



Blaenau Gwent Libraries/Aneurin Leisure Trust

Instead of the case studies previously submitted, authorities are asked to submit one impact statement for their service. Good impact statements are expected to include evidence that the library service has made a positive difference to an individual (or group of individuals). This would normally go beyond a description of services provided and their use, to show the outcome, and may include testimony from the customers concerned provided you have their permission to include this. Individuals should not be named within the impact statement. The impact statement indicative length is 300 words.

-Yes (permission obtained) Names have been altered.

Regular Attendees from Warm Spaces

Our 'Warm Spaces' campaign was launched in Oct 2022, with all six libraries offering the scheme. We delivered it during the full opening hours of all the libraries and in addition to this, we held specific activities to encourage people to attend.

'The library has saved me so much money over the winter. I visit every day. I live alone, so I cannot afford to put the heating on in the day. Even boiling the kettle, I have to think twice about, so having a free hot drink has been very much appreciated. The library is warm, comfortable and just makes me happier, knowing I can socialise, just like being in a café, but without paying. It really lifts my mood. It provides me with company, stimulation and makes me feel part of whatever is going on. I've participated in craft session, Knit and Natter and Reminiscence sessions. Due to the cost-of-living crisis, I have had to end my Broadband contract, so having free Wi-fi and computers has been invaluable for me. The council hub has helped me claim the correct benefits and helped me with fuel vouchers. The Citizens Advice service in the library has also helped me with form filling. Last week I also had a warm pack given to me, which has been a great help. – Barbara

David started attending the Cuppa and Company sessions after losing his wife. He enjoys reading the newspaper, doing the crossword and having a friendly chat.

'I have been suffering with depression since my wife passed away, earlier this year. I lost my purpose and routine in life, after caring for her for many years, I felt lost. A neighbour suggested joining the coffee morning at the library. It has really helped, I pop in most mornings, have a coffee, do the crossword and a chat, and it sets me up for the day. It gets me out of the house, I've made some new friends and has given me back some routine in my life, - and I haven't got to spend a penny! Which is really important, being a pensioner living alone. I have also started reading again, which helps me relax in the evenings' – David.

'I lost my job in December and as a result I couldn't afford the rent on my flat. For a couple of weeks, I was sofa surfing with friends. The library was a sanctuary to me, a safe haven, I could use the wi-fi, have a free coffee, and had lots of support from agencies like Pobl, Llamau and Citizens Advice Bureau. I could stay as long as I liked, without the need to spend money. I also had help with CV and advice on training and education. Within a few weeks, my life changed completely. I found a new job and affordable flat. Without the library, I think I would have ended up on the streets!' – Jamie

Libraries Warm Spaces

All our libraries in Blaenau Gwent will be providing warm, welcome spaces for local residents this winter

FREE access to:

- FREE hot drinks
- FREE activities.
- FREE Wi-Fi access.
- Free computer access.
- Books, e-books, e-magazines & audiobooks.
- Community Hubs offering advice & support on Council services.

A warm welcome awaits you at your local library

www.aneurinleisure.org.uk

Contact your local library for more info

  

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

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

Supporting local residents with the cost-of-living crisis has been a key priority for the service over 22/23. This role has become more important over the year, as the effects of the crisis has impacted further on local residents. Library staff attended a number of cost of living events, within the community, raising awareness of how libraries can help. We designed a specific flyer to promote to the community and to share with partners.

**Llyfrgelloedd
Blaenau Gwent
Libraries**

How our libraries can help with the cost of living:

- FREE books, e-Books, e-Audio & e-Magazines.
- All our libraries are registered Warm Spaces.
- Our libraries are all fines FREE.
- FREE space to study, work and socialise.
- FREE access to Wi-Fi and computers.
- FREE access to charge your mobile devices.
- FREE hot drinks available for all visitors.
- Regular FREE activities for adults and children.
- Our Sports Libraries offer FREE loans of sports and exercise equipment.
- FREE tablet loan scheme.
- FREE data sim cards (needs assessment will apply).
- We provide access to Blaenau Gwent Council services and a wide range of support from other organisations including DWP, Pobl, Llamau and carers groups.

Abertillery 01495 355646 | Blaina 01495 290312 | Brynmawr 01495 357743
Cwm 01495 355605 | Ebbw Vale 01495 355055 | Tredegar 01495 357869

Aneurin Ieure
Improving community life

For more information on our libraries and services visit
www.aneurinleisure.org.uk

A new Citizens Advice Service was launched in Sept 22 with weekly drop-in sessions being delivered in all libraries. This, together with the council community hubs provides a ‘one stop shop’ approach to support local residents with a wide range of enquiries.

The service supported the Welsh Libraries ‘Living Well in Wales’ campaign by delivering sessions to bring people together, focusing on connecting and giving people a sense of belonging.

