

# Equality Impact Assessment

## Context

1. under s.149 of the Equality Act 2010, when making decisions, Essex County Council must have regard to the Public Sector Equality Duty, i.e. have due regard to:
  - eliminating unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation, and other conduct prohibited by the Act,
  - advancing equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not,
  - fostering good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not, including tackling prejudice and promoting understanding.
2. The characteristics protected by the Equality Act are:
  - age
  - disability
  - gender reassignment
  - marriage/civil partnership
  - pregnancy/maternity
  - race
  - religion/belief
  - sex/gender
  - sexual orientation.
3. In addition to the above protected characteristics you should consider the cross-cutting elements of the proposed policy, namely the social, economic and environmental impact (including rurality) as part of this assessment. These cross-cutting elements are not a characteristic protected by law but are regarded as good practice to include.
4. The Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) document should be used as a tool to test and analyse the nature and impact of either what we do or are planning to do in the future. It can be used flexibly for reviewing existing arrangements but in particular should enable identification where further consultation, engagement and data is required.
5. Use the questions in this document to record your findings. This should include the nature and extent of the impact on those likely to be affected by the proposed policy.
6. Where this EqIA relates to a continuing project, it must be reviewed and updated at each stage of the decision.
7. The EqIA will be published [online](#):
8. All **Cabinet Member Actions, Chief Officer Actions, Key Decisions** and **Cabinet Reports must be** accompanied by an EqIA.
9. For further information, refer to the EqIA guidance for staff.
10. For advice, contact:  
Shammi Jalota [shammi.jalota@essex.gov.uk](mailto:shammi.jalota@essex.gov.uk)  
Head of Equality and Diversity  
Corporate Law & Assurance  
Tel 0330 134592 or 07740 901114



## Section 1: Identifying details

Your function, service area and team: Corporate and Customer Services

If you are submitting this EqlA on behalf of another function, service area or team, specify the originating function, service area or team: Corporate and Customer Services

Title of policy or decision: Future Library Services Strategy 2019/20 – 2023/24

Email: libraries@essex.gov.uk

Date of completing the assessment: 31 August 2018

## Section 2: Policy to be analysed

2.1	<p>Is this a new policy (or decision) or a change to an existing policy, practice or project?</p> <p>This is a draft Library Services Strategy that will go through public consultation and engagement to inform the final version on future of libraries service, which is due in Summer 2019.</p> <p>This is therefore a provisional Equality Impact Assessment (EqlA) prepared to inform the consultation described below. This EqlA will be updated in light of response to consultation. The updated assessment will be used to inform the decision made.</p> <p>In terms of the consultation itself we will ensure that it is widely publicised and is available for completion in a variety of accessible formats.</p>
2.2	<p>Describe the main aims, objectives and purpose of the policy (or decision):</p> <p>The aim of the policy is to determine how the Council will provide a comprehensive and efficient library service to people in Essex in the light of a decline in usage, and in the context of the council's overall financial position.</p> <p>Aim:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Have books and reading at the heart of our library service offer</li><li>• Have a smaller number of libraries more effectively focused on meeting the needs of communities but with increased library membership and use</li><li>• Work in partnership with our communities to run and improve library services</li><li>• Offer a consistently good customer experience</li><li>• Have a comprehensive eLibrary offer and embrace digital technology.</li></ul> <p>Objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• To provide a library service in appropriate locations across the county according to the needs of the community</li><li>• Ensure that there is a consistent approach in the library services provided in</li></ul>

	<p>the future.</p> <p>What outcome(s) are you hoping to achieve (i.e. decommissioning or commissioning a service)?</p> <p>We propose to deliver a core offer through a range of physical and online services and take a tiered approach, based on evidence of need, to where we provide library services around the county in the future. The Needs Assessment and the approach we have designed will enable Essex County Council to meet its statutory duty to provide a comprehensive and efficient library service to all who desire to use it.</p>
2.3	<p>Does or will the policy or decision affect:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• service users</li> <li>• employees</li> <li>• the wider community or groups of people, particularly where there are areas of known inequalities?</li> </ul> <p>Yes, all of the above</p> <p>Will the policy or decision influence how organisations operate?</p> <p>Yes. We intend to increase involvement from community and partner organisations to support with delivering the library service. The library service could be provided in different ways and from different spaces which may affect partner organisations, positively or negatively.</p>
2.4	<p>Will the policy or decision involve substantial changes in resources?</p> <p>Yes.</p> <p>The draft proposal will reduce the number of library services that the council manages throughout the county. As a result, it is proposed that there will be fewer library services overall and more library services will be delivered by the community, from different spaces.</p>
2.5	<p>Is this policy or decision associated with any of the Council's other policies and how, if applicable, does the proposed policy support corporate outcomes?</p> <p>The proposed changes will help the council achieve its strategic priorities in the following ways:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Achieving more with less as library services evolve -limiting costs and driving growth in revenue.</li> <li>• It will reduce running costs for the library service, focusing on delivering a library service where it is needed within the community, helping to make libraries financially viable. Online reservations, access to the Home Library Service mobile library services will ensure that the surrounding community still have access to library services.</li> <li>• Providing spaces and resources to help people in Essex increase skills and prosper</li> <li>• Providing safe, welcoming and stimulating spaces for all users to learn</li> </ul>

	<p>engage and remain connected to their communities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Re-imagine how residents' needs can be met in a digital world</li><li>• Supporting staff and volunteers to deliver great customer service</li></ul>
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### **Section 3: Evidence/data about the user population and consultation<sup>1</sup>**

As a minimum you must consider what is known about the population likely to be affected which will support your understanding of the impact of the policy, eg service uptake/usage, customer satisfaction surveys, staffing data, performance data, research information (national, regional and local data sources).



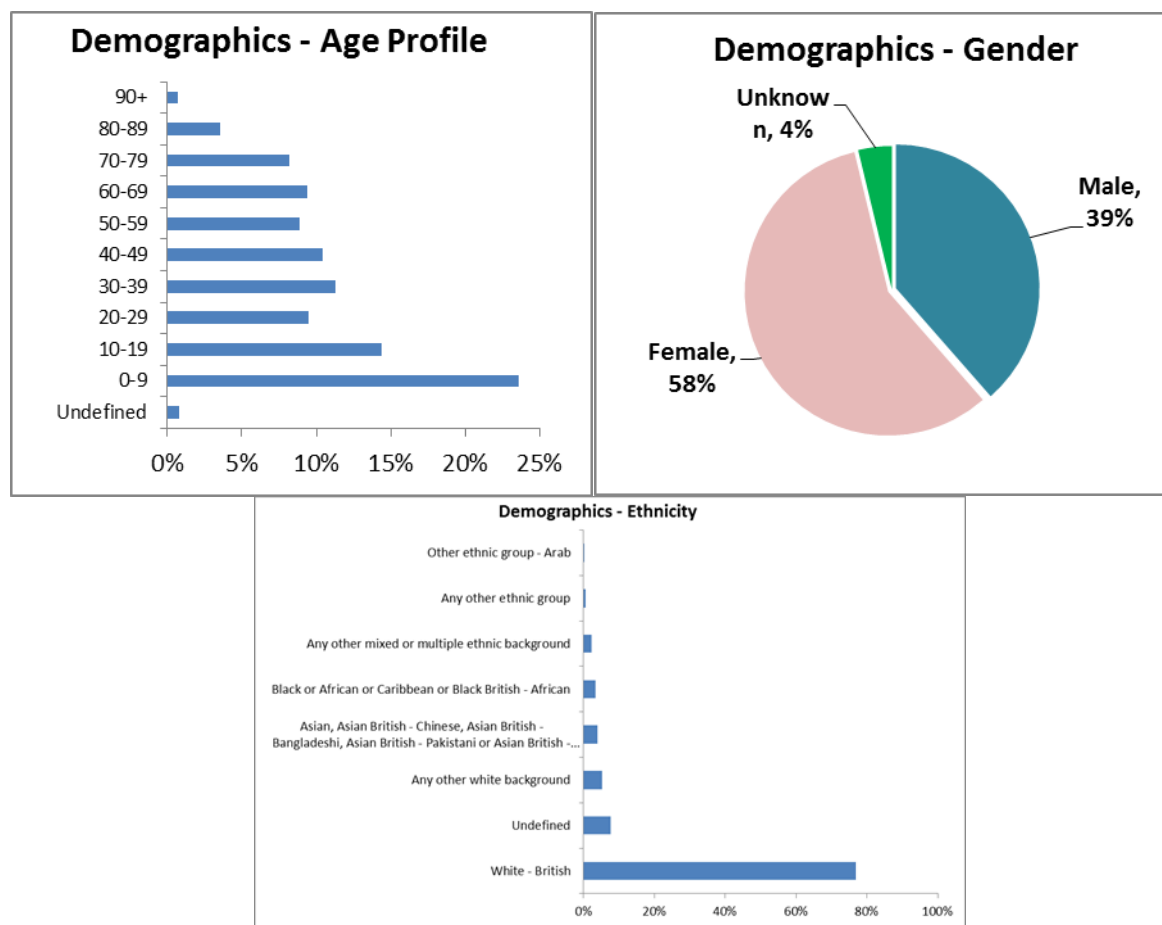
What does the information tell you about those groups identified?

### From the Needs Assessment:

Library services are disproportionately used by females making up 58% of users.

Under 9s account for 23% of users, over 60s account for 22% of users and majority of users are White - British, as shown in the graphs below.

