question 7: How do you find out about the variety of services offered by your local library?</b>	
Equal Voice Project	The participants outlined that finding out about the variety of services offered by their local library would be difficult, namely because they never visit the library, and they don't have access to computers and a broadband connection. As such, the group agreed that more advertising should be undertaken to highlight what services are offered.
English Language Group	The participants felt that in order to find out about the services offered by their library, they would need to go there personally. As they are unable to do so due to the library's opening hours, they could not say what was on offer there at present.
Taran	The notice board is especially useful- but if this wasn't available in the library- where would people go to view notices?

# Communities, Equality and Local Government Committee

## Inquiry into Public Libraries in Wales

### Key Statistics

**532** Total number of survey responses received

### Summary of Survey Responses

#### Section 1 – Survey Respondents

This section provides a breakdown of the survey respondents including the age-ranges, gender, and location of respondents.

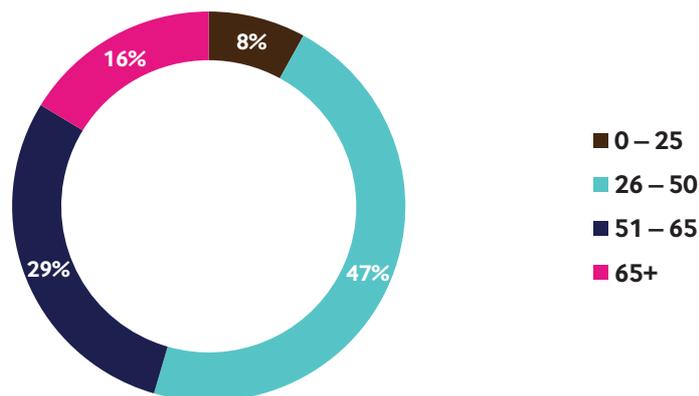
##### 01. What is your age?