Examples of sessions held –

- Reminiscence sessions
- Coffee mornings
- Coffee Art Sessions
- Family History sessions
- Book launches
- Creative writing sessions

With the roll-out of the new Warm Spaces campaign in all libraries, this linked all our priorities and enabled us to reach out to the most vulnerable members of our communities.

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 continued to be a priority for the service over 22/23. 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. There has been a marked increase in the number of partner organisations accessing libraries over 22/23. The community support role has been further developed, with our reputation now firmly established as a welcoming space, fully inclusive and the ideal venue to engage with the local community.

Examples of partners accessing the service

- Citizens Advice Bureau
- Pobl
- Communities for work
- Gwent Association of voluntary organisations
- Gwent Carers
- Grief Support Cymru
- Aneurin Bevan University Health Board
- Llamau
- Gwent Family History Society
- Cymraeg i Blant
- Cyfannol Women’s Aid
- Blaenau Gwent food partnership
- Keep Wales Tidy
- Families First
- Disability Can do
- Volunteering Matters
- Prime Cymru
- DWP
- Gwent De-Fibbers Association
- U3A
- Welsh Water
- Platfform
- Inside Out Art for mental health

Our Sports Library which was launched last year has increased in popularity. A range of sports equipment are available for customers to borrow free of charge and items are issued on the LMS. Ukrainian families have expressed their gratitude of the scheme, with many joining local sports groups as a result.

Various health campaigns have been promoted over the year, for example, Mental Health Awareness Week in May 22.

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.

Brynmawr and Tredegar Libraries are designated well-being hubs. We work in partnership with Aneurin Bevan University Health Board by promoting health and well-being activities and ensuring health information and stock is displayed in conjunction with themed events. Cuppa and Company sessions are held weekly, with the aim of encouraging social interaction and raising awareness of well-being.



A Prosperous Wales

The service has continued to support prosperity across the borough over 22/23. We have continued to develop our partnership work with the regeneration department to increase footfall into town centres, through supporting family events in the high street. We delivered events in libraries to linked to the themes of the events.

A new project was launched in Dec 2022, with the service hosting live music events with the aim of engaging with new audiences to library services. We worked with employability projects and local artists to inspire and motivate young people to embark on a career in the music industry. Library staff enrolled participants to the library and promoting relevant stock to them, including raising awareness of e-resources, e.g., music magazines.



ROCK AT THE LIBRARY
TALKS FROM INDUSTRY LEGENDS
Q&A SESSION WITH EXPERTS
LIVE PERFORMANCES

Are you a budding musician, sound tech, lighting engineer, film maker or just interested in breaking into the music & creative industries?
This event is for you!



6-8PM - FREE ENTRY
 ABERTILLERY & EBBW VALE LIBRARY
 MONDAY 5TH & TUESDAY 6TH DECEMBER






Support for jobseekers has continued to be a core aspect of library service provision. Our close working links with our colleagues in Adult Community Learning has enabled us to provide a wide range of learning opportunities delivered in their local library. This ranged for tailored one-to-one support, informal learning 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.

A More Equal Wales

A new member of staff from Abertillery Library has represented our service by being a member on the Anti-Racism steering group, commissioned by CILIP Cymru Wales. As a result of this, training will follow for all our library staff and have started reviewing our collections and stock policies. It will demonstrate our commitment to equality and will support our evolving communities. This work will align with the objectives of the WPLS and the Anti Racist Wales Action Plan.

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



To celebrate World Book Day in March 2023, 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. This scheme was particularly well received by families in need, many parents commenting how it helped them deal with the cost-of-living crisis.

WORLD BOOK DAY!

Families First are once again running our World Book Day project. We want to ensure ALL children are able to take part in the annual World Book Day event.

THURSDAY 2ND MARCH

Costumes and books will be available to browse and collect this year from Tredegar library or, alternatively, delivery can be arranged to your local library.

Costumes are limited and will be available on a first come first serve basis. The costume collection will be open for browsing from 3pm-5pm, Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday & Friday.

DAY 1 - TUESDAY 14TH FEBRUARY / FINAL DAY - WEDNESDAY 1ST MARCH
Books & costumes to suit all ages between 2- 11yrs.

For more information please contact
Tredegar Library on 01495 357669 or
Families First on 01495 355584

The theme of free activities was a common thread across all our events, schemes and projects. The ‘Summer of Fun, Project Gadgeteers’ campaign was delivered alongside the Summer Reading Challenge with a wide range of children’s sessions held in all libraries.

Examples of activities

- Diffusion Art
- Slime Workshops
- Weekly STEM Craft sessions
- Balloon Rocket Workshops
- When Science meets art sessions
- Owl visits
- Potion Party
- Louby-Lou Inter-active storytelling
- Huw Davies Author Visit
- Malachy Doyle Author Visit
- Clay Modelling
- Recycling Art Sessions

Llyfrgelloedd
Bibliothegau Cymreig
Libraries

Project **TECLYNNWR** Project **GADGETEERS**

Haf o Hwyl Summer of Fun

Codes & Secrets Workshop

Come and join children's author Karen Owen for a FREE interactive workshop with crafts based on her popular children's book Major and Mynah.

