

Initial Equality Impact Assessment

1. The Project

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| Directorate: | Corporate Services |
| Service area: | Libraries |
| Lead Officer: | Emma Wellard |
| Date: | July 2025 |

Description of the project:

The council is currently facing significant financial challenges, requiring £44 million in savings over the next three years. Rising demands for services, coupled with increasing costs, have necessitated a thorough review of all areas of council spending.

A review of the library service is one aspect of this financial strategy. The library service has a savings target of £217,000 in 2026/27 and a further £217,000 in 2027/28. The council is committed to fulfilling its statutory obligations and maintaining a quality library service that reflects the strong value our community places on it. To ensure the sustainability of library provision in North Somerset, a range of options has been explored to meet these targets, including alternative delivery models, enhanced outreach services, and a potential reduction in the number of library sites.

By focusing on outreach opportunities and potentially increasing mobile library services, we aim to adapt the service to meet the diverse needs of users while delivering these essential savings. This will help ensure that any future service delivery continues to meet both statutory responsibilities and the expectations of our residents.

Summary of changes:

To meet these savings targets, the option agreed to go to public consultation in summer 2025 includes a proposal to change the opening hours at Clevedon library. The proposed change is to close at 12.30 instead of 13.00 on Saturdays. This document is designed to assess the equalities impacts this will have on the local community, library service provision and staff.

2. Customer equality impact summary

Will the changes proposed in this project have a disproportionate impact (or bias) for any of these groups?

| Protected or significant group | Impact Level | | | | Impact type | |
|--|--------------|---|---|---|-------------|---|
| | H | M | L | N | + | - |
| Disabled people (Including the consideration of neurodiversity) | | | x | | | |
| People from different ethnic groups | | | x | | | |
| Men or women (including those who are pregnant or on maternity leave) | | | x | | | |
| People who are LGBTQ+ | | | x | | | |
| People on a low income | | | x | | | |
| People in particular age groups | | | x | | | |
| People in particular faith groups | | | x | | | |
| People who are married or in a civil partnership | | | x | | | |
| People who are undergoing gender reassignment | | | x | | | |
| Other significant groups, for example: Armed Forces Community, care experienced young people, carers, parents. Please specify: | | | x | | | |

3. Explanation of customer impact

The decision to close the library 30 minutes earlier on Saturdays has been assessed as having a low impact on protected groups. This is because the change represents a minimal reduction in service hours, occurring at the end of the day when footfall data shows that usage is typically lower. Protected groups are unlikely to be disproportionately affected. Extended access, digital services and weekday opening hours, remain available to support continued inclusion and accessibility.

Please describe how you will communicate these changes to those impacted.

A public consultation will take place from 31 July 2025 to 24 October 2025, followed by a staff consultation in 2026. We will work with the corporate communications team on a wider communication strategy for all the changes resulting from the medium-term financial plan

savings target.

4. Staff equality impact summary

Are there any staffing implications for this proposal? Yes

Explanation of staff impact

Library staff are appointed to the district, rather than to specific libraries. The likely impact on staffing will not be known until after outcome of this initial consultation which focuses on service and sites is known. Depending on the outcome, a specific staffing consultation is likely to follow at that point which will affect the whole service. This uncertainty could impact employee morale and increased stress.

5. Cumulative equality impacts

Is this project linked to or likely to have an impact on any other service areas?

The options for Clevedon library form part of a wider public consultation for overall library services in North Somerset. While the impact at this library is minimal, not implementing the changes (reduction in opening hours) would result in a greater negative impact at other libraries.

6. Action Plan

Are there any further actions that should be taken because of this Equality Impact Assessment?

| Issue Identified | Planned Action | Lead Officer | Time for review |
|-----------------------|--|--------------|-----------------|
| Reduced staffed hours | To help reduce the impact of closing at 12.30 on a Saturday instead of 13.00, we propose extending and promoting self-service opening hours. This would allow continued access to key library resources such as book borrowing, computer use, and study spaces outside of staffed hours. While this does not fully replace the benefits of staffed services and community activities, it may help maintain a level of accessibility—particularly for those who rely on | EW | February 2026 |

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| | the library outside of standard working hours. | | |
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7. Review and Sign Off

Service Manager Review

This is an initial impact assessment based on the potential changes outlined in the consultation document. A further assessment will take place once the outcome of the consultation is known.

Is a further detailed equality impact assessment needed? **No**

Service Manager: Emma Wellard

Date: 23 July 2025