0 – 25: **8% (41)**

26 – 50: **46.50% (237)**

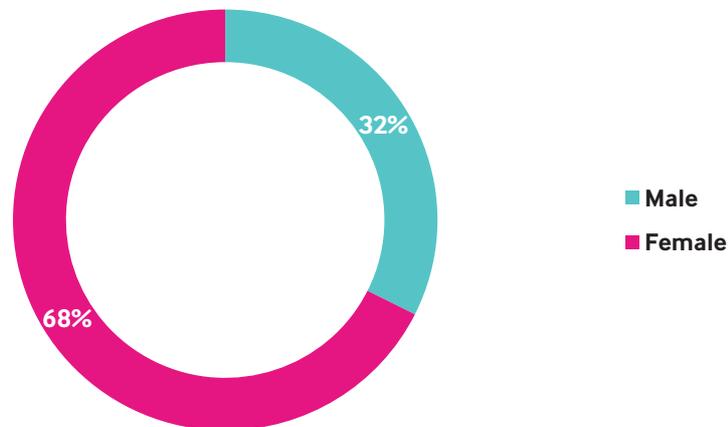
51 – 65: **29.20% (149)**

65+: **16.30% (83)**



## 02. What is your gender?

Male: **32.40% (163)** Female: **67.60% (341)**



## 03. In which local authority area do you live?

Isle of Anglesey – 9

Blaenau Gwent – 3

Bridgend – 4

Caerphilly – 4

Cardiff – 73

Carmarthenshire – 126

Ceredigion – 29

Conwy – 16

Denbighshire – 13

Flintshire – 10

Gwynedd – 9

Merthyr Tydfil – 13

Monmouthshire – 33

Neath Port Talbot – 10

Newport – 9

Pembrokeshire – 8

Powys – 19

Rhondda Cynon Taf – 17

Swansea – 60

Torfaen – 5

Vale of Glamorgan – 34

Wrexham – 4



#### 04. What is your home postcode?

LL: 48

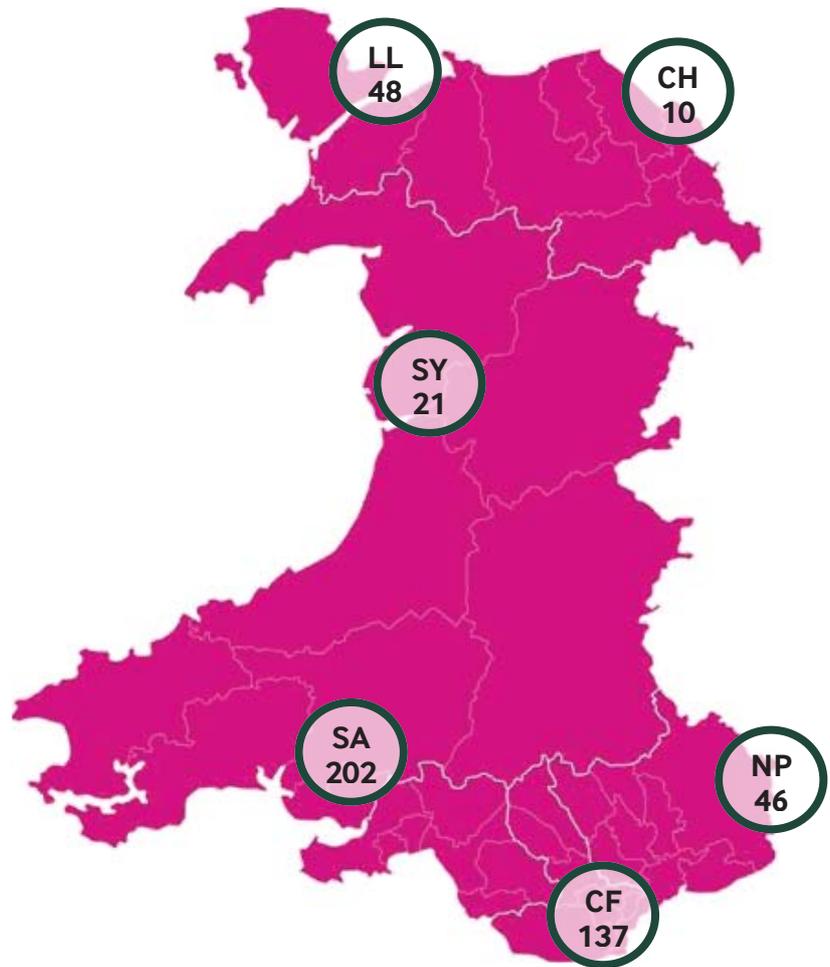
CH: 10

SY: 21

SA: 202

CF: 137

NP: 46



## Section 2 – Findings

This section outlines the key findings of the survey which covers participant’s level of library usage; the reasons that respondents gave for using their local library service; and their views on how greater use of public libraries could be encouraged.

