



## **Blaenau Gwent Libraries/Aneurin Leisure Trust**

### **Case Studies**

**The impact which the library has had on an individual, or on a group of individuals, during the year. Describe the use made of the service, and the difference that use made to the individual or group concerned. Please indicate if permission for the Welsh Government to re-use and/or publish the case studies has been obtained or not: Yes - obtained / No – not obtained**

### **Case Study 1**

#### **Long Covid Sufferer -Yes**

Janet joined the library in May 2021. Janet explained to the staff that she was suffering from long Covid and as a result it has affected her ability to read. Janet used to be an avid reader, reading a couple of books a week. Long Covid has left Janet unable to focus on the words, very similar to Dyslexia. Library staff recommended stock to help Janet, starting with adult learner titles and progressing to Quick Reads. Janet has praised the library service for helping her recovery with a range of support.

*‘When I first joined the library, I could only read a page or two of a book. Having the right type of book, has built my confidence, and got my brain back into reading. At the start I couldn’t focus or remember the words. Nearly a year on, I am enjoying the Quick Reads, I think I have read most of them now. I am going to move onto light paperback novels soon, that is going to be such big achievement for me’*

Library staff also helped Janet set up Borrowbox on her ipad. Janet finds following instructions difficult and has poor memory. Library staff designed a very simple user guide to help Janet log onto Borrowbox in simple steps. From time to time, Janet has needed to bring her ipad into the library, for further help in how to access the app. Staff have demonstrated the Dyslexia friendly accessibility features of BorrowBox, including altering the font style, font size, margins and background. Janet has discovered the sepia background

has been particularly helpful in making reading easier for her. Janet has also benefitted from listening to many e-audio titles, which have aided her long Covid recovery, as she suffers from insomnia and anxiety, since her diagnosis.

*'Borrowbox has been really helpful. Being able to listen to books, at my own pace has really helped with my brain fog and has helped build my concentration and helps me relax at the same time. I've listened to self help books to help manage stress and anxiety and in the evenings I listen to historical novels, they help get me off to sleep. I often wake through-out the night, so I start listening again and they help me drift off again, I find them very soothing'*

*'I've not been able to return to work since having long Covid. My local library has been invaluable to me over the year. From helping me get back into reading, helping my mental health and by just having somewhere I can easily walk to and have a friendly chat, all so helpful to getting me back on the road to full recovery'*

## Case Study 2 -Yes

### Young Family/Winter of Wellbeing Events

The funding made available from Welsh Government through the Winter of Wellbeing scheme, enabled us to deliver a wide range of young people's events during February and March 2022. 29 events were delivered with 596 children and 152 parents and carers.



One family, with three children, aged, 3, 5 and 8 attended all the events in Tredegar Library.

Parent, Kate, explained to staff the value of the sessions.

*'It has been great to have so many free events in the library. With the cost of living, so high, having free sessions in the library has made a big difference. It's been such a long time since the children have been able to use the library, like this, the atmosphere is lovely and cosy and*

*it has got the children in the habit of visiting the library regularly. It's helped them get back into reading too. The library is full of new books!*

Many parents relayed their positive feed-back to staff on the campaign, many highlighting the importance aspect of using libraries for building social interaction, following the pandemic. For many young children, it has been their first library experience. The opportunity to mix with other children, for parents to chat has been very much needed and appreciated. Many parents commented on the value of having the library to teach the children how to be a participant of an 'audience' and the much need experience of building social skills. The campaign helped the service recover from the pandemic by enabling us to offer exciting, entertaining, and educational sessions. A very important result was the centralising of the social experience of being in a

library setting, re-connecting with the community.

*'It has been the first visit, for my son Noah, who is 3. He has been in awe of the library, to able to borrow so many books and have such fun, he loves it. We attended the Louby Lou Storytelling session, this was the first time he had participated in this type of event, with children of a similar age, he loved it. To watch his face, he was mesmerised'*



#### **More comments from parents –**

- *'It has been so nice to get the children away from screens, they have become so reliant on ipads and gaming. They have made some new friends, it has been so good for them to get hands-on and creative. Sam loved the Lego club, will be coming to the next session'*
- *'I saw the Louby-Lou storytelling session advertised on Facebook and decided to take my Grandson Jack, who is nearly 3. We received such a warm welcome, the*

*storyteller, facilitated a fantastic story session with props, keeping both children and adults entertained. It was magical'*

- *'We attended the Harry Potter workshop, it was so nice to have an event where the parents could also participate. We have been coming to the library every week, since this'*
- *'My son loves attending Lego Club, he is Autistic, so usually finds it hard to fit into group activities. The library staff have been great, helping him settle and encouraging him. This is the first club that he has attended, I am thrilled to see him enjoy it so much'*



### **Case Study 3**

#### **Tackling Loneliness and Isolation –(Yes)**

As the service lifted restrictions for group activities in the autumn of 2021, many people expressed their gratitude to the library service, for helping them combat loneliness and social isolation.

