

Equality & Community Impact Assessment

Relating to: Draft Library Strategy Proposals

Date: 30th March 2012

Introduction

This Impact Assessment supports the County Council in meeting its legal obligations under the **Public Sector Equality Duty**, now contained in section 149 of the Equality Act 2010. The Equality Duty ensures that public bodies have due regard to the statutory needs referred to in section 149 when exercising their functions.

Section 149 provides that in exercising its functions an authority must have due regard to the need to:

- eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by the Act;
- advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and others who do not share it; and
- foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not share it.

Having due regard to the need to advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and others who do not share it involves having due regard (in particular) to the need to:

- remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that are connected to that characteristic;
- take steps to meet the needs of persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that are different from the needs of persons who do not share it; and
- encourage persons who share a relevant protected characteristic to participate in public life or in any other activity in which participation by such persons is disproportionately low.

Having due regard to the need to foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not share it involves having due regard (in particular) to the need to tackle prejudice and to promote understanding.

The Steps involved in meeting the needs of the disabled persons that are different from the needs of persons who are not disabled include, in particular, steps to take account of disabled persons' disabilities. Compliance with the duties in section 149 may involve treating some persons more favourably than others; but not if that would itself involve conduct which is made unlawful under the Equality Act 2010.

The protected characteristics to which the duty applies are age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation, also marriage and civil partnership but only in respect of the requirement to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination.

Having **due regard to** means consciously thinking about the statutory needs as part of the process of decision making, when the proposals are still at a formative stage, and before a decision is reached. This means that consideration of those equality issues must influence the decisions reached by public bodies. The Equality Duty must be exercised in substance, with rigour and with an open mind.

Indirect discrimination occurs where a condition criterion or practice is applied which would put people with one of the protected characteristics at a particular disadvantage, when compared with persons who do not share that characteristic, and the imposition of that condition, criterion or practice is not a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim, i.e. it cannot be objectively justified.

Indirect discrimination may occur in two ways.

1. It may occur when the neutral provision, criterion or practice, applied to everyone, affects people with a protected characteristic in a different way to those who do not share the protected characteristic; or
2. The neutral provision, criterion or practice does not cause any distinctly different effect on a protected group, but “tainting by numbers” occurs – there is a sufficiently substantial disparity in the statistical breakdown of a particular protected group affected by the provision, criterion or practice, to suggest that they are placed at a particular disadvantage when compared to those who do not share that protected characteristic.

In both cases, any prima facie indirect discrimination can be objectively justified if the PCP pursues a legitimate aim, and is proportionate to achieve that aim. This document primarily examines the first kind of indirect discrimination. Officers have considered whether there is an obvious risk of the second kind of indirect discrimination arising. No significant disparity in the statistics has been seen. Even if such a disparity did arise, officers consider that the draft library strategy proposals are pursuing a legitimate aim - namely, to improve the overall library service in the council's area, and to implement the identified savings. Officers consider that the proposals are a proportionate means of achieving that aim, which seek to minimise the effect on those likely to be affected to the greatest extent possible.

It is important to understand and consider how different people will be affected by the decisions the Council makes, so that policies and services are appropriate and accessible to all and meet different people's needs.

This assessment will help you think about the potential impact your proposals will have on all sections of the community. Recognising these impacts early on in the process of developing policies will assist good decision making and ensure that the County Council delivers services appropriate to people's needs.

Remember that the Equality Duty involves having due regard to the needs to advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between those who share a protected characteristic and those who do not, as well as to eliminate discrimination and other conduct which is unlawful under the Equality Act 2010.

1. Person responsible for undertaking this assessment:

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2. Name and brief description of the policy, service, strategy, procedure or function: (indicate whether new or revised)

<p>Gloucestershire County Council's Draft Library Strategy. This is a new strategy proposal</p> <p>The draft strategy proposes the means by which the council proposes to meet its legal duties to provide a library service for the people of Gloucestershire as required by the Public Libraries & Museums Act 1964. This equality and community impact assessment has been updated to reflect the feedback received as part of the consultation process, additional research and in context of the recommendations being proposed in the Cabinet report. It is provided to enable Cabinet Members as decision makers to have due regard to statutory equality needs.</p> <p>The draft library strategy proposes to provide a library service that encompasses different delivery mechanisms; through digital means and via the virtual library, through an outreach programme targeted to meet council outcomes for specific groups of people, and through a reconfigured network of libraries and through a reconfigured mobile library service. The council aims to deliver library services by working in partnership with communities and volunteers to support access to the council run universal library service and also to provide a tailored level of outreach services to support people who may have specific needs that could affect their ability to participate in community life or to access library services</p> <p>Under the proposed new strategy the council will provide 31 static libraries across the county. They will be located in busy locations in towns in the different areas of the county and also in some rural communities. These libraries will offer core opening hours. Reductions to core opening hours apply to 17 of these</p>

council run libraries. With participation from co-located partners and local volunteers the aim will be to increase these core opening hours wherever possible in those libraries other than Main libraries.

9 Main Libraries located in the 6 main district towns plus 3 in towns in rural areas

Cheltenham: 54 opening hours per week/ 6 days - no change proposed

Gloucester: 54 opening hours per week/ 6 days - no change proposed

Stroud: 44 opening hours per week/ 6 days - no change proposed

Cirencester: 44 opening hours per week/ 6 days - no change proposed

Tewkesbury: 44 opening hours per week/ 6 days - no change proposed

Dursley: 44 opening hours per week/ 6 days - no change proposed

Coleford: 40 opening hours per week/ 6 days - no change proposed

Newent: 40 opening hours per week/ 6 days - no change proposed

Stow: 40 opening hours per week/ 6 days - no change proposed

Local Libraries located in suburbs of larger towns or in rural towns

Bishops Cleeve: 40 core opening hours per week, distribution across days of week to be agreed with local community - proposed 13 hours less

Up Hatherley: 35 core opening hours per week, distribution across days of week to be agreed with local community - proposed 12 hours less

Quedgeley: 35 core opening hours per week, distribution across days of week to be agreed with local community - proposed 11 hours less

Hucclecote: 35 core opening hours per week, distribution across days of week to be agreed with local community - proposed 10 hours less

Charlton Kings: 35 core opening hours per week, distribution across days of week to be agreed with local community - proposed 3 hours less

Longlevens: 35 core opening hours per week, distribution across days of week to be agreed with local community - proposed 2 hours less

Lydney: 35 core opening hours per week, distribution across days of week to be agreed with local community - no change proposed

Cinderford: 35 core opening hours per week, distribution across days of week to be agreed with local community - no change proposed

Tetbury: 28 core opening hours per week, distribution across days of week to be agreed with local community - no change proposed

Winchcombe: 28 core opening hours per week, distribution across days of week to be agreed with local community - no change proposed

Chipping Campden: 28 core opening hours per week, distribution across days of week to be agreed with local community - no change proposed

Fairford: 28 core opening hours per week, distribution across days of week to be agreed with local community - no change proposed

Hesters Way: 21 core opening hours per week, distribution across days of week to be agreed with local community - proposed hours 13.5 hours less

Matson: 21 core opening hours per week, distribution across days of week to be agreed with local community –proposed hours 2 hours less

Tuffley: 21 core opening hours per week, distribution across days of week to be agreed with local community - proposed hours 8 hours less

Churchdown: 12 core opening hours per week, distribution across days of week to be agreed with local community - proposed hours 22 hours less

Nailsworth: 12 core opening hours per week, distribution across days of week to be agreed with local community - proposed hours 23 hours less

Moreton: 12 core opening hours per week, distribution across days of week to be agreed with local community - proposed hours 19 hours less

Prestbury: 12 core opening hours per week, distribution across days of week to be agreed with local community - proposed hours 19.5 hours less

Wotton: 12 core opening hours per week, distribution across days of week to be agreed with local community - proposed hours 13 hours less

Stonehouse: 12 core opening hours per week, distribution across days of week to be agreed with local community - proposed hours 8 hours less

Bourton: 12 core opening hours per week, distribution across days of week to be agreed with local community - proposed hours 1 hour less

Community Libraries

In addition to [council run libraries](#) the draft strategy proposes that the council will support seven communities to enable them to set up community run libraries but these will be an additional enhancement to the core council provided library services. The council will provide a revenue grant of £10,000 and will provide access to library systems and resources. Advice from professional librarians will help the volunteers to set up and run a community library and council library staff will provide up to 3 hours per week training and support. These communities are:

Berkeley: Percentage of county population living in the library catchment area: 0.94%. Current opening hours -17, community to decide future opening hours

Bream: Percentage of county population living in the library catchment area: 0.55%. Current opening hours-10, community to decide future opening hours

Brockworth: Percentage of county population living in the library catchment area: 1.32%. Current opening hours -26,community to decide future opening hours

Lechlade: Percentage of county population living in the library catchment area: 0.59%. Current opening hours -17, community to decide future opening hours

Minchinhampton: Percentage of county population living in the library catchment area: 0.74%. Current opening hours -26, community to decide future opening hours

Mitcheldean: Percentage of county population living in the library catchment area: 0.78%. Current opening hours -32, community to decide future opening hours

Newnham: Percentage of county population living in the library catchment area: 0.53%. Current opening hours-10.5, community to decide future opening hours

Mobile Library Services

The council has consulted on the reconfiguration of the mobile library services to see what people thought of the proposal to share a vehicle with other public sector services. The draft strategy will retain at the centre of such a public sector service mobile, a core of mobile library book loan services and include PCs with internet so that rural communities can tap into a wider range of information and services of strategic partners. In addition to this, the Share A Book Mobile service will also be retained to support library outreach services to children and young people and their families. Changes to mobile services:

Current: [3 community mobiles](#) visiting rural areas and town suburbs for a total of 41 opening hours per week and stop times ranging from 10 minutes to one and half hours. **Future:** [public sector mobile service](#) provided with partners and visiting up to 50 rural communities on a 3 week cycle offering opening hours of at least 1.5 hours per stop and up to half a day in some areas. This mobile will be wheelchair accessible and be supplied with PCs with Internet access.

Library books will continue to be at the core of this service alongside partner services and information.

Current: Share A Book mobile focusing on services to young children and their families, visiting playgroups, nurseries and children's centres for half a week during term time and providing outreach to other areas during school holidays. **Future:** No change but more focus on visiting those rural areas where there will be reduced opening hours proposed for libraries and places where there are likely to be children affected by educational, socio-economic deprivation factors.

Current: Homelink mobile visiting 171 older people's residential homes on a 7 week rota. It provides both book collections for leaving in the home and some residents visit the mobile to select their own books. **Future:** Cease provision of Homelink mobile library. Provide boxed book collections to homes from the nearest council run library. Homes staff to collect and return or volunteers to collect and return. Volunteer drivers to bring individual older people in to a library club if they are able to travel.

