Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA): Library Strategy Review

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1. Initial information

Name of the policy, project, strategy, project or service being assessed:

INSPIRE: Dorset Council Library Strategy 2023 – 2033

This is a: New Strategy

This is: Both internal and external

2. Purpose, Aims and objectives

Under the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964, Dorset Council, as a library authority, has a statutory duty to provide a "comprehensive and efficient" library service for all those who live, work or study in the authority area. In collaboration with our communities, we have developed a new evidence-based and partnership-focused library strategy.

2.1 Aims and Objectives of the Library Strategy

A new Dorset Council Library Strategy will guide how we develop and deliver our library services over the next 10 years, delivering services in line with the needs of our customers and Dorset Council's strategic priorities.

The draft library strategy sets a clear mission for the library service: "To Inspire, Connect and Enable our communities through our services."

The mission comprises three key themes:

- **Inspire**: To enrich lives through universal access to information, knowledge, learning, literacy and culture

- **Connect**: To connect with and meet the needs of our communities

- **Enable**:

    o **our communities** to create accessible, inclusive spaces for our communities to share and use

    o **our library teams** to invest in the development of our workforce and volunteers to deliver services that meet future community needs and exceed customer expectations.

Each of these strategic aims are supported by a set of outcome-based objectives, see Appendix 1.

The library strategy aims to reposition the library service as a strategic delivery partner for a range of council priorities. Libraries have engaged with strategic partners to create objectives to deliver outcomes which support: improved literacy and numeracy, reduce inequalities, tackle the mental health crisis, close the digital

divide, tackle social isolation, improve wellbeing and promote environmental awareness.

See the full Library Strategy as presented to the [Joint Overview Committee meeting on 7th June 2023](.).

2.2 Current operating model of Dorset Council run libraries

In May 2023, our statutory (legally required) Library service is made up of:

- 23 council-run libraries
- a 24/7 online library service
- a home library service which delivers services to residents

The 23 libraries are currently categorised into 5 bands:

Main Band: Dorchester, Ferndown, Weymouth

Town A Band: Blandford, Bridport, Gillingham, Sherborne, Wimborne

Town B Band: Shaftesbury, Swanage, Verwood, Wareham

Community A Band: Corfe Mullen, Littlemoor, Lyme Regis, Lytchett Matravers, Portland, Sturminster Newton, Upton, West Moors, Wyke Regis

Community B Band: Beaminster, Crossways

In addition to the statutory provision, there are also 8 community managed libraries (CMLs) at Burton Bradstock, Charmouth, Colehill, Corfe Castle, Chickerell, Puddletown, Stalbridge and Wool. The CMLs are supported by, but not run by Dorset Council. The library strategy does not consider changes to the CML network.

2.3 New Operating Model

Aims:

The proposed library operating model aims to simplify and streamline the way that libraries are organised. It also aims to provide consistency of service provision based on a core library offer and provide a framework to support individual libraries to meet local community needs.

2.3.1 Changes proposed to libraries:

We propose 3 types of Dorset Council run libraries:

- **Library:** a library which delivers our core library offer

- **Library Plus:** a library which delivers an enhanced core library offer

- **Library Connect:** a library hub which delivers an enhanced core library offer including co-located partner services

The allocation of library to the different types is based on an analysis of community needs and demands set out in the [Needs Assessment (Library Strategy Appendix 7.)](#)

Library Connect: Blandford, Bridport, Dorchester, Ferndown, Weymouth

Library Plus: Gillingham, Littlemoor, Portland, Shaftesbury, Sherborne, Swanage, Wareham, Wimborne

Library: Beaminster, Corfe Mullen, Crossways, Lyme Regis, Lytchett Matravers, Sturminster Newton, Upton, Verwood, West Moors, Wyke Regis

Libraries will continue to be managed as a county wide service across the whole of Dorset. For practical operational purposes we will manage libraries in geographical clusters. This allows us to share resources at a local level. Each cluster has a combination of library, library plus and library connect, see Appendix 2.

The 24/7 online library service and Home Library Service will continue to be part of core service provision.

2.3.2 Changes proposed to library services

In tandem with the work to simplify and improve how libraries are organised we have also clarified which library services are offered at each type of library. Most services in the core offer are currently available at all libraries. The core offer available at all libraries is enhanced by extra services available at Library Pluses and Library Connects. Some additional services are aspirational. There is no intention to remove existing services which are not a 'precise' fit, for example, customer access points will continue to be available at Dorchester, Wareham, Weymouth and Wimborne. See Appendix 3 for full details.

2.3.4 Changes proposed to opening hours

Following analysis of the phase 2 consultation and engagement responses, the following standard Dorset council funded hours are proposed:

- Library: 18 hours (including volunteer supported hours) open 5 days a week
- Library Plus: 30 hours, open 5 days a week
- Library Connect: 42 hours, open 6 days a week

As part of the implementation of the strategy, we propose a model of hours per library that offers access to the range of services across the geographical area, which aims to meet the needs expressed in the consultation responses. We propose a spread of opening hours and weekdays from 10am, so that each cluster has late nights throughout the week until 6pm and Saturday opening until 4pm.

We propose a model of 'standard shifts' per type of library. However, the precise pattern of shifts per weekday, will vary from library to library to match local need and to ensure a spread of hours across geographical clusters of libraries on different weekdays. [See website for detailed proposals per library](#).

3. Background

Dorset County Council, the predecessor authority, had a strategy that is over 10 years old. Since then, there has been societal change and transformation including significant digital transformation and public behaviour change following the Covid-19 pandemic. We want the new library strategy to meet the needs of our communities now and in the future.

We are developing the library strategy based on two phases of public consultation and a strategic needs assessment.

Phase one of the consultation took place in October 2021 to January 2022 and we ran three #LetsTalkLibraries surveys:

- Ages 5-15 public survey
- 16years+ (Main) public survey
- Employee, partner and business survey

External consultants, Shared Intelligence (SI), were commissioned to support and undertake further survey analysis and deliver independent workshops and research that would inform the development of the new library strategy for Dorset.

The draft library strategy was then subject to a second phase of public consultation, which took place in September 2022 to December 2022. In this second phase, we ran another 3 surveys with the same target audiences to seek feedback on the draft strategy and asked how we can prioritise and explore what delivery could look like in our communities.

Shared Intelligence were again commissioned to delve deeper into responses and engage with people who we might not otherwise hear from.

The analysis of the survey responses and workshop findings from both phases, combined with evidence around local need, have helped to inform and shape a draft library strategy. Since then, the draft EqIA was updated and shared with Dorset Council's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) reference group for feedback.

Evidence gathering and engagement:

4. Sources of data, evidence or research used for the assessment

Development of the library strategy has been evidence based. We have drawn on a range of data to develop and shape the draft library strategy which were undertaken in 2 phases of public consultation as detailed below:

4.1 Phase 1 public consultation (October 2021 to January 2022)

- ages 5-15 public survey results

- [16 years+ (main) public survey results](#)
- [employee, partner and business survey results](#)

Over 7,500 responses were received from the public consultation surveys. Individual respondents to the survey were asked for diversity information about themselves, as well as their feedback on libraries. Completion of the diversity section of the survey was optional. A breakdown of responses of all survey responses by protected characteristic is available in Appendix 4.

- range of engagement workshops
  - workshop with library employees
  - workshop with Dorset Councillors
  - focus group with existing library users
  - interviews with parent/carers at two pre-school nurseries
  - outreach workshop in area of socio-economic deprivation
  - business network meeting
  - street intercept interviews with 30 non-library users
  - ethnographic research[1] with 10 non-library users
  - equalities-focused workshop
  - 'Speaking Up' session with People First Dorset and Dorset Abilities
  - two primary school workshops
  - three secondary school workshops
  - Dorset Council services and external partner 3-part workshop series
  - three library service led strategy development Task and Finish Groups
- [Shared Intelligence Report: Research to inform a new library strategy for Dorset Council](#).

4.2 Phase 2 public consultation (September to December 2022)

- [ages 5-15 public survey results](#)
- [16 years+ (main) public survey results](#)
- [employee, partner and business survey results](#)

Over 4,500 responses were received. Like the phase one surveys, these surveys included an optional diversity section, allowing us to capture anonymised demographic data. A breakdown of responses of all survey responses by protected characteristic is available in Appendix 4.

The surveys were designed in two parts. Part one sought views on the draft strategy aims and objectives and part two explored the proposed tiered library model and sought input on what employees, volunteers, councillors, our voluntary and community sector partners, businesses and our public sector partners wanted to see prioritised in their local libraries and their preferred opening hours.

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[1] Ethnography is a type of research that gathers rich, detailed data from individuals in their everyday environment. The research involves observing the participant's behaviour as they interact with their environment and the researcher asking questions to understand the participant's thoughts, feelings and experiences.

- range of engagement workshops
  - workshop with library employees
  - workshop with Dorset Councillors
  - focus group with existing library users
  - focus group with non-library users
  - workshop with equality, diversity and inclusion organisations
  - workshop with Lytchett Minster school year 8 pupils
  - workshop with Weymouth South cub scouts club (8-10 year olds)
  - Dorset Council services and external partner 2-part workshop series

4.3 Strategic Needs Assessment

The initial Strategic Needs Assessment was first undertaken in 2021-22 and published with the [Overview Committee papers in June 2022](). The data was updated between January and March 2023 using the latest census and library usage data available and a [revised version was published with the Overview Committee papers in June 2023]().

The Strategic Needs Assessment uses a broad range of national data sets as proxy indicators for societal need. It also uses Census data and library membership data. A full list of data used along with its source is provided in Appendix 1 of the Strategic Needs Assessment.

The Strategic Needs Assessment looked at a series of measures to determine where local need is greatest. In recognition of the broad range of interventions which a library service can help support, we have taken a range of measures which indicate need across the breadth of society and an individual's life course. These include:

- demographic information (including population growth)
- education
- deprivation indicators
- health (including mental health and loneliness)
- digital exclusion
- local economy
- crime

These themes of need have been mapped geographically producing heat maps of need across Dorset. These heat maps have the libraries network overlayed which helps to highlight how effective our library buildings can be at delivering targeted outreach to our communities in need. The areas of need vary depending on what theme of need you consider. When you combine all themes of need together the five LSOAs[2] with the greatest combined need are:

- Rodwell and Chapelhay
- Fortuneswell North
- Bridport Skilling

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[2] LSOAs (lower-layer super output areas) Each of these areas are designed to be of a similar population size, with an average of approximately 1,500 residents or 650 households.

- Bridport Court Orchard
- Melcombe Regis Town Centre

Full list available in Annex 1 of the Strategic Needs Assessment.

Library catchments were also ranked on need combined with library demand data and the library catchments with the highest combined overall need were:

- Weymouth Library
- Bridport Library
- Portland Library
- Littlemoor Library
- Dorchester Library

Library demand indicators have been used to provide a measure of the amount of participation in five areas of library service provision at each library:
- number of active borrowers in the year
- number of issues in the year
- event participation in the year
- number of public access computer sessions
- number of public access computer user hours
- service isolation (proximity to other libraries)

Anonymised membership analysis has been carried out looking into the following membership characteristics:
- age
- socio-economic
- ethnicity
- disability
- sex
- religion

This can be compared to census data on the Dorset population to see which characteristics are significantly over and under-represented in our library membership, such as an:

- over-representation of young children using libraries, compared to older age groups
- under-representation of people living with disabilities
- under-representation of men and over-representation of women (which reflects the national patterns of usage of public library services)
- under-representation of ethnic minorities
- under-representation of residents living in isolated households
- under-representation of residents living in lower socio-economically developed households

It's important to note that protected characteristic data is optional when registering for library membership, so many choose not to disclose this information, as they do

not see the relevance. Therefore, the reported library membership characteristics will not necessarily be a true reflection of library membership characteristics, however the information we have collected, may be used as indications of which groups may be more impacted by the library strategy.

The Strategic Needs Assessment also looked at Dorset Council library demand data which highlights that behaviours and trends have changed significantly over the past five years which will have been impacted by the pandemic but also in terms of customer preferences.

Physical library use has declined since 2016 by between 16%, when we consider active users and physical items borrowed. Comparatively online resources for e-books and audio books has increased by over 470% and continues to increase.

We have seen new trends in accessing content, events and activities online and although people are returning to preferred "in-person" activities and events, we remain aware that the online library requirement must be embedded in our future thinking.

4.4 Post Consultation

Dorset Council's Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) reference group was consulted on a draft EqIA in a formal group discussion and via email.

5. What did this tell us?

5.1 Phase One Survey Analysis

The consultation sought the views of our library users and non-users to understand how the service could better meet the needs of customers now and in the future. The council needed to understand what people valued from the existing service, and what they would change. They also wanted to know what would encourage them to use the library more. Questions for non-users were focussed on what would encourage them to use the library at all, or again, if they had previously. Intersectional analysis of the survey data allowed us to highlight the different views and needs of those by age and disability, these are highlighted within the 16years+ (main) public survey analysis report.

The employee, partner and business survey analysis report gathered the views of our employees, volunteers, councillors, our voluntary and community sector partners, businesses and our public sector partners. We asked for ways we can join up and complement delivery across services and sectors, utilising libraries to maximise our reach and impact in communities. We sought to hear from organisations about opportunities to collaborate in the future, or ways in which libraries can support the different sectors.

5.2 Phase One Engagement Workshops (hosted by Dorset Council November to December 2021)

Themes that emerged from these workshops included:

- a requirement for safe, face-to-face spaces for children, families, and older and vulnerable people
- libraries should be a source of vitality and culture enrichment, through inspiring programmes and partnerships
- libraries could promote and enable sustainable (climate positive) practices
- supporting people to improve their digital skills and how this can empower them in their daily lives
- libraries can provide space for enterprise and economic growth
- an inclusive user experience should be available for all

5.3 Phase One Shared Intelligence Report

To complement the surveys and to help add depth to the consultation, we ran a range of targeted workshops and research interviews with those groups who are traditionally underrepresented during library consultations, i.e. those who do not currently access library services or individuals and communities with protected characteristics. The conclusions of this engagement work, in terms of identified need and recommended action, is presented in a research report available here and its accompanying appendix here.

The Shared Intelligence report identified three main areas of need within the council area:
- increasing the reach of services to ensure they are accessible to those who need them or could benefit most from them
- improved communication to increase public awareness of available support and to accelerate service-to-service collaboration around shared priorities
- access to space and resources to allow partners to deliver outreach services in Dorset's communities

Opportunities for more impact that were identified included:
- a network of locations to host support for mild/moderate mental health needs
- social prescribing via libraries – directing towards service, providing, hosting
- inclusive and adaptive community spaces in libraries for autism and other needs
- hubs for vulnerable adults, their carers, and support networks
- culture and creativity offer for audiences and creators
- skills and knowledge to reduce, reuse, recycle, lend and share
- access to information and tackling digital exclusion
- supporting local inclusive growth

Four areas of action were recommended to realise the potential of the library service:

- communication – create a strategy to enable the service to reach a far larger proportion of those who stand to benefit from the library service offer, and in ways which help other local services meet and manage demand
- customer support- prioritise user interactions which are relational and add value (events, activities, human help, support for community groups, advice, guidance) over those which are transactional (borrowing and returning items, making payments or bookings), and encourage more people to complete these transactional tasks digitally.
- collaboration - formalise relationships with other service partners through regular discussions with clear remits
- clarity - decide which opportunities best contributes to the purpose and vision of the council

5.4 Phase Two Survey Analysis

Survey responses show that over 90% of survey respondents support the mission statement and the 3 themes. 81% agreed with the library model and the core library services model. 73% agreed with the proposed names for the different types of libraries and 68% of children said that the names make sense. Feedback from adults and children showed that the word 'library' is what is important to customers and that all libraries are libraries.