Tredegar Library
Thursday 25th August at 2pm
Call 01495 357869 to book

For children aged 5-11

MAJOR and MYNAH
KAREN OWEN

FREE EVENT!

Haf o Hwyl Summer of Fun

CHALLENGE | READING | BOOKS | ACTIVITIES | CRAFTS | GAMES

Llyfrgelloedd
Bibliothegau Cymreig
Libraries

Project **TECLYNNWR** Project **GADGETEERS**

Haf o Hwyl Summer of Fun

Mad Science Workshops

www.madsciencecamps.co.uk

Mad Science SUMMER CAMPS
www.madsciencecamps.co.uk

Ebbw Vale Library at 11am - Call 01495 355055
Brynmawr Library at 3pm - Call 01495 357743

FREE WORKSHOPS - Suitable for ages 5-11

Haf o Hwyl Summer of Fun

CHALLENGE | READING | BOOKS | ACTIVITIES | CRAFTS | GAMES

The service has launched a new sim card project working with The Good Things Foundation and the National Data Bank to help bridge the digital divide.

National Databank - Good Things Foundation

This project supports our cost-of-living help for the community, offering data to those people in need. It links with another digital inclusion project we deliver, the loaning of free tablets. This enables us to provide a solution to those people who have no access to data. This offer has been a major development in the service, over the year, enabling us to prevent data poverty within the community.

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. As staff noticed an increasing number of users spending long period of time in the library, to avoid putting the heating on at home, the service reacted by providing a wide range of support. For example, we have seen an increase in the number of homeless people, as a result, we worked with partners to arrange weekly drop-in sessions by Pobl, with sessions specifically delivered for residents in need of housing support. Other agencies such as CAB, Council services, Platform and Llamau also delivered support through drop-in sessions in all libraries.

The MP, MS and the Police held a number of surgeries across all libraries, encouraging people to voice opinions and seek impartial information in safe, welcoming environments.

As Blaenau Gwent is already one of the most deprived areas of Wales, the emphasis on free services has become more important than ever. Being fines free continues to remove barriers to accessing the library. With the closure of the main council offices (Civic Centre) and the transition to all face-to-face council enquiries now being delivered at libraries, through the provision of community hubs, this has encompassed library buildings as being the 'go-to' venue for anyone in need. Residents access libraries for food bank referrals, fuel vouchers and general cost of living advice. The local health board has provided the service with a range of free items to support people in need, for example period products and warm packs. All libraries have a 'free' area, for the community to take, without asking.

A Wales of Vibrant Culture and Thriving Welsh Language

A new Welsh club has been established at Abertillery Library to encourage Welsh learners to practice conversational Welsh. A range of new Welsh language learning resources have been purchased over the year, including Welsh board games.



Welsh Baby Yoga is delivered weekly at Tredegar Library and number of Welsh Baby Rhyme time sessions have been delivered across the service. We have strong links with Cymraeg I Blant, helping us support many families through the medium of Welsh.

We have regularly promoted Welsh language audio books over the year and supported the North Wales Society for the Blind by committing a percentage of our allocated Welsh spend for this area.

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.

A Globally Responsive Wales

Over the year we linked with the Blaenau Gwent Food Partnership to deliver the 'Little Veg Library'. Each veg library includes 'pick and mix' pots filled with different seeds as well as envelopes that families can fill with seeds of their choice to take home. The idea is for people to have a go at growing some veg at home in response to the recent food shortages and spiralling food prices.

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.

The service works 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 2023 all libraries raised awareness of Holocaust Memorial Day. We marked the 'one day' encouraging communities to come together to learn from the holocaust and genocides for a better future.

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

The plan to re-locate Abertillery Library to a new town centre location will continue to be a main focus for the service over 23/24. We are continuing to work closely with the regeneration department to secure additional funding which if successful, will secure the

plans to transform Trinity Chapel, into a modern, vibrant library and community adult education centre.

Funding has been secured to recruit two new library development officers from the Skills Priority Funding stream. The recruitment process is planned for the summer of 2023. The post holders will have targets to achieve linked to performance in the WPLS, particularly on active membership and footfall.

A review of the ICT provision is planned for 23/24. This is following feed-back from the recent user surveys and an acknowledgment of the changing patterns of usage. The growing trend of BYOD by users and partners requires us to investigate an improved Wi-Fi solution, to meet the diverse needs of the community, including streaming, video conferencing etc.

Priority on the health and wellbeing agenda will encompass the increasing range of services that our libraries will deliver over 23/24. 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’.*

We will continue to work closely with the local authority, ensuring we prioritise services that contribute to local and national government agendas. We will build upon the success of the community hub provision to expand our pro-active approach to partnership work. We will continue to build upon our strong reputation within the community, that our libraries have emerged from the pandemic, stronger, more resilient, and more pivotal than ever before.