During the consultation period the council has been in further conversation with the WRVS in order to identify how it could increase its capacity to support the needs of older people. The partnership with WRVS will:

- Increase capacity for provision of volunteer transport to help older people with mobility difficulties get to a library or library club
- Provide delivery of book to older peoples homes
- Help older people develop digital skills where people have a home PC with Internet access so they can learn to use the electronic library services.

This will mean that all older library service users who are not able to travel independently to a library or to the new public sector mobile service will receive support to enable them to sustain their library use. From feedback received from the former consultation in 2011 and the consultation data gathered in 2012 this is estimated to apply to around 250 library users.

Subject to the Cabinet decision, the 31 council run libraries, and the reconfigured mobile library service together with the virtual library and library outreach service including the WRVS partnership will be the means by which the council will meet its duties under the Public Libraries & Museums Act. The reshaping of this service as a whole is the result of having been influenced by consideration of the public sector equality duty. More consideration about impacts on protected groups is in section 7 below.

3. Briefly describe its aims and expected outcomes

Access, Aspiration, Opportunity: The aim is to provide a network of libraries that takes into account the geographic spread and rural nature of the county, the density of population in the main towns, socio economic factors that may impact upon people's needs for library services, and the demographic characteristics of people living in Gloucestershire including the specific needs of some individuals or groups of people sharing protected characteristics. This strategy for library service provision is part of the means by which the council will promote equality of opportunity so that all people living in Gloucestershire will be able to participate in public life. We want to support individuals and local communities to achieve their aspirations by creating a vibrant, welcoming library service that provides access to books, information and learning opportunities in a variety of ways and settings, and in partnership with others.

4. Describe how this policy will impact on the Council's duty to:

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation
- Advance equality of opportunity
- Foster good relations

Identify what particular groups of people will be affected by this policy.

In terms of the impact on the general population of the county it is considered that the library strategy's reduction of library opening hours at 17 libraries, the changes to the mobile services and the cessation of council run libraries in seven communities means that there is a potential for a negative impact on some people who want to use libraries. However, it is considered that for the majority of library users there will either be no impact or a need for them to make a behavioural change. This may be for example, to visit the library or mobile service at a different time of day, to visit on a different day of the week, to travel by car or public transport to an alternative library or mobile service in another community.

In terms of reduction in opening hours there are minor adjustments at 4 libraries, moderate changes at 2 and more significant ones at the remaining 10. However in the case of Moreton in Marsh library, co-location with a partner service means an additional 19 hours per week will be provided giving a total of 31 hours per week and in the case of Churchdown library a financial contribution from the parish council is planned meaning an additional 16 hours per week can be provided to total 28 hours per week. Although Bishop's Cleeve will have a 24.5% cut in hours compared to its current hours it will still have 40 hours per week which is the same as some Main libraries and it does mean that the library could be open over 6 days per week.

The remaining 7 libraries with more significant cuts to opening hours are Up Hatherley, Hesters Way, Nailsworth, Hucclecote, Quedgeley, Prestbury and

Wotton. Up Hatherley, Prestbury and Hesters Way are all suburbs of Cheltenham and within 3, 2 and 1 mile (respectively) of the main Cheltenham library which is open for 54 hours per week. There is good regular public transport (every 10 minutes) to the centre of the town hence alternative library provision is nearby on days when these libraries are closed.

Quedgeley library is a suburb of Gloucester where the library is open for 54 hours per week and it is about 4.5 miles from the centre and there are 4 buses per hour to the centre of Gloucester and it also calls at Tuffley on the way. Hucclecote is also a suburb of Gloucester about 4 miles from the centre and buses to the centre are every 10 minutes. Longlevens is the nearest library for those able to travel by car and it is 3 miles away so again in Gloucester there is alternative library provision for times when these libraries are closed. .

The two libraries where there could be a more significant disruption to library users are Nailsworth and Wotton. Nailsworth library is just over 4 miles from Stroud Main library with 5 buses per day to Stroud. Wotton is 6 and a half miles from Dursley Main library with 6 buses a day to Dursley. The population in the library catchment area for these two libraries represents 3.23% of the county population. Older people with mobility difficulties in these communities will be eligible for the volunteer transport support to libraries if they need it. The communities of Wotton, Nailsworth and Prestbury have all indicated interest in providing volunteers to help extend core library opening hours and arrangements will be made accordingly.

The implications of people transferring their library use from one library to another have also been considered in terms of the increased use that some libraries might pick up as a result of the changes and in terms of the decrease to opening hours and the potential for increased demand or even overcrowding. It is not anticipated that this will make a significant difference. Furthermore, self service book issue machines are being provided to all council run libraries and staffing levels at each library will be maintained to be consistent with levels of use. This will be monitored.

As community libraries are established it is considered that many people will continue to use these libraries and to use them as a mean of accessing council stock through reservations and the council's virtual library via the People's Network library computers. Under the previous library strategy proposals from 2010-11 all seven communities provided business cases from groups willing to run a community library in these areas. There will be a legal agreement with the community libraries that will cover equality matters, requiring them to comply with the Equality Act 2012. Training will be provided by professional library staff to the volunteers which will include customer service inclusion training, for example how to support disabled people such as those with learning disabilities, the elderly and the young..

In these 7 communities, if there are people who would prefer to travel to a council run library rather than use a community library, public transport is available to the next nearest council run library:

Berkeley is five and a half miles from Dursley library and there are 3 buses a day Monday to Thursday

Bream library is 3 miles from Lydney and there is one bus per hour on weekdays and Saturdays

Brockworth is just under 2 miles from Hucclecote library and there is a bus every 10 minutes which also travels into Gloucester 5.6 miles away or to Cheltenham 5.8 miles away. The bus stop is directly in front of Hucclecote library.

Lechlade is just over 4 miles from Fairford library and there are 6 buses per day.

Minchinhampton's nearest council run library is Nailsworth which is two and a half miles away and there are three buses a day. Buses also run to Stroud every hour and this is 4.3 miles away.

Mitcheldean is just over 4 miles from Cinderford library and there are 5 buses a day with plans to improve this service in the summer of 2012. Additionally, there is a bus every hour to Gloucester 11.6 miles away.

Newnham is about three and half miles from Cinderford library but the best bus route is to Lydney library which is 8.8 miles away.

These changes to library service provision are part of the Meeting the Challenge programme to address council budget pressures. In order to support a fair financial decision this Equality & Community Impact Assessment seeks to draw to the decision makers' attention potential areas where a **differential** impact could be experienced by some protected groups covered by the equality duty and this is examined in more detail in section 7.

The draft library strategy is considered to have the potential for both positive and negative impacts on people sharing one or more of the protected characteristics. The following elements of the draft strategy are considered to indicate **positive impacts** that have the potential to advance equality of opportunity and eliminate the potential for discrimination with regard to access to library services:

Development of the virtual library and digital access to library services: In terms of providing a modernised library service that will be able to reach more people through digital means rather than just from provision of static or mobile libraries it is expected that the provision of eBooks and other digital information services will open the door to library services for some people who may not currently visit a static library or who may not be able to do so. The protected groups affected by this are 'age', 'sex', and 'disability':

1. It is expected that electronic library services are likely to increase use of library services by men and also by young adults whose regular means of accessing information and communication is via the internet on mobiles, laptops or iPads rather than by visiting a static library location.
2. The development of the digital library and access to eBooks and eAudio also minimises disadvantages in terms of accessing library services as experienced by some people who may be restricted to their homes through age related mobility difficulties or through disability where they have access to the Internet at home..
3. The electronic reference library and eBooks for children will also make it easier for children who have the Internet at home to access homework resources or recreational reading material without the need to rely on an adult to take them to a library.

Reconfiguration of the mobile library service: The provision of an Internet enabled vehicle with PC access that also offers access to other public sector services will mean there will be a positive impact in terms of improving equality of access in rural areas to 'real time' electronic information services of both the partner and of the library service. This will both extend digital access to information and provide a 'front door' to other public services.

Library service partnership with the WRVS: This will have a positive impact in terms of providing support to older people to help them overcome some of the barriers they are likely to experience as they age in terms of their ability to continue to drive, to use public transport independently or to walk more than a short distance. Not only will the WRVS volunteers increase the number and range of community transport available to provide practical help to get people to libraries or to take books to people at home wherever they live in the county but they will also bring an added dimension in terms of supporting people's

wellbeing by reducing the potential for social isolation and by facilitating ongoing participation in library activities such as library clubs. For those older people who have access to the internet at home, WRVS volunteers will also be able to provide support to help them learn how to get the most from the digital and virtual library services.

Following the research and the period of consultation the following potential for **negative Impacts** resulting from the draft library strategy have been drawn out as being aspects that might have potential for some differential impact on some people sharing protected characteristics. These negative aspects tend to come into effect mainly when combined with considerations about access to library service provision or socio-economic disadvantage and as such could have a potential for discrimination and this is assessed more fully in section 7 which also indicates what mitigations will be made. Based on the evidence we have, which includes research and the findings from all of the consultation activity, we have re-assessed that the particular groups most likely to be affected by the proposed changes to library services are:

- **Older people** who are losing their ability to remain independently mobile (especially over 75s). They may experience deterioration in their ability to walk and to carry books. They may no longer be able to drive safely, and may surrender their licence and may find it difficult to travel on public transport. If car parking is not near to libraries or if a walk uphill is required this may also act as a barrier. Car parking is available at 21 of the council run libraries.
- People with **physical disabilities** who may not be able to carry books or drive and may need companion support to travel on public transport. If car parking is not available near to libraries this may also be a barrier to use. However, blue badge holders could use disabled spaces near many libraries.
- People with **learning disabilities** who may need additional support to understand how the changes affect their library use and help with establishing a new routine to access library services.
- Some people with **mental health** concerns may be disconcerted by the proposed changes and may need support
- People who are **blind** or who have **visual impairment** may need additional support to identify a new route to a different library or mobile stop.
- **Children** living in families without access to a car in rural areas where a mobile library stop may no longer be provided and where public transport is infrequent or where a community library is proposed. Children are reliant on parents or carers for accessing a library until they reach their older teenage years.
- **Children who are disabled** and their families who due to the proposed changes may need to move their library use to a different venue and this may present an additional level of barrier to accessing the service.
- **Families with lone parents**, many of whom are **women**. When this is combined with socio - economic disadvantage there may be issues relating to costs of getting to alternative libraries by public transport where changes are made to their current local library provision and the fact that libraries may be an important source of reading for children from poorer families and for homework. The cost of car parking may also be a barrier to use.
- For **women in late pregnancy** access to an alternative library may be more difficult, especially if they are single parents or affected by socio-economic deprivation factors.