Some customers interpreted the list of core services very literally and were concerned that some libraries would no longer be able to offer some services which are currently available, such as adult learning classes or customer access points. The overview committee report and revised strategy clarify that this is not the case. The concept of a 'hub and spoke' or geographical 'cluster' model was suggested as a way to share services between the network of different types of libraries to mitigate against concerns that not all services would be available in every library. The revised strategy explains that a geographical cluster model will be used, see Appendix 2.

The survey also asked respondents for their most valued library opening timespans, in order to gather information about when customers would most prefer to use libraries. Respondents were also asked to provide additional comments about their desired opening hours and to explain any personal impacts if we were unable to deliver their desired opening hours.

Consultation feedback from the survey indicated that communities wish to see:

- standardised hours so that customers know when the library is open
- opening hours throughout the week Monday to Saturday
- mornings for pre-school children and their carers, retirees, those who do not work, those who work from home
- Saturdays and afternoon opening, for school age children and young people
- Saturdays, lunchtimes and evenings for those who work
- a spread of hours amongst a geographical group of libraries, so that not all libraries are closed on the same weekdays

- times when the library is available for hire by community groups

5.5 Phase Two Shared Intelligence Report

In the second phase of public consultation, the workshops ran by Shared Intelligence were designed to refine the draft strategy and to prioritise strategy outcomes and delivery methods. They also sought to identify how the strategy might impact communities including potential negative impacts which might require mitigation. The full report can be read here. Topics noted include:

- how to maintain/ensure development of all types of libraries
- how to reach isolated or vulnerable individuals in areas of lower need
- opening hours which support maximum impact for the range of library customers
- accessibility of language in the library strategy
- how to raise public awareness of the library offer
- how we can integrate other services without diminishing the 'trusted and neutral' reputation of libraries.

Possible solutions Shared Intelligence proposed included:
- providing further clarity on the rationale for the proposed operating model and scope for local variation
- considering having a cluster[3] or hub and spoke model[4], along with outreach to those in more rural areas
- ensuring the core library offer, meets the needs of all Dorset's communities
- using partnerships with other services (e.g. social care) to identify isolated and vulnerable communities or communities
- developing a range of opening hours, which meet the needs of different types of users
- carrying out a plain English review of the strategy text
- producing a summary-level 'plan on a page' version to help with accessibility of the strategy
- conducting engagement with marginalised communities, co-ordinated with existing equality and diversity networks and agencies and
- seeking regular customer feedback to include trust and perception

5.6 Home library user satisfaction survey

126 out of 409 active users (31%) completed the optional survey. The feedback from those who responded was overwhelmingly positive, with the majority stating that they

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[3]A cluster model involves grouping libraries into geographical areas, ensuring that libraries within each cluster coordinate with each other to offer services and opening hours to meet most people's needs at most times.
[4] A hub and spoke model involves choosing some central libraries to be "hubs" with a broad range of services and standardised hours, with smaller surrounding libraries offering more bespoke services and opening hours, to meet the needs of their immediate surroundings.

were happy with the delivery times, book selection and customer service. There were only a few comments suggesting ways to improve the service including:

"I have a laptop but I could use some help in using it. Something for complete novices."

"Being able to also have audio books, music CDs and perhaps jigsaw puzzles delivered along with books might be nice."

"Most books are what I would read and most authors too. I would prefer to choose my own in an ideal world …, but I enjoy the selections I have delivered."

5.7 Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) reference group

Themes which emerged from the group session and follow up emails include:

- The strategy is not easy to read. (It was circulated before a plain English review was done.) It would be helpful if a plain English and 'easy read' version were to be created and for it to be available in different formats and languages
- The strategy should explain why it's important to the local community
- The draft EqIA should detail who we have engaged with and the demographic breakdown of those who responded to the consultation surveys
- Provide more support to carers who may struggle to access libraries, although the home library service is available for them, carers also wish to visit libraries
- The EqIA should specifically address the impact for people with visual impairments
- Customers with similar conditions may have differing requirements and preferences. We need versatile spaces that can cater to all
- Could we explore options to introduce quiet spaces/times in libraries

6. Who have we engaged and consulted with as part of this assessment?

During the #LetsTalkLibraries public consultation, the council made a continuous effort to reach people from a variety of backgrounds, through a communications plan that used a variety of communication methods to reach different demographics. We ensured all our surveys and workshops were inclusive, by holding them in accessible locations and providing presentations in multiple formats, including PowerPoint, printed copies and large print. A summary of the characteristics of the people who responded to the surveys from phases one and two can be viewed in Appendix 4.

In both consultation phases, the workshops were kept to a manageable size, to ensure we had time to engage with everyone in the room. This meant that we were unable to invite representatives from every relevant local organisation and network to join us at our equalities and partnership focused workshops. However, we carefully

managed attendance, ensuring that each of the nine protected characteristics[5], plus Dorset Council's additional six protected characteristics[6] were represented. These characteristics are also widely represented in the EDI reference group, which we consulted on an early re-draft of the EqIA following the close of the second phase of public consultation.

To ensure an opportunity to hear from more representatives, we encouraged as many partners as possible to complete the employee, partner and business survey. A list of Dorset Council services, external partners and networks that we invited to participate can be found in Appendix 5.

The public, employees and partners who participated in phase one and two of the Let's Talk Libraries consultation survey and workshops have shared valuable insight into their lived experience of protected characteristics, what they value about the service and how the service could better meet community needs in the future. The new draft strategy seeks to address these needs and prioritises the inclusiveness and accessibility of the service.

In addition to the public and partners, internally we have briefed and consulted with:

- Portfolio Holder Culture and Communities
- Councillors
- employees
- Corporate Director Customer and Cultural Services
- the Equality Diversity and Inclusion Officer

These briefings took the form of presentations, workshops, phone calls, emails and regular informal catch ups.

7. Is further information needed to help inform decision making?

No.

The action plan associated with the library strategy will continue to develop during the lifetime of the strategy. Amendments to the action plan may impact on people with protected characteristics, so we will be continuously considering and evaluating how to manage this impact. The EDI reference group is a key partner in the action plan. Ongoing engagement with the group to review and support the development of library services is part of service operations. Dorset Council has an ongoing commitment to ensure all services support equality, diversity and inclusion and this EqIA will continue to be updated as needed.

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[5] Age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion and belief, sex, sexual orientation

[6] rural isolation, socio-economic status, single parents, people with an armed forces background and their families, gender identity (how someone describes their gender), carers

8. Is an EQIA required?

Yes

9. Key to impacts

Positive Impact	• the proposal aims to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between people who share a relevant protected characteristics and those who do not
Negative Impact	• protected characteristic group(s) could be disadvantaged or discriminated against
Neutral Impact	• no change/ no assessed significant impact of protected characteristic groups
Unclear	• not enough data/evidence has been collected to make an informed decision.

Please note: The impacts described below have been assessed and anticipated contingent on the current version of the Library Strategy and the opportunities it contains. We are committed to giving due regard to the protected characteristics and vulnerable groups and expect the impacts on protected groups to be evaluated and reassessed during implementation of the Strategy Delivery Plan, which will take place over 10 years. This will be led by the Senior Library Management team and will be delivered through a combination of small projects and business as usual service planning.

Ref.	Impacts on who?	Choose impact	Impact level	How
1.1.1	Age: 0-16 years	Positive Impact	High	The Strategic Needs Assessment indicates areas where young residents on average have the highest rates of education need (Section 1.3), enabling us to set up the appropriate support services and educational programmes in the most relevant locations, which will improve the net learning of our young residents. We will partner with Dorset's Speech and Language Service to support early years (for ages 0-5) language and literacy programmes and deliver shared priorities. We'll support early years numeracy by working with Children's Services to deliver rhyme times and stories with a counting theme. The skills gained may support children with their schooling and inspire a life-long love of reading and learning.
1.2.1	Age: 18+ years	Positive Impact	High	We will increase promotion the range of free adult education provision available within Dorset and host targeted events which aim to improve literacy levels and build confidence for adults with low literacy skills. We aim to pursue opportunities under the "Multiply" programme[7] in collaboration with Skills and Learning, to offer events and activities which allow customers to improve their maths and thus their life chances. Regular adults learning classes will be provided at all Library Connects and libraries currently hosting community-led adult learning classes will continue to do so. Good literacy and numeracy skills may unlock job opportunities, lead to higher wages, prepare adults for further study and/or help in everyday life, such as helping children with homework or managing household budgets.

[7] The Education Hub, 2021 https://educationhub.blog.gov.uk/2021/10/27/everything-you-need-to-know-about-the-new-multiply-programme/u need to know about the new Multiply programme - The Education Hub (blog.gov.uk)

Ref.	Impacts on who?	Choose impact	Impact level	How
1.3.1	Age: 65+ years	Positive Impact	Medium	Libraries will host assistive tech "care lounges" and adult social care road shows to help people to live at home for longer.

2.1.1	Disability: People with Special Education Needs and Disability (SEND)	Positive Impact	High	The Needs Assessment indicates areas where young residents on average have the highest rates of education need (Section 1.3), enabling us to set up the appropriate support services and educational programmes in the most relevant locations, which will improve the net learning of people with SEND.
				We plan to further develop the Library SEND offer for children and their families, to include staff training on best practices to support SEND, hosting stay and explore sessions, picture journeys for all libraries, 360 library tours.
				We will partner with Dorset's speech and language service to support early years (for ages 0-5) language and literacy programmes and deliver shared outcomes. We'll support early years numeracy by working with Children's Services to deliver rhyme times and stories with a counting theme. The skills gained may support SEND children with their schooling and inspire a life-long love of reading and learning.
				We will promote the range of free adult education provision available within Dorset and host targeted events which improve literacy levels and builds confidence for adults with low literacy skills.
				Improved literacy and numeracy skills may unlock job opportunities, lead to higher wages, prepare SEND adults for further study and/or help in everyday life, such as helping children with homework and household budgeting.
				Currently we have two Autism friendly meeting rooms across our library network at Dorchester and Gillingham. Sensory equipment is also available at several libraries and we plan to expand access to more equipment at more libraries and consider the creation of more autism friendly rooms as part of building developments. Feedback gathered from the EDI reference group suggested that we need rooms to meet a variety of needs (i.e. can be sensory stimulating or sensory depriving). They also suggested avoiding the use of florescent lighting in library spaces, as can be problematic for certain visual conditions. Accessible lighting will be explored as part of the library building accessibility audit by the library assets management team.
				We will explore options to introduce quiet spaces/hours in our libraries, to increase the inclusivity of library spaces for those who don't feel less comfortable in noisy spaces.

Ref.	Impacts on who?	Choose impact	Impact level	How
2.2.1	Disability: People who are disabled/ have long-term health conditions	Positive Impact	High	The Library Assets Management Team will carry out an audit of our buildings in 2023-25, to include accessibility.

Following the audit, an improvement plan will be put together to include improvements to signage, infrastructure, fixtures and fittings so that our services can be accessed more easily by more residents including those who are neurodivergent or have special learning or physical needs.

We plan to explore opportunities for libraries to provide a community-based non-clinical setting for health-related service delivery. Libraries will provide a central link to health visitors to deliver co-ordinated and complimentary sessions while engaging the same cohort. We'll use connections with Dorset's primary care networks and promote library's social prescribing offer and work with Patient Participation groups to develop services which meet their needs.

The Strategic Needs Assessment provides geographical analysis of a range of poor health indicators (Section 1.3), enabling us to target the most relevant locations. This will on average improve access to healthcare for people with disabilities and long-term health conditions. |

Ref.	Impacts on who?	Choose impact	Impact level	How
2.3.1	Disability: People with disabilities or health conditions that make it hard to travel	Unclear Impact	Unclear	Library opening hours will be co-ordinated across a geographical cluster of libraries to ensure continuous daytime provision in the area from Monday to Saturday. This means that people who are only able to travel at certain times have more options on where to go, when they need it. Some libraries will see a reduction in operating hours, however consultation feedback is being used to select opening hours that will prioritise the needs of people with disabilities where known. Libraries will support customers to find out about accessible transportation options within the area, including local bus and train timetables and community schemes such as Dorset Community Transport, Liftshare and NORDcat. We anticipate that these mitigating actions will reduce negative impact, however, we need to monitor this risk during implementation, as the most likely impact remains uncertain at this time.
2.3.2	Disability: People with disabilities or health conditions that make it hard to travel	Positive Impact	Medium	We are committed to promoting our home library service[8] to ensure those eligible for the service are made aware and are encouraged to sign up. We are also seeking to improve knowledge of and access to our online library service offer of free ebooks, eaudiobooks and virtual events. This will allow people who struggle to leave their home to access our online services throughout Dorset. We will also support people who struggle to travel due to disability or health to improve their digital skills by enhancing and expanding our current offer aimed at helping customers to get online. This will empower people to access our online services from home.

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[8] The home library service is a free of charge service for those who are unable to leave their home or unable to easily access their local library. Volunteers deliver books, and/or talking books to customers' homes on a regular basis.

Ref.	Impacts on who?	Choose impact	Impact level	How
2.5.1	Disability: People with visual impairments	Positive Impact	Medium	Library signs will be redesigned to meet best practice accessibility & design standards where required and we'll invest in accessible technology so that our services can be accessed more easily by residents who with visual impairments. The EDI reference group suggested avoiding fluorescent lighting, as can be problematic for certain conditions. Accessible lighting will be explored as part of the buildings audit by the library assets management team to see if any changes are required. We will explore options to introduce quiet spaces/hours in our libraries, for those who don't feel comfortable with distractions or loud background noise. This will benefit people who rely more than most on their sense of hearing to help get around and complete tasks.
3.1.1	Gender reassignment and Gender Identity: People who are transgender and non-binary	Positive Impact	Unclear	People with who are transgender or non-binary in the UK face huge levels of abuse and inequality.[9] Libraries aim to explore the role libraries can play in offering refuge, safe spaces and supporting vulnerable members of our communities.
4.1.1	Marriage or civil partnership: ALL	Neutral Impact	None	Marriage or civil partnership status have no effect on the services delivered, at this stage of the strategy development.

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[9] Stonewall, The Truth about Trans, 2022 https://www.stonewall.org.uk/truth-about-trans#trans-people-uk

Ref.	Impacts on who?	Choose impact	Impact level	How
5.1.1	Pregnancy and maternity: Young mothers	Positive Impact	Medium	The Strategic Needs Assessment indicates areas where there are higher conception rates in women under 18, enabling us to set up the appropriate support services in areas where they are going to help the most young mothers. The library service offers a wide range of free Child/Parent activities such as rhyme times and story times, which support carers to create social connections and thus tackle social isolation. Libraries provide a space where expecting and new parents can connect with health and wellbeing opportunities. They will do this by collaborating with multi-agency Family Hubs (currently under development) to deliver shared objectives, in close partnership with colleagues from other services and organisations. Child/Parent activities delivered for free at the libraries can also help tackle social isolation and create social connections. The cluster model should provide opportunity for library employees to seek more flexibility on their hours and work location, which will benefit those supporting dependants.
6.1.1	Race and Ethnicity: Refugees and Asylum seekers	Positive Impact	Medium	We will look to establish a role for libraries within the refugee resettlement programmes, welcoming refugees/asylum seekers into the community and providing relevant resources in their language. Further consideration into how libraries can become further involved in the refugee resettlement programme is required. See EqIA action plan.

Ref.	Impacts on who?	Choose impact	Impact level	How
6.2.1	Race and Ethnicity: Ethnic Minorities	Positive Impact	High	The strategy commits to deliver outreach activities and events outside of our buildings, taking the library to new places to engage with new customers who don't currently use the library, to include: underrepresented groups and protected groups under the Equalities Act. Event promotions and activity materials will be accessible and varied. Ethnic minorities receive a disproportionate amount of discrimination, particularly in employment.[10] Libraries aim to explore the role libraries can play in offering refuge and supporting vulnerable members of our communities. There will also be careers promotions for priority areas of employment in Dorset Council's Economic Growth Strategy including STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) especially in underrepresented groups. We aim to host targeted events which improve literacy levels and builds confidence for English language learners.
7.1.1	Religion and belief: ALL	Neutral Impact	None	The Strategic Needs Assessment highlight the predominating religion of our library members is Christianity and those with no religion, or no response, or prefer not to say. Religion and belief currently have no effect on the services delivered, at this stage of the strategy development.
8.1.1	Sex: Men	Positive Impact	Low	The strategy commits to deliver outreach activities and events outside of our buildings, taking the library to new places to engage with new customers who don't currently use the library, to include: underrepresented groups and protected groups under the Equalities Act.

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[10] EHRC, Race report statistics, Race report statistics | Equality and Human Rights Commission (equalityhumanrights.com)

Ref.	Impacts on who?	Choose impact	Impact level	How
9.1.1	Sexual orientation: LGB	Positive Impact	Unclear	Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual people receive a disproportionate amount of discrimination and less than half feel comfortable being open about their sexuality, with every member of their family.[11] Libraries aim to explore the role libraries can play in offering refuge and supporting vulnerable and disadvantaged members of our communities. Further consideration on ways to deliver this objective is required in the EqIA action plan. Events and spaces will be promoted as being safe for people of all sexual orientations.

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[11] Stonewall, LGBTQ+ facts and figures, 2022 https://www.stonewall.org.uk/cy/node/24594

Ref.	Impacts on who?	Choose impact	Impact level	How
10.1.1	People with caring responsibilities: Carers	Positive Impact	High	Carers have increased risk of mental health issues, long-term illness and disabilities.[12] We will create connections with Dorset's primary care networks, to promote the service's social prescribing offer. Carers are also at increased risk of having disruption to their education or having special educational needs. [13] We aim to promote learning opportunities for all customers and to facilitate the development of new skills, which will have a positive impact on carers who may have greater educational need. The EDI reference group expressed concern that carers may struggle to leave home on a regular basis. We are committed to promoting our home library service to ensure those eligible for the service are made aware and are encouraged to sign up including carers. We are also seeking to improve knowledge of and access to our online library service offer of free ebooks, eaudiobooks and virtual events. This will allow people who struggle to leave their home to access our services throughout Dorset. We will also support people who struggle to travel due to caring responsibilities to improve their digital skills by enhancing and expanding our current offer aimed at helping customers to get online. This will empower people to access our online services from home. The cluster model should provide opportunity for library employees to seek more flexibility on their hours and work location, which will benefit those supporting dependants.

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[12] LGA, Supporting carers: guidance and case studies, 2022, https://www.local.gov.uk/publications/supporting-carers-guidance-and-case-studies
[13] LGA, Supporting carers: guidance and case studies, 2022, https://www.local.gov.uk/publications/supporting-carers-guidance-and-case-studies

Ref.	Impacts on who?	Choose impact	Impact level	How
10.1.2	People with caring responsibilit ies: Carers	Unclear Impact	Unclear	The public expressed concerns during consultation that people who struggle to travel, may not have access to the same services as others, and this problem may be worsened by a tiered operating model, where the offer is not the same at every library. However, the tiered model will not decrease the core library offer and will instead offer a consistent service at all libraries, as well as additional services at libraries classified as a Library Plus and Library Connect.

Library opening hours will be co-ordinated across a geographical cluster of libraries to ensure continuous daytime provision in the area from Monday to Saturday. This means that people who are only able to travel at certain times have more options on where to go, when they need it.

Some libraries will see a reduction in operating hours, however consultation feedback is being used to select opening hours that will prioritise the needs of people who will be negatively impacted if they cannot access their library.

We anticipate that these mitigating actions will reduce negative impact and may even lead to a highly positive overall impact, however, we need to monitor this risk during implementation, as the most likely impact remains uncertain at this time. |

Ref.	Impacts on who?	Choose impact	Impact level	How
11.1.1	Rural isolation: People living in isolated areas	Unclear Impact	Unclear	People living in isolated areas are less likely than others to be in close proximity to a Library Plus or Library Connect that offers additional services to the core library offer. The library strategy increases the additional services we offer, so we do not anticipate these people will lose access to services they previously used, however they may not gain as much benefit from the library strategy as those living in more populated areas.

People living in isolated areas may have more limited public transportation options. Libraries will support customers to find out about accessible transportation options within the area, including local bus and train timetables and community schemes such as Dorset Community Transport, Liftshare and NORDcat.

People with limited transportation may also be more affected by changes to opening hours, however library opening hours will be co-ordinated across a geographical cluster of libraries to ensure continuous daytime provision in the area from Monday to Saturday. This means that people who are only able to travel at certain times have more options on where to go, when they need it.

We anticipate that these mitigating actions will reduce negative impact and may even lead to a highly positive overall impact, however, we need to monitor this risk during implementation, as the most likely impact remains uncertain at this time. |

Ref.	Impacts on who?	Choose impact	Impact level	How
11.1.2	Rural isolation: People living in isolated areas	Positive Impact	High	Those living in isolated households are under-represented in library membership, however there are some areas where participation is greater, such as Lyme Regis and Crossways. As a library service we are committed to drawing on best practice from across the network of libraries, so we will explore the ways in which these libraries have engaged with their catchment communities and identify lessons we can learn/adopt as a network to reach more people living in isolated areas. We are committed to promoting our home library service to ensure those eligible for the service are made aware and are encouraged to sign up, such as people unable to travel to a library. We will also be seeking to improve knowledge of and access to our online library service offer of free ebooks, eaudiobooks and virtual events. We will also support people who struggle to travel due to limited public transport options to improve their digital skills by enhancing and expanding our current offer aimed at helping customers to get online. This will empower people to access our online services from home.
12.1.1	Socio-economic deprivation: Lower socio-economically deprived	Positive Impact	High	Those living in lower socio-economically developed households are under-represented in library membership. However, there are some areas where participation is greater, such as Wyke Regis, Beaminster and Shaftesbury. As a library service we are committed to drawing on best practice from across the network of libraries, so we will explore the ways in which these libraries have engaged with their catchment communities and identify lessons we can learn/adopt as a network. The Strategic Needs Analysis indicates areas where residents on average have the highest rates of economic deprivation, crime and digital exclusion, enabling us to set up the appropriate support services in the most relevant location (Section 1.3). Services can include educational support, access to free technology, career support, support to access Housing, Revenue and Benefits, and directing to partner support services, e.g. Citizen Advice, Public Health Dorset etc. Strategically placing these services will help to reach the most people who are lower socio-economically deprived.

Ref.	Impacts on who?	Choose impact	Impact level	How
13.1.1	Armed forces communities: Armed forces personnel and their families	Positive Impact	Medium/ High	Service families often face additional pressures on family life resulting from separation from loved ones due to deployment on exercises and operations. They also have a tendency to be more mobile than families in the general population, moving on average every two years, with moves sometimes unplanned and at short notice.[14] The library service will work with the Dorset Council Armed Forces Covenant programme to develop our role in supporting members of the Armed Forces and their families in Dorset. We will partner with Public Health Dorset and LiveWell Dorset to deliver outreach sessions at libraries connecting with communities in most need, guided by Joint Strategic Needs Assessment and Health and Wellbeing Strategy outcomes. A stakeholder network of those working on health and wellbeing in Dorset will be developed, with the view to talking about key partner's services. This may help family members struggling with worries over illness, injury, and death during deployments.

10. Summary of impacts:

Some positive impacts are anticipated for certain demographics including a variety of age groups, people with disabilities/long-term health conditions, men, the LGBT community, young mothers, pregnant and new parents, carers, people living in isolated areas, lower socio-economically deprived, and armed forces communities. These positive impacts include:

- providing a safe, inclusive space
- supporting everyone in accessing our services
- enabling people to improve their literacy, mathematical and digital skills
- connecting with their community and tackling social isolation through library activities and events

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[14] LGA, Armed Forces Act 2021: background, implications for councils and practical steps to get ready for the Act, 2022 Armed Forces Act 2021: background, implications for councils and practical steps to get ready for the Act | Local Government Association

- enabling people to overcome barriers in their social and professional lives through education, access to technology, career support and directing to support services
- more flexibility for employees to change their hours or work location

Some impacts on certain groups including people with disabilities or health conditions, carers and people living in rural isolation is unclear. Concerns have been raised that they may be negatively impacted by a tiered operating model or that they may struggle to access our services altogether. However, some mitigating actions will be undertaken, including coordinating opening hours between nearby libraries, promoting our online library service and home library service and telling people about transportation options. We expect this will prevent any negative impact, but we will need to frequently evaluate the impact on these groups as the tiered model and new opening hours are implemented, to ensure our mitigating actions are effective.

There are also some changes that are being made to the presentation of the strategy as a direct result of feedback gathered during the development of the EqIA, including reviewing the strategy for plain English, while also developing an easy read version and a "Plan on a page" version. We expect this to impact positively on everyone, by ensuring that everyone can easily find out about the strategy in a format and language that works best for them.

The Library Strategy has been developed in collaboration with partners from many organisations and Dorset Council services, and the library service will require close and frequent partnership working and support to deliver the strategic aims and to complete the tasks set out in the delivery action plan. There is a risk that changes to capacity in other Dorset Council service areas and organisations could affect service delivery and therefore, the impacts described in this EqIA. However, through continuous communication and dynamic leadership, we aspire to meet our mission to Inspire, Connect and Enable our communities through our services.

11. Action Plan

Impact ref.	Action to be taken	Person(s) responsible	Year to be completed
1.1.1	Partner with Dorset's Speech and Language Service to support early years (for ages 0-5) language and literacy programmes and deliver shared priorities. We'll support early years numeracy by working with Children's Services to deliver rhyme times and stories with a counting theme.	Libraries Management Team Dorset Council Speech and Language Service	2023-2033
Applicable to all	Engage with the workforce on the new operating model, to fully understand how they will be impacted. Update the EqIA with what has been discussed and any further actions taken as a result.	Libraries Service Manager and Project Manager for the INSPIRE: Dorset Council Library Strategy	2023-24
2.1.1	We need to take further action to explore ways to increase access to sensory stimulation and deprivation equipment, such as ear defenders, sensory toys and tactile mats in libraries without autism rooms. Options may include a package of sensory equipment to be sent to any library for a period of time or we could identify costs for particular items for each library to have permanently, dependent on space.	Libraries Management Team	2023-2025
2.1.1, 2.2.1	Explore options to introduce quiet spaces/hours in our libraries, for those who don't feel comfortable with distractions or loud background noise.	Libraries Service Manager Libraries Management Team Assets and property	2023-25
2.2.1	Survey feedback expressed concern that library employees are not health experts. During implementation of objectives linked to health and wellbeing, we will clarify that library employees will be supported to improve their knowledge in order to more effectively signpost customers to the appropriate support services rather than becoming health and wellbeing practitioners.	Libraries Service Manager Communications Team	2023-2033
2.3.1, 10.1.1	Due consideration will need to be given to people who may have difficulties travelling, before removing any classes/services on offer	Libraries Service Manager Libraries Management Team	2023-2025

	at any specific libraries or implementing any changes to library opening hours. Residents will be supported to find public transport and community transport schemes where needed.		
2.3.1, 10.1.2, 11.1.1	Explore ways volunteers or donors can approach us to express an interest in enhancing the proposed Dorset Council funded opening hours, such as providing a financial contribution towards running costs, exploring further implementation of the current volunteering model or offering support to explore the use of technology to extend opening hours and enable customers to access libraries in a safe, secure way when buildings are unstaffed.	Libraries Service Manager	2023-24
2.1.1, 2.5.1	The Libraries Asset Management team will be completing an audit of all library spaces to evaluate accessibility. The Libraries Service Manager will ensure this audit includes a consideration of appropriate lighting. Follow up with EDI Reference Group members to 'walk and talk' through library to improve inclusion in widest sense for all buildings and services.	Libraries Service Manager Assets and Property EDI Reference Group Library Service Management Team	2023-2025
3.1.1, 9.11	Libraries need to explore how they can play a role in offering refuge, safe spaces and supporting vulnerable members of our communities. This should result in actions and success measures in the Library Strategy Action Plan to show how they will meet this aim.	Libraries Management Team EDI Reference Group Employee network groups Partner organisations, including: • Dorset Ability Group • Dorset Mind • Dorset Race Equality Council • Help and Kindness • Mermaids UK • South West Dorset Multicultural Network • The Pineapple Project • Women's Action Network Dorset (WAND)	2023-25
6.1.1	Further consideration into how libraries can become further involved in the refugee resettlement programme is required. This	Libraries Management Team EDI Reference Group	2023-24

	should result in actions and success measures in the Library Strategy Action Plan to show how they will meet this aim.	Refugee support groups Dorset Race Equality Council South West Dorset Multicultural Network	
2.3.1, 2.3.2, 10.1.1	Seek to improve knowledge of and access to our online library service offer of free ebooks, eaudiobooks and virtual events.	Libraries Management Team Dorset Council Communications Team	2023-2025
11.1.2, 12.1.1	Explore the ways in which libraries with higher participation from demographics that are normally under-represented have engaged with their catchment communities and identify lessons we can learn/adopt as a network.	Libraries Management Team BI and Performance Team	2023-2025

Sign Off

Officer completing this EqIA: Hannah Godwin

Officers involved in completing the EqIA: Kate Turner, Liz Crocker, Lisa Cotton

Date of completion: 5th May 2023

Version Number: 4.0

EqIA review date: 9th May 2023

Equality Lead Sign Off: James Palfreman-Kay

Appendices

Appendix 1: Strategic Themes and Aims (excerpt from Strategy)

Theme 1: Inspire - Enriching lives through universal access to information, knowledge, learning literacy and culture. Inspiring and supporting people, learning, businesses, and the response to climate change**.**

What does inspire mean?

Everything changes when we can read. Strong literacy skills provide long term social and economic benefits. We celebrate the difference that reading for pleasure makes to health and wellbeing, confidence and empathy. We recognise the difference that access to free, trusted information makes to all.

Libraries are probably the most informal and welcoming cultural venues in Dorset. We offer a unique safe space to allow everyone to experience art and culture. Working in libraries enables artists to reach diverse audiences from across the whole community.

Libraries create inspiration and innovation and can generate significant economic benefits. We also have a role in supporting the response to the climate and ecological emergency. We can help to inspire and inform actions that can help Dorset become a carbon neutral county.

We aim to inspire more customers to improve their life chances by supporting you to:

- read and to share your enjoyment and the benefits of reading with others
- gain knowledge and to share your learning with others
- pursue your personal goals to find a job
- start and grow your business
- be part of an active cultural scene, supporting the cultural economy
- improve your digital skills and feel confident using information technology (IT)

Libraries support these aims by providing free access to:

- books and other reading materials
- events and activities
- in person support from trained staff and volunteers
- Information Technology (IT) – public access computers and public Wi-Fi

1.1 Support language, literacy and reading for pleasure for everyone through lifelong learning; acquiring knowledge; developing skills and pursuing personal goals

1.2 Host and deliver events & activities to inspire cultural connection and new experiences

1.3 Support people to develop digital skills, removing digital barriers and building confidence

1.4 Support an innovative and thriving Micro and Small Medium Enterprise business network

1.5 Inspire, inform and facilitate climate and ecologically positive actions and decisions

Theme 2: Connect - To connect with and meet the needs of our communities by linking people together with each other and with services from libraries, Dorset Council and partners.

What does Connect mean?

The library service is more than just a place to borrow books. It is a service which brings people together. Libraries allow people to connect with other members of their community. They foster culture and creativity.

Libraries also help people to learn and develop lifelong skills. Taking part in library events and activities improves mental wellbeing. They help to reduce isolation and feelings of loneliness. Libraries are also a place to access trusted information and support from:

- all council services
- public sector partners
- a range of other organisations

2.1 Customers and partners are aware of everything the library service has to offer

2.2 Our service is designed to meet customer needs and supports community connection

2.3 Local libraries thrive as part of a coordinated network of libraries including Dorset's Community Managed Libraries

2.4 Our open and inclusive service will ensure access is barrier free

2.5 Libraries are at the heart of delivering council services to communities, acting as the council's front door

Theme 3a: Enable - our communities

To create welcoming library buildings which are accessible, inclusive spaces for our communities to share and use in many ways.

What does Enable our communities mean?

We want to deliver a modern, sustainable, and responsive library service. To do this, we need facilities that are inspiring and fit for purpose. Our spaces need to be appropriate and welcoming. They need to have facilities, equipment, and technologies which support a range of uses. For example, we want to provide study

spaces, assistive technologies, innovation spaces, digital suites, and flexible workspaces. We want to provide spaces which are busy and energetic as well as spaces which are quiet and reflective.

We will work with other services and organisations to be responsive to our communities on wider issues. We will develop welcoming and inclusive library spaces that services and partners can use. This will enable more services to be delivered locally within communities.

3.1 Create inviting, flexible, well used spaces

3.2 Provide safe trusted spaces

3.3 Sustainable buildings which keep pace with community growth

3.4 Library services form part of community hubs

3.5 Provide space where residents can connect with health and wellbeing opportunities

Theme 3b: Enable – our library teams

To invest in the development of our workforce and volunteers to deliver services that meet current and future community needs and customer expectations.

What does it mean to Enable our library teams?

Our service relies on a committed and passionate library and volunteer workforce who are essential in inspiring and empowering our communities. Our employees and volunteers provide access to free, trusted information and the in person support many customers rely on to make the most of our services.

We wish to continue delivering high-quality services. We also wish to respond to the future needs of our communities. To achieve our Inspire Connect Enable aims, we will support the individuals in our teams to develop the knowledge and skills they need to achieve their potential. We will provide opportunities for our teams to continue to develop and improve. By employing those whose values, behaviours, knowledge and skills reflect the strategy, we can reach the standards our communities expect from the library service.

3.6 Each employee feels valued and empowered, with career opportunities in the library service and Dorset Council more broadly

3.7 Flexible resourcing across our library network, allows employees to develop a range of skills and experience

3.8 We offer inclusive routes to employment and development opportunities via apprenticeship programmes

3.9 We have a strong partnership with, and wholly value the contribution of, our volunteers to the library service. We have a framework in place for supporting future partnerships to build on their success

Appendix 2: Our Library Network

We propose to organise the Dorset Council run libraries into the 3 library types as below:

Library (10)	Library Plus (8)	Library Connect (5)
• Beaminster	• Gillingham	• Blandford
• Corfe Mullen	• Littlemoor	• Bridport
• Crossways	• Portland	• Dorchester
• Lyme Regis	• Shaftesbury	• Ferndown
• Lytchett Matravers	• Sherborne	• Weymouth
• Sturminster Newton	• Swanage	
• Upton	• Wareham	
• Verwood	• Wimborne	
• West Moors		
• Wyke Regis		

Libraries will continue to be managed as a county wide service across the whole of Dorset. For practical operational purposes we will manage libraries in geographical clusters. This allows us to share resources at a local level. Each cluster has a combination of library, library plus and library connect.

East (9)	Mid and North (7)	South and West (7)
Ferndown*	Blandford*	Bridport
	Dorchester	Weymouth
Swanage		
Wareham	Gillingham	Littlemoor
Wimborne	Sherborne	Portland
	Shaftesbury	
Corfe Mullen		Beaminster
Lytchett Matravers	Crossways	Lyme Regis
Upton	Sturminster Newton	Wyke Regis
Verwood		
West Moors		

Appendix 3: Our Library Services Offer (excerpt from Strategy)

We aim to provide a consistent core library offer at all 3 types of Dorset Council run libraries. Most services are currently available at all libraries. Footnotes explain where some services need development to become available to all.

The core offer available at all libraries is enhanced by extra services available at Library Pluses and Library Connects. Some additional services are aspirational. They will require feasibility studies and investment over the next 10 years to support our aims and vision. Footnotes explain where current provision is limited.

All libraries are available for community groups and partners to hire. Services offered by groups may enhance the offer beyond the standard core offer.

We anticipate that needs and demands will alter during the lifetime of the strategy. We intend to flex the provision of services where possible to match changing needs and demands. These changes will be subject to available resources.

Services available at Libraries, Library Pluses and Library Connects

Inspire: To enrich lives through universal access to information, knowledge, learning and literacy and culture

Resources, reading and literacy

We offer:
- trained library teams support access to our services
- free access to diverse range of books and resources, catering from early years to adults. These are available to browse and reserve in libraries
- accessible and inclusive resources available to browse and reserve in libraries (charges may apply). These include: large print, audio books, picture journeys
- ability to browse and reserve books and resources from the LibrariesWest catalogue
- ability to request items from outside of the LibrariesWest catalogue via inter library loans service (for a charge)
- 24/7 access to e-resources. These include e-books, e-audiobooks, e-newspapers, e-magazines, e-comics and e-reference
- signposting to local studies library at Dorset History Centre

Events and Activities

We offer:
- in person activities, events and groups in libraries for adults

- in person activities, events and groups in libraries for schools, early years, children and young people[15]
- online activities, events and groups for adults
- online activities, events and groups for schools, early years, children and young people

Digital

We offer:
- access to free WI-FI
- access to free public computers
- access to digital family hub service via public access computers
- printing and scanning facilities (for a charge)
- digital support available at library
- library teams signpost and book customers onto digital champion support session

Learning*:* Library teams able to signpost customers to adult learning opportunities in Dorset

Business Support*:* Signpost customer to business support available in Dorset

Climate Advice and Support*:* Library events or displays which promote the climate and ecological emergency

Connect: To connect with and meet the needs of our communities

We offer:
- a network of library buildings which are free to visit and free to join
- access to Home Library Service *(if customer meets eligibility criteria)*
- a notice board for council promotions and community events
- signposting to support available for resettled refugees in Dorset
- signposting to support available to members and families of the Armed Forces under the Armed Forces Covenant

Enable: To create accessible, inclusive spaces for our communities to share and use

We offer:
- flexible, accessible library spaces (including moveable furniture and fittings)
- bookable rooms / library spaces (for a charge)

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[15] In person activities for 'older' young people (teenagers) is an area for development, based on need and demand

- in person wellbeing events
- online wellbeing events
- signposting to trusted health and wellbeing agencies, organisations and resources
- signposting to information and advice about a range of partner services
- outreach by third-party agencies in response to local need which relate to the library strategy themes and aims
- signposting to online and telephone access to Dorset Council customer services
- customer support for basic questions about a range of council services

Further services available at Library Plus and Library Connect:

We offer:
- local studies and Dorset History Centre exhibitions
- in person events in libraries for children or young people with special education needs and disabilities[16]
- in person events in libraries for adults with special education needs and disabilities[17]
- sensory equipment for use in libraries[18]
- space for art displays or spaces for artists to perform
- business support events and/or advice available at library
- outreach events by partner agencies providing advice on energy efficiency and green grants

Additional Services available at Library Connect:

We offer:
- regular adult learning classes available at the library[19]
- co-working library spaces
- customer collection of recycling containers
- library of things/repair café *(subject to feasibility assessment)*
- autism friendly rooms[20]

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[16] All library events are accessible, our aspiration is to offer additional specific targeted activities

[17] All library events are accessible, specific activities are currently offered at Dorchester, Ferndown and Gillingham

[18] Currently available at Blandford, Bridport, Dorchester, Gillingham, Swanage, Wareham, Weymouth, libraries and may be shared between libraries to deliver sessions

[19] Dorset Skills and Learning offer currently available at Dorchester, Gillingham, Wareham, Weymouth

[20] Currently available at Dorchester and Gillingham, further expansion dependent on building developments.

- dedicated customer services team co-located at the library site[21]
- co-located partner agencies at library sites
- café at library *(subject to feasibility assessment)*

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[21] Customer Access Points currently available at Dorchester, Wareham, Weymouth, Wimborne.

Appendix 4: Breakdown of respondents by protected characteristic (phase 1 and phase 2 consultation surveys combined)

Please note, in the 5-15 years surveys, the children were only asked to provide their age. In the main survey, respondents were asked about age, gender, gender reassignments, disability, religion and belief and race and ethnicity. All questions about protected characteristics were optional, so many choose not to disclose this information, as they do not see the relevance. Therefore, the percentages below will not necessarily be a true reflection of the average characteristics of our survey respondents.

Characteristic	Description	Total who answered yes from all six surveys	Percentage who answered yes from all six surveys
Age	5-10 years	622	4.95%
	11-15 years	386	3.07%
	16-18 years	73	0.58%
	18-24 years	103	0.82%
	25-34 years	378	3.01%
	35-44 years	840	6.69%
	45-54 years	1064	8.47%
	55-64 years	2199	17.51%
	65+ years	5888	46.88%
	Prefer not to say	328	2.61%
	Not answered	678	5.40%
Disability	Do not have a disability	9306	80.78%
	Physical disability	464	4.03%
	Long-standing illness/ health condition	413	3.59%
	Mental health condition	93	0.81%
	Sensory impairment	243	2.11%
	Learning disability/difficulty	84	0.73%
	Other	58	0.50%
	Prefer not to say	424	3.68%
	Not answered	435	3.78%
Gender Reassignment	Gender identity is the same as the sex assigned at birth	10113	87.79%
	Gender identity is not the same as the sex assigned at birth	37	0.32%
	Prefer not to say	493	4.28%
	Not answered	877	7.61%
Religion and Belief	Buddhist	90	0.78%
	Christian	5405	46.92%
	Hindu	11	0.10%
	Jewish	15	0.13%

	Muslim	11	0.10%
	Sikh	4	0.03%
	No religion	3663	31.80%
	Other	290	2.52%
	Prefer not to say	1115	9.68%
	Not answered	916	7.95%
Race and Ethnicity	White British	9554	82.93%
	White Irish	64	0.56%
	Gypsy/Irish traveller	5	0.04%
	Any other white background	212	1.84%
	Asian / Asian British - Bangladeshi	2	0.02%
	Asian / Asian British - Chinese	3	0.03%
	Asian / Asian British - Indian	21	0.18%
	Asian / Asian British - Pakistani	3	0.03%
	Any other Asian background	7	0.06%
	Black/ Black British – African	1	0.01%
	Black/ Black British - Caribbean	6	0.05%
	Any other Black Background	0	0.00%
	Mixed ethnic background – White and Asian	19	0.16%
	Mixed ethnic background – White and Black African	2	0.02%
	Mixed ethnic background – White and Black Caribbean	7	0.06%
	Any other mixed background	27	0.23%
	Any other ethnic group	92	0.80%
	Prefer not to say	623	5.41%
	Not answered	872	7.57%
Sex	Male	3512	30.49%
	Female	6937	60.22%
	Prefer to self describe	31	0.27%
	Prefer not to say	328	2.85%
	Not answered	712	6.18%
Sexual orientation	Bi	170	1.48%
	Gay/lesbian	116	1.01%
	Heterosexual/straight	8606	74.70%
	I use another term	91	0.79%
	Prefer not to say	1462	12.69%
	Not answered	1075	9.33%

Appendix 5: Services, partner organisations and networks we invited to consult on the strategy and EqIA

Please note, this is a list of services, partner organisations and networks that we directly invited to participate during the consultation and development of the draft library strategy. This may have taken the form of an invite to complete the partner survey, a request to a representative to attend a workshop or the EDI reference group or an invitation to have a conversation about how we can support each other. The list may not be definitive, as we regularly engaged with a wide variety of people and groups informally during strategy development.

- Age UK
- Armed Forces Covenant
- Arts Council
- Arts Development Company
- BCP Library Service
- BCP Skills and Learning
- Carer Support Dorset
- Citizen's Advice
- Community Managed Libraries
- DC Adult Social Care
- DC Archives & Museums
- DC Assets & Property
- DC Childrens Social Care
- DC Climate & Ecological Sustainability
- DC Communications
- DC Customer Services
- DC Commercial Waste
- DC Digital Team
- DC Economic Development
- DC Leisure Services
- DC LGBTQI+ Employee Network
- DC recognised Trade Unions
- Digital Skills & Adoption
- Dorset Ability Group
- Dorset Blind
- Dorset Chamber of Commerce
- Dorset Local Enterprise Partnership
- Dorset Mind
- Dorset Parent Carer Council
- Dorset Race Equality Council
- Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS)
- Department of Work and Pensions (DWP)
- Federation of Small Businesses
- Friends of Libraries network

- Help and Kindness
- Home Start West Dorset
- Livewell Dorset
- Magna Housing
- Mermaids UK
- NHS Speech and Language Service
- Other Dorset local authorities
- Our Dorset Integrated Care System
- Public Health
- Royal Voluntary Service (Home Library service)
- South West Dorset Multicultural Network
- Schools
- The Pineapple Project
- Town and Parish Councils