

# Equality Impact Report

<b>Title of proposal</b>	Review of Library Offer
<b>Date of implementation</b>	1 <sup>st</sup> April 2020 or as advised by Cabinet Member
<b>EIR completed by:</b>	<b>Name:</b> Tom Batten (Librarian Projects) and Karen Wallace (Lead Manager Library Service) <b>Tel:</b> 033022 24747 (KW)

## 1. Decide whether this report is needed and, if so, describe how you have assessed the impact of the proposal.

By its very nature the **Mobile Library Service** in its current form is geared toward supporting the most vulnerable and rurally isolated of our community so any change will impact upon its users.

Figures from our database of active Mobile Library users show the following;

Of 891 active borrowers providing a date of birth;

- 48 are 15 and under
- 2 are aged 16-17
- 2 are aged 18-24
- 56 are aged 25-34
- 116 are aged 35-50
- 95 are aged 51-64
- 572 are 65 and over

Of the 952 active Mobile Library users providing an ethnic origin;

- 2 Asian Bangladeshi
- 3 Black African
- 2 Black Caribbean
- 1 Chinese
- 1 Other Black background
- 2 Other Mixed background
- 14 Other White background
- 259 Unknown
- 1 White and Black African
- 519 White British
- 135 White English
- 6 White Irish
- 6 White Scottish
- 1 White Welsh

Of 1022 active Mobile Library users that provided a gender

- 208 were male (20%)
- 814 were female (80%)

This statistical analysis supports the fact that the service is primarily used by the county's older users with 64% of those who provided a date of birth being over the age of 65. While *any* change will be impactful, the purpose of the proposal is to continue to support the residents and extend the current range of services to them. By offering specific residents the opportunity to utilise our Home Library Direct Service we are potentially providing them with a door to door service more convenient than a scheduled van stop.

Unlike with the users of the mobile library we do not know the demographic of the static library users between 6pm and 7pm. In our largest libraries, currently open until 7pm five days a week, use between 6pm and 7pm has been declining. It is the quietest hour of the day in all libraries. However, buildings on more than one floor require a staffing presence to maintain customer and staff safety and wellbeing, so per customer this is an expensive hour to offer.

There were 2079 respondents to the consultation providing the following details

#### Age

- 2 were under 13
- 5 were aged 13-15
- 25 were aged 16-24
- 74 were aged 25-34
- 220 were aged 35-44
- 333 were aged 45-54
- 469 were aged 55-64
- 621 were aged 75-74
- 183 were aged 75-84
- 26 were 85 and over
- 113 preferred not to say
- 8 didn't answer

#### Gender

- 620 were male
- 1314 were female
- 120 preferred not to say
- 25 didn't answer

#### Ethnicity

- 1799 White - English/Welsh/Scottish/Northern Irish/British/Irish/Gypsy or Irish Traveller/any other white background
- 18 Mixed/multiple ethnic groups - White and Black Caribbean/White and Black African/White and Asian/any other mixed/multiple ethnic background
- 16 Asian/Asian British - Indian/Pakistani/Bangladeshi/Chinese/any other Asian background
- 4 Black/African/Caribbean/Black British - African/Caribbean/any other black/African/Caribbean
- 2 Other ethnic group - Arab/any other ethnic group
- 217 preferred not to say
- 23 didn't answer

#### Religion

- 10 Buddhist
- 927 Christian
- 4 Hindu
- 4 Jewish
- 5 Muslim
- 1 Sikh
- 667 No religion
- 21 Any other religion
- 16 unknown
- 373 preferred not to say
- 51 didn't answer

#### Disability

- 220 considered themselves to have a disability
- 1665 didn't consider themselves to have a disability
- 164 preferred not to say
- 30 didn't answer

#### Sexuality

- 1477 Heterosexual
- 26 Bisexual
- 24 Gay or Lesbian
- 15 Other
- 498 preferred not to say
- 39 didn't answer

## 2. Describe any negative impact for customers or residents.

### Cessation of the Mobile Library Service

Prior to the consultation we identified 102 mobile library users who we considered vulnerable due to age, illness, disability, mobility problems or caring responsibilities. Users of Community Mobile 1 (which accounts for more than half of these) were advised about our additional services when the vehicle was taken off the road. This process is under way with users of Community Mobile 2. A significant number of Mobile Library users also used a static library and following the loss of the library vehicles we have seen more sign up with 52% now holding a "dual membership".

Information from the consultation identified 15 mobile library users that declared a disability. Further work to assess whether they are among the 102 will take place.

Mitigations include; Home Library Direct a personal service delivered to users in their home by volunteers or a registered friend or family member, working with parishes to expand our Select and Collect service to house a collection in a community and Digital Library Plus helping people at home with basic computer skills so they can access services from their home. Recent limited external funding has been obtained to set up "Reading Friends" groups prioritising localities where mobile library users could be most at risk from social isolation.

While the offer of having the books delivered via a Home Direct Library service is an advantage to those with reduced mobility, it is wrong to assume that this is all that someone over the age of 65 would want. For many the service offers the opportunity to socialise with other mobile library users, something that would be significantly reduced were they to simply have a single volunteer come to visit. Any pregnant users or those on maternity leave using the service may feel more isolated as they are dependent on the convenience of the service when there's "not enough time in the day" they would not be eligible for Home Library Direct which is for residents who cannot visit a library because of age, illness, disability, mobility problems or caring responsibilities. This can be mitigated by many of our other services

available 24/7 such as described above. We recognised that not all of our users would be computer literate and that this could be a high proportion of our mobile library users. All mobile and static library users were invited to request a printed copy of the consultation if required which would be sent to them along with a stamped addressed envelope. 40 people made this request, we received 22 back and 18 of those were from mobile library users.

### **Changes to opening hours**

Work prior to the consultation did not identify users with a protected characteristic. Responses to the survey showed that most library users who would be unable to access the service with new opening hours were of working age without protected characteristics. Some respondents identified that they chose to use the service between 6pm and 7pm because it was the quietest time in some cases this was because of a declared disability.

In mitigation for these users Saturday openings will be maintained with increased active promotion of our digital services. Only 4 of the paper consultations we received were from non-Mobile Library users. We can ensure that we recommend either quietest times in the week or locations in the building most suitable for users that value a quiet atmosphere.

### **3. Describe any positive effects which may offset any negative impact.**

In more populous rural communities such negative impacts as stated above could be mitigated by a community building housing a collection of books, coordinated by volunteers, that could be browsed by the users through our Select and Collect service. Recent limited external funding has been obtained to set up "Reading Friends" groups prioritising localities where mobile library users could be most at risk from social isolation. These would be services that are open to everyone, offering convenience and a social aspect. Each proposal should see an increase in uptake of our e-library services including downloads of the Library App by mobile phone users.

### **4. Describe whether and how the proposal helps to eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation.**

The proposal recognises that not all library users are the same regardless of any of the protected characteristics.

It offers mobile library users more choices and a greater flexibility than the mobile service currently does.

All library staff have regular mandatory refresher training on; diversity and inclusion, positive communication with people living with dementia and safeguarding. In order to maintain safety and wellbeing of customers we require adequate staffing on each floor. In the quietest hour of the day between 6 and 7 this staffing is disproportionately expensive in relation to library use.

### **5. Describe whether and how the proposal helps to advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.**

One element of the proposal is the expansion of the Digital Library Plus service, this free service helps older and isolated people to use tablets at home (only 44% of active Mobile Library users provided an email address) so it would give those with limited I.T. skills the opportunity to order their own titles having browsed the catalogue rather than waiting up to a month for the next visit from the mobile. We would encourage the use of community buildings with good access for people with mobility problems. The library users between 6 and 7 most affected by the proposal are those with limited I.T. access. With 138 respondents mentioning social isolation as an issue, 154 Mobile Library users have now joined in a static library allowing themselves to have further social interaction and the chance to take part in group activities.

### **6. Describe whether and how the proposal helps to foster good relations between**

**persons who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.**

The consultation encouraged users of the mobile service and those using one of the 4 larger libraries between 6 and 7 including those with a protected characteristic to make suggestions. Almost all of the 2079 respondents to the survey made use of the freetext boxes to make suggestions and have their say.

**7. What changes were made to the proposal as a result? If none, explain why.**

This consultation gathered feedback on specific proposals, they will be considered if practical and affordable. Feedback suggested that promotion of Home Library Direct and partnership working with parishes for our Select and Collect offer were seen as priorities for our Mobile Library users. We can action these and use postcode data to see where these options were most commonly chosen and explore these with corresponding parishes.

**8. Explain how the impact will be monitored to make sure it continues to meet the equality duty owed to customers and say who will be responsible for this.**

We would talk to users that have adopted Home Library Direct, Select and Collect, Digital Library Plus or Reading Friends to ask about their experience using the new service. This could be done a year after implementation. Through our network of 36 static libraries we will continue to communicate with anyone that was a user of the Mobile Library service.

**To be signed by a Director or Head of Service to confirm that they have read and approved the content.**

Name

Lesley Sim



Date 20/11/19

Your position

Head of Libraries, Heritage and Registration