The council currently provides library services to people who share the protected characteristics and these inclusive services will continue. These services have been developed to encourage access to library services for those that want to use libraries but who in some way may find access difficult. They are

intended to help people participate in public life and aim to advance equality of opportunity. The draft strategy proposes they will remain part of the core library offer and still be provided to people wherever they live in Gloucestershire. These are:

For people with visual impairment: We subscribe to R.N.I.B services to provide talking books by post to the homes of people with visual impairment. This is not dependent upon location of the library and referrals are made in partnership with the sensory services team. Large print books and talking books and clear vision braille picture books for visually impaired children are also available in our libraries. Book shine packs are provided to pre- school age children who are deaf and Booktouch packs to pre- school children who are blind or partially sighted. This is managed through a telephone booking system. We provide super nova and Browse Aloud software and training in their use to make it easier for people with visual impairments to use computers.

For people with mental health related issues: In partnership with the health service we provide 'Books on Prescription', which are self- help and awareness books prescribed by GPs for people with mental health related issues. Discussions with health colleagues have indicated that this service could also be offered from community libraries.

For older people and people with mobility difficulties: We offer 25 Library Clubs and co-ordinate community and volunteer transport for older or disabled people so they can visit the library to borrow books and meet others socially, helping to reduce isolation for some. For people with mobility disabilities who prefer to stay at home but still want library books we have a pool of volunteers to take books to them. This support and assistance with transport to Library Clubs may mean that for older and physically disabled people it helps to extend the time they are able to access services as they age. The proposed partnership with the WRVS will help us to extend this support. Community libraries could also provide library clubs.

For people in BME communities and people speaking other languages: We provide books, newspapers and magazines in 4 Indic languages, 4 European languages and Mandarin. In addition to these we supply books in approximately 25 other languages each year through our subscription to 'Bright Books'. Although these collections are not available in all of the county libraries these resources are available to all via the reservation system. This would also be the case for those people using community libraries.

For the LGBT community: The Library stock policy ensures that books reflecting the experiences of the LGBT community are available. In Gloucester Library there is a Loud and Proud collection. Although these collections are not held in all of the county libraries these resources are available to all via the reservation system. This could also be the case for those people using community libraries as proposed in the draft strategy.

For very young children and families: The introduction to the library and books starts from birth when our Gloucestershire Registration service joins babies and their families to the library. We provide Baby rhyme sessions, story times and facilitate the delivery of the national **Bookstart** programme locally (gifting of books to babies and toddlers). We work with family learning tutors to provide Quick Read books for classes and activities.

For school age children: The Library helps to support their school work whether this is for internet access or advice about information sources. The Summer Reading Challenge for 4-12 yr olds helps to sustain children's reading ages. Over 9,000 children took part in 2011 including Looked After Children and disabled children and children living in areas of deprivation. If children have a specialist interest and cannot find a book about it in their local library we provide a service that enables books to be posted to them for free from Library Services for Education if we have a book available on that subject. This is a service

available to all children.

For parents and carers: The library offers books and internet access to enable them to find help and advice, to apply for jobs, school places and housing through [Gloucestershire Homeseeker](#). We provide parenting book collections and books on child health, some of which are selected in partnership with the local NHS and we work closely with Children's centre teams to tailor family support for lone parents and others. [Our librarians have also attended the 'Together Trust' training to help them learn how to support the needs of disabled children.](#)

For job seekers Gloucester Library is the venue for the Gloucestershire First 'job hub' and a job hub [is now running in Coleford library and other libraries in the Forest are being made available to the partner delivering a six week training programme for NEETs.](#) This will include advice on how to use Library service resources. These sessions will be extended to other libraries where a NEET cohort is gathered.

Development of the digital library services such as eBooks and eAudio that may make it easier for some people to use library services or extend access to people who may not otherwise use library services, for example **carers**, and **disabled people**. National research also shows that **men** are more likely to use library services when they are 'digital' even if they never visit a library so this may advance equality of opportunity.

Access to wider public services

The library service acts as a 'front door' or 'portal' to put people in connection with other public services and information and this may have a positive effect on people who share protected characteristics providing another avenue of access to information or other services. [The public sector mobile service with Internet access will also help to meet this function.](#)

Supporting active communities

[The council believes that by offering active community volunteering opportunities, this provides an opportunity for participation in public life.](#)

Travel and transport support for accessing libraries

[Although the majority of the county's population live in towns and our most used libraries are in the main towns and centres of population, Gloucestershire covers a wide geographical area that is rural. The draft library strategy proposals have been mapped alongside integrated transport plans so that consideration is given to how public and community transport arrangements are shaped in order to help to maintain access to a council run library. The proposed support will be targeted to meet the needs of older or disabled people and for young families with children, who do not have access to a car, thereby seeking where possible to accommodate the needs of people sharing protected characteristics who may also be economically disadvantaged and affected by the adjustments to the proposed library network. The options to be implemented will depend on the needs identified and will include a library visit bus 'pass' and consideration of some adjustments to public and community transport routes. For older people who are unable to travel independently, the partnership with the WRVS opens up greater capacity for supplying volunteer drivers to help people travel to libraries and for taking library books to people in their homes or other places they meet. This will be provided to people wherever they live in the county.](#)

[The consultation survey indicated that around two-thirds of respondents' last visits to libraries were primarily driven by the visit to the library rather than by](#)

other reasons for being in town and the next most significant reason mentioned was for shopping. However, when looking at the information supplied on the surveys by people using the libraries proposed to become community libraries there is a more mixed picture. Apart from Bream and Newnham, around an average of 55% were combining it with shopping. The figures from Bream and Newnham were lower, 33.3% in both cases, representing 4 people at Bream and 9 people at Newnham.

5. Provide details of the evidence you have gathered in making this assessment, including data sources, consultation undertaken and the outcome/s of this.

In developing the Strategy the council has had regard to the public sector equality duties and undertaken a research based analysis of need, assessed library use data and considered consultation and feedback from library users and communities. This includes both a reassessment of the main themes from the consultation feedback received for the 2010-11 library proposals as well as the full consultation feedback received for the 2012 library proposals.

The 2012 consultation report and the feedback received have been assessed in order to identify any significant areas for consideration with regard to identifying potential equality related impacts of the library strategy proposals in order to bring these to Cabinet's attention prior to their decision regarding the library service changes. The Libraries 2012 consultation process included a range of methods and full details are available on the consultation report. The consultation sought to furnish information that would help the council assess the impact of the library proposals on people who may share protected characteristics. It included:

- Deliberative consultation in workshops with selected groups of people
- A representative telephone survey that included quotas set to ensure representation of some protected groups
- A randomly selected postal survey of library users
- Open consultation so that anyone wanting to express their views could do so
- Consultation road shows
- A dedicated email enquiry line for queries and comments from stakeholders and the public

In order to encourage participation, staff provided support to customers with queries about the consultation; at the road shows, in all libraries and on the mobile libraries. Large print surveys and an easy read survey were also provided.

Stakeholder organisations were also invited to comment on the Initial Equality & Community Impact Assessment in relation to the needs of people in the groups they represent, and we asked them for feedback about any people they thought might be vulnerable as a result of the proposed changes to the library service. However, no comments were received directly from groups representing people who may have specific needs. The chief executive of the Gloucestershire Association for Older people (GOPA) did express some concerns about the consultation itself in regard to older people being able to participate and the issues raised were addressed.

The people attending the deliberative workshops were asked to consider what the equality related impacts might be on people if library services were reduced. There was debate in the groups about whether there were any negative impacts or if they were 'neutral' in the sense that people could still access library provision by changing their behaviour. When pushed to consider negative impacts and identify possible mitigations, suggestions included use of volunteers, providing transport to a library or delivering books and looking at community transport options.

The most recent consultation process undertaken between 30th January and 11th March 2012 sought to draw out information about the impact of the library change proposals on people who may be part of a protected group, for example people with disabilities. This was gathered partly from an analysis of the questionnaires completed where people had indicated personal information about themselves such as age, sex, disability status, sexual orientation, race etc. This has provided some additional information but it was not completed by all respondents.

Overall, the consultation indicated support for the council's library strategy proposals. However, there were some disproportionate impacts reported by some groups of the respondents. The differential from the norm of the survey is relatively small but nevertheless people living rurally and older women using the mobile library service were more likely to expect negative impacts as part of the strategy implementation.

Feedback has also been sought from professionals who work in services provided for people who may share one of the protected characteristics. This has acted as a means of testing our understanding of the issues that may be of relevance to these groups. Where stakeholders have provided detailed feedback and information about their communities this has been investigated by the research team and where further evidence has come to light and been confirmed the Context & User Needs Assessment has been updated. This information is also considered as part of this equality and community impact assessment with particular detailed consideration of the potential impacts for people sharing some of the protected characteristics in the seven areas where a council run library is not proposed and in relation to mobile library service change proposals.

Section 7 indicates the areas for consideration that arose from the feedback received and assesses the potential for impact on people sharing protected characteristics.

The Lead Cabinet Member for libraries and the Chief Executive were updated weekly about the research and consultation feedback and discussed possible options for consideration. As the consultation came to a close updates have also been provided to Cabinet Members who have been engaged in the considerations for adjustments to the initial draft library strategy proposals in the context of any new information and consultation feedback. The Health, Community & Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee also provided helpful feedback for consideration and the main points raised were with regard to the importance of providing and developing a new mobile library service for our rural county, the importance of access to books being maintained and to match any revised opening hours to local community needs.

There has also been an assessment of national research and national level data where local information or feedback has not been substantive for some protected groups. The Equalities & Human Rights Commission website and the information provided about the public sector equality duty and different protected groups has been examined to see if any issues come to light in relation specifically to library service provision and also for general guidance in

relation of provision of services. Additionally some websites of the main organisations representing people within the different protected groups have also been surveyed. The following information was found useful in undertaking the equality assessment and we indicate how it has helped us to assess needs.

RADAR, The Royal Association for Disability Rights states that “*The duty to make reasonable adjustments aims to make sure that if you are a disabled person, you can use an organisation’s services as close as it is reasonably possible to get to the standard usually offered to non-disabled people.*” Radar is the UK’s largest disability rights campaigning network, with a membership of 800 organisations and individual campaigners. This has led us to consider ways in which additional support could be provided to support disabled people’s access to library services, as indicated in section 7.

Information from **Age UK** led us to conclude that older people are not a homogeneous group and should not be treated as such. In terms of supporting the development of active communities, younger retired people do have more ability to get out and about and more time available to them and many do seek out opportunities to volunteer once they give up work and the library strategy proposals could have positive outcomes for some. However, as people get older there is a potential area for a more negative impact on their lives in relation to those who want to use libraries. This is about securing access to books, getting to a library and the problems associated with declining mobility.

