

Conwy Library and Information Strategy 2021-2026



Contents

Introduction	5
The Modernising Libraries Strategy 2012-2019	9
Conwy Libraries Strategy 2021-2026	11
The Context	11
Our Vision	11
How we deliver on Conwy's Corporate Plan Outcomes and Priorities	12
Our Priority Areas for 2021-2026	12
Actions	14
How we will monitor progress	14

'What do libraries do for us? Well, they introduce many into the world of literacy and learning and help to make it a lifelong habit; they equalise; they teach empathy and help us to learn about each other; they preserve our cultural heritage; they protect our right to know and to learn; they build communities; they strengthen and advance us as a nation; they empower us as individuals.'

Malorie Blackman, OBE. Writer and former Children's Laureate (2013-2015).

What our users say:
I don't know what I'd do without books. It's a lifeline - an absolute lifeline.



Introduction

What we do:

Our libraries provide free books for adults and children; access to information; computers and Wi-Fi. We have knowledgeable staff who provide expert advice and support. Our buildings provide a safe space for all members of the community and are gateways for wellbeing, learning and enjoyment.

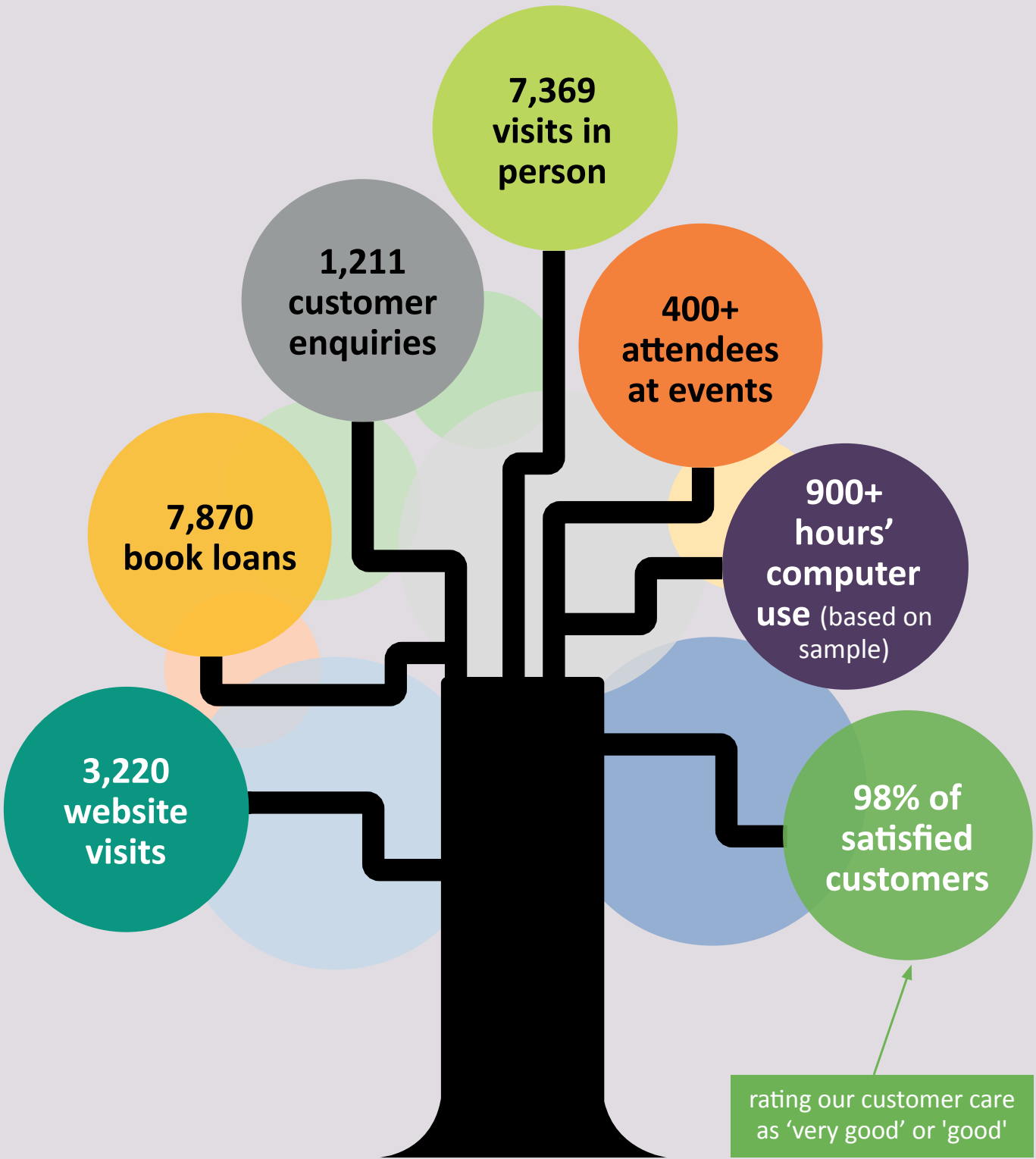
We:

- Provide job opportunities through apprenticeships. Many of our apprentices have obtained jobs with the service.
- Help people to get online, such as Mrs A and M who are in their 80s. Mrs A learnt how to use an iPad and M to use Skype to communicate with family who live overseas.
- Hold shared reading groups. Through stories and poems we discuss issues, such as death, love, war, share experiences and provide support and encouragement.
- Help children to learn to read and to read aloud through our work with therapy dogs.
- Support people like John, a young carer who looks after his father. There are few books at home. When John got his library card, he started using the library regularly and began reading for pleasure.
- Provide large print and talking books for people such as Mrs T who is in her 80s and her severely disabled daughter through the Home Library service.
- Provide learning opportunities. A young offender worked as a volunteer at a Community Library. He became more confident, began a training course and was offered a full time job.

In Conwy, the public Library and Information Service is delivered through:

- Five Area Libraries (Abergele, Colwyn Bay, Conwy, Llandudno and Llanrwst), providing the full range of library and information services.
- Five Community Libraries (Cerrigydrudion, Llanfairfechan, Penmaenmawr, Penrhyn Bay and Kinmel Bay). In partnership with town and community councils, a professional library and information service is provided by Conwy in a building managed by Community Library groups, who use the building for a range of other activities.
- Conwy's Home Library brings books, audio books and information to those who are housebound or those who are unable to use library facilities while caring for the housebound.
- Conwy's Mobile Library brings books, audio books and information to communities that are remote from library buildings. The Mobile Library also visits rural schools.
- Conwy's Digital Library delivers access 24 hours a day to information, e-books, audio-books, magazines and comics.

In a week we deal with:



What our users say:
It gives me somewhere peaceful and quiet where I can work on projects without outside interference or disruption. This helps immensely with my personal wellbeing.



The Modernising Libraries Strategy 2012-2019

It is essential that our library buildings provide safe, inspiring and accessible environments and deliver services which are based on the needs of the communities they serve. Following a period of extensive community consultation, Cabinet approved a Modernising Libraries Strategy in December 2011. This set out the priorities for the service to 2019 and included refurbishing library buildings and modernising the way library services are delivered. In spite of budget reductions of over £470,000 from 2014, we have delivered the core aims of the Strategy:

- Opening hours and staffing have been revised across all libraries.
- Mobile Library routes have been reviewed and are now concentrated in the areas most remote from library buildings. The Mobile Library also provides a service for rural schools.
- Five Community Libraries have been established and buildings leased to Community Library groups. These libraries have become Community Hubs, providing a range of services and functions.
- The final phase of the Strategy, a new Area Library for Conwy, Deganwy and Llandudno Junction opened at Conwy Culture Centre in December 2019.

Through delivery of this Strategy, the service met all the targets of the Welsh Public Library Standards for the first time in 2016-2017.

We have achieved a great amount since 2012, but further change is required to ensure we meet the needs of our customers and potential customers, and to ensure sustainability of the service.

What our users say:

With the help of library staff I have been able to use the internet for many useful tasks, such as new bills (internet is not available at my house).



What our users say:
Supported learning Welsh through a range of books.

Conwy Libraries Strategy 2021-2026

The Context

In writing this Strategy, we have taken into consideration:

- The statutory obligations of the Public Libraries and Museums Act (1964) and its assessment through the Welsh Public Library Standards.
- A range of national and regional strategies, in particular The Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and the Conwy & Denbighshire Public Services Board Wellbeing Plan 2018-23.
- Conwy's Corporate Plan priorities.
- Feedback from public consultation.
- Reduced number of staff and budget.
- The opportunity to mitigate essential maintenance of our library buildings estimated at: Abergele Library £42,000; Colwyn Bay Library £175,000; Llandudno Library £90,000 and Llanrwst Library £162,000.

Our Vision

A Library and Information Service which is inclusive, innovative and will inspire and enable our users to be connected to their communities.

A bilingual service that:

- Is accessible to all throughout the County Borough.
- Provides local access to Council information and services.
- Offers a safe and supportive space for people to read for pleasure, borrow books, use computers and Wi-Fi; meet, and share ideas.
- Promotes personal health and wellbeing by reducing loneliness and social isolation and encourages active participation.
- Finds innovative solutions to challenges.
- Works with partners to support learning, creativity, and employability for Conwy's citizens.
- Builds sustainability through enterprise.

How we deliver on Conwy’s Corporate Plan Outcomes and Priorities

‘We will develop our libraries into Community Hubs that provide a wide range of services and activities’.

We will continue to provide our core activities	Corporate Plan Priority
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Free access to public computers and Wi-Fi• 24 hour access to books and resources via the Digital Library• Provides local access to Council information and services• Working with partners, providing advice on jobs, consumer/ other questions• Access to Higher Education and Further Education resources• Reading Well; Books on Prescription• Support people to access online services	Skills Growth Health
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Free books and lending materials in a variety of formats• Bilingual reading and literacy for children: e.g. Bookstart, Summer Reading Challenge and Storytime (at Area Libraries)• Health and wellbeing library• Extensive Welsh books and materials	Skills Culture Environment Health
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Access to professional, trained staff• Modern Apprenticeships and volunteering opportunities• Working with partners, provide adult basic skills and learning• Reading groups, including Welsh language• Shared Reading	Skills Growth Health Culture
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Books and materials for those who are housebound• Engaging the socially isolated through reading based activities	Health
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Safe places to meet others• Free access to Ancestry/Findmypast• Heritage and art displays	Health Safety Culture
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Welsh language conversation group	Culture
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Activities and events including author events	Culture Health

Our Priority Areas for 2021-2026

With the opening of the new Council offices at Coed Pella, Colwyn Bay in 2018, Council services were brought together. Library and Information staff, who work front of house, assist with residents’ queries and signpost to services.

Residents will be able to access Council services and information in their localities as libraries become the direct point of contact for Council residents across the County.



What our users say:
When stressed with my mental health it is a peaceful place to be! Breathing space.

To develop this model, further co-location of services is required. This will ensure that there is no duplication of provision; that buildings are fit for purpose and that the Library and Information Service is sustainable in the long term.

Actions

1. Contribute to the delivery of the Conwy Culture Strategy through supporting an active programme of cultural activities.
2. Participate in a feasibility study, identified as part of the master plan, for a Community Hub in the west end of Abergele.
3. Undertake an options study for delivering a community hub at Colwyn Bay Library.
4. Continue the development of Conwy Culture Centre.
5. Evaluate the Community Library model after five years in existence. Agree a sustainable model for the next 5 years in partnership with town and community councils.
6. Continue to work in partnership with health and social care to explore the range of opportunities library spaces and resources provide to support mental health and wellbeing.
7. Increase the use of technology to improve access to Council information services.
8. Develop services for communities which are remote from Council services, through the use of the Mobile and Home Library.

How we will monitor progress

Progress on the Strategy will be measured through:

The annual return on the Welsh Public Library Standards and Welsh Government's assessment which is reported to Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet; Conwy Council's Service Performance Review process; customer feedback and library user surveys.

We are happy to provide this document in large print, audio and braille.
Please contact:

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www.conwy.gov.uk/libraries

Customers with hearing or speech impairments can contact any Council service by dialling 18001 before the number they require.