Equality Impact Assessment

Directorate: Customer and Community	
Service: Library Service	
Name of Officer/s completing assessment: Liz McMillan /Liz Jones	
Date of Assessment: September 2021	
Name of service/function or policy being assessed: Slough library service - review of services	

1.	**What are the aims, objectives, outcomes, purpose of the policy, service change, function that you are assessing?**
	The library service will be undertaking a review of the way SBC delivers library services to a) ensure they are fit for purpose and continue to be compliant with statutory obligations, b) review the advantages and disadvantages seen through the change in delivery during COVID-19 lockdown and c) achieve value for money by driving out savings to support action associated with issuing of Section 114 Notice.
	The library service in Slough has four (statutory) libraries: The Curve cultural hub in the heart of Slough town centre; and three community libraries in Britwell, Cippenham and Langley. In addition, there are three satellite non-staffed (non-statutory) libraries in Chalvey Grove, Vicarage Way and Wexham children's centres. All of our libraries are free at the point of use for all users. We also offer a small Home Library Service supported by volunteers who take library books to the homes of people who are unable to come to a library. During 2020 and 2021 the service was forced (due to COVID-19 restrictions) to close all physical library buildings. The service moved on-line and directed customers to eBooks/eAudio books, on-line "click and collect" and on-line activities and events.
	Library services provide access to books, online resources, computers with WiFi and Internet as well as a programme of events and activities for adults and children. Britwell and The Curve are also locality hubs which accommodate other services including Registrar Service, Learning & Skills services, Housing Demand and council customer services. The library service also provides outreach events including visits to schools.
	Under the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964, local councils in England have a statutory duty to provide a 'comprehensive and efficient' library service for all people working, living, or studying full-time in the area who want to make use of it.

2.	**Who implements or delivers the policy, service, or function?**
	Library services are funded, delivered and managed by a dedicated team within Slough Borough Council.
	The service is part of the Locality and Neighbourhoods Group under the Customer and Community Directorate.
	The Service Manager is the Locality Hubs and Library Services Manager who is supported by an Operational Lead and a Children's and Young People's Officer. This is the library services management team.
	The operational delivery is made through a number of Supervisors, Assistant Supervisors, library customer service assistants and volunteers.
	Early Years Teams based at the Children's Centres support the delivery of the three satellite (non-statutory) libraries in Chalvey Grove, Vicarage Way and Wexham.
3.	**Who will be affected by this proposal?**
	The proposal to review and reconfigure how we deliver the library service in Slough will have the potential to affect all residents of the borough as the service is universal and free at the point of use.
	Sloughs total resident population is 149,539.
	Total library membership in the borough is 40,000 people and of this, 21,000 are active borrowers (borrowing at least once a year and including on-line borrowing). The total membership accounts for 27% of the resident population and active borrowers account for 14% of the total resident population.
	Slough currently has 4 libraries the lowest number per population of our CIPFA "Most Similar Group" of 12 other local authorities with the most similar demographics to us. Reducing that number could have a negative impact on residents' ability to access library services.

These proposals could impact on residents, current library users and potential users of the service who will all fall into one or more of the protected characteristics groups.

Affected groups could include
- all residents of Slough,
- library staff,
- other council and hub staff,
- current library users,
- partner organisations and stakeholders including schools, Early Years provision, and post-16 education, learning and skills services.

Library Users data
<u>Age</u>
A high percentage of library users are children and young people. 70% of all users across all sites are aged under 15 and under. All of the attendees of activities such as story reading and, Baby and Rhyme sessions are carers with babies and pre-school children.

Older residents attend libraries to reduce social isolation, borrow books and attend events such as seated exercise sessions and reading groups.

The breakdown of active library users by age:

	% of active library users	Number of active library users
Child (0 – 10 y/o)	20.6%	4,394
Child (11 – 13 y/o)	9.2%	1,970
Young person (14 – 17 y/o)	7.6%	1,630
Adult (18 – 59 y/o)	58.7%	12,480
Senior citizen (60+)	3.6%	777

Sex

A slightly higher percentage of library members are female rather than male.

