

## Equality Impact Assessment - Campus 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

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

### Staff Impact

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

# 1. The Project

## Background to 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 Campus Community Services budget (which covers the cost of staffing and running the Campus Library) also has a savings target to meet.

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.

To meet these savings targets, the option agreed to go to public consultation in summer 2025 includes a proposal to close The Campus at 18.00 instead of 20.00 on weekdays and to close at 13.00 instead of 17.00 on Saturdays and Sundays. The feasibility of introducing self-service facilities will be explored. 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. Reducing opening hours could disrupt their ability to engage with the local community effectively.

- **Community Groups:** Groups such as book clubs, job seekers' support groups, digital inclusion programs, often use library space. Reducing opening hours could disrupt their ability to engage with the local community effectively.
- **Children's Services & Family Support:** The library is co-located with a children's centre and alongside two schools. The proposed changes will not directly impact any of these partners.
- **Education Providers:** Local schools often rely on libraries for curriculum support, extracurricular activities, and student study spaces. A reduction in staffed hours could limit students' access to books, research materials, and quiet study environments.
- **Social & Health Services:** Libraries often serve as informal access points for health information, social service referrals, and mental health support programs. A reduction in staffed hours could hinder outreach efforts.
- **Employment & Skills Training:** Access to free public wi-fi, printing and online resources will impact on delivery of council employment services. A reduction in staffed hours could make it harder for unemployed or under-skilled individuals to access job support.
- **Local Arts & Cultural Organisations:** Libraries often host arts-related events, writing groups, and cultural activities, enriching community life. Reduced staffed hours could reduce opportunities for cultural engagement.
- **Public Access 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.

## 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. Reduced staffed hours 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.

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

Residents who use the library as a gathering place for social inclusion, learning, and support services may struggle to find alternative venues if they are unable to use the potential self-service option. Vulnerable populations, such as residents with no fixed abode, elderly individuals or those with disabilities, may feel isolated due to the loss of a nearby accessible and safe space if they are also unable to use the potential self-service option.

## **Council Partners**

Libraries often collaborate with council services, offering information hubs and assisting in delivering community outreach programs. Reduced staffed hours 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.

## **North Somerset Council Employees**

Campus staff may worry about redundancy or job changes, leading to financial and emotional distress. This could also impact employee morale within the wider council, especially if there is concern about further service reductions.

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. This uncertainty could impact employee morale and increased stress.

## **Service Users**

Regular users of library services, including students, job seekers, and families, would have less opportunity to access a key resource for education and development although potentially a new self-service offer would be available. Children could particularly be affected, 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 locally. This disruption could impact service effectiveness and accessibility.

## **Voluntary/Community Groups**

Local voluntary groups often use library spaces for meetings, training, and outreach.

## **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 Campus, 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 Campus 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.

## **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 have planned a public consultation to run from 12 weeks from 31 July – 24 October 2025. This will provide an opportunity for engagement with a wide range of stakeholders, including library users, staff, community partners, volunteers and local communities. 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 and by collecting feedback through a questionnaire aimed at children.

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?**

Protected or significant group	Impact Level				Impact type		Please explain impact giving examples from data and consultation information to support your assessment
	H	M	L	N	+	-	
Disabled people (including consideration of neurodiversity)		x				x	In the <a href="#">2021 Census</a> , 19.55% (19.31% + 21.30% + 22.33% + 15.28%) of people in the wards surrounding The Campus identify themselves as disabled under the Equalities Act, having day to day activities limited a little or a lot. At The Campus library 19% (32) of library survey respondents identified as having a physical or mental health condition which impacts their day-to-day life. Therefore, reduced library opening hours library will have a disproportionate impact on people with disabilities.
People from different ethnic groups				x			96% 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 51.43% in surrounding wards), therefore women will be disproportionately affected by reduced opening hours at this branch.



People who are LGBTQ+	x		x	5% 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.
People on a low income	x		x	While we don't hold data on the deprivation level of Weston 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 51.59% (52.1% + 53.37% + 55.63% + 44.25%) of households in the wards surrounding The Campus had one or more dimension deprivation.
People in particular age groups	x		x	Children and older people are more likely to use the library and are therefore disproportionately impacted by the closure of this site. 9.4% of The Campus library survey respondents indicated they were over 75 years of age.
People in particular faith groups		x		14 respondents at The Campus 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.

People who are married or in a civil partnership	x			Only 10 respondents at The Campus 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 The Campus library, 9 respondents identified their gender as being different to the one assigned at birth and therefore any impacts are deemed negligible.

Protected or significant group	Impact Level				Impact type		Please explain impact giving examples from data and consultation information to support your assessment
	H	M	L	N	+	-	
<p>Other significant groups, for example: Armed Forces Community, care experienced young people, carers, parents.</p> <p>Please specify:</p>				x			<p>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.</p>

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

**Yes**

The Campus library is also impacted by savings requirements for the library service, which needs to achieve savings of £433k over 26-27 and 27-28 financial years.

## **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. The proposed changes to opening hours at The Campus library have not been confirmed.

We are exploring:

1. Community-managed libraries: in some areas, the Council may no longer run a library directly. Instead, local community groups could be supported to take on management. Libraries could remain open in areas where a Council-run model is no longer sustainable - but this would depend on local capacity and interest.
2. Alternative service delivery: in places where libraries may close or change, services could be offered differently (e.g. via mobile library, drop-off points, partner venues, or the Home Library Service). People would still have access to library services, but in new formats or locations. Some may have to travel further or use services differently.
3. Changes to opening hours: Staffed hours may be reduced in some libraries, based on usage patterns. In some cases, self-service access could be extended so libraries remain open without staff present. Libraries would still offer access to a range of services but with fewer staffed hours. Customers may need to visit at different times than currently or visit during self-service hours
4. Reducing central budgets: savings could be made in areas like central staffing, the new book and digital resources budget, management, IT systems, equipment and stationery. Libraries would still make a range of books available to customers but spending on new books would reduce. The way services are supported behind the scenes would be affected.
5. Income generation: increased promotion of library spaces for hire, advertising, or partnerships with local organisations. Could bring in income to help support core services — but may reduce space available for community use in some locations.

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

Issue Identified	Planned Action	Lead Officer	Time for review
Disabled people (including consideration of neurodiversity)	Promote the home library service. Provide training in using digital resources. The feasibility of introducing self-service facilities will be explored. If any changes to space are required to facilitate self service facilities an access audit will be undertaken.	Emma Wellard	TBC
Men or women (including pregnant women or those on maternity leave)	The feasibility of extending self-service facilities will be explored.	Emma Wellard	TBC
People who are LGBTQ+	Ensure that the library continues to be visibly inclusive, with signage, displays, and resources that affirm LGBTQ+ identities, even if physical access is reduced.	Emma Wellard	TBC
People on a low income	Continue to offer free access to Wi-Fi, computers and the council services telephone during self-service hours. Increased self-service access options will be explored, including wi-fi printing.	Emma Wellard	TBC

	Support for residents seeking access to Council services can still be delivered when the main Campus reception is staffed.		
People in particular age groups	Promote the home library service. Provide training in using digital resources. The feasibility of extending self-service facilities will be explored.	Emma Wellard	TBC

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

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

A public consultation will take place over the summer in 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.

## **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?**

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?**

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.