A range of activities and events were held to target isolated people. It was identified from customer enquiries that there was a particular need to support carers in the borough. The service worked with AgeCymru and Gwent Carers hub to deliver a series of drop-in sessions across all libraries.



The service also received funding from social services to purchase coffee machines for all libraries, to facilitate coffee morning events in ‘carers corners’.

*‘I have been caring for my husband, since the start of the pandemic, due to chronic health conditions. I came to the library after seeing a poster for carers sessions. I was so glad I came along. I got all the information I needed and I have been coming to the library every week, since. I haven’t got a lot of time to myself, but the library has been ideal for me, as it is on my door-step. I have joined the Knit and Natter group, this gets me out of the house and makes me feel so much better, having a nice chat and a cuppa’ – Mary.*



Singalong sessions were also held during February and March 2022. Invitations were sent to residents of local care homes and sheltered accommodation.

*'The session really lifted the spirits of our residents, it was such a feel-good event, everyone came out smiling'* – support worker

*'Oh, it was lovely to sign in a group, to be part of something, it really cheered me up'* – participant

*'It was so emotional, signing the national anthem, it was joyful! I've asked the library for more sessions'* – participant

Reading groups re-commenced in all libraries in Sept 2021. Previous to this, the groups met in outdoor spaces, i.e., parks and cafes. The service still supported the groups, by providing stock and maintained regular contact with members on a one-to-one basis, in preparation for the return of group activities in Sept 21.

The social aspect of reading groups, post pandemic, has become even more evident, with positive feedback being relayed to staff

*'I have forgotten, how good coming to the reading group makes me feel. It has been wonderful coming back; we all feel safe. Coming back finally feels like our lives are getting back to normal. I have missed it so much'*

*'Coming back to the library, is like coming back home. Meeting friends, having a chat and coffee, it really lifts my mood'*

*I suffer with depression; the reading group helps me manage my condition. Being able to join in a group and focus on something good, like reading engrossing and powerful books really helps my mental health. We have all been enjoying the Richard and Judy booklist, we are really grateful for the staff for sourcing all our books.*

## **Case Study 4**

### **Impact of Library Services on a New Family -Yes**

In April 21 a new family moved into the area. They visited the library, initially to find out more about the services within the community. We were able to help them with several enquiries, from how to register with a GP, how to order recycling bins and information on local schools and playgroups. Following this, the whole family joined the library and all family members have participated in library events and services over the year. The father, Dave, has joined the job club and attends the weekly sessions in the library. The mother, Emma, has participated in a range of library sessions, including creative writing and family history events. The children of varying ages have attended the WOW events and their teenage son, Ethan, has really embraced the digital services, including Libby and Borrowbox. He has also recently registered to use Theory Test on-line. The family are regularly giving feed-back to staff on their appreciation of the service. When the family first moved to the area, they enquired at the library about litter picking, as it very noticeable to them, having moved from a rural area, that some areas in Blaenau Gwent have particular problems with litter. Staff promoted the KeepWalesTidy scheme to them and as a result they have now become litter picking champions, doing regular weekly litterpicks, as a family.

*'The library has helped us settle into Ebbw Vale. We have had so much help, with so many things. I am amazed at all the extra things on offer. Money has been tight, so having free events has been great. It has helped us feel part of the community, we have all made new friends. As a family we are keen to learn Welsh, the library has helped us with books for the children and language courses for myself and my husband. The bilingual picture books have been helpful, for all of us. We have borrowed litter picking equipment, sports equipment and a tablet! I feel very fortunate to have a library on our door-step which offers so much'*

### **Narrative that demonstrates how the library service is contributing towards wider Welsh Government priorities and strategic goals**

#### **Timeline regarding re-starting services**

- From the beginning of April 21 browsing was reinstated. Call and collect was still in operation and PC sessions by appointment.
- All libraries back to full operation hours by May 21
- All libraries offering 'walk in' customers, with staffing managing numbers in buildings at the beginning of May 21 Families welcomed back.
- Group activities returned in Sept 21
- Feb 28<sup>th</sup> 2022 face coverings no longer required, quarantining of stock no longer in operation
- Class visits returned in Feb 22
- By the end of March 22, the service is operating as pre-Covid, with a number of enhanced cleaning procedures and new working practices maintained as good practice, e.g Call and Collect.