	Numbers of members	% of members
Female	10,945	55%
Male	8,868	45%

Gender reassignment and gender self-identification

The Library Service does not hold comprehensive data on gender reassignment or gender self-identification from membership records as this is not a legal requirement to hold this information. However, this is a universal offer supporting the needs of the total population by offering a range of free services.

There is no accurate information on the number of lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender (LGBT) people in Slough. Several estimates for the nationwide percentage of lesbian, gay and bisexual individuals exist, with the Office for National Statistics estimating approximately 2% of the total UK population (2016). The LGBT Foundation places it higher at between 5% and 7%. The Office for National Statistics has concluded that there is a need for greater information about LGBT individuals and is currently consulting about how best to generate this information.

Sexual orientation

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Disability
The Library Service does not hold full and comprehensive data on the disability needs of its customers. However, this is a universal offer supporting the needs of the total population by offering a range of free services.

In the 2011 Census, 9,322 Slough residents between the ages of 16-64 reported living with a physical disability. Over 1,350 people were also reported to be living with a severe mental health problem. There are an estimated 2,590 people living with sight loss in Slough and 2,696 adults under the age of 65 live with a moderate to severe hearing impairments (more have a profound impairment). Hearing impairments in younger adults in Slough is expected to increase by 20% over the next ten years. Just over 4% of over 65s in Slough have been recorded by their GPs as living with dementia.

In April 2021 it was estimated (here) that the un-employment rate for disabled people across the UK was 8.4% (compared to 4.6% for non-disabled) whilst for economic inactivity the rate for disabled people was 42.9% compared to only 14.9% for non-disabled people. This indicates that unemployment, economic inactivity and associated lack of disposable income for items like books, magazines, newspapers and Internet access (all services provided free by libraries) will disproportionately affect people with disabilities. It is fair to assume that reducing or removing access to these services in our libraries will negatively impact residents with disabilities.

In recognition of this the library service provides a range of resources to support residents with disability needs. This includes large print books, Talking Books and on-line resources with the ability to zoom into enlarge print size. We also offer targeted resources including Books on Prescription and "Reading Well" collections that support general health and wellbeing (self-help).

Marriage and Civil Partnership
The Library Service does not hold comprehensive data on the status of its users from membership records as this is not a legal requirement. However, this is a universal offer supporting the needs of the total population by offering a range of free services.

Pregnancy and maternity
The Library Service does not hold comprehensive data on the pregnancy/maternity status of its users from membership records as this is not a legal requirement. However, this is a universal offer supporting the needs of the total population by offering a range of free services. Anecdotal observations suggest that parents-to-be and new parents are a high proportion of those who use the service in particular Baby Rhyme Time sessions.

Race

The Library Service does not hold comprehensive data on the ethnic status of its users from membership records as this is not a legal requirement.   However, from observations of attendance at activities, feedback from library staff and anecdotal observations the majority of those using the service are Asian British, followed by White British and White other. This mirrors the general ethnic breakdown of Slough's resident population.

Ethnic breakdown of Slough resident population		
Asian/Asian British: Bangladeshi	549	0.6% of population
Asian/Asian British: Chinese	797	0.6% of population
Asian/Asian British: Indian	21,922	15.6% of population
Asian/Asian British: Other Asian	7,560	5.4% of population
Asian/Asian British: Pakistani	24,869	17.7% of population
Black/African/Caribbean/Black British: African	7,548	5.4% of population
Black/African/Caribbean/Black British: Caribbean	3,096	2.2% of population
Black/African/Caribbean/Black British: Other	1,471	1.0% of population
Mixed/multiple ethnic groups: White and Asian	4,429	1.0% of population
Mixed/multiple ethnic groups: White and Black African	607	0.4% of population
Mixed/multiple ethnic groups: White and Black Caribbean	1,667	1.2% of population
Mixed/multiple ethnic groups: Other Mixed	1,055	0.8% of population
Other ethnic group: Arab	928	0.7% of population
Other ethnic group: Any other ethnic group	2,654	1.9% of population
White: English/Welsh/Scottish/Northern Irish/British	48,401	34.5% of population
White: Gypsy or Irish Traveller	220	0.2% of population

White: Irish 1,607 1.1%		1,607	1.1% of population
White: Other White 13,825 9.9%		13,825	9.9% of population

Religion and Belief
The Library Service does not hold comprehensive data on the pregnancy/maternity status of its users from membership records as this is not a legal requirement. However, this is a universal offer supporting the needs of the total population by offering a range of free services.

Religious belief breakdown of Slough resident population			
Buddhist		743	0.6% of population
Christian		57,726	43.6% of population
Hindu		8,643	6.5% of population
Jewish		87	0.1% of population
Muslim		32,655	24.7% of population
Sikh		14,889	11.3% of population
Other religion		482	0.4% of population
No religion		17,024	12.9% of population

Library Users data

A separate Equality Impact Assessment will be carried out with staff if the outcome of the review and consultation results in changes for staff numbers, hours of work, type of role etc.

4.	**What are any likely positive impacts for the group/s identified in (3) above?** Publication budget If the Publication budget is reduced there will still be a mix of hard copy and on-line resources available for all users. During Covid-19 restrictions the numbers of items borrowed on-line increased by 300% showing that there is a demand for this type of borrowing. Changes to hours the libraries are open/hours that libraries are staffed by library customer service assistants

If the hours when library staff are available at libraries do change/reduce we will still have a 24/7 on-line offer which proved popular with users over Covid-19 lockdown. Anecdotal feedback has been that some users (unidentified protected characteristics) prefer the anonymity of using on-line resources and reduced interaction with staff rather than coming into a building and interacting with staff. This change may also present further volunteering opportunities for residents to take advantage of which could improve confidence, skills and wellbeing.

5.	**What are the likely negative impacts for the group/s identified in (3) above?** Age Children and young people make up the highest percentage of our library users both for book borrowing and attending events/activities. Reducing the publications budget could limit the number and range of books/eResources for children and young people. Reducing opening hours could limit the times young people are able to access physical library buildings, especially if self-service alternatives are used that may not be available for children/young people to access. Many of our activities and events are aimed at children and young people and there may be a reduction in the number of events available and/or they may be restricted to one or two libraries rather than being offered from all libraries across the borough. Anecdotal feedback from library staff suggest that older residents often go to a local library as a way of informally socialising with others, reducing their social isolation, and improving their social networks, health, and wellbeing. Feedback from adults using library-based activities (e.g., reading groups, seated exercises) support this staff feedback. Reducing the hours when library staff are available for people to talk to and get advice from could increase feelings of loneliness and social isolation. This would also reduce the availability of staff to work with older users to help reduce digital isolation – currently staff offer hands-on support and guidance to residents who are not confident using or accessing Internet in general and a range of council self-serve service as part of the "digital by default" transformation. Sex A higher percentage of females than males are library users so any reductions in service may have a disproportionate impact on female users. Gender reassignment and gender self-identification

Although we have no data specifically on library usage by residents who have had/are having gender reassignment, the reduction in publications budget could have a disproportionate impact on these users and those who don't identify as gender-binary. A reduced publication budget would limit the range of publications available and would focus on mainstream items. This would reduce the opportunity of stocking resources by, or for people in this group.

Sexual orientation
Although we have no data specifically about sexual orientation of library users or the general resident population, the reduction in publications budget could have a disproportionate impact on LGBT+ users and potential users. A reduced publication budget would limit the range of publications available and would focus on mainstream items. This would reduce the opportunity of stocking resources by, or for people in this group.

