

# **PEOPLE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY ADDENDUM**

**4.00PM, MONDAY, 10 NOVEMBER 2025**

**COUNCIL CHAMBER, HOVE TOWN HALL, NORTON ROAD,  
HOVE, BN3 3BQ - HTH/CC**

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## **ADDENDUM**

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# Brighton & Hove City Council

## Overview & Scrutiny

## Agenda Item

**Subject:** Sustainability plan for Libraries

**Date of meeting:** 10 November 2025

**Report of:** Chair of People Overview & Scrutiny Committee

**Contact Officer:** Name: Luke Proudfoot  
Email: [luke.proudfoot@brighton-hove.gov.uk](mailto:luke.proudfoot@brighton-hove.gov.uk)

**Ward(s) affected:** (All Wards);

**Key Decision:** No

**For general release**

### **1. Purpose of the report and policy context**

- 1.1 This Report provides an update to the People Overview & Scrutiny Committee on the proposals currently under consideration to change public library service provision. This is in the context of the statutory duty to provide a comprehensive and efficient library service for all who live, work or study in the area and given the council commitment to make sustainable improvements and to deliver on the savings plan for 2025/7. The Report offers an overview of the processes followed to date as well as the responses to the recent public consultation. The consultation sought feedback on proposals including a reduction in opening hours at Jubilee and Hove Libraries and the closure of Hollingbury, Rottingdean and Westdene Libraries.
- 1.2 The Report offers the Committee the opportunity to review the process followed thus far and, if it wishes, to provide input on the proposals. Any such input will be taken into account alongside the consultation outcomes as data is analysed and recommendations for future consideration at December's Cabinet meeting are being developed.

### **2. Recommendations**

- 2.1 That having considered the July Cabinet report and appendices attached as Appendix 2, People Overview & Scrutiny Committee note the detailed rationale for the decision to consult on proposals, as well as the decision to approve consultation and engagement on them which was made by Cabinet at its meeting in July 2025.
- 2.2 That Committee note the public consultation and stakeholder engagement that have been carried out, as well as the data gathered, in Summary of Consultation Responses report, Appendix 3.

- 2.3 That Committee further note the steps currently underway to analyse the consultation responses data and to take it into account when developing final proposals, including but not only the steps underway to further develop of the Needs & Use Analysis and to assess the equalities implications of the proposals.
- 2.4 That Committee note the opportunity this Report affords it to provide input on the proposals which were consulted upon, by making comment which will be taken into account in the development of the recommendations to be put to Cabinet.

### **3. Context and background information**

- 3.1 Members are asked to consider the Report of July 2025 at Appendix 2, which outlines in a detailed way the process followed up to the decision to consult on the proposals outlined in that report, as well as the methodology and rationale for selecting those proposals.
- 3.2 In February 2025 councillors agreed to reduce the Library Service budget by £210,000 over two financial years. This included looking at library closures and decreases in opening hours.
- 3.3 This work has been completed within the context of the Council Plan 2023-2027 and current Library Strategy 2022-25. In this context, the city council has committed to a change in public library provision in the city to make sustainable improvements but also to deliver on the savings plan for 2025-27 and offset increasing costs in future years.
- 3.4 The full reduction in costs associated with the changes are not reflected in the savings target of £210,000. The full reduction in costs would include the maintenance and facilities management, utilities bills and rates. These are costed to offset increasing financial pressures in both the Libraries and Premises revenue budgets.

#### **3.5 Timeline and Actions to Date**

February 2025	Full Council agreed an overall budget reduction for Library Services, to include reduction in opening hours at Jubilee and Hove Libraries and permanent closure of up to three libraries
17 July 2025	Cabinet considered a detailed report and approved officer recommendation to commence public consultation into proposed changes to library services
18 July – 10 October 2025	12 week public consultation Survey open Public meetings and drop-in sessions Meetings with community groups and stakeholders

#### **3.6 Proposed Changes, Savings and Rationale**

The service conducted the first iteration of a Needs & Use Analysis (see Appendix 2), looking at the usage statistics of each library, the measures of deprivation and needs in each area, and the geographic spread of sites across the city. These informed the proposals for changes to library services. The Needs & Use Analysis is being further developed, with a new iteration being worked on currently, incorporating understanding developed from the consultation data and feedback from communities. The specific rationale for the proposed closures and reduction in opening hours is set out in the Cabinet report for July.

- 3.7 An Equalities Impact Assessment was previously prepared with regard to the consultation process. A further, expanded, Equalities Impact Assessment is in development. This will focus on an assessment of the impact of the substantive proposals and will incorporate understanding gained from the consultation data and the new iteration of the Needs & Use Analysis.

- 3.8 These documents will inform the review of the proposals which will be presented to the December meeting of Cabinet for its decision. Both will be included in the papers for that meeting.

- 3.9 Proposals in consultation July – October 2025

**Central library reductions**

Jubilee – 2 hours Monday 5-7pm; 3 hours Sunday 2-5pm - £65,000

Hove – 2 hours Wednesday 5-7pm; 3 hours Saturday 2-5pm - £35,000

**Library closures**

Hollingbury - £15,000

Rottingdean - £25,000

Westdene - £20,000

Associated reduction in **management** and **out of hours** rotas - £50,000

**Total** - £210,000

- 3.10 Public Consultation Activities

The Government's Department for Culture, Media and Sport requires a public consultation period, to engage with residents, users and non-users, for any proposals to change statutory library services. The opening hour changes and libraries closures were included in a public consultation which ran for 12 weeks from July to October 2025.

This included:

- A survey with 2711 responses. Most of these were completed on Your Voice (the council's on-line consultation platform), with 1% completed on paper copies. (Survey questions at Appendix 2)
- The [libraries.consultation@brighton-hove.gov.uk](mailto:libraries.consultation@brighton-hove.gov.uk) inbox was used to collect more detailed feedback from groups and individuals in addition to the survey and 164 responses were received via this route.
- Posters, flyers and stickers were distributed and displayed at libraries and council buildings to promote the survey and meetings.
- Social media updates and press releases promoting the survey and meetings throughout the consultation period.

- 2 online and in 7 in-person public meetings and drop-in sessions. The lowest attendance was at the second online meeting (1 person) and at Hollingbury drop-in session (3 people). The highest attendance was at Rottingdean and Westdene public meetings, with over 100 attendees.
- Emails were sent to 122 community groups, library and BHCC stakeholders, as well as all local schools, encouraging engagement with the consultation process.
- Councillors and officers met with key stakeholders, including Hollingbury Old Boat Community Centre management, Rottingdean Parish Council, Heritage Society and Save Our Library groups and Westdene School.

### 3.11 Timeline for Next Steps

October – November 2025	Officers review and analyse data from consultation Prepare papers for Scrutiny Committee
Monday 10 November 2025	Special meeting of the People Overview and Scrutiny Committee
November 2025	Officers review and finalise proposals to be presented as recommendations, considering updated Needs & Use Analysis and full Equality Impact Assessment, and with regard to any input from Scrutiny Committee Prepare papers for Cabinet
Thursday 11 December 2025	Final proposals put to Cabinet on changes to library provision. Cabinet decision
January – March 2026	Staff consultation to reduce staffing in affected libraries
April 2026	Any potential changes to public library provision implemented

## 4. Analysis of consultation responses and consideration of alternative options

### 4.1 Analysis of public consultation responses

A detailed breakdown of the consultation findings is available in the Summary of Consultation Responses document, Appendix 3. This includes but is not limited to: demographic data; which libraries respondents use; at what times and days; what they use libraries for; whether they can use alternative options; and any ideas for alternative proposals.

### 4.2 Themes

Some key themes have been identified through the analysis of responses, including but not limited to the following:

- Most respondents did not agree with proposals to reduce opening hours or close libraries
- Opposition to reduction in library budgets
- Concerns over impact on children and literacy
- Schools' use of public library resources and access to books
- Loss of study spaces for secondary, further and higher education students
- Loss of a vital community resource
- Loss of free community spaces, "third spaces", "warm spaces"
- Contact with staff and other residents
- Digital and financial exclusion

- Difficulty travelling to alternatives, particularly for families, elderly and disabled
- There was particularly strong response to keep Rottingdean and Westdene libraries open
- There was also particularly strong response to retain late nights and weekends at Jubilee and Hove Libraries

#### 4.3 Feedback by library

Some details from the responses related to specific libraries, more detail in the Summary of Consultation Responses at appendix 3.

Hollingbury - 10% survey respondents had used this library in the last 12 months

- 0 emails received
- Meetings were held with Old Boat Community Centre management
- Key themes: Impact on low-income families, digital exclusion and financial implications of public transport to alternative library options

Hove - 38% survey respondents had used this library in the last 12 months

- 3 emails received
- Group responses from book groups and writers' groups received by email
- Key themes: Impact on families, students and full-time workers

Jubilee - 71% survey respondents had used this library in the last 12 months

- 3 emails received
- Engagement with Network of International Women and Storytree groups (for refugees and vulnerable migrants)
- Key themes: Concern for vulnerable groups with emphasis on Jubilee Library as a 'safe space'; impact on families, students and full-time workers

Rottingdean - 21% survey respondents had used this library in the last 12 months

- 80 emails received
- Organisational/group responses received from Rottingdean Parish Council, Rottingdean Heritage, Save Our Library group, Rottingdean News and St Margaret's Primary School
- meetings with Rottingdean Parish Council, Rottingdean Heritage, Save Our Library group and local MP
- Key themes: Impact on children at neighbouring schools; impact on older people, particularly those digitally excluded or living with disabilities; lack of alternative community spaces in area

Westdene - 16% survey respondents had used this library in the last 12 months

- 37 emails received
- Group response received from Westdene Primary School, including letters from over 100 children
- Meetings with Westdene Primary School
- Key themes: Impact on children at adjoining school; impact on older people and those living with disabilities, with barriers to using public transport; lack of alternative community spaces in area

#### 4.4 Ideas and Alternative Options

A range of ideas and alternative options for making savings or delivering services were sought and suggested during the consultation. Those ideas will be actively explored and, where appropriate, may be developed for future consideration by Cabinet.

Some of the key themes most frequently suggested:

- Reduce savings targets for libraries and reallocate to other council services
- Increase use of volunteers or community-run models
- Seek alternative funding (sponsorship, donations, crowdfunding, charging and membership)
- Reduce or alter hours at larger libraries to maintain smaller branches and protect evenings and weekends
- Expand/alter library services (digital support and e-resources, mobile libraries, extending Libraries Extra hours at community libraries and consider at central libraries)
- Improve publicity and outreach to increase usage

### **5. Community engagement and consultation**

- 5.1 Please see point 3.4 for a full account of the engagement and consultation completed to date.

### **6. Financial implications**

- 6.1 Dependent on the outcome of the Cabinet decision in December 2025, changes will be required to reduce the Libraries revenue budget.
- 6.2 The net General Fund budget for the Libraries Service in 2025/26 is £4.3m, whilst the gross budget after allowing for income is £6.3m. The employee staffing element of the budget is approximately £2.6m.
- 6.3 To achieve the saving of £210,000, a reduction of 5 FTE is necessary from the Library & Information Officer and Libraries Managers teams. Around 60 libraries staff could be affected by changes to their rotas and will be consulted after the Cabinet decision in December. Vacancies have been held in the teams affected to minimise the risk of redundancy.
- 6.4 Savings include a reduction in running costs of the libraries proposed for closure. Changes to contracts may impact the extent and timing of savings achievable in 2026-27.

Name of finance officer consulted: David Ellis Date consulted (28/10/25):



## **7. Legal implications**

- 7.1 As a library authority, the Council has a statutory duty (pursuant to section 7 of the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964) to “to provide a comprehensive and efficient library service for all persons desiring to make use thereof.”
- 7.2 Committee is referred to the detailed legal implications to the July 2025 Cabinet Report, appendix 2, which gave rise to a decision to consult on the proposals outlined in that Report. Those legal implications outlined in a detailed way the elements that the Council is required by law and statutory guidance to take into account. Those include the Gunning principles as well as the guidance from the Department of Culture Media and Sport: “Libraries as a Statutory Service”. When considering its statutory service and in particular when it wishes to make changes to library provision, the council must be able to demonstrate:
- plans to consult with local communities alongside an assessment of their needs (including any projections of need)
  - consideration of a range of options (including alternative financing, governance or delivery models) to sustain library service provision in their area
  - a rigorous analysis and assessment of the potential impact of their proposals
- 7.3 This report outlines the process followed thus far in relation to proposals to change the library service provision in Brighton & Hove, including the recent consultation and engagement process. It provides a summary of the consultation data collected during that process and outlines how that data will be analyzed and taken into account – alongside up to date assessments of the equalities implications and a current needs and use analysis - as proposals for service provision changes are further developed by officers before they are presented to a future meeting of Cabinet.
- 7.4 Scrutiny Committee will wish to consider the consultation and engagement process followed with potentially affected persons. It may have questions about the process followed thus far and may if it wishes consider the consultation data appended to this report. However it will appreciate that it is for Cabinet to consider whether the consultation responses have been conscientiously considered before making any decision on proposed provision changes, having first considered up to date equalities impact assessment and a revised Needs and Use Analysis, both of which take into account the impacts identified during the consultation and engagement process.

Name of lawyer consulted: Victoria Simpson      Date consulted 22/10/25

## **8. Equalities implications**

- 8.1 The original Needs & Use Analysis (Provided within Appendix 2) was developed to inform the initial proposals for changes to the Library Service. This is a live document which will be used for this and future change management decisions, including the development of the new Library Service Strategy in 2026. With feedback from Scrutiny Committee and analysis of the consultation data, it will be further developed and presented as part of the report to December Cabinet.
- 8.2 An Equalities Impact Assessment was completed, to monitor and support mitigation of impact of the public consultation into proposed changes to Library Services; this was presented at July Cabinet (Appendix 2). An additional Equalities Impact Assessment is being prepared for the December Cabinet meeting and will address the impact of proposed changes, taking into account feedback from the public consultation.
- 8.3 It is recognised that any reduction in public library services will impact some residents and risks reducing access to and use of services. A range of mitigations have been identified to potentially offset the impact of reductions in public library services. These include but are not limited to:
- Libraries Extra enables customers to access libraries when they are unstaffed, contributing to the accessibility of services in the city.
  - A full range of online services, with free access to e-books and e-audio, are available 24/7.
  - The Home Delivery Service delivers library resources direct to the homes of those who cannot come to a library due to disability or caring responsibilities.

## **9. Sustainability implications**

- 9.1 Please see Appendix 2 for the July Cabinet paper for travel implications as identified in the original Needs & Use Analysis. Changes to public library opening hours and closures could impact on how residents travel to access library services.
- 9.2 The next iteration of the Needs & Use Analysis is in the process of being updated with data from the consultation. Impact from changes in travel patterns will be acknowledged and mitigations identified in the Equalities Impact Assessment, documents to be completed and shared for December Cabinet.
- 9.3 BHCC is exploring ways to make best use of resources, including buildings and utilities costs. The proposals include a reduction in the number of library

sites and opening hours, which could contribute to a reduction in utilities usage for the service.

## **10. Health and Wellbeing Implications:**

- 10.1 There is potential for impact on the wellbeing of residents affected as identified in the Equalities Impact Assessment, documents to be completed and shared for December Cabinet.
- 10.2 There is potential impact on staff affected by staff consultation and reduction in posts, with the possibility of redundancies. A separate staff Equalities Impact Assessment will be completed for those changes and a formal consultation process followed.

## **11. Conclusion**

- 11.1 This report and its appendices outline the process which has been followed thus far in relation to proposals for changes to the city's library services. Members of Scrutiny Committee are asked to note the recommendations in this report, having first made such enquiry they wish to make, including of the relevant Cabinet member and portfolio holder.

## **Supporting Documentation**

### **1. Appendices**

- 1. Cabinet Member presentation for the Scrutiny Committee meeting
- 2. Cabinet papers July 2025, including Equality Impact Assessment, Engagement Plan and Needs & Use appendices
- 3. Summary of Consultation Responses Report



# Sustainability plan for Libraries

People Overview & Scrutiny Committee

**Monday 10 November 2025**



**Brighton & Hove  
City Council**

# Proposals – saving £210k 2026-27

- **Reduction in opening hours:**
- Jubilee – 2 hours Monday evening (5-7pm)
- 3 hours Sunday afternoon (2-5pm)
- Hove – 2 hours Wednesday evening (5-7pm)
- 3 hours Saturday afternoon (2-5pm)
- **Closure of:**
- Hollingbury Library
- Rottingdean Library
- Westdene Library

# Process

- February 2025 - budget council decision to reduce public library services to achieve savings
- March 2025 – People Overview & Scrutiny Committee
- July 2025 - Cabinet decision to begin public consultation
- 18 July – 10 October – 12-week public consultation period
- Your Voice Survey - stakeholder engagement - 9 public meetings
- 10 November – People Overview & Scrutiny Committee
- 11 December - final Cabinet decision
- January 2026 – staff consultation if required (reduction of up to 5FTE)
- April - Any potential changes to public library provision implemented

# Consultation

**Hollingbury** 10% survey respondents had used this library in the last 12 months  
0 emails received  
Drop in session

**Hove** 38% survey respondents had used this library in the last 12 months  
3 emails received  
Public meeting at Hove Town Hall  
Group responses from book groups and writers' groups received by email

**Jubilee** 71% survey respondents had used this library in the last 12 months  
3 emails received  
Public meeting at Jubilee Library

**Rottingdean** 21% survey respondents had used this library in the last 12 months  
80 emails received  
Drop in session & public meeting

**Westdene** 16% survey respondents had used this library in the last 12 months  
37 emails received  
Group response from Westdene Primary School, including letters from over 100 children  
Drop-in session & public meeting

- 2711 consultation survey responses
- 164 emails sent to the consultation inbox
- Over 370 people attended 9 public meetings



# Key Themes

- Most respondents **did not agree** with proposals to reduce opening hours or close libraries
- Opposition to reduction in library **budgets**
- Concerns over impact on **children and literacy**
- Loss of a vital community resource, free **community spaces**, “third spaces”, “warm spaces”
- **Contact** with staff and other residents
- Difficulty **travelling** to alternatives, particularly for families, elderly and disabled
- **Digital** and **financial** exclusion

# Key Themes

- **Hollingbury** - Impact on low-income families and financial implications of public transport to alternative library
- **Hove** - Impact on families, students and full-time workers
- **Jubilee** - Concern for vulnerable groups with emphasis on Jubilee Library as a 'safe space'; impact on families, students and full-time workers. Loss of study spaces for secondary, further and higher education students
- **Rottingdean** - Impact on children at neighbouring schools; impact on older people, particularly those digitally excluded or living with disabilities; lack of alternative community spaces in area
- **Westdene** - Impact on children at neighbouring school; impact on older people and those living with disabilities with barriers to using public transport; lack of alternative community spaces in area

# Ideas & Alternative Options

Respondents were asked if they had any comments or suggestions for alternative ways to deliver library services or savings:

- Reduce **savings** targets for libraries and reallocate to other council services
- Increase use of **volunteers** or community-run models
- Seek alternative **funding** (sponsorships, donations, crowdfunding, charging and membership)
- Reduce or alter **hours** at larger libraries to maintain smaller branches and protect evenings and weekends
- Expand/alter library **services** (digital support and e-resources, mobile libraries, extending Libraries Extra hours at community libraries and consider at central libraries)
- Improve **publicity** and outreach to increase usage

# Timeline

date	action
October – November 2025	Officers review and analyse data from consultation Prepare papers for Scrutiny Committee
Monday 10 November 2025	Special meeting of the People Overview and Scrutiny Committee
November 2025	Officers review and finalise proposals, update Needs & Use Analysis and prepare full Equality Impact Assessment Prepare papers for Cabinet
Thursday 11 December 2025	Final proposals put to Cabinet on changes to library provision Cabinet decision
January – March 2026	Staff consultation to reduce staffing in affected libraries if required
April 2026	Any potential changes to public library provision implemented

# Brighton & Hove City Council

## Cabinet

## Agenda Item 24

**Subject:** Library Sustainability Plan

**Date of Decision:** 17 July 2025

**Report of:** Cabinet Member for Sports & Recreation

**Lead Officer:** Corporate Director Families, Children & Wellbeing

**Contact Officer:** Name: Ceris Howard – Head of Library and Customer

[Ceris.howard@brighton-hove.gov.uk](mailto:Ceris.howard@brighton-hove.gov.uk)

**Ward(s) affected:** All wards for proposed changes to Jubilee and Hove Libraries. Patcham & Hollingbury Ward, Rottingdean & West Saltdean Ward and Westdene & Hove Park Ward are directly affected by proposed library closures in those areas.

**Key Decision:** No

**For general release**

### 1. Purpose of the report and policy context

- 1.1 Local Authorities have a statutory duty under the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964 to provide a comprehensive and efficient library service for all persons who live, work or study in the area (section 7), taking into account the resources available. The Brighton & Hove City Council Plan 2023 to 2027 also provides a commitment to increase use of our libraries and improve facilities and library users' experience.
- 1.2 The Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) is responsible for superintendence and promoting the improvement of libraries. If a Local Authority wishes to make changes to the library provision, the service should be able to demonstrate:
  - plans to consult with local communities alongside an assessment of their needs (including any projections of need)
  - consideration of a range of options (including alternative financing, governance or delivery models) to sustain library service provision in their area
  - a rigorous analysis and assessment of the potential impact of their proposals
- 1.3 In this context, the city council has committed to a change in public library provision in the city to make sustainable improvements and to deliver on the savings plan for 2025/26 and future years. This paper provides an overview of the sustainability plan for the Library Service, which supports delivery of the council priorities to invest in the city and to enable lifelong learning. This involves a proposed reduction in the number of community libraries and opening hours in central libraries. The report seeks agreement to start a

public consultation to seek views from a range of stakeholders on these proposals.

## **2. Recommendations**

That Cabinet:

- 2.1 Notes the sustainability plan for Libraries as set out in this report
- 2.2 Agrees to commence a public consultation on the proposals, specifically covering the following suggestions:
- 2.3 Consult on the proposed closure of Hollingbury Library
- 2.4 Consult on the proposed closure of Rottingdean Library
- 2.5 Consult on the proposed closure of Westdene Library
- 2.6 Consult on the proposed changes in opening hours at Hove Library
- 2.7 Consult on the proposed changes in opening hours at Jubilee Library

## **3. Context and background information**

Current library service offer across Brighton & Hove

- 3.1 The city's public library service currently comprises 13 libraries, including the flagship Jubilee Library in central Brighton, Hove Library, and 11 community libraries located in Coldean, Hangleton, Hollingbury, Moulsecoomb, Patcham, Portslade, Rottingdean, Saltdean, Westdene, Whitehawk and Woodingdean. Jubilee Library, opened in 2005, is one of the most visited libraries in the UK, recording over 830,000 visits in the 2023/24 period and accounting for about 50% of the city's library transactions. The community libraries are single staffed from one to three days per week, and most are open to the public 7 days/week through the use of Libraries Extra. This enables customers to access the library when unstaffed, using their library card and PIN to access the building. These libraries are monitored by CCTV and supported through a phone line directly to Jubilee Library.
- 3.2 Brighton & Hove's 13 libraries attracted a total of 1,256,000 visitors in 2024-25. Jubilee and Hove, being the most central libraries, are the busiest buildings. Of the remaining 11 community libraries, the newly refurbished Saltdean Library (based at Saltdean Lido) received over 40,000 visits in this timeframe. Hollingbury Library (based at Old Boat Corner Community Centre) received the least visits at 6,500.
- 3.3 Many customers already use more than one of the city's libraries and take advantage of access to services seven days a week using Libraries Extra. Residents are accessing a range of resources, including physical book stock and e-resources; over 500,000 e-library resources were borrowed in 2024-25, including e-books, newspapers, magazines and e-audio books.

## Library strategy and vision

- 3.4 The city's Libraries Strategy 2022-25 sets out the vision for libraries to be a vibrant and accessible community asset. The current strategy expires at the end of 2025 and a new strategy will be launched in 2026, building on this year's work and informed by the public consultation this summer if it were to go ahead. The new strategy will root the future vision for city libraries as sustainable and embedded community resources, supporting community resilience. Libraries take a one council approach to supporting residents and visitors.
- 3.5 A Needs and Use Analysis is required for any proposed change to a Local Authority's statutory library provision. This is provided as Appendix 2 and identifies areas in highest need of library services. The plans for maintaining library service sustainability are covered within this paper, enabling the delivery of agreed budget savings and developing the longer-term plan for libraries including post Jubilee Library PFI contract arrangements in 2029.
- 3.6 If the proposed changes are implemented, Brighton & Hove will retain 10 libraries, which will continue to provide an appropriately comprehensive library service, while delivering efficiency savings to support the mid to long-term sustainability of services.
- 3.7 The new strategy, from 2026, will focus remaining resources on those libraries serving residents at highest risk of the impact of deprivation, increasing use of facilities in areas of greatest need and targeting services to those residents who could most benefit from access to resources and support, as identified in the Needs and Use Analysis.

## Methodology

- 3.8 Part one of this needs and use phase consists predominantly of desk-based research and data analysis. Data reviewed includes footfall, borrowing data (about what resources are borrowed, when and where) from library management systems, 2021 Census data, ONS and DWP data available via the Local Insight platform, and additional data provided by colleagues from across BHCC including numeric Schools Census, travel and Adult Social Care data.
- 3.9 Part two of the needs and use analysis will comprise a formal public consultation, alongside stakeholder engagement events and activities, to gather additional data and fill some of the gaps to better understand library customers' current use of libraries and their needs.

## Budget pressures and savings

- 3.10 As part of the city council budget agreement for 2025/26, a £69,000 saving target was agreed, to be achieved through a reduction in opening hours at the Jubilee and Hove Libraries, as well as a review and closure of some community libraries.

- 3.11 It was also indicated, via the Medium-Term Financial Strategy, that a further £140,000 would be achieved during 2026-27 through the reduction of library services (closures and opening hours), as the process for change would cross the financial years, showing part-year savings in 2025-26, completing in 2026-27
- 3.12 Other savings were identified for this year, which have been implemented through operational service efficiencies. In addition to the savings identified for these two years, the service faces budget pressures due to the rising cost of operating and maintaining public buildings. Concentrating resources on fewer physical library locations, whilst maintaining a geographic spread across the city, will support longer-term sustainability of the wider city service, as well as safeguarding the quality of library provision.

#### Proposed changes from April 2026

- Closing Hollingbury, Rottingdean & Westdene Libraries
- Reducing opening hours at :
- Jubilee Library – 2 hours Monday evening (5-7pm) & 3 hours Sunday afternoon (2-5pm)
- Hove Library – 2 hours Wednesday evening (5-7pm) & 3 hours Saturday afternoon (2-5pm)

#### Rationale for proposed changes

- 3.13 It should be noted that, in consideration of any reduction of hours and any libraries which should be proposed for closure, a Needs and Use Analysis has been started, see Appendix 2. The analysis identified which libraries were of highest priority for the city to maintain and promote, based on the needs of the areas they serve. Geographic spread, the operating costs of different buildings, and the current usage of each library were also taken into consideration when developing the recommendations for reductions in services to meet the savings identified.
- 3.14 Brighton & Hove City Council currently offers more library provision per resident than average across the country. Consideration is given to the travel times and convenience of library location; currently there are clusters, particularly in the east and north of the city, with multiple libraries within 3 miles of each other. Were the proposal to reduce the city's libraries from thirteen to ten to be taken forward, the city would still have more libraries per resident than the national average with a reasonable geographic spread.
- 3.15 Based on measures of need, including Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD), economic activity and receipt of benefits and free school meals, certain libraries were identified as priorities in order to support those areas at most risk of disadvantage. Priority levels of high, medium and low were allocated to support decision making on proposals for change.



High priority – meeting the needs of large numbers of customers, serving areas with most disadvantage. These libraries were not considered for closure.

- 3.16 Hove and Jubilee Libraries are by far the busiest , serving a broad range of customers from across the city and offering a wide variety of services, including Council Help Desks, events for children and families, free to use PCs and spaces for community groups to meet. Jubilee Library footfall regularly exceeds 2,000 people per day and it is one of the most popular spaces in the city for students to study, particularly during exam periods. While these libraries are serving large numbers of customers and meeting the needs of disadvantaged people in the city, they are also the most costly to manage, with high staff numbers. These libraries need to be considered for reductions in staffed hours in order to reduce the cost of running the service.
- 3.17 Hove Library's membership base is broad, with most active borrowers from wards to the west of the city. Data suggests that those living in the library's catchment area are at low risk of deprivation, although there are areas of need which should be recognised, with some areas supporting higher numbers of older people and low income families.
- 3.18 Hove Library's listed status means that it is expensive to run and maintain, although income generated from a nursery school tenancy as well as room rental, goes some way to mitigate this.
- 3.19 Jubilee Library is situated centrally and serves residents of its immediate central wards, as well as those from further afield travelling in and out of the city centre for work and study. The library serves some of the city's most deprived wards, in particular West Hill & North Laine, Queens Park and Kemptown.
- 3.20 Hourly footfall at both Jubilee and Hove peak on weekday mornings, remain steady throughout the day but drop off gradually between 5pm and 7pm on their respective late opening days. Saturdays are particularly busy at Jubilee and sustained high footfall matches that of weekday mornings. Sunday footfall is lower with 11am-12pm being almost three times as busy on average as 4-5pm. At Hove, Wednesdays 6-7pm are particularly quiet, currently seeing an average of less than 30 visits. Saturday footfall reduces later in the day, with 10-11am being twice as busy on average as 4-5pm.
- 3.21 A reduction in opening hours at Jubilee could impact the service's ability to offer Libraries Extra as an option in community libraries, as this currently relies on library staff phone support from Jubilee.
- 3.22 Coldean, Moulsecoomb and Whitehawk Libraries serve the most deprived areas of the city, particularly supporting families and children and those not in work. These are the highest priority libraries for the service to support and ensure sustainability. Although visitor numbers are low for these three libraries, compared to others of similar size, they are among the least costly libraries in the city to run.

- 3.23 Coldean Library has low visitor numbers compared to most other libraries, however, it is situated near a school and in a residential area with higher levels of need.
- 3.24 Moulsecoomb Library will be part of the new Moulsecoomb Hub development, with a new library, co-located with health and council services, expected to open in 2028.
- 3.25 Whitehawk Library is co-located with other council services at Whitehawk Community Hub and incorporates a toy library.
- 3.26 Children and young people in these areas face relative challenge, with a higher proportion of special educational needs and eligibility for free school meals and the highest number of NEET (not in education, employment or training) in the city. There are also higher than average levels of disability and these areas include the most economically inactive and digitally excluded residents in the city.

Medium priority – meeting the needs of local residents, serving areas with some disadvantage. These libraries were not identified for closure.

- 3.27 Hangleton, Patcham, Portslade, Saltdean and Woodingdean Libraries all show steady usage figures, particularly for families and children. They are meeting the needs of their local areas and are all either co-located or near to local amenities, supporting their longer-term sustainability. Each area has its own challenges, and the local nature of these libraries means they can target their offer to those in most need in the community.
- 3.28 Hangleton Library maintains reasonably high footfall and strong membership figures, with around twice as much children's as adult fiction issued annually.
- 3.29 Patcham Library has maintained steady footfall for the last three years and has a strong membership base of almost a quarter of the ward's total residents. The building is co-located with a community centre and is one of two libraries in the ward, with Hollingbury Library one mile away.
- 3.30 Portslade Library is a busy community library and is co-located with the South Portslade Family Hub, close to the local GP practice.
- 3.31 Saltdean Library was refurbished as part of the wider Saltdean Lido development and reopened in March 2024. Footfall at the branch is increasing since this investment, it is now the city's busiest community library.
- 3.32 Woodingdean Library is co-located with Woodingdean Medical Centre with schools adjacent and nearby.
- 3.33 These libraries serve a high number of families, children and young people, providing a safe and free community space and access to paper and digital

resources close to homes and schools. There are high numbers of Adult Social Care clients and relatively high number of NEET young people. Older people are represented in these areas, particularly Woodingdean, with a higher than average risk of digital exclusion.