Over 21/22 the service has delivered a staged approach to pre-Covid delivery, in-line with legislation and advice. Every aspect of re-instating services has been risk assessed and approved by our local authority health and safety dept. As a result, at the end of the year, the service is back to pre-pandemic delivery.

The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 ensures that public bodies across Wales, including local authorities, think about the long-term, work better with communities and each other, look to prevent problems and take a more joined-up approach.

To achieve this, the Act puts in place 7 well-being goals:

- A globally responsive Wales
- A prosperous Wales
- A resilient Wales
- A healthier Wales
- A more equal Wales
- A Wales of cohesive communities
- A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language

Clearly, the library service contributes to a number of these goals by supporting education and lifelong learning; promoting health and wellbeing; improving digital literacy; and providing access to culture and the Welsh language within some of the most deprived communities in Wales. The seven goals provide a clear vision that links the major themes of the service.

### **A Wales of Cohesive Communities**

A major development in the supporting community role was further developed with the roll-out of council community hubs in every library. This scheme was launched in June 21. The library service has worked closely with the local authority to transform the way in which residents engage with the council, offering a face-to-face option, in every library. The



scheme was launched to coincide with the lifting of restrictions and the increasing demand for people needing face to face help. Residents are able to seek support with any council related query, including Blue badge applications, cost of living rebate scheme and council tax enquiries. The service links closely to library based information enquiries and from joint partnership working, we are able to provide a comprehensive community support service, all in one location. The service has been much appreciated by local communities and the local authority. The leader of the council has made visits to all libraries over 21/22 to witness, first hand, the improvements the scheme has made to local residents. The majority of people accessing the hubs are digitally excluded, for varying reasons. This has provided a new opportunity to engage with hard to reach, vulnerable people and promote library services to them. The roll-out of the community hubs into library settings has been very successful. It has strengthened our relationship with the community and the local authority. 98% of the population in Blaenau Gwent live within 2.5 miles of their nearest library. This demonstrates that residents have easy access to library and council services in one building.

Following the successful roll-out of the community hubs, there has been an increased engagement from other partner organisations wishing to engage with residents. Libraries in Blaenau Gwent are now seen as the 'go-to' location for community engagement. Particularly, since the pandemic this has been exacerbated, as the lack of face-to-face support has been limited in other areas. In a society that has lived with so much social isolation, community spaces are more precious than ever. The number of new partners we are working with is increasing every month.

In Oct 21 a new Sports Library project was launched at our full-time libraries. Working closely with our Aneurin Leisure Trust colleagues in the Leisure service, funding was made available to loan a range of sporting equipment to library customers, free of charge. Equipment includes kettle bells, resistance bands, badminton sets, rugby balls etc. All the items are loaned using our Library Management System, and therefore, requires the customer to join the library.



We also worked with Keep Wales Tidy to launch a new litter picking scheme from all libraries. Libraries are now Litter Picking hubs, residents are able to borrow a litter picking kits from their local library, loaned via the Library Management System. A series of drop-in sessions were held across libraries, to raise awareness of the scheme. A community litter-pick event was also held from Ebbw Vale Library, attended by MS, Alun Davies.



## A Healthier Wales

As Aneurin Leisure is a health and wellbeing trust, the focus for all sectors within the organisation is to improve health – *‘We are a community focussed organisation and believe passionately about making a positive impact to people’s lives by not only improving physical*

*health and wellbeing, but also their mental and social wellbeing through our diverse range of services and facilities'*

Combating loneliness and improving health and wellbeing has been a priority for the service over 21/22. Feed-back from the community clearly demonstrated the need for physical events and activities. People expressed their need to enjoy the company of others whilst taking part in an engaging session. We have worked hard with all our partners, assisting with Covid risk assessments and helping them to deliver sessions in a Covid safe environment.

Examples of activities re-introduced since Sept 21

- Reading Groups
- Knit and Natter
- Carers Support Groups
- Family History Sessions
- Baby Yoga
- Singalongs
- Rummikub Group
- Creative writing Group
- Inside Out Group (art for mental health)
- Local History Groups
- U3A groups

Over 21/22 layout of libraries have reverted to pre-pandemic style, therefore we have been able to promote stock on health campaigns, raising awareness of the range of resources in stock. Various health campaigns have been promoted over the year, for example, Mental Health Awareness Week in May 21.

The Reading well collections are regularly promoted and over the year a number of schools and community organisations have borrowed sets. Empathy Day was promoted in June, with related stock promotions and on-line digital activities.

The service held Dewis Cymru drop-in sessions in all libraries in Oct 21. We worked in partnership to deliver training to community groups, raising awareness of this well-being resource. Library staff also completed the training and signed up as 'Well-being' friends within local communities. Working with the Integrated Wellbeing Network( Public Health Wales) within Blaenau Gwent, Brynmawr and Tredegar Libraries have now become 'Well-being hubs'. These Libraries form a network of groups and organisations that provide information, resources and sign-posting to support well-being. Over 22/23 the service will develop new activities and events, to tackle health inequalities, working in partnership with the Integrated Wellbeing Network.

The service has also worked closely with the local health board (Aneurin Bevan Health Board) We have agreed for Abertillery Library to be the base to hold the resources for 'Five ways to Well-being and Melo (mental health resource)



Community groups, organisations and individuals are able to collect resource packs from their local library, we also offer a free delivery service, through our home delivery vans.



These resources are promoted in all libraries, in designated health and well-being areas.

In the last quarter of 21/22, the Library Service worked in partnership with the local authority to coordinate the distribution of lateral flow tests. All libraries distributed the tests to residents, providing easy access. Over this period, 3606 tests were distributed through the library service. Without the reach of libraries, widespread community distribution would have been difficult. During this time, library staff reported that they provided lots of information on Covid related enquiries, from assisting with on-line Covid passes to explaining current restrictions to vulnerable customers.

### **A Prosperous Wales**

The service has continued to support prosperity across the borough over 21/22, as the community recovers from the pandemic. Business Start-up sessions were held on-line in the first quarter of the year but returned face-to-face by the summer. Monthly drop-in sessions are held in every library.

The service has worked closely with the Regeneration Dept of Blaenau Gwent Council to help support local high streets. During the summer the library service was the lead partner for a town centre family activity. A story telling treasure hunt was held in all towns, with children starting and finishing in the library. This initiative encouraged families to use and visit their local high street. From feed-back from elected members, council officers and local businesses, all have commented that having busy, community focused libraries, helps support the high street by encouraging foot-fall in town centres. This has been particularly highlighted in Blaenau Gwent, where town centres struggle, particularly in post Covid times. The merger of community hubs into libraries have increased visitor figures considerably in all libraries. The Regeneration Dept has also funded digital screens for all libraries, to promote local projects, services, and organisations. As part of this scheme, all libraries have linked to the 'Shop Local' promotion, raising awareness of services by shared advertising.



Support for jobseekers has continued to be a core aspect of library service provision. All libraries provide job clubs and a range of support for jobseekers. The first organisation to return to face-to-face provision was the DWP. The return of work coaches and drop-in support re-started in the summer of 2021 for all libraries. Our close working links with our colleagues in Adult Community Learning also delivered support and classes across the service. This ranged for tailored one-to-one support, virtual support and classes. Clear referral routes are in place to signpost learners to more formal learning. Libraries continue to be the ‘first port of call’ for informal learning, particularly for digital needs. Staff are trained to encourage customers to progress with their learning and work with partners to facilitate this.

In post Covid recovery times, the importance of having free services has become more important than ever. The service continues to demonstrate that being fines free, removes barriers to accessing library services. The service has 64 public access PCs, which have proved a crucial support for the digitally excluded. Free Wi-Fi and Wi-Fi printing facilities are available in all libraries. A free tablet loan scheme is available to people that do not have access to digital devices. Volunteers also returned to the service in the autumn of 21, supporting people to develop their skills for future progression.

### **A More Equal Wales**

The Covid-19 pandemic has highlighted new challenges for residents of Blaenau Gwent. Blaenau Gwent has some of the most deprived communities in Wales, the pandemic has further exasperated problems for those living with poor health and poverty. Various services and projects delivered by the library service over 21/22 has supported the equality agenda on a local level and helped bridge the poverty gap.