### 05. On average, how often do you use public libraries?

Never: **2.11% (11)**

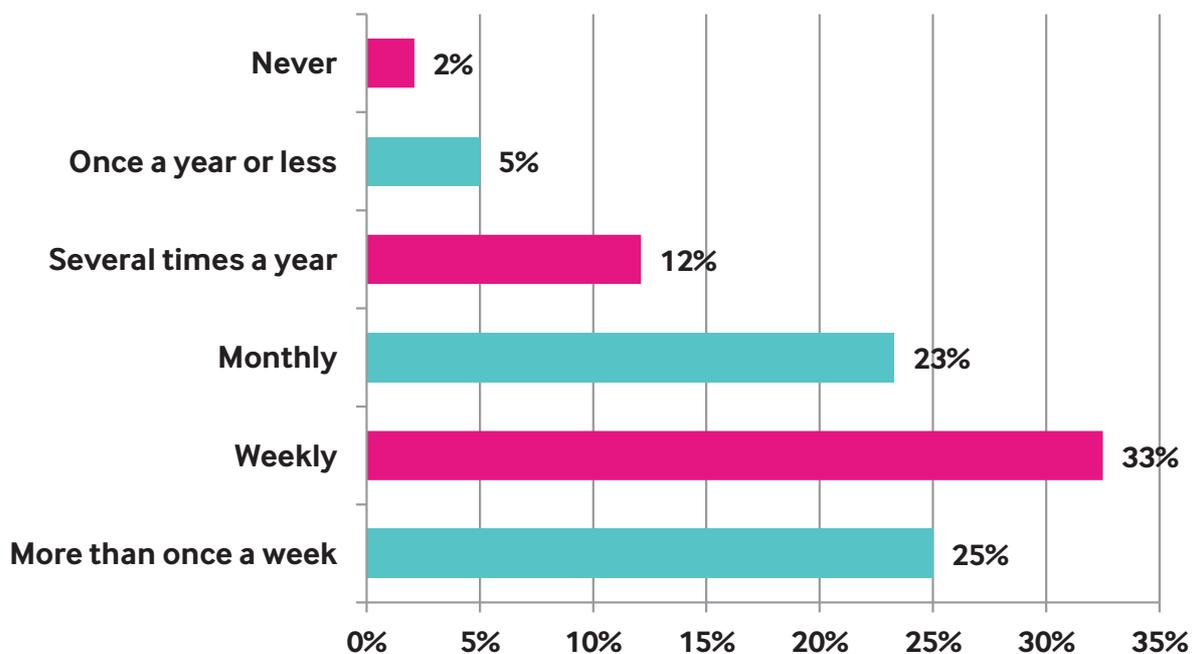
Once a year or less: **5% (26)**

Several times a year: **12.11% (63)**

Monthly: **23.30% (121)**

Weekly: **32.50% (169)**

More than once a week: **25% (130)**



## 06. Why do you use the library? (Choose your top 3).

To borrow books: **35.30% (456)**

As a place to research/study: **10.40% (134)**

For social reasons: **4% (52)**

To attend children's activities: **5.90% (76)**

To attend events and/or meetings: **6.10% (79)**

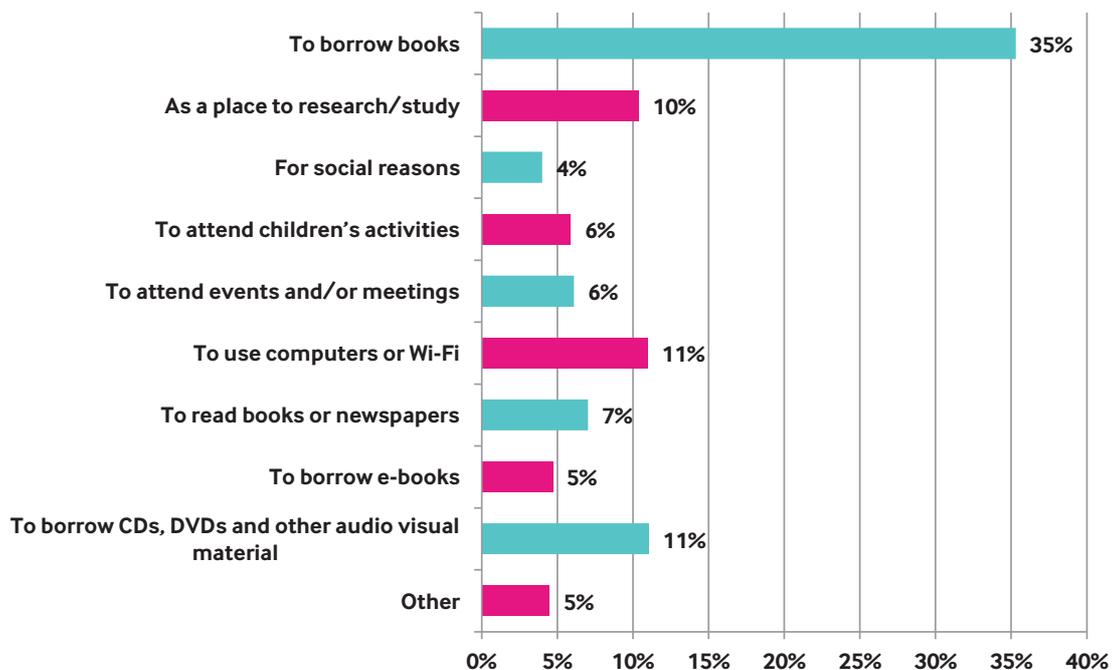
To use computers or Wi-Fi: **11% (142)**

To read books or newspapers: **7.04% (91)**

To borrow e-books: **4.70% (61)**

To borrow CDs, DVDs and other audio visual material: **11.06% (143)**

Other: **4.50% (58)**



Below is a breakdown of the issues raised, followed by the number of respondents, under the 'other' category:

Photocopying: 1

I don't use the library: 6

To use the mobile library: 1

To access council services: 2

For reference books: 2

For e-material: 9

For local information and public  
Announcements: 7

To keep warm: 1

To relieve stress: 2



## 07. What would encourage you to use public libraries more?

A better range of books and e-books: **23.60% (142)**

A better range of CDs, DVDs and other audio-visual material: **2.50% (15)**

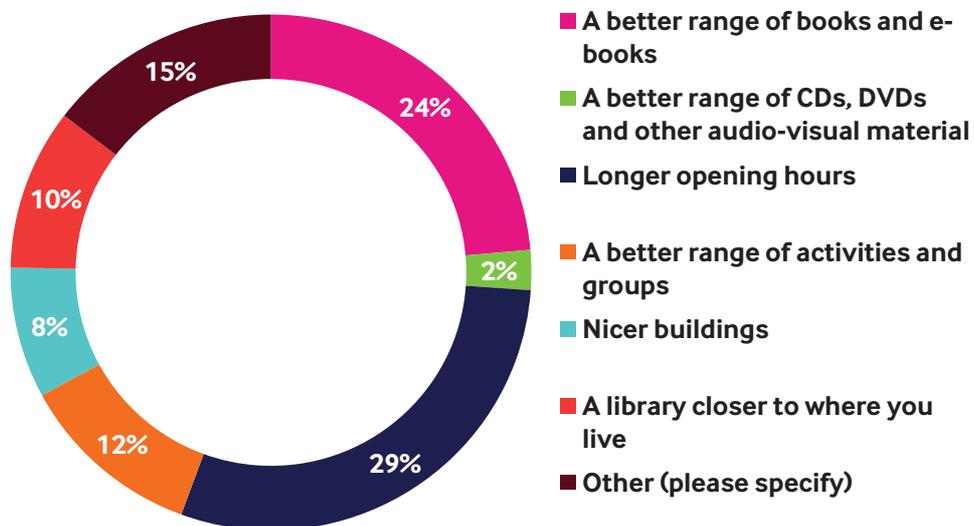
Longer opening hours: **29.50% (177)**

A better range of activities and groups: **11.50% (69)**

Nicer buildings: **8.20% (49)**

A library closer to where you live: **10.10% (61)**

Other (please specify): **14.60% (88)**



Below is a breakdown of the issues raised, followed by the number of respondents, under the 'other' category:

Later (rather than longer) opening hours: 6

Longer borrowing period: 2

More information about events going on at the library: 4

Improved online services: 2

More facilities and resources (e.g. toilets/computers etc.): 4

Improved access to the library: 8

More helpful staff: 2



## 08. What do you value most about your library?

Books and e-books: **44.10% (250)**

The social aspect: **4.80% (27)**

Activities and groups: **4.20% (24)**

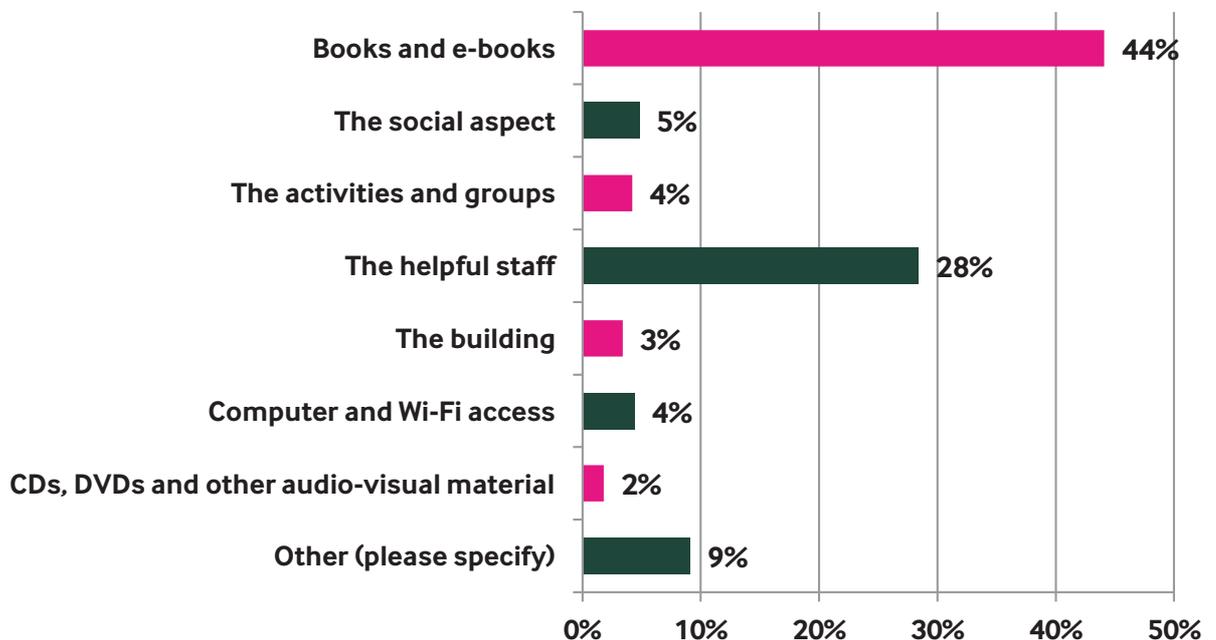
Helpful staff: **28.40% (161)**

The building: **3.40% (19)**

Computer and Wi-Fi access: **4.40% (25)**

CDs, DVDs and other audio-visual material: **1.80% (10)**

Other (please specify): **9% (51)**



Below is a breakdown of the issues raised, followed by the number of respondents, under the 'other' category:

The library as a Resource Centre for Council Services: 3

I value all aspects of the library: 9

E-library catalogue: 1

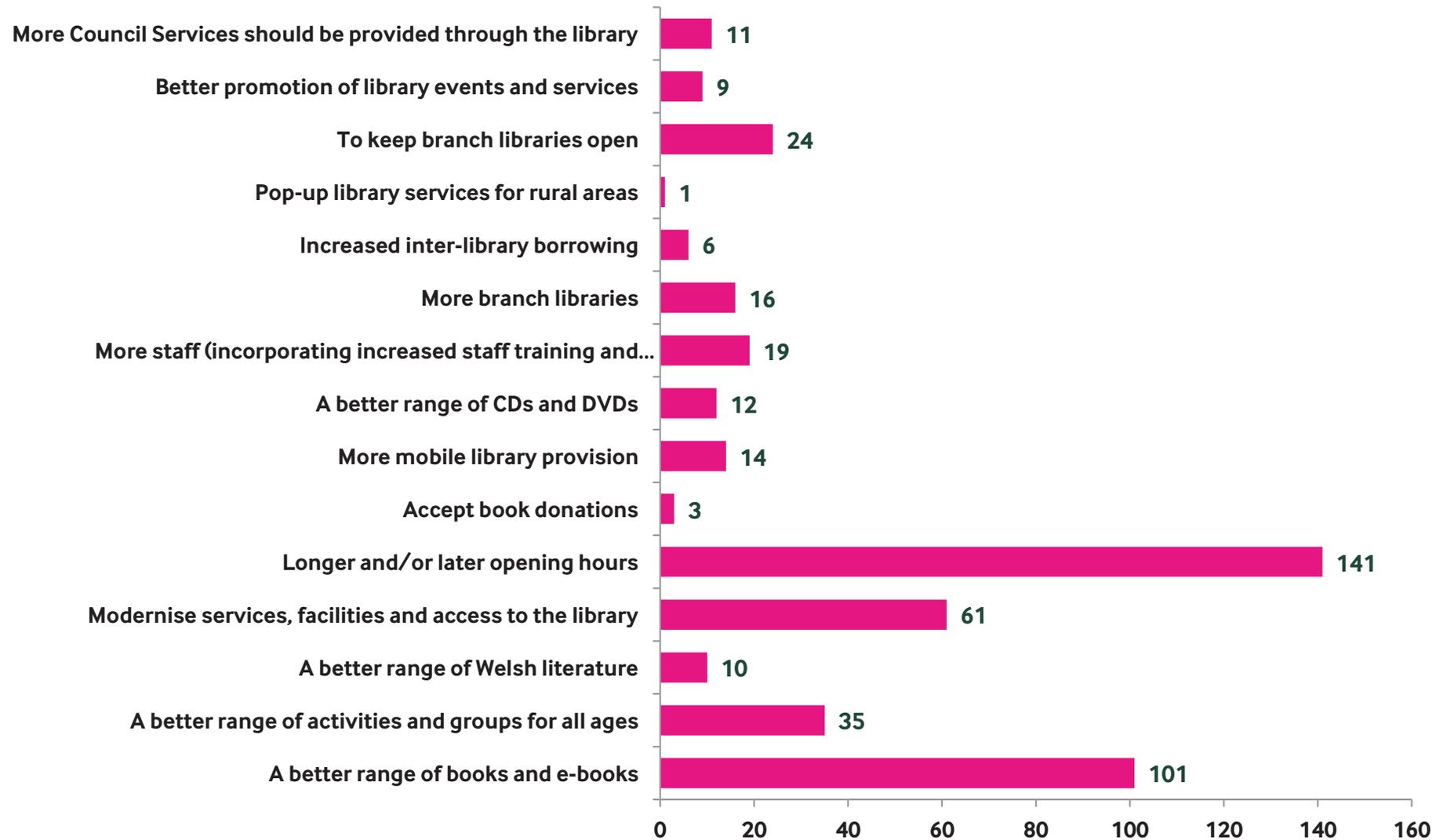
Mobile library Services: 1

The library's free Services: 2

Location of the library: 1

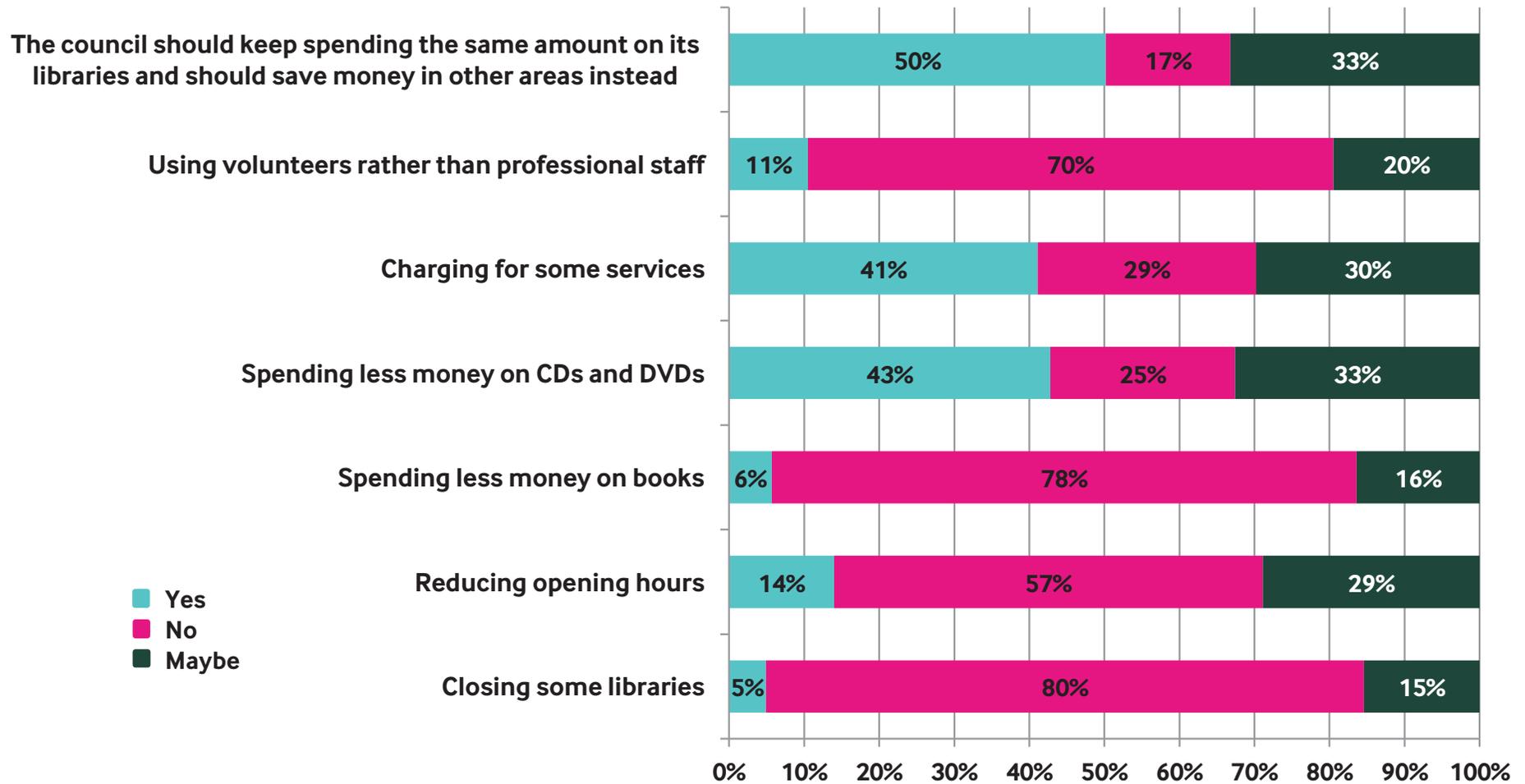


### 09. How could library services in your area be improved?



**10. Do you think that councils should save money, whilst providing library services, by:**

*For this question, participants were asked to answer yes, no, or maybe in a relation to a number of money-saving options. Views were also sought on other ways that councils could save money whilst providing library services.*



b. If you have any other ideas as to how the Council should save money whilst providing library services, please provide details here:

