



Equality Impact Assessment SUMMARY

This information tells you about changes to:

Library Strategy – Review of Opening Times

The changes we are making are:

The proposed changes to opening hours are detailed in Appendix D

We are making these changes because:

Barnsley Council has to make savings to its expenditure on the Library Service. Following public engagement and to avoid closing some libraries it's proposed that we reduce or amend the opening hours at some of the libraries to help reduce costs.

We asked these questions to help us better understand the impact of the changes:

1. How will the changes to opening times affect diverse groups of library users? Will some groups be more negatively affected than others and, if so, how and why?
2. What mitigating actions could be taken to reduce any negative impacts?

To answer these questions we did the following things:

1. Consulted with the public and library service users on the proposed changes to the opening hours.
2. Worked with Barnsley's network of equality forums to encourage people from diverse groups to complete the survey.
3. Analysed the responses to the survey to understand if diverse respondents had broadly similar or significantly different views about the opening hours and the impacts these would have on them.

From this we learnt the following things:

1. The respondents to the library consultation survey were, from a diversity point of view, broadly representative of the library users and/or the local community. {The quality of data we have on existing library service users means we cannot be entirely accurate about this and hence we also compare to the local community.} Key areas where we would have liked improved engagement were:
 - a. Younger people aged 16-24 who make up 12% of adult community but only 2% of survey respondents (but also only 6% of adult library users). This under-representation is typical of consultation exercises which find this age group difficult to engage with through surveys promoted traditionally.

b. Older people aged 65-84 are also under-represented among survey respondents (25%) compared to library users (where they comprise 36% of users). However compared to the local community they are over-represented (25% compared to 20%).

	Men	Women	Disabled	LGB	BME
% of library users	35%	63%	8% ⁱ	N/A	2%
% of community	49%	51%	24%	2-4% ⁱⁱ	4%
% respondents to survey	26%	70%	22%	2%	4%

	16-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65-74	75-84	85+
% of (adult) library users ⁱⁱⁱ	6%	11%	15%	14%	15%	23%	13%	4%
% of (adult) community	12%	16%	14%	18%	16%	13%	7%	3%
% respondents to survey	2%	11%	19%	17%	19%	17%	8%	3%

2. The responses given to the survey show that there were some significant variations in the responses from diverse groups that would suggest there would be different impacts experienced as a result of the proposed changes to opening hours:

Women are less likely than men to agree to the proposed staffed hour's changes (net 12% of women agree compared to 21% for men) but women are not more likely to say this will make it harder to use the library.	People aged 35-54 are less likely to agree with the proposed staffed hours changes (net 8% 35-54 yr olds agree compared to 17% for 16-34 yrs and 23% for 55+ yrs.)	Younger people (age 16-35) are more likely to agree that the changes will make it harder for them to use the library (net 62% agree compared to 55% aged 35-54 yrs, and 56% 55+ yrs).
BME people are less likely to agree with the proposed staffed hours changes (net -12% agree compared to 17% for White UK)	BME people are more likely to agree that the changes will make it harder for them to use the library (net 92% agree compared to 55% for White UK)	There are no discernible differences in the responses of disabled people and LGB people compared with respondents generally.

3. The written comments given in response to the survey that had equality-related implications were focused around three key themes:

- Saturday afternoon opening is important for children and families as it is often not possible for them to attend during weekdays. There were 22 comments on this theme for the central library.
- There were two comments relating to disability access associated with the proposed Saturday afternoon closing at the Central Library – one who says they have caring responsibilities at other times, and another that they use the library at this time and their child has additional needs.
- The closure of the library on Saturday afternoons would impact greatest on the section of the population who work full-time Monday to Friday. Many comments were made along these lines,

making the point that working people often do not have the time to visit libraries on a weekday evening so Saturday afternoons are especially valuable.

Conclusion:

The consultation has highlighted areas where there is potential for a degree of inequality of impact in respect of gender, age and ethnicity. However given the small sample size for ethnicity we will need to undertake further work to engage with this community to better understand the reasons behind this. Whilst the differences in responses in respect of gender and age are inconsistent and hence no simple relative impacts or inequalities can be inferred. However further monitoring of library usage after implementation should enable any differentials in impact to be assessed and therefore addressed at an early stage.

The consultation comments suggested that Saturday afternoon openings are important for people with children and for people who work full-time during the week. This impact needs to be considered as part of the review of opening hours.

The people most affected will be:

Children and families and those who work full-time during the week.

How they will be affected:

Closing on Saturday afternoons will make it harder for these groups to use the library.

To help the changes to be as fair and equal as possible we will:

The following mitigating actions have been taken to ensure that those affected by the proposed changes to opening hours can still access library services 'out of hours':

- Trusted key holder status: leaders of community groups and activities will be able to apply for trusted keyholder status which means they will continue to be able to use the library for community group meetings and activities when the library is closed.
- Open Plus: approved individuals and groups will be able to access the ground floor of the library outside of main opening hours to use a wide range of library services including book borrowing, use of Wi-Fi, printing facilities etc.

The impact on children and families, and people, who work full-time during the week, will be considered when making a decision about future opening hours.

The Council will also ensure that the usage of the library continues to be diverse following the implementation of the proposed opening hours. We will do this by improving the quality of the diversity data held on library user records and improving the computer booking system so take-up and usage can be monitored over time. Further engagement and feedback from the community and library users will be sought after implementation to assess if there have been any inequalities in impact that can be addressed.

ⁱ Library record database uses a different question and definition than census and survey.

ⁱⁱ This is an estimated figure.

ⁱⁱⁱ These are presented as percentages of the library users who are aged 16 and over.