A research paper from 2005 commissioned by Help the Aged gathered together the literature about accessibility to local services for older people <http://celebrate.mtcserver4.com/images/cmsimages/media/publications/equality/accessibilityolderpeople.pdf> This indicated that a distance of a quarter of a mile or less was achievable walking distance for a healthy older person but that even shorter distances of 100 to 200m would present problems for many especially as personal mobility difficulties began to develop and increase with age. At some point even this distance would not be possible. It also showed that older people are more reliant on public transport and that car transport use declines with age. The report drew attention to ‘distance decay’ which is when older people get put off travelling anywhere if the journey seems to be too far or too difficult. The most required services were shops, post offices or banks and GP surgeries but access to libraries was mentioned as a secondary factor in terms of participation in social activity. This information has been very useful in helping us to consider how the council could take steps to support the needs of older people as the decline in personal mobility increases and what measures can be put in place to help older people sustain their active citizenship and support their health and well being. In the context of the draft library strategy proposals we believe we will enhance the methods we offer to help older and mobility disabled people access library services by providing additional support in partnership with the WRVS.

Researching information about older people’s needs and the information from the consultation feedback also reminded us that the major impacts in terms of mobility and ability to access services generally tended to be for the over 75 years age group whereas younger retired people are less likely to experience the same issues around travel and access to services.

Press for Change: Seeks respect and equality for all trans gender people in the UK. In the government document *Advancing Transgender Equality* there is a focus on, ‘*Opening up public services and empowering individuals and communities, by removing discrimination in accessing public services caused by their transgender status*’. There was no specific references to libraries. No additional transgender issues came to light as a result of the additional research and

consultation process.

Runnymede trust: Represents race issues and the key issue seems to be equality of treatment and access to services (and jobs). No mention of libraries on the website. The consultation process did not bring race to the forefront as a protected group in relation to the library service proposals. The deliberative workshop that was held with a group of BME people in Gloucester did not highlight any particular concerns and they were enthusiastic about the role community organisations could have in helping to sustain services that the council can no longer run

Church of England & Muslim Council of GB: No particular mention of libraries but religious groups might have concerns about book stock. We considered that the issues for other religious groups were likely to be along similar lines and the consultation period will help us to assess this. The consultation process did not highlight religion or belief as an issue in relation to the library service proposals.

Fawcett Society: Focuses on equality between men and women. “We campaign on women’s representation in politics and public life; on equal pay, on pensions and poverty; valuing caring work; and the treatment of women in the justice system.” So for the library service we think the issue might be for women in low paid jobs and poverty and access to books for this group or for older women.

Stonewall: A look at this site did not draw out any particular issues with access to libraries. As no national census has ever asked people to define their sexual orientation, there is no hard data on the number of lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender (LGBT) people in the UK. The Government is using the figure of 5-7% of the population. It is difficult to see how sexual orientation would be affected by library changes but CILIP (the Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals) says “*Libraries exist to meet the information, lifelong learning and leisure needs of all sections of the community, whether heterosexual, bisexual, gay or transgendered. It is essential that information professionals select stock that is relevant to the needs of their LGBT users.*” The consultation process did not highlight any particular areas for concern in relation to the impact of the library service change proposals and very low numbers of people completed this section of the consultation form.

Gingerbread: Single parent pressure group. This led us to consider that there may be issues for access to public libraries that relate to single parents and possibly child poverty. These may relate to costs of getting to libraries and the fact that libraries may be a source of reading for children from poorer families. Lone parents are more likely to be female. The deliberative workshop with a parent group, (including lone parents and expectant mothers) indicated a strong preference for protecting a local library near to where they live, owing to the costs and logistics of taking children to the library as compared to protecting a Main library.

Research at a local level: The council’s research team provided a full range of data and information about the demographic characteristics of the population including socio- economic deprivation and about the distribution of the population in terms of the 9 protected characteristics where this was available. This was matched directly on to the library catchment areas. Much of the information came from MAIDeN, the multi-agency database for neighbourhoods in

Gloucestershire. The Inform website was also used to assess other information <http://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/inform/> and in particular the Gloucestershire Story, especially with regard to Older People and Rural Gloucestershire <http://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/inform/index.cfm?articleid=94018> The Strategic Needs Analysis Team has also re-examined queries about the data from different people and communities to check for accuracy and to add additional information where available. Much of this feedback came from the communities where a proposed community library is proposed. The Context & User Needs Assessment has been updated accordingly and the main points relevant to consideration of the impacts on people sharing one of the protected characteristics and living in these areas are addressed in section 7.

The last two public library users surveys for Gloucestershire; adults in 2006 and children in 2007 were also analysed for information that might inform our knowledge about library use by people sharing the protected characteristics, mainly disabilities and travel distances and children's use of libraries. The feedback from the former strategy consultation indicated that there was concern expressed about the reduction in opening hours and the impact if a library was transferred to the community or a mobile library service withdrawn. Although this consultation recorded people claiming to have a disability no detailed analysis was undertaken about impacts on them and as it was a self completed survey the figures could not be seen as representative of library users. [Similar information obtained from the most recent library strategy 2012 consultation process can also only be used as a guide as the personal details section was not completed by all those taking part.](#)

Patterns of library use from data extracted from the Library Management System (Talis) were also assessed for any evidence. This showed us that a third of the child population of the county borrow books from libraries and that issues of children's books was high even in places where the demographic pattern may indicate more older people resided. [The information gathered about people's ages \(other than children\) when they join the library is optional so we do not have fully reliable data about the age breakdown of library users. Nor do we gather information about their disability status when people join the library.](#)

The 'Context & User Needs Assessment' document provides a detailed analysis of information gathered for the purpose of reviewing the library strategy.

6. Is this Policy affected by, or will it have an impact on other Meeting the Challenge proposals? Yes/No. (If yes, please specify relevant project and indicate how it is affected).

[There is potential for some impact on the last phase of the transport project as public and community transport developments are refined.](#)

7. Where any particular group is affected differently by the policy in either a **negative** or a **positive** way, if you identify a negative impact, explain what actions you have undertaken or you plan to undertake, including consideration of any alternative proposals, to lessen or negate this impact.

	Negative	Positive	Neutral	Evidence	Mitigating actions where a negative impact has been identified	How will the mitigating action be monitored/evaluated, including who will be responsible for monitoring?
Age	✓	✓		See more detailed section below	See more detailed section below	See more detailed section below
Disability (indicate different impacts on different types of disability)	✓	✓		See more detailed section below	See more detailed section below	See more detailed section below
Gender reassignment			✓	No new information came forward as a result of the consultation process and the research undertaken and this has confirmed our belief that the proposed new library service arrangements would not have any greater or lesser effect on people on account of gender re-assignment.		
Marriage & civil partnership			✓	No new information came forward as a result of the consultation process and the research undertaken and this has confirmed our belief that the proposed new library service		

				arrangements would not have any greater or lesser effect on people on account of marriage and civil partnership		
Pregnancy & maternity	✓			Pregnant women may find access to libraries more difficult in later stages of pregnancy. The consultation process did not provide any feedback to indicate that this was a significant problem in relation to the proposed changes and pregnancy is a transitory effect.	Online library services would help women in these cases. Also see 'Sex' section below	
Race (including Gypsy & Traveller)			✓	5.6% (162) of those taking part in the consultation indicated that they were from backgrounds other than 'white British' The highest percentage of these respondents were using either Cheltenham library 12.3% (20) or Gloucester, 19.1% (31) Compared to the overall responses they were less likely to predict a negative effect on them from the library strategy proposals, probably because they use the two Main libraries. The research indicates that BME people account for 6.1% of the county population and they mainly live in the areas where the 2 main libraries are located No changes are proposed to the	The Share A Book mobile would still be available to provide outreach activity to traveller sites in school holidays as an outreach service	

				<p>specialist library services to the books in other languages service (Bright Books)</p> <p>Consultation was held at a traveller site to discuss the library proposals and it told us that most travellers do not use the service themselves but like it to be available to their children as they can not afford expensive books and they do not all have computers.</p> <p>We do not believe that there are any particular issues to be aware of as traveller sites are relatively near to one of the 31 proposed libraries.</p>		
Religion or Belief			✓	<p>No new information came forward as a result of the consultation process and the research undertaken and this has confirmed our belief that the proposed new library service arrangements would not have any greater or lesser effect on people on account of on people on account of their faith.</p>		
Sex	✓			See more detailed section below	See more detailed section below	See more detailed section below
Sexual			✓	<p>2.7% of people completing the consultation questionnaire</p>		

Orientation				<p>defined themselves as being LGBT</p> <p>LGBT stakeholder groups were written to ask them to let us know if they saw any issues of concern in relation to their needs and library proposals. No new information came forward as a result of the consultation process and the research undertaken. This has confirmed our belief that the proposed new library service arrangements would not have any greater or lesser effect on people on account of sexual orientation</p>		
Other groups: e.g. rural isolation, long term unemployed, health inequality, carers	✓	✓		<p>As a result of the consultation process, rural access was raised as an area of concern by some people.</p> <p>The deliberative workshop consultation with unemployed people confirmed that unemployed people may make use of libraries and use PCs for job application</p> <p>For carers there could be impact in terms of access to libraries to fit around caring responsibilities where there are reduced opening hours.</p>	<p>Also see references under other categories of age and disability</p> <p>Internet access will be available in 31 libraries and PCs will also be provided to community libraries. Job Clubs will continue in those libraries identified by those running them as being places where there is most need.</p> <p>Some carers may find digital library services more convenient</p>	<p>The library services provided to support the needs of carers, job seekers and the access needs for older people and disabled people and children living rurally are integral to the role of the service's Development Manager and the Community & Development Officers team and they will ensure these needs are regularly re- assessed and monitored</p>

<p>Socio-economically deprived groups (which may serve as a useful proxy for black and ethnic minority groups, the disabled and women who, research shows, are generally disproportionately represented in such groups)</p>	<p>✓</p>			<p>The consultation feedback has indicated that those taking part want the council to give consideration to providing library services to meet the needs of people who may be socio – economically disadvantaged.</p> <p>In terms of the library strategy proposals it may mean that economically disadvantaged people cannot afford to travel very far to a library or other services and they may not have books or computers and internet access at home</p> <p>The reduction in library opening hours could impact on the availability of libraries in terms of providing learning opportunities for people who may be disadvantaged.</p>	<p>The draft strategy proposes that council run libraries will be provided in all areas that are in the top 20% of the country’s most deprived in terms of multiple deprivation factors. It is intended that these library services will be developed with local partners to support the specific needs of people living in these areas.</p> <p>The library service will continue to work with partners such as Adult Learning services and G. First to facilitate the use of libraries and library services to support the learning needs of people who need specific support.</p> <p>Opportunities for active volunteering in both council run and the proposed community libraries could offer ‘work’ experience to some people who may be disadvantaged</p> <p>Other mitigations are references under the age, disability and sex sections below</p>	<p>The library service’s activity to support the needs of socio – economically deprived people are an integral element of the service’s Development Manager and the Community & Development Officers team and they will ensure these needs are regularly re - assessed and monitored and appropriate library services provided. This will often be by working in partnership with others.</p>
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<p>Community Cohesion</p>	<p>Provide details of any ways in which the proposed activity would promote equality in the community between those who share a protected characteristic and those who do not, and how it would promote good relations between such groups</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is there equality between those who will and won't benefit from the proposal? • Are there strong relationships between groups and communities in the area affected and will the proposed action promote positive relationships? • Does the proposal bring groups/communities into increased contact with each other? 	<p>The consultation process did not draw out any particular issues with regard to community cohesion.</p> <p>We do not think that the draft library strategy proposals will on balance lead to any diminution in current levels of community cohesion.</p>	<p>We think that strategy to extend the use of volunteering in the different areas of library services may help to bring people together with a shared aim.</p> <p>The consultation feedback appears to indicate support for the use of volunteers to support library services providing professional library input is also provided. Advice and training support will be provided by council librarians to community libraries</p>	<p>Library Services Manager will promote and monitor volunteering activity and report impact to Lead Cabinet Member</p>
<p>Human Rights</p>	<p>Are there any particular areas for attention?</p> <p>The following areas are considered relevant:</p>	<p>Article 8: The right to respect for private and family life.</p>	<p>Article 8: Privacy considerations have been taken into account in the context of volunteers accessing the library Talis system. Processes will be put in place to ensure that relevant data protection legislation is observed. Legal</p>	

		<p>Article 9: Freedom of thought, conscience and religion.</p> <p>Article 30 of the UN Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities states that the government recognises the right of persons with disabilities to take part on an equal basis with others in cultural life and take appropriate measures to ensure that they can enjoy access to inter alia, libraries.</p> <p>Article 14: Enjoyment of the ECHR rights and freedoms without discrimination</p>	<p>agreements and undertakings will be sought as appropriate. CRB checks will be made.</p> <p>Article 9: Reading materials are available for major religious beliefs in county libraries and through reservation services.</p> <p>Article 30: This requirement is reflected in the UK equalities legislation. All council run libraries are wheelchair accessible and access for disabled people would be a requirement of any community run library that is formed.</p> <p>The aspects of library services that support equality of access for disabled people are outlined on section 4 of this document</p> <p>Library service provisions identify positive steps to ensure that no service user is discriminated against as a</p>	
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			<p>result of disability.</p> <p>Library service provisions aim to provide an inclusive framework in which different cultural and religious values can co-exist and in which people are treated with dignity and respect. They aim to foster understanding and citizenship and to counter stereotyping and prejudice in a diverse society.</p>	
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AGE: For this protected group the aspects requiring consideration in relation to the proposed changes to the library strategy are in terms of the possibility for disproportionate negative impacts in terms of access to library services for children and older people, especially those aged 75 years. This is in relation to impacts from the proposed reduction in opening hours at 16 libraries, the proposed changes to mobile library services and the proposals for 7 community libraries.

Older people

A report was run from the library data base to see how many people over 65 years had borrowed items over the year from March 2011 to February 2012. However, the information about the age of users can only provide a guide as not all library members provide their date of birth. This showed the following numbers for each of the seven proposed community libraries:

Berkeley: 38 people aged over 65 and 31 aged over 75; Bream: 20 aged over 65 and 12 aged over 75; Brockworth 83 aged over 65 and 66 aged over 75; Lechlade 58 aged over 65 and 47 aged over 75; Minchinhampton 131 aged over 65 and 140 aged over 75; Mitcheldean: 83 aged over 65 and 45 aged over 75; Newnham: 27 aged over 65 and 19 aged over 75.

We estimate that older people are more likely to be using libraries than other adults as they have more time available to them once they retire and the consultation feedback and other research appears to confirm that this is the case. However, older people are not a homogeneous group and at the younger age range from 60+ many people will be living active lives and we think that these people are not as likely to be affected negatively by the proposed changes to library services as the over 75s or those who are already experiencing disabilities as well. The evidence (see section 5 above) indicates that as people age they tend to lose their ability to remain independently mobile and to sustain their participation in community and social activities. They may experience

deterioration in their ability to walk and to carry books. They may no longer be able to drive safely, and may need to surrender their licence and they may find it difficult to travel on public transport. If car parking is not near to libraries or if a walk uphill is required this may also act as a barrier.

The needs assessment has shown that the highest numbers of **older people** live in the main towns where Main and libraries will be provided and there are no changes affecting these libraries so no impact is expected. Local libraries will also be provided in the suburban areas.

The information about which Local libraries will have reduced opening hours is provided in section 2 and section 4 indicates distances to the nearest alternative libraries and public transport availability. It is considered that the two libraries where their users might need to most change their library visit habits owing to opening hour changes are Nailsworth and Wotton. Nailsworth library is just over 4 miles from Stroud Main library with 5 buses per day to Stroud. Wotton is 6 and half miles from Dursley Main library with 6 buses a day to Dursley. The population in the library catchment area for these two libraries represents 3.23% of the county population. There are 2,012 people over 65 living in the library catchment area for Nailsworth, 19.03% and 1,640 or 19.42% living in Wotton. These percentages are around the county average 18.5% for percentage of older people. Both Nailsworth and Wotton communities have expressed interest in providing volunteers to help extend core library opening hours. It is considered that retired people will be able to change the timing of their visits to match into new opening hours and active older people will be able to travel to other libraries. Hence taking this information into consideration it is considered that any adverse impact for older people in Nailsworth or Wotton due to the changes in opening hours will be limited. Older people with mobility difficulties in these communities will be eligible for the volunteer transport support to libraries if they need it.

Although the actual numbers of older people are greatest in the main towns, in the rural areas of the Cotswolds especially, a higher percentage of the local population are 65+. This is most significant in Painswick, Chipping Campden and Minchinhampton. In Painswick, a community library is already being developed as the library closed in 2009. Also at Chipping Campden there will be a local library providing 28 opening hours a week; opening hours were increased from 16 in October 2011. Hence no changes or impact is expected.

For two of the proposed community libraries where there are more significant proportions of older people (25% or more) in the local library catchment population this is examined further. A report was run from the library data base to see how many people over 65 years had borrowed items over the year from March 2011 to February 2012. However, the information about the age of users can only provide a guide as not all library members provide their date of birth. This also looked at home postcodes to see how far they had travelled.

For Minchinhampton library this indicated that there were 271 people in this category. Of this 140 were aged over 75 years. Only 8% of library borrowers with a Minchinhampton post code were over 65 and for over 75s this falls to 4% or 65 people. Older people with mobility difficulties in these communities will be eligible for the volunteer transport support to libraries if they need it. This is described in more detail in the mitigation section below. Less than half of all library borrowers at Minchinhampton were living within 1 mile of the library which suggests that many people were travelling by car to the library.

Using the same report for Lechlade 105 people over 65 had borrowed an item during the year and 47 of these were aged over 75 years. Only 11% of the library borrowers with a Lechlade postcode were over 65s and 5% of the over 75s.

Information received from the consultation feedback about older people:

Of the respondents who supplied their age on their consultation forms for the 65+ age group 90.5% (212 people) were using one of the libraries proposed to become council run and 9.5% (22 people) using the libraries proposed as community libraries. However, there was some indication that when compared to the responses from all respondents (the 9.5%) who said they used a library proposed to become a community library there was more use by over 65s than other ages.

When asked to consider the impact the changes would have on their future use of libraries if the library strategy proposals went ahead, 4.1% of people in the 60 - 74 age group said it would have a negative effect and this was 7.5% in the 75+ group of respondents.

Some of the most significant feedback to be actively considered in the context of this protected group was received from the self selecting questionnaire feedback from mobile library users. Of the respondents, 41.8% were aged over 75 or over and a further 33.3% were aged 60-75. Almost three quarters, 64.6% were female and just under half of this group, 46.8% people also said they had a disability. 56% reported that they had access to the Internet at home. Nevertheless, in terms of attitudinal responses, over 6 in 10 agreed to the proposition relating to use of volunteers and community involvement and just over a half, 50.5% indicated agreement with the mobile library proposals. Only 13.9% recorded disagreement.

Although we cannot disaggregate feedback from users of the Homelink mobile library service that visits elderly people's residential homes from the consultation data, we did undertake further contact with Homelink mobile users through staff visits to support the consultation process. The key points raised by these older people showed a high level of customer's appreciation of the service due to the range of large print stock specific to their requirements and that the residents who were able to visit the van to choose their own books valued this rather than have other people select books for them. Some residents were not keen to use the internet or have someone help them with it to order books, and others were concerned about the cost of taxis if they needed to travel to a library in the future. The partnership with the WRVS will help us to identify more volunteer drivers to support these people.

Children

A report was run from the library data base to see how many children had borrowed items over the year from March 2011 to February 2012. However, the information about the age of users can only provide a guide as not all library members provide their date of birth. This showed the following numbers for each of the seven proposed community libraries:

Young children of primary school age or below need parents to accompany them to a library. There are no changes to opening hours at Main libraries so no

adverse impact is expected for children using these libraries and the other 6 Local Libraries where no reduction in opening hours is planned (as in section 2) . Although there will be reductions in opening hours at some libraries there will always be some opening times after school and at weekends so no adverse impact is expected for those libraries where opening hours are only being reduced by a few hours.

For libraries with a greater reduction of opening hours, children using these libraries may need to travel with their parent/carer to another library if they cannot visit on the days their local library is open. On public transport, children under 5 travel free and under 16s at a discounted fare. If this is necessary for children living in families that are income deprived such journeys may be considered too costly so it is possible that in these cases there may be some adverse impact. This cannot be assessed from the information available. The library travel pass could help to support these families. It should be remembered that children will still have access to school libraries and the Share A Book mobile library or the Public Sector Mobile Service could also be visiting the areas where they live.

The largest actual numbers of children live in the main towns. The areas where there are proportionally more **children** are in the library catchment local population areas of Hesters Way, Matson and Quedgeley for 0 - 4s and Wotton, and at Bream and Quedgeley for 5-16s. Council run libraries will be provided in all these areas except Bream which is 3 miles from the council run Lydney library and a bus runs every hour during weekdays. From the library borrower report run over the year from March 2011 to February 2012, 94 children under 16 borrowed books from Bream library.

The changes to the opening hours at Matson are minor, 2 hours less, so no adverse impact expected for children and the reduction of these 2 hours will not be after school times. The reduced opening hours at Hesters Way and Quedgeley are more significant, 13.5 and 11 respectively but in both cases these libraries are in the suburbs of the county's two main towns with good public transport to the central libraries. For Hesters Way, it is only 1 mile into Cheltenham library with buses every 10 minutes. For Quedgeley it is 4.5miles from the centre of Gloucester and there are 4 buses per hour and these also call at Tuffley on the way where there is another council run library. Wotton is six and a half miles from Dursley Main library with 6 buses a day to Dursley.

Information received from the consultation feedback about this protected group:

The analysis of the telephone survey consultation shows that 57.5% of those respondents with dependent children said their children used libraries. The responses indicated that in terms of how children use libraries it was split between borrowing, 59% and for attending early year's activities, 2,7%

Feedback from the workshops that took place with young people; secondary school children and NEETS indicated that library use for their peer group was low. The feedback from the primary aged children groups indicated higher use of libraries at Hesters Way and that many visited by themselves whereas for the Matson group library use was low. When asked about what would help them to use libraries all mentioned their school library, wanting libraries open after school times and being attracted if special activities were taking place.

Additional feedback from stakeholder communities

In addition to the formal consultation feedback process the following communities, Minchinhampton, Lechlade, Brockworth, Berkeley, Mitcheldean, Moreton-in-Marsh, Newnham, and Nailsworth also provided extra information for consideration as part of the feedback process and for the needs assessment. This has been assessed by the council's Strategic Needs Analysis Team and is referenced fully in the Context & User Needs Assessment. Travel and access for older people or children was a consistent theme and other main points relevant to this protected group were:

For **Minchinhampton**, where there will be a community library, people were concerned about the implications for travel by car or public transport to alternative libraries of Stroud or Nailsworth library for older people especially. The travel information was checked. Public transport is available to both towns as indicated in section 4 above. However it is recognised that a 15 to 20 minute walk up an incline would be needed to get to Stroud library. Blue badge parking for disabled people is available outside the library in Stroud and scheme members can park for free in Stroud car parks where lift access is available in the main car park adjacent to the bus terminal to street levels. Free public car parking is also available next to Nailsworth library. If travelling from Minchinhampton to Nailsworth the bus station is virtually opposite the library. The community drew attention to the higher proportion of the local population being 'active borrowers' 28.94% as compared to the county norm of 18.94%. As the active borrower data can only provide a guide to library use as it is calculated from the library where people first joined, a report was extracted from the library database to show over a year the number of people actually borrowing items from Minchinhampton library (1,577) and where they had travelled from based on their postcode. This is the information analysed above under the 'older people' section which shows that less than half live within a 1 mile radius of the library.

For **Lechlade**, where there will be a community library, concern was expressed about the impact on older people and children who may need to travel to an alternative library and that Cirencester main library was considerably more than 30 minutes away by public transport. They were also concerned that the library catchment did not represent those travelling in to use the library in the wider Lechlade area. The information provided has been checked. The percentage of older people according to 2010 figures is 24.48% and this is higher than the county average of 18.5%. People aged over 65 in Lechlade make up 5% of people of these ages for the Cotswolds District council area. Younger people make up 22.8% of the population in the catchment area. Lechlade has the smallest population catchment of the Cotswold group of libraries. A council run library at Fairford is 4 miles from Lechlade and the secondary school is also in Fairford. Public transport is available to Fairford as indicated in section 4 above.

For **Berkeley**, where there will be a community library, concern was expressed that a higher number of children and young people live in income deprived families. This was checked and is estimated that this could affect 9.6% of children (103). We do not know if these children use the current library.

For **Brockworth**, where there will be a community library the main concerns of the feedback was about the levels of deprivation mainly affecting children. The data has been analysed by the strategic needs analysis team which looked at income deprivation affecting children, children in poverty, free school meals and lone parents and concluded that the information did put Brockworth at the lower end of the deprivation spectrum out of the seven proposed community libraries but more significant deprivation was found in the main towns of Cheltenham, Gloucester and Tewkesbury. Relatively low number of

looked after children were in the area.

For **Mitcheldean**, where there will be a community library the main concern submitted was about public transport and access to a car or van, and the impact this would have on income deprived children and older people. The information was checked and there is a slightly higher percentage, 19.1% of households not having access to a car or van when compared to the county average of 18.1%. Estimates suggest that about 17.1%, about 150 children could be in income deprived families. 913 people or 19.8% of the population are aged over 65 years and this is slightly above the county average of 18.5%. In terms of access, an hourly bus is provided to Gloucester with an average journey time of 35 minutes and a bus 5 times per day to Cinderford. The latter service is due to be improved. Both destinations will have council run libraries under the library proposals.

For **Newnham**, where there will be a community library the main concerns were around access and impact on older people. A higher than the county average for households with access to a car or van is recorded for Newnham. The library catchment population makes up 3.85% of the Forest of Dean area population with a total of 3,144 people. 22.6% are aged over 65 years which is higher than the county average of 18.5%. A higher proportion of the adult care users in this area are older people.

Similar comments about the strategy's impact on older people in relation to travel by public transport and the costs of parking near proposed Main libraries were also received from **Moreton in Marsh** and **Nailsworth** communities where it is proposed that there will be council run libraries.

Mitigating actions

Section 4 above indicates the services provided to support children and young people's use of libraries and also measures taken to support access for older people. These are at the heart of library service's core offer to people to ensure inclusivity and to encourage participation. The mitigations in this section are intended to build on what is already provided and referenced in section 4 and to increase capacity of the service to provide measures to ensure inclusion.

For older people affected by changes to their current local library or by the mobile library changes and who can still travel independently, libraries will be open elsewhere and travel by public transport or community transport will be available to them if they do not have a car. In co-ordination with the integrated transport service more flexible public or community transport arrangements will be developed. These will **depend on needs identified and it may include a library visit bus 'pass' and consideration of some adjustments to public and community transport routes and a flexible phone and book service.** Older people also have concessionary travel passes.

For people travelling by car, on site car parking is available at 68% (21) of the 31 proposed council run libraries. Free car parking is also currently within about 50 metres at a further 4 libraries.

For older people who are unable to travel independently, the partnership with the WRVS opens up greater capacity for supplying volunteer drivers to help

people travel to libraries and for taking library books to people in their homes or other places they meet.

We will continue to provide and expand the number of Library Clubs and transport to these clubs for older people with mobility difficulties. The new partnership with the WRVS will increase the capacity for providing volunteers to extend this service to include people living in residential homes. Experience has shown is that these clubs can have a **positive** impact in terms of enabling older people to participate in public life for longer than they would otherwise have done and it that they are valued by some attendees as a social activity, reducing their isolation.

For those older people who reach a point of not being able or wanting to leave their homes volunteers can take books to them if they want this service. This includes taking books to people who may live in elderly people's residential homes. Boxed book collections can be provided to elderly people's residential homes from a nearby library. Small collections of library books can be offered to groups of older people meeting in rural areas, for example at lunch clubs. Some Village Agents already help us to provide books to older people and the WRVS volunteers and others could help us to extend this further.

Library services actively support the 'get online' campaign to get more people using digital services and volunteer IT buddies and library staff help older people with first steps into computer use. The WRVS have also been providing support to older people developing digital skills. They have offered to supply such a service to support older people living in rural areas where they have a PC at home so that they can learn how to use online library services and order books or find out information from 'Your Circle'.

The WRVS are an organisation whose aim is to 'make Britain a great place to grow old' and they put older people at the heart of what they do, promoting wellbeing and providing support to help sustain older people's independence. It is considered that some of these mitigations will have a positive effect on older people as they age and become less independently mobile and thereby help towards sustain independence and engagement in life.

The consultation period has indicated that over 77.8% of respondents agreed with the proposal for a public sector services mobile. A book loan service will be integral to this and it will continue to provide library services in rural areas. Subject to Cabinet confirmation of this proposal and to discussions with partners, initial feasibility has indicated that such a re-configured service will be able to visit up to 50 rural communities over a three week period with stops lasting from 1.5 hours up to half a day. Additionally, people will also have access to other partner services in these rural areas and to the Internet and wider sources of information. This service will serve people of all ages but consideration will be given to placing mobile stops near shops and other places where older people meet or near to elderly people's residential homes in some cases.

The library strategy proposals for more use of volunteers in either council run or community run libraries provides retired people aged over 60 with opportunities for volunteering and this could have a positive impact on people's lives, helping them remain active in their communities.

The continuation of the Share A Book mobile service for half of the week when it is not in use by Library Services for Education (LSE) and during school

holidays will mean that this service continues to be used for outreach to children and especially to support the early years age group via playgroups and children's centres, with an emphasis on those rural areas and other places where there are likely to be children affected by educational, social or economic deprivation factors.

School libraries will continue to provide children with access to reading material and the library service outreach work to children via schools will continue. The library service's outreach activity for children's centres and that which supports the needs of Looked After Children and children with disabilities will also be maintained. Library Services for Education (LSE) will continue to supply schools and other educational settings with a mobile library book loan service during term time and this will reach many children. Via the LSE, the library service will continue to provide a postal service to children directly to them if they have a specialist interest and books on the subject are not available in the library they usually visit. This service is available to all children.

Children with access to a PC and internet at home will be able to use online library reference material for homework and also to download children's eBooks from home.

Gloucestershire youth support service provide training programmes for NEETs in libraries where there is most evidence of need. The consultation feedback demonstrated that NEETS are more likely to be using a proposed council run library, especially the Main libraries. Young people who want to use computers for study or to apply for jobs online can book a computer to use when a library is open.

As community libraries are established as an addition to the statutory council run libraries their services are also likely to cater for the needs of children and their families and older people. The consultation feedback indicated that the main concern about greater use of volunteer run libraries was the loss of librarian input. Professional advice, training and support from the council run library service will be provided to the volunteers running community libraries during any transition phase and up to 3 hours per week support and advice. The People's Network PCs will also be provided by the council to these community libraries and this will give access to county book stock via online reservations and book delivery to the library. Community libraries may want to focus their services to cater more for younger people and families or for older people in their area, depending what would be relevant to that community. Agreements between the council and the community group will require them to comply with the Equality Act 2010. Subject to physical limitations their libraries will also be accessible. Volunteers would also be trained by library staff about meeting the specific needs of the elderly, children and disabled. Additionally, the books donated by the council will include large print, talking books and other resources that promote inclusivity.

Suggestions arising from people participating in the deliberative workshops about ways to mitigate impacts for this protected group

1. A suggestion from the group of people living in rural areas was to put the mobile in supermarket car parks.
 - This can be investigated as part of the development of the reconfigured new public sector mobile service.

2. Several suggestions were made by the different groups about making more use of other charitable organisations and volunteers to help extend services to people in protected groups who might be adversely affected by the proposals.
 - The use of volunteers to help extend library services is a key element of the draft strategy.
3. Some groups suggested providing books in other places, such as small collections to be picked up or dropped off by volunteers.
 - This is already happening in some rural areas and the proposed strategy and use of volunteers should enable it to be extended further
4. Some groups suggested more use of IT and Kindles to help people at home use the library service.
 - The development of the virtual library and eBooks is a core element of the draft strategy. The library service and current IT buddy volunteers already offer support to older people wanting to develop digital skills and the partnership with the WRVS would also increase capacity for this support.
5. In terms of cost savings, people also suggested hiring library rooms to raise income and seeking sponsorship, especially for the mobile service.
 - Libraries and meeting rooms are hired out and income raised currently and will continue to be so. Sponsorship options for a reconfigured mobile library service will be investigated.
6. Use of community transport was suggested by some groups including dial a ride, bus passes, and volunteer drivers
 - These will be developed as part of mitigations

How monitored & by whom The library services provided to support the needs of older people and children are integral to the role of the service's Development Manager and the Community & Development Officers team. They will ensure that people's needs are regularly reassessed and library services provided to support outcomes for more vulnerable people and that relevant mitigations are implemented and monitored.

Library travel passes as a mitigation provision will be monitored by the Library Services Manager and Integrated Transport Unit

Disability: For this protected group the aspects requiring consideration in relation to the proposed changes to the library strategy are in terms of the possibility for disproportionate negative impacts in terms of access to library services for people with mobility related disabilities if they need to use alternative libraries when their current library is not open. This is especially for people with who acquire an age related disability, for other physical disabilities and learning disabilities. There may also be impacts for those who are blind or have visual impairment or mental health disabilities. This is in relation to impacts

arising from the from the proposed reduction in opening hours at some libraries as outlined in section 2 and in the proposed changes to mobile library services and the proposals for 7 community libraries.

Children with disabilities: Some disabled children and their families may find that the changes to the library opening hours may aggravate the barriers that already exist for them to access library services or if they can no longer visit the library they are used to using.

Adults and older people with physical and mobility related disabilities: Our assessment is that for mobility related disabilities the issues for some disabled people will be similar to those outlined for the aged. Some types of disablement will be about physical access to services and ability to travel.

Learning disability: Some people with **learning disabilities** may experience more difficulties if they don't understand the changes to opening hours or have to travel further to visit a library service and may need additional support to help them understand the changes and what options are available to them. The consultation process included an easy read version of the questionnaire and 129 were returned. Some of these may have been completed by people with learning disabilities. The feedback was that 55% felt that getting to another library other than their current regular one would be difficult for them.

Blindness or visual impairment: People who are blind or have visual impairment, which can often be onset in older age, may be able to travel independently to a library on a known and practiced route but they may be adversely affected if they needed to switch their library use to a different library and different bus route.

Mental health disability: Some people with **mental health disabilities** may experience more isolation if they have to travel further to a library service and it requires visiting a new place.

Evidence:

As no database of disabled people is available and the library membership database does not request this information from library users, adult care service user figures are used as a guide to indicate the numbers of people with disabilities. This information is on the Context & User Needs document and highlighted where significant in this equality assessment.

The library user survey of 2006 did indicate that where people responded to register their disability as part of that survey it was to record mainly mobility disabilities/ difficulties getting around but also to a lesser degree sight, hearing and mental health. This was reported mainly by respondents using libraries in the Gloucester area where 357 people reported a disability. The second largest number was for the Stroud libraries, 344 people this is followed by the Forest area, 325 people, Tewkesbury area 306, Cheltenham area 297 and the Cotswolds, 237 people. The highest number by library was Hucclecote, 104 people, 3.8% of all respondents for this library, Coleford, 84 people, 6.8%, Nailsworth 83 people, 8.9%, Churchdown 83 people, 6.7% and Lydney, 77 people 0.6%.

Around 15% of people over 65 years receive social care support services to help them live independent lives. Only 3% of this group receive residential care.

The incidence of limiting long term illness increases with age for example it affects 56% of people over 75 years compared to 16% of those aged 45 to 59.

The needs assessment showed that in terms of actual numbers of adult care service users with disabilities the highest proportions in the county and the largest numbers live in the Gloucester library catchment area, followed by Cheltenham. No changes are planned for these libraries hence no impact should be expected.

For the library catchment areas the most significant ones showing a higher than average proportion of adult care service users in terms of the immediate local population were: Tuffley Stow, and Painswick for physical disability; Gloucester, Stonehouse, Newnham for learning disability; Stonehouse, Brockworth, Mitcheldean for mental health. Gloucester and Stow will be a Main libraries and no changes are planned hence no particular impact is anticipated. Painswick library closed in 2009 and the local people are developing a community library. Tuffley and Stonehouse will remain as council run libraries and the main impact may be in terms of opening hour reductions.

The opening hour reductions will affect people with disabilities who use libraries only if they visit during the opening hours provided and if they cannot travel by car, taxi or public transport to another library. It is considered that if people's disability currently enables them to travel to a library then no adverse impact should be assumed. They can use this library during the time it is open. Alternatively, if they need to travel to a different library, such libraries are accessible. People are probably in receipt of disability living allowance and are likely to be blue badge holders if they drive. On balance, in the light of these considerations no significant impact is anticipated but if any library user expressed concern and could not get to a library we would identify volunteer drivers.

There are no clear records about children with disabilities as library users. There was some evidence for higher levels of children with SEN (more than 100) in Gloucester, Hucclecote, Stroud, Cirencester and Quedgeley. In terms of the proportion of children in the in the library catchment areas Matson, Hesters Way and Cinderford showed some significance. The highest numbers of children with disabilities is in Cheltenham, Gloucester, Stroud and Forest of Dean district council areas.

People with disabilities using the 7 libraries proposed to become community run would still be able to use these libraries unless they did not wish to do so and providing community libraries are established in these areas. Equality of access to library service will be a requirement of the agreement with the council. Inclusion training will be provided by council librarians. The provision of resources for supporting disabled people's specific needs as identified in section 4 is available to all people in the county and managed by the council libraries but much of this is not library specific hence disabled people living in areas where there is a community library would not be disadvantaged.

Information received from the consultation feedback about this protected group:

Information from the recent libraries 2012 consultation process tells us that 718 people said they had a disability (18.4% of respondents) The most common

type of disability recorded was mobility problems (228). The next highest category was hearing impairment (178) then partially sighted (138). 65 people said they had problems using hands and fingers, 48 that they had learning difficulties and 67 reported mental health problems. Respondents who considered themselves to be disabled were twice as likely to expect a negative impact as a result of the proposed library changes compared to the returns from all respondents. However, people who indicated they had mental health problems in the consultation feedback were more likely to indicate that they would be unaffected by the library proposals

The feedback analysed also indicated that the disabled people who responded were more likely to be using the proposed main and local libraries. For these people no adverse impact is expected as the service remains the same. From the 137 respondents who used the mobile library services just under a half reported a disability, 42.3% or 58 people. Those reporting a disability who were users of the 7 proposed community libraries was as follows:

Berkeley, 8 people; Bream, 1 person; Brockworth, 20 people; Lechlade, 41 people; Mitcheldean, 17 people; Newnham, 9 people; Minchinhampton, 95 people. For disabled people who are unable to travel independently, volunteer drivers or a book delivery service to their home can be provided if requested. However, not every respondent who has a disability will necessarily have completed the personal information section of the forms asking for information about disabilities.

The consultation information also seemed to indicate that for those reporting a disability and completing the how they travelled section, that there was more concerns about negative effects reported by those who said they travelled by methods other than by car, public transport or walking. This may be because they are more reliant on others to help them access libraries.

From an overall base respondent figure of the 174 disabled people who completed the question about the mobile library proposals, 69.6% agreed with the proposals for the mobile library service changes but 15.5% were in disagreement and this was slightly higher than the mean level of disagreement.

When asked to consider the impact the changes would have on their future use of libraries if the library strategy proposals went ahead, 4.7% of people reporting disabilities and answering this question said it would have a negative effect and 58.3% said they thought it would have no effect.

Additional feedback from stakeholder communities

In addition to the formal consultation feedback process the following communities Newnham, Brockworth and Berkeley also provided extra information about disabilities for consideration as part of the feedback process and for the needs assessment. This has been assessed by the council's strategic needs analysis team and is referenced fully in the Context & User Needs Assessment. The main points relevant to this protected group were:

For **Newnham**, where the strategy proposes a community library the community were also concerned about the impact on older people who may also have disabilities. There are 123 physical disability service users in Newnham and 45 people with learning disability and there are a number of care and sheltered

homes close to Newnham. .

For **Brockworth** where the strategy proposes a community library the feedback indicated concerns for people experiencing deprivation and of the 7 proposed community libraries Brockworth is in the most deprived range for mental health; 94 people or 1.21% of the local population and people with physical disabilities, 268 people, 3.45% of the local population.

For **Berkeley**, where the strategy proposes a community library, the community were concerned about deprivation factors affecting people. 16.7% of people living in Berkeley are estimated to have a limiting long term illness which is just above the county average of 16.1%. 195 people receive disability living allowance.

Mitigating actions

Section 4 above indicates the services provided to support people with disabilities including older people and children. These are at the heart of library service's core offer to people to ensure inclusivity and to encourage participation by people who may have a disability. The mitigations in this section are intended to build on what is already provided and referenced in section 4 and to increase capacity of the service to provide measures to ensure inclusion.

All council run libraries are accessible to people using wheelchairs. Disabled people will be able park at the 68% of libraries that have on site parking. The Blue Badge scheme means disabled people can park near to many libraries for easy access. Disabled people and also have concessionary travel passes for public transport. Staff at the proposed Main and some other local libraries are trained to provide support to people applying for disabled travel passes.

Hearing loops are available in some council run libraries and this is being extended to all.

The re-configured public sector service mobile service will be provided in rural areas and it will be accessible to people who have a mobility disability

Council run libraries will continue to be part of the 'keep safe scheme' for people with learning disabilities. Local staff teams often know their regular users and we will ensure that they take time to explain library service changes to people with learning disabilities.

As well as the services for visually impaired people outlined in section 4, if blind people are concerned about visiting a different library as a result of the library changes we will liaise with the sensory team who can provide mobility route training to familiarise them with a new route.

For people with physical disabilities affected by changes to their current local library or by the mobile library changes and who can still travel independently or with their companion, libraries will be open elsewhere and travel by public transport or community transport will be available to them if they do not have a car. In co-ordination with the integrated transport service more flexible public or community transport arrangements can be developed. [It may include a library](#)

visit bus 'pass' and consideration of some adjustments to public and community transport routes and a flexible phone and book service.

The Library Clubs and support with transport if needed are also available to disabled people and they can also provide a social experience as well as support library use.

Older people with disabilities will also be eligible for the WRVS support to help them continue independent participation in library use in the ways already outlined in the section above about 'age'

The development of digital library services could provide a better means of access that visiting a library for people with physical and hearing disabilities if they have the Internet at home.

For children with disabilities as well as the core support outlined in section 4 we will ensure we inform the Parent Participation Council about library services changes and regularly consult with them about how we can encourage participation by children with disabilities. We have liaised with the sensory team and are jointly planning 'Inclusion Needs You' training tailored for library staff.

We will continue to offer the full range of services to people with visual impairment. As part of this talking books can be posted to them. Libraries will also provide talking books and also large print books. Digital eAudio books are also downloadable at home for people with the Internet.

In partnership with the health service we will continue to provide 'Books on Prescription', self- help and awareness books prescribed by GPs for people with mental health and the health partner has indicated that they would be wanting to offer this to community run libraries as these are established.

As community libraries are established in addition to the statutory council run libraries their services are also likely to cater for the needs of disabled people. The consultation feedback indicated that the main concern about greater use of volunteer run libraries was the loss of librarian input. Professional advice, training and support from the council run library service will be provided to the volunteers running community libraries during any transition phase and up to 3 hours per week support and advice. The People's Network PCs will also be provided by the council to these community libraries and this would give access to county book stock via online reservations and book delivery to the library. Community libraries may be able to focus their services to cater more for people with disabilities if they think they perceive a need in their area, depending what would be relevant to that community. Agreements between the council and the community group will require them to comply with the Equality Act 2010. Subject to physical limitations their libraries will also be accessible. Volunteers would also be trained by library staff about meeting the specific needs of the elderly, children and disabled. Additionally, the books donated by the council will include large print, talking books and other resources that promote inclusivity.

Suggestions arising from people participating in the deliberative workshops about ways to mitigate impacts for this protected group

1. The disabled people group suggested co-ordination of service with meals on wheels for book delivery to older people

The proposed partnership with the WRVS will enable this to be investigated.

2. Several suggestions were made by the different groups about making more use of other charitable organisations and volunteers to help extend services to people in protected groups who might be adversely affected by the proposals

The use of volunteers to help extend library services is a key element of the draft strategy.

How monitored & by whom The library services provided to support the needs of disabled people are integral to the role of the service's Development Manager and the Community & Development Officers team. They will ensure that people's needs are regularly reassessed and library services provided to support outcomes for more vulnerable disabled people and that relevant mitigations are implemented and monitored.

Sex: For this protected group the aspects requiring consideration in relation to the proposed changes to the library strategy are in terms of the possibility for disproportionate negative impacts in terms of access to library services which could have more significance for people due to their sex or gender when other factors are also taken into consideration such as caring responsibilities, dependent children, socio-economic disadvantage and ageing. This is believed to be an area for consideration because:

Women are more likely to be **carers** either of children or of adults and to be responsible for accompanying children or the person they care for to the library. If they need to transfer their library use to a different library to the one currently used this could present difficulties in terms of travel and access and costs. Changes to opening hours at the library they currently use may also affect them. Opening hours and travel information is provided on section 2 and 4.

Lone parents are more likely to be women and if they are experiencing socio- economic deprivation this could aggravate their ability to pay for public transport and access library services. Libraries may be an important source of reading for children from poorer families.

For women a second element of protected characteristic may also come into effect in term **pregnancy & maternity.** This may also be relevant to library use, as in late pregnancy physical access may be more challenging and mothers are often responsible for looking after babies and young children and this could make access more difficult especially if mothers are single parents and experience economic or social deprivation.

Older women represent a significant proportion of library users and the consultation suggests that there is some indication that proportionally, as they age and become less independently mobile, that they may be more likely to be affected if they can no longer get to a library independently or to a mobile stop. The mitigations already outlined under the age section would come into effect.

Men appear to make more use of the proposed Main libraries and especially Cheltenham and Gloucester; this may be related to use of PCs and reading of newspapers and magazines supplied and no changes are happening for these libraries so no adverse impacts are anticipated for these users.

Evidence:

The analysis of the demography of the county and library catchment areas did not show significant evidence of a bias towards women or men and numbers were roughly equal. In Gloucestershire overall the split is 49.1% male and 50.9% female. There is not any significant variation in terms of district council area populations either. As people age the ratio of women to men increases. There has been an increase in single pensioner households who are headed by women.

It is estimated that there are 15,000 in single parent households with dependent children in the county and about 88% are headed by a woman and 12% by a man. Lone parent levels in the library catchment areas at Hesters Way, Gloucester and Matson were the most significant from the analysis. Council libraries are proposed in all these areas and public transport between libraries in the main towns of Gloucester and Cheltenham is regular and distances short, usually no more than 2 to 3 miles between libraries.

Information received from the consultation feedback about this protected group:

Of those participating in the consultation who completed the personal details section of the survey there does appear to be a bias towards more women taking part than men and towards older women. However, 9.8% of library use across the county was recorded for the proposed community libraries by women but they were significantly more likely to be using the libraries proposed to be Main (49.9%) or Local libraries (29.9%). Of the 137 people who completed the survey who said they were mobile library users and who gave their sex, 73.7% were female. The Public Sector Mobile service will be available to these users.

Women were also more likely to expect a negative impact if the proposals were implemented compared to men. There were 10% of women expecting a negative effect, for men it was 8%. Women expressed concerns in the consultation process about the effect on their children. Women without dependent children were less likely to predict a negative effect on future library use. This figure goes down to 7.8%. On balance there is not a more negative effect on women 'per se' but the perceived impact becomes noticeable where there are dependent children.

Parents expressed concerns that storytimes and other children's activities might not be available at the proposed community libraries. Libraries were also seen as having a role in supporting children's learning and helping with homework and providing a safe environment for children. *These activities are likely to be provided at community libraries and council library staff will be able to train volunteers.*

However, in terms of reporting 'no effect' on their anticipated future use of libraries due to the proposed changes it was actually women who were the higher

group; 44.8% for women and 40% for men.

When adding in age factors for over 75s there is a much higher differentiation between the expectations about negative effects due to the proposed library change. 8.7% men expect negative effects whereas it rises to 17.6% for women over 75 years of age.

The analysis of the feedback from the consultation process also gave some indication that confirms that it is mainly women who use the libraries proposed to become community libraries and older women are more likely to be regular users and users of the mobile library services

Increased walking times to a library may be a barrier for some and if a trip by public transport becomes a necessity concerns about costs were raised by the parent workshop group. Parents were concerned that children could not travel by bus independently and that this would limit access.

As community libraries are established as an addition to the statutory council run libraries their services are also likely to cater for the needs of this protected group. The consultation feedback indicated that the main concern about greater use of volunteer run libraries was the loss of librarian input. However, the council will be providing professional advice, training and support to the volunteers running community libraries during any transition phase and on an ongoing basis up to 3 hours per week support and advice. The People's Network PCs will also be provided by the council to these community libraries and this would give access to county book stock via online reservations and book delivery to the library. Community libraries will be able to focus their services to tailor services to local needs. Children's books and training by council library staff about children's needs and putting on activities such as story times, baby bounce and the summer reading challenge will all be provided to the volunteers running the community library.

Mitigating actions

For **older women** the range of mitigations already covered in age and disability sections will apply.

For **carers** travelling by car, on site car parking is available at 68% (21) of the 31 proposed council run libraries. Free car parking is also currently within about 50 metres at a further 4 libraries. Carers who need to accompany a disabled person on public transport get concessionary fares.

For younger women as **carers** or for **lone parents** experiencing **socio - economic disadvantage** who need to switch their library use to an alternative library as a result of the library proposals, public transport is available to alternative council run libraries for those who do not have access to a car. A library travel pass may help to improve access to libraries for some families on low income and pregnant mothers. Pregnancy will only be a transitory condition with short term impacts. Children under 5 years travel free and fares for children up to 16 years are discounted on public transport services.

The Share A Book mobile service will continue to provide a service focused on children and families. especially to support the early years age group via playgroups and children's centres, with an emphasis on those rural areas and other places where there are likely to be more vulnerable children affected by

educational, social or economic deprivation factors.

The reconfigured public sector mobile service will also be available in rural areas to support the needs of people affected in this protected group.

National evidence suggests that **men** are more likely to access services electronically so the development of the virtual library services could have a **positive** effect for men and help to improve access to library services and attracting some who do not currently use libraries.

Suggestions arising from people participating in the deliberative workshops about ways to mitigate impacts for this protected group

1. The parent and lone parent group suggested differentiating opening hours between term time and holidays.

This could cause disruption to other library users. However, by working with voluntary sector and other partners and play schemes it might be possible to offer use of some libraries for children's activities in the school holidays on days when the library is normally closed.

2. Other groups suggested that more use could be made of school libraries providing reading books and that the library service could liaise with schools more with books delivered to the school.

The library service's outreach ensures that contact is made with schools and children encouraged to use libraries and to take part in the Summer Reading Challenge. Library Services for Education provides bulk loans of children's books for reading for pleasure as well as for learning to schools.

How monitored & by whom Library services are provided to support the needs of all people including both sexes without discrimination. Additional outreach and support is provided to support more vulnerable families as part of the work of the Development Manager and the Community & Development Officers team. They will ensure that people's needs are regularly reassessed and that relevant mitigations are implemented and monitored.

Library travel passes as a mitigation provision will be monitored by the Library Services Manager and Integrated Transport Unit

Declaration

We are satisfied that an Assessment has been carried out and where a negative impact has been identified, actions have been developed to lessen or negate this impact where possible. We consider that the negative impacts have been mitigated to the maximum extent possible and that the number of people in the protected groups who will suffer a negative effect thereafter is very small. The council remains under very significant financial constraints thus it is considered reasonable to continue with the proposed strategy. We understand that the Equality and Community 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

Date: March 30th 2012

Role: Library Services Manager (Strategy)

Countersigned by Operations Director Education Learning & Libraries : Jo Grills.....

Date:

Name of relevant Portfolio Holder/Cabinet Member: Mark Hawthorne

I confirm that I have examined and understood the potential impact of the proposal and confirm that I have had due regard to the needs set out in section 149 of the Equality Act 2010.

..... Cabinet Member

Date: