

Library Plan 2017-2022

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES FOR AWEN'S LIBRARIES

As part of a 20-year partnership agreement with Bridgend County Borough Council, Awen Cultural Trust operates and manages the library service in Bridgend.

Awen's strategic vision for our libraries is:

- to improve the literacy of people of all ages;
- support reading for pleasure;
- enhance wellbeing and provide unbiased access to sources of trusted information.

Alongside the ongoing transformation of our libraries, reading will continue to be at the heart of what we do.

Our priorities for the next five years are -

To develop new library spaces

- We recognise the need for our spaces to meet the demands of our communities – spaces for buggies and motorised chairs, non-slip flooring for those with poor mobility, clear signage for those with limited vision, level flooring for those in wheelchairs, and baby changing and breast-feeding friendly spaces for our young families. We will invest in our libraries to meet these needs.
- Re-defining our spaces will underpin future developments and acknowledge the changing behaviours, habits and demands of 21st Century lifestyles. We understand the importance of our libraries being flexible multipurpose community spaces and will invest in our infrastructure in order to meet this need.
- The flagship redevelopment of Maesteg Town Hall will include improved library provision, and we will also seek solutions to improve library facilities in Porthcawl as part of the development of the Grand Pavilion site. Both projects will encourage participation and engagement in cultural and heritage activities as well as produce wider economic benefits.

To create spaces and opportunities that enhance children's literacy & foster a love of reading

- Libraries have an important role in improving children's literacy. We will invest in a programme of refurbishment of our children's libraries in order to make them attractive destinations for tomorrow's young people, increase the number of young library members and contribute towards improvements in children's literacy by expanding opportunities for reading for pleasure, a proven determinant of enhanced educational and social outcomes.

- We will support national programmes that engage with children and nurture a love of reading such as the Summer Reading Challenge, Every Child a Member and Bookstart, and support them with regular children's activities and events.
- We believe our libraries are safe spaces within our communities, where entertainment, culture, informal learning and fun are freely offered and an important thread that runs through childhood into young adulthood and beyond.

Digital skills agenda

- We currently play a key role in tackling digital exclusion. From digital drop in sessions which supply ad-hoc digital support and teaching, and supporting job seekers in searching and applications, to coordinating our range of e-services into a coherent, attractive offer. We will listen and engage with communities to make continual improvements to our hardware services. Allied to this will be an investment in staff training – both will support our position as the default 'community IT helpdesk'
- Patterns of library usage demonstrate how users are gradually changing their behaviour and increasingly engaging with the online services offered by the library. Annual loans of e-books, e-audio and e-zines are increasing year on year, almost one quarter of book reservations are placed online via the website and two-thirds of book issues in Bridgend Library are through the self-issue machines. We will monitor these usage trends and ensure our resources are in line with demand.
- We believe libraries can play a key role in the digital education of children. We will offer Tech clubs (coding, 3D printing, Lego) that have the hardware, software and trained staff to ensure a quality edTech experience, and will seek training opportunities for staff and partnership work with educationalists and children's groups.

Wellbeing

- We will continue to develop our role in improving the wellbeing of citizens by providing activities that enable social interaction, provide mental stimulation and contribute to the preventative health agenda.
- The importance of a library's warm and welcoming space becomes increasingly essential when adults are vulnerable or isolated. We will continue to shape our services to provide opportunities for social interaction and mental stimulation.
- We will gain and maintain Dementia Friendly status.

OUR PROMISES

- We will continue to invest in our libraries. This includes our book stock, online resources, buildings and spaces, programme, and in our excellent staff.
- We will continue to programme events and activities targeted at children which will engage, entertain and educate. We have identified our core children's activities as story times and Bounce & Rhymes, which each library will host at least one session per week.
- We will continue to invest in the Summer Reading Challenge, liaise with schools to promote it and work with Awen's Programmers to book professional, exciting artistes to engage with new users.
- We will continue to host activities (and engage with partners) to enable social interaction and mental stimulation for adults, particularly those isolated by age or time-limiting illness such as dementia. We will become a Dementia Friendly organisation by Autumn 2019
- We will adapt and invest in our Mobile Library Service in order to reach more homes and isolated individuals and families.
- We will continue to offer digital support. Each library will also host a timetabled weekly digital discovery session.
- We will annually review our hardware and software and make investment where necessary to best support our communities
- We will continue to seek partnerships with local and national organisations that can enhance our offer and improve the lives of our users.
- We will remove fines in order to ensure there are no barriers, either actual or perceived, to people accessing our libraries and all they have to offer.