

## Equality Impact Assessment Form

### 1. Persons responsible for this assessment:

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<b>Service: Libraries &amp; Information</b>	<b>E-Mail:sue.laurence@gloucestershire.gov.uk</b>
<b>Directorate: C&amp;ACD</b>	<b>Date of Assessment: 24/03/11</b>

### 2. Name of the policy, service, strategy, procedure or function:

#### Is this new or an existing one? **New Strategy**

New: - This Equality Impact Assessment addresses the likely impact of the changes to library service provision in the context of Council's Meeting the Challenge proposals and the subsequent feedback and information obtained during the period of consultation.

### 3. Briefly describe its aims and objectives

The way in which library services are used by the public is changing, especially with regard to how people access information in an age of electronic communications, the increased availability of books and the emergence of e.Books. Service changes have continued to be driven by the modernisation agenda to make library provision more flexible, dynamic and relevant.

The service is also affected by the unprecedented challenges to public service policy and provision and the impact of the increased pressures on council budgets due to the recession and the growth in demand for other council services.

Another factor concerns the increased engagement of communities through the Council's Community Offer which has resulted in a number of communities expressing interest in running their own library services with the Council's support.

All of these factors set the context for the new approach to providing library services and how the Council aims to 'meet the challenge' for Gloucestershire. The proposals for remodelling our library service seek to establish a standard of library service provision that can be sustained into the future. The reduction to the library budget will have an impact on the level of service that can be provided and also on the staff team working in Libraries & Information.

The EIA action plan will indicate how the impacts of the change can be ameliorated for both the community and for staff.

### 4. Who is intended to benefit from it and in what way?

Investment in developing the virtual library should improve access to library services for some people and open up opportunities to use the library service for new audiences.

Some local communities will also be able to benefit from having community run libraries tailored

to their local needs and they will draw on local social capital and skills.

Increased opportunities for volunteering in both county libraries and community run provision will provide social benefits for some people and this experience may be a step towards paid work in some cases.

The personalised approach to assisting people with mobility difficulties to access library services may make it easier for them to use the service.

Closer working with co-located partners will mean costs can be shared and additional opening hours facilitated.

Some people may be adversely affected by the proposed changes affecting county library services as the library 'footprint' in the county is adjusted and library opening hours reduced. However in some market towns library opening hours will increase. The development of regular partner and volunteer relationships may also increase library opening hours.

## **5. What outcomes are expected?**

- A new approach to library service delivery that is modern, relevant to customers and consistently able to meet people's leisure reading, information and learning needs,
- A reduction in council expenditure on library services
- A service that is financially sustainable

This will be achieved by:

1. Establishing a good basic network of libraries giving a geographical spread of traditional library provision across the county, accessible within reasonable travel time and delivered through three standardised tiers of libraries.
2. Improving access to library services through technology to encourage Gloucestershire people to carry out their own transactions with library, council and other services as part of 'digital citizenship'
3. To give local people and community groups the opportunity to run their own library service to suit local needs
4. To work with partners and volunteers to provide library services to those individuals who may want them but for specific reasons, such as disability or mobility issues, may be unable to access library services independently
5. To encourage volunteering across all tiers of library provision

## **6. Have you consulted on this policy, service, strategy, procedure or function?**

Yes: The Meeting the Challenge conversation held with staff and the public in September asked people to prioritise council services. This showed that some people were prepared to reduce library, archives and lifelong learning services in order to protect other services such as care for older people and vulnerable adults and children.

A programme of consultation on this service change has been carried out during the period from the 19<sup>th</sup> November 2010 up to 11<sup>th</sup> February 2011 and feedback was monitored to assess how the proposed changes impact on people. To ensure that the consultation was accessible and provided all interested parties with the opportunity to share their views a multi method approach

was adopted. Letters were sent also to mobile library users, Homelink library users, Share-A-Book mobile library users, music and drama service users and reading clubs to invite them to comment. More than 5,000 people took part in the consultation and many more contributed signatures to petitions against the library proposals. 'Drop in' road show events, public meetings and meetings with groups in areas where the community transfer proposals were in place were also held and provided valuable feedback on the views and needs of residents..