Lower priority – lower demand or need for services in these areas; these libraries are considered for closure.

- 3.34 Rottingdean Library is based in the Grange building, alongside the Heritage Society, cafe and gardens. The library maintains good footfall, however, it is the most proportionally expensive community library in the city to run due to its location within a Grade II listed building and the associated maintenance costs.
- 3.35 Rottingdean Library is within two miles of Saltdean Library, with good transport links and high car ownership in the area. Many customers already use both libraries and there is less evidence of deprivation in this area. By reducing from two to one library in this area, considerable savings can be achieved with minimal impact on residents.
- 3.36 The Needs and Use Analysis suggests that residents in the ward are at a low risk of deprivation. Nearly a third of this ward are over 65 but are the least likely in the city to be in receipt of Pension Credit, and residents are at a relatively low risk of digital exclusion.
- 3.37 Hollingbury and Westdene Libraries are the least used libraries in the city, based in areas with good access to alternative libraries, and some of the lowest indicators of deprivation in the city.
- 3.38 Hollingbury Library, based within Old Boat Corner Community Centre, has the lowest footfall of all branches. The cost of operating the library room within the community centre is proportionally high when considering its usage.
- 3.39 Westdene Library has one of the smallest footprints and is co-located with Westdene Primary School.
- 3.40 While at ward level, residents live at relatively low risk of deprivation, with lower than average receipt of benefits and high car ownership, there are pockets of higher deprivation that should be acknowledged close to Hollingbury Library, with children and families in need of support.
- 3.41 The ward has the lowest crime rate in the city and children here are the least likely (by a significant majority) to be in receipt of free school meals.

Proposals for closure

- 3.42 Three libraries were identified as those most appropriate for closure based on the information gathered through the Needs and Use Analysis, considering the geographic spread of libraries in the city, and the proportional cost of operating and maintaining each branch.

- 3.43 Hollingbury Library, with the lowest footfall of all branches, is one mile from neighbouring Patcham Library. Membership figures for Hollingbury are 11% of ward population, compared with Patcham's 23%. The library is one of the most expensive to run for its size and use.
- 3.44 Rottingdean Library. The ward has two libraries, with Saltdean Library less than 2 miles away and Woodingdean within 3 miles. As detailed in the Needs and Use Analysis document, residents in the ward are at low risk of deprivation (second only to Westdene). Closure of this library would have less effect on disadvantaged residents and would realise substantial savings in the cost of operating and maintaining the site.
- 3.45 Westdene Library is the second least visited in the city and is within two miles of Patcham Library. The Needs and Use Analysis indicates Westdene & Hove Park ward is the least deprived in Brighton & Hove; with low footfall and alternative options nearby, closure would have minimal impact on those most at risk of disadvantage.

#### Impact of the proposed changes

- 3.46 Potential impacts of changes have been identified through the Needs and Use Analysis and Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA), see appendices 1 and 2, and will be more fully explored within the public consultation.
- 3.47 Reductions in opening hours at Jubilee Library could present a disproportionate impact on students and young people. Over 2,000 visitors per day are regularly recorded at Jubilee Library during exam seasons as local GCSE, A level and university students use the study space.
- 3.48 The closure of a community library could disproportionately affect elderly and disabled residents and carers as they could be less able to travel to access physical services in an alternative venue.
- 3.49 Mitigations include considering the distance to an alternative library, considering the strength of accessible public transport in those areas and considering alternative methods of library delivery such as Libraries Extra, e-resources and Home Delivery Service.
- 3.50 A reduction in opening hours at Jubilee could impact the service's ability to offer Libraries Extra as an option in community libraries, as this currently relies on library staff phone support from Jubilee. Alternative options for delivery of this service element will be explored.
- 3.51 Further details and mitigations are considered within the Equalities Impact Assessment given at Appendix 1 and will be fully explored within the public consultation. Information gathered through the consultation period and the Needs and Use Analysis will inform the new libraries strategy from 2026, focussing resources to ensure city library services remain relevant and sustainable for all residents, especially those at risk of disadvantage.

## Timeline

3.52 Below is the proposed timeline for change

3.53 Prior to the report going to Cabinet in July, all Councillors at Brighton & Hove City Council will have had the opportunity to attend a briefing session to hear about the proposals. Ward Councillors whose areas are directly impacted by proposals set out in this paper will have received direct information including the dates of any upcoming engagement activities as set out in Appendix 3.

17 July 2025	Cabinet considers report - officer recommendation to commence the public consultation into closure of 3 libraries and reduction in opening hours of Hove and Jubilee.
18 July – 10 October 2025	If approved, 12 week public consultation commences and runs until 10 October 2025
Date TBC November 2025	Special meeting of the People Overview and Scrutiny Committee
11 December 2025	Final decision taken at Cabinet on closures and changes to opening hours
January – March 2026	Staff consultation
April 2026	Library closures and reductions in opening hours implemented

3.54 Following the public consultation, all Councillors will be briefed on the responses and any final proposals will be taken to Cabinet for decision.

## 4. Analysis and consideration of alternative options

4.1 Over the past decade or so, Brighton & Hove Libraries has undergone significant transformation to adapt to changing community need and financial pressures. In 2013, the mobile library service was withdrawn and replaced by a more cost-effective Home Delivery Service that has maintained access for residents unable to visit library branches. Against a backdrop of national library cuts, the city retained all of its branches for the next decade, until Mile Oak library was closed in July 2023 due to low visitor numbers and high buildings costs, and staffed days at community libraries were reduced.

4.2 Despite these challenges, Brighton & Hove Libraries has embraced innovation and inclusivity. The introduction of the 'Libraries Extra' initiative has extended opening hours and improved access through a combination of staffed and unstaffed periods. In 2024 the newly refurbished Saltdean Library, based within Saltdean Lido, was opened. Part of a broader development of the listed site, the majority funder of this project was the National Lottery Heritage Fund.

- 4.3 In May 2025, council customer services were integrated with libraries. Two new help desks opened at Jubilee and Hove, operating Monday – Friday 10am-5pm, which, along with the council’s telephone switchboard, are now staffed by Library Officers. With the addition of free self-help telephones and PC use across all branches, libraries are enabling more face-to-face support to access council services for those who need it most.
- 4.4 Further opportunities for colocation of council and community services are being explored, with Adult Education and Skills moving into Jubilee Library in autumn 2025 and the inclusion of a new library space in the Moulsecoomb Hub development.
- 4.5 The Needs and Use Analysis started by the service has identified key areas of the city which benefit most from access to statutory library services. Whilst savings are a driver for the changes proposed, the priority for the council is to protect services in those areas most in need, although this will necessarily mean reductions in services in other areas of the city. This can be mitigated by exploring options for delivering some aspects of library services in alternative ways. The option to suggest other ways for communities to be involved in the delivery of services is included in the public consultation survey.
- 4.6 When considering the range of proposals, the reduction in hours at Jubilee and Hove will affect the greatest number of people, due to very high footfall and engagement in these central libraries. Greater savings can be achieved in these libraries, compared to community libraries, due to the much higher staff costs per hour. Additional and alternative times for reductions in hours were considered as part of the scoping work, however, reductions in services Monday – Friday, 10am – 5pm, were not considered possible without adverse impact on the Council Help Desks.
- 4.7 There are many models for alternative provision for community libraries. The service already supports some of these in the city, which will be explored as potential mitigations for affected communities and residents. Community book collections are already in place in Hollingdean Community Centre and St Luke’s Church; access to book stock can be supported in communities where a library building is no longer sustainable, and can build on relationships with other community groups and spaces, driving footfall and engaging with those who may be at risk of isolation. The Home Delivery and Equal Access Services work with a network of volunteers to deliver book and audio-book stock to residents who cannot easily leave their homes due to disability or caring responsibilities. This service is well established and can be extended to meet the needs of those residents who may be impacted by the closure of a local library building.
- 4.8 Library Authorities around the country have a wide range of delivery models, with varying levels of Local Authority involvement, including volunteer-led libraries. In East Sussex, several community libraries were transferred to local community groups at point of closure. The local authority does not retain any responsibility for the operation or provision of these spaces and they are no longer recognised by DCMS as part of the statutory library

provision, however, they still meet a need in the local community, providing a third space in their locality, access to books and opportunities for volunteering. During the consultation period, if community groups make themselves known to the service as interested in exploring alternative models, these will be examined on a case-by-case basis and could provide some further mitigations to the changes proposed.

## **5. Community engagement and consultation**

- 5.1 The Government's Department for Culture, Media and Sport requires a public consultation period, to engage with residents, users and non-users, for any proposals to reduce or significantly change statutory library services. The process needs to be transparent, inclusive, and respectful of the community's needs and concerns. It should clearly explain the reasons for the proposed changes, including any financial, logistical, or strategic factors, and should encourage feedback and participation from all stakeholders, including library users, staff, and local partners. All feedback received and how it has been considered in the decision-making process must be documented and made available to the public. This helps build trust and demonstrates that the consultation is meaningful. After the consultation, the final decision and rationale behind it must be clearly communicated.
- 5.2 Please see appendix 3 for the public consultation plan document and timeline for a full breakdown of the community engagement work planned for the consultation period.
- 5.3 In line with the Community Engagement Framework, a consultation questionnaire will be available for 12 weeks through 'Your Voice', the online consultation service, and promoted on council web pages, social media and through partners helping to disseminate details and promote engagement. Paper copies will be available in all libraries, BHCC buildings and key places in communities potentially affected by the changes.
- 5.4 The consultation will gather information, asking respondents about why, when, where and how they use library services. Free text boxes are provided to gather alternative suggestions as to how the saving might be made by Brighton & Hove Library Services or how elements of the library service could be provided in their communities.
- 5.5 The aim is to ensure that as many service users, stakeholders, partners and non-library users are able to have their say on the proposals. A dedicated consultation email address will be available and publicised for individual enquiries.
- 5.6 A detailed and comprehensive communications plan is being developed with Communications Team colleagues. The consultation will be advertised through various communication channels including press releases, social media, posters and flyers containing a QR code to Your Voice Survey.
- 5.7 BHCC staff will be essential stakeholders in the consultation. Colleagues will be given the opportunity to give their views through several routes:

- As a resident/worker in the city they can use the Your Voice survey to comment on the impact on them and their families of potential changes
- As an expert, their views will be gathered through internal engagement exercises, to give their perspective on the potential impact on service users in the libraries they regularly work in
- As a colleague, they may be part of a formal consultation process in relation to reductions in staff numbers and changes in working rotas to meet the savings targets
- A range of support is available to all library staff, working closely with HR and line managers to ensure all colleagues are given the opportunity to input to the consultation and feel heard through the changes.

## 6. Financial implications

- 6.1 The net council general fund budget associated with the libraries service in 2025/26 is £4.1m, whilst the gross budget after allowing for income is £6.1m. Within this, the employee staffing element of budget is approximately £2.4m.
- 6.2 As set out in section 3 of the report, savings in 2025/26 of £0.111m were agreed at Budget Council in February 2025, and within the Medium Term Financial Strategy further savings of £0.140m have been identified for 2026/27.
- 6.3 £0.042m has been achieved through operational streamlining in 2025-26. The remaining £0.209m saving for 2025-27 must be met through reductions in library services and staff hours.
- 6.4 The reduction of opening hours at Jubilee achieves the highest saving, followed by the reduction in out of hours staff time, then the reduction in opening hours in Hove.
- 6.5 Closure of Rottingdean Library achieves the highest saving followed by Westdene and Hollingbury.
- 6.6 These savings do not include associated savings for the corporate management and maintenance of these buildings as these are not factored into the budget savings.

Proposal	saving
Reduction in opening hours at Jubilee	£65k
Reduction in out of hours staff time	£50k
Reduction in opening hours at Hove	£35k
Closure of Rottingdean Library	£25k
Closure of Westdene Library	£20k
Closure of Hollingbury Library	£15k
total	£210k

Name of finance officer consulted: Steve Williams  
Date consulted (24/06/25)



## **7. Legal implications**

- 7.1 This report seeks the approval of Cabinet to initiate a consultation process on proposals for the reduction in hours at two libraries and the closure of three community libraries. While the decision to consult is not a Key Decision, it has nonetheless been referred to this meeting of Cabinet to ensure maximum transparency.
- 7.2 Ultimately any decision to change the operation of the library service will need to be in accordance with the statutory duty in Section 7 of the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964 for the Council as a library authority “to provide a comprehensive and efficient library service for all persons desiring to make use thereof.” The duty relates to those whose residence, place of work or study is within the Council’s area.
- 7.3 The Department of Culture Media and Sport has produced guidance entitled “Libraries as a Statutory Service” (updated 21 February 2025) which the council should take into account when considering its statutory service and in particular when proposing changes to it. This includes reference to the need to demonstrate plans to consult with local communities alongside an assessment of their needs. A “Needs and Use Analysis” is attached to the report and should be considered by the Cabinet in making its decision.
- 7.4 Given the nature of the changes proposed, it is important that a period of consultation with those potentially affected is carried out. The process being followed is considered to comply with the *Gunning*<sup>[11](#)</sup> principles:
1. Proposals are at a formative stage allowing for genuine input and potential changes to the proposal prior to any final decision.
  2. Consultees need adequate information about the proposals to understand them and provide meaningful feedback, and these are set out in the report.
  3. Sufficient time must be given for consultees to review the information, formulate responses, and participate in the consultation process, in this case 12 weeks is proposed.
  4. If the matter returns to Cabinet, the report will need to demonstrate how the consultation responses have been conscientiously considered before making a final decision.
- 7.5 The Equality Act 2010 states that public bodies must have “due regard” to a variety of equalities objectives, including the need to eliminate discrimination and advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between those who share a “protected characteristic” and those who do not (Equality Act 2010, Section 149). An equalities impact assessment is attached to this report which should be taken into account by the Cabinet when making this decision. The assessment will be updated to take account of any impacts identified through the consultation process and will be reviewed prior to any final decision being taken at a further meeting of Cabinet.

Name of legal officer consulted: Allan Wells  
Date consulted (03/07/25)

## **8. Risk implications**

- 8.1 Risks associated with the proposals have been identified, will be monitored and mitigated against where possible. These and any further risks identified through the consultation process will be presented with mitigations in the Cabinet report in December.
- 8.2 Risk of adverse impact on residents and customers in BHCC communities which rely on the libraries affected. A full range of equalities considerations are addressed in the Equality Impact Assessment (appendix 1), which will be updated with data gathered through the consultation process.
- 8.3 If changes are made to the library service, staff will then be part of a consultation. Risks which could impact on staff will be addressed in a separate Equality Impact Assessment and a full support package as part of the staff restructure consultation period. The proposed changes are part of a wider sustainability plan for libraries which included changes to management structure and some reductions in staffing last year. The integration of other services has also impacted staff and added to the levels of change being managed by the team. This level of change presents the risk of potential for industrial unrest. Colleagues will be engaged in the consultation process as key stakeholders and experts and all staff will be supported through the usual HR processes and line management.
- 8.4 There is a risk that the full savings identified will not be achieved in this financial year due to the change in timeline. Any reduction to the proposed changes or any delay in implementation will further risk the achievement of the full saving identified for 2026-27. Any savings not achieved will impact the Families, Children and Wellbeing directorate as an in-year budget pressure, potentially impacting other BHCC services.
- 8.5 With any change to statutory services, residents have the option to challenge the decision if it can be demonstrated that processes have not been followed appropriately, with transparency, or that statutory services are being denied to residents. This presents a potential risk of formal complaint, legal challenge and judicial review. By following the correct processes and engaging in meaningful consultation with transparency and openness, this risk can be mitigated.

## **9. Equalities implications**

- 9.1 BHCC has a statutory duty to provide a comprehensive library service to those who live, work and study in the city. Reductions in this statutory service are likely to disproportionately affect more vulnerable groups in the city, as their options for library use will be reduced.
- 9.2 An Equalities Impact Assessment has been completed for the consultation period and will be extended with additional information gathered during consultation. Risks of impact on particular groups and some mitigating actions have been identified, please see appendix 1.

Mitigations include but are not limited to:

- Efforts made to communicate directly with a wide range of community services and networks to gather a wide range of responses
- Monitoring the impact through data collection enables the service to focus remaining resources in areas of need
- Communicating and advertising Libraries Extra and the Home Delivery Service to affected communities to support those who may be impacted by changes and unable to travel to another library

- 9.3 The report above and the Equalities Impact Assessment explore in some detail the potential implications for some communities (geographic and identity) of the proposed reduction in library service. An element of the public consultation is to run a survey on the council's YourVoice engagement portal – this will seek a range of views regarding the proposals but also seek equalities monitoring data from responders. This will allow for a greater level of analysis of the impact of the proposals and will inform any final recommendations.

## **10. Sustainability implications**

- 10.1 The proposals above are contributing to the long-term strategic planning for more sustainable library services for city residents, employees and visitors. The statutory needs of the city will be more securely met with a streamlined service which focuses on the areas of most need. Staff will be more secure, working within a sustainable structure which offers opportunities for progression and role satisfaction, providing excellent customer services in key areas of the city.
- 10.2 Travel is kept to a minimum, but, where necessary, active and sustainable travel is prioritised. The proposals retain 10 libraries across the city, in areas which are accessible by public transport, and many of which are co-located with or close to other community assets such as schools, shops, Family Hubs and GP surgeries. Online services support those who wish to travel less, with online ordering and loan renewal as well as access to e-resources.
- 10.3 BHCC is exploring ways to make best use of resources, including buildings. The co-location of libraries with other community spaces is part of the long-term sustainability strategy, including a new library in the Moulsecoomb Hub in 2027-28, co-location of Council Help Desks and Adult Education & Skills at Jubilee from 2025. The service is actively seeking other opportunities to share spaces in communities, to both reduce running costs of libraries and improve access for residents.

## **11. Other Implications**

### **Public health implications:**

- 11.1 The Needs and Use Analysis has identified some areas of focus, particularly families and children and older people; by building our understanding of who is using the library, the service can work with colleagues in other services, such as Public Health, to support residents within their communities.

- 11.2 Public health implications will be explored further during and after the public consultation and reported on in the Cabinet report later in the year.

## **12. Conclusion**

- 12.1 Cabinet are asked to approve the recommendations made above. The proposals are to enable a sustainable and affordable library service across the city, particularly focused on serving those in most need.

## **Supporting Documentation**

### **Appendices**

1. Equalities Impact Assessment for the proposed public consultation
2. Brighton & Hove Libraries initial Needs and Use Analysis – part 1
3. Engagement plan for the proposed public consultation

## General Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) Form

### Support:

An [EIA toolkit](#), [workshop content](#), and guidance for completing an [Equality Impact Assessment \(EIA\) form](#) are available on the [EIA page](#) of the [EDI Internal Hub](#). Please read these before completing this form.

For enquiries and further support if the toolkit and guidance do not answer your questions, contact the Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) team by emailing [Equalities@Brighton-Hove.gov.uk](mailto:Equalities@Brighton-Hove.gov.uk). If your request is urgent, please mention this in the subject line of your email so we can support as required.

### Processing Time:

- EIAs can take up to 10 business days to approve after a completed EIA of a good standard is submitted to the EDI Business Partner. This is not considering unknown and unplanned impacts of capacity, resource constraints, and work pressures on the EDI team at the time your EIA is submitted.
- If your request is urgent, we can explore support exceptionally on request.
- We encourage improved planning and thinking around EIAs to avoid urgent turnarounds as these make EIAs riskier, limiting, and blind spots may remain unaddressed for the 'activity' you are assessing.

### Process:

- Once fully completed, submit your EIA to the Equalities team by emailing the Equalities inbox and copying in your Head of Service, Business Improvement Manager (if one exists in your directorate), any other relevant service colleagues to enable EIA communication, tracking and saving.
- Your EIA will be reviewed, discussed, and then approved by the assigned EDI Business Partner and after seeking additional approval as appropriate for your EIA.
- Only approved EIAs are to be attached to Committee reports. Unapproved EIAs are invalid.

### 1. Assessment details

Throughout this form, 'activity' is used to refer to many different types of proposals being assessed.

Read the [EIA toolkit](#) for more information.

<b>Name of activity or proposal being assessed:</b>	<b>Public consultation on proposed reduction in public library services including closure of some community libraries and a reduction in opening hours at Jubilee and Hove Libraries.</b>
<b>Directorate:</b>	Families, Children and Wellbeing
<b>Service:</b>	Library Service
<b>Team:</b>	Senior Leadership Team
<b>Is this a new or existing activity?</b>	New
<b>Are there related EIAs that could help inform this EIA? Yes or No</b> (If Yes, please use this to inform this assessment)	Yes – Budget EIA that went to Budget Council February 2025 <a href="#">Appendix 7 - Equality Impacts Assessments.pdf (budget proposal 2)</a>

## 2. Contributors to the assessment (Name and Job title)

<b>Responsible Lead Officer:</b>	Anna Gianfrancesco – Director of Commissioning and Communities
<b>Accountable Manager:</b>	Ceris Howard – Head of Library and Customer
<b>Additional stakeholders collaborating or contributing to this assessment:</b>	Carolyn Bristow – Service Manager for Policy for Families, Children and Wellbeing

## 3. About the activity

Briefly describe the purpose of the activity being assessed:

As part of the city council budget agreement for 2025/26 the following savings were committed:

- Reduced opening hours at the Jubilee and Hove Libraries, as well as a review and closure of some community libraries (£69,000)

It was also indicated, via the Medium-Term Financial Strategy, that a further £140,000 would be achieved during 2026-27 through this review of library services (closures and opening hours), as the process for change would need at least 9 months to complete, showing part-year savings in 2025-26, completing in 2026-27

The proposals going to Cabinet in July 2025 are to conduct a public consultation for 12 weeks over the summer of 2025 to:

Consult on the proposed closure of Hollingbury Library

Consult on the proposed closure of Rottingdean Library

Consult on the proposed closure of Westdene Library

Consult on the proposed changes in opening hours at Hove Library

Consult on the proposed changes in opening hours at Jubilee Library

The full rationale for this proposal is available in the accompanying Cabinet report, which will be available here when published: [Brighton & Hove City Council - Agenda for Cabinet on Thursday, 17th July, 2025, 2.00pm](#)

What are the desired outcomes of the activity?

To conduct a public consultation where a wide range of views can be collected. This will inform the city council to enable decision making later in the year on this matter. This EIA is conducted in order to support the design and delivery of the public consultation process.

Which key groups of people do you think are likely to be affected by the activity?

- Library users
- City Residents
- Visitors to the city including those who work and study in the city

Staff within the council's library service are a vital stakeholder in this process. They will have specific mechanisms to engage with and contribute to the public consultations. If changes are made to the library service, staff will then have a separate staff consultation.

#### 4. Consultation and engagement

What consultations or engagement activities have already happened that you can use to inform this assessment?

- For example, relevant stakeholders, groups, people from within the council and externally consulted and engaged on this assessment. **If no consultation** has been done or it is not enough or in process – state this and describe your plans to address any gaps.

- This proposal is to have a public consultation to gather views and feedback on the proposals. This EIA is made to ensure a full and robust public consultation is delivered, which actively seeks the views of a wide range of residents and library users.
- In order to make changes to library services, a needs and use analysis will be needed to understand the potential impact of the changes for residents. This would include analysis of travel times between libraries, areas of deprivation, demographic data etc. Part 1 of this analysis will be provided as part of the proposal to Cabinet in July 2025. This will then be further informed by the public consultation and Part 2 will be presented to Cabinet later in the year if a further paper is taken with final proposals.
- The Government's Department for Culture, Media and Sport requires a public consultation period, to engage with residents, users and non-users, for any proposals to reduce library services. It is proposed the opening hour changes and libraries closures are included in one public consultation which will run for 12 weeks in the summer/autumn of 2025. There will be a survey on Your Voice (the council's on-line consultation platform), with paper copies available in all libraries and more specific engagement with partners and stakeholders for each of the libraries affected.
- Our analysis made us aware of the particular importance of reaching seldom-heard or marginalised groups, exploring all available options to make consultation documents and communications fully accessible for disabled people, those with access requirements, different literacy or language requirements and non-digital engagement for those who are digitally excluded. We will also analyse our consultation feedback/data intersectionally where possible.
- Library staff at several levels will be affected by the proposals and a consultation with over 60 colleagues is likely to be required, once the public consultation has closed and decisions have been made, likely to be early 2026. However, during the public consultation, internal work will be undertaken to inform and engage with staff on the proposals.
- Once results are collated and shared, final proposals would be taken to a Cabinet meeting later in the year, and if changes are decided, at least one month's notice will be given to the public, likely to be spring 2026.

#### 5. Current data and impact monitoring

Do you currently collect and analyse the following data to enable monitoring of the impact of this activity? Consider all possible intersections.

(State Yes, No, Not Applicable as appropriate)

Age	YES
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<b>Disability and inclusive adjustments, coverage under equality act and not</b>	YES
<b>Ethnicity, 'Race', ethnic heritage (including Gypsy, Roma, Travellers)</b>	YES
<b>Religion, Belief, Spirituality, Faith, or Atheism</b>	YES
<b>Gender Identity and Sex (including non-binary and Intersex people)</b>	YES
<b>Gender Reassignment</b>	YES
<b>Sexual Orientation</b>	YES
<b>Marriage and Civil Partnership</b>	YES
<b>Pregnant people, Maternity, Paternity, Adoption, Menopause, (In)fertility (across the gender spectrum)</b>	YES
<b>Armed Forces Personnel, their families, and Veterans</b>	YES
<b>Expatriates, Migrants, Asylum Seekers, and Refugees</b>	YES
<b>Carers</b>	YES
<b>Looked after children, Care Leavers, Care and fostering experienced people</b>	YES
<b>Domestic and/or Sexual Abuse and Violence Survivors, and people in vulnerable situations (All aspects and intersections)</b>	NO
<b>Socio-economic Disadvantage</b>	YES
<b>Homelessness and associated risk and vulnerability</b>	YES
<b>Human Rights</b>	NO
<b>Another relevant group (please specify here and add additional rows as needed)</b>	NO

**Additional relevant groups that may be widely disadvantaged and have intersecting experiences that create exclusion and systemic barriers may include:**

- Ex-offenders and people with unrelated convictions
- Lone parents
- People experiencing homelessness
- People facing literacy, numeracy and /or digital barriers
- People on a low income and people living in the most deprived areas
- People who have experienced female genital mutilation (FGM)
- People who have experienced human trafficking or modern slavery
- People with experience of or living with addiction and/ or a substance use disorder (SUD)
- Sex workers

If you answered "NO" to any of the above, how will you gather this data to enable improved monitoring of impact for this activity?

Responses to the public consultation will be considered, including where people have talked about personal circumstances and any intersectionality of their characteristics. The digital and paper survey will seek to collect equalities monitoring data during the public consultation.



Some data about library users is gathered by the Library Management System when customers join the library. Not all equalities data for protected characteristic and groups listed above are able to be covered through that system. The public consultation will encourage responders to provide equalities monitoring data as part of their response, so that the impact of the proposals can be considered appropriately.

The accompanying Part 1 of the required Needs and Use Analysis is also provided with this assessment in the report to July Cabinet. This details what other data sets are available in the city to consider the needs and use of city library services, including the impact of the proposals set out in the report.

Staff data is managed through BHCC HR systems.

What are the arrangements you and your service have for monitoring, and reviewing the impact of this activity?

The feedback received through the public consultation will be fully considered, available to Cabinet members who will be making the decisions on any resulting final proposals.

Data will be available on numbers of visitors and items loaned at libraries affected.

Feedback via comments and complaints.

Informal engagement with partners and stakeholders. This will be through direct communication, social media promotion and invites to public meetings.

Formal consultation with staff, 1:1s, team meetings.

Data and feedback will be monitored by the Libraries Senior Management Team and reported to the Communities and Commissioning Director and Senior Leadership Team.

Public Consultation feedback will be read in full. Themes will be identified and presented to Councillors when they are considering next steps and any final decisions.

General known data about library use is presented in section 3 (current library use) of the Needs and Use Analysis.

## 6. Impacts

### Advisory Note:

- **Impact:**
  - Assessing disproportionate impact means understanding potential negative impact (that may cause direct or indirect discrimination), and then assessing the relevance (that is: the potential effect of your activity on people with protected characteristics) and proportionality (that is: how strong the effect is).
  - These impacts should be identified in the EIA and then re-visited regularly as you review the EIA every 12 to 18 months as applicable to the duration of your activity.
- **SMART Actions mean:** Actions that are (SMART = Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, T = Time-bound)
- **Cumulative Assessment:** If there is impact on all groups equally, complete **only** the cumulative assessment section.
- **Data analysis and Insights:**
  - In each protected characteristic or group, in answer to the question 'If "YES", what are the positive and negative disproportionate impacts?', describe what you have learnt from your data analysis about disproportionate impacts, stating relevant insights and data sources.
  - Find and use contextual and wide ranges of data analysis (including community feedback) to describe what the disproportionate positive and negative impacts are on different, and

intersecting populations impacted by your activity, especially considering for [Health inequalities](#), review guidance and inter-related impacts, and the impact of various identities.

- For example: If you are doing road works or closures in a particular street or ward – look at a variety of data and do so from various protected characteristic lenses. Understand and analyse what that means for your project and its impact on different types of people, residents, family types and so on. State your understanding of impact in both effect of impact and strength of that effect on those impacted.

- **Data Sources:**

- **Consider a wide range (including but not limited to):**

- [Population and population groups](#)
  - [Census 2021 population groups Infogram: Brighton & Hove by Brighton and Hove City Council](#)
- [Census](#) and [local intelligence data](#)
- Service specific data
- Community consultations
- Insights from customer feedback including complaints and survey results
- Lived experiences and qualitative data
- [Joint Strategic Needs Assessment \(JSNA\) data](#)
- [Health Inequalities data](#)
- Good practice research
- National data and reports relevant to the service
- Workforce, leaver, and recruitment data, surveys, insights
- Feedback from internal 'staff as residents' consultations
- Insights, gaps, and data analyses on intersectionality, accessibility, sustainability requirements, and impacts.
- Insights, gaps, and data analyses on 'who' the most intersectionally marginalised and excluded under-represented people and communities are in the context of this EIA.

- Learn more about the [Equality Act 2010](#) and about our [Public Sector Equality Duty](#).

## 6.1 Age

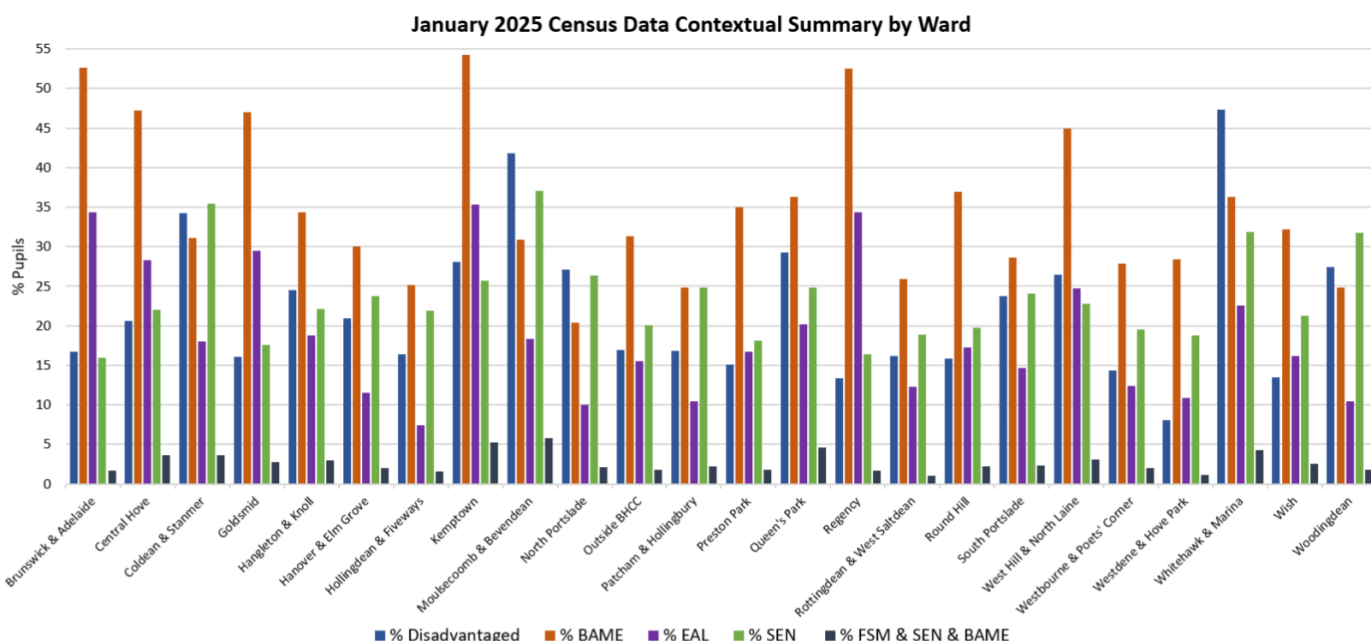
<b>Does your analysis indicate a disproportionate impact relating to any particular Age group? For example: people who may be housebound, those under 16, young adults, with other intersections.</b>	YES
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### If “YES”, what are the positive and negative disproportionate impacts?

Please share relevant insights from data and engagement to show how conclusions about impact have been shaped. Include relevant data sources or references.

#### **What we know about library use/children and young people/older people in the city and how any changes to library provision may impact on them:**

At a 2023 population estimate there were 46,666 children and young people under 18 living in Brighton & Hove. The chart below provides data on school aged children, showing the range of demographic characteristics we see across the city. The chart details each ward in the city and provides information on the percentage of pupils within each ward who are disadvantaged, Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic group (DfE use this terminology), English as a Second language, special educational needs and how some children have more than one of those characteristics. This will be especially relevant for the wards where there are proposed closures but already recognising that residents/library users from across the city may be impacted by the proposed reduction in opening hours at the central libraries.



Library services are important for both young and older people.

In 2023, the National Literacy Trust found that the percentage of children and young people aged 8 to 18 who said that they didn't have a book of their own at home increased compared with the year before, particularly for those from lower-income homes<sup>4</sup>.

In 2022 nearly 1 in 10 children receiving free school meals (FSMs) said they did not have a book of their own. Since then, that figure has risen to 1 in 8. Children who are on FSMs are twice as likely not to own a book as those who are not. In fact, the percentage-point (pp) gap in book ownership between children and young people who receive FSMs and their peers who do not (6.6 pp) is now at its largest in a decade.

The effects of our aging population are also among the biggest social challenges we will face over the coming decades, as a society, economically, and within our own families. There is evidence that libraries have a part to play in combatting social isolation.<sup>6</sup> Brighton & Hove has a higher proportion of older people living in poverty compared to England and the South East.<sup>7</sup>

Westdene Library is located within Westdene Primary School and four times as much children's fiction as adult fiction is borrowed from this community library. If closed, there will be an impact on local children and young people not being able to borrow books or use resources from this site.

Other disproportionate impacts may include:

- Children and young people: loss of after-school study spaces, homework support and digital access for families without home internet.
- Older adults: reduced social contact opportunities, loss of accessible community spaces, impact on those with mobility issues accessing alternative locations.
- Working age adults: reduced access to job search facilities, IT support and lifelong learning opportunities.
- Socio-economically disadvantaged older people: loss of designated Warm Spaces in the winter.

#### **Mitigations against potential impacts**

Distance and travel to alternative libraries will be a key consideration when considering closure. It will be important to understand the ease, accessibility and cost impacts of travel to alternative libraries where there may be a closure or a reduction in opening hours when those library users want to access the service.

This will be important for older people and young families who may be unable to walk far and rely on transport (public or private car) to travel to another library. The closure will affect disproportionately people who could walk to libraries before closure and will have to buy bus tickets afterwards.

For each of the proposed library closures there are alternative libraries within 2 miles, and the city is generally well served by public transport. However, these potential impacts and mitigations will be considered further during the public consultation, based on feedback received.

Other potential mitigations may include:

- Maintaining children's services as priority during reduced library opening hours.
- Partnering with schools and colleges to provide alternative study spaces.
- Develop online resources and digital literacy support.
- Signposting to alternative Warm Spaces nearby if there are any.
- Consideration of the parking options, particularly for drivers with accessibility requirements around the alternative libraries.

#### **For the public consultation:**

The Your Voice survey is available for anyone aged 13 and above and we'll be asking responders if they could state their age as part of their reply, as well as a range of other protected characteristic information. This will help us analyse the consultation responses based on age.

We will communicate with city nurseries, schools and colleges to ensure parents/carers of children and young people are made aware of the proposals.

We will liaise with support services such as Family Hubs, the Adult Education Hub and the Employment Service to continue encouraging participation from younger parents. We will use social media platforms and online promotion to reach younger parents in conjunction with traditional methods of promotion.

Consideration will be given to the timing of any public consultation events so parents with young families can attend.

We will approach youth services in the city to ensure they are aware of the consultation and may be able to assist young people to participate.

We will communicate directly with young people through the Summer Reading Challenge programme.

Engagement will be planned with Westdene Primary School which is where Westdene Library is co-located.

These steps will help ensure that the consultation reaches underheard communities in the city.

We will communicate with groups that support and network with older people in the city to ensure they are aware of the consultation and may be able to promote across their network.

Therefore, it will be possible to provide some analysis post public consultation on views of children and young people and for older people. The public consultation will also encourage responders to share free text comments on their views of the proposals; this will help gain a fuller understanding of the implications of the closures which will be reflected within the next EIA and report to Cabinet in December 2025.

We will develop greater equalities insight by including equalities monitoring questions in both paper and digital consultations.

We will ensure that all consultation materials, communications and processes are fully accessible for people of all ages by providing them in plain English, in a variety of accessible formats, such as for

example Braille, Easy Read, British Sign Language, various languages and both digital and traditional paper formats. These would be available upon request and for some would require time to provide.

An accessibility statement will be available for both digital and traditional (non-digital) consultation materials and relevant communications, outlining our approach to supporting access requirements, and how people can let us know about any access requirements.

## 6.2 Disability:

<b>Does your analysis indicate a disproportionate impact relating to <a href="#">Disability</a>, considering our <a href="#">anticipatory duty</a>?</b>	YES
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### If “YES”, what are the positive and negative disproportionate impacts?

Please share relevant insights from data and engagement to show how conclusions about impact have been shaped. Include relevant data sources or references.

#### **What we know about library use/disabled people in the city and how any changes to library provision may impact on them:**

The accompanying Needs and Use Analysis details the geographical spreads of health deprivation and disability rank across the city.

Brighton & Hove has an aging population and a significant proportion of residents with long-term health conditions, mental health issues, or those who are disabled.

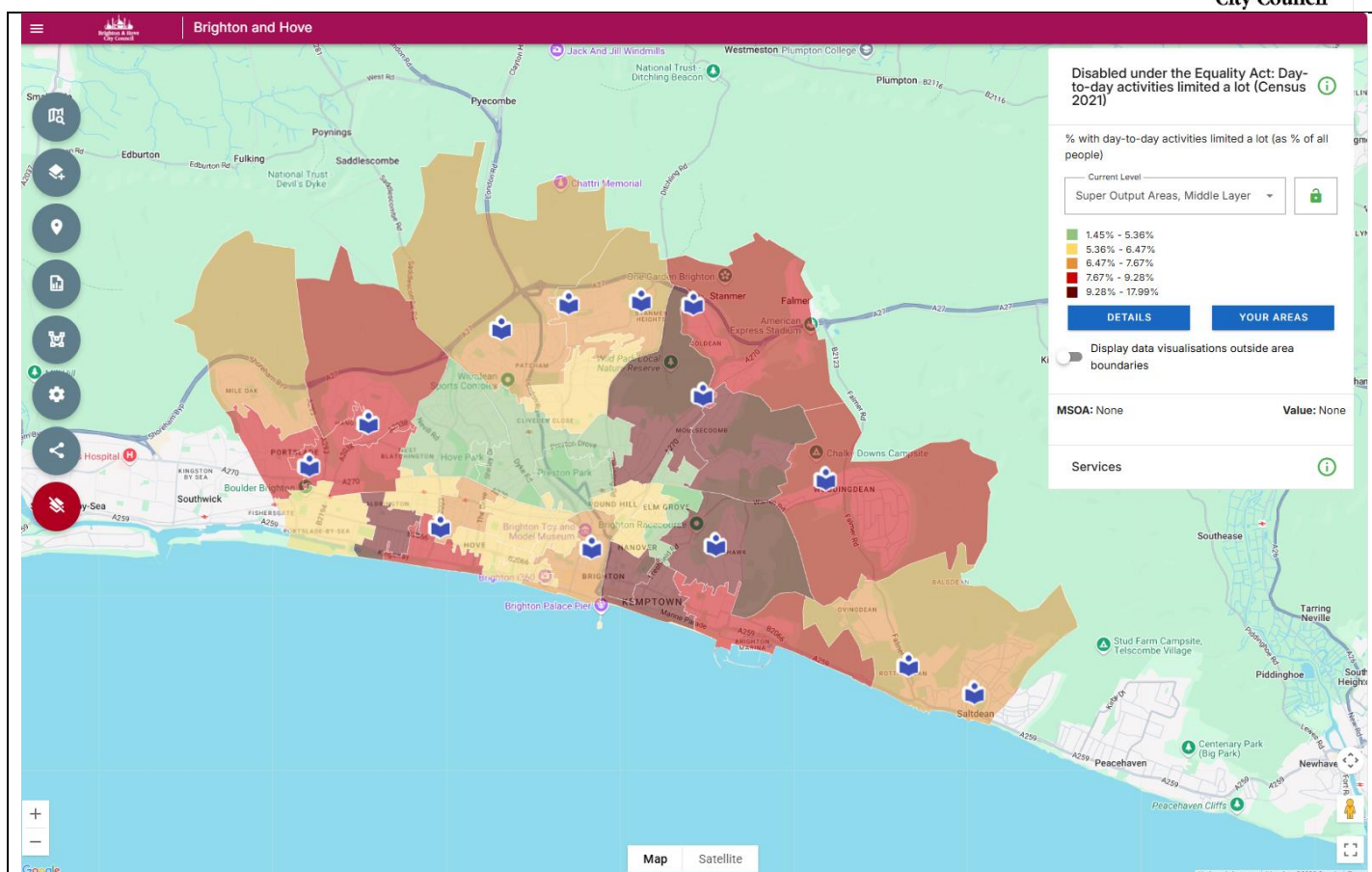
Among disabled residents, for two out of five (20,351, 39%) their day-to-day activities are limited ‘a lot’ and for three in five (31,446 people, 61%) their activities are limited ‘a little’. Both proportions are similar to what is seen in the South East and England.

Over four out of five residents (225,306 people, 81%) are not disabled as defined by the Equality Act. This is lower than seen in both the South East (84%) and England (83%).

Nearly three quarters of residents have no long term physical or mental health condition (74%). This is lower than seen in the South East (76%) and England (76%).

Among residents who are not disabled, nearly one in ten (20,502 people, 8%) have a long term physical or mental health condition. However, this condition does not affect their day to day activities. This is similar to what is seen in both the South East (8%) and England (7%).

Residents who are disabled under the Equality Act are concentrated in the central/eastern area of the city, particularly in East Brighton, Queens Park and Hollingbury & Stanmer wards. However, there are also higher proportions of disabled people in the east in Woodingdean and to the west in Hangleton & Portslade. This is shown in the image below.



This shows us that in the areas where community libraries are proposed to close there are lower levels of disabled people. It also shows that there is a higher density of disabled residents near to Hove and Jubilee Libraries, where opening hours are proposed to reduce.

Ranking upper tier local authorities by the proportion of disabled residents shows that Brighton & Hove (19%) is ranked 51 out of 152 authorities (second quintile).

Disabled customers may not be able to travel independently to access a library further from their home. They may also face additional costs through the increased travel, especially people who need to use a private vehicle for travel. Disabled households are already more likely to be under greater financial strain due to lower income and greater household costs.

They could find Libraries Extra more challenging to use than staffed library services, so this being available in community libraries will have limited impact in areas where a library has closed and will not mitigate loss of opening hours in Jubilee and Hove libraries.

We also know that libraries support people to live healthier lives in a range of ways, including providing access to health information and Books on Prescription, hosting healthcare events and opportunities, delivering books to those who are housebound and addressing social isolation and loneliness.<sup>5</sup> While overall life expectancy has risen in Brighton & Hove, healthy life expectancy has declined in recent years, meaning people are living longer but with more health issues. Additionally, the number of people with long-term health conditions or those who are disabled is increasing.

If changes are made to library provision, it is essential to consider how these would impact those who are disabled.

Other disproportionate impacts may include:

- Loss of accessible, familiar environments.
- Reduced access to assistive technology and adapted materials (for example large print books).
- Impact on those who rely on libraries for social interaction and routine.



- Potential barriers to accessing alternative venues.
- Loss of Blue Badge disabled bays close to libraries listed for closure.

### Mitigations against potential impacts

As above, distance and travel to alternative libraries will be a key consideration when considering closure. It will be important to understand the ease and accessibility of travel to alternative libraries where there may be a closure or a reduction in opening hours when those library users want to access the service.

This will be important for disabled people who may be unable to walk far and rely on transport (public or private car) to travel to another library. Or for factors such as those with neurodiversity who may struggle to adapt to a change in routine.

For each of the proposed library closures there are alternative libraries within 2 miles and the city is generally well served by public transport. However, these potential impacts and mitigations will be considered further during the public consultation, based on feedback received, particularly for those who may experience accessibility barriers due to being disabled. We will conduct accessibility audits on the identified alternative libraries.

The library service offer does include a Home Delivery Service which is available for those in need, including disabled library users. This may be an alternative for some that are impacted by a community library closure.

### For the public consultation:

Consultation documentation should be available in accessible formats, and efforts made to ensure disabled residents are made aware of the proposals and the consultation. We will communicate directly with council and community support services to ensure they are aware of the consultation and can share with their networks where possible. An Easy Read version of the proposals will be made available. Public meetings will be held at a range of times, venues and online to enable disabled residents and library users to engage in a way and at a time that suits them.

We will develop greater equalities insight by including equalities monitoring questions in both paper and digital consultations.

We will ensure that all consultation materials, communications and processes are fully accessible for people of all ages by providing them in plain English, in a variety of accessible formats, such as for example Braille, Easy Read, British Sign Language, various languages and both digital and traditional paper formats.

An accessibility statement will be available for both digital and traditional (non-digital) consultation materials and relevant communications, outlining our approach to supporting access requirements, and how people can let us know about any access requirements.

What [inclusive adjustments](#) are you making for diverse disabled people impacted? For example: those who are housebound due to disability or disabling circumstances, D/deaf, deafened, hard of hearing, blind, neurodivergent people, those with non-visible disabilities, and with access requirements that may not identify as disabled or meet the legal definition of disability, and have various intersections (Black and disabled, LGBTQIA+ and disabled).

Listed above

### 6.3 Ethnicity, 'Race', ethnic heritage (including Gypsy, Roma, Travellers):

Does your analysis indicate a disproportionate impact relating to ethnicity?

YES

## If “YES”, what are the positive and negative disproportionate impacts?

Please share relevant insights from data and engagement to show how conclusions about impact have been shaped. Include relevant data sources or references.

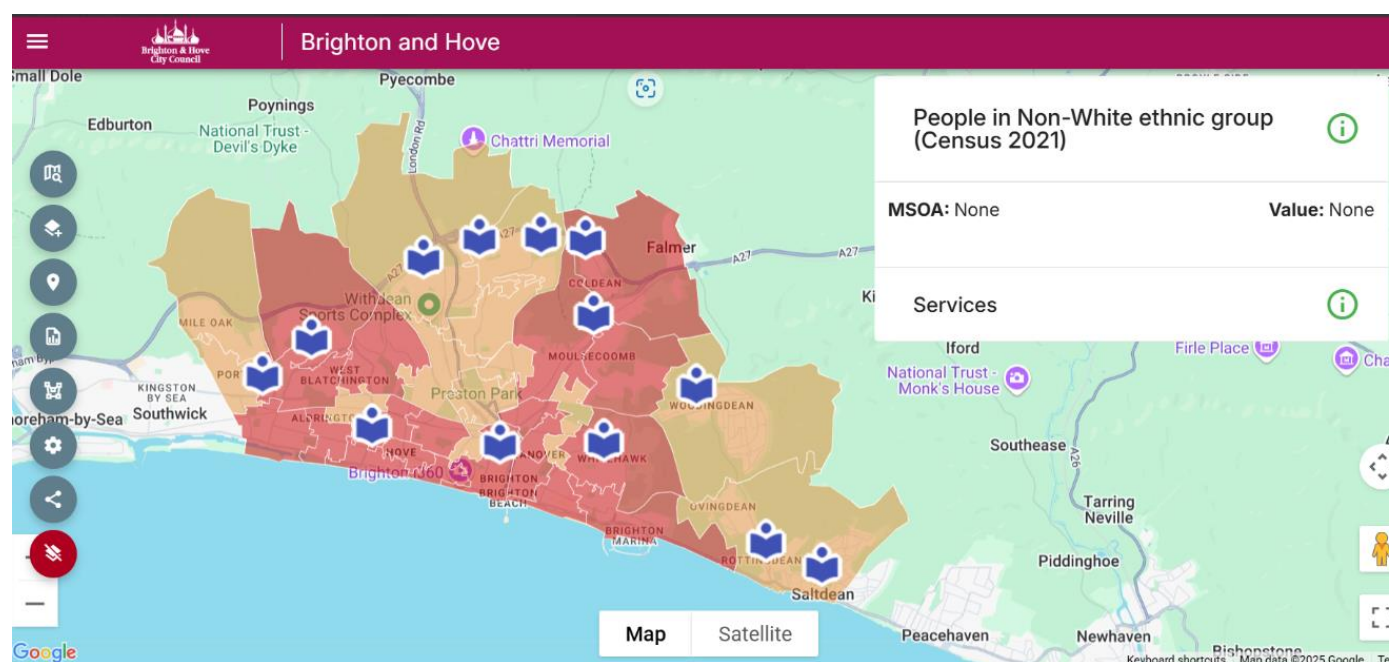
### What we know about library use/Black and Racially Minoritised people in the city and how any changes to library provision may impact on them:

According to the 2021 census 26% of people are Black or racially minoritised (27%):

- 4.8% Asian or Asian British (10%)
- 2.0% Black or Black British (4%)
- 4.8% Mixed or multiple ethnic group (3%)
- 1.1% Arab (0.6%)
- 11.5% White Irish or White other (8%)

Despite the overall number of residents only increasing by 1% since the last Census. The number of Black or Racially Minoritised residents has increased by over a third (35%, 18,921 people), especially in young population groups.

Certain Black and racially minoritised communities may be disproportionately affected, dependent on the demographic of the areas affected by library closures. This can be viewed in the image below which is the geographical spread to Census 2021 responders who identified as anything other than White. This shows that for the areas of proposed library closure there are fewer BRM residents.



For nearly one in ten residents (24,579 people, 9.1%) English is not their first or preferred language. Higher than the South East (7.2%) but similar to England (9.2%).

For 145 residents their main or preferred language is a sign language, 120 residents use British Sign Language.

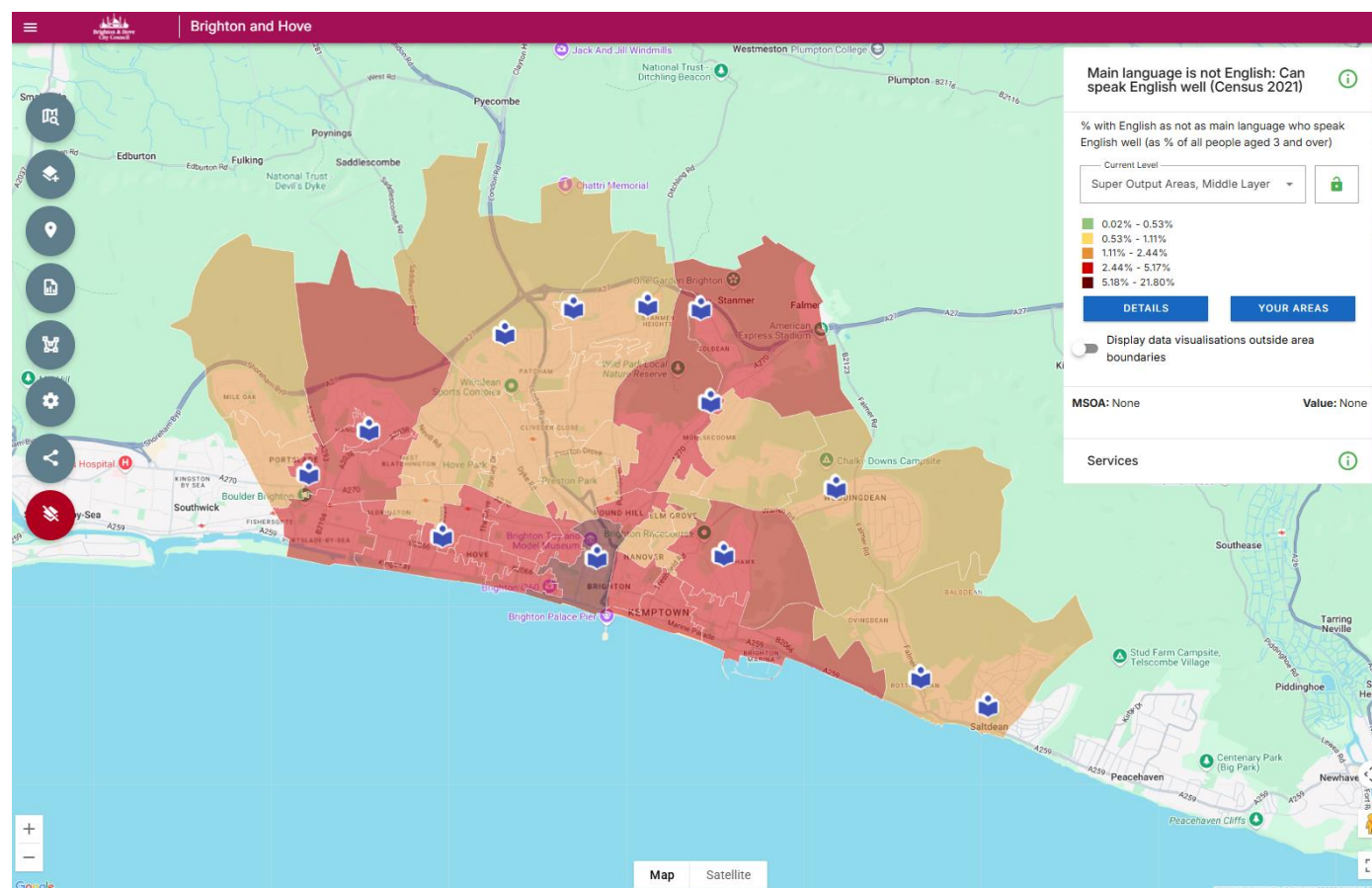
Among residents (24,577) for whom English is not their main or preferred language:

- 87% speak English very well or well
- 11% (2,732 people) cannot speak English well



- 2% (386 people) cannot speak English
- In more than one in twenty city households (7,817, 6.4%) no adult speaks English as a main or preferred language.

Taking the measure of those whose main language is not English, but they can speak English well, the image below shows the geographical spread across the city from the Census 2021.



This shows us that for where community libraries are proposed for closure, there are fewer residents from those demographic groups than in some other areas of the city. It also shows that there is a higher density of these demographic populations directly around Jubilee Library in the centre of the city.

### Mitigations against potential impacts

Black and Racially Minoritised communities who are resident in the city are most likely to be impacted by the proposed reduction in opening hours at Hove and/or Jubilee library due to density of resident populations. Mitigations will focus on being clear, with inclusive communications, on any new opening hours of those central libraries, to ensure notice is given for users to amend when and how they use the service. Further promotion to be undertaken to highlight the online library service offers to support people when the libraries are closed. This applies to all service users but may impact directly on local BRM residents due to the density of population in central areas of the city.

If Black and Racially Minoritised service users are impacted by community library closures, travel and access to alternative libraries will be a consideration. Alternative libraries will be available within 2 miles of each library which are proposed for closure and the city is generally well served by public transport.

Library users for whom English is not their first language require clear and accessible communications about any changes in library service offer and their regular library(ies).

### For the public consultation:

We will communicate with BRM community groups to ensure they have awareness of our consultation and ask for them to share across their networks as appropriate. We will encourage groups to make their own submissions to the consultation so we can gain an understanding of the potential impact on BRM communities across the city, as a typically underheard and underreached voice in council consultations. We will be particularly interested in hearing from groups that are BRM run organisations but will share widely. We will offer to work with community organisations to host in-person listening sessions.

Whilst not always directly linked to BRM status, we'll also be ensuring accessibility to the public consultation for those who have English as an additional language. We'll be advertising the translation option on YourVoice portal. We'll communicate with relevant services in the city so that they are aware of the consultation and can share with their networks as appropriate. These will include council commissioned translation and interpreting services and the EALT service.

When analysing the public consultation feedback we will disaggregate consultation responses by ethnicity (where people have declared this) to ensure we can understand and hear from minority voices in the city, and they are not obscured in the broader analysis.

## 6.4 Religion, Belief, Spirituality, Faith, or Atheism:

<b>Does your analysis indicate a disproportionate impact relating to Religion, Belief, Spirituality, Faith, or Atheism?</b>	YES
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### If "YES", what are the positive and negative disproportionate impacts?

Please share relevant insights from data and engagement to show how conclusions about impact have been shaped. Include relevant data sources or references.

#### **What we know about library use/People of faith, belief, religion, spirituality or atheism in the city and how any changes to library provision may impact on them:**

According to the 2021 census 55.2% of people have no religion or belief

- 30.9% Christian (46%)
- 3.1% Muslim (6.7%)
- 0.9% Jewish (0.5%)
- 0.9% Buddhist (0.5%)
- 0.8% Hindu (1.8%)
- 0.1% Sikh (0.9%)
- 1.0% Other religion (0.6%)

Considering the intersection of faith and ethnicity, some faith communities may be disproportionately affected dependent on the demographic of the areas affected by library closures.

### For the public consultation:

Efforts will be made to ensure the consultation is conducted in a way that is accessible for a range of beliefs. For example, public meetings being held a range of times, venues and online to accommodate those with religious observances/festivals during that time including providing spaces which are prayer friendly. Efforts will be made to share the consultation with faith groups across the city, asking them to share with their networks.

## 6.5 Sex:

Does your analysis indicate a disproportionate impact relating to and <a href="#">Sex</a> (including non-binary and intersex people)?	YES
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### If “YES”, what are the positive and negative disproportionate impacts?

Please share relevant insights from data and engagement to show how conclusions about impact have been shaped. Include relevant data sources or references.

#### What we know about library use and sex and how any changes to library provision may impact on groups:

There is potential for additional impact on women as predominantly primary child carers, especially for young children. Community libraries provide a neutral safe social space for women with young children. Lack of a local library facility could disproportionately impact on women. CIPFA library usage data shows that women are the greater user of library services nationally.

It will be important to consider impact on women with intersectional protected characteristic, eg disabled women, migrant women, women of colour.

#### For the public consultation:

Efforts will be made to ensure that women will be reached through this consultation. Information will be sought through the public consultation on people's sex and and this will help inform analysis of public consultation responses. A range of consultation meeting times and venues will be available to accommodate for different caring responsibilities that may reduce someone's ability to attend.

## 6.6 [Gender Identity](#) /Gender Reassignment:

Does your analysis indicate a disproportionate impact relating to <a href="#">Gender Identity</a> / <a href="#">Gender Reassignment</a> ?	NO
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### If “YES”, what are the positive and negative disproportionate impacts?

Please share relevant insights from data and engagement to show how conclusions about impact have been shaped. Include relevant data sources or references.

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## 6.7 Sexual Orientation:

Does your analysis indicate a disproportionate impact relating to <a href="#">Sexual Orientation</a> ?	NO
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### If “YES”, what are the positive and negative disproportionate impacts?

Please share relevant insights from data and engagement to show how conclusions about impact have been shaped. Include relevant data sources or references.

### 6.8 Marriage and Civil Partnership:

Does your analysis indicate a disproportionate impact relating to Marriage and Civil Partnership?	NO
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#### If “YES”, what are the positive and negative disproportionate impacts?

Please share relevant insights from data and engagement to show how conclusions about impact have been shaped. Include relevant data sources or references.

### 6.9 Pregnant people, Maternity, Paternity, Adoption, Menopause, (In)fertility (across the gender spectrum):

Does your analysis indicate a disproportionate impact relating to Pregnant people, Maternity, Paternity, Adoption, Menopause, (In)fertility (across the gender spectrum)?	NO
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#### If “YES”, what are the positive and negative disproportionate impacts?

Please share relevant insights from data and engagement to show how conclusions about impact have been shaped. Include relevant data sources or references.

### 6.10 Armed Forces Personnel, their families, and Veterans:

Does your analysis indicate a disproportionate impact relating to Armed Forces Members and Veterans?	NO
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#### If “YES”, what are the positive and negative disproportionate impacts?

Please share relevant insights from data and engagement to show how conclusions about impact have been shaped. Include relevant data sources or references.

### 6.11 Expatriates, Migrants, Asylum Seekers, and Refugees:

Does your analysis indicate a disproportionate impact relating to Expatriates, Migrants, Asylum seekers, Refugees, those New to the UK, and UK visa or assigned legal status? (Especially considering for age, ethnicity, language, and various intersections)	YES
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#### If “YES”, what are the positive and negative disproportionate impacts?

Please share relevant insights from data and engagement to show how conclusions about impact have been shaped. Include relevant data sources or references.

Brighton & Hove Library service has the Library Service of Sanctuary Award, so any reduction in provision potentially reduces access to a safe and welcoming environment for these communities.

It may also reduce access to free resources such as materials supporting English language development.

Within the public consultation, efforts will be made to hear from these communities and organisations that support them, to ensure impacts may be more fully understood and considered.

## 6.12 [Carers](#):

**Does your analysis indicate a disproportionate impact relating to [Carers](#) (Especially considering for age, ethnicity, language, and various intersections).**

YES

### If “YES”, what are the positive and negative disproportionate impacts?

Please share relevant insights from data and engagement to show how conclusions about impact have been shaped. Include relevant data sources or references.

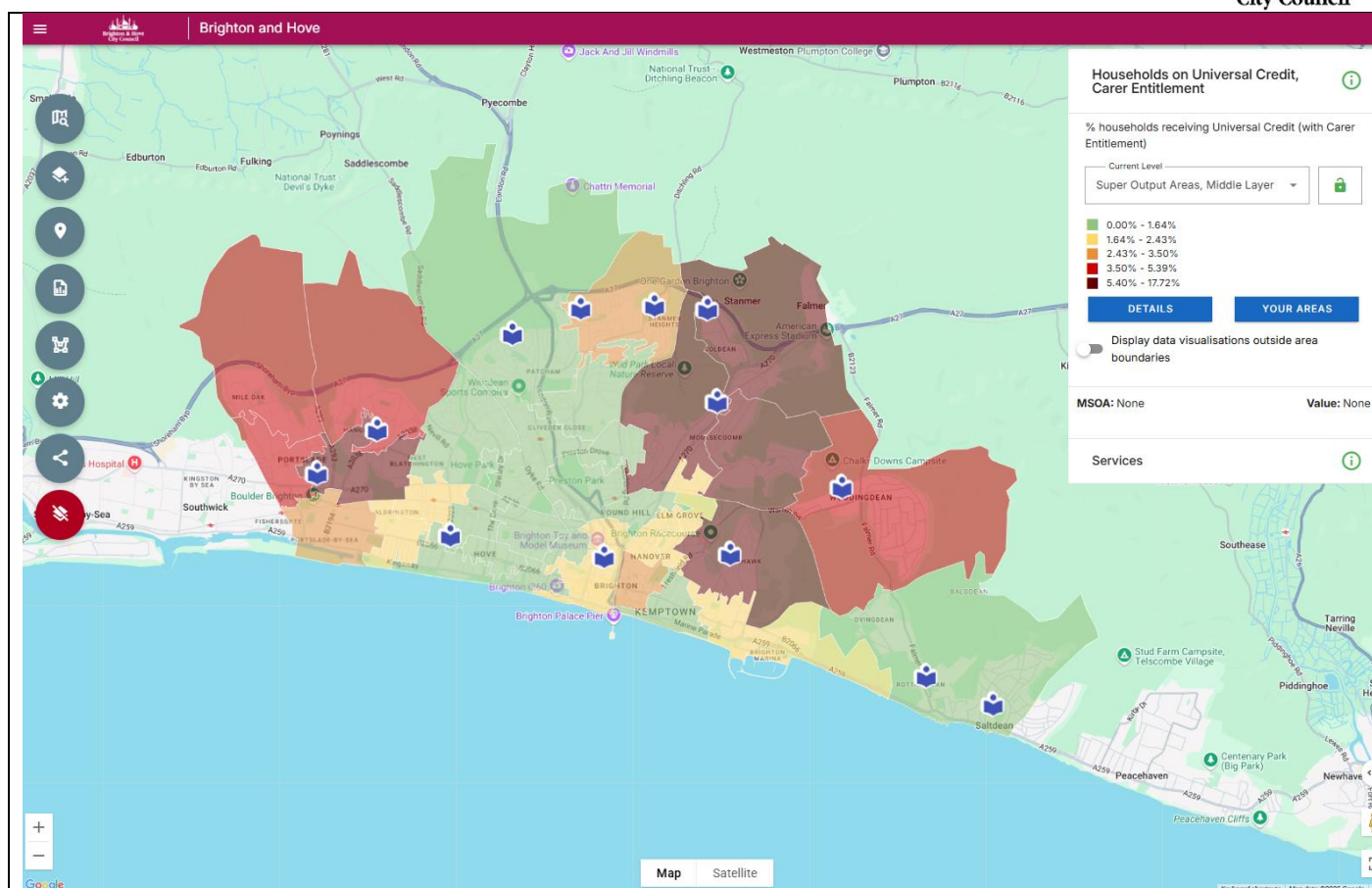
**What we know about library use/people who are carers and how any changes to library provision may impact on them:**

According to the 2021 census, 1 in 12 residents (20,800 people, 7.8%) provide un-paid care (9%).

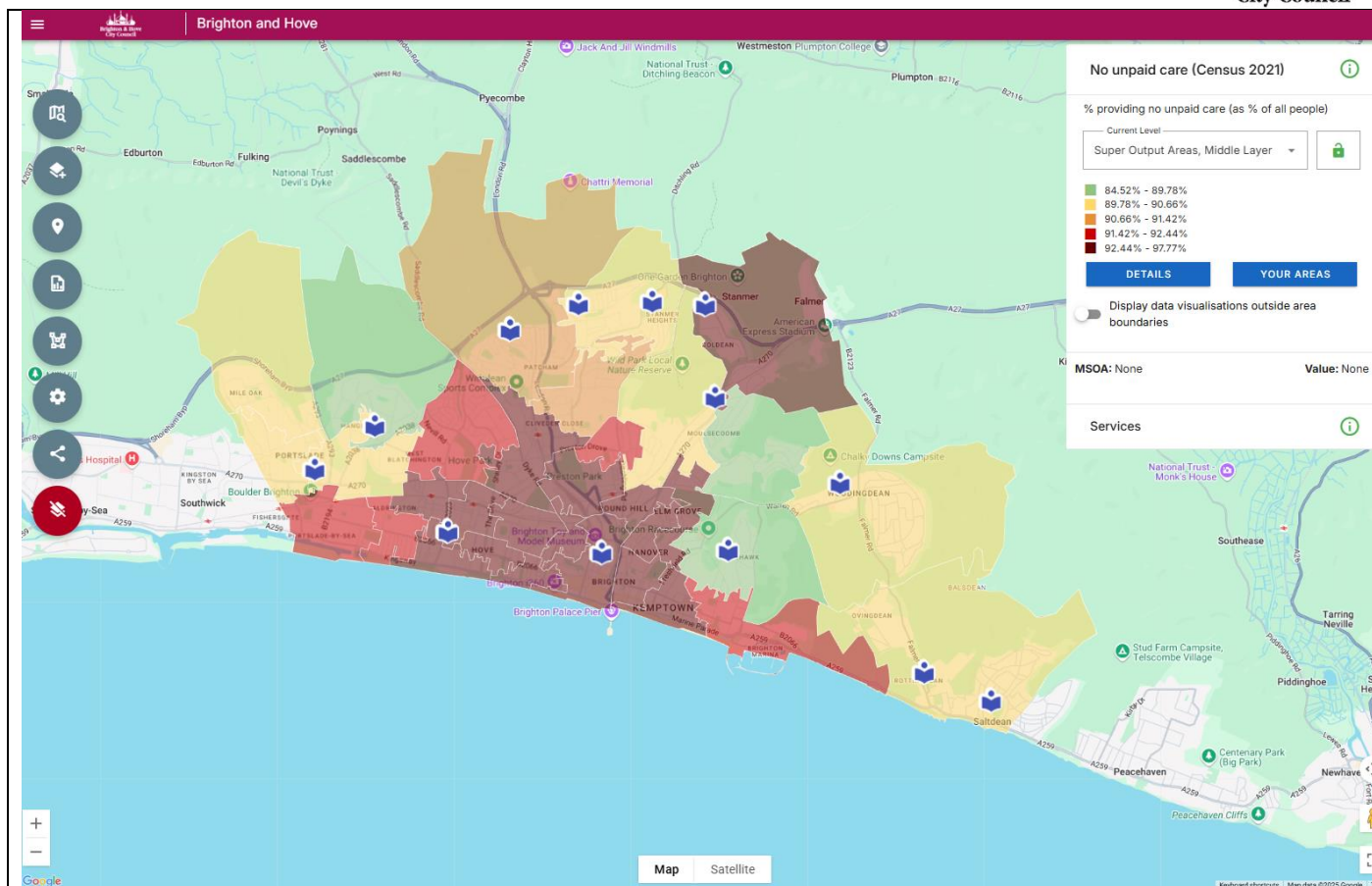
Carers may have restrictions in the times and days they can access services, therefore a reduction in access hours could disproportionately affect their use of services.

The image below shows a geographical spread of households who receive Universal Credit with carer entitlement. This shows us that there is a lower density of those residents in the areas where there are proposed closures to 2 community libraries but an increased % of the population around Hollingbury Library. It also shows us that there is an increased % of the population around Jubilee Library and near to Hove Library, where there are proposed reductions in opening hours.





The census 2021 asked residents about their levels of unpaid care and the image below shows the geographic distribution of responses. This shows us that there are greater proportions of those providing unpaid care in the areas where community libraries are proposed to be closed.



## Mitigations against potential impacts

Library users who have caring responsibilities or who require care will require accessible, affordable and timely access to alternative libraries. For each of the proposed library closures there are alternative libraries within 2 miles and the city is generally well served by public transport. However, these potential impacts and mitigations will be considered further during the public consultation, based on feedback received.

The library service offer does include a Home Delivery Service which is available for those in need, including carers. This may be an alternative for some that are impacted by a community library closure.

### For the public consultation:

Efforts will be made to target communication to carers support groups and ask them to share with their network.

## 6.13 Looked after children, Care Leavers, Care and fostering experienced people:

Does your analysis indicate a disproportionate impact relating to Looked after children, Care Leavers, Care and fostering experienced children and adults (Especially considering for age, ethnicity, language, and various intersections).

Also consider our [Corporate Parenting Responsibility](#) in connection to your activity.

YES

If “YES”, what are the positive and negative disproportionate impacts?

Please share relevant insights from data and engagement to show how conclusions about impact have been shaped. Include relevant data sources or references.

**What we know about library use/care experience and how any changes to library provision may impact on groups:**

Brighton & Hove City Council have adopted Children in Care and Care Experienced as a protected characteristic and will demonstrate commitment to ensure that this group are not discriminated against within the changes proposed for library services.

**For the public consultation:**

Efforts will be made to ensure that care experienced residents and children in care will be reached through this consultation. This will help inform analysis of public consultation responses.

**6.14 Homelessness:**

**Does your analysis indicate a disproportionate impact relating to people experiencing homelessness, and associated risk and vulnerability? (Especially considering for age, veteran, ethnicity, language, and various intersections)**

YES

**If “YES”, what are the positive and negative disproportionate impacts?**

Please share relevant insights from data and engagement to show how conclusions about impact have been shaped. Include relevant data sources or references.

**What we know about library use/people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness and how any changes to library provision may impact on them:**

There are a number of vulnerably or un-housed customers who regularly use Jubilee Library as a safe, warm space, particularly in winter. Any reduction in opening hours could disproportionately affect this group. Jubilee Library supports a local street community around the building.

**For the public consultation:**

We will attempt to reach this underheard community whilst they are visiting libraries during the consultation.

**6.15 Domestic and/or Sexual Abuse and Violence Survivors, people in vulnerable situations:**

**Does your analysis indicate a disproportionate impact relating to Domestic Abuse and Violence Survivors, and people in vulnerable situations (All aspects and intersections)?**

NO

**If “YES”, what are the positive and negative disproportionate impacts?**

Please share relevant insights from data and engagement to show how conclusions about impact have been shaped. Include relevant data sources or references.

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## 6.16 Socio-economic Disadvantage:

Does your analysis indicate a disproportionate impact relating to Socio-economic Disadvantage? (Especially considering for age, disability, D/deaf/ blind, ethnicity, expatriate background, and various intersections)	YES
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### If “YES”, what are the positive and negative disproportionate impacts?

Please share relevant insights from data and engagement to show how conclusions about impact have been shaped. Include relevant data sources or references.

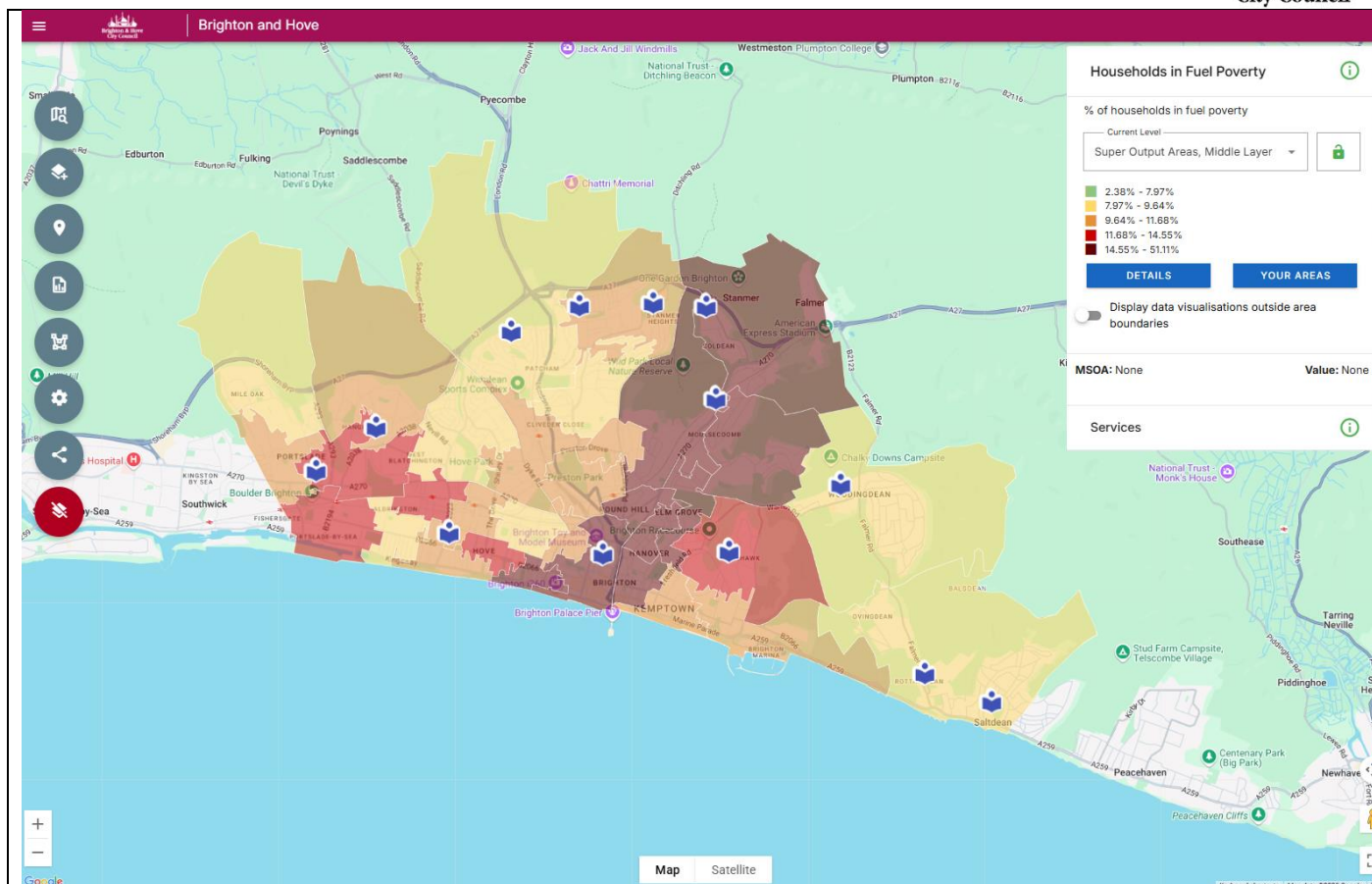
**What we know about library use/people who are at socio-economic disadvantage or at risk of homelessness and how any changes to library provision may impact on them:**

Customers at a socio-economic disadvantage may be less able to pay for travel to alternative provision.

Regarding Hollingbury Library, while at ward level the area's IMD ranking suggests residents live at relatively low risk of deprivation, at a more granular level there are pockets of high deprivation that should be acknowledged close to the centre in which the library is situated. Overall, ward residents are at a lower risk of digital exclusion than the city's average and 84% of residents own a car.

Regarding Rottingdean Library, an IMD rank of 25,035 suggests that residents in the ward are at a low risk of deprivation (second only to Westdene).

Regarding Westdene Library, residents of Westdene & Hove Park ward are the most likely in the city to own a car and have qualifications. They are the least likely in the city to be digitally excluded, economically inactive or in receipt of benefits. It is the lowest scoring (least deprived) ward in Brighton & Hove with an IMD ranking of 28,634 and has the lowest number of economically inactive residents. The ward has the lowest crime rate in the city and children here are the least likely (by a significant majority) to be in receipt of free school meals. The image below shows the geographical spread of households in Fuel Poverty. This shows us that there are lower %s of houses in fuel poverty around Westdene and Rottingdean library but a higher % around Hollingbury. There is a greater density of households in fuel poverty directly around Jubilee Library and near to Hove Library, where opening hours are proposed to be reduced.



### Mitigations against potential impacts

For each of the proposed library closures there are alternative libraries within 2 miles and the city is generally well served by public transport. For some these alternative libraries will be walkable and therefore affordable but not for all.

Further promotion to be undertaken to highlight the free to use online library service offers to support people when the libraries are closed.

### For the public consultation:

Active work needs to happen before and during the consultation process to ensure efforts are made to hear from residents and stakeholders from a wide range of geographical spread over the city but also within specific groups and communities where we know there are likely to be underheard people. This also applies for the areas where there are fewer levels of socio-economic disadvantage as communities are not homogeneous and it will be important to consider multiple barriers for people to respond to the consultation and explore creative ways to overcome that.

### 6.17 Human Rights:

Will your activity have a disproportionate impact relating to Human Rights?	NO
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### If “YES”, what are the positive and negative disproportionate impacts?

Please share relevant insights from data and engagement to show how conclusions about impact have been shaped. Include relevant data sources or references.

## 6.18 Cumulative, multiple [intersectional](#), and complex impacts (including on additional relevant groups):

### What cumulative or complex impacts might the activity have on people who are members of multiple Minoritised groups?

- For example: people belonging to the Gypsy, Roma, and/or Traveller community who are also disabled, LGBTQIA+, older disabled trans and non-binary people, older Black and Racially Minoritised disabled people of faith, young autistic people.
- Also consider wider disadvantaged and intersecting experiences that create exclusion and systemic barriers:
  - People being housebound due to disabilities or disabling circumstances
  - Environmental barriers or mobility barriers impacting those with sight loss, D/deafness, sensory requirements, neurodivergence, various complex disabilities
  - People experiencing homelessness
  - People on a low income and people living in the most deprived areas
  - People facing literacy, numeracy and/or digital barriers
  - Lone parents
  - People with experience of or living with addiction and/ or a substance use disorder (SUD)
  - Sex workers
  - Ex-offenders and people with unrelated convictions
  - People who have experienced female genital mutilation (FGM)
  - People who have experienced human trafficking or modern slavery

It will be important to hear from a wide range of residents, customers and stakeholders during the proposed public consultation to enable greater analysis and understanding of the impacts of the proposals. The data above indicates that there could be a greater impact on residents who are younger, older, disabled and those at risk of socio-economic disadvantage.

When we are considering those with membership of multiple minoritised groups it is essential that the public consultation draws out more reflections on the potential cumulative impact there could be of the proposed changes. This includes using an intersectional lens when reviewing the consultation responses and considering how some individuals or communities may have multiple impacts.

It is essential that we encourage communities in all areas of the city to engage in the consultation process and provide alternative methods for them to respond. Additional steps should be taken to engage residents and other stakeholders with this consultation. Advice and support will need to be sought from a range of teams and those with links to various communities, especially where we are trying to hear from those from minoritised groups. For public meetings with a focus on a particular community, explore with individual schools the languages spoken and benefit of providing interpreters. We will be engaging with community organisations to reach the most marginalised groups.

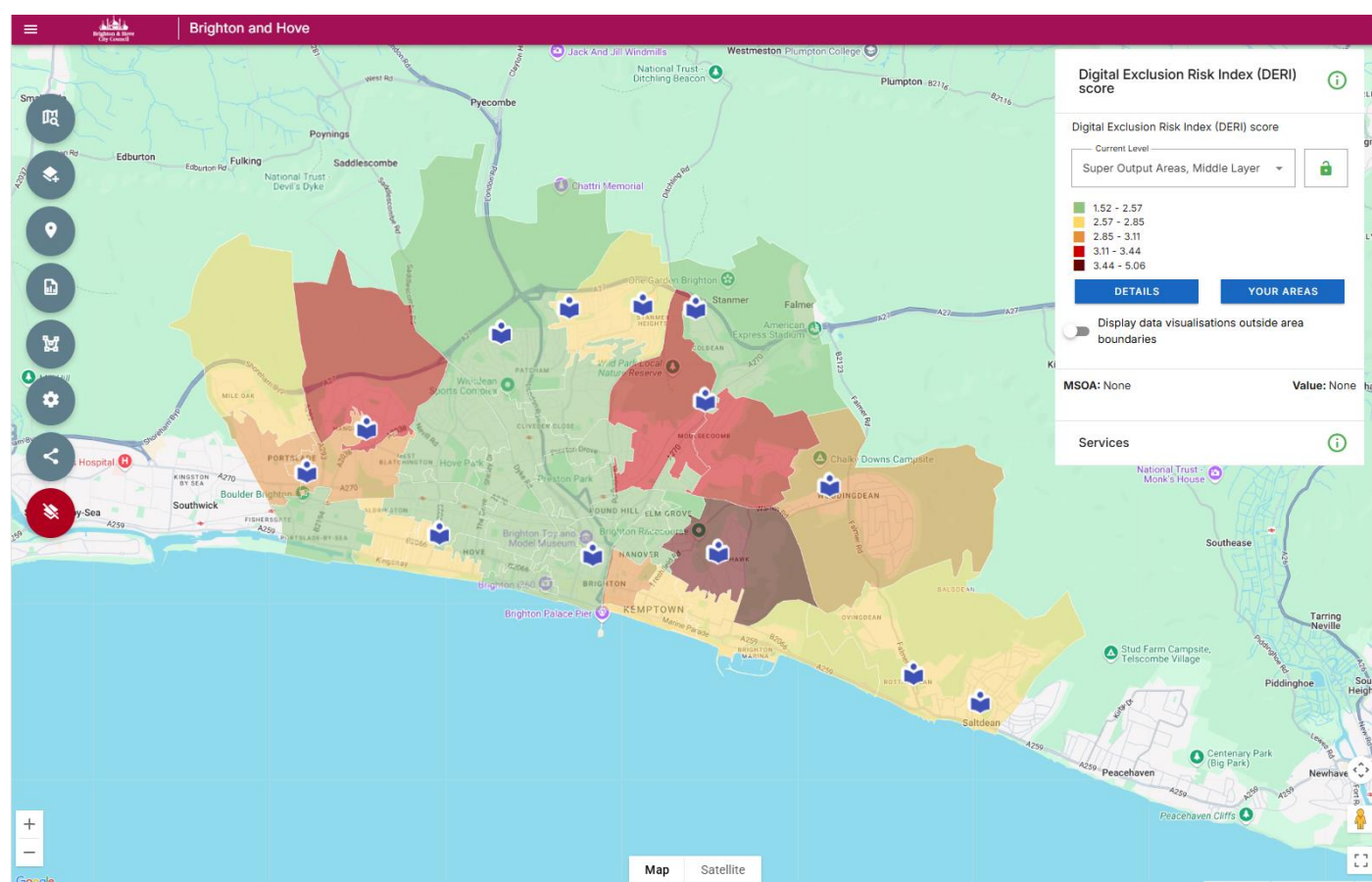
We will highlight that there is a translation function on YourVoice so that consultation information can be viewed in different languages.

The consultation process must be as accessible as possible for all residents to respond to; events will be held at a variety of times and in locations which allow interested residents to participate.

Through the anonymised responses to the survey and other activities within the public consultation, we will be able to consider any impact on human rights, consider how to monitor that in future and what mitigations may be able to be put in place to minimise/remove these.

We also want to hear during the public consultation from LGBTQ+ communities about whether it is felt there will be an impact from the proposed reductions in service. We will be reaching out to relevant community organisations to seek their engagement with the consultation. We are keen to hear from those within the community who also have an intersectional relationship with other protected characteristics eg LGBTQ+ people of colour, or LGBTQ+ people who are disabled.

It is recognised that a reduction in library services may have a detrimental impact on residents who are digitally excluded. The image below shows the geographical spread of the Digital Exclusion Risk Index score (which shows risk or likelihood of exclusion) across the city. This shows that there are areas of the city not directly impacted by the proposed closures of community libraries which have higher densities of digital exclusion risk. It is important to note that users of the two central libraries of Jubilee and Hove may come from all over the city so could be impacted by the proposed reduction in opening hours.



## 7. Action planning

**What SMART actions will be taken to address the disproportionate and cumulative impacts you have identified?**

- Summarise relevant SMART actions from your data insights and disproportionate impacts below for this assessment, listing appropriate activities per action as bullets. (This will help your Business Manager or Fair and Inclusive Action Plan (FIAP) Service representative to add these to the Directorate FIAP, discuss success measures and timelines with you, and monitor this EIA's progress as part of quarterly and regular internal and external auditing and monitoring)



1 We will ensure that all consultation materials, communications and processes are fully accessible for people of all ages by providing them in plain English, in a variety of accessible formats, such as Braille, Easy Read, British Sign Language, various languages and both digital and paper formats.
2 An accessibility statement to be available for the consultation, outlining our approach to supporting access requirements, and how people can let us know about any access requirements.
3 Clearly defined and actioned efforts to be made to communicate directly with a wide range of support and community services / groups / networks to ensure that the consultation is widely known.
4 Analysis of the feedback/responses received via the public consultation (a survey, public meetings, emails and written correspondence) will be analysed from an equalities perspective. This will ensure that impact on protected characteristics and wider equalities matters are considered in relation to discrimination, inclusion and equity. This will also be done from an intersectional perspective, recognising that discrimination and exclusion can be amplified for those with multiple characteristics, which can put them at risk of disadvantage.
5 We will develop greater equalities insight by including equalities monitoring questions in both traditional and digital consultations.

#### Which action plans will the identified actions be transferred to?

- For example: Team or Service Plan, Local Implementation Plan, a project plan related to this EIA, FIAP (Fair and Inclusive Action Plan) – mandatory noting of the EIA on the Directorate EIA Tracker to enable monitoring of all equalities related actions identified in this EIA. This is done as part of FIAP performance reporting and auditing. Speak to your Directorate's Business Improvement Manager (if one exists for your Directorate) or to the Head of Service/ lead who enters actions and performance updates on FIAP and seek support from your Directorate's EDI Business Partner.

The consultation and engagement plan for the public consultation.

## 8. Outcome of your assessment

What decision have you reached upon completing this Equality Impact Assessment? (Mark 'X' for any ONE option below)

<b>Stop or pause</b> the activity due to unmitigable disproportionate impacts because the evidence shows bias towards one or more groups.	
<b>Adapt or change</b> the activity to eliminate or mitigate disproportionate impacts and/or bias.	
<b>Proceed</b> with the activity as currently planned – no disproportionate impacts have been identified, or impacts will be mitigated by specified SMART actions.	
<b>Proceed with caution</b> – disproportionate impacts have been identified but having considered all available options there are no other or proportionate ways to achieve the aim of the activity (for example, in extreme cases or where positive action is taken). Therefore, you are going to proceed with caution with this policy or practice knowing that it may favour some people less than others, providing justification for this decision.	<b>X</b>

If your decision is to "Proceed with caution", please provide a reasoning for this:

This assessment explores what we know about the city population and how this needs to inform the design, delivery, analysis and reporting of a public consultation for proposed changes to city library

provision. Actions are identified to increase and enhance underheard and underserved community voices.

**Summarise your overall equality impact assessment recommendations to include in any committee papers to help guide and support councillor decision-making:**

## 9. Publication

All Equality Impact Assessments will be published. If you are recommending, and choosing not to publish your EIA, please provide a reason:

N/A – this is to be a public document

## 10. Directorate and Service Approval

Signatory:	Name and Job Title:	Date: DD-MMM-YY
Responsible Lead Officer:	Anna Gianfrancesco	03/07/2025
Accountable Manager:	Ceris Howard	03/07/2025

**Notes, relevant information, and requests (if any) from Responsible Lead Officer and Accountable Manager submitting this assessment:**

## EDI Review, Actions, and Approval:

### Equality Impact Assessment sign-off

EDI Business Partner to cross-check against aims of the equality duty, public sector duty and our civic responsibilities the activity considers and refer to relevant internal checklists and guidance prior to recommending sign-off.

Once the EDI Business Partner has considered the equalities impact to provide approval for by those submitting the EIA, they will get the EIA signed off and sent to the requester copying the Head of Service, Business Improvement Manager, [Equalities inbox](#), any other service colleagues as appropriate to enable EIA tracking, accountability, and saving for publishing. Budget and Staffing EIAs secure EDI Manager and Head of Service level approval via different templates.

Signatory:	Name:	Date: DD-MMM-YY
EDI Business Partner:	Eric Page. Zofia Danin	04/05/2025
EDI Manager:	Debs Totney	04/07/2025

**Notes and recommendations from EDI Business Partner reviewing this assessment:**

**Notes and recommendations (if any) from EDI Manager reviewing this assessment:**

**Notes and recommendations (if any) from Head of CETS Service reviewing this assessment:**





# Brighton & Hove Libraries

## Needs and Use Analysis

### Part 1: Data Analysis

To be informed by Public Consultation - Summer 2025



Contents

1. Summary of Findings
2. Introduction
3. Current Library Use
4. Community Profiles
5. Opportunities
6. Recommendations
7. Next steps

## 1. Summary of Findings

Savings need to be identified across a range of Brighton & Hove City Council services for 2025-27. The 2025-26 budget includes proposals to reduce staff costs through a reduction in

opening hours at Jubilee and Hove Libraries and the proposed closure of up to 3 community libraries.

To support the development of these proposals for public consultation, senior library professionals have conducted a needs and usage analysis. Part 1, summarised here, focuses on available data and will be further informed by feedback gathered during the consultation process. A key consideration of this analysis has been how to minimise the impact of necessary service reductions—particularly identifying which library services should be protected from closure.

Rigorous analysis of current library data, combined with sociodemographic information at both a ward and a 'library catchment' level from a range of sources, were used to identify options that would have the least impact possible on the city as a whole, as well as a consideration of the impact on individual communities.

### **Jubilee & Hove – Footfall vs operating costs**

At Jubilee, a reduction of two hours on a Monday evening (5-7pm) and three hours on a Sunday afternoon (2-5pm) would have the least impact in terms of footfall. Sunday mornings 11am-12pm at Jubilee being almost three times as busy on average as 4-5pm.

At Hove, where Wednesdays 6-7pm currently sees an average of 29 people, a reduction of two hours (5-7pm) would have the least impact in the week. Saturdays 10-11am are twice as busy on average as 4-5pm and so a reduction in hours in the afternoon (2-5pm) would have less impact on the library's footfall.

### **Community Libraries – Need and use vs operating costs**

When reviewing the library usage and sociodemographic data, three factors stand out that should inform the decision-making process:

- 1. Variation in geographical spread of libraries**
- 2. Variation in operating costs and current use**
- 3. Variation in needs relating to social outcomes from area to area**

Concentrating resources on fewer physical library locations will support longer-term sustainability of the wider city service, as well as safeguarding the quality of library provision.

Rottingdean & West Saltdean is one of the least deprived wards in the city and is home to two community libraries, with Saltdean and Rottingdean branches less than 2 miles apart and well connected by bus. Rottingdean has the highest building costs of all the community libraries and can expect ongoing high maintenance and management costs due to its heritage status.

Data shows that Westdene & Hove Park is the least deprived ward in the city. Westdene Library's footfall is consistently lower than other community branches, currently forming 0.8% of the service's total visits. The library is close to neighbouring Patcham Library and there are good public transport links and high car ownership levels in the area. Library data shows that those in the postcode sectors to the south of the ward already use neighbouring Hove and Hangleton branches.

Patcham & Hollingbury is another ward containing two libraries, with Patcham and Hollingbury (Old Boat Corner) branches less than 2 miles apart. Footfall is considerably higher at Patcham (and consistently so) and management costs associated with Hollingbury's site are much higher than average.

We recognise that communities are not consistent or homogenous and within community areas there will be differences in need. These factors are considered in more detail below.

## 2. Introduction

Local authorities UK-wide are facing a growing funding gap, with the Local Government Association (LGA) warning of an £8.4bn gap by 2028-29. Research from the County Council's Network (CCN) in January 2025 suggested that over one in

three (35%) of county and unitary authorities are likely to reduce their number of branches and opening hours in 2025-26.

Savings need to be identified across a range of Brighton & Hove City Council services for 2025-27. The recently adopted 2025-26 budget includes proposals to reduce staff costs through a reduction in opening hours at Jubilee and Hove Libraries and the proposed closure of up to 3 community libraries.

The purpose of this document is to provide a thorough assessment of local needs and use, in order to support proposals for consultation and decision-making in relation to public library services provided in Brighton & Hove.

Specifically, to present:

- Key demographic information to create a picture of existing and potential needs from library and information services
- An improved understanding of current library use

The findings will also be used to inform, in part, a new Libraries Strategy for 2026-2030.

## Methodology

As outlined in the Charteris Report (2009)<sup>1</sup>, and at the stipulation of the Department of Culture Media and Sport (DCMS), this process will include:

***Consideration of the needs of those who live, work and study in the area***

***An assessment of accessibility***

***Consideration of the views of existing users***

***An assessment of whether any specific communities or groups would suffer adverse impacts***

***Consideration of information from partner organisations and other departments***

The wider process, undertaken throughout 2025, is formed of four phases, designed with the above criteria at the fore:

Phase 1: Needs and Use Part 1 - Data Analysis - Spring 2025

Phase 2: Needs and Use Part 2 - Public & Stakeholder Consultation – Summer/Autumn 2025

Phase 3: Staff Consultation – Winter/Spring 2025/2026

Phase 4: Implementation of changes - Spring 2026

Part one of this needs and use phase consists predominantly of desk-based research and data analysis. Data reviewed includes footfall, borrowing data (about what resources are borrowed,

when and where) from library management systems, 2021 Census data, ONS and DWP data available via the Local Insight platform<sup>2</sup>, and additional data provided by colleagues from across the council, including numeric Schools Census, travel and Adult Social Care data.

When reviewing the need associated with the communities each library serves, it has been necessary to look at information on both a ward level (where this is the level at which data is collected) and what we refer to here as a 'library catchment' level. These catchment areas can be found on the local insight tool and are based on data from the library management system to ensure the highest accuracy possible when associating residents with different branches. The opportunities section towards the end of this document references other more granular geographical levels to capture nuances of the needs of some of our communities.

Part two of the needs and use analysis will comprise a formal Public Consultation as detailed in section six of this document, alongside stakeholder engagement events.

## **Brighton & Hove**

Brighton & Hove had a population of approximately 277,100 as of the 2021 Census, reflecting a modest 1.4% increase since 2011. The median age was 38 years, an increase from 35 years

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<sup>1</sup> [A Local Inquiry into the Public Library Service Provided by Wirral Metropolitan Borough Council - GOV.UK](#)

<sup>2</sup> [www.brighton-hove.localinsight.org](http://www.brighton-hove.localinsight.org)

in 2011, yet still younger than the South East average of 41 and England's 40. Notably, the number of residents aged 50 to 64 increased by 30% between 2011 and 2021, while those aged 35 to 49 decreased by 7.9% during the same period.

Brighton & Hove has become increasingly ethnically diverse. 26% of residents (approximately 72,272 people) identified as Black and racially minoritised in 2021, up from 19.5% in 2011. This proportion is higher than the South East average of 21% and aligns with the national average for England.

Administratively, the city is divided into 21 electoral wards, across which the needs of residents vary greatly.

### **A library service responsive to change**

The city's public library service currently comprises 13 libraries (see Fig.1.), including the flagship Jubilee Library in central Brighton, Hove Library, and 11 community libraries located in Coldean, Hangleton, Hollingbury, Moulsecoomb, Patcham, Portslade, Rottingdean, Saltdean, Westdene, Whitehawk and Woodingdean. Jubilee Library, opened in 2005, stands out as one of the most visited libraries in the UK, recording over 830,000 visits in the 2023/24 period and accounting for about 50% of the city's library transactions.

Over the past decade or so, Brighton & Hove Libraries has undergone significant transformation to adapt to changing community need and financial constraints, as well as the Covid-19 pandemic. In 2013, the mobile library service was withdrawn

and replaced by a more cost-effective Home Delivery Service that has maintained access for residents unable to visit library branches. Against a backdrop of national library cuts, the city retained all of its branches for the next decade, until Mile Oak Library was closed in July 2023 due to low visitor numbers and high buildings costs. In the same year, staffed days at community libraries were reduced and in 2024 the Libraries Management Team was also reduced, both in order to meet savings targets.

In the three years preceding this, the service responded quickly and effectively to the Covid-19 pandemic. Pivoting to a click and collect format of delivery and sharing online Storytimes and activities for children at home, whilst ensuring the safety of staff and customers as a priority.

Despite these challenges, Brighton & Hove Libraries has embraced innovation and inclusivity. The introduction of the 'Libraries Extra' initiative (at a time when libraries nationally were closing) has extended opening hours and improved access through a combination of staffed and unstaffed periods. In 2020, Jubilee Children's Library was refurbished and still receives public acclaim today.

Furthermore, in 2024, all 13 libraries in the city were collectively awarded the 'Library Service of Sanctuary' status, recognising their commitment to providing welcoming spaces for refugees, asylum seekers, and other marginalized groups. In the same year, the newly refurbished Saltdean Library, based within Saltdean Lido, was opened. Part of a broader development of

the listed site, the majority funder of this project was the National Lottery Heritage Fund.

**Fig.1. Library locations and ward boundaries**



In May 2025, council customer services were integrated with libraries. Two new help desks opened at Jubilee and Hove, operating Monday – Friday 10am-5pm, which, along with the council’s telephone switchboard, are now staffed by library staff. With the addition of free self-help telephones and PC use across all branches, libraries are enabling more face-to-face support to access council services for those who need it most.

**This context underscores the evolving landscape of public library provision in Brighton & Hove, reflecting efforts to balance resource limitations with the goal of serving a diverse and growing urban population.**

### 3. Current library use

#### **Footfall**

Brighton & Hove Libraries’ 13 libraries attracted a total of 1,256,033 visitors in 2024-25 (see Fig.2). A comparison to 2019-20 (1,462,923) shows us that library footfall has gradually climbed and almost returned to pre-pandemic levels.

Jubilee and Hove, being the most central libraries, remain the busiest buildings. Of the remaining 11 community libraries, the newly refurbished Saltdean Library (based at Saltdean Lido) received over 40k visits in this timeframe. Hollingbury Library (based at Old Boat Corner Community Centre) received the least visits at 6.5k.

Analysis of the postcode sectors of active borrowers from 2023-25 shows that between 40-60% of each community branch’s customers live in the building’s immediate vicinity. The geographic reach of both Jubilee and Hove is broader, as expected with larger and more centrally located branches, serving the city centre’s employees, students and visitors as well as city residents.

The percentage of visits that happen during unstaffed Libraries Extra periods ranges from 28% at Portslade Library to 66% at Westdene Library. Overall, this data is reflective of the fact that some community libraries have more staffed days than others and highlights the importance of the promotion of the Libraries Extra service (a free upgrade to regular library membership) to all users.

**Fig.2. Visitor numbers 2024-25 by branch (ranked)**

	All Days	LE days	LE %
Jubilee Library	857,109	N/A	N/A
Hove Library	158,981	N/A	N/A
Saltdean Library	40,861	15,237	37%
Portslade Library	31,655	8,928	28%

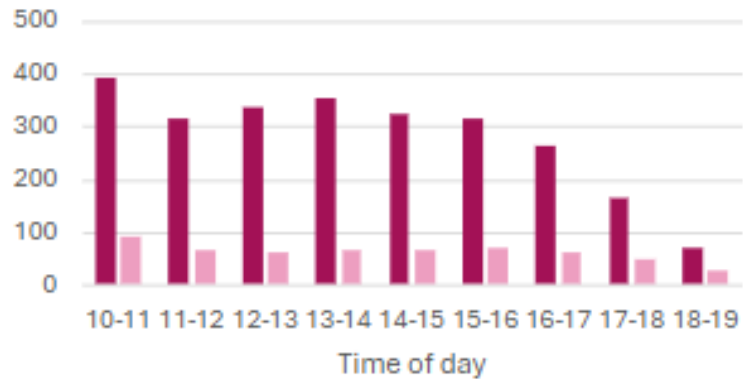
Hangleton Library	29,435	12,454	42%
Rottingdean Library	28,837	14,488	50%
Patcham Library	28,288	11,917	42%
Woodingdean Library	20,268	11,192	55%
Whitehawk Library	18,576	8,078	43%
Moulsecoomb Library	14,633	7,844	54%
Coldean Library	10,797	5,200	48%
Westdene Library	10,039	6,582	66%
Hollingbury Library	6,554	2,908	44%
Grand Total	1,256,033	104,828	8%

Hourly footfall at both Jubilee and Hove (see Fig.3.) peak on weekday mornings, remain steady throughout the day but drop off gradually between 5pm and 7pm on their respective late opening days. Saturdays are particularly busy at Jubilee and sustained high footfall matches that of weekday mornings. Sunday footfall here tails off more with 11am-12pm being almost three times as busy on average as 4-5pm. At Hove, Wednesdays 6-7pm are particularly quiet, currently seeing an average of 29 visits. Saturday footfall tails off later in the day, with 10-11am being twice as busy on average as 4-5pm.

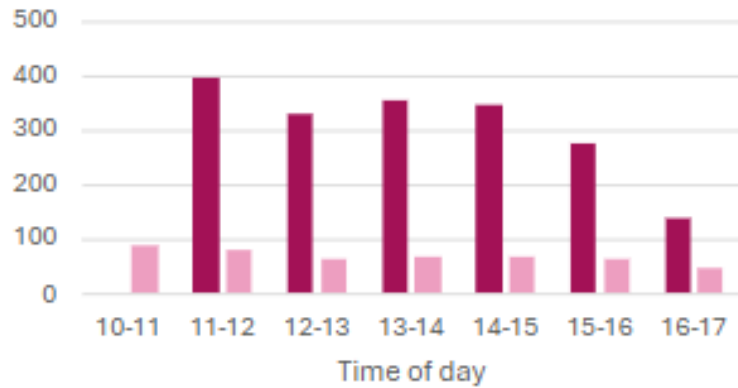
**Fig.3. Footfall – Late nights and Weekends at Hove and Jubilee**



Average hourly footfall (2024)



Monday - Jubilee Wednesday - Hove

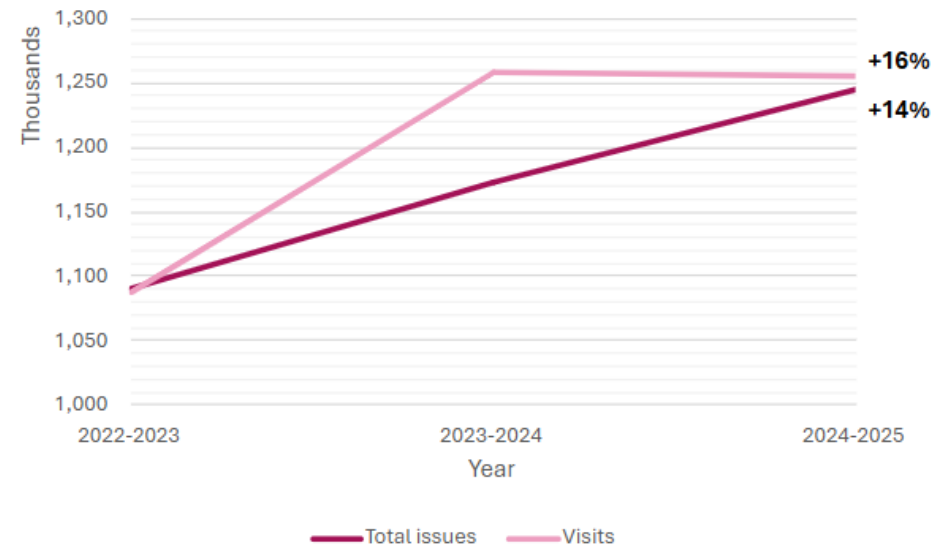


Sunday - Jubilee Saturday - Hove

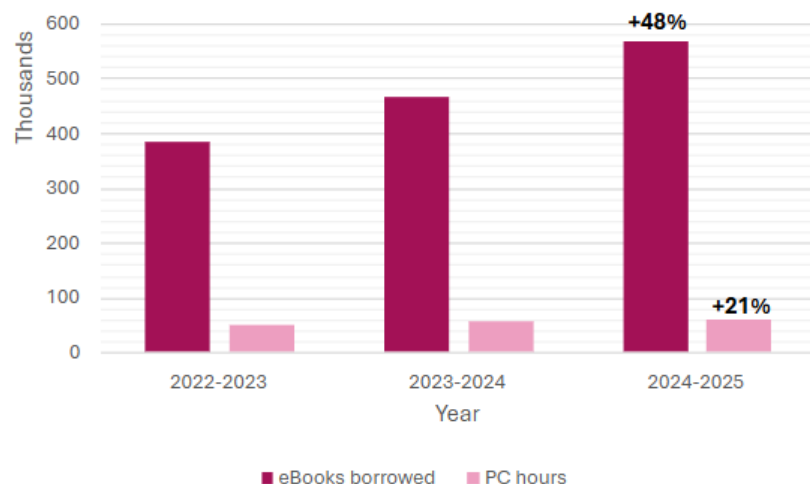
## Borrowing and PC use

As visits have reached pre-pandemic levels we have seen a natural plateau in the last year's data, but despite this, issues of both physical and online resources as well as PC use continue to rise (see Fig.4. and 5). Borrowing of eBooks has risen by 48% in the last two years alone. Multiple factors may explain this, including acceleration of the move to digital due to the pandemic, as well as a cost-of-living crisis driving customers towards public PC use and away from costly audiobook subscriptions.

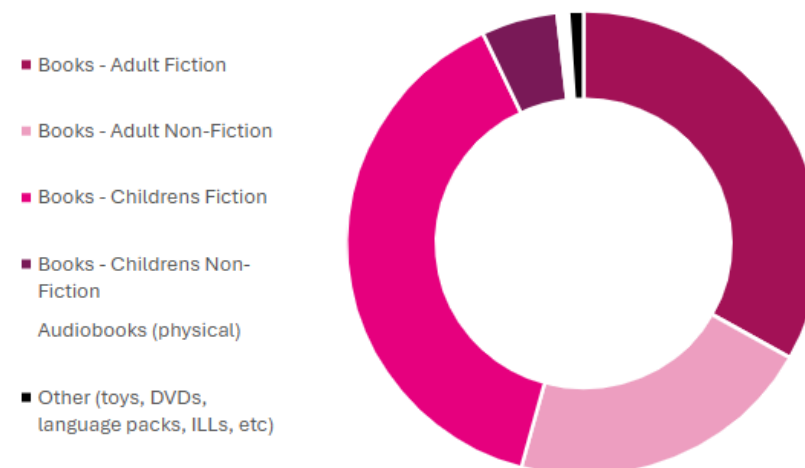
Fig.4. Total item issues vs total visits 2022-25



**Fig.5. eBooks issued and Public PC hours used 2022-25**



**Fig.6. Issues by item category 2024-25**



High-level analysis of issues by category shows that children’s fiction remains the most borrowed of all items and resources, forming almost 40% of total issues (see Fig.6.) Borrowing of non-fiction continues to decline, following national trends.

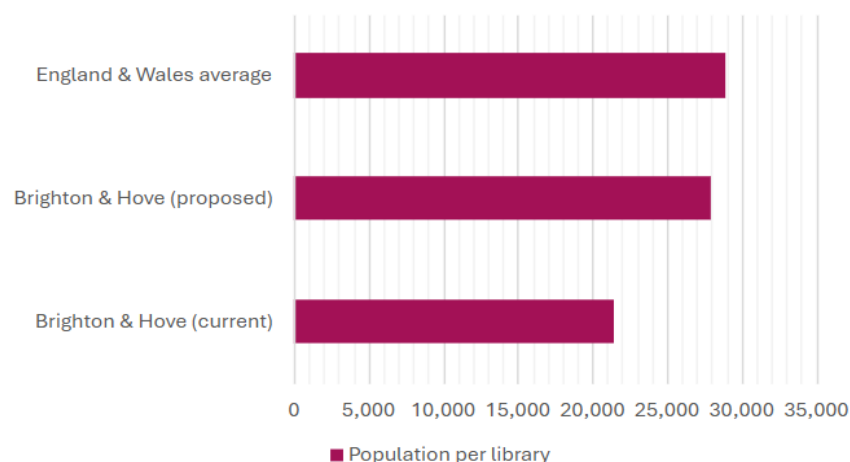
### Comparison to national landscape

Recent data<sup>3</sup> released on the number of staffed libraries that each public library service in England and Wales has by population size provides useful context to the proposal to reduce the number of branches in Brighton & Hove and consolidate resources.

<sup>3</sup> Libraries Basic Dataset 2023, Arts Council England

Fig.7. highlights the fact that Brighton & Hove City Council currently offers more library provision per resident than average. It also shows that were the proposal to reduce the city's libraries from thirteen to ten to be taken forward, the city would still have more libraries per resident than the national average.

**Fig.7. Population by paid staffed library – B&H vs national average**



#### 4. Community profiles and assessment of need

When assessing the needs of the communities served by each library branch, we used library catchment areas as defined on the Local Insight tool. These areas were sense-checked using recent borrower data, to ensure they remain accurate, and in the case of community libraries (all but Jubilee and Hove) they essentially cast a slightly wider net than the ward each library is located in. Sociodemographic data was analysed in part by these catchment areas where available, and in part by ward. Many libraries clearly predominantly serve a single ward. Where a library serves multiple wards, wards have been assigned based on library borrower data, and sociodemographic data has been aggregated to ensure all residents are represented in this process.

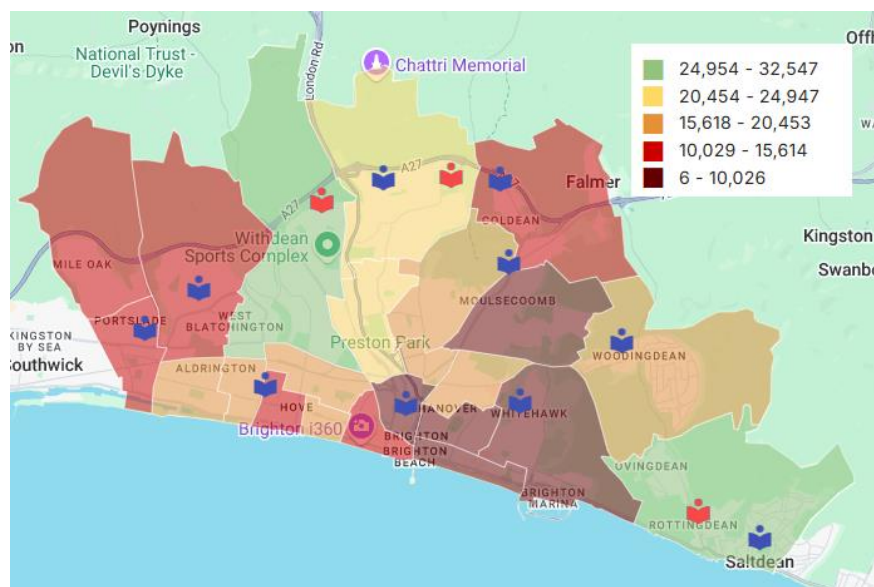
#### Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) 2019

The Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) datasets are small area measures of relative deprivation across each of the constituent nations of the United Kingdom. Areas are ranked from the most deprived area (rank 1) to the least deprived area. Each nation measures deprivation in a slightly different way but the broad themes include income, employment, education, health, crime, barriers to housing and services, and the living environment.

While this tool does not fully capture the nuances of individual experiences of deprivation, it does give a useful snapshot of need across the city, with Westdene & Hove Park and Rottingdean & West Saltdean ranked the least deprived in the city.

The subsequent sections highlight further detail about the demographics and social characteristics of each individual library catchment area, as well as necessary equality and inclusion considerations that emerge from the data.

**Fig. 8. IMD 2019 rankings by ward (lower ranking = more deprived)**



**These community profiles by library are only a summary of the data reviewed and cannot reflect the nuances of individual experience in those catchments. A full Public and Stakeholder Consultation on a Cabinet decision will further inform the analysis.**

## Our Libraries

### Coldean

Coldean & Stanmer ranks among the most deprived wards in the city with an IMD score of 28.08 (compared to the city's average of 20.76). 38% of the city's council-owned housing is situated in the ward and it has a higher working age population than average, due to the prevalence of university housing in the area.

0-16s make up only 10% of the ward's population, but they face relative challenge. 43% of school pupils are eligible for free school meals and a relatively high proportion of children and young people (35%) have special educational needs (SEN).

Operating costs at Coldean Library are relatively high compared to other community provision and a decline in visits in the last year gives it the highest cost per visit of all branches.

### Hangleton

Hangleton is home to a relatively high percentage of children and young people (21% of ward total) and one of the highest numbers of Adult Social Care clients by ward. A relatively high number of the city's young people who are not in education, employment or training (NEET) live in Hangleton & Knoll.

Hangleton Library maintains reasonably high footfall, around 30k visits per year and strong membership figures – 3,668 active library members list this as their 'home branch' (25% of ward population). The ward's young demographic is reflected in borrowing here, with around twice as much children's as adult fiction issued annually.

### Hollingbury (Old Boat Corner)

Hollingbury Library, based within Old Boat Corner Community Centre, has the lowest footfall of all branches (6,554 visits in 2024/25). The ward it is situated in (Patcham & Hollingbury) has two libraries, with neighbouring Patcham Library within 2 miles of here. Most recent membership figures for Hollingbury are 11% of ward population, compared with Patcham's 23%.

While at ward level, the area's IMD ranking suggests residents live at relatively low risk of deprivation, at a more granular level there are pockets of higher deprivation that should be acknowledged close to the centre in which the library is situated. Ward residents are at a lower risk of digital exclusion than the city's average and 84% of residents own a car.

### Hove

Unlike the trend with community libraries, Hove Library's membership base is less concentrated in one area, with the majority of active borrowers spanning multiple wards to the west of the city. In aggregate, data suggests that those living in the library's catchment area are at low risk of deprivation, although certain nuances should be noted.

There are fairly high discrepancies between wards served by Hove Library – for example nearly 20% of over 65s in

Brunswick & Adelaide are in receipt of pension credit, compared with 5% of those in Westdene & Hove Park.

Children living in the Hove coastal wards and Goldsmid are among the least likely in the city to be in low-income families (as defined by the DWP). Brunswick & Adelaide, Central Hove and Goldsmid wards have higher levels of school pupils from Black and racially minoritised backgrounds, as well as a higher percentage of pupils for whom English is an additional language (EAL).

Hove Library's listed status means that it is expensive to run and maintain, although income generated from a nursery school tenancy as well as room rental, goes some way to mitigate this.

### Jubilee

The city's flagship Jubilee Library is situated centrally, in the heart of the North Laine area. It serves residents of its immediate central wards, as well as those from further afield travelling in and out of the city centre for work, play and study. These central wards are home to a higher percentage of the city's Black and racially minoritised residents.

The library also serves some of the city's most deprived wards, in particular West Hill & North Laine, Queens Park and Kemptown. 35% of pupils in nearby Kemptown and Queens Park wards are disadvantaged according to the Schools Census and 1 in 3 are in receipt of free school meals.

Jubilee Library is home to Temptations Cafe, the Business & IP Centre Sussex, Council Help Desks and will soon house Adult Education and Skills services.

## **Moulsecoomb**

Moulsecoomb Library is situated close to the University of Brighton's Moulsecoomb campus in an area that has seen huge development in recent years – the introduction of a wealth of new student accommodation, housing and co-working spaces. A quarter of all Brighton & Hove City Council owned housing is located in Moulsecoomb & Bevendean ward.

Although very well connected by public transport, with many university bus routes serving it and its close proximity to a train station, footfall at this branch is relatively low compared to other suburban branches. It is located on the busy A270. While the library has a sizeable car park relative to its footprint, Moulsecoomb & Bevendean ward residents are among the least likely in the city to own a car. 1,858 residents of the city have Moulsecoomb listed as their home branch – 12% of the ward.

Similarly to Coldean, the ward has a high proportion of 'working age' residents, due to the location of the city's universities and the percentage of student housing nearby. Children, however, are still the most active borrower group here (the trend across many community libraries), with issues for children's fiction in 2024/25 being double that of adult fiction.

Half of children in the ward are in receipt of free school meals and 42% are deemed by the school census as being disadvantaged. The ward has the highest proportion of school pupils with special educational needs (37%) and the highest number of NEET young people in the city – some of whom are tutored at Moulsecoomb Library.

Looking at health indicators, 14% of people in the ward are living with a disability that limits them 'a little' and 9% have a disability that limits them 'a lot' - these are amongst the highest levels in the city. 7% of residents are economically inactive due to long-term illness or disability. The IoD Health and Disability ranking places Moulsecoomb & Bevendean residents amongst the most deprived in the city, alongside Whitehawk.

## **Patcham**

Patcham Library has maintained very steady footfall of 28k visits per year for the last three years and has a strong membership base of 3,723 members (almost a quarter of the ward's total residents). The building is co-located with a community centre and is one of two libraries in the ward (with the aforementioned Hollingbury Library within 2 miles).

According to the Schools Census, 17% of children and young people in the ward are disadvantaged, lower than the city's average of 26%. DERI scores show that residents are at a relatively low risk of digital exclusion.

## Portslade

Portslade Library, situated in South Portslade ward, is a busy community library averaging 30-35k visits a year and is co-located with the South Portslade Family Hub. It is also located on the same site as a local GP practice with which it shares a car park, and is a couple minutes' walk from Benfield Primary School.

Almost 60% of Portslade's current active borrowers live in North and South Portslade wards, with a further 15% coming from neighbouring Hangleton & Knoll.

With an IMD rank of 13,146, South Portslade is relatively deprived compared to the city average, and akin to neighbouring North Portslade and Hangleton & Knoll. 25% of residents in the library's catchment area do not own a car but the area is well connected by public transport – both bus and rail. Portslade is a relatively 'young' ward with 19% of the population being aged 0-16 and 29% of school pupils are in receipt of free school meals.

## Rottingdean

The population of Rottingdean & West Saltdean is older than the city's average, with both the lowest percentage of 0-16s and the highest percentage of over 65s living in the ward. Nearly a third of the ward are over 65 but are the least likely in the city to be in receipt of Pension Credit and residents are at a relatively

low risk of digital exclusion (2.78 DERI score compared to UK average of 3.0).

The ward has two libraries, with Saltdean Library situated less than 2 miles eastward. An IMD rank of 25,035 suggests that residents in the ward are at a low risk of deprivation (second only to Westdene).

Rottingdean Library maintains good footfall, around 30k visits per year. It is however the most expensive community library in the city to run due to its location within a Grade II listed building (The Grange) and the associated maintenance costs.

## Saltdean

Saltdean Library was refurbished as part of the wider Saltdean Lido development and reopened in March 2024. Footfall at the branch goes from strength to strength and with over 40k visitors in 2024-25 it is now the city's busiest community library, with only Hove and Jubilee libraries exceeding this figure.

The ward (Rottingdean & West Saltdean) has two libraries, with Rottingdean Library situated less than 2 miles westward.

An IMD rank of 25,035 suggests that residents in the ward are at a low risk of deprivation. Saltdean has a higher membership than its neighbouring branch, with 2,460 people registered here compared to 1,609 at Rottingdean.



## Westdene

Westdene Library has one of the smallest footprints and is co-located with Westdene Primary School. It is perhaps therefore not surprising that four times as much children's fiction as adult fiction is borrowed from this branch.

Westdene Library is the second least visited in the city and has the biggest percentage of Libraries Extra footfall with 66% of customers attending during unstaffed hours. It incorporates no commercial space.

Residents of Westdene & Hove Park ward are the most likely in the city to own a car and have qualifications. They are the least likely in the city to be digitally excluded, economically inactive or in receipt of benefits. It is the lowest scoring (least deprived) ward in Brighton & Hove with an IMD ranking of 28,634 and has the lowest number of economically inactive residents. The ward has the lowest crime rate in the city and children here are the least likely (by a significant majority) to be in receipt of free school meals.

## Whitehawk

Whitehawk Library is co-located with other council services at Whitehawk Community Hub and the library service manage commercial spaces within the same building that are income-generating. It also incorporates a Toy Library.

The library is situated in Whitehawk & Marina ward, though library management system data shows that it has a lower-than-average core audience living in its immediate vicinity. A significant number of active borrowers also travel here from Kemptown and Queen's Park and it is interesting to note that residents of these three wards are the least likely in the city to own a car.

According to the IMD, Whitehawk & Marina ward is the most deprived in the city. Schools Census data shows that 56% children living in the ward are in receipt of free school meals – far above the UK average of 24.6% - and that the ward has the highest number of NEET young people.

Residents of the ward are the most likely in the city to be digitally excluded, with a DERI score of 3.48 (compared to UK average of 3.0). Nearly 10% of residents are economically inactive due to long-term sickness or disability (Census 2021) - the highest in the city.

## Woodingdean

The population of Woodingdean has a high percentage of over 65s (22%) compared to the city's average (14%). Residents here are at higher risk of digital exclusion than in other wards with a DERI score of 3.01. Alongside Whitehawk, the ward has the highest percentage of adults over 16 without qualifications in the city. 31% of children living in the ward are in receipt of free school meals, higher than the city average of 26%.



Woodingdean Library is co-located with Woodingdean Medical Centre and is in the immediate vicinity of Woodingdean Primary School, with Downs View special school nearby.

### **Ward comparisons**

In order to make decisions about where need for library branches is greatest, it is necessary to compare area data against some key socioeconomic indicators. While we offer a 'cradle to grave' service, we know that libraries improve quality of life for residents at particular points of need in life, including in childhood and youth, in ill-health and in older age.

### **Protecting children and young people living at disadvantage in Brighton & Hove from the effects of library closure:**

In 2023, the National Literacy Trust found that the percentage of children and young people aged 8 to 18 who said that they didn't have a book of their own at home increased compared with the year before, particularly for those from lower-income homes<sup>4</sup>.

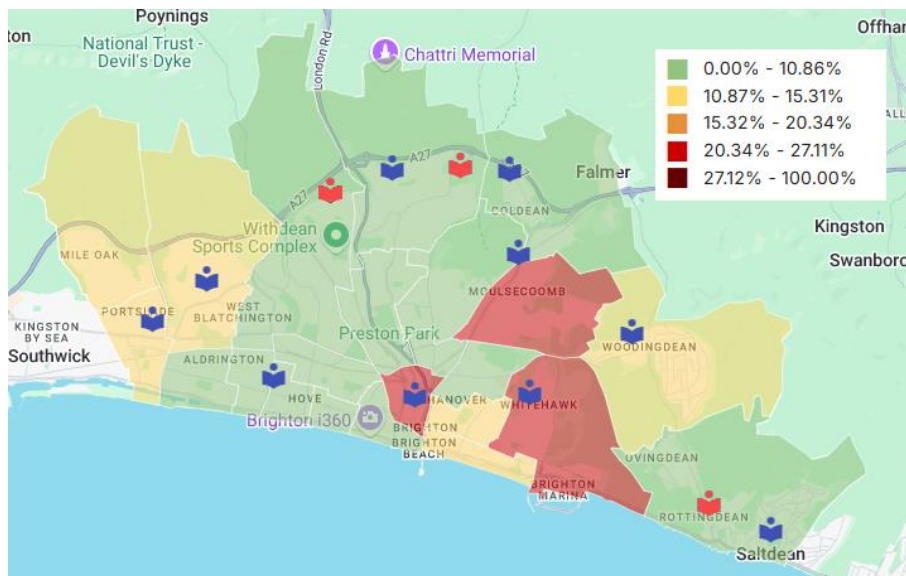
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[www.nlt.cdn.ngo/media/documents/Book\\_ownership\\_in\\_2023\\_k6ovlWY.pdf](http://www.nlt.cdn.ngo/media/documents/Book_ownership_in_2023_k6ovlWY.pdf)

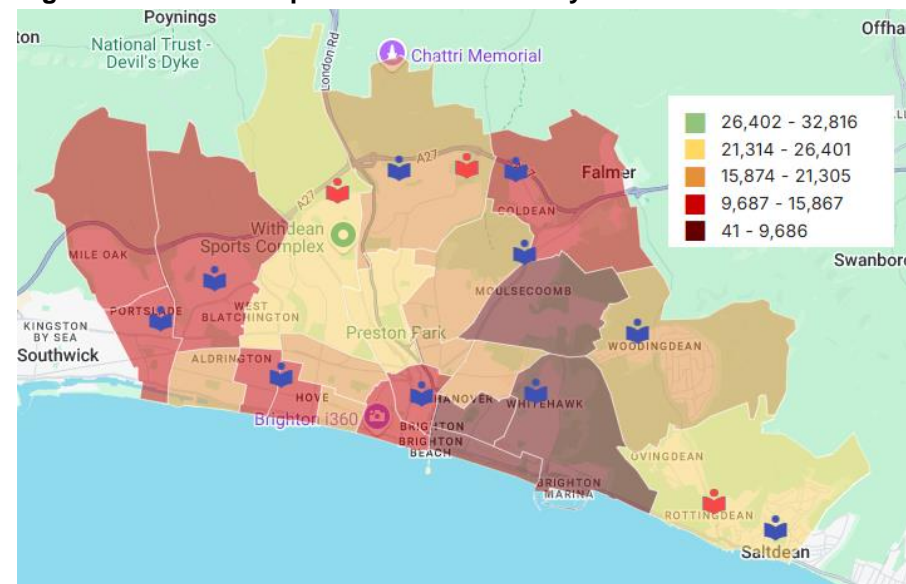
In 2022 nearly 1 in 10 children receiving free school meals (FSMs) said they did not have a book of their own. Since then that figure has risen to 1 in 8. Children who are on FSMs are twice as likely not to own a book as those who are not. In fact, the percentage-point (pp) gap in book ownership between children and young people who receive FSMs and their peers who do not (6.6 pp) is now at its largest in a decade.

**Fig. 10. Percentage of children aged 0-19 in relative low-income families**



information and Books on Prescription, hosting healthcare events and opportunities, delivering books to those who are housebound and addressing social isolation and loneliness.<sup>5</sup> While overall life expectancy has risen in Brighton & Hove, healthy life expectancy has declined in recent years, meaning people are living longer but with more health issues. Additionally, the number of people with long-term health conditions or disabilities is increasing.

**Fig. 11. IoD Health Deprivation and Disability Rank**



### Protecting those at greatest risk of health deprivation in Brighton & Hove from the effects of library closure:

We also know that libraries support people to live healthier lives in a range of ways, including providing access to health

<sup>5</sup> [www.dcmslibraries.blog.gov.uk/2016/09/26/healthier-and-happier-lives-how-libraries-deliver/](http://www.dcmslibraries.blog.gov.uk/2016/09/26/healthier-and-happier-lives-how-libraries-deliver/)

### Protecting older people living at disadvantage in Brighton & Hove from the effects of library closure:

The effects of our aging population are also among the biggest social challenges we will face over the coming decades, as a society, economically, and within our own families. There is a wealth of evidence that libraries have a huge part to play in combatting social isolation.<sup>6</sup> Brighton & Hove has a higher proportion of older people living in poverty compared to England and the South East.<sup>7</sup>

**Fig. 9. Percentage of pensioners living in poverty**



### Protecting other groups at risk of disadvantage in Brighton & Hove from the effects of library closure:

We recognise there are other demographics of communities that could be considered when looking at the effects of library closure. This is information we are looking to seek views on during the public consultation, if approved at Cabinet. These considerations will include intersectionality of residents, where people may be members of multiple communities at risk of disadvantage or where changes to library closures may affect them.

<sup>6</sup> Stand by Me - The contribution of public libraries to the well-being of older people, Arts Council England, 2017.

<sup>7</sup> [Ageing Well in Brighton & Hove](#)

## 5. Opportunities

There are opportunities to make more data-led decisions about library provision in the future, responding directly to patterns of use and the specific needs of residents in different areas of the city. This would extend to mitigating the risks of potential community library closures with alternate provision, for example:

### **Community Collections tailored to residents**

Community Collections are an existing model for trust-base book collections in community spaces, currently operating from Hollingdean Children's Centre and St Luke's Church, which could be introduced in more areas. With the addition of the library service's new Collection HQ tool which makes library data analysis much more possible, these collections could be tailored accurately to the communities they serve.

### **Targeted marketing of the Home Delivery Service**

The Home Delivery Service (HDS) could be marketed in a more targeted way going forward, using the most recent data we have on where older people in the city who are most in need live. We acknowledge that library use is not just about book

borrowing, and many current HDS clients benefit from seeing their HDS volunteer on a regular basis. Where proposals for library closure are taken forward, we can identify and reach new customers for the HDS who may be put at risk of social isolation from the loss of a library branch.

### **Retaining customers and improving their experience**

Were a reduction of evening opening hours and library closures to be taken forward, we would want to do everything in our power to retain and consolidate our customer base. We know that customer experience is key to retention, and so we will not miss the opportunity at public consultation to better understand what residents value most about their current library access.

### **Further promotion of popular online library offer to compliment physical resources**

Since 2021, UK public libraries have experienced a 34% increase in eBook and audiobook checkouts, indicating a sustained rise in digital borrowing<sup>8</sup>. Demand for, and use of, Brighton & Hove Libraries' free online collection of eBooks, eAudio and electronic resources reflects this and continues to grow exponentially year-on-year. This already compliments the rest of the library offer by expanding access, convenience, and

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<sup>8</sup> [UK Libraries Achieve Record-Breaking Circulation of Digital Media in 2023 - OverDrive](#)

resource diversity, but with strategic focus on marketing activity around it, its audience could be significantly extended.

### **Addressing disparity between ‘need’ and ‘use’ in areas of the city**

This analysis has identified disparities in some areas of the city between need (in terms of social outcomes that we know libraries can support) and current library usage. Predominantly, this is the case in Whitehawk and Moulsecoomb. There is a case for strategic focus around these libraries, to work with residents (both current library users and potential) to drive use and ensure we have a library offer at these locations that feels relevant and has impact.

## **6. Recommendations**

### **Proposal of a reduction in hours at Jubilee and Hove**

At Jubilee, a reduction of two hours on a Monday evening (5-7pm) and three hours on a Sunday afternoon (2-5pm) would have the least impact in terms of footfall. Sunday mornings 11am-12pm at Jubilee being almost three times as busy on average as 4-5pm.

At Hove, where Wednesdays 6-7pm currently sees an average of 29 people, a reduction of two hours (5-7pm) would have the least impact in the week. Saturdays 10-11am are twice as busy on average as 4-5pm and so a reduction in hours in the afternoon (2-5pm) would have less impact on the library's footfall.

### **Proposal to consider closure of Rottingdean Library**

Rottingdean & West Saltdean is one of the least deprived wards in the city and is home to two community libraries, with Saltdean and Rottingdean branches less than 2 miles apart and well connected by bus. Rottingdean has the highest building costs of all the community libraries and can expect ongoing high maintenance and management costs due to its heritage status.

### **Proposal to consider closure of Westdene Library**

Data shows that Westdene & Hove Park is the least deprived ward in the city. Westdene Library's footfall is consistently lower

than other community branches, currently forming 0.8% of the service's total visits. The library is close to neighbouring Patcham Library and there are good public transport links and high car ownership levels in the area. Library data shows that those in the postcode sectors to the south of the ward already use neighbouring Hove and Hangleton branches.

### **Proposal to consider closure of Hollingbury Library**

Patcham & Hollingbury is another ward containing two libraries, with Patcham and Hollingbury (Old Boat Corner) branches less than 2 miles apart. Footfall is considerably higher at Patcham (and consistently so) and management costs associated with Hollingbury's site are much higher than average.

## **7. Next steps**

The data presented here only forms part of the picture, and any decisions made about changes to library provision in the city should be justifiable, considered and socially responsible. It is therefore imperative that the views of, and the impact on, library users and residents is taken into account, alongside any assessment of data.

A formal 12-week public consultation on proposed changes will be conducted in order to more fully understand the potential impact, the findings of which will form Part 2 of this Needs and Use Analysis.







## **Public Consultation Plan**

### **Sustainability plan for Brighton & Hove Libraries**

**July – October 2025**

#### **Summary**

This document provides an overview and timeline of Brighton & Hove Library Services' public consultation plan. It outlines how the savings targets set at Brighton & Hove City Council Budget 2025/26 might be met whilst maintaining the local authority's legal duty under the Public Libraries and Museum Act 1964 "to provide a comprehensive and efficient library service for all those who live, work or study and want to access the service".

The Council also has a duty to develop its library services in consultation with those who live, work or study in Brighton & Hove and undertake statutory consultation on any significant service changes.

#### **Proposal**

Following a detailed Part 1 needs and use analysis it is proposed that Hollingbury, Rottingdean and Westdene Libraries be closed completely and opening hours in Jubilee and Hove Libraries be reduced, each by 5 hours weekly, from 01 April 2026.

#### **Service Offer**

Hollingbury Library is housed in a room within the Old Boat Community Centre. It is staffed one day a week. Customers can enter and use the room every day of the week, however due to anti-social behaviour in the centre and operational challenges opening hours are currently restricted.

There is a mix of staffed and Libraries Extra (LE) days operating in Rottingdean and Westdene Libraries. Libraries Extra enables customers to visit libraries outside staffed hours using an enhanced membership card.

Full details outlining the current opening hours of all libraries in Brighton & Hove may be found at [Our libraries and their opening times](#)

The libraries that would be affected by the proposed closure and reductions are currently open -

Current Hours							
	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun
Hollingbury	Open Access 9-5	Open Access 9-5	Open Access 9-5	Staffed 9 – 12 - 5	Open Access 9 - 5	Open Access 9 - 5	Open Access 9 - 5
Rottingdean	Staffed 9 - 5	LE 9 - 7	Staffed 9 - 5	LE 9 - 7	LE 9 - 5	LE 9 - 5	LE 9 - 5
Westdene	LE 9 - 7	Staffed 9 - 5	LE 9 - 7	LE 9 - 7	LE 9 - 5	LE 9 - 5	LE 9 - 5
Jubilee	10 - 7	10 - 7	10 - 5	10 - 7	10 - 5	10 - 5	11 - 5
Hove	10 - 5	10 - 5	10 - 7	10 - 5	10 - 5	10 - 5	Closed

### If Proposals Agreed

If the proposals are agreed, Hollingbury, Rottingdean and Westdene Libraries will close completely. The proposed revised hours in Jubilee and Hove are highlighted below -

Revised Hours							
	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun
Jubilee	<b>10 - 5</b>	10 - 7	10 - 5	10 - 7	10 - 5	10 - 5	<b>11 - 2</b>
Hove	10 - 5	10 - 5	<b>10 - 5</b>	10 - 5	10 - 5	<b>10 - 2</b>	Closed

### Timeline

The public consultation is proposed to run for 12 weeks from 18 July – 10 October.

### The consultation programme

We will aim to ensure that as many service users, stakeholders, partners and non-library users are able to have their say on the proposals. An email address is available at [libraries.consultation@brighton-hove.gov.uk](mailto:libraries.consultation@brighton-hove.gov.uk) and will be publicised for individual enquiries and for information.

Activities will include

- A consultation survey available through 'Your Voice', Brighton & Hove City Council's online consultation service, which will be promoted on council web pages, library and council social media and via partners helping to disseminate details. Paper copies will be available in all libraries, Family Hubs, the Homelessness Helpdesk at Bartholomew's House, Hove Town Hall and at key places within the local communities potentially affected by the changes.
- A link to the online survey will be promoted throughout all library buildings, utilising a QR code for ease of access.

- Existing partners and community groups will be approached and asked to assist with engaging non library users with the consultation.
- Council Help Desks and Family Hubs will promote to their visitors.
- Links to the consultation will be sent to all book, craft and other community groups which meet regularly in libraries.
- A Brighton & Hove City Council Councillor and a senior officer will attend drop-in sessions and public engagement meetings in proposed locations affected and for those interested city-wide – details below:

Date	Time	Location	Engagement
Tuesday 22 July	18.00 – 19.30	Online	Presentation, Q&A
Tuesday 29 July	14.00 – 16.00	Westdene Library	Drop In, Q&A
Thursday 31 July	14.00 – 16.00	Hollingbury	Drop in Q&A
Wednesday 27 August	17.00-19.00	Hove Town Hall	Presentation Q&A
Tuesday 09 September	18.00 – 20.00	Rottingdean	Presentation Q&A
Wednesday 01 October	19.00 – 21.00	Jubilee	Presentation Q&A
Wednesday 07 October	10.00 – 11.30	Online	Presentation Q&A

The consultation will gather information around themes asking the respondents to tell us about

- Why, when, where and how they use library services
- What services they use when physically visiting a library and when accessing services remotely eg eBooks, eAudio and online resources
- How much they agree or disagree with each individual proposal
- Which other libraries they could visit if their nearest library were to close and reasons for not being able to visit any other library
- There will be an opportunity for survey respondents to provide any further information they wish to including any alternative solutions and suggestions for alternative delivery models

The consultation will be advertised through various communication channels including

- Press Releases
- Social Media - Council and Library Facebook & Instagram
- Posters & Flyers containing a QR code to Your Voice Survey

The consultation will be anonymous, although respondents are asked to complete an optional 'About You' section at the end for equalities monitoring purposes.

### **Equalities implications and mitigations**

Steps will be taken before and during the public consultation to ensure the widest range of voices are heard and that implications are fully understood. The service will communicate about the consultation with a wide range of council services, community groups, organisations and networks asking them to share with their networks and support consultation engagement where possible.

A young person friendly and easy read versions of the proposals will be available.

### **Analysis**

A detailed report analysing data and information collected from questionnaires and public engagement activities will be published in time for consideration and a decision to be taken by Cabinet on 11 December 2025.

Analysis of the responses received via the public consultation (a survey, public meetings, emails and written correspondence) will be analysed from an equalities perspective. This will ensure that impact affecting protected characteristics and wider equalities matters are considered in relation to discrimination, inclusion and equity. This will also be done from an intersectional perspective, recognising that discrimination and exclusion can be amplified for those with multiple characteristics that can put them at risk of disadvantage.

# Brighton & Hove City Council Sustainability Plan for Libraries

## Summary of public consultation responses 2025

### Why we held a public consultation

In July 2025, City councillors agreed to hold a public consultation on the proposed closure of 3 community libraries and changes to the opening hours of Jubilee and Hove libraries.

These proposals were part of a wider strategic plan for Brighton & Hove libraries, which included the introduction of customer service points earlier this year and some reductions in vacant staff posts.

The consultation invited views on whether the library spaces proposed for closure could continue to be provided through a different operating model, for example transfer to a community or voluntary sector organisation.

The wider plan aims to ensure Brighton & Hove City Council maintains a sustainable and affordable library service across the city, particularly focused on serving those in greatest need. If agreed, these proposals would maintain 10 libraries across Brighton & Hove.

The proposed changes to library services in Brighton & Hove covered in this public consultation were:

- Closing Hollingbury, Rottingdean and Westdene libraries
- Reducing the opening hours of Jubilee Library by 2 hours on Monday evenings and by 3 hours on Sunday afternoons
- Reducing the hours of Hove Library by 2 hours on Wednesday evenings and by 3 hours on Saturday afternoons

Officers considered a number of factors when looking at the libraries proposed for closure, based on their use and the needs of the communities in the areas they serve.

This included an analysis based on economic activity and receipt of benefits and free school meals to prioritise areas in most need, as well as each library's usage, the proximity of alternative community libraries and operational costs.

The proposed changes at Jubilee and Hove libraries reflect the times when the fewest people access them.

The Department for Culture, Media and Sport requires a public consultation for any proposals that reduce or significantly change statutory library services.

## **How the consultation ran**

The consultation ran for a period of 12 weeks from 18 July - 10 October 2025.

The consultation included:

- A survey open to anyone, hosted on the council's YourVoice website, open from 18 July until 10 October 2025. The survey was available online and in paper format from libraries.
- 2 publicly advertised online consultation meetings held in July and October.
- 3 drop-in sessions at Hollingbury, Rottingdean Westdene Libraries
- 4 in-person consultation meetings spread throughout the time period - 2 planned for Jubilee Library and Hove Town Hall, 2 added in response to high levels of interest at Westdene Primary School (on the same site as Westdene Library) and St Margaret's C of E Primary School (near to Rottingdean Library).

There was a general email address available for questions and representations – [libraries.consultation@brighton-hove.gov.uk](mailto:libraries.consultation@brighton-hove.gov.uk) plus residents submitted Member enquiries and enquiries to the Customer Feedback Team. During the consultation, a number of FOI requests were also made.

A Young People's Guide and an Easy Read Guide to the consultation were created and made available on the Your Voice platform alongside the survey and proposal documents. The availability of the information in accessible formats was also promoted.

## **Consultation marketing and engagement**

The consultation and associated survey were publicised (via flyers, posters, stickers, digital screens and word of mouth) in Libraries, at Council Help Desks, the Homelessness Help Desk and Family Hubs. Publicity was also supported by local organisations and businesses, particularly those in close proximity to the affected library branches.

Council and Libraries' social media accounts were also used to share the information.

Tannoy announcements were made at Jubilee during the proposed affected hours to increase visibility of the consultation and staff engaged in person with customers, raising awareness of the proposals and promoting the survey.



### **Library user stakeholder engagement**

Targeted communication and engagement was made with regular library users who book rooms and/or meet in libraries. This included the citywide library network of book groups and community groups that meet regularly in libraries. This enabled groups who may be directly impacted to have the opportunity to consider and respond to the proposals.

### **Wider stakeholder engagement**

Over 100 local stakeholder / community organisations were contacted with information about the proposals and survey and were invited to share a response as an organisation or group directly via the consultation email address or to complete the survey.

Stakeholders were also asked to share details of the proposals and the survey/meetings and email address with their networks - a wide range of residents from across the city, including young people, those living with disabilities, those at risk of digital exclusion, Black and Racially Minoritised diasporas, older people, care leavers, the LGBTQ+ community, those with neurodivergence, low-income families and those experiencing mental health issues, reaching communities all across the city. A follow-up reminder email was sent to all stakeholders halfway through the consultation period.

City schools were informed via the city's schools bulletin and an accompanying article. Schools closest to libraries affected by the proposals were contacted directly by the Libraries' Senior Management Team with the offer of additional support to enable pupils' and teachers and school staffs' engagement with the consultation.

Councillors and officers met with a range of stakeholder groups on request, including Rottingdean Parish Council, the Save Our Library (Rottingdean) campaign, Old Boat Corner Community Centre and Westdene Primary School.

A range of visits were also made by library staff to community groups, including the Network of International Women, StoryTree and the Social Prescribers Forum to give additional support to engage with the consultation.

### **Responsive marketing throughout consultation period**

Monitoring data received via the survey and the level of email responses were both evaluated throughout the period. As of 9<sup>th</sup> September, only 6% of respondents that shared monitoring info were from Black and Racially Minoritised backgrounds – this was not representative of the fact that 26% of the city's residents are from Black and Racially Minoritised backgrounds (Census 2021).

Partner organisations and colleagues were proactively approached for support to ensure the range of voices heard were as diverse as possible.

Additional online marketing that features more diverse imagery (of real library customers) was created to support engagement with Black and Global Majority residents on the proposals.

At the consultation conclusion, 12% of respondents identified as being from a Black or Racially Minoritised background.

### **How people responded to the consultation**

**2711 completed responses** were made to the YourVoice survey – it was possible for individuals to submit multiple entries

**164 emails** were sent to the consultation email address which have been accepted as responses to the consultation

**1 formal member enquiry** was received during the consultation

**374 people** engaged with 9 public consultation meetings, online and in person

### **Summary of the consultation**

#### **Explanatory note:**

This report provides a summary overview of responses received to the public consultation. It includes a summary analysis of the Your Voice survey, of the emails received directly to



the council, of group/organisational responses, and a summary of the comments/questions raised at the meetings facilitated by the council.

The full raw data from the survey, the emails and letters cannot be shared publicly because they could contain personal and sensitive information which might identify the consultee and which the council is therefore not able to put into the public domain.

*Please note that AI has been used to support the summary analysis of the free text responses to the YourVoice survey. Officers have read all individual responses, and AI has been used to support the collation of themes and summaries.*

## Survey Responses

A total of 2711 people responded to the online survey. All responses were anonymous, and we encouraged views from both users and non-users of Brighton & Hove libraries services.

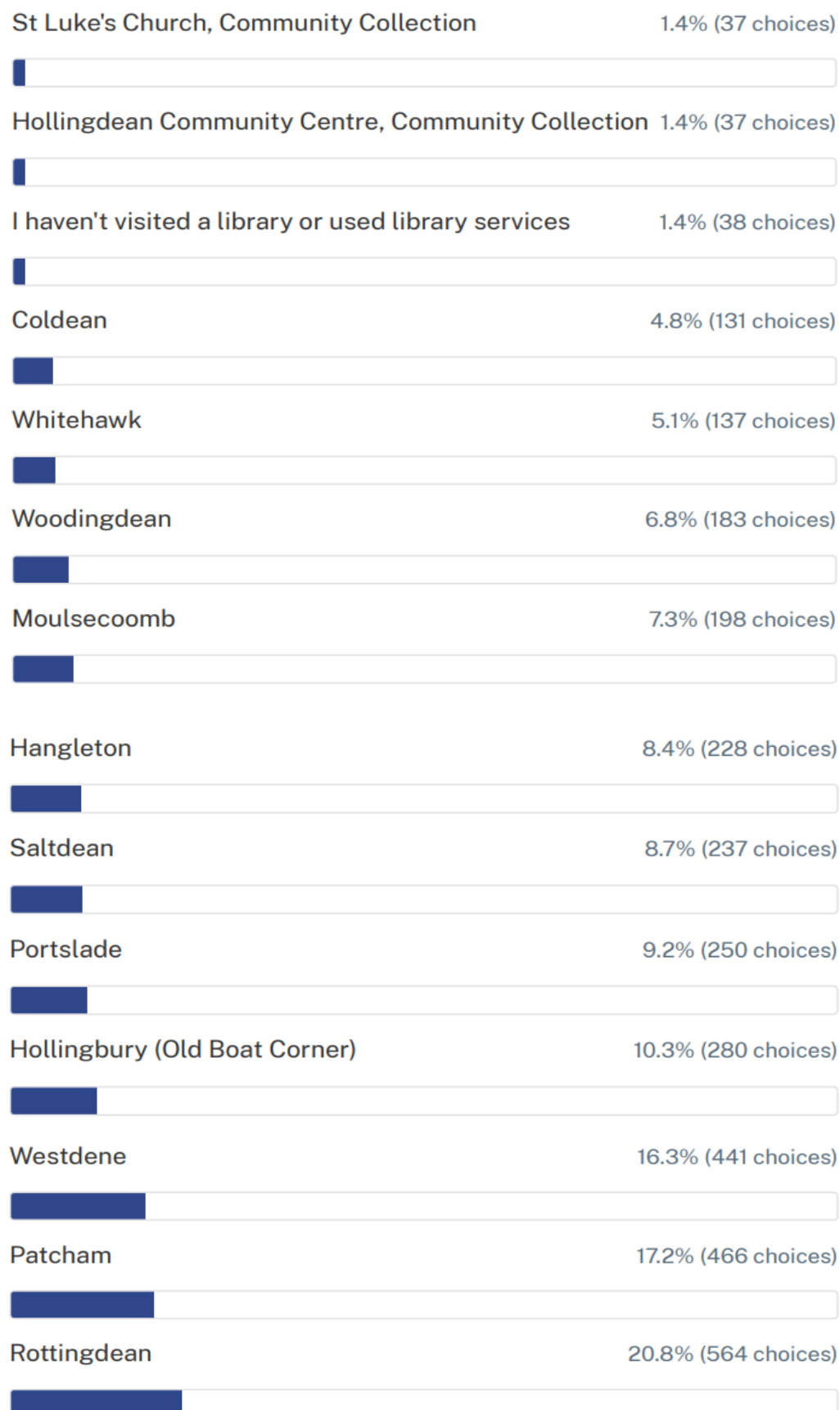
This section addresses each individual survey question, providing a summary of responses and descriptive statistics where appropriate.

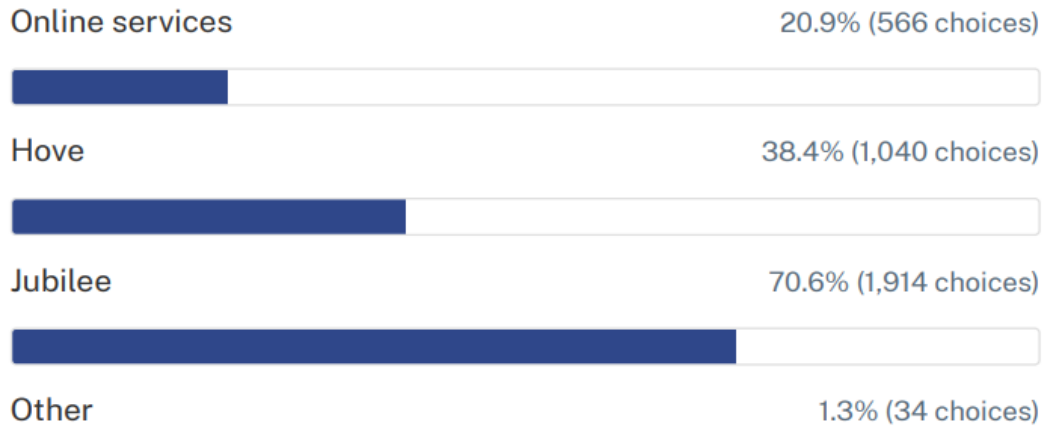
### Q1. Which libraries and services have you used in the past 12 months?

A range of checkboxes were offered and there was no limit to the number of boxes responders could tick. Options included Community Collections at St Luke’s Church and Hollingdean Community Centre, as well as Equal Access, Home Delivery and online services. There was also the option to declare that the respondent does not use library services.

2711/2711 - Multiple choice - choose many - required





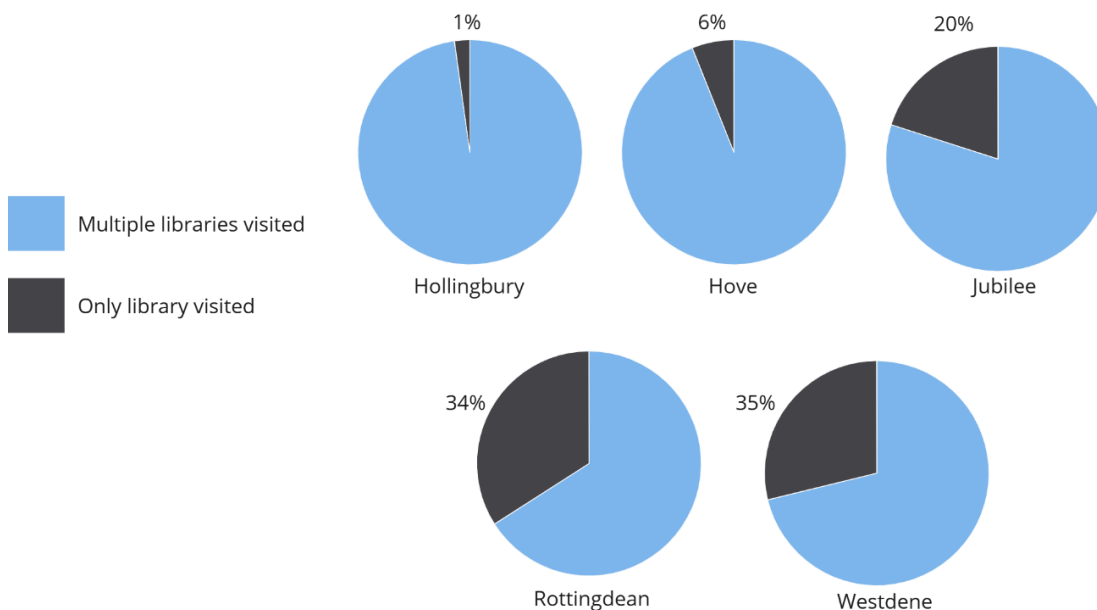


‘Other’ locations and services can be categorised as follows:

- Repeats of libraries already listed and chosen
- Other locations such as ‘Rottingdean Gallery’ and ‘The Grange’
- Libraries outside of the authority (elsewhere in South East and UK)
- ‘Reserving books’
- Council Help Desks
- School libraries
- Libraries Extra
- Specific online services such as ‘Borrowbox’

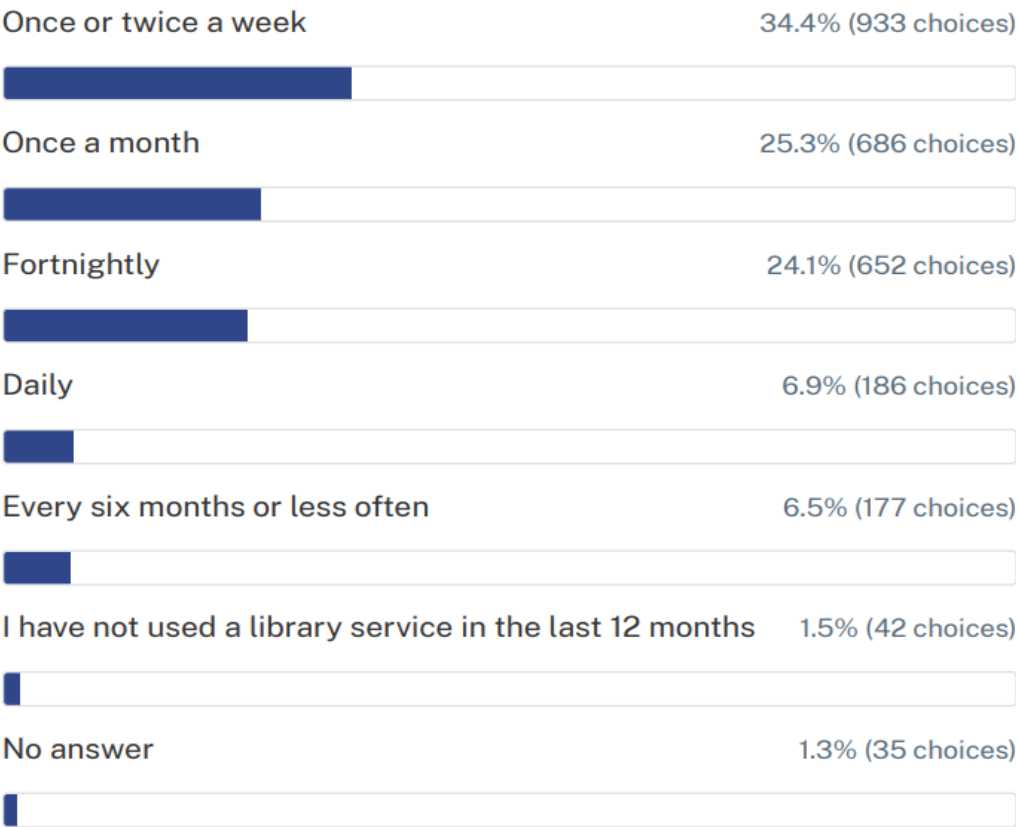
### Single site use vs multiple site use in areas affected by the proposals

Among respondents who reported visiting the areas affected by the proposals, the proportion who had used only one specific library in the past year varied significantly between branches — from just 1% of Hollingbury users to 35% of Westdene users exclusively using that branch.



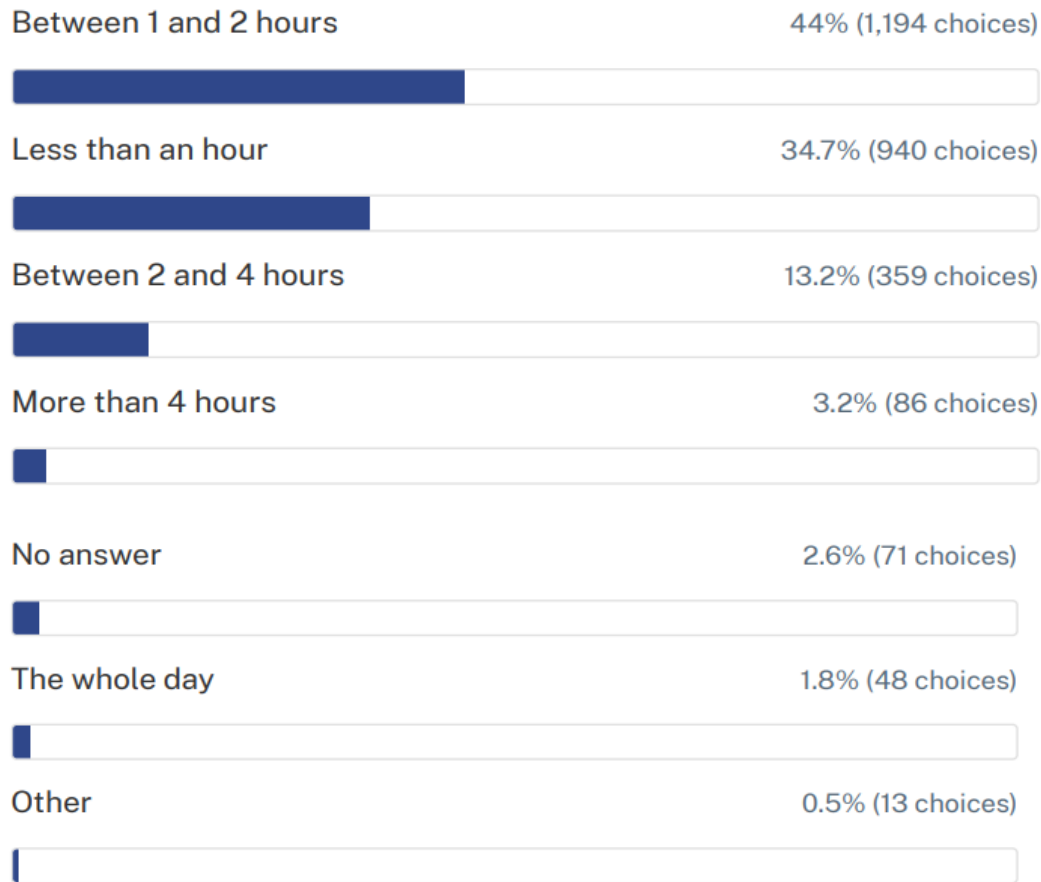
**Q2. On average, how often do you use Brighton & Hove libraries? (optional)**

2676/2711 - Multiple choice - choose one - optional



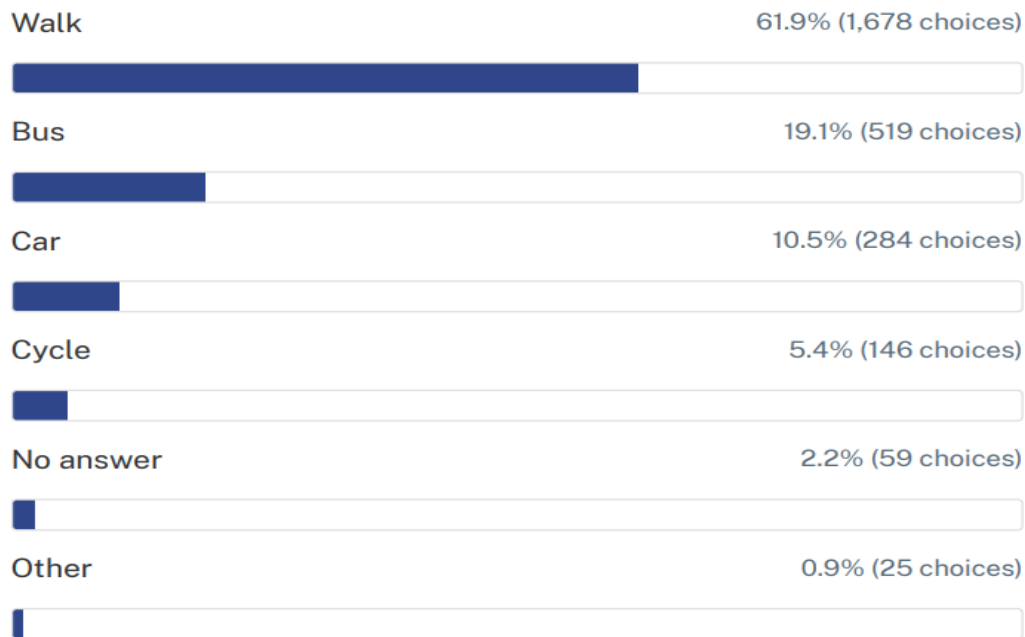
**Q3. How long do you spend in Brighton & Hove libraries on an average visit? (optional)**

2640/2711 - Multiple choice -choose one -optional



**Q4. How do you usually travel to the library you visit most in Brighton & Hove?**  
(optional)

2654/2711 - Multiple choice - choose one - optional



The majority of those who chose 'other' travel by train. A few respondents travel by wheelchair, mobility scooter or taxi. One respondent travels by broomstick.

**Q5. Which of the following library services have you used in the last 12 months? (optional)**

Respondents were given the option to tick as many services as they liked, as well as the chance to specify other service aspects not listed.

2659/2711 - Multiple choice - choose many - optional

No answer 1.9% (52 choices)



Business and careers information including the Business and IP Centre (BIPC) 3.8% (103 choices)



Using the meeting or conference rooms 4.8% (129 choices)



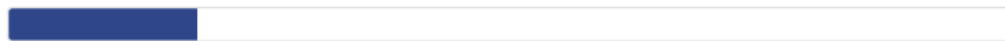
Visiting the Council Help Desk 4.9% (133 choices)



Playing board games and puzzles 10.8% (292 choices)



Keeping warm and safe 18.8% (510 choices)



Borrowing electronic items e.g. eBook, eAudiobook, eComic or eMagazine 19.2% (521 choices)



Using online resources 23.9% (649 choices)



Attending an event or activity 25.5% (691 choices)



Looking up information 26.4% (717 choices)

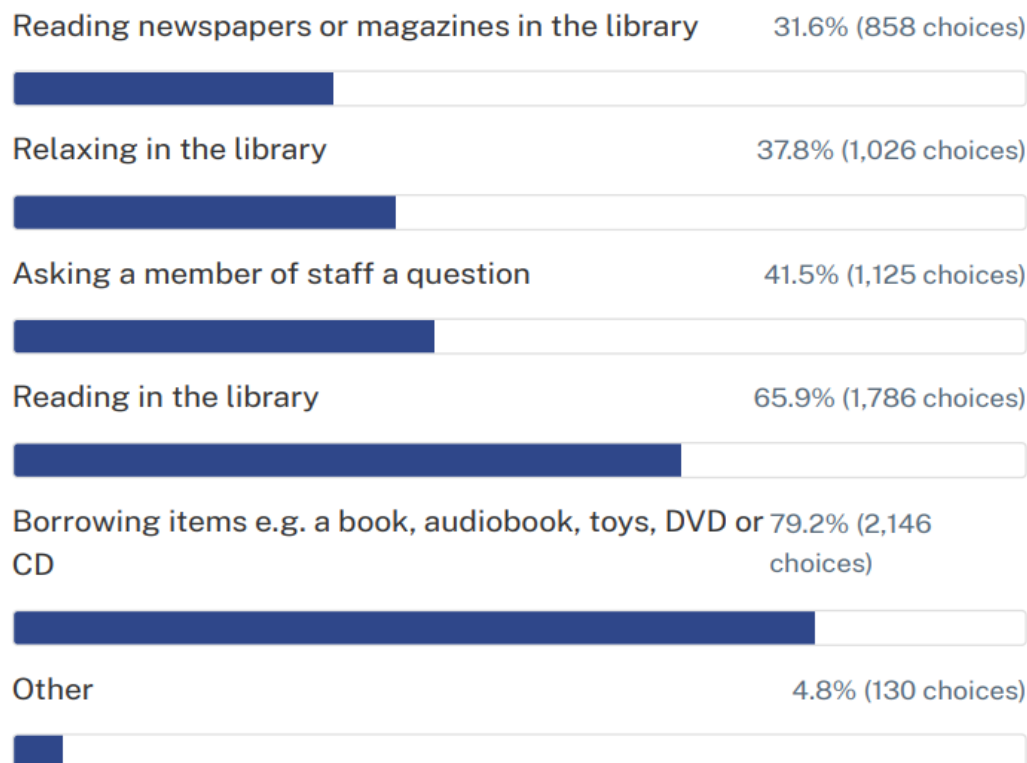


Using computers and printing 28% (760 choices)



Using wifi 30.2% (818 choices)





The answers of respondents who chose 'other' can be categorised as follows (in order from most to least cited):

- Baby changing
- Playing with and reading to children
- Using the toilet
- Using the cafe (Jubilee)
- Meeting with a Library Connect volunteer (computer support)
- Revising
- Breastfeeding
- Sheltering from bad weather
- Attending social groups and events
- Paid employment in a library

**Q6. Why do you not use library services? (optional)**



If respondents said that they did not use library services in the last year, we wanted to know more about why. Respondents could tick all that applied or specify another reason.

1911/2711 - Multiple choice - choose many - optional

Not applicable - I do use library services 66% (1,790 choices)



No answer 29.5% (800 choices)



I don't need to use the services libraries provide 1.3% (35 choices)



The opening hours do not suit me 0.7% (19 choices)



I don't know what services there are 0.7% (18 choices)



I use a different library authority 0.6% (15 choices)



I cannot travel to any library 0.4% (12 choices)



Other 1.2% (32 choices)



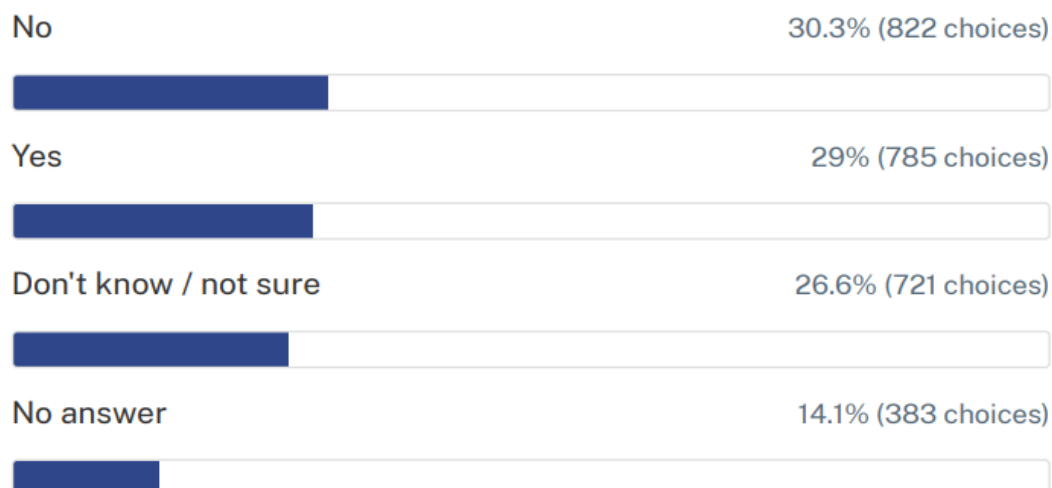
32 respondents shared detailed qualitative information about their reasons for not visiting libraries, categorised as follows (in order from most to least cited):

- Being too busy / no time to read
- Haven't used since children were younger
- Transport/travel issues
- Technical issues with cards (Libraries Extra)
- Insufficient lighting in buildings
- Ideological disagreement with some of the stock on offer
- Not permitted to bring pet into libraries
- Out of the 'habit'
- Live outside of the area

**Q7. Can you access those or other alternative libraries? (optional)**

Respondents were given a list of nearest alternative libraries to those proposed for closure before answering this question.

2353/2711 - Multiple choice - choose one - optional



**Q8. If you can't access alternative libraries or if you have concerns about accessing alternative libraries, please tell us why. (optional)**

This free text question was answered by 38% of respondents.

The most cited concerns relating to access were for those living with disabilities and for families for whom the library is on their route home from school.

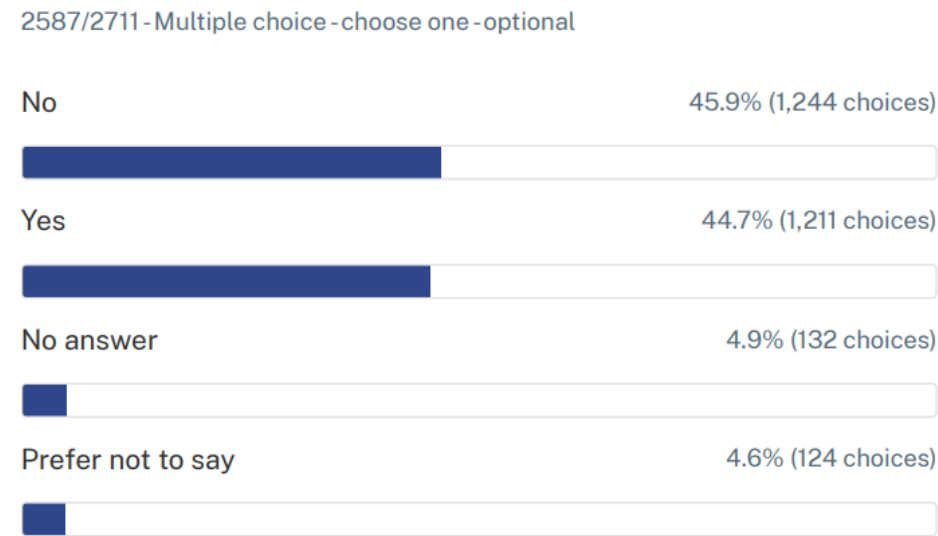
Concerns were also expressed about financial constraints and public transport costs, as well as the inconvenience of traveling longer distances to reach another library.

Respondents living with a disability said they would find accessing alternative libraries via public transport very challenging. Some of those who state they could make the journey by public transport fed back that their disability would mean they were unable to carry books home on the bus. Some highlighted the fact that their library offers the only accessible public toilet in their area. While some would consider driving to the next available library, parking is cited as a barrier to this (the example of limited spaces in the on-site car park at Patcham being given by multiple respondents).

Parents with young children highlight the difficulty of traveling to alternative libraries, especially when they rely on walking or public transport. They mention that using a car daily is not feasible due to climate change concerns and financial constraints. The comments also stress the importance of libraries being within walking distance, as they are often used for after-school visits and are integral to the daily routines of families.

Many comments moved beyond the scope of the question on access, to reflect a deep and broad concern about the potential closure of local libraries, emphasizing their importance as vital community resources.

**Q9. Do you use Libraries Extra at any libraries? (optional)**



**Q10. If you don't use Libraries Extra, please tell us why. (optional)**

This free text question was answered by 25% of respondents.

The trend in responses is that most people do not use Libraries Extra because they are unaware of it. Many also said they had heard of it but were not sure what it was or how to sign up for it.

A significant number of respondents stated they do not need to use Libraries Extra because their needs are met during regular staffed hours or at libraries (Jubilee or Hove were both cited here) that have good opening times. Some haven't needed to use it yet or haven't got around to registering. A small number cited technical issues as a barrier to using Libraries Extra. Another common theme is that Libraries Extra is not available at the libraries respondents use most often (namely, Jubilee and Hove).

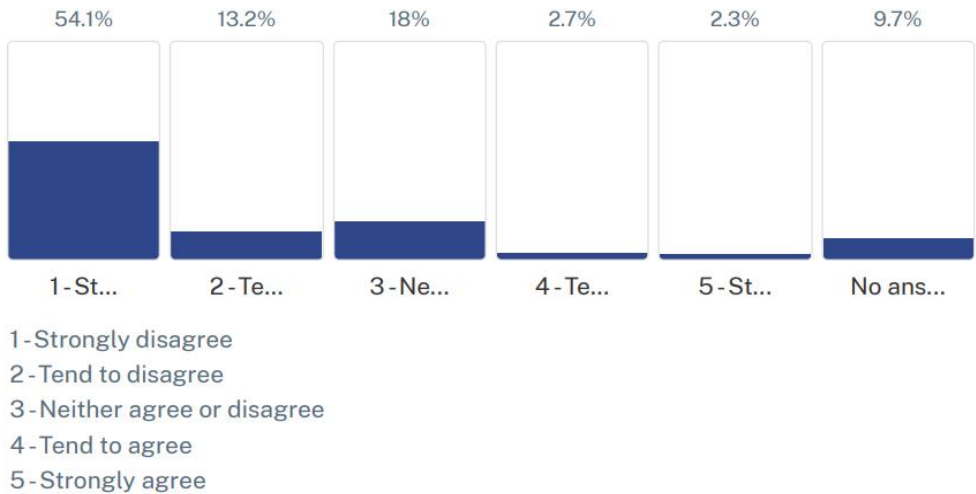
Safety and comfort concerns about being in an unstaffed library were raised by several respondents and were more likely to be raised amongst older respondents or those living with a disability.

Older respondents were more likely to report that they prefer to visit the library on staffed days. As well as citing safety as a reason for this, they also cite concern for the impact on staff employment and the loss of the social/community aspect of libraries.

Those respondents who do use Libraries Extra express that they find it useful but even among respondents who are users, there is still a preference for staffed hours. Technical issues are cited by some as being off-putting.

**Q11. How much do you agree or disagree with the proposal to close Hollingbury Library? (optional)**

2447/2711 -Linear scale -optional



**Q12. If Hollingbury Library was to close, do you have any comments or suggestions for alternative ways to deliver local library services? We welcome comments from community groups interested in working with us to deliver local library services. (optional)**

This free text question was answered by 17% of respondents.

Most respondents highlight their strong opposition to the proposed closure of Hollingbury Library, emphasising its vital role as a community hub, especially for children and low-income families. Some respondents cite that they and their families would have no other way to access books if the library closed, due to the expense of bus travel to alternatives and the terrain between them making walking with children challenging.

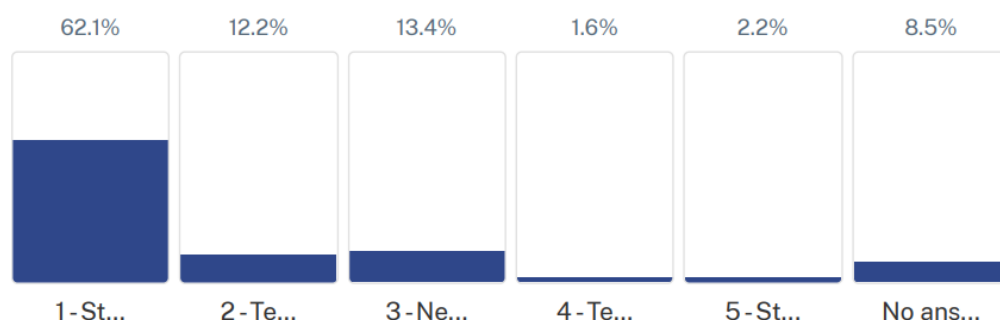
**Summary of suggestions for alternatives to closure shared during the consultation:**

- Reinstating a mobile library service to serve those unable to travel to other branches

- Using volunteers or community groups to staff or help run the library, sometimes alongside paid staff
- Expanding Libraries Extra or open access hours but ensuring self-service facilities work
- Partnering with local businesses, schools, cafes, or other community venues to host book collections within them
- Offering the Home Delivery Service for those unable to travel
- Better promotion and marketing of the library
- Seeking alternative funding sources such as sponsorships or grants
- Reducing opening hours at larger libraries or cutting other council services instead
- Working with bus company to improve transport links between Hollingbury and Patcham

**Q13. How much do you agree or disagree with the proposal to close Rottingdean Library? (optional)**

2480/2711 - Linear scale - optional



- 1-Strongly disagree
- 2-Tend to disagree
- 3-Neither agree or disagree
- 4-Tend to agree
- 5-Strongly agree

**Q14. If Rottingdean Library was to close, do you have any comments or suggestions for alternative ways to deliver local library services? We welcome comments from community groups interested in working with us to deliver local library services. (optional)**

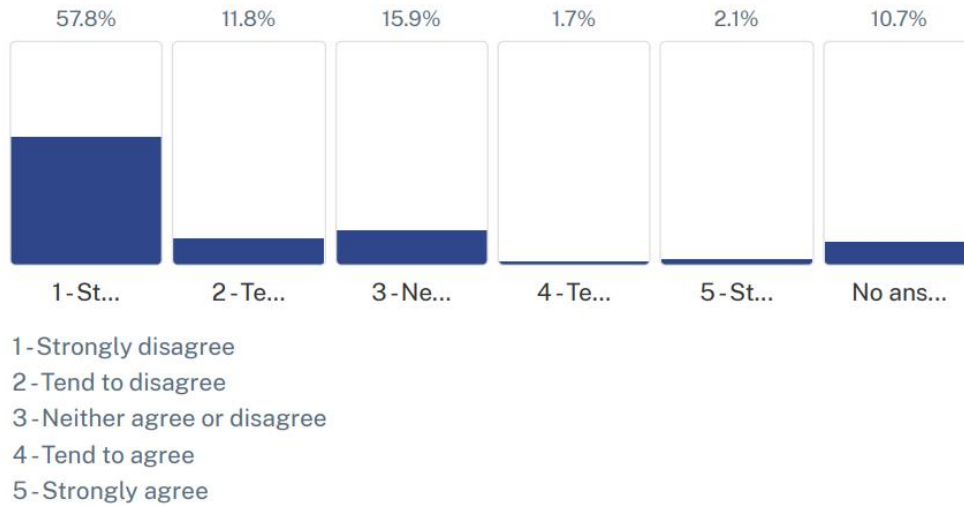
This free text question was answered by 19% of respondents.

The overwhelming majority of respondents strongly oppose the closure of Rottingdean Library. Many highlighted the library's importance for education, literacy, social connection, and as a safe, free public space. There is widespread concern that closure would disproportionately impact those unable to travel to alternatives, such as the elderly, disabled, and families with young children. A few respondents mention using Saltdean Library as a viable alternative, but many state it is not easily accessible for Rottingdean residents.

### **Suggestions for alternatives to closure:**

- Use volunteers or seek support from groups such as Rottingdean Heritage to run the library (though some respondents recognise this is not a substitute for professional library staff)
- Reducing staffed hours and increasing Libraries Extra hours at Rottingdean Library
- Reducing staffed hours across other/all community libraries to avoid closure of Rottingdean Library
- Offering mobile library services or home delivery for those unable to travel
- Reconsider spending priorities and look for savings elsewhere rather than closing libraries
- Charge for entrance to libraries in the way museums do

**Q15. How much do you agree or disagree with the proposal to close Westdene Library? (optional)**



**Q16. If Westdene Library was to close, do you have any comments or suggestions for alternative ways to deliver local library services? We welcome comments from community groups interested in working with us to deliver local library services. (optional)**

This free text question was answered by 17% of respondents.

Most respondents to this question strongly oppose the closure of Westdene Library, emphasizing its role as a community hub, particularly for children at the neighbouring school, the elderly, disabled people, and those without easy access to transport. Many respondents stated that Patcham Library is not a viable alternative due to distance and poor transport links. A minority felt the library was underused and suggested focusing resources elsewhere, but these views were far outweighed by those stressing the library's value.

### **Suggestions for alternatives to closure:**

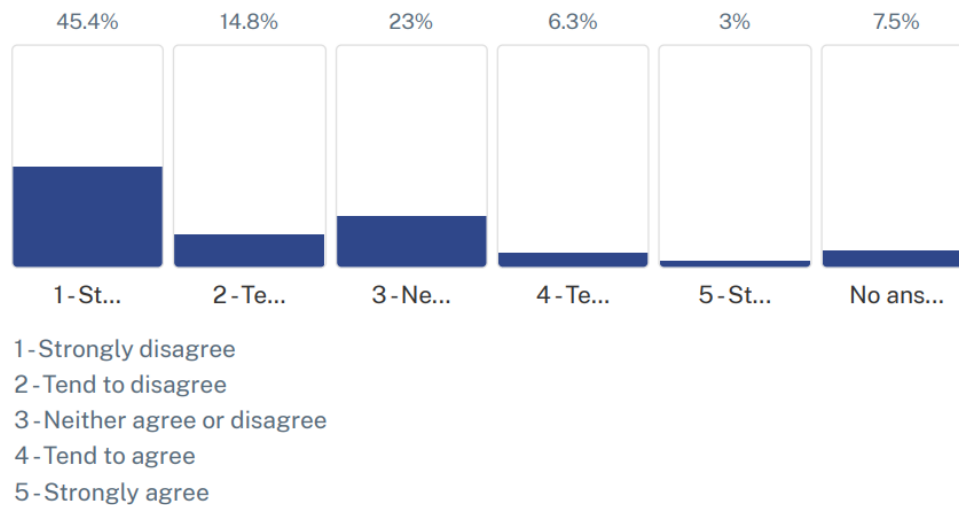
- Reducing hours at larger libraries (such as Jubilee) or cutting other council spending instead
- Using volunteers or community groups to staff or run the library
- Increase Libraries Extra hours
- Partnering with the school or local organisations (local churches, school and leisure centre all mentioned) to share responsibility for the space and service
- Reintroducing mobile library services for those unable to travel

- Fundraising
- Increasing council tax or parking charges to support libraries
- Reduce spending on books to keep the building open

**Q17. How much do you agree or disagree with the proposal to reduce the opening hours at Hove Library on a Wednesday evening? (optional)**

Respondents were reminded of the precise proposed changes to hours before answering this question.

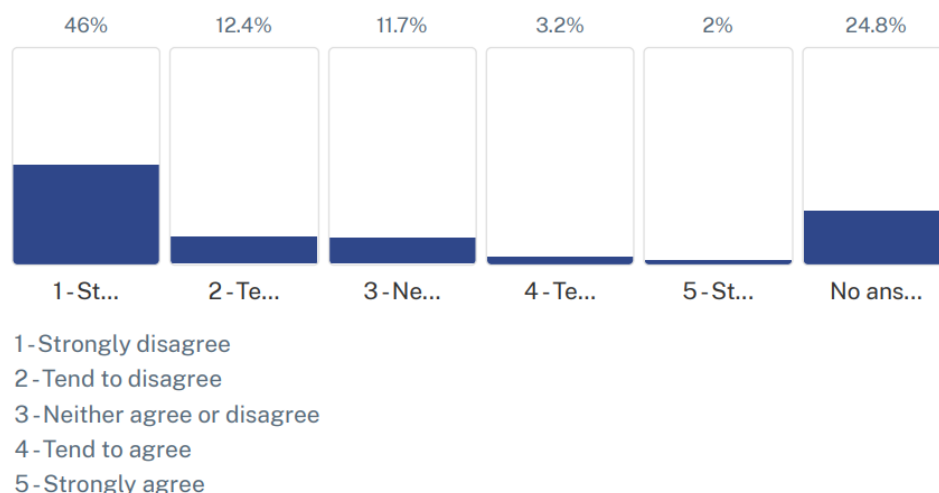
2509/2711 - Linear scale - optional



**Q18. How much do you agree or disagree with the proposal to reduce the opening hours at Hove Library on a Saturday afternoon? (optional)**

Respondents were reminded of the precise proposed changes to hours before answering this question.





**Q19. If the opening hours at Hove Library were to change, do you have any comments or suggestions for alternative ways to deliver library services? (optional)**

This free text question was answered by 21% of respondents.

There is strong opposition to reducing Hove Library's opening hours, with many respondents stressing that current late openings and weekend hours are essential for people who work full-time, parents, students, and families. Many said that closing at 5pm or earlier would make the library inaccessible to anyone working standard hours, and that Saturday afternoons are prime time for families. Several noted that school-age children and students would also be disadvantaged if weekend or late hours were cut. A minority of respondents accepted reduced hours as preferable to full closure.

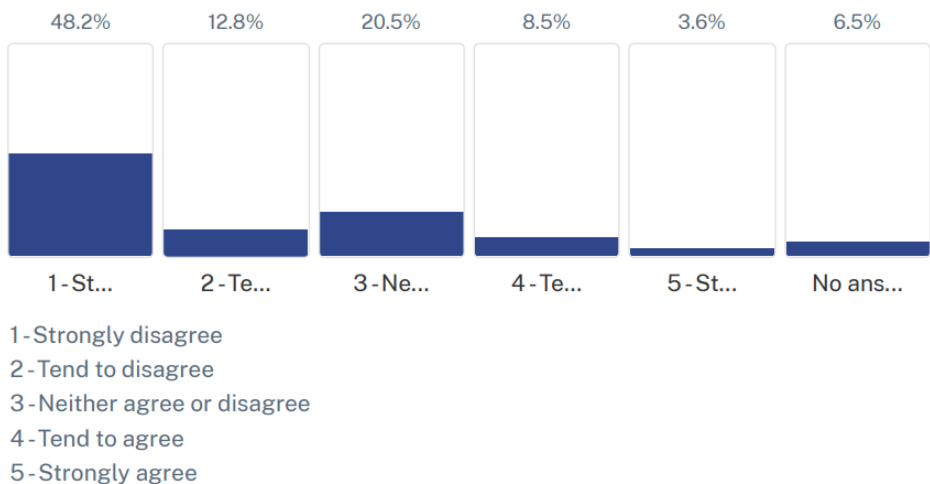
**Suggestions for alternatives to a reduction in opening hours:**

- Introduce Libraries Extra to Hove Library to reduce staffed hours
- Using volunteers to keep the library open
- Reduce hours on less busy weekdays rather than evenings or weekends
- Later opening in the morning to allow for later closing
- Alternative funding sources and fundraising efforts
- Increased use of volunteers and community partnerships to deliver library services
- Expand online library offer and resources
- Reintroducing a mobile library

**Q20. How much do you agree or disagree with the proposal to reduce the opening hours at Jubilee Library on a Monday evening? (optional)**

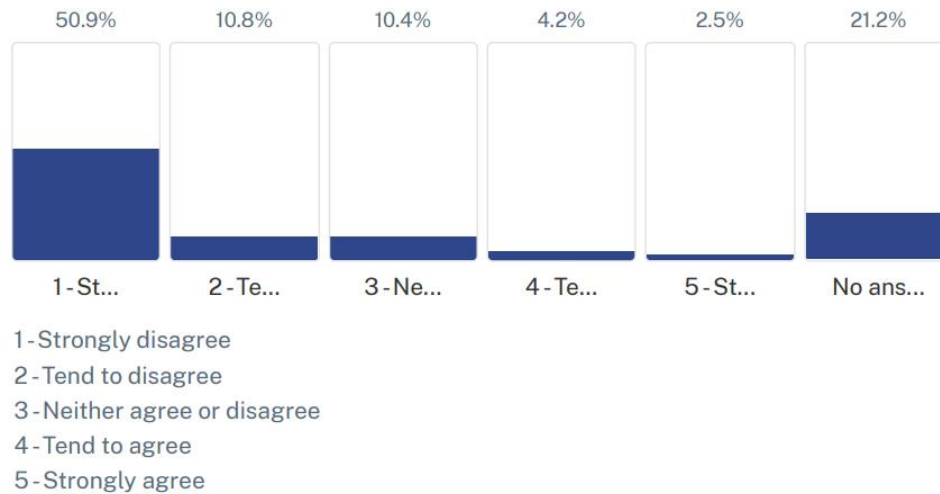
Respondents were reminded of the precise proposed changes to hours before answering this question.

2535/2711 - Linear scale - optional



**Q21. How much do you agree or disagree with the proposal to reduce the opening hours at Jubilee Library on a Sunday afternoon? (optional)**

Respondents were reminded of the precise proposed changes to hours before answering this question.



**Q22. If the opening hours at Jubilee Library were to change, do you have any comments or suggestions for alternative ways to deliver library services? (optional)**

This free text question was answered by 22% of respondents.

Many respondents strongly disagree with the proposal to reduce Jubilee Library's opening hours. Many feel that the library is always busy at these times and serves as a vital, free, safe public space and community hub for all ages, including children, students, disabled people, and those facing social isolation or financial hardship. There is particular emphasis on the importance of Sunday afternoons for families, and the importance of weekday evenings for students and those seeking a warm, safe and free space. A minority accept that some reduction in hours may be necessary for financial reasons but urge that cuts be made at less busy times or that reductions be minimal.

**Suggestions for alternatives to a reduction in opening hours:**

- Introduce Libraries Extra to Jubilee to reduce staff costs
- Use volunteers to help keep the library open longer
- Close some floors at Jubilee on certain days and times and minimise staffing at those times, to avoid reducing hours
- Collaborate with local businesses or community groups to run library services
- Close earlier on a weekday rather than Sundays or only reduce hours outside of exam periods

- Prioritise funding for libraries over other services
- Alternative funding models such as crowdfunding or taxing the wealthy

### **Q23. How might these changes impact you? (optional)**

We want to understand how our proposals may impact different people in our city, especially in relation to personal characteristics. These characteristics were listed as follows, as a precursor to this free text question:

- Age
- Disability
- Sex (including pregnancy and maternity)
- Gender identity or reassignment
- Race or ethnicity
- Religion or belief (including lack of belief)
- Sexual orientation
- Marriage or civil partnership
- Caring responsibilities
- Low income or digital exclusion
- Refugee, asylum seeker, or migrant status

Respondents overwhelmingly emphasised that libraries are vital community resources, especially for groups at risk of exclusion: children and families (particularly those on low incomes), older people, disabled people, those with caring responsibilities, and people experiencing digital exclusion. Many highlighted that libraries are often the only free, safe, warm indoor spaces available for social interaction, study, work, and access to information and technology.

A major concern was that reducing opening hours - especially evenings and weekends - or closing local branches would disproportionately impact those who cannot travel far or afford alternative spaces. This includes working people who rely on evening/weekend access, parents with young children who need local, accessible activities, and those with mobility issues or disabilities. Many noted that public transport is expensive or impractical for these groups.

Digital exclusion was frequently mentioned and the fact that libraries provide essential internet and computer access for those who cannot afford it at home, which is crucial for job-seeking, benefits, homework and administrative tasks. Respondents also stressed the importance of libraries in improving mental health and combating loneliness and isolation, particularly for elderly people and new parents.

Many parents and carers described libraries as essential for children's literacy and development, offering access to books they could not otherwise afford and providing educational activities. School links were highlighted as important, and libraries located in close proximity to schools are especially valued.

Disabled people and neurodivergent users repeatedly stressed the need for accessible, local, quiet spaces; respondents express concern that closures or reduced hours would increase barriers and distress. Some respondents noted the lack of alternative accessible toilets in the city outside of those provided by local libraries.

Libraries were also described as safe havens for LGBTQ+ people, migrants, and other minorities - places where they feel welcome and can access relevant resources. Several respondents mentioned the importance of libraries as neutral spaces for community cohesion and integration.

A number of respondents expressed concern that closures or reduced hours would further erode community spirit and increase inequality. Some suggested alternatives such as using volunteers to keep libraries open but raised concerns about consistency and inclusivity in volunteer-run services.

A minority said they would not be personally affected but recognised the negative impact on others, especially vulnerable groups. A few expressed a view that the consultation was poorly designed or that decisions had already been made.

#### **Q24. Please share any final comments or suggestions you have about our proposals. (optional)**

This free text question was answered by 45% of respondents.

Respondents overwhelmingly oppose library closures and reductions in opening hours, describing libraries as vital, irreplaceable community assets that provide much more than just access to books. The most common themes and concerns in response to this question are:

##### **Libraries as essential community hubs**

Libraries are repeatedly described as safe, warm, and inclusive spaces that support learning, social connection, mental wellbeing, and provide free access to information and technology for all ages, especially children, the elderly, low-income families, and vulnerable groups.

##### **Negative impact on disadvantaged groups**

There is strong concern that closures, or reduced hours will disproportionately harm those who cannot easily travel further afield, such as people with disabilities, older people, families with young children, and those on low incomes.

### **Importance of libraries for children's education and literacy**

Many stress the crucial role libraries play in encouraging children to read, supporting schoolwork, and providing educational opportunities that may not be available at home.

### **Rottingdean and Westdene Libraries**

There is a particularly strong response to keep Rottingdean and Westdene libraries open. Respondents highlight their high usage (especially by children and older people), their role as community/cultural hubs (Rottingdean Library's position within The Grange), proximity to schools, and the minimal financial savings compared to the social cost. Many argue that closing these libraries would increase isolation and reduce access for those unable to travel.

### **Concerns about reduced opening hours at central libraries**

There was also a particularly strong response to retain late nights and weekends at Jubilee and Hove Libraries. Many object to reducing evening and weekend hours at main libraries (Jubilee and Hove), noting these are peak times for working people, students, and families. There is particular concern about Sunday closures or early closing.

### **Opposition to cost-cutting**

Many respondents believe the proposed savings are small compared to the long-term social and educational costs. They urge the council to find savings elsewhere.

### **Libraries as free public spaces**

Libraries are seen as one of the last remaining places where people can spend time without having to spend money or face commercial pressures.

### **Respondents suggest a range of alternatives to closure or cuts, the most cited being:**

- Increase use of volunteers or community-run models (though with some caution about sustainability)
- Seek alternative funding (sponsorship, donations, crowdfunding, tourist tax)
- Reduce hours at larger libraries to maintain smaller branches
- Expand library services (increased digital offer and mobile libraries most frequently mentioned)
- Improve publicity and outreach to increase usage

### Other notable points:

- Some call for greater transparency in decision-making
- A minority of respondents do suggest rationalising the service by focusing on fewer but better-resourced libraries

In summary, the vast majority of respondents see libraries as vital public spaces whose closure or reduction would have far-reaching negative impacts, and they urge the council to seek alternative savings or funding and to recognise the long-term value of libraries over short-term financial savings.

We invited survey responders to complete optional equalities monitoring questions at the end of the survey. A summary of the responses are provided at the end of this report.

## Email Responses

We received a total of 164 emails to the dedicated consultation inbox. Engagement came from a range of people, summarised as follows:

Response type	Count
Public	133
Community Group	7
School	2
MP	1
Organisations	3
Councillors	2
Library Staff	2
Access Requests	14
<b>Total</b>	<b>164</b>

As well as this, 195 pages of letters and handmade posters from children at Westdene Primary School were written, scanned and shared by email to the consultation inbox as an attachment. In addition, 7 handmade posters were shared in-person by children from Rottingdean which were scanned by library staff and sent to the consultation inbox.

14 access requests were predominantly for PDF versions of the survey or for signposting to proposal details and appendices.

The majority of email responses from the public specifically relate to Rottingdean and Westdene Libraries, whereas group and organisational responses tended to be more general in nature.

The most common themes and concerns from email correspondence, echoing some of those from the survey responses, are:

### **Potential impact on families, children and young people**

Respondents highlight that for many children, the library is on their way home from school or close to a swimming lesson, and concern is expressed that families may be unable to maintain this healthy library habit. The two responses from local schools in Westdene and Rottingdean both state the importance of their local public libraries' impact on improving and maintaining literacy outcomes for pupils. Westdene Primary School's response highlights the fact that all of their classes visit the library every fortnight but do not use the main entrance. Pupils that responded directly to the consultation by written letter are overwhelmingly against the proposed closure of Westdene Library and share the many ways the library supports their love of reading. They also outline the role it plays in the lives of other people in their community – particularly those experiencing fuel poverty and digital exclusion. They also reference the calming and relaxing nature of the space.

Similarly, concern is expressed by members of the public for families who utilise Jubilee and Hove libraries at weekends who would find this opportunity reduced were the proposals to be taken forward.

### **Potential impact on older people, specifically those digitally excluded**

Multiple respondents highlight that older people are vulnerable to digital exclusion and social isolation, regardless of their financial means. As well as this, older respondents share their personal experience of living with disabilities, and their inability to use public transport.

### **Libraries as vital safe spaces**

Many examples of the benefits of physical library spaces for vulnerable groups are shared, particularly young people, refugees and asylum seekers, and the unhoused community at Jubilee and Hove Libraries.

### **Dissatisfaction with consultation process**



A number of respondents expressed their concern over the lack of multiple suggestions being consulted on, as well as the size of the potential saving compared to the potential impact on communities and the financial savings that libraries contribute to elsewhere (school attainment, employment, reducing social isolation and digital exclusion are all cited in relation to this).

## **Event Engagement**

Over 370 people were recorded as being in attendance at nine consultation events to share their views in person.

### **Key themes and concerns**

#### **Transparency & Evidence**

Requests for detailed cost breakdowns and clarity on how decisions are made were made at multiple meetings and concerns expressed about long-term planning.

#### **Accessibility & Equity**

Strong objections were made across the board to reduced hours or closures. Concerns about impact on children, elderly, and disabled residents were cited in all locations.

#### **Carbon Impact**

Questions were put to Councillors and Officers at multiple meetings about increased travel and emissions if residents at Rottingdean, Hollingbury and Westdene must travel further to access libraries.

#### **Social Value**

Libraries were frequently described as safe, free spaces for children and families. Personal stories highlighted the role of libraries in post-COVID recovery, job seeking, and community connection or combatting of social isolation. Libraries were seen by attendees as essential to fund, and it was suggested that they mitigate excessive screen time for children and young people. Particularly in Rottingdean and Westdene, event attendees highlighted a lack of other free community spaces.

### **Ideas from event attendees**

#### **Alternative models**

Shared funding, reduced staffing hours, fully volunteer-led models, or blended (staff and volunteer) models were all suggested as alternatives to closures or reductions.

#### **Income generation**

Encouraging more public donations, seeking sponsorships, and running income-generating community events were frequently suggested. Collaboration with businesses (including national bookshops) was also suggested as an area for exploration.

**Youth engagement**

There were strong calls to consult thoroughly with young people, especially students from local schools. Suggestions to involve students in running libraries services via Duke of Edinburgh volunteering were made.

**Partnerships**

Career coaching, adult education, and digital support were suggested areas to work in partnership with other services and save resources. Greater collaboration with school libraries was also proposed.

**Smartphone Use & Education**

Libraries are seen as a counterbalance to screen time; calls to align library policy with national moves to reduce smartphone use among children and the National Year of Reading in 2026.

**Rottingdean & Westdene-Specific Issues**

- Cultural Hub: The Grange houses the library, gallery, museum, and gardens; it is seen as a vital cultural centre.
- Community Impact: Residents from Rottingdean, Ovingdean, and Westdene expressed concern about losing key social and educational resources.
- Accessibility: Praised for disabled access and proximity to schools and play areas.
- Heritage & Covenant: Questions raised about historical agreements requiring the building to be used for library services.
- Synergy with Other Services: Highlighted the interconnectedness of services at The Grange and Westdene School.

**Summary of all responses**

**Most frequently cited ideas and suggestions from all responses**

Reduce savings targets for libraries and reallocate to other council services
Increase use of volunteers or community-run models

Seek alternative funding (sponsorships, donations, crowdfunding, charging and membership)
Reduce or alter hours at larger libraries to maintain smaller branches and protect evenings and weekends
Expand or alter library services (digital support and e-resources, mobile libraries, extend Libraries Extra hours at community libraries and consider introducing at Jubilee and Hove)
Improve publicity and outreach to increase usage

### Key themes and concerns from all responses

Opposition to reduction in library budgets
Concerns over impact on children and literacy, and schools' use of libraries
Loss of study space for young people and students
Libraries as safe, warm, 'third' spaces that support community cohesion and reduce social isolation
Difficulty travelling to alternatives, particularly for families, elderly and disabled
Digital and financial exclusion

## How this report will be used

This report is created to facilitate discussion at a November 2025 meeting of the People Overview and Scrutiny Committee in Brighton & Hove.

This report plus further analysis of the public consultation will be shared as part of the final proposal paper going to Cabinet in December 2025.

## Supplementary information: Your Voice Survey Monitoring Information

A series of optional equalities monitoring questions were asked at the end of the survey. Before these questions, it was stated that:

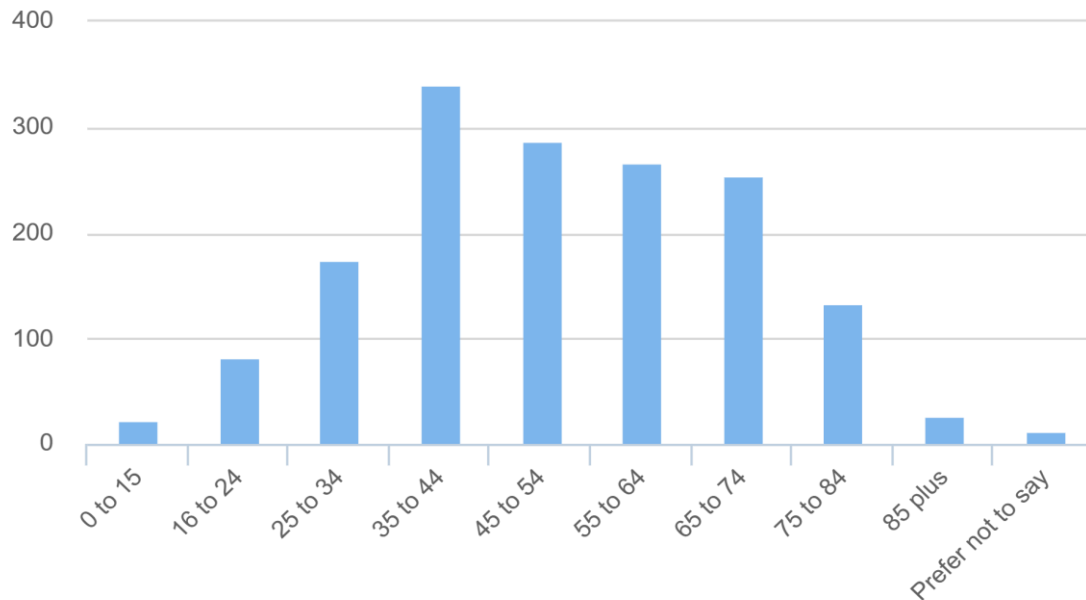
- *All responses are anonymous.*
- *Data is used to help the council fulfil its legal equalities duties and ensure its services meet the needs of customers and service users*

- *The information you give will be used to see what impact these proposals may have on particular groups. We can also adjust our approach if we find a particular group is under-represented.*

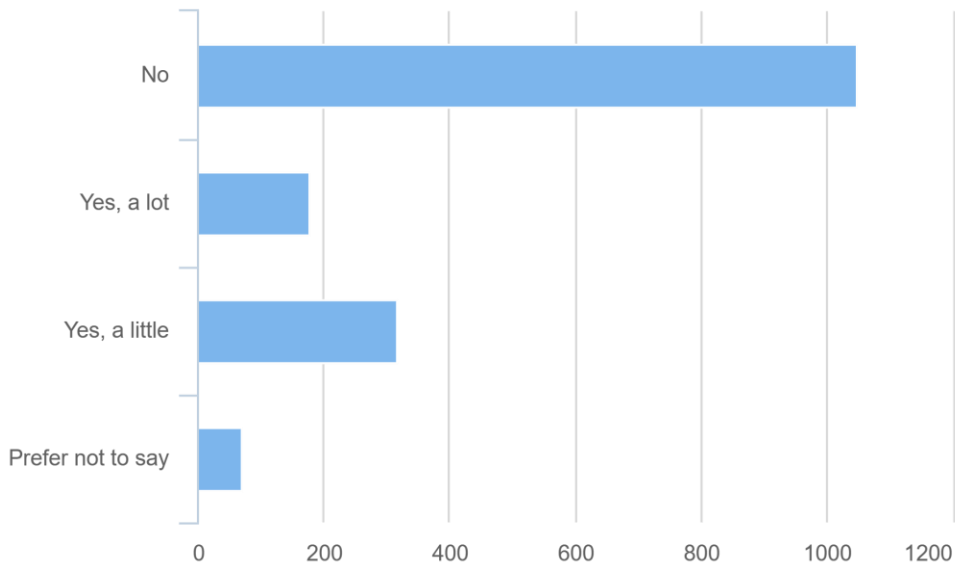
### **59% of respondents shared monitoring information.**

Here is a summary of those responses:

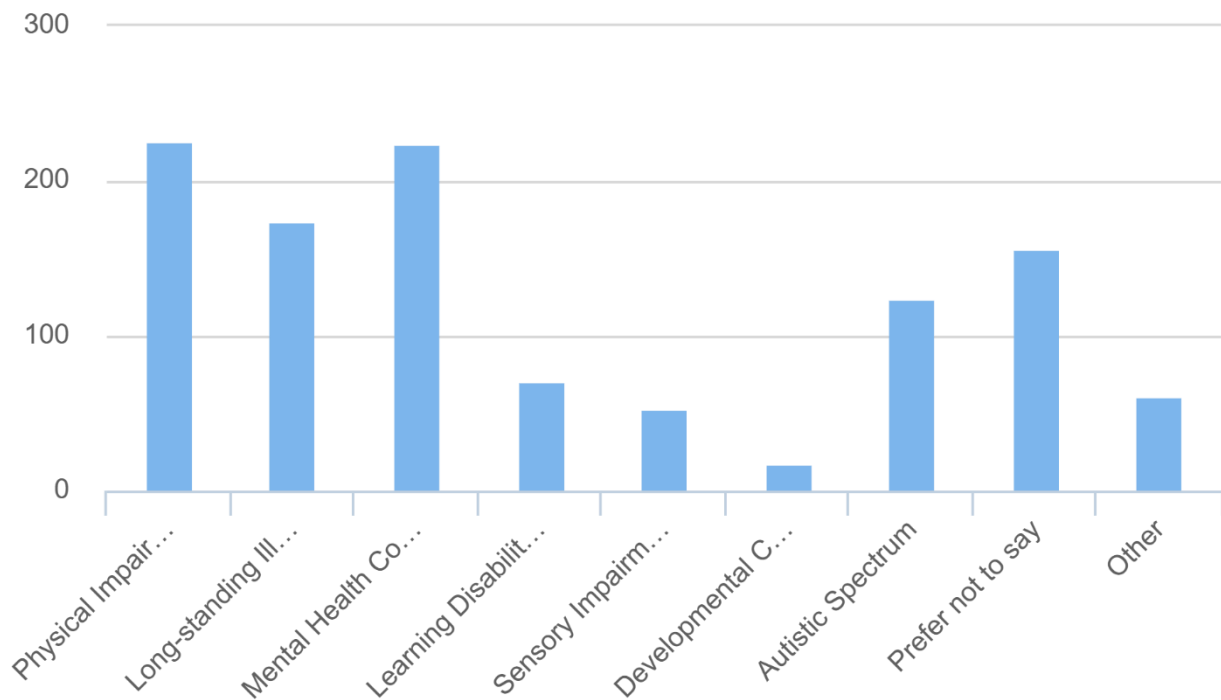
#### **Q32. What is your age? (optional)**



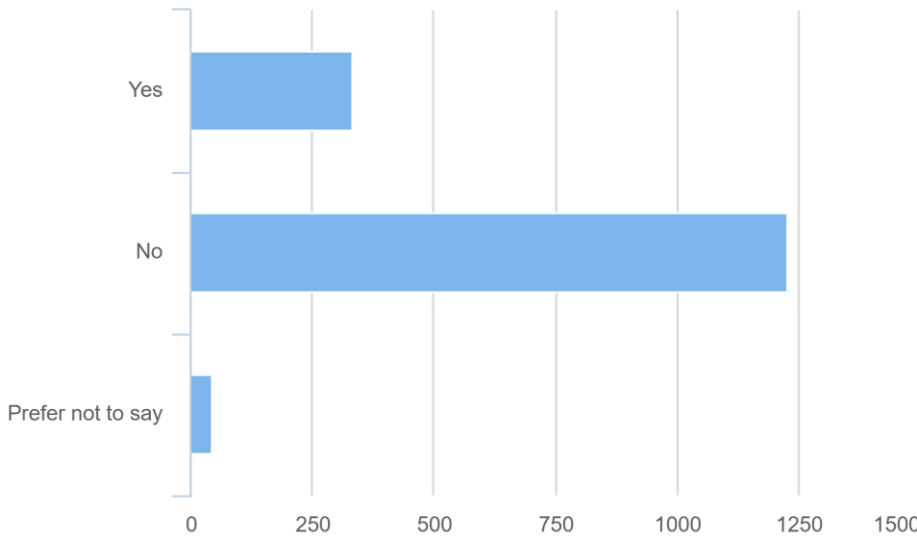
#### **Q 33. Are your day-to-day activities limited because of a health problem or disability which has lasted, or is expected to last, at least 12 months? (optional)**



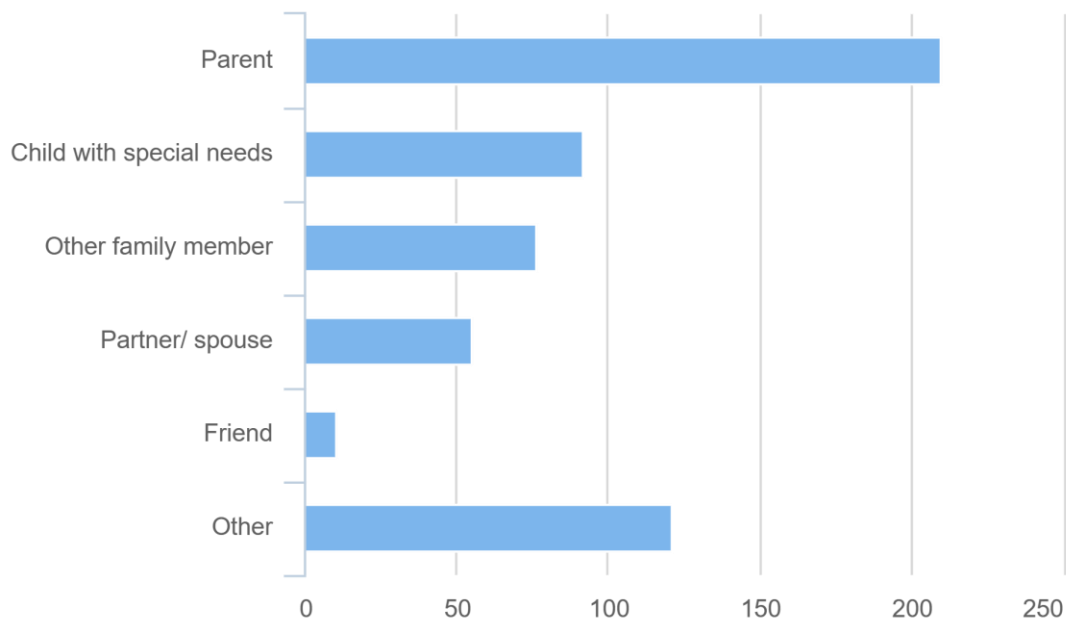
**Q34. Do any of your conditions or illnesses reduce your ability to carry out day-to-day activities? (optional)**



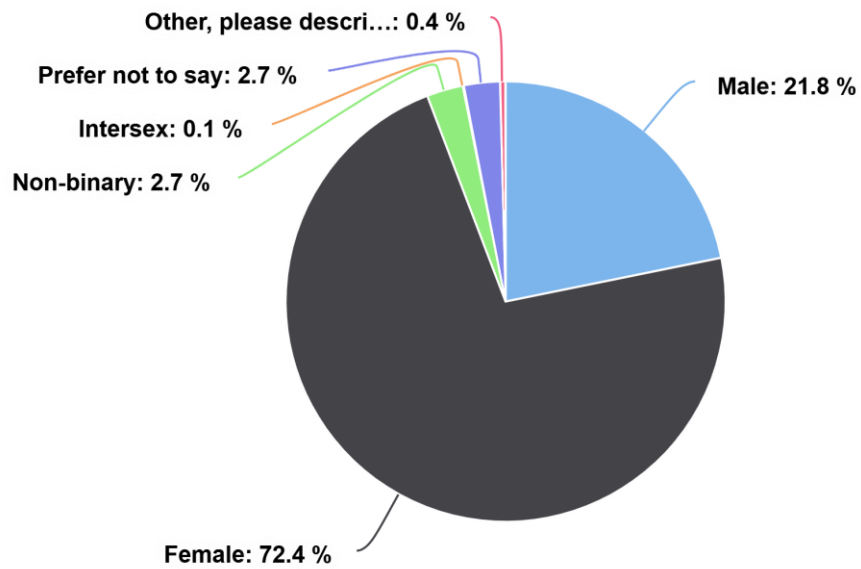
**Q35. Are you a carer? (optional)**



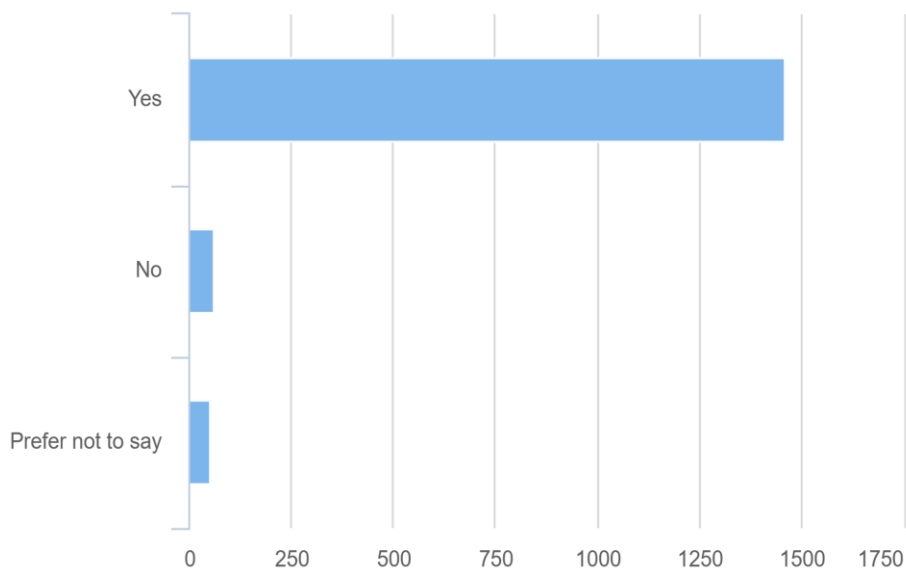
**Q36. If you answered 'yes' above, please state who you care for. If you care for more than one person please tick all that apply. If none apply, please mark 'other' (optional)**



**Q39. What best describes your sex?**



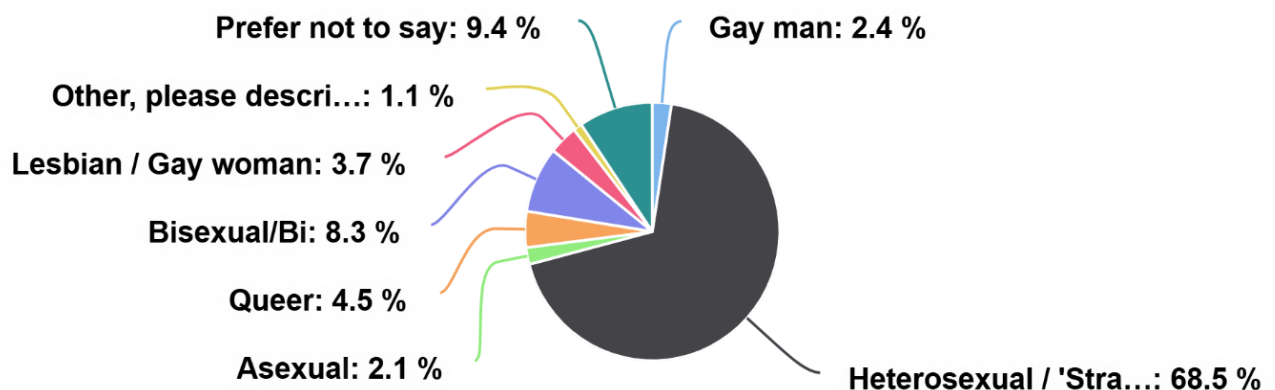
**Q40. Is the gender you identify with the same as your sex registered at birth? (optional)**



**Q42. How would you describe your ethnic origin? (optional)**

Asian / Asian British: Bangladeshi	4
Asian / Asian British: Chinese	8
Asian / Asian British: Indian	33
Asian / Asian British: Other (please share details below)	12
Black / Black British: African	17
Black / Black British: Caribbean	14
Black / Black British: Other (please share details below)	2
Mixed: Any other mixed / multiple ethnic background	32
Mixed: Asian and White	17
Mixed: Black African and White	8
Mixed: Black Caribbean and White	9
Other ethnic group, please describe	29
Other Ethnic Group: Arab	12
Prefer not to say	42
White: English, Welsh, Scottish, Northern Irish, British	1099
White: Gypsy or Irish Traveller	2
White: Irish	32
White: Other	191
Asian / Asian British: Pakistani	2
(blank)	1146

**Q44. Which of the following best describes your sexual orientation? (optional)**



**Q46. What is your religion or belief? (optional)**

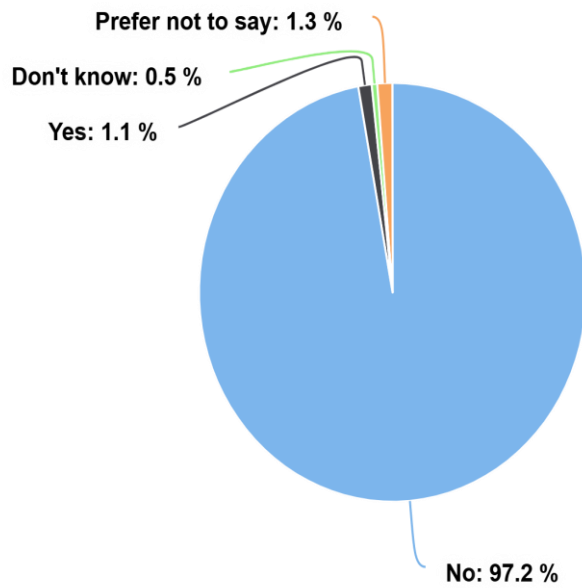


Jewish	24
I have no particular religion or belief	749
Prefer not to say	86
Other philosophical belief	53
Hindu	15
Christian	367
Other religion or belief, please describe	29
Atheist	115
Pagan	15
Buddhist	25
Agnostic	47
Muslim	19
Sikh	2

**Q48. What is your legal marital or registered civil partnership status? (optional)**

Never married and never registered in a civil partnership	455
Married	704
Separated but still legally married	19
Divorced	127
Widowed	71
In a registered civil partnership	43
Formerly in a civil partnership which is now legally dissolved	4
Separated but still legally in a civil partnership	4
A surviving member of a legally registered civil partnership	2

**Q49. Are you, or have you been, looked after by a local authority for at least 13 weeks since the age of 14? (optional)**



**Q50. Have you previously served in the UK armed forces? (optional)**