The service worked in partnership with the local housing association 'Tai-Calon' during the February half-term, to distribute free 'recipe bags' to residents. People attending the library could receive a bag contain all the contents to make health family meals, including recipe cards and ingredients.

To celebrate World Book Day in March 2022, the service worked in partnership with Families First, to provide children with free costumes. The costumes were loaned from local libraries, which worked well, with families joining the library at the same time and borrowing related stock.

Library space was used by Social Services working with the 'Supporting Change' team, targeting vulnerable, disadvantaged children. Craft activities and reading groups were delivered, which we promoted to the wider community, as well as targeted invitations to families needing support. The aim was to provide inclusive sessions, in neutral settings, with families using libraries on a regular basis.

The service delivered a very successful 'Winter of Wellbeing' campaign during the last quarter of 21/22. Families really appreciated having free events. The service delivered a total of 29 events, attended by 596 young people and 152 parents and carers. The campaign has been instrumental for re-engaging with young people, post pandemic. Memberships and issues have risen as a result, compared to February/March last year. Book issues increased by 137% over that period.

Sessions were delivered to target all the age ranges from 0-25 .

Example of sessions included –

- Baby Zumbini
- Expressive Art (for 16-25 year olds)
- Dan Anthony Author workshops
- Crochet taster sessions
- Louby-Lou interactive Storytelling events
- Roald Dahl themed Art Sessions
- Harry Potter themed Art Sessions
- Lego Club

## Winter of Wellbeing Events at Blaenau Gwent Libraries

**FREE**

**Road Dahl Themed BFG Art Workshop**  
 Tredegar Library • Tuesday 8th February • 3.30pm – 5.30pm  
 Booking is essential – Call 01495 357869 to book your **FREE** place

**Harry Potter Themed Art Sessions – Making Mandrakes**  
 Tredegar Library • Saturday 19th February • 10am – 12pm  
 Cwm Library • Tuesday 22nd February • 2.30pm – 4.30pm  
 Ebbw Vale Library • Wednesday 23rd February • 11am – 1pm  
 Blaena Library • Thursday 24th February • 2.30pm – 4.30pm  
 Brynmawr Library • Friday 25th February • 2.30pm – 4.30pm  
 Abertillery Library • Saturday 26th February • 10am – 12pm

Booking is essential – call your local library to book your **FREE** place:  
 Tredegar 01495 357869 | Cwm 01495 370454 | Ebbw Vale 01495 355055  
 Blaena 01495 290312 | Brynmawr 01495 357743 | Abertillery 01495 355646

Visit our website at [www.aneurinleisure.org.uk](http://www.aneurinleisure.org.uk)

BookTrust Cymru’s Bookstart packs and Early Years packs were also distributed from libraries, as health checks were still disrupted by the pandemic.

### Babies and toddlers love books!

**Order and collect your  
free Bookstart packs  
from your library.**

Outreach provision has been extended further over 21/22 with an increasing number of group loans to community organisations, community centres and other hard to reach communities. The service maintains strong partnership support with Llanhilleth Miners Institute. Llanhilleth, is an isolated community within Blaenau Gwent. We regularly loan stock, advise on reading material and provide outreach librar based activities, including Summer Reading Challenge events. With support from us, the Institute have been able to establish their own community based children’s library, with stock provided by us. Trefil, another isolated community in Tredegar has regular group loans, at Trefil Chapel, where customers are able to access and request library stock.

We have worked closely with the Sports Development team within Aneurin Leisure Trust, over the year, as reading has been added to the Fit and Fed programme. We supported the scheme by providing promotional bags for outreach activity. We also advised on stock, for free books to be added to the packs. This programme aims to tackle inequalities that children living in the most disadvantaged areas face, including food poverty, physical inactivity and social isolation. The Fit, Fed and Read has been successful in reaching children, who otherwise, would have encountered barriers to reading.

School visits returned in the last quarter of 21/22. Schools were keen to bring class visits to libraries. To maintain Covid safe environments, visits were arranged on closed days. For example, every class from Ebbw Fawr Primary, Ebbw Vale, visited Ebbw Vale Library, with every pupil being able to borrow stock, during February and March 21.

Stock promotion is an important aspect for the service to raise awareness of equality. Pride Month and LGBT History Month was promoted in all libraries, with displays, with relevant titles promoted.