Most of the concerns registered from the comments received were about meeting different needs across the county and about the criteria used for the library proposals. Overall there was very little difference between the feedback received from the 14<sup>th</sup> January compared to the feedback outlined in the interim and then the final report.

People also commented on how important they thought libraries were to the quality of life and there were reservations about community run libraries; concerns about the withdrawal of mobiles and that the proposals may have a disproportionate impact on vulnerable adults and children.

For staff the most common concern has been about the level of potential job losses and whether a smaller workforce would be able to respond to the needs of users.

The feedback from the survey and from county wide roadshows, public meetings, letters and emails are available on the council website <http://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/index.cfm?articleid=102540>

The original library change proposals have been adjusted following feedback received and an additional £650,000 revenue provided to the library budget as part of the Medium Term Financial Strategy to address some of the main concerns.

## **7. What evidence has been used for this assessment: eg Research, previous consultations, MAIDEN? (Multi-Agency Information Database for Neighbourhoods)**

Maiden data was analysed for each of the current libraries' catchment areas. 'Hot spots' where the data significantly differed to the Gloucestershire 'norm' were highlighted and considered. Wards found to be in the top 10% of the country's indices of multiple deprivation were assessed as one of the criterion for evaluating how future library services could be provided. Other criteria included catchment populations, library usage figures and co- location including presence of children's centres.

The prime consideration in developing the proposals for the new network of directly operated county libraries was to provide a comprehensive, efficient and consistent level of service from a main library in all parts of the county accessible within a reasonable travel time. Travel distances and the catchment coverage of main libraries was calculated by 'Accession' software which produced maps illustrating the catchment and accessibility. Additional Library provision (Library Express) was added to this to place more libraries in additional rural areas and also to accommodate the higher levels of population in some urban areas where there is currently high levels of library use. The service continues to liaise with colleagues in the public transport section of the Environment directorate in order to map public transport routes where there is need for access to libraries as part of the council's transport review.

## **8. Could a particular group be affected differently in either a negative or positive way?**

**Please evidence that you have used the Consultation toolkit and planning template <http://staffnet/index.cfm?articleid=5203>**

	Negative	Positive	Neutral	Evidence
<b>Age</b>	✓ ✓ ✓			<p>Reducing the number of GCC provided libraries and the mobile libraries will impact on potential library users and the consultation has indicated that older people who may have mobility difficulties may be more affected by this.</p> <p>Some children may also be less able to access a library independently.</p> <p>As a high proportion of library staff are older women if they are made redundant it may be more difficult to find alternative employment.</p>
<b>Disability</b>	✓	✓ ✓	✓ ✓	<p>Although the number of GCC provided libraries may be reduced the ones that remain will still be accessible.</p> <p>The service for visually impaired people will continue and this will give these people access to the wide ranging RNIB talking books collection</p> <p>The removal of the Homelink service to older people's homes may have some adverse impact as may the removal of the mobile library service.</p> <p>A personalised approach will be introduced as a means of positively supporting people with mobility disabilities to identify the best means for them to access library services and tailored arrangements will be made according to their needs.</p>
<b>Gender</b>	✓		✓	<p>Reducing the number of GCC provided libraries may impact on all potential library users and this group is no more or less affected by it.</p> <p>A high proportion of library staff are women and they will be at risk of redundancy</p>
<b>Race including Gypsy &amp; Traveller</b>			✓	<p>Reducing the number of GCC provided libraries may impact on all potential library users and this group is no more or less affected by it.</p> <p>Library stock and services for different ethnic groups will continue to be provided.</p>
<b>Religion or Belief</b>			✓	<p>Reducing the number of GCC provided libraries may impact on all potential library users and this group is no more or less affected by it.</p>
<b>Sexual Orientation</b>			✓	<p>Reducing the number of GCC provided libraries may impact on all potential library users and this group is no more or less affected by it.</p>
<b>Transgender</b>			✓	<p>Reducing the number of GCC provided libraries may impact on all potential library users and this group is no more or less affected by it.</p>
<b>Other groups: eg Rural Isolation, Long term unemployed, Deprivation Health Inequality</b>	✓ ✓		✓	<p>Reducing the number of GCC provided libraries may impact on all potential library users and some people in these groups may be more affected. Books on Prescription and Health books will still be provided</p> <p>Although there will be a better geographic dispersal of main libraries around the county the removal of the mobile library may disadvantage some people without access to transport.</p>

