

## Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) - Pill Library

<b>Directorate</b>	Corporate Services
<b>Service area:</b>	Libraries
<b>Lead Officer:</b>	Emma Wellard
<b>Review date:</b>	November 2025

### Equality Impacts

This EIA is effectively a work in progress and represents an initial assessment with impacts being explored prior to the consultation with stakeholders, community groups, and other relevant parties. It is intended to identify potential areas of impact. Any mitigations, adjustments, or final outcomes will be shaped by the feedback and insights gathered during the consultation phase. This document will be reviewed and updated accordingly to reflect a more comprehensive and inclusive understanding of the impacts post-consultation.

#### Service User Impact add date

Before mitigating actions	<b>High</b>	Medium	Low	No
After mitigating actions	High	<b>Medium</b>	Low	No

#### Staff Impact

Before mitigating actions	High	Medium	<b>Low</b>	No
After mitigating actions	High	Medium	<b>Low</b>	No

# 1. The Project

## Background to project

The [North Somerset Libraries Strategy](#), adopted in 2021, outlined the need for libraries to keep evolving to maintain a quality service provision in the context of changing demand and budget challenge whilst still meeting statutory duties. It flagged that any future restrictions on the Library Service budget would require services to be run in a very different way to maintain a much-valued level of service across North Somerset. It was hoped that this approach would minimise the requirement for service reductions, whilst enhancing the local offer at the same time.

However, the challenging [financial context](#) in which North Somerset Council (NSC) is now operating led to a planned reduction in Library Service budget of 19% being included in the Council's approved Medium Term Financial Plan from April 2026 (which equates to £433k). The savings target was based on a planned 20% reduction in the service's 2024–2025 financial year revenue budget. The Council therefore needs to consider how best to meet the needs of communities within the reduced resources available.

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, designed around an analysis of needs. 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, 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 needs of those who live, work or study in North Somerset, whilst being financially sustainable.

To meet these savings targets, the option agreed to go to public consultation in summer 2025 includes a proposal to offer local communities the opportunity to manage Pill library. If a community managed library is formed, it could potentially remain part of the North Somerset network and retain access to LibrariesWest services. If no viable community-led solution is found, Pill library may unfortunately have to close. This document is designed to assess the equalities impacts this will have on the local community, library service provision and staff.

**Please detail below how this proposal may impact on any other organisation and their customers.**

- **Local Charities & Non-Profits:** Many charities rely on libraries as meeting spaces, hubs for outreach programs, or venues. Closing the library could disrupt their ability to engage with the local community effectively.
- **Education Providers:** Local schools often rely on libraries for curriculum support, extracurricular activities, and student study spaces. Should the library close, this could limit students' access to books, research materials and technology.
- **Social & Health Services:** Libraries often serve as informal access points for health information, social service referrals, and mental health support programs. Pill Library is a collection point for the Food Hub, which would need to relocate if the library were to close
- **Employment & Skills Training:** Access to free public wi-fi, printing and online resources will impact on delivery of council employment services. Should the library close, this will make it harder for unemployed or under-skilled individuals to access job support and community groups delivering outreach in this area will have to find alternative locations to operate.
- **Local Arts & Cultural Organisations:** Libraries often host arts-related events, writing groups, family activities (e.g. board game sessions) and cultural activities, enriching community life. Closing this space could reduce opportunities for cultural engagement; moving to community management could potentially enhance this offer.
- **Access to information and to technology:** Many individuals rely on libraries for free internet access, public computers, printing, online learning, and communication and the library also delivers face to face council services for those who are digitally excluded. If the library closes, this will make accessing essential online services and Council services more difficult for those lacking their own internet access or the skills to engage online. Pill Library also hosts Councillor and MP surgeries which would need to relocate if the library should close.
- **Children's Services & Family Support:** The library is historically co-located with a children's centre; however, children's services have stopped being delivered from Pill for some time now and are often run out of the nearby local village hall instead. Children's Centres are currently considering what the service offer could look like in Pill and think that services could be delivered in the following way: Family Hubs will provide an outreach service in the Pill area of North Somerset; Continue to deliver a weekly, term time activity for children under the age of 5 from the Salvation Army site; Digital Offer – providing online access to information, advice and support services in the Pill area. Child-minders regularly use the building and would need to find an alternative operating location. The library also provides information and signposting to support for children's and family services. Changes at the library may affect referrals into local support networks. The site is also used regularly by a Childminders Group, who would have to relocate if the library closed. Pill Library also runs activities for children, including a Rhyme Time session, the annual Summer Reading Challenge, Lego Club and Code Club sessions.

These activities would either have to be discontinued or provided in an alternative way (based on analysis of need) if the library should close.

Transferring to a community led solution presents many issues which need to be considered however, there are also a range of potential positive benefits which include:

**Continued Access to Services**

Prevents complete loss of access, especially for groups who rely heavily on libraries

Maintains a local hub for digital access, literacy support, and social inclusion.

**Community Empowerment**

Encourages local ownership and involvement, which can foster stronger community ties and responsiveness to local needs.

Culturally relevant activities reflecting the diverse needs of the community.

Develops increased volunteering opportunities

**Flexibility and Innovation**

Community groups may introduce new services or partnerships tailored to local demographics (e.g. ESOL classes, youth mentoring, cultural events).

## **Section 2 – What do we know?**

### **Who is likely to be affected by this project?**

#### **Community across North Somerset**

Libraries are central to community cohesion, providing access to resources for education, employment, and social interaction. Their closure could disproportionately affect individuals who rely on free internet access, books, and quiet study spaces. Those who experience financial

hardship may struggle to access information and recreational reading elsewhere, widening inequalities. Libraries in North Somerset operate on a district wide basis and are part of the wider LibrariesWest partnership which operates across 7 authorities in South West England (145 libraries, lending 2.5 million items). Libraries therefore offer residents free access to resources across a wider community than in their local area.

### **Community in a specific area (Pill and surrounds)**

In a smaller community like Pill, where local resources may already be limited, the closure of a library could be even more disruptive. Residents who use the library as a gathering place for social inclusion, learning, and support services may struggle to find alternative accessible venues. Vulnerable populations, such as elderly individuals or those with disabilities, may feel isolated due to the loss of a nearby accessible, warm, welcoming, non-judgmental space.

### **Council Partners**

Libraries collaborate with other council services, acting as information hubs and assisting in delivering community outreach programs, for example, offering access to equipment lending and sales. Libraries provide support and signposting to North Somerset residents who are unable to access council services online. For complex enquiries, staff direct residents to a dedicated council services phone located within the library, ensuring access to the appropriate specialist support. Losing a library could mean added strain on other public services, such as job centres and community advice groups, which may need to accommodate displaced library users seeking assistance. A community managed library may not seek provide support for access to NS Council services.

### **North Somerset Council Employees**

Library staff are appointed to the district, rather than to specific libraries. North Somerset Council are not seeking to make the required savings through redundancies, although it is likely that there will be an impact on staffing. 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 period of uncertainty could impact employee morale and increased stress.

## **Service Users**

Regular users of library services, including students, job seekers, and families, would lose a key resource for education and development. Children could particularly suffer, as libraries play a crucial role in early literacy and access to educational programming.

## **Commissioned Services**

Services that rely on libraries as venues for delivery—such as adult learning programs, digital inclusion initiatives, and literacy workshops—may struggle to find suitable alternatives. This disruption could impact service effectiveness and accessibility.

## **Voluntary/Community Groups**

Local voluntary groups often use library spaces for meetings, training, and outreach. The loss of this venue could limit their ability to function effectively, reducing opportunities for community engagement and collaboration.

The closure of a library has significant social and economic repercussions, disproportionately affecting marginalised communities. Strategies to address these impacts will be developed.

## **What data or evidence do you have to inform this Equality Impact Assessment?**

To inform this Equality Impact Assessment, we have gathered a range of data sources to ensure a comprehensive understanding of library usage and community needs. Specifically, we conducted a library survey that ran from Monday, 24 March 2025, until midday on Friday, 18 April 2025. This survey was carried out across all branches, including Pill, to collect insights directly from library users.

In addition to the survey findings, we have leveraged historical membership data from our library management system, which provides valuable information on past and present library usage trends within the Winscombe branch and other locations. Furthermore, we have drawn data from council planning teams and broader area demographic statistics to ensure our assessment reflects the wider community context.

This combination of survey responses, historical usage statistics, and strategic planning data ensures that our Equality Impact Assessment is informed by a well-rounded evidence base, allowing us to make decisions that best serve the diverse needs of our library users.

The feedback received through the libraries consultation will feed into a thorough analysis of need, which will be used to update this impact assessment and inform the final options development.

### **Who have you consulted with as a part of this project OR who do you plan to consult with?**

As part of this project, we are running a public consultation for twelve weeks, from 31 July 2025 until 24 October 2025. This will provide an opportunity for engagement with a wide range of stakeholders, including library users and non-users, staff, community partners, volunteers, Councillors and local residents. The consultation will help us gather valuable feedback and ensure that different perspectives are considered in our decision-making process.

### **Are there any gaps in our evidence to support this Equality Impact Assessment? If so, what are the plans to gather this information?**

We are aware that our recent survey was not aimed at children and so there may be gaps in understanding how young people engage with library services and how any potential changes might affect them. To address this, we plan to explore additional ways to gather insights from children and young people, ensuring their perspectives are considered in the wider public consultation in the summer. The service is planning to collect information from under 16's as part of the consultation by engaging with families during the Summer Reading Challenge.

The consultation also seeks to engage with all residents of North Somerset, including those who do not currently use libraries.

Note we have not made any attempts to gather data in relation to customer's religious views as this does not have any impact on how people access our libraries.

## Section 3 – Assessment of Impact

**Will the project have a disproportionate impact (or bias) on any of these groups?**

Insert X into one box per row, for impact level and type.

H = High, M = Medium, L = Low, N = None | + = Positive, - = Negative

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Protected or significant group	H	M	L	N	+	-	Please explain impact giving examples from data and consultation information to support your assessment
Disabled people (including consideration of neurodiversity)	x					x	In the <a href="#">2021 Census</a> , 16.53% (9.87%+6.66%) of people in Pill identify themselves as disabled under the Equalities Act, having day to day activities limited a little or a lot. At Pill library 18.36% (18) of library survey respondents identified as having a physical or mental health condition which impacts their day-to-day life. Therefore, closure of the library will have a disproportionate impact on people with disabilities.
People from different ethnic groups				x			93% of library survey respondents identified as White - English/Welsh/Scottish/Northern Irish/British. According to the North Somerset JSNA (Joint Strategic Needs Assessment) 95.7% of the overall population is White.
Men or women (including pregnant women or those on maternity leave)	x					x	68% of library survey respondents were female and 5% of survey respondents identified as being protected under the Equalities Act due to pregnancy or maternity. In North Somerset, Census data indicates that 51.4% of the population is women (and 50.31% in Pill), therefore women will be disproportionately affected by a closure at this branch.  The closure of the library would result in the discontinuation of services such as Rhyme Time. Evidence suggests that participation in such

					<p>sessions can have a positive impact on maternal mental health, offering opportunities for social connection, routine, and support during the early stages of parenthood. The removal of this provision may therefore disproportionately affect new mothers and primary carers, particularly those experiencing isolation or mental health challenges.</p>
People who are LGBTQ+		x		x	<p>4% of library survey respondents identified as being protected under the Equalities Act, due to sexual orientation. The North Somerset Census average was 2.61%, which would indicate a higher impact on LGBTQ+ communities. This is higher usage rate is likely a result of community partner use of library space, rather than a reflection of the average library user.</p>
People on a low income		x		x	<p>While we don't hold data on the deprivation level of Pill library service users, we know that 17% of library survey respondents come to the library because they cannot afford internet access at home. Others may not be able to buy books or heat their homes and therefore the closure is assessed to have a negative impact on more deprived groups. In the 2021 Census 48.89% of households in Pill had one or more dimension deprivation.</p> <p>Pill library is currently a collection point for the food hub. Closure may disproportionately affect vulnerable groups and exacerbate existing inequalities in access to essential support services.</p>

People in particular age groups	x		x	<p>Children and older people are more likely to use the library and are therefore disproportionately impacted by the closure of this site. 26% of Pill library survey respondents indicated they were over 75 years of age.</p> <p>The closure of the library would have a notable impact on children and young people, particularly through the loss of Lego Club and Code Club. These free, inclusive activities provide valuable opportunities for informal learning, creativity, and digital skill development outside of school.</p> <p>Code Club supports digital literacy and introduces children to programming in a supportive environment, helping to bridge the digital divide. Lego Club encourages problem-solving, teamwork, and imaginative play, contributing to cognitive and social development.</p> <p>The removal of these services may disproportionately affect children from lower-income families who may not have access to similar resources at home, potentially widening educational and digital inequalities.</p>
People in particular faith groups		x		<p>Only 4 respondents at Pill library indicated that their religion, belief (or none) needed to be considered under the Equalities Act. Overall survey responses were 6% and therefore impacts are considered negligible.</p>

People who are married or in a civil partnership	x		Only 3 respondents at Pill library indicated that being married or in a civil partnership needed to be considered under the Equalities Act. Overall survey responses were 3% and therefore impacts are considered negligible.
People who are undergoing gender reassignment	x		Library survey responses indicate that only 1% of library users identified as being a different gender to the one assigned at birth, with 3% preferring not to say. At Pill library, 4 respondents preferred not to say, and no respondents identified their gender as being different to the one assigned at birth and therefore any impacts are deemed negligible.
Other significant groups, for example: Armed Forces Community, care experienced young people, carers, parents.	x		We do not hold data for these groups; however, knowledge of the local community would indicate that these groups are not highly represented in this area. As part of the consultation process, we intend to gather more detailed data and better understand the potential impact on these groups—particularly unpaid carers—to ensure their needs and perspectives are fully considered.

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## Could this proposal have a cumulative impact with any other budget savings?

**Yes**

The options for Pill library form part of a wider public consultation for overall library services in North Somerset and any mitigations implemented to reduce the equalities impacts of this transfer to a community managed library, or closure may increase costs in other areas of the library and council services (for example outreach costs).

## Section 4 – Options

### What other options have been considered?

It is highly likely that up to three libraries could close if no alternative way to deliver services in those areas can be found. A potential closure at Pill is not confirmed.

We are exploring:

- Whether local communities are interested in running these libraries. The Council may no longer run a library directly. Instead, local community groups could be supported to take on management This is dependent on local capacity and interest. (If no viable community led solution is found, Pill library will unfortunately have to close)
- Delivering services through other means, such as through the mobile library, community outreach, or the Home Delivery Service as well as promoting alternative libraries nearby and digital library services.
- Changes to opening hours.
- Reducing central budgets e.g. staffing, new book and digital resources, IT systems, equipment and stationery.
- New income or funding opportunities, increased promotion of library spaces for hire, or partnerships with local organisations.

Your feedback, views and local knowledge will help us shape how - and where - savings are made, and how library services are delivered in the future.

## Section 5 – Action Plan if the library closes

Issue Identified	Planned Action	Lead Officer	Time for review
Disabled people (including consideration of neurodiversity)	Should the library close, expanding mobile and outreach services, consider re-directing impacted users to the home library service and / or signposting local community transport links to take customers to Portishead Library.	Emma Wellard	TBC
Women (including pregnant women or those on maternity leave)	Should the library close, expanding mobile and outreach services and partnering with Children's Centre teams to deliver targeted maternity and pregnancy events and activities. Partnering with local community centres and The Resource Centre to provide information on topics such as women's health and pregnancy and maternity services.	Emma Wellard	TBC
People who are LGBTQ+	Work with existing partnerships and networks to deliver targeted support to these groups.  Continue to provide access to a balanced range of library stock according to library policy via outreach activity.	Emma Wellard	TBC

People on a low income	<p>Expanding mobile library and outreach services and partnering with groups and centres e.g. The Resource Centre and Citizens Advice to provide information and access to Council and digital services.</p> <p>Explore provision of alternative face to face support for council services</p>	Emma Wellard	TBC
People in particular age groups – children and older people	<p>Expanding mobile library and outreach services and partnering with groups and centres e.g. The Resource Centre and Citizens Advice to provide information and access to Council and digital services.</p> <p>Family hub services could be delivered in the following way:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Family Hubs will provide an outreach service in the Pill area of North Somerset.</li> <li>• Continue to deliver a weekly, term time activity for children under the age of 5 from the Salvation Army site.</li> <li>• Digital Offer – providing online access to information, advice and support services in the Pill area.</li> </ul>	<p>Emma Wellard</p> <p>Tracey Wells</p>	TBC



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## Action Plan if Pill Library and Children's Centre is transferred to a community managed library

Issue Identified	Planned Action	Lead Officer	Time for review
Disabled people (including consideration of neurodiversity)	Work with the community to ensure the building remains accessible and inclusive. Provide training and support on inclusive service delivery. Continue to offer the home library service in Pill.	Emma Wellard	TBC
Women (including pregnant women or those on maternity leave)	Work with the community to continue to provide / promote access to resources and training on women's health and maternity topics.	Emma Wellard	TBC
People who are LGBTQ+	Offer guidance on inclusive language and representation in displays.  Depending on the community model which emerges, supply a range of stock to the library based on existing collection development principles.	Emma Wellard	TBC

People on a low income	Depending on the community model which emerges, continue to offer free access to Wi-Fi and computers.  Explore provision of support to access council services.	Emma Wellard	TBC
People in particular age groups – children and older people	Depending on community model, provide training and resources for volunteers to run sessions for children and older people.  Provide information to signpost children aged 0-19 and their families to Family Hubs and other initiatives.	Emma Wellard	TBC

**If after planned actions you anticipate negative impacts remain, please provide an explanation below.**

Impacts of the reduction and removal of access to Council services for digitally excluded customers cannot be entirely mitigated by community partners (who may or may not wish to support this). This is due to the required levels of data protection and knowledge of council services and teams required to offer this support.

Whilst the Council will continue to deliver library services in alternative ways should the library close, the wider benefits of accessing library services through a physical building and the social connection this brings may be lost. This is likely to result in an increase in social isolation, loneliness, cohesion and deprivation in the local community.

**Please set out how you plan to communicate these changes with those effected?**

A public consultation will take place from 31 July 2025 to 24 October 2025, followed by a staff consultation in 2026. Links and partnerships with the local town council and community partnerships in the area will be strengthened and our outreach and mobile library programmed strengthened in the area to help support the change. 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.

## **Section 6 – Monitoring**

### **What are the governance arrangements for monitoring and reviewing the actions listed above and the actual impact on protected or significant groups?**

We will monitor attendance numbers at outreach events and visitor number to the mobile library. We will also use qualitative feedback from local community partners and other council teams operating in the area to inform and evaluate service provision.

A full plan will be put in place once the outcome of the consultation is known and a decision made on a way forward. Section 7 – Publish the Assessment

### **How will you publish this Equality Impact Assessment?**

A comprehensive version of the Equality Impact Assessment will be made available on a dedicated webpage. This will include downloadable documents and contact information for further inquiries or feedback.

Hard copies will be distributed to local libraries to ensure that individuals without internet access can review the materials.

These measures are intended to provide broad public access and encourage informed participation in the consultation process.