## **A Resilient Wales**

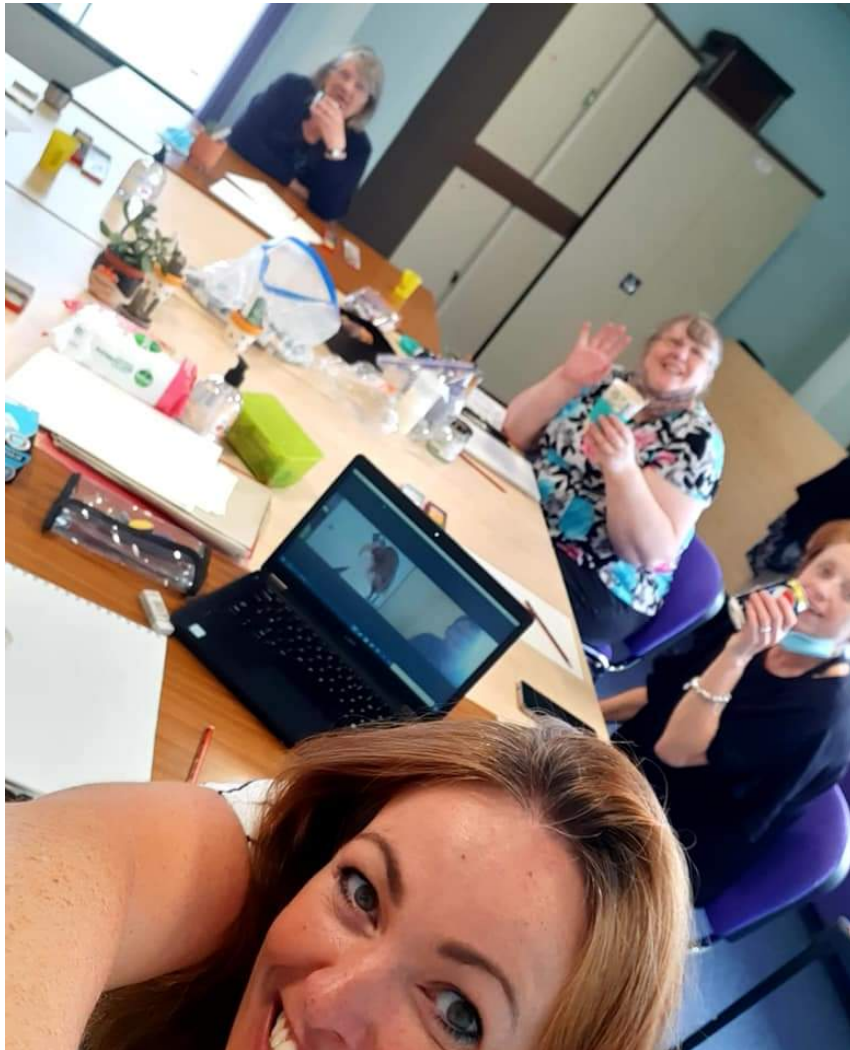
The service is committed to building stronger, more connected communities. We are able to adapt to change quickly and be responsive to local needs. Over 21/22 we have experienced customers with urgent needs and more customers in crisis. We have tailored services to meet needs to support residents. For example, our home delivery service has changed the delivery model completely, since the pandemic. The service is now extended to anyone in need who cannot access their local library. Deliveries have been made to people with short term illnesses and disabilities. We have also included community group loans to be included in our free delivery service. We have continued to offer the call and collect service, giving users more options on how to access library services.

Various public consultations have been held in libraries over the year, including 'Heads of the Valley Transport' consultation and Aneurin Health Board consultations. The MP and MS for Blaenau Gwent have re-commenced surgeries in libraries, with good attendance. These activities demonstrate that people can access advice, voice opinions and seek impartial information, in safe, welcoming environments.

The service offers an established, strong digital offer through a range of support and strong partnership working. Although PC usage has not been reported for this return, it should be highlighted that the service has experienced a steady increase over the year. There has been an increase in the need for support for digital devices, with staff adapting to this and tailored sessions delivered. In post pandemic times we are experiencing people needing more support with social media, video platforms and on-line shopping. Digital support partners include Adult Community Learning, Digital Communities Wales, DWP and digital champion volunteers.

Partner activities have also adapted since Covid, for example 'Inside Out Art therapy' group offered users virtual access to the weekly class, running live during the physical class. This allowed vulnerable learners to participate in the sessions. This delivery model is continuing into 22/23.





In November 21 the service launched a poetry and short story competition, working with a local business, as a sponsor and raising funds for Velindre Hospital. This is an annual event for the service, which was launched as soon as we started engaging with groups. Over the year, we worked with creative writing groups, reading groups and schools to promote the competition.



During the summer of 2021, the service launched the Summer Reading Challenge 'Wild World Heroes'. We offered the physical visits with incentives, as by this time, we were inviting families back to libraries, by managing numbers in buildings. We also offered a digital participation for those families choosing not to engage face to face

### **A Wales of Vibrant Culture and Thriving Welsh Language**

The service ensured that the spend on Welsh materials was met and increased for 21/22. There has been a strong focus on under 5 provision, bilingual titles and adult leaning Welsh titles. Stock has been promoted in all libraries and group loans have been delivered to Welsh Language Playgroups. By raising awareness of stock, issues have increased significantly compared to last year.

Welsh Baby Yoga delivered by Cwmraeg I Blant restarted in Tredegar Library in the autumn of 2021. Many of the families attending these sessions have enjoyed borrowing Welsh picture books. We have also seen an increase in the number of issues of adult Welsh learning stock, from parents wanting to support their children with Welsh language.

There are various groups that use the free library space for cultural sessions. For example the Blaina Aberystroth History and Archaeological Society holds weekly sessions in Blaina Library. The service has strong partnership links with Gwent Family Society. Volunteers from this organisation deliver regular help desks in all libraries, promoting FindMyPast and Ancestry.com. The Blaenau Gwent Heritage Forum holds monthly meetings at Tredegar Library and utilises the local studies resources based there. Blaina Heritage Centre is based in the same building as Blaina Library, which provides an ideal link to work jointly on shared Welsh cultural activities. Likewise, a community Museum is based in Tredegar Library. Which attracts many visitors researching the birth place of Aneurin Bevan, plus other

historical information. Library staff and volunteers from the museum work together to provide a range of information and resources to promote Welsh culture.

The service works closely with the Welsh Books Council, taking advice on new Welsh language titles, including new titles by Welsh authors. Welsh stock is routinely promoted in all libraries and through our on-line platforms.

Tredegar Library hosted a consultation for plans for a new Welsh medium school. This formed part of the Welsh in Education Strategic plan consultation, conducted by the local authority.

### **A Globally Responsive Wales**

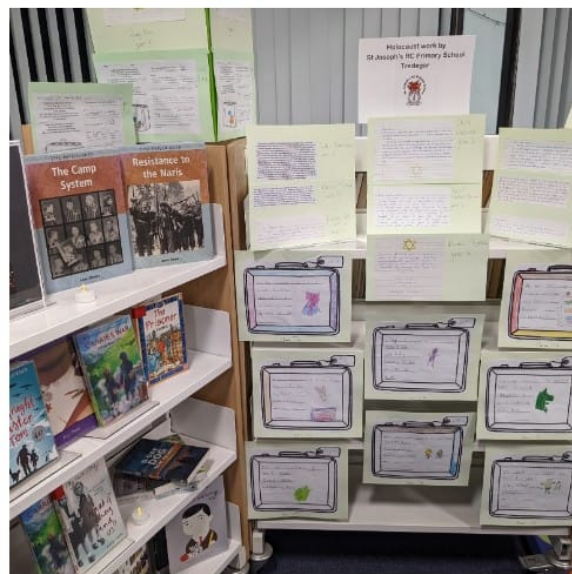
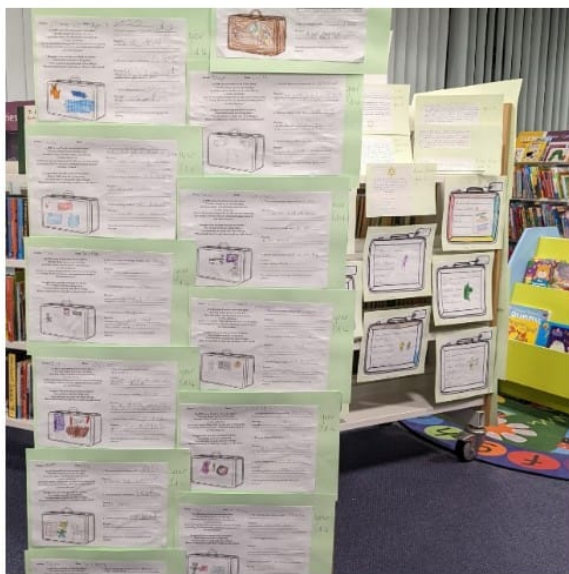
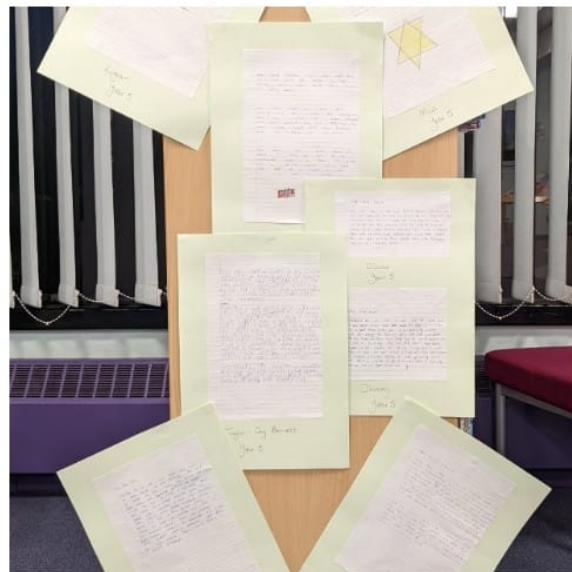
The service continues to be the main distribution hub for food recycling bags in the borough. The Keep Wales Tidy litter picking scheme, which was launched in 2022, links closely with raising awareness of environmental issues and encourages residents to be responsible for keeping areas free from litter.

As part of the WOW funding the service delivered Upcycling Craft sessions for young people. These sessions promoted the environmental benefits of re-purposing items.



The service continues to work closely with all other library authorities in Wales on joint initiatives. The book purchasing consortia, the All Wales Library Management system and regional inter-lending schemes provide considerable cost savings and improves the efficiency of the service. The very basics of book borrowing is an environmentally friendly way of reducing the carbon footprint.

In Jan 2022 the service worked in partnership with all primary schools in the borough to remember Holocaust Memorial Day. Pupils completed a range of work, including letters to Anne Frank, this was displayed in libraries, together with relevant stock. The 27<sup>th</sup> January marked the 'one day' communities come together to learn from the holocaust and genocides, - for a better future.



## Summary

The service has adapted well to change over 21/22, acting quickly to reintroduce services in line with legislation. The service is a key partner for the council's post Covid recovery plans. The implementation of the council Community Hubs in all libraries, has further compounded that Libraries are high profile local services that make valuable impacts on people's lives. Other partners and organisations are further acknowledging that libraries are ideally placed to engage with the local community, particularly in post covid times. The increasing range of services delivered clearly demonstrates impact and value on local and wider Welsh Government agendas.

### **Please provide a short statement about the future direction and plans for the library service (indicative length 200 words).**

Over 22/23 the re-location of Abertillery Library to a new town centre location will form a key focus for the service. The project has been delayed due to Covid, but is now progressing at speed. The service will continue to work closely with the local authority to support the delivery of local and national government agendas. It is anticipated that as a result of strong partnership work over 21/22, more agencies and organisations will want to utilize our libraries, as the community support role is now firmly embedded into service delivery. As local communities continue to recover from the effects of the pandemic, the service will prioritise the supporting of the local authority in post Covid recovery plans. This will be an integral aim for the service over 22/23.

A planned recruitment drive for 22/23 will see half of the workforce being replaced with new post-holders. This is due to planned retirements. The service will use this as an opportunity to appoint staff that will assist with driving the libraries forward, with a passion for supporting the community. In addition to this, the service will link with Blaenau Gwent Council to seek grants from the Skills Priority Funding stream, to recruit two additional library development officers. This will enable the service to have a workforce that will be suitably qualified and experienced to deliver a comprehensive library service that meets the needs of the local community. A revised training programme will be introduced for new staff, with a strong focus on CILIP membership and specific library based qualifications and courses.

Priority on the health and wellbeing agenda will encompass the increasing range of services that our libraries will deliver over 22/23. This agenda is strongly endorsed by Aneurin Leisure Trust as the ethos that is common to all elements of service delivery of the Trust. *'We are a community focussed organisation and believe passionately about making a positive impact to people's lives by not only improving physical health and wellbeing, but also their mental and social wellbeing through our diverse range of services and facilities'*