				The reduction in the number of GCC provided libraries and the lower number of opening hours will reduce the time available for accessing libraries and the Internet PCs and this may have an adverse impact on those applying for jobs on line or those using 'Homeseekers'. There may also be less access to Your Circle advice and information.
<b>Community Cohesion</b>	<p><b>Describe how the proposed activity, policy, strategy, service, procedure or function will contribute to Community Cohesion.</b></p> <p><b>You will need to consider;</b></p> <p><b>Is there equality between those who will and won't benefit from the proposal?</b></p> <p><b>Are there strong relationships between groups and communities in the area affected and will the proposed action promote positive relationships?</b></p> <p><b>Does the proposal bring groups / communities into increased contact with each other</b></p>			<p>The proposals for community run libraries may bring about greater cohesion of communities working to a common aim. Communities that develop a community run library will still have access to the county library services through the virtual library.</p> <p>If a library is closed and a community run library is not developed there is potential for an adverse impact on the community generally but this would not necessarily translate into an adverse impact on impacting on community cohesion.</p> <p>More opportunities for volunteering and development of social capital could have a positive effect in bringing different people together</p>
<b>Community Cohesion (Contd)</b>				

**9. If you have identified a negative impact in question 8, what actions have you undertaken or do you plan to undertake to lessen or negate this impact?**

**Please indicate whether these actions will be carried forward into level 2 or level 3 business plans.**

<b>Action(s):</b>	<b>How will this action be Monitored/Evaluated</b>	<b>When will policy / service / strategy / procedure / function be reviewed?</b>	<b>Carried to Level 2?</b>	<b>Carried to Level 3?</b>
Consultation process	Responses considered & significant adverse impacts emerging evaluated prior to setting new policy for library service	March 2011	<b>N</b>	<b>N</b>
<b>Age: Older people:</b> For those individuals unable to access a library independently we will work with them and identify a suitable alternative means of providing a service via library club or an extended housebound service	An audit of need will be drawn up in April 2011 and a quarterly assessment will check if a satisfactory outcome was achieved. Community transport will be provided for those unable to travel independently.	December 2011  Annually in	<b>Y</b>	<b>Y</b>

<p><u>Children:</u> Services to children's centres and children in care will continue in order to support the most vulnerable</p> <p><u>Staff:</u> Voluntary redundancy and retirement options will be provided and staff can access the Employee Assistance Programme.</p>	<p>This will be monitored through partnership / close working with children's services practitioners Families can use community transport</p> <p>Monitored with support of HR reports &amp; milestones in project management programme</p>	<p>February each year</p> <p>Quarterly</p>	<p>Y</p>	<p>Y</p>
<p><b>Disability:</b> An alternative means of providing books to Homelink and for Mobile library users with mobility difficulties will be implemented. This will include an extended personalised Housebound service to address the specific needs of people with disabilities to ensure they can still access the library services they need. This will also include postal delivery services if required.</p> <p>Community run libraries will also provide access to library services and in business plans will evidence how they will make their provision inclusive and accessible</p> <p>A plan to encourage people with learning disabilities to volunteer in libraries will be developed.</p>	<p>An audit of need in April and May 2011 will be drawn up and a quarterly assessment will check if a satisfactory outcome was achieved.</p> <p>Equalities and inclusivity requirements will be part of the agreement made with community run provisions.</p> <p>Evidence of positive activity and numbers recruited. Links to employment.</p>	<p>January 2012</p> <p>January 2012</p>	<p>Y</p> <p>Y</p>	<p>Y</p> <p>Y</p>
<p><b>Gender:</b> <u>Impact on staff</u> Voluntary redundancy and retirement options will be provided and EAS support provided.</p> <p>Full and part time work</p>	<p>Monitored with support of HR reports &amp; milestones in project management programme</p>	<p>Quarterly</p>	<p>Y</p>	<p></p>

will still be available in the new service structure and many staff will be redeployed in this way				
<p><b>Other: <u>Rural Isolation</u></b> The dispersal of main libraries with greater opening hours may provide better access for some living in rural areas. The impact of the removal of the mobile library will be mitigated by addressing specific needs of individuals (as above)</p> <p><u>Long term unemployed</u> Work with partners to provide job clubs / similar support</p> <p>Sustain library computers/ internet access in community run libraries</p> <p><u>Deprivation</u> 1. Continue to provide a targeted programme of outreach library activities to parts of Gloucester and Cheltenham identified as 'deprived'</p> <p>2. Provide ongoing support to help with the development of community run libraries</p> <p><u>Health Inequality</u>: Books on Prescription – work with GP surgery to provide these where no community library in place.</p> <p>Sustain access to Your Circle information via virtual library in community run libraries &amp; train volunteers</p>	<p>Visitor figures will be monitored</p> <p>An audit of need will be drawn up in April 2011 and a quarterly assessment will check if a satisfactory outcome was achieved.</p> <p>Assessed as part of business plan</p> <p>Sustain 'job clubs' in main libraries with partner</p> <p>Monitored as part of hand over process &amp; milestones in project management programme</p> <p>Identified and monitored as part of level 3 plans</p> <p>Monitored as part of hand over process &amp; milestones in project management programme</p> <p>Identified and monitored as part of level 3 plans</p> <p>Monitored as part of hand over process</p>	<p>Quarterly</p> <p>December 2011</p> <p>Quarterly</p> <p>December 2011</p> <p>Quarterly</p> <p>Annually</p> <p>Quarterly</p> <p>Quarterly</p>	<p>Y</p> <p>Y</p> <p>Y</p> <p>Y</p> <p>Y</p> <p>Y</p> <p>Y</p>	<p>Y</p> <p>Y</p> <p>Y</p> <p>Y</p> <p>Y</p> <p>Y</p>

<p>Continue to provide a wide range of inclusive stock and information that cover the needs of people across the 7 Equalities strands and produce guidelines and training for community run volunteers about this</p>	<p>Monitor as part of hand over process and on annual basis.</p>			<p>Y</p>
<p>Develop a communications plan to ensure all library users know about the service changes and what support is available to individual's to help them access library services</p>	<p>Integrate into agreement with community</p> <p>Plan in place prior to implementation of changes and giving at least 6 week's notice of change</p>	<p>Assess monthly</p>	<p>Y</p>	
<p>Carry out a survey to ascertain preferred opening hours in new county library network and provide hours that link with public transport.</p>	<p>Undertake survey in April 2011 prior to any changes being implemented</p>	<p>Monitor annually</p>		<p>Y</p>
<p>Liaise with community transport providers to identify alternative travel in some rural areas and for individual's with specific mobility issues.</p>		<p>Ongoing</p>		<p>Y</p>

### Declaration

**We are satisfied that an Impact Assessment has been carried out on this service, strategy and where a negative impact has been identified, actions have been developed to lessen or negate this impact.**

**We understand that the Equality Impact Assessment is required by the County Council and that we take responsibility for the completion and quality of this assessment**

**Completed by: Sue Laurence**

**Revision Date: 24/03/11**

**Role: Library Services Manager (Strategy)**

**Countersigned by Group Director:**

**Date:**

**Date for Review: January 2012**

**Please forward an electronic copy to the Equalities Team by emailing**

**equalities@gloucestershire.gov.uk**

**The original signed hard copy and electronic copy should be kept with your team for audit purposes.**