BME communities are over represented in the user base – 7% of the Essex population report being from a BME background compared to 11% of library users.



Libraries also have a significant role to play in the prevention of social isolation within communities. Whilst there is no definitive measure of social isolation and anyone in the community is potentially at risk of becoming isolated we are aware that new parents and older people over 65 are at particular risk of social isolation.

### Older people population

Library membership records show that over 60s make up 22% of library services users and groups such as “knit and natter” use the library frequently attracting this audience. Face to face interviews with library users during the public engagement in spring 2018 found that retirement was a trigger for people using libraries more and that older people value libraries as places they can read, pass the time and socialise.



	<p><b>New parents</b></p> <p>In the interviews with library users, becoming a first time parent was identified as a trigger for using libraries more.</p>
3.2	<p>Have you consulted or involved those groups that are likely to be affected by the policy or decision you want to implement? If so, what were their views and how have their views influenced your decision?</p> <p>We have asked users what they want to see for the future of the library service. The purpose of this Cabinet report is to agree the proposed direction, subject to consultation.</p> <p>Thus there will be a full consultation about these proposals if they are agreed by Cabinet</p> <p>We don't collect additional information or plan to do any equality monitoring. We do use population data and will be considering how we attract non-library users to the service going forward, part of this may include equality monitoring of customers.</p>



3.3	<p>If you have not consulted or engaged with communities that are likely to be affected by the policy or decision, give details about when you intend to carry out consultation or provide reasons for why you feel this is not necessary. Please include any reasonable adjustments, e.g. accessible formats, you will provide as part of the consultation process for disabled people:</p> <p>Subject to approval by Cabinet in November 18, a 12 week public consultation and engagement will be run.</p> <p>The primary channel for response will be an online survey, hosted on Essex Insight, where all ECC surveys are hosted. This site complies with level "A" of the <a href="#">WAI guidelines</a> on accessible websites and is working towards level AA compliance.</p> <p>Respondents who cannot respond online will be offered the option of completing the survey over the phone. The council's contact centre will also respond to phone enquiries about the consultation.</p> <p>The survey will ensure that views of children, young people, adults and organisations can be captured.</p> <p>A large print version of the survey and information about the draft strategy will be made available on request. An Easy Read version of the survey and information about the draft strategy will be produced and made available to people with learning or communications difficulties.</p> <p>The consultation will be publicised as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A dedicated section on <a href="http://libraries.essex.gov.uk">libraries.essex.gov.uk</a> that summarises the draft strategy proposals and provides links to the draft strategy, supporting documents, the surveys and further information.</li> <li>• Posters will be displayed in all libraries, ECC poster sites and made available to community venues and organisations. Notices and information will also be displayed on TV screens in those libraries that have them. Subject to resources, a short film/ film clips will be produced, for display in libraries and use on social media.</li> <li>• Library staff will be briefed on the draft strategy and the consultation plan so they can help people find out about it and respond.</li> <li>• A series of drop-ins will be held at selected libraries around the county, to provide opportunities for people to find out more before completing the survey and to ensure that we obtain qualitative insight to support the online survey.</li> <li>• A publicity campaign using traditional and social media promotion: using ECC networks and targeting local and regional media.</li> <li>• Stakeholders including town and parish councils and community groups will be informed of the consultation and how people can get involved. Other authorities in Essex will be asked to cascade the information to their elected members. All active library users will be contacted to inform them of the</li> </ul>
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consultation, where they can find out more information and how they can respond. This contact will be digital by default, either by email or text message but will be by post to users who have told us that is their preference.

Essex's Citizen Insight and Inclusive Communications Essex are involved to ensure the consultation is designed in such a way as to reach and be accessible to groups likely to be affected.

This EqlA will be revisited and updated once engagement with the public is complete. The draft Library service strategy will be amended if necessary in light of the views expressed before being presented to Cabinet members for decision, accompanied by the updated EqlA in Summer 2019.



## Section 4: Impact of policy or decision

Use this section to assess any potential impact on equality groups based on what you now know.

Description of impact	Nature of impact Positive, neutral, adverse (explain why)	Extent of impact Low, medium, high (use L, M or H)
Age	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Over 65+ population</li> <li>0-9 years population</li> </ul> <p>The above groups are the largest user groups for library service and are likely to be more impacted by the changes than any other ages.</p> <p>However, young people told us that they wanted longer opening hours and we wish to achieve this as part of the proposal. If we are able to achieve this then there will be a positive impact for young people.</p>	H
Disability – learning disability	We have limited data on usage. If further travel is required, this may also increase the risk of isolation and further impacting on mental health issues.	M
Disability – mental health issues	We have limited data on usage. If further travel is required, this may also increase the risk of isolation and further impacting on mental health issues.	M/H
Disability – physical impairment	<p>Negative Impact - fewer library services may mean that there may be a need to travel to alternative locations.</p> <p>Positive Impact – investment in remaining library spaces will make them more accessible. If further travel is required, this may also increase the risk of isolation and further impacting on mental health issues.</p>	H



Disability – sensory impairment (visual, hearing and deafblind)	<p>Negative Impact - fewer library services mean further travel may be required. Libraries will maintain a core offer, however dependent on tier placement some library services will see a reduction in stock, which could also see a reduction in audio books and large print books.</p> <p>Positive – looking to invest in e-library service.</p>	H
Gender/Sex	Negative – Women at all ages will be disproportionately impacted as they form the majority of the library users.	H
Gender reassignment	<p>No current data on usage.</p> <p>A change to the library service is not expected to have a disproportionate impact on this group.</p>	L
Marriage/civil partnership	No impact	L
Pregnancy/maternity	Negative – fewer library services means that further travel may be required for some people. New mothers form a large part of the library user group as they attend rhyme time, registration services for births and baby weigh-ins.	H
Race	Negative – fewer library services mean that further travel will be required for some people. BME communities are over represented amongst library users generally. We do not yet have data as to the breakdown of the ethnicity make up of users of different libraries. We need to draw a comparison with usage of library services against the local make-up of the population. Although we need to get data, we have no particular reason to believe that these proposals will impact on BME communities more than library users generally.	M
Religion/belief	<p>We do not collect this information.</p> <p>A change to the library service is not expected to have a disproportionate impact on this group.</p>	L
Sexual orientation	No current data on usage. It is unlikely that any LGBT groups will be impacted due to a change of stock or support groups.	L
<b>Cross-cutting themes</b>		



<b>Description of impact</b>	<b>Nature of impact</b> Positive, neutral, adverse (explain why)	<b>Extent of impact</b> Low, medium, high (use L, M or H)
Socio-economic	<p>There will be a negative impact on some people as some people will need to travel further to visit a library service. Social deprivation is spread throughout Essex but we have tried to prioritise the retention of library services which serve a deprived areas as this formed part of the criteria that assessed need in order to minimise impact.</p> <p>The Index of Multiple Deprivation, commonly known as the IMD, is the official measure of relative deprivation for small areas in England and is the most widely used index of deprivation. Libraries based in areas of most deprivation such as Clacton, Harwich and Greenstead are therefore prioritised as being essential community assets.</p> <p>See Needs Assessments 2018-19</p>	M
Environmental, eg housing, transport links/rural isolation	<p>There will be a negative impact on some people as some people will need to travel further to visit a library. Location has been taken into consideration and formed part of the criteria that assessed need to minimise impact.</p> <p>See Needs Assessments 2018-19</p>	M



## Section 5: Conclusion

		Tick Yes/No as appropriate	
5.1	Does the EqlA in Section 4 indicate that the policy or decision would have a medium or high adverse impact on one or more equality groups?	No <input type="checkbox"/>	
		Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	If ' <b>YES</b> ', use the action plan at <b>Section 6</b> to describe the adverse impacts and what mitigating actions you could put in place.



## Section 6: Action plan to address and monitor adverse impacts

What are the potential adverse impacts?	What are the mitigating actions?	Date they will be achieved.
Fewer libraries services	Provide longer opening hours, through Smart Technology and volunteer support, as part of the proposal	Duration of strategy: 2019 -2024
Fewer library services means that further travel may be required for some people.	<p><b>Pregnancy/maternity</b> Fertility rate data taken into consideration and formed part of the criteria, that assessed need to minimise impact</p> <p><b>Environment (demographic changes):</b> Location has been taken into consideration and formed part of the criteria, that assessed need to minimise impact</p> <p><b>Race:</b> To will explore additional data to draw a comparison with usage of libraries against the local make up of population.</p> <p>Investment in remaining library spaces will make them more accessible.</p> <p><b>Socio – economic:</b> We have tried to prioritise the retention of library services which serve a deprived areas as this formed part of the criteria that assessed need in order to minimise impact.</p>	<p>Oct 2018</p> <p>Oct 2018</p> <p>Oct 2018 – Feb 2019</p> <p>Duration of strategy: 2019 – 2024</p> <p>Oct 2018</p>
Reduction in stock in some libraries dependent of tier	Looking to invest in e-library service.	Duration of strategy: 2019 -2024



**Section 7: Sign off**

**I confirm that this initial analysis has been completed appropriately.  
(A typed signature is sufficient.)**

Signature of Head of Service: S Jalota

Date: 31.08.18

Signature of person completing the EqlA: A Roachford

Date: 31.08.18

**Advice**

Keep your director informed of all equality & diversity issues. We recommend that you forward a copy of every EqlA you undertake to the director responsible for the service area. Retain a copy of this EqlA for your records. If this EqlA relates to a continuing project, ensure this document is kept under review and updated, eg after a consultation has been undertaken.