Disability
A reduction in the publications budget could affect users and potential users with disabilities as this would limit the number and range of large print, Talking Books and eResources (books where print size can be increased and audio books) available. It may also reduce the number and range of health and wellbeing resources being stocked to allow users to follow a "self-help" route to improve/maintain their own health.

Whilst some users/residents with disability may use on-line libraries/Home Library Service rather than physical buildings (e.g., those with limited mobility), others may find the loss of or reduced opening hours of library buildings more difficult. Residents with early stages of dementia, are neuro-atypical, have some mental health conditions etc. may be able to (and get benefits from) use a familiar library at times when they are less busy. If libraries are closed at quiet times this may disadvantage this group although we have no current library usage data on this issue.

Pregnancy and maternity
Several activities at libraries are specifically aimed at parents/carers of babies (e.g., Baby Rhyme Time, story times etc) to help babies get a first introduction to books and allow socialisation for both them and their parents. Spend on books/publications for babies is relatively high because the items are used often and suffer more wear and tear than books for older users. Free access to a range of books supports early years development. This means that reductions to the publication fund, reduced opening hours for libraries and reduced staff resource to deliver activities would have a specific impact on this group.

		New parents also use libraries to collect Bookstart packs for babies. Reduction in opening hours and hours when staff are available could limit the opportunities for parents to collect this resource. Race Almost 1/3rd (27%) of our total resident population do not have English as their main language (2011 Census). Reducing the publications budget would limit the range of publications available to allow focus on mainstream items meaning there may be a reduction in publications in languages other than English. Reducing the hours when staff are available to help and guide those who are not confident in reading English may also negatively impact this group.
6.	**Have the impacts indentified in (4) and (5) above been assessed using up to date and reliable evidence and data?** Data used is from Office for National Statistics (ONS) and Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA). ONS data is from 2011 Census. CIPFA data (most similar groups) is from 2019 report using 2018 data. Where Slough library usage data has been used this has been taken from the library management system. Further, more detailed analysis about impacts of service changes will be carried out after the 12-week public consultation which will include collection of equalities data and asking residents for their assessment of the proposals.	
7.	**Have you engaged or consulted with any identified groups or individuals if necessary and what were the results?** These service changes will be consulted on during a 12-week public engagement exercise. This public consultation will seek current library user's views and the views of people who do not currently use libraries but may do in the future. The consultation will include an on-line and hard copy survey, several face-to-face focus groups at each library (carried out at different times of day) and on-line sessions for residents and stakeholder groups. Information collected from this consultation will be analysed and included in the final recommendations so decision makers can fully understand the impact on different parts of our community. If changes have an impact on staff there will then be a separate consultation exercise with staff affected, other council services and unions. The results of this consultation exercise will be analysed and included in the final implementation plan.	

8.	**Have you considered the impact the policy might have on local community relations?**
	As part of the public consultation, we are ensuring that we actively seek the views of community, voluntary and third sector organisations that represent different community groups. We will be encouraging members of these groups to take part in the consultation. In addition, there will be face-to-face and on-line stakeholder engagement sessions to understand the impact of the proposals on community relations.
9.	**What plans do you have in place, or are developing, that will mitigate any likely identified negative impacts?**
	Each option being considered has a detailed mitigations plan associated with it. The mitigations include:
	- Seeking the views of residents and stakeholders about alternative proposals to ensure the service is fit for the future and delivers excellent value for money. - Ensuring that there is a robust and transparent process for deciding on the ratio of physical vs on-line resources purchased through the publications fund. - Ensuring there is a robust and transparent process for purchasing hard copy and eResources to mitigate the impact of publications available to users in a protected group (e.g., English language vs non-English language, children/young people vs adults etc.) - Ensuring there is a robust and transparent process for deciding what activities and events will be hosted by libraries and library staff. - Explore alternative venues for hosting library events and services (e.g., Children's Centres, schools, pop-up community locations etc) and also opportunities for libraries to co-locate in alternative venues and other services to co-locate in library buildings. - Develop a strong volunteer recruitment and retention scheme to support the delivery of events and services including Home Library Service. - Explore the further use of technology to allow library buildings to be accessible without staff needing to be on-site (e.g., Open+) - Develop a multi-media communications strategy to advertise opening hours, staffing hours and where and when activities will be happening. - Ensure that on-line resources remain available 24/7. - Actively seek out and make bids for external funding streams that will allow libraries to deliver specific projects. - Explore opportunities for sharing skills and knowledge with staff from other services/organisations to allow residents to still receive support even if not from specialist library staff. Also, explore opportunities for library staff to adopt new skills and knowledge to allow them to work efficiently with possible co-located services.
10.	**What plans do you have in place to monitor the impact of the proposals once they have been implemented?** (The full impact of the decision may only be known after the proposals have been implemented).
	Continue to collect user data via library management system and feed this to CIPFA as requested to allow us to review our services and their impact in comparison to our most similar local authority library services.
	We will develop a process (on-line surveys, staff feedback and consultation events) to regularly collect feedback from users, residents, staff and stakeholders. This "light touch" EIA process will take place annually.

What course of action does this EIA suggest you take? More than one of the following may apply	
Outcome 1: No major change required. The EIA has not identified any potential for discrimination or adverse impact and all opportunities to promote equality have been taken	
Outcome 2: Adjust the policy to remove barriers identified by the EIA or better promote equality. Are you satisfied that the proposed adjustments will remove the barriers identified? (Complete action plan).	✓
Outcome 3: Continue the policy despite potential for adverse impact or missed opportunities to promote equality identified. You will need to ensure that the EIA clearly sets out the justifications for continuing with it. You should consider whether there are sufficient plans to reduce the negative impact and/or plans to monitor the actual impact (see questions below). (Complete action plan).	
Outcome 4: Stop and rethink the policy when the EIA shows actual or potential unlawful discrimination. (Complete action plan).	

Action Plan and Timetable for Implementation

At this stage a timetabled Action Plan should be developed to address any concerns/issues related to equality in the existing or proposed policy/service or function. This plan will need to be integrated into the appropriate Service/Business Plan.

Action	Target Groups	Lead Responsibility	Outcomes/Success Criteria	Monitoring & Evaluation	Target Date	Progress to Date
Complete needs assessment using library data and demographics	All residents including library users and non-users	Liz Jones/Liz McMillan	Completed and used to shape consultation and options paper		Sept 2021	
Carry out public consultation to help shape outcomes and library review and enable full assessment of impact on Slough	All residents including library users and non-users and targeted groups with	Liz Jones/Liz McMillan	Completed and clear picture of needs of library users and non-users		December 2021	

Community	protected characteristics					
Hold series of face-to-face consultation drop ins at each library and online events and with stakeholder groups and staff to provide feedback – communications plan	All residents including library users and non-users and targeted groups with protected characteristics	Liz McMillan	Completed with good numbers attending and actively engaging. Feedback analysed and included in final needs assessment and recommendations for SBC decision makers.		February 2022	
Update EIA following consultation	As above	Liz McMillan/ Liz Jones	EIA reflects the findings from the consultation and mitigates negative impacts on protected groups.		January 2022	
Carry out annual "light touch" EIA with service users to monitor the impact of changes	Library users including targets groups with protected characteristics	Liz McMillan/Patsy To/Alison Beer	Ongoing impacts of changes are understood and used to fine tune and/or further review service delivery.		From Sept 2022	
Develop a library outcomes and strategic plan	Internal staff, Directors, cllrs, all residents	Liz McMillan/Liz Jones	New strategic plan linking clearly to Slough 2040 vision for future priorities for library service.		July 2022	

Name: Liz McMillan/ Liz Jones

Signed: …………………………………………………

Date: