

Brighton & Hove Libraries

Needs and Use Analysis

Part 1: Data Analysis

To be informed by Public Consultation - Summer 2025



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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)¹, 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 platform², 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

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

² 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)

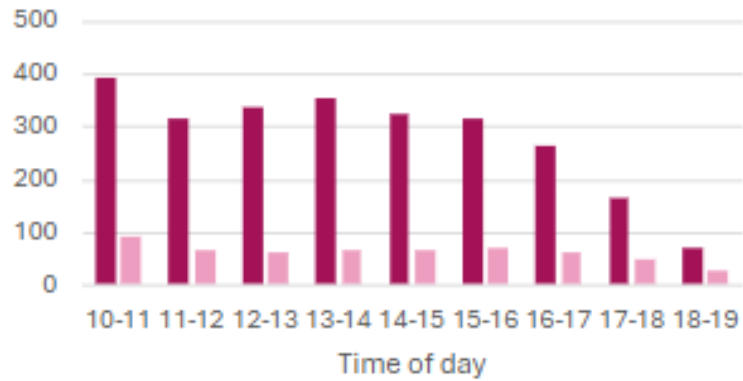
	All Days	LE days	LE %
Jubilee Library	857,109	N/A	N/A
Hove Library	158,981	N/A	N/A
Saltdean Library	40,861	15,237	37%
Portslade Library	31,655	8,928	28%

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%

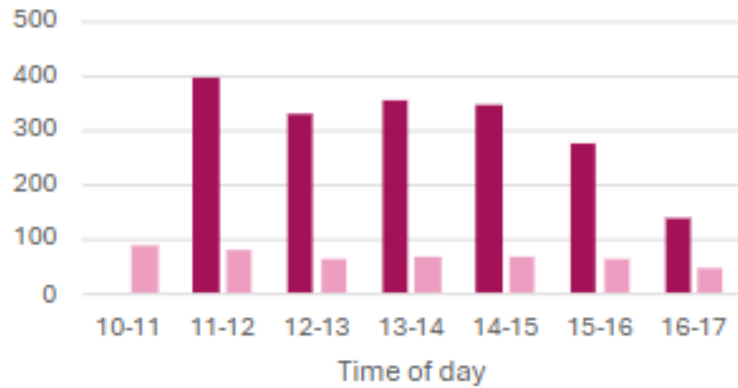
Hourly footfall at both Jubilee and Hove (see Fig.3.) peak on weekday mornings, remain steady throughout the day but drop off gradually between 5pm and 7pm on their respective late opening days. Saturdays are particularly busy at Jubilee and sustained high footfall matches that of weekday mornings. Sunday 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

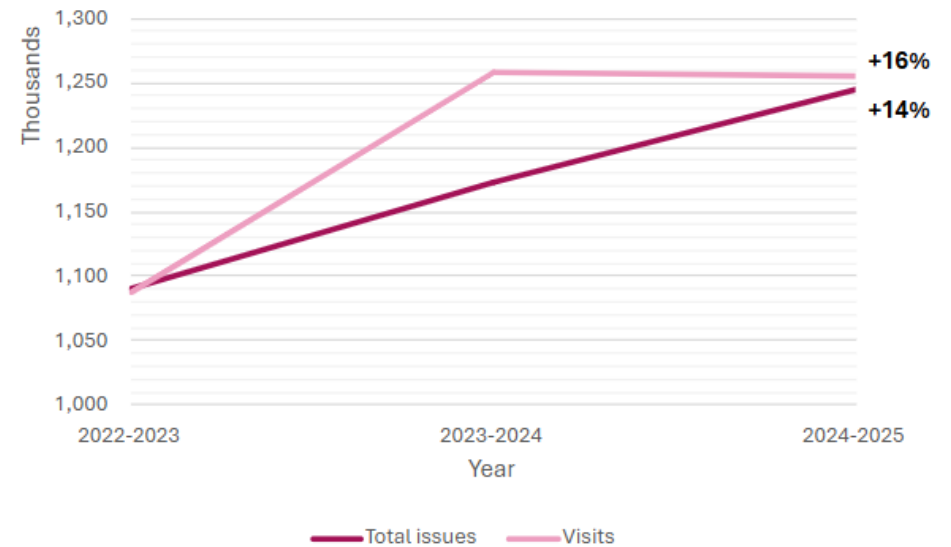


Fig.5. eBooks issued and Public PC hours used 2022-25

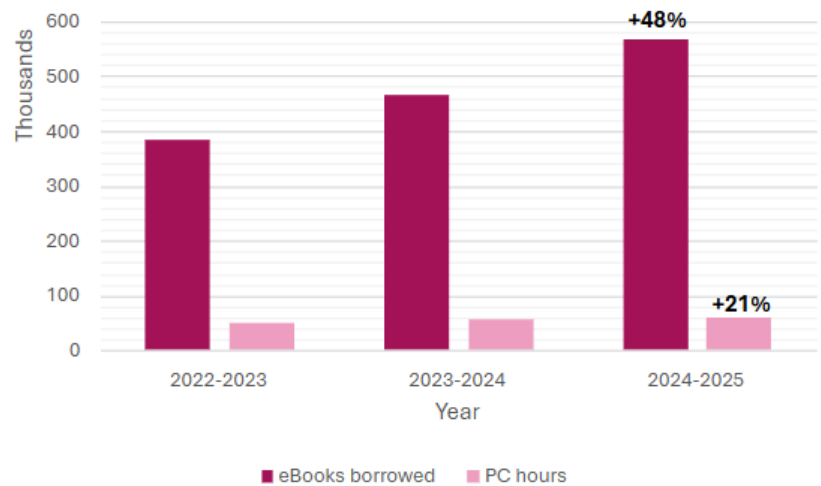
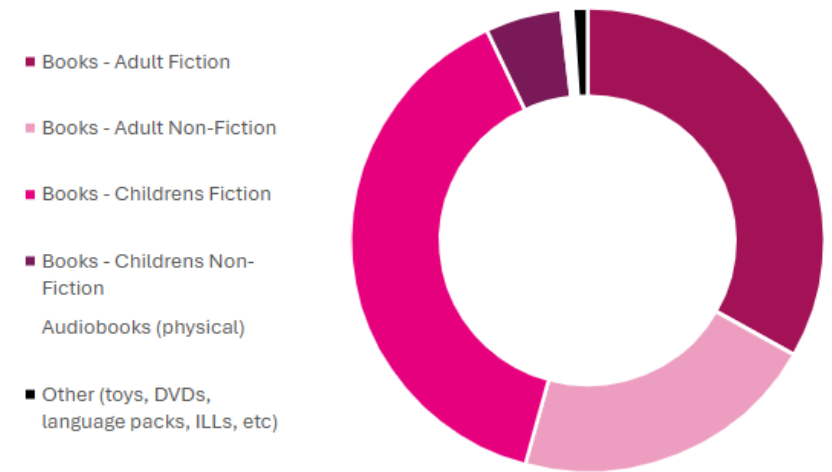


Fig.6. Issues by item category 2024-25



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.

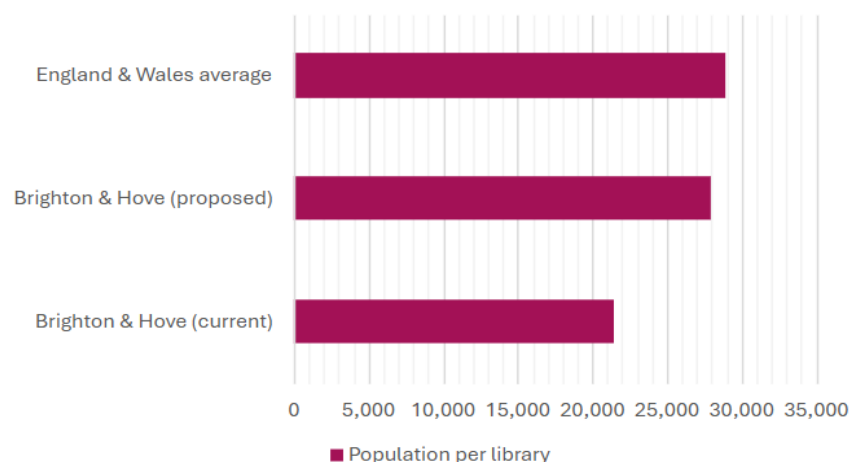
Comparison to national landscape

Recent data³ 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.

³ 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.

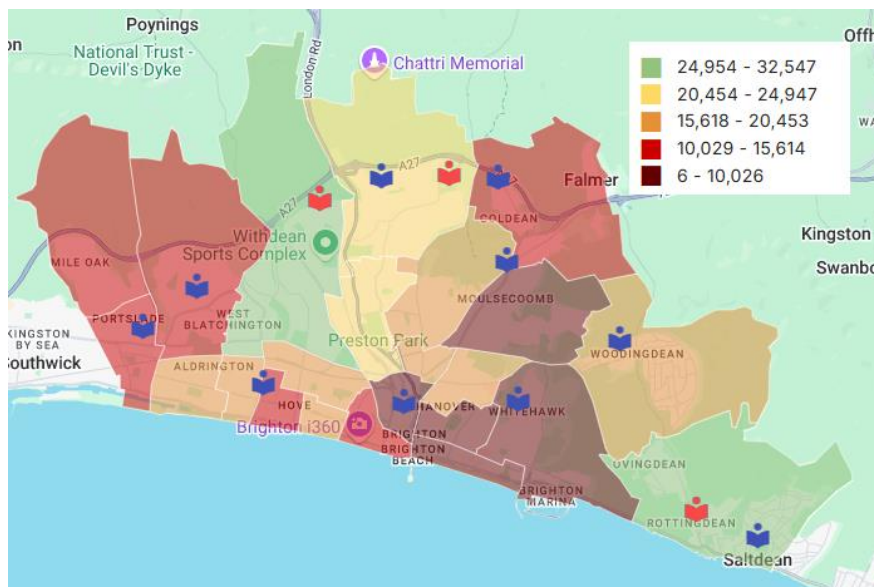
Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) 2019

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% of 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:

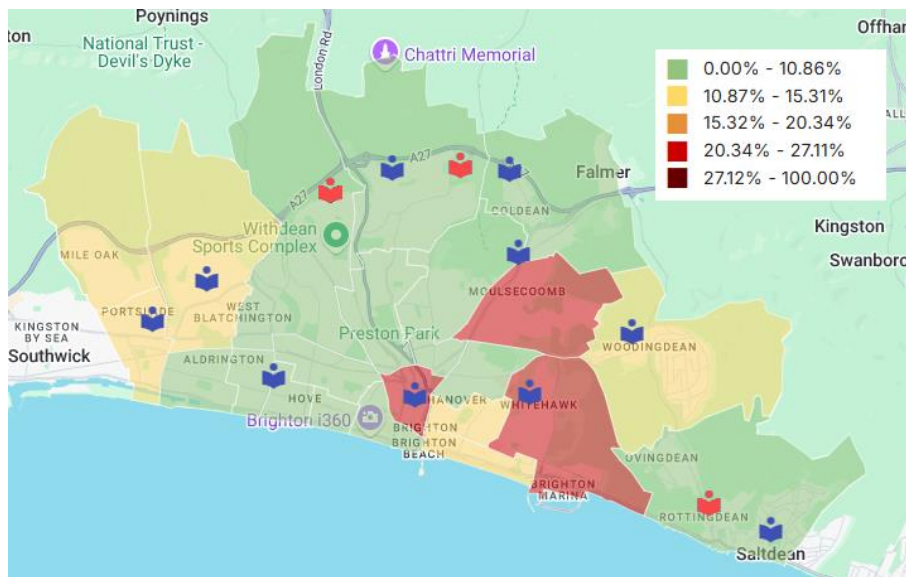
In 2023, the National Literacy Trust found that the percentage of children and young people aged 8 to 18 who said that they didn't have a book of their own at home increased compared with the year before, particularly for those from lower-income homes⁴.

⁴

www.nlt.cdn.ngo/media/documents/Book_ownership_in_2023_k6ovlWY.pdf

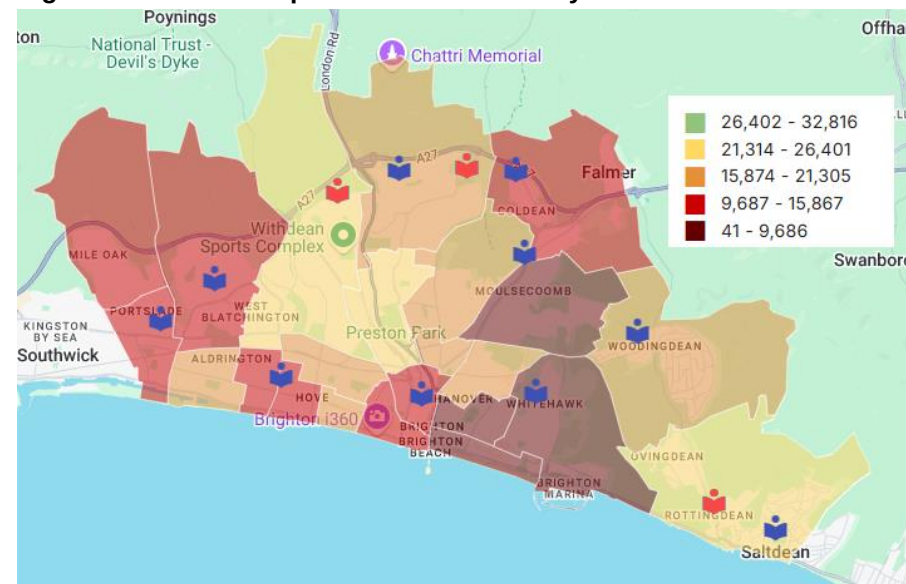
In 2022 nearly 1 in 10 children receiving free school meals (FSMs) said they did not have a book of their own. Since then that figure has risen to 1 in 8. Children who are on FSMs are twice as likely not to own a book as those who are not. In fact, the percentage-point (pp) gap in book ownership between 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.⁵ 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

⁵ 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.⁶ Brighton & Hove has a higher proportion of older people living in poverty compared to England and the South East.⁷

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

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.

⁷ [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 borrowing⁸. 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

⁸ [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.

