

General Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) Form

1. Assessment details

Name of activity or proposal being assessed:	Proposed closure of some community libraries and a reduction in opening hours at Jubilee and Hove Libraries – Cabinet 11 December 2025
Directorate:	Families, Children and Wellbeing
Service:	Library Service
Team:	Senior Leadership Team
Is this a new or existing activity?	New
Are there related EIAs that could help inform this EIA? Yes or No (If Yes, please use this to inform this assessment)	<p>Yes – Budget EIA that went to Budget Council February 2025</p> <p>Appendix 7 - Equality Impacts Assessments.pdf (budget proposal 2)</p> <p>Yes – EIA that went to Cabinet in July 2025 to seek approval to commence a public consultation</p> <p>General Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) Form Libraries public consultation</p>

2. Contributors to the assessment

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

3. About the activity

Briefly describe the purpose of the activity being assessed:

In July 2025, Cabinet agreed to undertake a Public Consultation into the following proposals.

- closure of Hollingbury Library
- closure of Rottingdean Library
- closure of Westdene Library
- changes in opening hours at Hove Library
- changes in opening hours at Jubilee Library

The public consultation ran for 12 weeks from 18 July to 10 October 2025.

This consultation process included a survey (digital and paper versions available), public meetings and drop-in sessions, email correspondence, and meetings with local community groups and stakeholders.

The consultation was well responded to by a wide range of library users, visitors to the city and other stakeholders. We heard from 1000s of people through the survey form and from 100s of people via online and face to face public meetings. There was also an email address where people could email in their views. Many views were shared on the value of libraries within the city and how they meet community needs in a wide range of ways.

The responses to the consultation have been read, considered and analysed by council officers.

Following the public consultation July-October 2025 and the response analysis which followed, the following proposals are being made to Cabinet in December 2025. The full background and context can be found in the accompanying Cabinet paper - [Brighton & Hove City Council - Agenda for Cabinet on Thursday, 11th December, 2025, 2.00pm](#)

Recommendations to Cabinet:

- That having considered the information provided in this report and its appendices, Cabinet agrees to make the following changes to existing library provision, being satisfied that its remaining provision complies with its statutory obligation to provide a comprehensive and efficient library service
 - Cabinet agrees to reduce opening hours at Jubilee Library by 5 hours/week on Monday evenings and Sunday afternoons from 1st April 2026
 - Cabinet agrees to reduce opening hours at Hove Library by 5 hours/week on Wednesday evenings and Saturday afternoons from 1st April 2026
 - Cabinet agrees to close Hollingbury Library on 31st March 2026 and notes that officers will work with partners in exploring alternative options for future community based provision;
 - Cabinet agrees to continue the existing library provision in Rottingdean with a further report to be brought back to Cabinet in 12 months to review the outcome of work with community partners;
 - Cabinet agrees to close Westdene Library on 31st March 2026 and notes that officers will work with partners in exploring alternative options for future community based provision;
- That Cabinet delegates authority to the Corporate Director for Families, Children and Wellbeing, working in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Sport & Leisure, to take all steps necessary or incidental to the delivery of the recommendations in paras 2.1.1 to 2.1.5 inclusive.

The main change to the recommendations, further to those that were proposed in July, is that the original proposals include closing Rottingdean Library. The recommendation now is to keep the library open with a review in 12 months' time.

What are the desired outcomes of the activity?

To ensure that within its decision making at Cabinet in December 2025, Councillors ensure there remains a comprehensive and efficient library service which also meets our public Sector Equality Duty within the Equality Act 2010. The purpose of the EIA is to ensure they are appropriately sighted on a wide range of implications that have been informed by the public

consultation and to consider them and their mitigations, as presented within this assessment and the accompanying Cabinet report.

An EIA was conducted late last year on the original budget proposals. An EIA was conducted earlier this year to support the design and delivery of the public consultation process. Both of those have informed this assessment.

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, look for work and those who study in the city

Staff within the council's library service are an essential and significant stakeholder in this process. They have had specific mechanisms to engage with and contribute to the public consultations. If changes are confirmed to be made to the library service, staff will then have a separate staff consultation. Equalities implications for staff members will be considered as part of that and a separate EIA prepared.

4. Consultation and engagement

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

Following Cabinet in July 2025, a public consultation was held on the following recommendations:

- 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 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 platform, 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 and 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 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.
- Pre-consultation, 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 targeted communications about the consultation with a wide range of community groups and networks, to reach as many residents and visitors as possible. We have also analysed 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 was undertaken to inform and engage with staff on the proposals.

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
Disability and inclusive adjustments, coverage under equality act and not	YES
Ethnicity, ‘Race’, ethnic heritage (including Gypsy, Roma, Travellers)	YES
Religion, Belief, Spirituality, Faith, or Atheism	YES
Gender Identity and Sex (including non-binary and Intersex people)	YES
Gender Reassignment	YES
Sexual Orientation	YES
Marriage and Civil Partnership	YES
Pregnant people, Maternity, Paternity, Adoption, Menopause, (In)fertility (across the gender spectrum)	YES
Armed Forces Personnel, their families, and Veterans	YES
Expatriates, Migrants, Asylum Seekers, and Refugees	YES
Carers	YES
Looked after children, Care Leavers, Care and fostering experienced people	YES

Domestic and/or Sexual Abuse and Violence Survivors, and people in vulnerable situations (All aspects and intersections)	YES
Socio-economic Disadvantage	YES
Homelessness and associated risk and vulnerability	YES
Human Rights	NO
People on a low income and people living in the most deprived areas	YES

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

A large number of stakeholders were contacted during the public consultation, comprising community groups and networks. They were provided with details of the proposals and the various ways people could respond to the consultation. This included stakeholders covering a wide range of communities, including those relevant to the list provided above, including groups for where we have more limited data sets including Brighton Womens Centre and Rise.

All responses to the public consultation have been considered, including where people have talked about personal circumstances and any intersectionality of their characteristics. The digital and paper survey also collected equalities monitoring data during the public consultation. We were also informed about personal and individual experiences via a number of public meetings where the proposals were presented and attendees had multiple opportunities to ask questions and share their views. During these discussions many personal experiences were shared with us covering a wide range of both protected characteristics plus wide factors impacting on people’s lives. That has all contributed to this assessment.

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 encouraged 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 2 of the required Needs and Use Analysis is also provided with this assessment in the report to December’s Cabinet. This, alongside Part 1 of the analysis, 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.

This will be through direct communication, social media promotion and engagement with partners and stakeholders.

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 has been read in full. Themes have been 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 Part 1, which was presented to Cabinet in July 2025.

6. Impacts

Please note:

- The sections below feature some direct quotes provided by responders to the public consultation. Where these may have contained clearly identifiable information these have been slightly modified, to protect the identity of those quoted. The sentiment and meaning of the quote has not been affected
- The analysis below features inclusion of comments made about the Rottingdean proposals. Despite this proposal no longer going forward in its original form, these comments and accompanying analysis have been left in as it informs the assessment.

6.1 Age

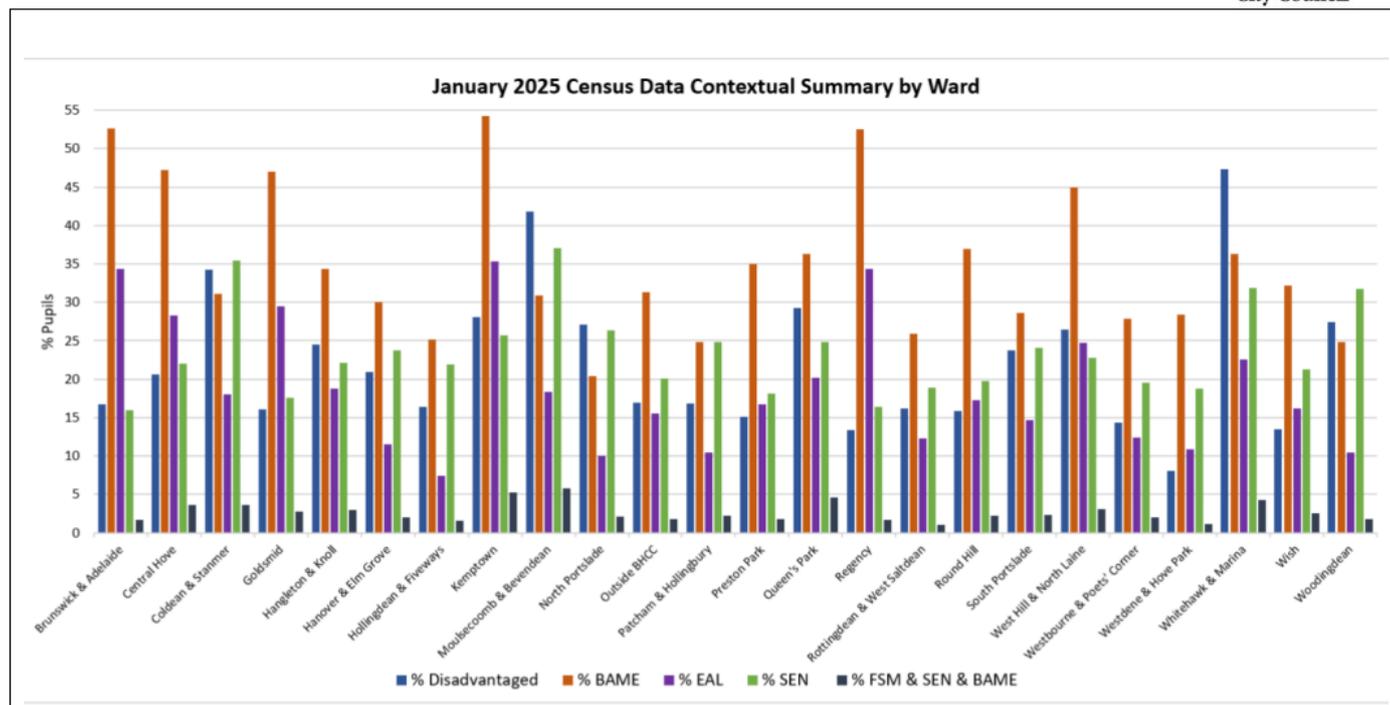
Does your analysis indicate a disproportionate impact relating to any particular Age group? For example: people who may be housebound, those under 16, young adults, with other intersections.	YES
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If “YES”, what are the positive and negative disproportionate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



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. 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 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 personally within our own families. There is evidence that libraries have a part to play in combatting social isolation. Brighton & Hove has a higher proportion of older people living in poverty compared to England and the South East.

The recent public consultation heard deeper and more actionable insight into the age of people using libraries. This then expands on the data we explored in part 1.

These new insights include:

- For those that were happy to provide their age when completing the survey, the distribution skews to working age adults and older adults. We therefore need to be mindful of hearing the views from young library users and may need to continue to develop mechanisms for doing that more consistently and successfully.
- This same reflection is also made for the ages of survey responders who told us about their library usage. Weekly and daily usage is highest in families and working-age adults but with older adults also showing strong routine usage.
- When looking at travel arrangements to the libraries, travel modes vary by age, with walking dominant for most groups; bus dependency increases among older adults; car/cycle use is more common among the 45–64 grouping. The data indicates that library location and appropriate transport availability is of greater importance to those who are older and / or less mobile.

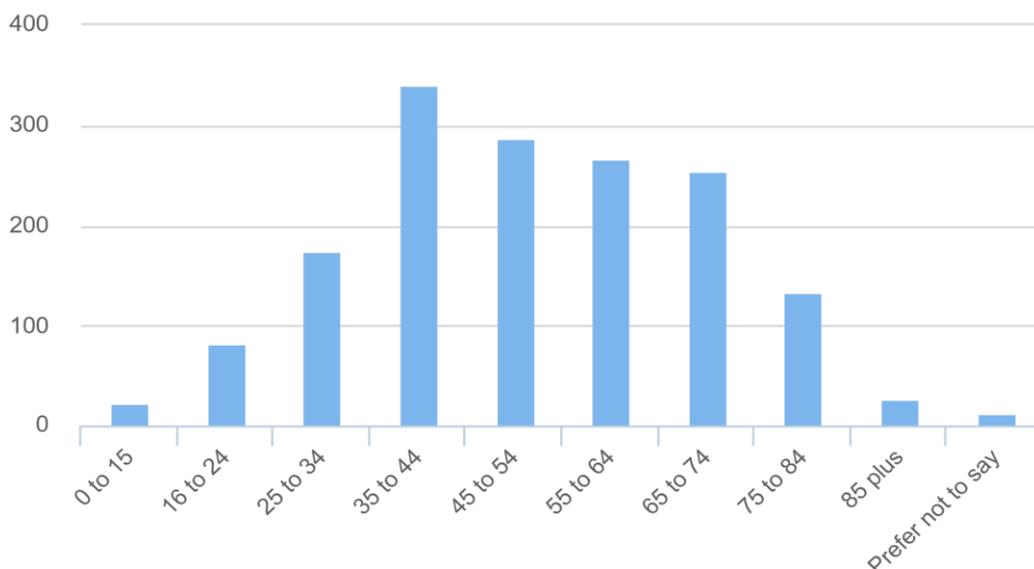
- Older people told us about potential barriers to using alternative libraries as being mobility, cost of travel, road safety and fatigue. Parents of young children talked about distance, availability of time and the cost of travel as being of concern. This enables us to consider that age intersecting with disability and / or caring responsibilities can present an impact/barrier to alternative library use.

Who we heard from during the consultation – related to age

The consultation was widely promoted through council platforms/social media accounts and local press. We also sent targeted information about the proposals and the consultation to a wide range of community groups and networks. This included groups supporting parents/carers of children and young people and groups that support older people in the city. A young person’s guide to the consultation was provided on the YourVoice portal.

In the public consultation survey, responders were invited to share their equalities monitoring data. 59% of respondents shared monitoring information. We had 2711 completed survey submissions.

Here's what people told us about their age:



The image above displays the age ranges of people who responded to the survey – showing that the majority of respondents are between 35 and 74, with much smaller numbers of responses from those under 24 or over 85.

YourVoice, the council’s engagement portal, is designed for people aged 13 and above, so it is not surprising that we heard from fewer people 15 and younger. We know that some adult responders provided their children’s views on their behalf.

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 by children from Rottingdean.

Due to the demographics of the area of the city, the public meetings were well attended by residents aged 50 and over, so we know we heard from a significant number of people in that age group.

Efforts were made within Hove and Jubilee Libraries to encourage the young adults using the space for studying to respond to the consultation and in the last couple of weeks we heard from more users of Jubilee Library, we think partly as a result of that targeted encouragement.

This meant that we were able to hear the views of a wide range of ages for city residents and visitors to the libraries.

What we heard within the consultation process

Accessibility and Mobility

- Many older respondents and some of those who attended public meetings emphasised the importance of having a library within walking distance. For those with mobility issues, walking to a local library is manageable, but travelling further afield can be felt to not be feasible due to steep hills, long distances, or the need to cross busy roads or use multiple buses. Some responders said that for these reasons, if their local library closed, they would likely stop using library services altogether.

Social Isolation and Community

- Libraries were described by some as a “lifeline” for older people, providing not just access to books but also an important social hub. Some older respondents said the library is sometimes the only place they speak to someone all week. The closure of local libraries was seen by some as likely to increase social isolation and loneliness among the elderly.

Physical and Mental Health

- Several older people responding to the survey mentioned that the library helps them maintain their mental health and cognitive abilities. For some, it’s a place to keep their mind active, access information, and feel part of the community. The loss of a local library was described as likely to have a negative impact on both physical and mental wellbeing – this matter came up through survey responses and was raised a number of times within the public meetings.

Digital Exclusion

- There was concern expressed by some that not all older people are comfortable or able to use digital services. Libraries provide access to computers, the internet, and staff support, which are considered essential for those who do not have these facilities at home. Some respondents felt that digital exclusion would worsen if local libraries closed.

Intergenerational Impact

- Some respondents highlighted that libraries are used by all ages, but the impact of closure would be particularly severe for both the very young and the very old. Libraries were seen as places where older people can interact with younger generations, such as grandchildren, and where families can visit together. This came up both in the survey responses and in the public meetings.

Volunteering and Community Solutions

- Some older respondents expressed willingness to volunteer to help keep libraries open, but others noted that relying on volunteers is not a sustainable solution, especially as many potential volunteers are themselves elderly or have health issues.

Libraries as Essential for Early Literacy and Education

- Many survey respondents and people that attended the public meetings described libraries as important for fostering a love of reading and supporting literacy from an early age. Many parents, carers, and educators said that regular library visits help children develop reading skills, discover new genres, and access a wide range of books they could not otherwise afford.
- Libraries were seen by some as crucial for supporting homework, research, and independent study, especially for children and young people who may not have a quiet or suitable space at home.

Libraries as Safe, Inclusive, and Free Spaces for children and families

- Many families and young people described libraries as one of the few free, safe, and welcoming indoor spaces available to them, especially during bad weather or school holidays. Libraries were valued as places where children can read, play, attend events, and socialise without the pressure to spend money.
- Several respondents highlighted the importance of libraries for children with special educational needs, disabilities, or neurodivergent conditions, as libraries offer calm, structured, and supportive environments.

Access and Proximity Matter

- Some parents and carers stressed that having a library within walking distance is essential for regular use, especially with young children or for those without access to a car. The closure of local libraries was seen by some as likely to reduce library use dramatically among children and families, as travelling further afield is often impractical or unaffordable.
- Some noted that libraries attached to or near schools are particularly valuable, as they enable children to visit after school, with their class, or as part of school activities.

Libraries as Community Hubs

- Libraries were described as community hubs where children and young people can meet friends, participate in activities (e.g. Summer Reading Challenge, story time), and engage in cultural and educational pastimes. Many parents said that libraries help reduce isolation for both children and carers and provide opportunities for intergenerational connection.

Impact of Reductions and Closures

- Some respondents expressed strong concern that closing libraries or reducing hours would disproportionately affect children and young people, especially those from low-income families, those with disabilities, and those living in areas with fewer community resources.
- Some feared that reduced access to libraries would lead to lower literacy rates, less enthusiasm for reading, increased screen time, and greater social isolation among children and young people. Concerns about screen time were raised within the survey and multiple times at the public meetings.
- There was particular concern about the loss of after-school and weekend access, as these are the main times when children and families can visit libraries.

Some quotes from survey respondents, specifically related to age.

“Libraries are a vital hub for older people to get out of the house, keep up with news, and socialise.”

“As an older person, having a library within walking distance is important to help me get over these limitations. Having to travel further would leave me very isolated.”

“I am 94, cannot walk long distances, and struggle with the hills in the area. The library is where I meet people, feel part of the community, and use the internet to communicate with my family abroad. Losing it would affect my social life and connection to others.”

“The closure of the library would have a significant impact upon my children’s life chances given what we now know about the correlation between access to literature and positive outcomes. My mental health would also suffer owing to the fact that the library offers a space for social interactions for busy yet isolated parents.”

“Our young children spend so much time here we foster a love of reading there. The library is one of the few places people can go for free at the weekend. It is incredibly well used. Families are there all the time on a Sunday. Also it is one of the few places you can comfortably breastfeed for free and this will have a detrimental impact. “

“The library is a much loved asset and doesn’t cost much to run each year. With a few funding ideas I hope it can be kept open as the local community would be devastated if it closed. As a working mum I have chosen to have Fridays with my pre-school children and prefer to use local services when possible. Closing the library would take away one of the few good indoor activities for kids in the area and rob them of a key educational and cultural resource.”

We received a number of letters and posters from children attending Westdene School. These are available privately to Cabinet Members ahead of the decision meeting on 11 December, but here are a couple of examples to demonstrate how children have been able to express their views through the consultation process.

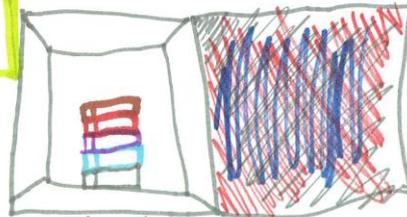
• our school uses its Library

SAVE

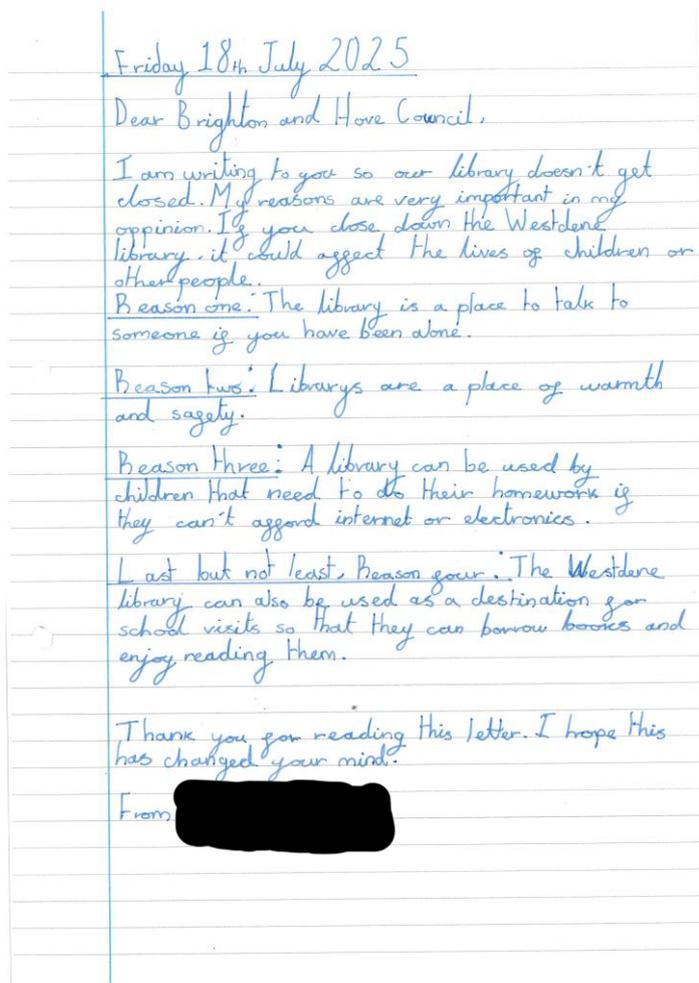
THE

LIBRARY!

please keep the library open



• it's got my favourite books in it



The images above show 2 posters and 1 letter provided by pupils at Westdene Primary School, opposing the proposed closure of Westdene Library.

Summary of potential impacts

- Children and Young People:
 - It was felt by some that CYP were likely to be disproportionately affected by library closures and reduced hours, especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds, those with special educational needs, and those without access to books or digital resources at home.
 - Impacts include loss of after-school study spaces, homework support, digital access, and safe, inclusive community spaces. Libraries are considered important for early literacy, education, and social connection.
- Older Adults:
 - Face increased risk of social isolation, loneliness, and reduced opportunities for social contact if local libraries close or centrally used libraries reduce their opening hours.
 - Many older people rely on libraries as accessible, walkable community hubs for mental stimulation, social interaction, and digital inclusion.

- Those with mobility issues may find it difficult or impossible to travel to alternative libraries, especially if closures mean longer journeys or reliance on public transport.
- Working Age Adults
 - May experience reduced access to job search facilities, IT support, lifelong learning, and designated Warm Spaces in winter.

Mitigations against potential impacts

- Maintain seven-day access at Jubilee Library and through Libraries Extra to ensure continued availability for all age groups, especially those most affected by reduced access elsewhere.
- Promote access to alternative libraries by targeted communications with users at libraries proposed for closure and those who use Hove and Jubilee at the times the library is proposed to close, to ensure they know about the change in delivery and where the alternatives are
- Further campaigns promoting Libraries Extra – to ensure library users affected by closure or reduction in hours have the option of flexible access to alternative libraries
- Continue to prioritise children’s offer within remaining libraries, including maintaining after-school study spaces and resources for homework support
- Ensure alternative local Warm Spaces are well promoted within all libraries
- Consider work with schools and colleges to ensure they are aware of any changes to library services and are aware that children and young people may lose access to local libraries
- For Westdene, explore potential with the school to provide books and online resources for the children’s use
- Expansion and targeted promotion of Home Delivery Service to older people who may lose access to local libraries
- Further promotion of the library service’s online offer of eBooks, eAudiobooks and online resources
- The areas where there are proposed closures are served by frequent bus routes. For Westdene the number 27 runs between Westdene and Saltdean, via the city centre but also passing bus stops where changes to other bus routes are provided. Hollingbury is well served by the number 46 route and several of the 5s – which enable connections and some direct routes to Patcham Library.

The image below (From Brighton & Hove Buses website) shows the bus routes in proximity to libraries proposed for closure and the alternative libraries. Libraries are shown in the black stars.



The image above is a screen shot from a page on the Brighton & Hove Buses website – detailed the main bus routes through the city centre. It also details the locations of a number of libraries (excluding Woodingdean, Rottingdean and Portslade) to show the proximity of libraries to regular bus routes.

6.2 Disability:

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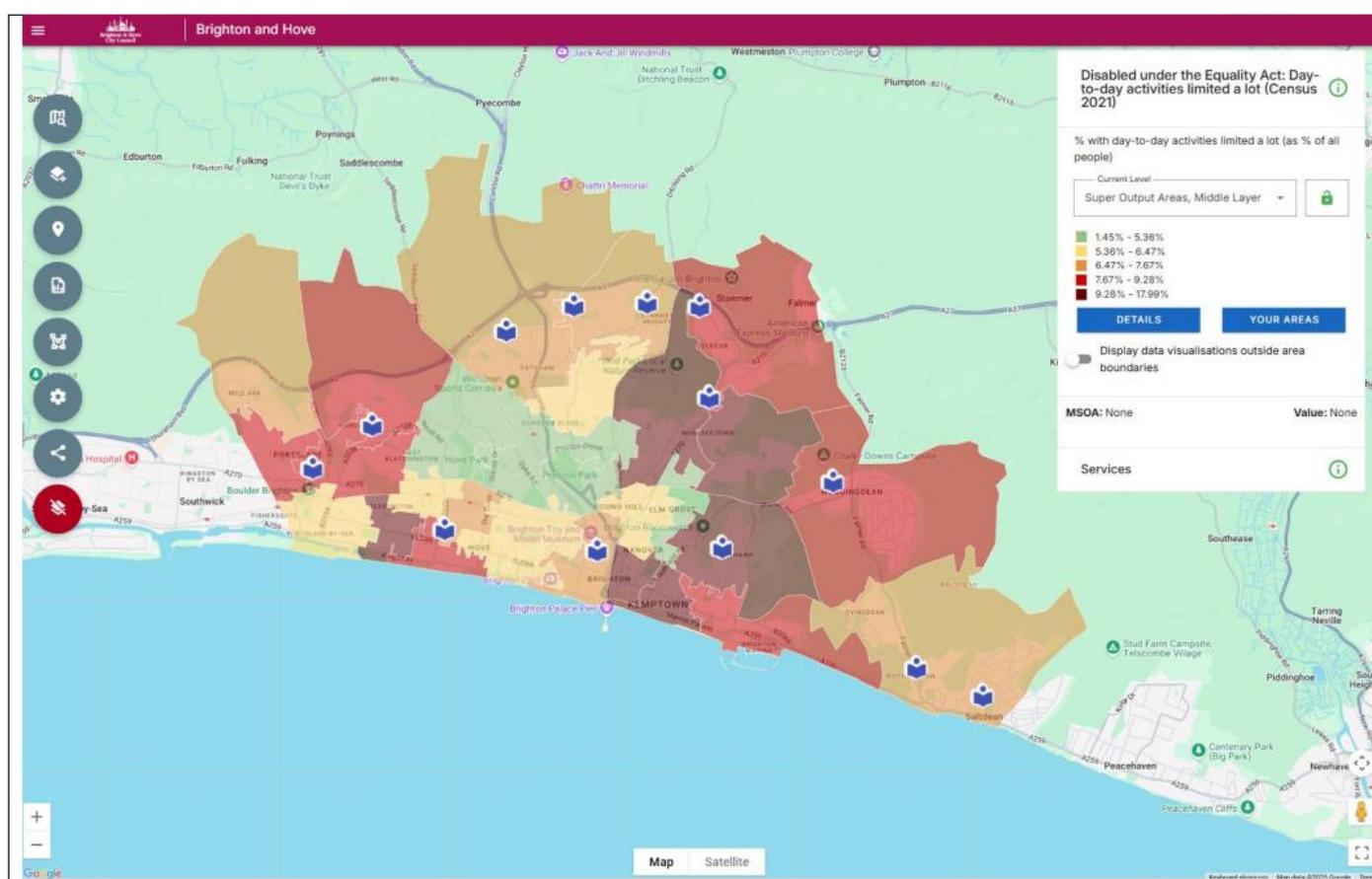
If “YES”, what are the positive and negative disproportionate impacts?

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:

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.



The image above is a screen shot from the Local Insight website, detailing a map of the city and showing the percentages of residents who told the 2021 census that their day to day activities were limited a lot by being disabled. The data shown is at the middle layer of the super output areas. The image also details the location of the city libraries.

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.

Disabled users 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. 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.

The recent public consultation provided a range of individual level responses and free text comments which inform this assessment and analysis.

- About 1 in 5 respondents to the survey reported that their day-to-day activities are limited by a health problem or disability (combining “Yes, a little” and “Yes, a lot”). This means that among those who answered, disability or long-term health conditions are a significant factor for library users.
- We heard that some community branches (e.g., Rottingdean, Portslade, Whitehawk, Woodingdean) have a higher share of users reporting a disability than some city-centre branches, however Jubilee and Hove do support some disabled users.
- The data reflects that disability often intersects with age (older adults), caring responsibilities and with those on a low income. This means it’s important to consider intersectional and cumulative impacts within mitigating actions.
- We heard that some disabled users rely on library computers and staff support for digital access, benefits, and health information.

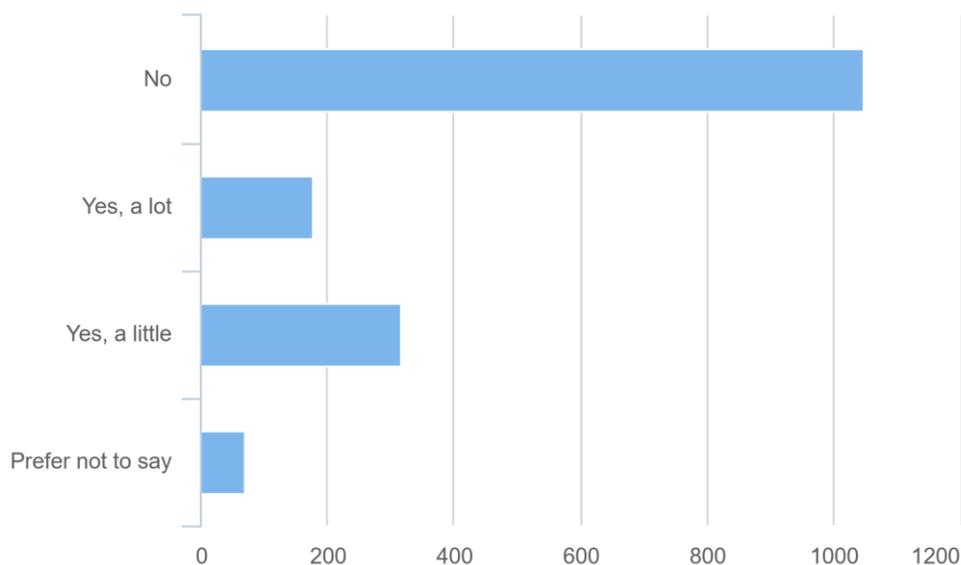
Who we heard from during the consultation – relating to health problems and disabilities

The consultation was widely promoted through council platforms/social media accounts and local press. We also sent targeted information about the proposals and the consultation to a wide range of community groups and networks. This included groups supporting parents/carers of disabled children and young people and groups that support disabled people in the city.

In the public consultation survey, responders were invited to share their equalities monitoring data. 59% of respondents shared monitoring information. We had 2711 completed survey submissions.

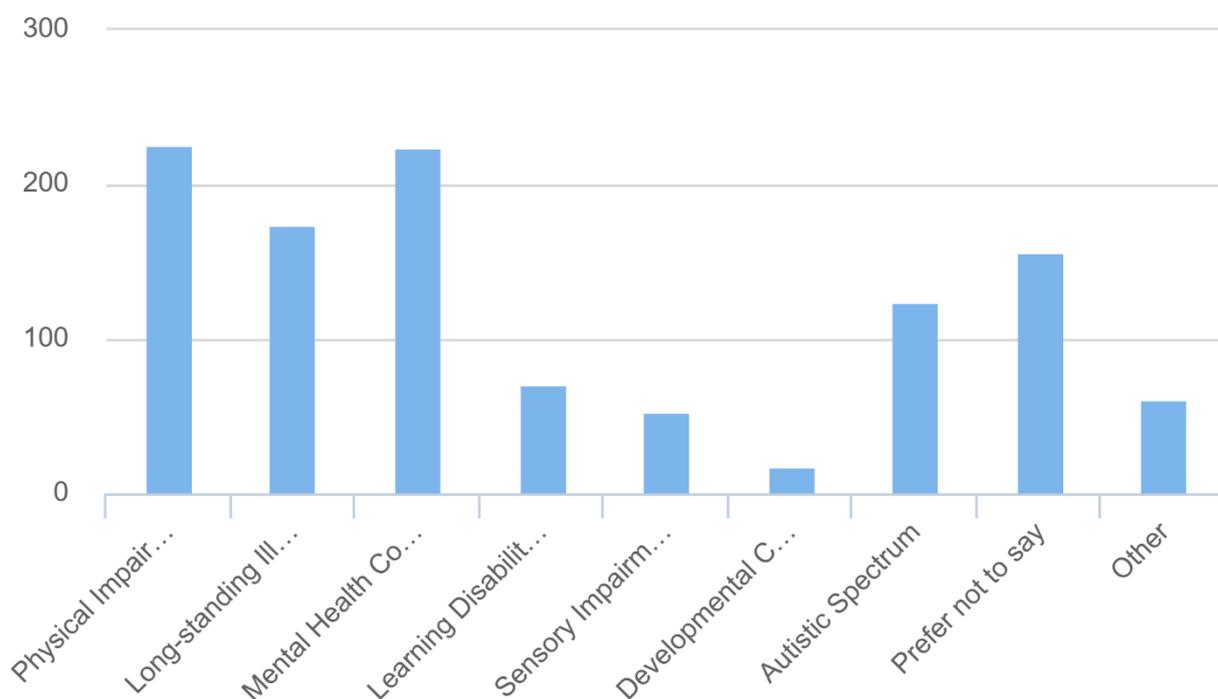
Here's what people told us about health problems or disabilities:

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?



The image above shows data from the libraries survey for the question on whether your day to day activities are limited due to a health problem or a disability. The majority of respondents said no, but there are still significant numbers of those who said 'yes, a little' (over 200) and 'yes, a lot' (over 150).

Do any of your conditions or illnesses reduce your ability to carry out day-to-day activities?



The image above shows data from the libraries survey asking people which conditions affect their ability to conduct day to day activities. A high response was made for mental health condition and physical impairment. Below that was long standing illness and having autism. A significant people also opted for 'prefer not to say'.

What we heard during the consultation:

Access and Mobility

- Disabled respondents to the survey highlighted the importance of having a library within walking distance. For those with physical impairments, mobility issues, or chronic health conditions, travelling further afield (especially to alternative libraries) could be felt to not be feasible. Steep hills, long distances, and the need to use multiple buses were cited as significant barriers.
- Some specifically mentioned that if their local library closed, they would lose access to library services altogether, as they could not manage the journey to another branch.

Libraries as Safe, Inclusive Spaces

- In some cases, Libraries were described as “lifelines” for disabled people, offering not just access to books but also a safe, warm, and welcoming environment. For some, the library is the only public space they feel comfortable and included.
- Several respondents with neurodivergent conditions (such as autism or ADHD) said that libraries provide a calm, quiet, and predictable environment that is important for their wellbeing.

Digital Exclusion

- A few respondents noted that not all disabled people can use digital services. Libraries provide essential access to computers, the internet, and staff support for those who do not have these facilities or skills at home. The closure of local libraries could worsen digital exclusion for disabled people.

Financial Barriers

- The cost of public transport was cited as a potential barrier for disabled people, especially those on low incomes or benefits. Some said that having to pay for buses or taxis to reach a more distant library would be prohibitive, effectively excluding them from library services.

Independence and Social Connection

- Libraries were seen as important for maintaining independence and social contact. For some disabled people, the library is the only place they can go independently, meet others, and feel part of the community. The loss of a local library was described by some as likely to increase isolation and dependence on others.

Accessible Facilities

- Several respondents mentioned the importance of accessible facilities in libraries, such as disabled toilets, step-free access, and staff support. Some noted that their local library is the only place nearby with an accessible toilet.

Impact on Carers and Families

- Carers of disabled people (including parents of disabled children and adults caring for elderly relatives) emphasised that local libraries are essential for their caring responsibilities. Libraries provide a safe, accessible space for outings, respite, and social interaction for both carers and those they care for.

Emotional and Mental Health

- Several disabled respondents described libraries as crucial for their mental health, providing a place to relax, escape isolation, and access information and support. The closure of libraries was seen as likely to have a negative impact on mental wellbeing.

Some quotes from survey respondents, specifically related to disability

“I am disabled and unable to access another library. You would be closing a vital service for me and others in the community. Closing the library will severely impact me as I am unable to visit any other library due to my disability and cannot afford to buy books, magazines or ebooks. You would be removing a vital service which would have a serious negative impact on my life.”

“I have mobility issues, and the closure of the library would severely limit my access to a very valuable community resource.”

“I have a PIP award for high mobility needs. I am disabled and there are very few places I can access in the city without transport. I can just about walk to the library and want to keep doing this. The library is part of the community. Don't take away parts of our community.”

“There is no direct bus route or public transport between Westdene and Patcham library. There is a large hill and busy A23 which I cannot navigate due to disabilities.”

Summary of potential impacts

- We heard from disabled people that local libraries are considered essential for their independence, social connection, mental health, and access to information. The closure or reduction of library services could disproportionately affect disabled people (and their carers) increasing isolation and digital exclusion. Accessible, local libraries are seen as an important part of an inclusive community and travel can be a barrier to accessing alternatives.

Mitigations against potential impacts

- Distance and travel to alternative libraries is a key consideration when considering closure. As with the age section above, the city is well served by public transport arrangements and most customers will be able to travel to alternative libraries. We recognise that this may be more difficult for disabled people who may be unable to walk far and rely on transport (public or private car) to travel to another library. The need to travel to an alternative site could impact those who are neurodivergent and may find it more difficult 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.
- As part of business-as-usual work within the Library Service we'll continue to review accessibility of libraries, but especially those identified as alternatives for those impacted by closures. This will also be a key way of informing the future strategy for the city.
- Expansion and targeted promotion of Home Delivery Service to those who are housebound who may lose access to local libraries.
- Further promotion of the library service's online offer of eBooks, eAudiobooks and online resources.
- Libraries near the ones proposed for closure will work on Welcome events, where informal inductions can be held, supporting users to become familiar with the space. Further promotion of the online 360 tours, to be used to help people familiarise themselves with other libraries before attending - [Brighton & Hove libraries virtual tours](#)

- Staff at libraries proposed for closure will support customers to sign up to and use the Libraries Extra offer, to access alternative local libraries and to understand the full offer made at Hove and Jubilee Libraries if more convenient.
- Targeted promotion of Large Print and eAudiobooks available for those with visual impairments.
- Targeted promotion of these facilities: [How our libraries support people with sensory needs and disabilities](#)

6.3 Ethnicity, ‘Race’, ethnic heritage (including Gypsy, Roma, Travellers):

Does your analysis indicate a disproportionate impact relating to ethnicity?	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/Black and Racially Minoritised people in the city and how any changes to library provision may impact on them:

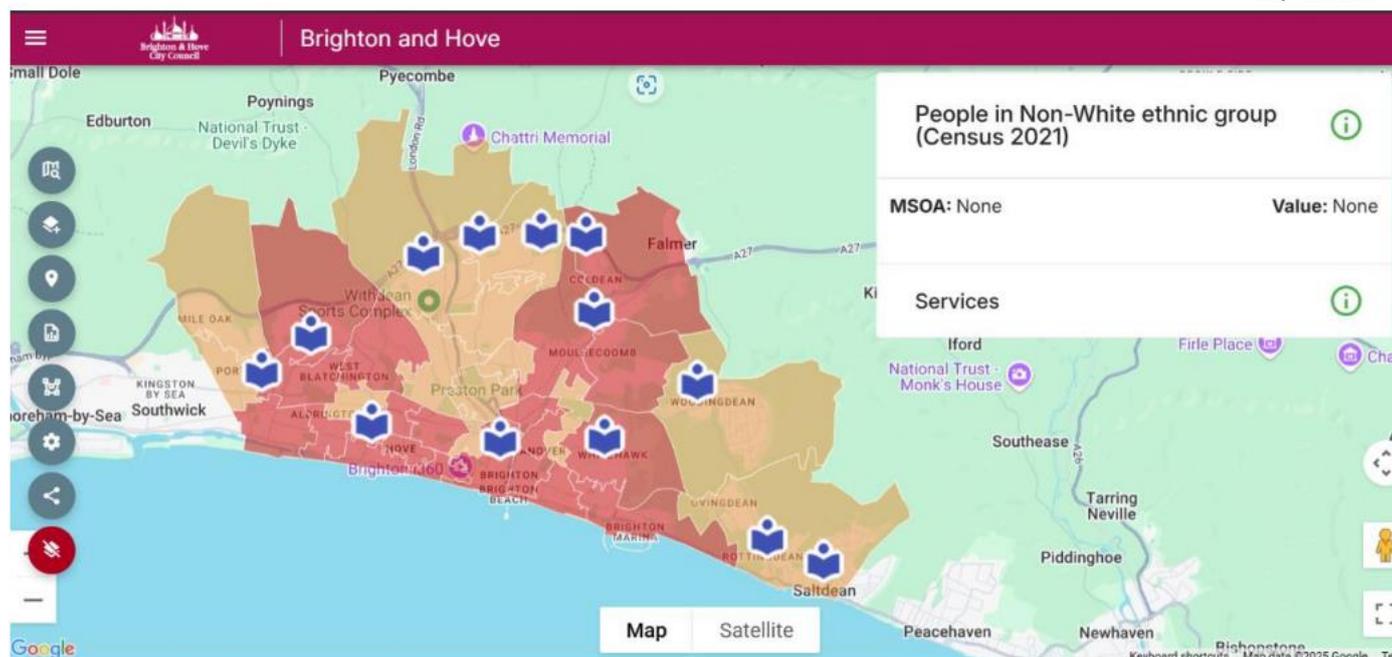
According to the 2021 census 26% of people are Black or racially minoritised (27%):

- 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 and Racially Minoritised (BRM) 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.



The image above is a screen shot from the Local Insight website, detailing a map of the city and showing the numbers of people that told the 2021 census that they were from a non-white ethnic group. It shows that there is more of a diverse mix of residents in central areas as well as West Blatchington and Hangleton, plus Moulsecoomb, Coldean and Falmer. The image also details the location of the city libraries.

The recent public consultation heard the following:

- Jubilee and Hove libraries had the most ethnically diverse survey responder base, with higher proportions of respondents from Black, Asian, Mixed, and Other backgrounds compared to community branches.
- Community libraries (e.g., Rottingdean, Westdene, Hollingbury) were used predominantly by White British respondents, reflecting local population demographics.
- Libraries in more diverse parts of the city (e.g., Whitehawk, Moulsecoomb, Portslade) saw higher proportions of non-White respondents, though overall numbers were lower.
- Community libraries are less diverse in their reported user base, but there is a call for greater inclusion and representation in collections and programming.
- Race and ethnicity often intersect with other factors such as disability, digital exclusion, and low income. Responders from Black and Racially Minoritised backgrounds were more likely to mention barriers related to language, digital access, and feeling welcome in certain branches.
- The survey provides evidence that the central libraries (Jubilee, Hove) are particularly important for the more diverse communities in Brighton & Hove and any reduction in hours or accessibility at these branches is likely to have a disproportionate impact on Black, Asian, Mixed, and Other ethnic minority residents, as well as migrants and refugees.

Who we heard from during the consultation – related to race and ethnicity

The consultation was widely promoted through council platforms, social media accounts and local press. We sent targeted information about the proposals and the consultation to a wide range of community groups and networks, including groups supporting Black and Racially Minoritised

residents and visitors to the city. We also approached groups who support an intersectionality of identity of residents e.g. Black and Racially Minoritised LGBTQ residents.

In the public consultation survey, responders were invited to share their equalities monitoring data. 59% of respondents shared monitoring information. We had 2711 completed survey submissions.

Here's what people told us about their race and ethnicity:

How would you describe your ethnic origin?

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

Monitoring data received via the survey and the level of email responses were both evaluated throughout the period. As of 9th September, only 6% of respondents that shared monitoring information 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).

Additional online marketing that featured more diverse imagery (of real library customers) was created to support engagement with Black and Racially Minoritised residents on the proposals. At the consultation conclusion, 12% of respondents identified as being from a Black or Racially Minoritised background.

What we heard during the consultation relating to race and ethnicity

Libraries as Inclusive, Safe Spaces

- Some respondents from Black and Racially Minoritised backgrounds described libraries as safe, welcoming, and inclusive spaces. Several specifically mentioned that libraries are among the few public places where they feel comfortable, respected, and able to access resources without judgement or discrimination.
- Libraries were highlighted as important for people from all backgrounds, including migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers, who use them for English classes, support with paperwork, internet access, and as a neutral, inclusive environment.

Representation and Cultural Resources

- Some respondents noted the value of libraries in providing books and materials that reflect a diverse range of cultures, languages, and experiences. For example, parents mentioned the importance of their children seeing themselves represented in library books and resources.
- There were positive comments about libraries hosting events, book clubs, and displays that celebrate different cultures and histories, including LGBTQ+ and Black History Month activities.

Barriers and Concerns

- A few respondents from Black and Racially Minoritised backgrounds expressed concerns about feeling less comfortable in certain library environments, particularly if they are unstaffed or if there is a lack of visible diversity among staff and users.
- Some mentioned that language barriers or lack of culturally relevant materials can make libraries less accessible or welcoming for people from certain backgrounds.

Access to Education and Opportunity

- Libraries were described as crucial for supporting educational attainment and social mobility, especially for children from Black and Racially Minoritised backgrounds or low-income families who may not have access to books or study spaces at home.
- Several respondents highlighted that libraries help to close the gap in educational resources and opportunities for children from different ethnic backgrounds, providing free access to books, computers, and a quiet place to study.

Community and Social Connection

- Libraries were seen as important community hubs where people from different backgrounds can meet, interact, and build social connections. Respondents valued the opportunity to participate in multicultural events, language exchange groups, and community activities hosted by libraries.

Concerns About Cuts and Closures

- Some respondents expressed concern that closing libraries or reducing hours would disproportionately affect Black and Racially Minoritised communities, who may rely more heavily on public resources for education, social connection, and digital access.
- There was a sense that libraries play an important role in promoting equality, inclusion, and community cohesion, and that reductions in library services risk undermining these values.

Some quotes from survey respondents, specifically related to race and ethnicity

“I am Black British and use the library as a safe space to study and meet others. There are not many other places in the city where I feel as comfortable and included.”

“As a Black / Black British: African woman, having the library as a safe, warm place to go is really important for me. Closing or reducing hours would make it much harder to find somewhere welcoming and accessible.”

“The library is a safe space for me as a Black person, especially as I have a disability. I use the library to keep in touch with my community and to access resources I can’t afford at home. Losing this would be a huge blow.”

Summary of potential impacts

- Some people from a range of Black and Racially Minoritised backgrounds have said that libraries are essential for inclusion, representation, education, and community connection. Libraries are valued as safe, welcoming spaces that help bridge gaps in opportunity and provide resources that reflect and celebrate diversity. There is concern that reductions to library services would disproportionately impact minority ethnic communities and undermine efforts to promote equality and cohesion.

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.

- Clear and 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 will be needed.
- Further promotion of 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 Black and Racially Minoritised 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).
- During the consultation families from a minoritised diaspora in the city told us that their language support groups would be directly affected by the proposals. Library staff will aim to work with them to find an alternative space or day and time to meet.
- Libraries across the city could do more to reflect the diversity of the city in their collections, events, and staffing. This will be reviewed in the development of the new Library Strategy in 2026 and in reviewing the Stock Policy.

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

Does your analysis indicate a disproportionate impact relating to Religion, Belief, Spirituality, Faith, or Atheism?	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%)

The recent public consultation heard the following:

- The majority of respondents identified as having no religion or belief or as Christian, but there was representation from Jewish, Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist, Sikh, and other faiths, as well as those who preferred not to say.
- Jubilee and Hove libraries had the most reported religiously diverse user base, with higher proportions of respondents from minority faiths compared to community libraries.
- Community libraries (e.g., Rottingdean, Westdene, Hollingbury) were used predominantly by respondents identifying as Christian or having no religion, reflecting local population demographics.
- Libraries in more diverse neighbourhoods (e.g., Whitehawk, Moulsecoomb, Portslade) also saw higher proportions of respondents from minority faiths, though overall numbers were proportionally lower than at Jubilee.
- Those who provided information about their religion and belief often had intersectional links with other factors such as ethnicity, disability, digital exclusion, and low income.
- Respondents from minority faith backgrounds were more likely to mention barriers related to language, digital access, and feeling welcome in certain libraries.

Who we heard from during the consultation – related to faith, religion and beliefs

- The consultation was widely promoted through council platforms/social media accounts and local press. We also sent targeted information about the proposals and the consultation to a wide range of community groups and networks. This included groups supporting residents of different faith groups.
- In the public consultation survey, responders were invited to share their equalities monitoring data. 59% of respondents shared monitoring information. We had 2711 completed survey submissions.

Here's what people told us about faith, religion and beliefs:

What is your religion or belief?

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

What we heard during the public consultation relating to faith and belief

Libraries as Neutral, Welcoming Spaces

- Many respondents, including those from faith backgrounds described libraries as neutral, inclusive, and welcoming spaces. Libraries were valued as places where people of all faiths and beliefs can gather, learn, and feel safe without judgement or pressure to conform to any particular worldview.
- Some respondents specifically mentioned that libraries are among the few public spaces where they feel comfortable practising or expressing their faith, or simply being themselves, regardless of their religious background.

Faith-Based Community Use

- Several people noted that libraries are used by faith-based groups for meetings, book clubs, and community events. This may range from formal to informal.
- There were suggestions that libraries could partner with local churches, mosques, or other faith organisations to provide additional community services, especially if library hours are reduced.

Access for Religious Minorities

- Respondents from faith backgrounds expressed appreciation for libraries providing materials and resources that reflect a range of religious traditions and beliefs. Some

mentioned the importance of access to books, newspapers, and information relevant to their faith.

- A few respondents noted that libraries are important for religious minorities who may not have access to community spaces elsewhere, or who may feel marginalised in other public venues.

Libraries and Religious Practice

- Some respondents highlighted the practical role of libraries in supporting religious practice. For example, several mentioned using libraries on Sundays after attending church, or as a place to meet with others from their faith community.
- There were comments about the importance of weekend and evening opening hours to accommodate those who observe religious practices or attend services during the week.

Concerns About Cuts and Closures

- A number of respondents expressed concern that reducing library hours or closing branches would disproportionately affect people who rely on libraries for faith-related activities, community connection, or access to religious materials.
- Some noted that libraries are particularly important for those who may be isolated due to their faith, or who use libraries as a safe space to practise or explore their beliefs.

Some quotes from survey respondents, specifically related to faith and belief

“I am a Christian and the library is a place where I can educate myself and my children for free, reducing access hurts that ability.”

“As a Muslim, I attend worship in Brighton on a Sunday morning and having somewhere to go afterwards to do some life admin or just read a magazine is really crucial. My Sunday morning is taken up with religious worship, I need Sunday afternoon facilities. It also has the biggest impact on working age people for whom Monday Friday 9-5 public services are inappropriate.”

“The library is used by people of all ages, ethnicities, religion or belief. Closing it would impact the community, especially those who use it as a safe and inclusive space.”

Summary of potential impacts

- People from a range of faith backgrounds reported that libraries are essential as neutral, inclusive spaces that support religious practice, community connection, and access to faith-related resources. There is concern that reductions in library services would disproportionately impact those who rely on libraries for faith-based activities, social connection, and safe, welcoming environments.

Mitigations

- The city retains a comprehensive library service which is available in a range of venues, dates and times – accommodating religious observances, festivals and prayer times.
- Provide accessible information about service changes in multiple formats and languages, ensuring faith communities are aware of new opening hours, closures, and alternative resources.
- Maintain and promote collections of faith-related materials (books, newspapers, resources) in remaining libraries and online, ensuring continued access for religious minorities.

- Any group losing their place to meet by a closure or reduction in opening hours will be supported to find alternative times/spaces within the library service, recognising the need to provide a safe inclusive space. Library staff to work with regular users of affected libraries to ensure regular but informal use is understood and supported to continue. Partner with local faith organisations (churches, mosques, temples, etc.) to explore the need for alternative meeting spaces when library access is reduced.
- Ensure libraries remain neutral, inclusive, and welcoming spaces, with staff trained to support people of all faiths and beliefs and provide prayer-friendly spaces where possible.

6.5 Sex:

Does your analysis indicate a disproportionate impact relating to Sex	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:

During the recent public consultation we heard the following:

- Female respondents were more likely to report frequent library use, especially for family and caring-related activities (e.g., visiting with children, attending storytime, using the library as a warm space for family).
- Male respondents also reported regular use, but were more likely to mention individual study, digital access, or leisure reading.
- Caring responsibilities: Many female respondents described themselves as primary carers for children or elderly relatives, and emphasised the importance of local, walkable libraries for family wellbeing and social connection.
- Safety and inclusion: Female respondents highlighted the library as a safe, welcoming space, particularly for those who may feel vulnerable or isolated elsewhere.
- Access to facilities: Female respondents were more likely to mention the importance of accessible toilets, baby changing, and breastfeeding-friendly spaces.
- Impact of closures/reduced hours: Female respondents, especially those with caring responsibilities, expressed concern that closures or reduced hours would disproportionately affect them and their families, making it harder to access books, social contact, and support.
- Female respondents who are also disabled, carers, or from minority backgrounds described the library as a lifeline for social contact, respite, and access to information.
- The survey provides evidence that women, especially those with caring responsibilities, are among the most frequent and dependent library users.

Who we heard from during the consultation – related to sex

- The consultation was widely promoted through council platforms/social media accounts and local press. We also sent targeted information about the proposals and the

consultation to a wide range of community groups and networks – including women-only groups and those impacted by domestic abuse.

- In the public consultation survey, responders were invited to share their equalities monitoring data. 59% of respondents shared monitoring information. We had 2711 completed survey submissions.

What People Told Us About Sex in the Survey Responses

Libraries as Safe, Inclusive Spaces

- Many respondents, including women, and those from LGBTQ+ communities, described libraries as some of the few public spaces where they feel safe, respected, and able to be themselves without judgement or harassment.
- Libraries were valued for their neutrality and inclusivity, with several respondents noting that they are welcoming to people of all genders and sexual orientations.

Women and Mothers

- Women, particularly mothers and carers, frequently mentioned that libraries are essential for their wellbeing and that of their children. Libraries were described as safe, warm, and free spaces to take children, breastfeed, meet other parents, and access resources.
- Some women highlighted the importance of libraries as places where they can go alone or with children and feel secure, especially during maternity leave.
- Several respondents mentioned that libraries are among the few places where women can breastfeed or change babies without pressure to spend money.

Boys

- We heard from a family concerned about the potential impact on their two boys if their local library closed. They raised the concern that some boys already struggle with finding enjoyment in reading and the closure of the local library could mean these boys end up less likely to enjoy reading as they reach teenage years and adulthood.

Barriers and Concerns

- A few respondents, particularly women, expressed concerns about feeling less comfortable in unstaffed libraries, especially in the evenings. Some mentioned that the presence of staff is important for their sense of safety and inclusion.
- There were also concerns about the impact of library closures or reduced hours on women, carers, and LGBTQ+ people, who may rely more heavily on libraries for social connection, information, and support.

Impact of Cuts and Closures

- Respondents expressed concern that closing libraries or reducing hours would disproportionately affect women (especially mothers and carers), LGBTQ+ people, and those who may not feel safe or welcome in other public spaces.
- Some noted that libraries are among the few places where people of all genders and sexual orientations can access resources, socialise, and feel part of the community without discrimination.

Some quotes from survey respondents, specifically related to sex

“I am a female mother trying to build a business so I need access the library as a working space and a safe place for my kids to work while I do this as we have no broadband.

Rather than trying to cut costs and save money, turn the library into a hub of activity where people want to come and work, read, study, meet.”

“As a young mother who experienced a traumatic birth last year, I know this firsthand. Like many new parents navigating a health system under enormous pressure, I was left feeling overwhelmed, isolated, and frightened, especially with a sick newborn. The library became a lifeline. It was the one place I could go where I felt safe, welcome, and seen. There, I found solace in books about early years development and parenting. I discovered stories that helped me bond with my baby when everything else felt like it was falling apart. And, crucially, I found community—others to talk to, smile with, and share those fragile early days of parenthood.”

“The closure of the library will mean two boys will likely end up less likely to read for enjoyment as they reach teenage years and adulthood. “

A summary of potential impacts

- Some respondents said that libraries are essential for people of all sexes and genders, providing safe, inclusive, and supportive spaces for women, mothers, LGBTQ+ people, and gender-diverse individuals. Service reductions or closures are likely to have a disproportionate impact on these groups, increasing isolation and reducing access to important resources and community support.

Mitigations

- Clear and inclusive communications on any new opening hours of central libraries, to ensure notice is given for users to amend when and how they use the service will be needed. This helps women—especially mothers and carers—plan their visits and adapt to new arrangements.
- Promote Alternative Breastfeeding-Friendly Spaces: Signpost and promote other breastfeeding-friendly venues in the city, ensuring women with young children continue to have access to safe, welcoming environments.
- Maintain and Publicise Safe, Inclusive Spaces: Keeping central libraries open as safe, inclusive spaces for women, mothers, and and ensure staff presence during key hours to support feelings of safety and inclusion.
- Expand Home Delivery and Online Services: Promote and, where possible, expand home delivery services and digital library resources (eBooks, audiobooks, online activities) to support women who may face barriers to accessing physical libraries.
- Engage with Women’s Groups and Carers: Continue targeted engagement with women’s organisations, carers’ networks, and community groups to understand ongoing needs, gather feedback, and co-design further support or mitigation measures as service changes are implemented.

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

Does your analysis indicate a disproportionate impact relating to Gender Identity / Gender Reassignment ?	YES
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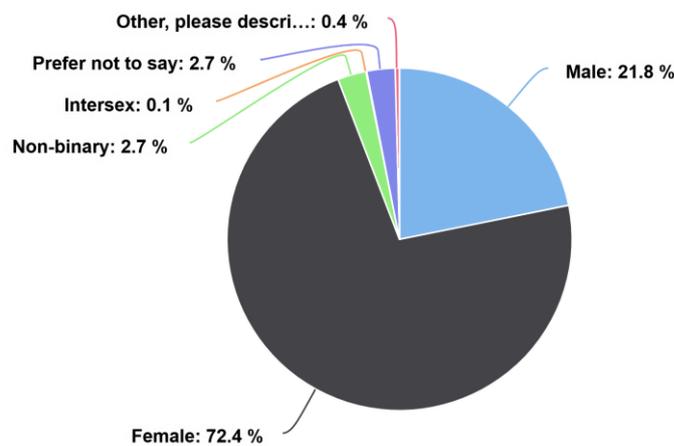
If “YES”, what are the positive and negative disproportionate impacts?

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

Who we heard from during the consultation – related to gender/gender identity

- The consultation was widely promoted through council platforms/social media accounts and local press. We also sent targeted information about the proposals and the consultation to a wide range of community groups and networks – including those supporting our trans, non-binary and intersex (TNBI) communities.
- In the public consultation survey, responders were invited to share their equalities monitoring data. 59% of respondents shared monitoring information. We had 2711 completed survey submissions.

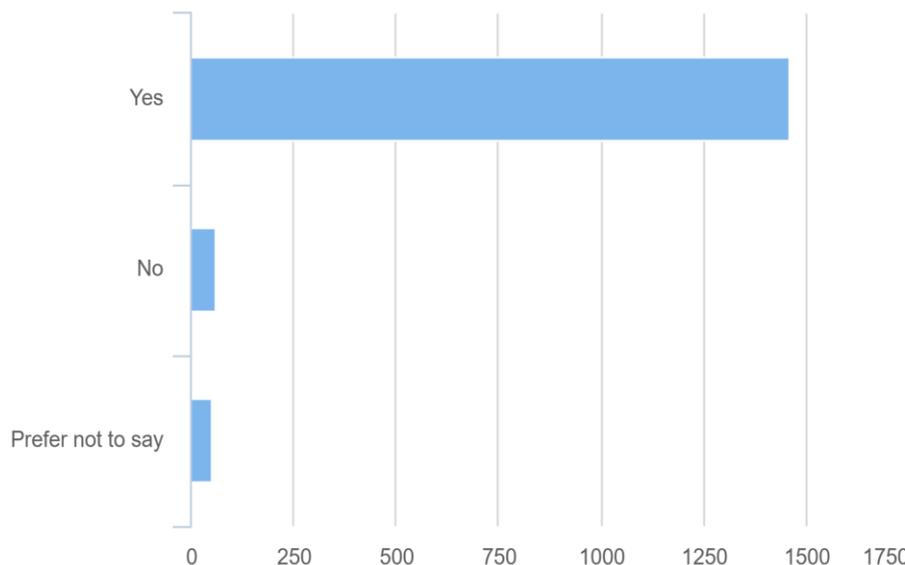
What best describes your sex?



The image above is pie chart detailing responses from the libraries survey in relation to the question about what best describes your sex. The vast majority of respondents (72.4%) said Female, followed by Male (21.8%). 2.7% of people said they were non-binary and 0.1% said they were intersex. The others either said other or prefer not to say.

Here's what people told us about gender and gender identity:

Is the gender you identify with the same as your sex registered at birth?



The image above is bar chart from the libraries consultation, detailing the answers to the question on whether your identity is the same as the one you were assigned at birth. The vast majority of respondents said Yes with smaller (under 100) saying No or Prefer not to say.

What we heard during the consultation relating to gender and gender identity

Diverse Gender Representation:

- The survey captured responses from a broad spectrum of gender identities, with the majority identifying as female, a significant proportion as male, and additional representation from non-binary, “prefer not to say”, and “other” gender identities

Patterns of Library Use by Gender:

- Female respondents were most likely to use libraries frequently, especially for family and caring-related activities. Male respondents tended to use libraries for individual study and digital access, while non-binary and gender-diverse respondents highlighted the importance of libraries as safe, inclusive, and gender-neutral spaces

Intersectional Impacts:

- The data shows that women—particularly those with caring responsibilities—are among the most dependent library users, and any reduction in local provision is likely to disproportionately affect them and their families. Non-binary and gender-diverse users may be especially impacted by changes that reduce staffed hours or access to gender-neutral facilities

Gender Diversity

- Respondents from LGBTQ+ backgrounds, including non-binary and transgender people, described libraries as safe havens where they can access information, meet others, and feel accepted. Some specifically mentioned that libraries provide resources and events relevant to LGBTQ+ identities and that staff are supportive and inclusive.
- There were positive comments about libraries hosting LGBTQ+ book clubs, displays, and events, and about the presence of gender-neutral toilets in some branches.

- Some non-binary and transgender respondents noted that they feel safer in libraries than in other public spaces, and that libraries are important for accessing information about gender identity and sexual orientation.
- Non-binary and “other” respondents described the library as a safe, inclusive space, and some highlighted the importance of gender-neutral facilities and staff sensitivity.
- Safety and inclusion: Some non-binary respondents highlighted the library as a safe, welcoming space, particularly for those who may feel vulnerable or isolated elsewhere.

Some quotes from survey respondents, specifically related to gender/gender identity

“As a non-binary person I find the resources for LGBTQ+ people very useful, and in particular I appreciate the various art installations by local LGBTQ+ organisations which have been hosted at Jubilee Library.”

“As a trans person, libraries are a safe place I can go to while in town to escape unwanted situations (which I have done many times)”

“I am disabled and trans and the library is somewhere I go to feel safe and less lonely, I feel safe there are visits if something has triggered a panic attack. I usually visit in the late afternoon, after I've been to support groups or volunteering and I stay until closing. I am on low income and it is one of the few spaces in the city I can be without spending money. The proposed changes will effect me a lot, I am very sad to hear about them.”

A summary of potential impacts

Libraries are described as safe havens by LGBTQ+ individuals, offering access to information, community, and a sense of acceptance. Reducing library spaces and hours may make women, non-binary and transgender people feel less safe, especially at a time when trans safety nationally is perceived to be under threat.

- Libraries provide resources and events relevant to LGBTQ+ identities, as well as supportive, trained staff and gender-neutral toilets, which are valued by these communities.
- Some respondents noted that libraries are among the few public spaces where they feel safe from discrimination and able to be themselves.
- Changes to library services risk increasing isolation and reducing access to important and valued safe spaces for LGBTQ+ people.

Mitigations for Potential Impacts

- **Maintain and Promote Safe, Inclusive Spaces:** Ensure all remaining libraries continue to be explicitly welcoming to LGBTQ+ users, with visible signage, inclusive policies, and ongoing staff training to reinforce a zero-tolerance approach to discrimination and celebrate diversity.
- **Retain and Publicise Gender-Neutral Facilities:** Keep gender-neutral toilets and changing facilities available in as some libraries and clearly signpost these amenities so that customers feel comfortable and safe.
- **Continue and Expand LGBTQ+ Resources and Events:** Offer and promote resources, book clubs, displays, and events relevant to LGBTQ+ identities, ensuring that gender diverse users see themselves represented and supported in library programming.

- Consult and Engage with LGBTQ+ Communities: Regularly seek feedback from LGBTQ+ users (and relevant community groups) to identify emerging needs and co-design further improvements or mitigations.
- Provide Clear, Accessible Communication About Service Changes: Ensure that any changes to opening hours, facilities, or services are communicated in accessible formats and through channels that reach LGBTQ+ communities, so users can plan their visits and access alternative support if needed.

6.7 Sexual Orientation:

Does your analysis indicate a disproportionate impact relating to Sexual Orientation ?	YES
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If “YES”, what are the positive and negative disproportionate impacts?

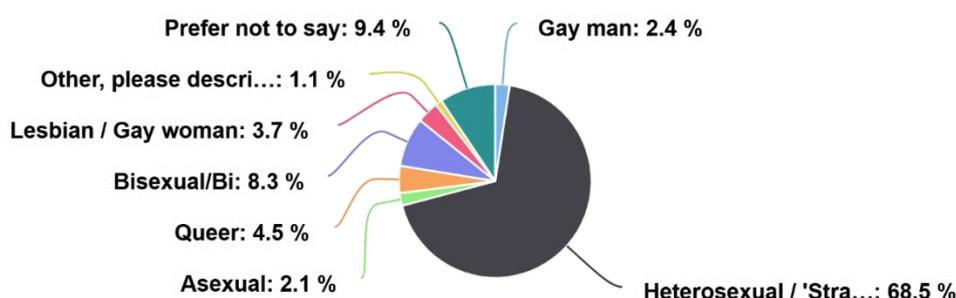
Please share relevant insights from data and engagement to show how conclusions about impact have been shaped. Include relevant data sources or references.

Who we heard from during the consultation – related to sexual orientation

The consultation was widely promoted through council platforms and social media accounts and local press. We also sent targeted information about the proposals and the consultation to a wide range of community groups and networks; this included groups supporting LGBQ+ residents

In the public consultation survey, responders were invited to share their equalities monitoring data. 59% of respondents shared monitoring information. We had 2711 completed survey submissions.

Which of the following best describes your sexual orientation?



The image above is a pie chart detailing the responses in the libraries consultation on what best describes the respondents sexual orientation. The majority (68.5%) said heterosexual/straight. Others included 2.4% saying Gay Man and 3.7% saying Lesbian/Gay Woman. Nearly 10% of respondents said they'd Prefer not to say.

What People Told Us About Sexual orientation in the Survey Responses

- The majority of respondents identified as heterosexual/straight, but there was significant representation from lesbian/gay women, gay men, bisexual, asexual, queer, and “other” respondents, as well as those who preferred not to say.

- LGBTQ+ respondents (including lesbian, gay, bisexual, asexual, queer, and non-binary users) described the library as a safe, inclusive, and affirming space, particularly for those who may feel marginalised or isolated elsewhere.
- Heterosexual respondents also reported regular use, but were less likely to mention safety or inclusion as a primary concern.
- Some LGBTQ+ respondents who are also disabled, non-binary, or from minority backgrounds described the library as a lifeline for social contact, support, and access to information.

Libraries as Safe, Inclusive Spaces

- Some respondents from LGBTQ+ communities described libraries as some of the few public spaces where they feel safe, respected, and able to be themselves without judgement or harassment.
- Libraries were valued for their neutrality and inclusivity, with some respondents noting that they are welcoming to people of all sexual orientations.

LGBTQ+ and Gender Diversity

- There were positive comments about libraries hosting LGBTQ+ book clubs, displays, and events, and about the presence of gender-neutral toilets in some branches. Some specifically mentioned that libraries provide resources and events relevant to LGBTQ+ identities and that staff are supportive and inclusive.

Barriers and Concerns

- A few respondents, particularly women and non-binary people, expressed concerns about feeling less comfortable in unstaffed libraries, especially in the evenings. Some mentioned that the presence of staff is important for their sense of safety and inclusion.
- There were also concerns about the impact of library closures or reduced hours on women, carers, and LGBTQ+ people, who may rely more heavily on libraries for social connection, information, and support.

Impact of Reductions and Closures

- Respondents expressed concern that closing libraries or reducing hours would disproportionately affect women (especially mothers and carers), LGBTQ+ people, and those who may not feel safe or welcome in other public spaces.
- Some noted that libraries are among the few places where people of all genders and sexual orientations can access resources, socialise, and feel part of the community without discrimination.

Resources

- LGBTQ+ respondents highlighted the importance of diverse collections, inclusive events, and visible representation in library spaces, noting that access to resources and community support is a key reason for their frequent library use.

Some quotes from survey respondents, specifically related to sexual orientation

“As a queer person, it also gives me a safe space to be when I am out... and not ready to go home yet as it is a difficult place to be.”

“As a lesbian/gay woman, I find the library a welcoming and inclusive space. Reducing hours or closing libraries would mean losing one of the few places in the city where I feel comfortable and safe.”

“I am bisexual and feel that libraries are places in which I am safe from discrimination.”

Summary of potential impacts:

- People told us that libraries are essential for people of all sexes and genders, providing safe, inclusive, and supportive spaces for women, mothers, LGBTQ+ people, and gender-diverse individuals. Reductions or closures are likely to have a disproportionate impact on these groups, increasing isolation and reducing access to important resources and community support.

Mitigations against potential impacts

- **Maintain and Promote Safe, Inclusive Spaces:** Ensure all remaining libraries continue to be explicitly welcoming to LGBQ+ and gender diverse users, with visible signage, inclusive policies, and ongoing staff training to reinforce a zero-tolerance approach to discrimination and harassment.
- **Retain and Publicise Gender-Neutral Facilities:** Keep gender-neutral toilets and changing facilities available in some libraries and clearly signpost these amenities so that all users feel comfortable and safe.
- **Continue and Expand LGBTQ+ Resources and Events:** Offer and promote resources, book clubs, displays, and events relevant to LGBQ+ and gender diverse identities, ensuring that users see themselves represented and supported in library programming.
- **Consult and Engage with LGBTQ+ Communities:** Seek feedback from gender queer, non-binary, trans, and LGBQ+ users (and relevant community groups) to identify emerging needs and co-design further improvements or mitigations.
- **Provide Clear, Accessible Communication About Service Changes:** Ensure that any changes to opening hours, facilities, or services are communicated in accessible formats and through channels that reach LGBTQ+ communities, so users can plan their visits and access alternative support if needed.

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.

The recent public consultation heard further detail below.

- There was clear representation from migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers, including those who identified as having English as an additional language or who described themselves as new to the UK.
- Jubilee and Hove libraries are reported to be important for migrants and asylum seekers, as these branches may be more likely to offer:
 - Books and resources in multiple languages
 - English language learning materials
 - Staff support for digital access, paperwork, and integration
 - Community events and social opportunities
 - Council Help Desks
- Community libraries are used by some migrants, especially those living in more diverse neighbourhoods (e.g., Whitehawk, Moulsecoomb, Portslade).
- Migrant and asylum seeker status often intersects with other factors such as ethnicity, language, digital exclusion, low income, and disability.

- Additional data, gained from the 2021 census, shows a higher density of households where no people have English as a main language in the proximity of Jubilee and Hove libraries.

What we heard in the consultation relating to migrants, asylum seekers and refugees

Libraries as Safe, Inclusive Spaces

- Libraries were frequently described as some of the few public spaces where migrants, asylum seekers, and refugees feel safe, welcome, and included. Respondents noted that libraries are neutral environments where people from all backgrounds can access resources and support without fear of discrimination or judgement.

Access to Information, Language Support, and Digital Inclusion

- Several respondents highlighted the importance of libraries for migrants and refugees who may not have access to the internet, computers, or printers at home. Libraries provide essential digital access for job searches, benefit applications, and communication with family or support services.
- Libraries were also valued for providing English language learning resources, books in different languages, and support with paperwork or official forms. Some mentioned that libraries host English classes, conversation groups, or provide information about local services.

Community and Social Connection

- Libraries were seen as important community hubs where migrants, asylum seekers, and refugees can meet others, build social networks, and reduce isolation. Some respondents mentioned that libraries help newcomers to the UK feel part of the local community and offer opportunities to participate in multicultural events or activities.

Support for Children and Families

- Respondents noted that libraries are especially important for migrant and refugee families with children, providing free access to books, homework support, and a safe place to learn and play. Libraries help children from migrant backgrounds develop literacy skills and confidence and offer parents a supportive environment to connect with others.

Barriers and Concerns

- Some respondents expressed concern that language barriers, lack of culturally relevant materials, or unfamiliarity with library systems can make it harder for migrants and refugees to access services. There were also worries that cuts to library hours or closures would disproportionately affect these groups, who may rely more heavily on libraries for support and inclusion.

Some quotes from survey respondents, specifically related to migrants and asylum seekers

“I am a neurodiverse migrant woman from the LGBT community. The libraries in Brighton and Hove have been some of the most welcoming, safe spaces I have been able to access.”

“I am not a migrant but I work closely with the refugee and migrant community and libraries are a crucial resource for many of these people. The home office does not provide WiFi which is an essential utility in 2025 and many people can only access it at the library.”

“Libraries are a crucial third space – used by myself, my partner and almost every single person I know. I cannot afford to buy the books I read, and in a world of increasing cost and reducing opportunity, the library is a literal beacon of opportunity. I would do anything I could to help the library survive, thrive, and stand against reduction of any kind.”

(This quote is from a user who identifies as a migrant and highlights the importance of libraries for access and inclusion.)

Summary of potential impacts:

People told us that libraries are essential for migrants, asylum seekers, and refugees, providing safe, inclusive spaces, digital and language support, and opportunities for social connection and learning. Reductions or closures are likely to have a disproportionate impact on these groups, increasing isolation and reducing access to important resources.

Mitigations against potential impacts:

- **Maintain Safe, Inclusive Spaces:** Ensure that all remaining libraries continue to be welcoming, neutral environments where people from all backgrounds can access resources and support without fear of discrimination or judgement.
- **Promote and Expand Access to Digital and Language Resources:** Continue to provide and publicise access to computers, internet, printers, and English language learning resources, including books in different languages.
- **Targeted Communication and Outreach:** Communicate any changes to library services in multiple languages and accessible formats, and work with local organisations to ensure migrants, asylum seekers, and refugees are aware of alternative resources and support available.
- **Support Community and Social Connection:** Facilitate opportunities for migrants, asylum seekers, and refugees to meet others, build social networks, and participate in multicultural events or activities within libraries or through partnerships with community groups.
- **Provide Support for Children and Families:** Ensure that migrant and refugee families continue to have access to free books, homework support, and safe spaces for children to learn and play, and offer parents a supportive environment to connect with others.

6.12 [Carers](#):

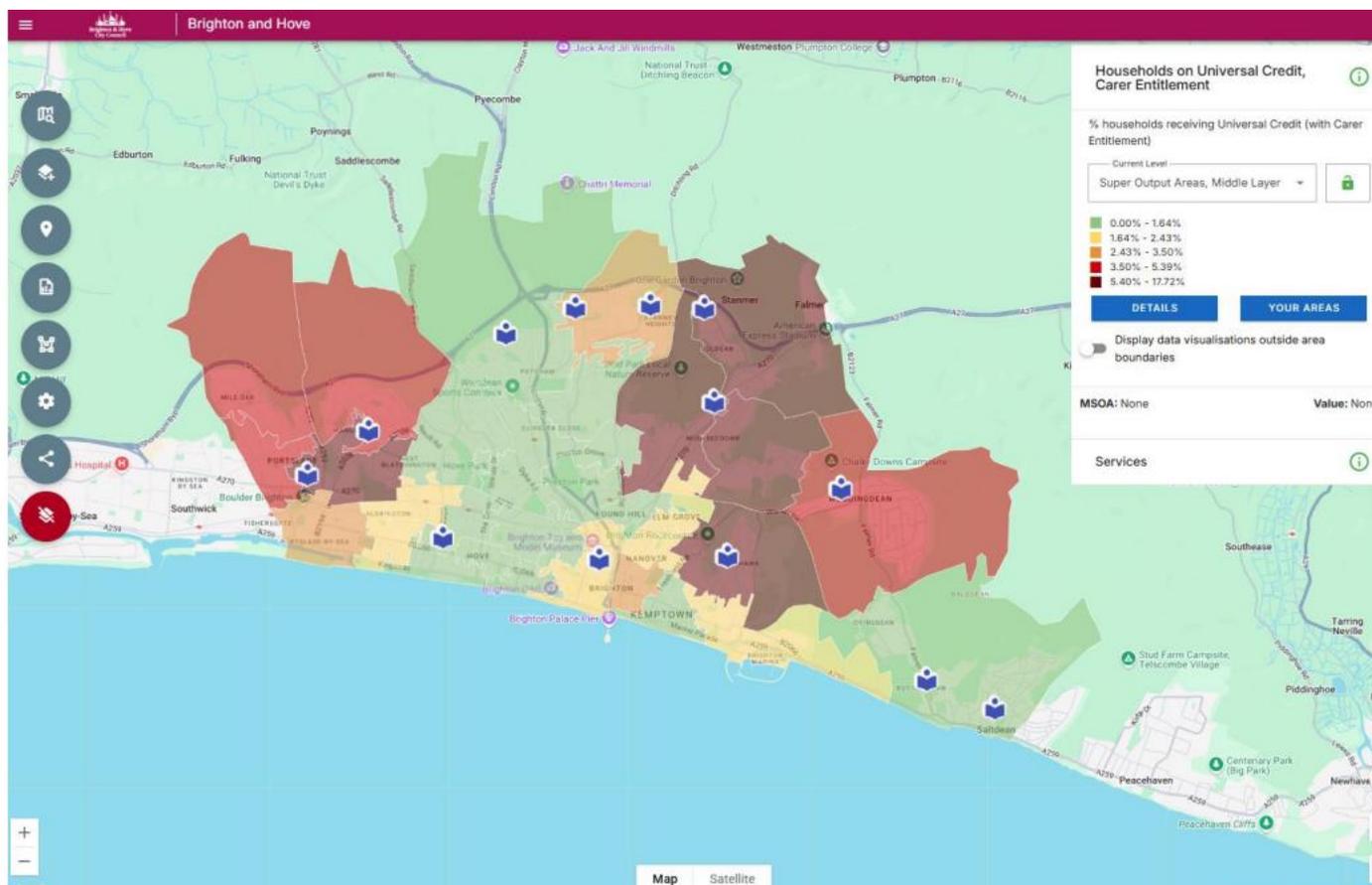
<p>Does your analysis indicate a disproportionate impact relating to Carers (Especially considering for age, ethnicity, language, and various intersections).</p>	<p>YES</p>
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If “YES”, what are the positive and negative disproportionate impacts?

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

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

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 area around Westdene Library 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 image above is a screen shot from the Local Insight website, detailing a map of the city and showing the percentages of households receiving universal credit with carer entitlement. The image shows that rates are higher in some of the ‘periphery’ areas of the city such as Mile Oak, Falmer and Woodingdean. The image also details the location of the city libraries.

The recent public consultation heard the following:

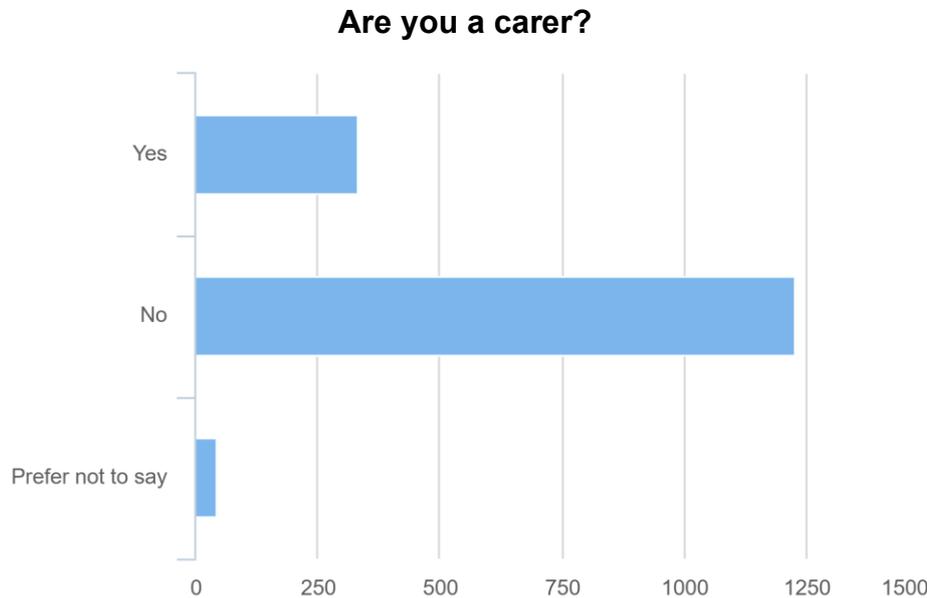
- Those who identified as carers are frequent library users.
- Some carers described the library as one of their only opportunities for social contact and a break from caring responsibilities.
- Many carers are also women, disabled, or from Black or Racially Minoritised backgrounds.

Who we heard from during the consultation – related to being a carer

- The consultation was widely promoted through council platforms and social media accounts and local press. We also sent targeted information about the proposals and the consultation to a wide range of community groups and networks, this included groups supporting carers.

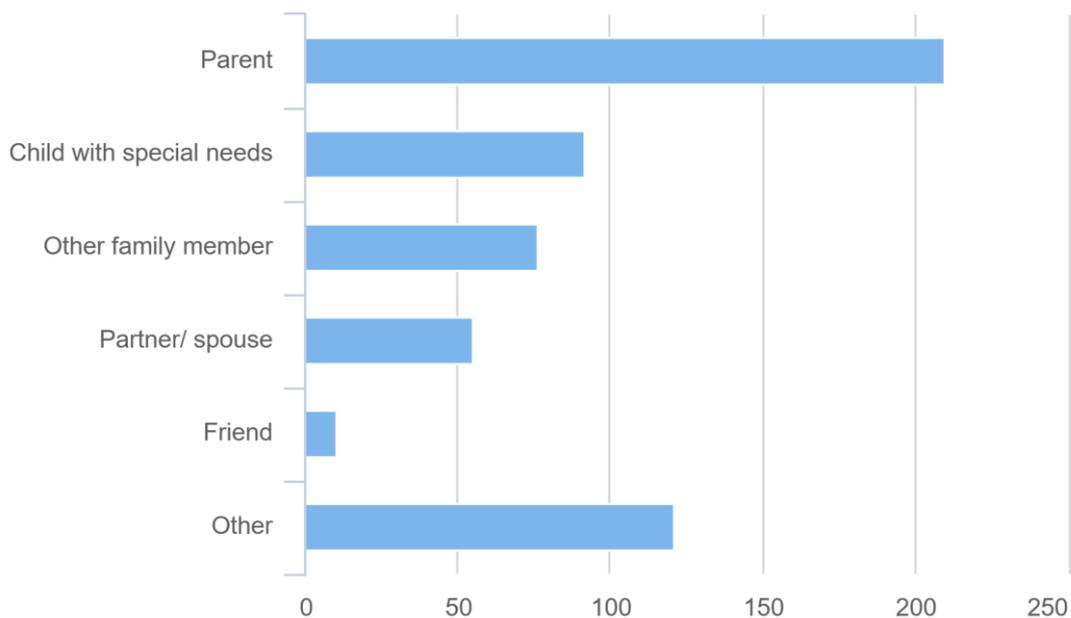
- In the public consultation survey, responders were invited to share their equalities monitoring data. 59% of respondents shared monitoring information. We had 2711 completed survey submissions.

Here's what people told us about being a carer:



The image above is a sbar chart from the libraries survey, showing the that majority of respondents said that they were not a carer, but a significant number of people (around 300) replied that they were.

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'



The image above is a bar chart from the libraries survey, detailing who people care for (if they indicated that they are a carer). The highest response was 'parent', followed by other, child with special needs, other family member, partner/spouse and then friend.

What we heard in the consultation about carers

Libraries as Essential Support for Carers

- Many carers (including parents, those caring for elderly relatives, and those supporting people with disabilities or special needs) described libraries as a lifeline. Libraries provide a safe, accessible, and free space for both carers and those they care for to visit, relax, and engage in activities outside the home.
- Carers highlighted that libraries offer respite, opportunities for social interaction, and a break from isolation. For some, the library is the only place they can go with the person they care for, especially if mobility or behavioural needs make other venues difficult.

Accessibility and Proximity

- Carers repeatedly stressed the importance of having a library within walking distance. Travelling further afield, especially with someone who has mobility issues, learning disabilities, or young children, is often impractical or impossible. The closure of local libraries was seen as likely to reduce outings and increase isolation for both carers and those they support.

Libraries as Community Hubs

- Libraries were described as community hubs where carers can meet others in similar situations, access information, and participate in activities or support groups. Some mentioned attending story time, book groups, or simply using the library as a warm, welcoming space to connect with others.

Digital and Practical Support

- Several carers noted that libraries provide essential access to computers, printers, and the internet, which are needed for managing care responsibilities, accessing benefits, or supporting the cared-for person's education and wellbeing. Staff support was also valued for help with paperwork or finding information.

Impact of Cuts and Closures

- Respondents expressed concern that closing libraries or reducing hours would disproportionately affect carers, who may have limited time, energy, or resources to travel further or pay for alternative activities. Some worried that the loss of local libraries would increase stress, reduce opportunities for respite, and negatively impact the wellbeing of both carers and those they care for.

Intergenerational and Family Value

- Carers of children, grandchildren, and elderly relatives described libraries as places where different generations can come together, share experiences, and access resources tailored to their needs. Libraries were seen as supporting family cohesion and providing opportunities for learning and enjoyment for all ages.

Some quotes from survey respondents, specifically related to being a carer or having caring responsibilities

"My husband doesn't drive and is the primary carer for our children. He also has mobility issues which means taking the children out using the buggy and walking is vital. Public

transport is not possible for him with a baby and toddler. Closing the library will restrict him even further & make his and my children's lives smaller."

"As someone with caring responsibilities I have an extremely limited options for leaving my home but the local library is a little haven for me to access. The wonderful librarian is a precious source of contact and understanding and I'd feel lost without her."

"I look after my parent with Alzheimer's and cannot leave her on her own without getting someone to sit with her ...the local library here is close enough for me to manage everything."

Summary of potential impact on carers

- Carers told us that libraries are essential for their wellbeing and that of those they care for. Local, accessible libraries provide respite, social connection, practical support, and opportunities for learning and enjoyment. Reduction in services could impact on carers, increasing isolation and reducing access to valued resources.

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.
- Library users who are full-time carers are entitled to concessionary library membership, with longer loan periods and lower fees and charges. This service could be actively promoted to offset potential impact of closures and reductions in opening hours.
- The library service does offer a Home Delivery Service, available for those who might struggle to visit a library in person, including carers. This may be an alternative for some who could be impacted by a community library closure.

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

<p>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).</p> <p>Also consider our Corporate Parenting Responsibility in connection to your activity.</p>	<p>YES</p>
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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 City Council have adopted Children in Care and Care Experienced as a protected characteristic and will demonstrate commitment to this group aligned to our responsibilities under the Public Sector Equality Duty.

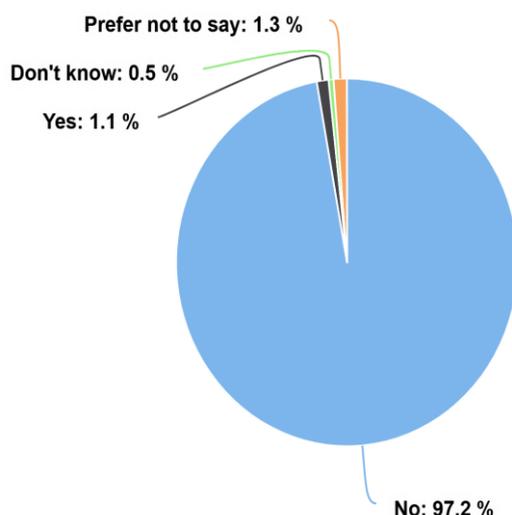
For Brighton & Hove there were 345 Children in Care at 31st July 25. The rate per 10,000 is 73.9, above the 23/24 national average of 70, the South East average of 56, and the statistical neighbour average of 62.1.

Who we heard from during the consultation – related to being care experienced

- The consultation was widely promoted through council platforms and social media accounts and local press. We also sent targeted information about the proposals and the consultation to a wide range of community groups and networks. This included groups supporting young people in care, care leavers and those who are care experienced.
- In the public consultation survey, responders were invited to share their equalities monitoring data. 59% of respondents shared monitoring information. We had 2711 completed survey submissions.

Here's what people told us about being care experienced:

Are you, or have you been, looked after by a local authority for at least 13 weeks since the age of 14?



The image above is a pie chart from the libraries survey showing that the vast majority of residents reported that they had never been looked after (in care) by a local authority. Only 1.1% of respondents said that they were.

What we heard during the consultation about Being Care Experienced

Direct Mentions and Representation

- A small number of respondents directly identified as care experienced or answered questions about being looked after by a local authority. Some mentioned this in the context of equalities monitoring or demographic questions, but there were very few extended comments specifically about the experience of being in care.

Libraries as Safe and Supportive Spaces

- Where care experience was mentioned, libraries were valued as safe, neutral, and supportive spaces for young people who may not have stable homes or family support. Libraries were described as places where care experienced young people can access books, computers, and a quiet place to study or relax without stigma or cost.

- Some respondents noted that libraries are important for care experienced children and young people to access resources for homework, reading for pleasure, and social connection, especially if they move placements or lack books at home.

Barriers and Concerns

- There were concerns that care experienced young people may face additional barriers to accessing libraries, such as frequent moves, lack of transport, or not knowing how to use library services. Some respondents suggested that libraries could do more outreach to children in care, foster carers, and care leavers to ensure they know about and can access library services.
- A few respondents highlighted that libraries can be really important for care experienced young people who may otherwise be isolated, and that closures or reduced hours could disproportionately affect this group.

Equal Opportunities and Inclusion

- Some responses referenced the importance of libraries in providing equal access to books, learning, and safe spaces for all children, including those who are care experienced. Libraries were seen as helping to level the playing field for children who may not have the same opportunities or support as their peers.

Some quotes from survey respondents, specifically related to being care experienced

“It is used by children’s social services for contact sessions, for child protection cases, both supervised and unsupervised. It is perfect as it is never empty and has access to a garden too. I can’t think of anywhere else local that offers that. It is also used by young mothers in temporary accommodation as a place to go. Which is brilliant for their children.”

“As a foster parent, my foster son has disabilities. I value library space as a welcoming, calm public space where I don’t have to spend any money, my son can witness all kinds of interesting social interaction and see how our collective knowledge and stories are stored in communal spaces free of charge and without barriers.”

A summary of potential impacts

- People told us that libraries are especially important for care experienced children and young people, providing safe spaces, equal access to resources, and opportunities for learning and social connection. There is concern that barriers to access and the impact of cuts could disproportionately affect this group, and that libraries should do more to reach out and support care experienced individuals.

Mitigations

Targeted Communication and Outreach

- Ensure care experienced children, young people, and their carers are proactively informed about any changes to library services, including closures or reduced hours.
- Use multiple channels (schools, social workers, foster care networks, community groups) to reach care experienced individuals who may not be connected to standard council or city-wide communications such as the social media accounts.

Alternative Access Arrangements

- Signpost and facilitate access to alternative libraries within a reasonable distance, ensuring that care experienced young people know where and how to access these services.
- Provide information about public transport options, travel support, or digital resources to help overcome barriers such as lack of transport or frequent moves.

Digital Inclusion Support

- Ensure care experienced young people have access to digital resources (eBooks, audiobooks, online learning tools) and the library service should link with care support services to ensure digital library resources are well promoted to care experienced children and young people.
- Continue to offer digital literacy support and guidance on how to use online library services.

Safe Spaces and Social Connection

- Work with schools, youth services, and community organisations to identify and promote alternative safe spaces for study, social connection, and support if local libraries are unavailable.

Staff Training and Awareness

- Ensure library staff are trained to understand the needs of care experienced children and young people, including the barriers they may face and how to offer sensitive, non-stigmatising support.

Ongoing Engagement and Feedback

- Continue to engage with care experienced individuals and their advocates as part of library service Business As Usual work to monitor the impact of changes and adapt support as needed.
- Use feedback from care experienced users to inform future service planning and enable their voices to be heard in decision-making.

6.14 Homelessness:

<p>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)</p>	<p>YES</p>
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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 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.

What we heard in the consultation about Homeless and Rough Sleepers

A number of respondents identified as currently or previously homeless, rough sleeping, or living in temporary accommodation, and several others described working with or supporting people experiencing homelessness.

Libraries as Safe, Warm, and Inclusive Spaces

- Respondents highlighted that libraries are one of the very few places in the city where homeless people and rough sleepers can go to be safe, warm, and sheltered without any expectation to spend money. Libraries were described as important for those who are homeless, providing a refuge from the streets, especially during cold or bad weather.
- Some respondents mentioned that libraries are used by people who are homeless to access basic facilities such as toilets, warmth, and a place to rest or read during the day.

Access to Information and Digital Inclusion

- Libraries were valued for providing free access to computers, the internet, and information. For people who are homeless or rough sleeping, this access is crucial for job searches, benefit applications, communication with support services, and staying connected with friends and family.
- Several respondents noted that digital exclusion is a significant issue for homeless people, and libraries help bridge this gap.

Social Connection and Reducing Isolation

- Libraries were described as important for reducing social isolation among homeless people and rough sleepers. They offer a non-judgemental environment where people can feel part of the community, interact with others, and access support or advice.

Practical Support and Staff Kindness

- Respondents appreciated the kindness and support of library staff, who often help homeless people with information, printing, or accessing services. Some mentioned that staff are understanding and treat everyone with respect, regardless of their housing status.

Some quotes from survey respondents, specifically related to homelessness, vulnerably housed and rough sleepers

“As a member of the homeless community, I find the Jubilee Library an essential community resource. i.e. as a safe warm space, a source of essential information and Yes also the staff are very decent and welcoming.”

“Libraries are a vital community service. Not only do they offer free resources for learning and self development but also offer warm spaces and a sense of community to some of the most vulnerable members of our society. To limit access to such vital services by reducing opening hours could have serious impact on frequent vulnerable users’ health and wellbeing.”

A summary of the potential impacts:

- People told us that libraries are essential for homeless people and rough sleepers, providing safe, warm, and inclusive spaces, digital access, social connection, and practical support. Reductions or closures are likely to have a significant negative impact on these groups, increasing isolation and hardship.

Mitigations

- Promote alternative warm spaces for periods of library closure. Ensure this information is visible within libraries.
- Continue to provide access to computers, internet, and printing for job searches, benefit applications, and communication/ signposting with support services.
- Ensure library staff are trained to support people experiencing homelessness with sensitivity and can signpost to relevant local services (housing, health, benefits, food banks). Consider outreach partnerships with local homelessness charities for in-library advice sessions.
- Maintain access to essential facilities such as toilets and drinking water points (where possible) during staffed hours.
- As part of business as usual, consider the establishment of a mechanism for ongoing feedback from people experiencing homelessness and frontline organisations, to monitor the impact of any changes and to adapt any mitigations as required.

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)?	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.

During the survey, we heard from a few respondents about their experience of domestic abuse and how libraries have provided a safe alternative space in their lives. These examples of lived experience help inform our wider understand of the impact of reducing the library service in the city.

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.

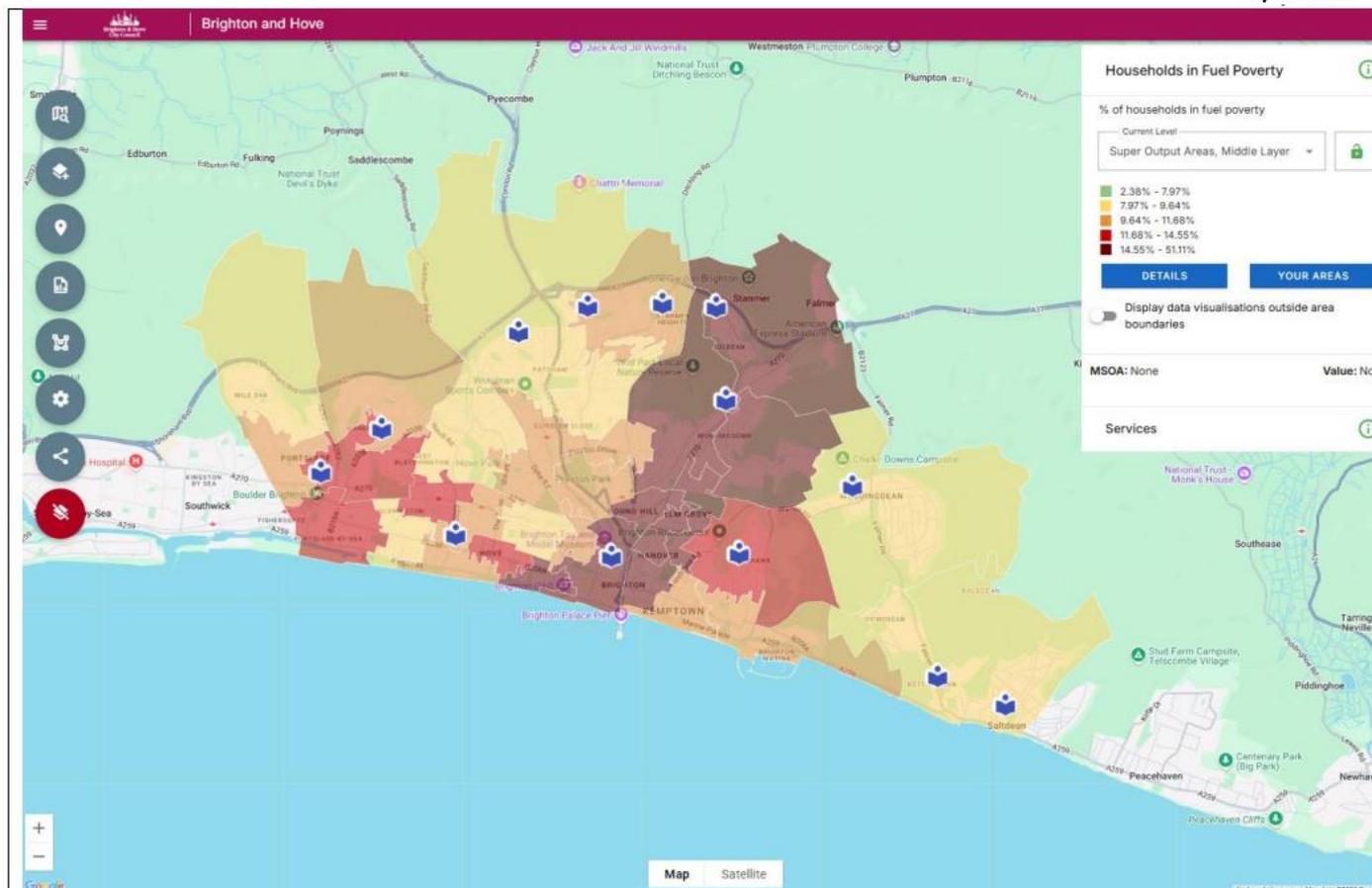
What we know about library use/people who are at socio-economic disadvantage or at risk of homelessness and how any changes to library provision may impact on them:

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 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.

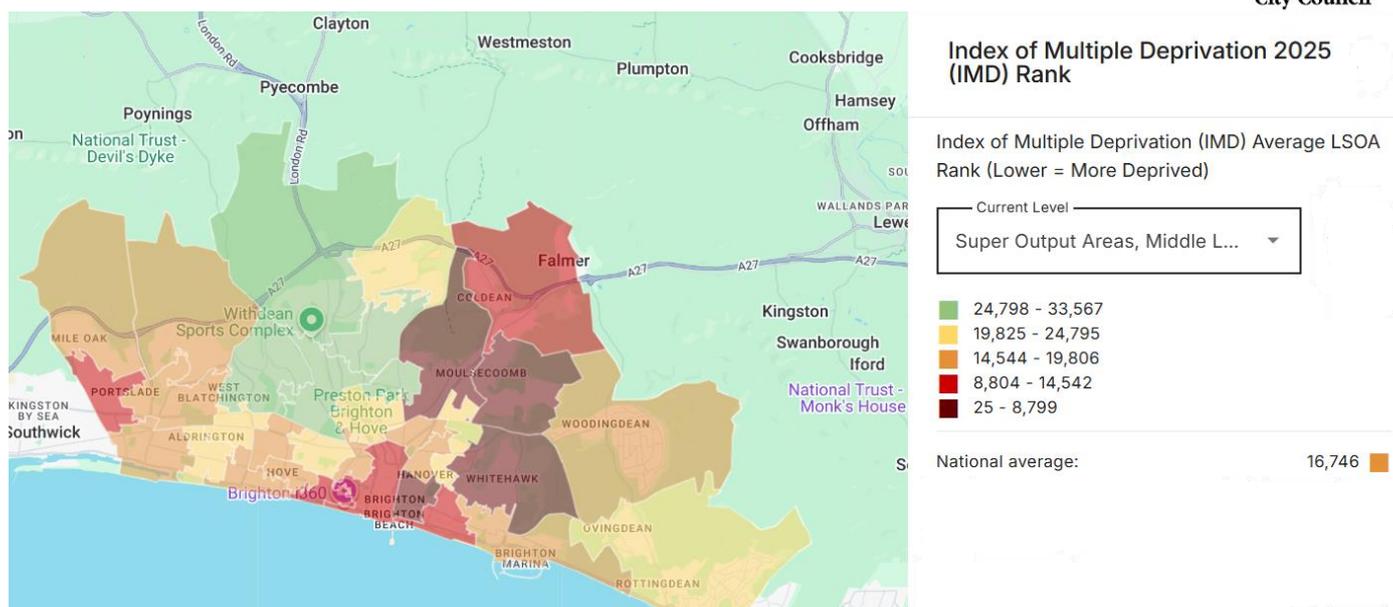
The image below shows the geographical spread of households in Fuel Poverty. This shows us that there are lower % of houses in fuel poverty around Westdene Library but a higher % around Hollingbury. There is a greater density of households in fuel poverty directly around Jubilee Library and near to Hove Library, where opening hours are proposed to be reduced.



The image above is a screen shot from the Local Insight website, detailing a map of the city and showing the % of household in fuel poverty from the 2021 census. It shows that there are areas of the city with greater densities of fuel poverty. The image also details the location of the city libraries.

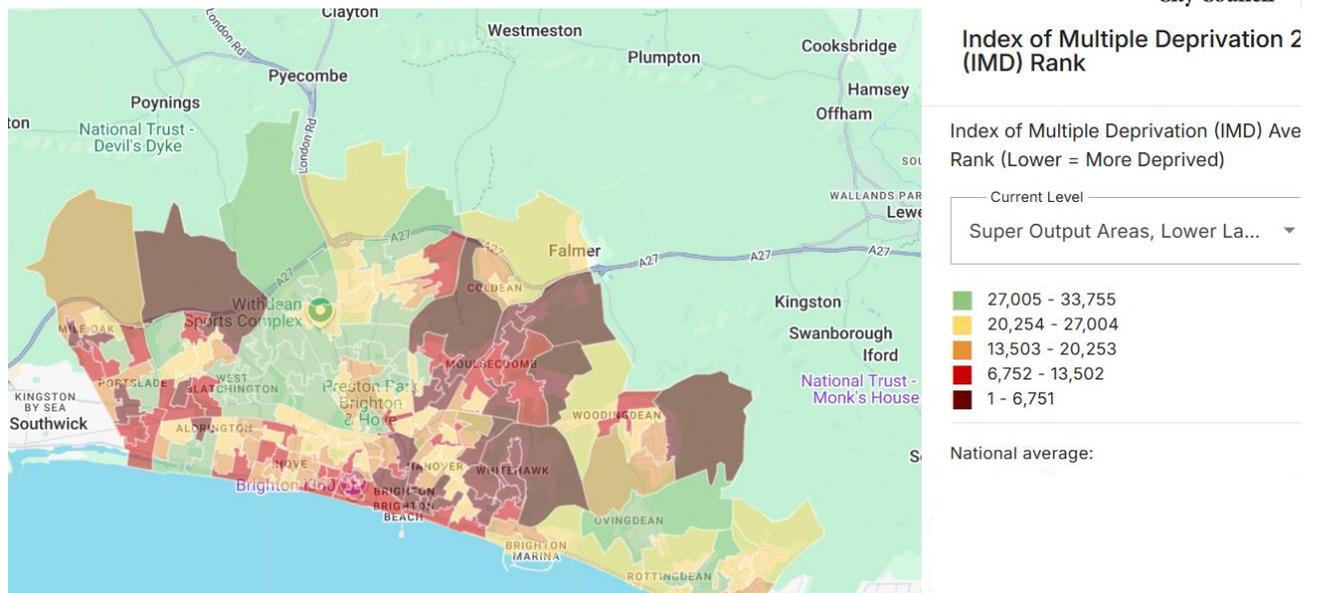
Since the public consultation commenced, more recent Index of Multiple Deprivation data has been released that shows the following:

- Brighton & Hove continues to contain neighbourhoods which are among the most deprived in England, particularly in East Brighton (Whitehawk, Moulsecoomb, Bevendean, Hollingdean, Queen's Park). These areas rank in the top 10–20% most deprived nationally, with some LSOAs (Lower Super Output Areas) in East Brighton falling within the top 1,000 most deprived in the country.
- Compared to other South East authorities, Brighton & Hove continues to stand out for having pockets of severe deprivation alongside areas of affluence. While the city as a whole is less deprived than some northern cities, it is one of only two South East authorities (alongside Hastings) to rank among the lowest 50 nationally for income and employment deprivation.
- The IMD maps and ward-level breakdowns show stark contrasts. For example, Westdene & Hove Park and Rottingdean & West Saltdean are among the least deprived, while East Brighton and parts of Moulsecoomb & Bevendean are among the most deprived. This is shown below in the image which shows the middle layer of super output areas.



The image above is a screen shot from the Local Insight website, detailing a map of the city and showing the rank of indices of multiple deprivation across the city. This is the middle layer of data.

- Brighton & Hove's deprivation is most acute in income, employment, and health domains, but barriers to housing and services are also significant due to high housing costs and limited affordable options.
- The city's overall deprivation ranking has improved slightly in recent years, but persistent pockets remain, and the gap between the most and least deprived areas has not narrowed substantially.
- The IMD 2025 shows that some neighbourhoods around Hollingbury rank among the most deprived in Brighton & Hove, and are well above the national average for deprivation. Westdene, while generally more affluent, contains some groups (for example older adults, carers, and families without cars) who are at risk of isolation and digital exclusion. This is shown below in the image which shows the lower layer of super output areas.



The image above is a screen shot from the Local Insight website, detailing a map of the city and showing the rank of indices of multiple deprivation across the city. This is the lower layer of data.

- Central Brighton shows continued persistent deprivation amongst affluence. While central Brighton includes some affluent neighbourhoods, the IMD 2025 data shows that it also contains LSOAs, ranking among the most deprived in England, particularly in domains such as income, employment, health, and digital exclusion. This means a number of residents who live locally to Jubilee Library and use its facilities will be from for these deprived areas.
- Central Hove is generally more affluent than central Brighton, but the IMD 2025 data reveals that there are still pockets of deprivation, particularly among older adults, carers, and those living on low incomes or with limited access to digital resources. As above, that means that some of those that live locally to Hove Library and use the facilities there, will be from areas of deprivation.

What we heard in the consultation About Disadvantaged People and Those Living in Poverty

Libraries as Equalisers

- Some respondents described libraries as “levellers” or “equalisers” for people living in poverty. Libraries provide free access to books, computers, the internet, and were reported to offer a safe, warm space—and it was recognised that these are resources that many disadvantaged people cannot afford at home.
- Some said that for children and families on low incomes, libraries could be the only way to access a wide range of books, support with homework, and digital resources needed for education, job searches, and benefit applications.

Warmth, Shelter, and Social Connection

- Libraries were described as one of the last remaining free, warm, and safe public spaces in the community. Respondents living in poverty or on low incomes said they rely on libraries to keep warm in winter, to meet others, and to avoid isolation without having to spend money.

- Some mentioned that libraries are important for those who cannot afford to heat their homes, buy books, or pay for internet access.

Digital Inclusion and Practical Support

- Some disadvantaged respondents highlighted the importance of libraries for digital inclusion. Libraries provide free access to computers and WiFi, which are essential for job hunting, accessing benefits, and managing daily life when you cannot afford these at home.

Financial Concerns

- The cost of public transport was frequently cited as a barrier for older people on fixed incomes. Many said that having to pay for buses to reach a more distant library would be prohibitive, especially for regular visits. Some also mentioned that they cannot afford to buy books, making the library an essential free resource.
- Several noted that library staff help with paperwork, printing, and accessing information, which is especially valuable for those who are digitally excluded or have limited literacy.

Impact of Cuts and Closures

- Some said that reductions to library services would “make life smaller” for those already struggling, and that libraries are often the only place where people can go without being expected to spend money.

Children, Young People, and Families

- Respondents stressed that children from disadvantaged backgrounds are particularly at risk if libraries close. For many, the library is the only place to access books, do homework, and participate in free activities. Parents and carers said that libraries help to “level the playing field” for children who cannot afford books or digital devices at home.

Social Mobility and Opportunity

- Libraries were seen by some as crucial for supporting social mobility, providing opportunities for learning, self-improvement, and community engagement for those who might otherwise be excluded due to poverty.

Some quotes from survey respondents, specifically related to living in poverty or being in economic disadvantage

“Libraries are a crucial third space – used by myself, my partner and almost every single person I know. I cannot afford to buy the books I read, and in a world of increasing cost and reducing opportunity, the library is a literal beacon of opportunity.”

“As a low income family, we are unable to buy a computer and aren't able to buy lots of different books for education and teaching reading purposes, we use the library for those.”

“I am on a low income and it is one of the few spaces in the city I can be without spending money. The proposed changes will effect me a lot, I am very sad to hear about them.”

“Libraries are a vital community service. Not only do they offer free resources for learning and self development but also offer warm spaces and a sense of community to some of the most vulnerable members of our society.”

“Hollingbury library is in a great location for the children being right next to the park. We often use it during a combined visit especially when the weather is changeable. Whilst I can also walk to Patcham, it is a different experience. Hollingbury is a deprived area and when the original library was closed, we were promised a replacement. If we want

children to access books, we have to make it easy for them. They will not access them in Patcham which is at least a half hour walk compared to the Old Boat where you could pop in whilst at the playground or visiting the community pantry.”

A summary of potential impacts

- Some people told us that libraries are essential for those who are disadvantaged or living in poverty, providing free access to books, digital resources, warmth, and social connection. Reductions or closures are likely to have a significant negative impact on these groups, increasing hardship, isolation, and educational inequality.

Mitigations

- 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.

Promote and Expand Digital Access

- Ensure continued access to computers, WiFi, and printing at remaining libraries. Where possible, increase the number of devices and extend digital support, especially for job searches, benefit applications, and essential online services. Further promotion to be undertaken to highlight the free to use online library service offers to support people when the libraries are closed.

Partnerships with Community Organisations:

- Consider further work with local charities, food banks, schools, and community centres to provide access to books, digital resources, and information in alternative venues.

Warm Spaces and Social Support:

- Publicise and partner with other local “warm spaces” (community centres, churches, etc.) to support people to access safe, free places to go during library closures or reduced hours.

Travel Support and Information

- Provide clear information about public transport options to alternative libraries

Targeted Support for Children and Young People

- Maintain or expand free activities at remaining libraries or partner venues, to ensure children from low-income families continue to have access to educational opportunities.

Digital Literacy Training

- Continue to provide access to volunteer support and work with partners to explore the potential for digital skills workshops and one-to-one support to help digitally excluded residents access online resources, benefits, and job opportunities.

Staff Training

- Ensure staff at remaining libraries and partner organisations are trained to support people facing socio-economic disadvantage, including signposting to relevant local services.

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?

It is important that we were able to hear from a wide range of residents, customers and stakeholders during the proposed public consultation as this has enabled greater analysis and understanding of the impacts of the final 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.

Through targeted promotion of the consultation, we’ve been able to draw 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 experience multiple impacts.

However, several protected characteristic groups appear to be underrepresented or less vocal in the survey which we need to be mindful of when considering equalities implications and any resulting planned actions.

- **Race/Ethnicity:** While there are some responses from people of Black and Racially Minoritised backgrounds, the majority of responses are from White British respondents. There is therefore less reflection across all areas of the proposals of specific barriers faced by Black, Asian, or other racially minoritised groups.
- **Religion or Belief:** Although some respondents mention their religion (e.g., Christian, Jewish, Muslim, Buddhist), there is little in-depth discussion of how library changes would impact religious minorities or those with particular faith-based needs. Some respondents referred to having particular philosophical beliefs but very few explicitly linked their philosophical stance to the impact of the proposals.
- **Gender Reassignment/Transgender:** There are a few references to non-binary and trans identities, but overall, the voices of transgender people are limited compared to other groups.
- **Pregnancy and Maternity:** While mothers and parents are well represented, there are fewer explicit references to the needs of pregnant women or those on maternity leave, beyond general comments about families and carers.

Intersectional and Cumulative Impacts of Library Service Reductions

Potential for disproportionate Impact on Vulnerable Groups

- Reducing library services could most affect people who are older, younger, disabled, carers, or at risk of socio-economic disadvantage. These groups can rely on libraries for social contact, digital access, learning, and a safe, warm environment

Intersectionality intensifies disadvantage

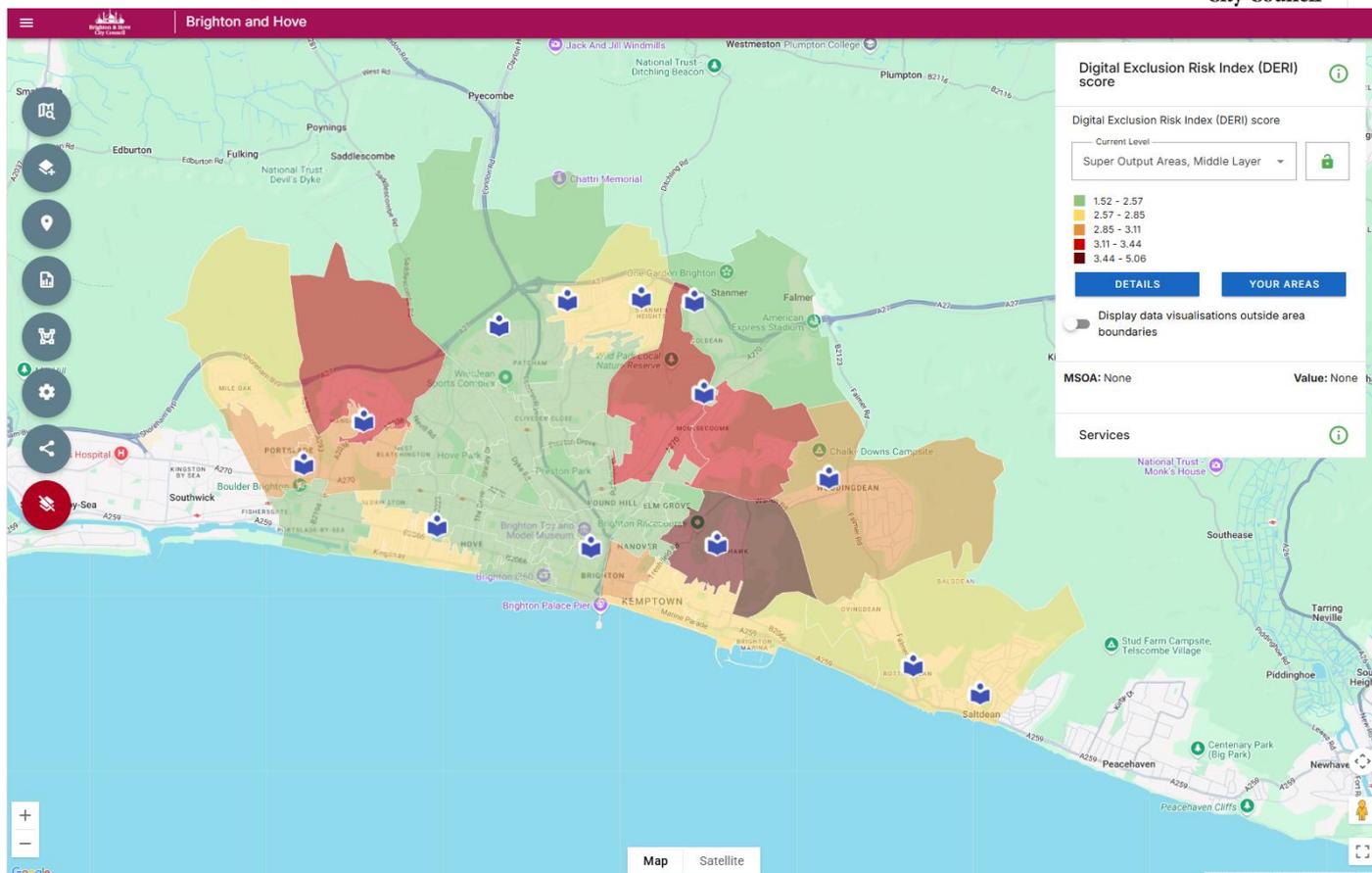
- Individuals with multiple protected characteristics face compounded barriers. The loss of local, accessible library provision can increase isolation, digital exclusion, and can limit access to important services
- Disability + Age: Older adults with disabilities could be particularly affected by the closure of local, accessible libraries. For these users, libraries are not just about access to books, but could also contribute to independence, social contact, and in providing a safe, warm space. They may find travelling to alternative sites more challenging.
- Ethnicity + Digital Exclusion + Low Income: Respondents from Black and Racially Minoritised backgrounds were more likely to mention digital exclusion and low income. Libraries can provide essential digital access, language learning, and community support. Reducing hours at central libraries can mean some people have reduced access to important services and opportunities for social integration.
- Caring Responsibilities + Disability + Gender: Many carers are women, some of whom are also disabled. Reduced library services can mean fewer opportunities for respite, support, and social contact, potentially leading to increased stress and barriers to community participation. They may find travelling to alternative sites more challenging.
- Race/Ethnicity + Disability + Language: Libraries are often one of limited accessible spaces for people who are both from Black and Racially Minoritised backgrounds and disabled, especially those with English as an additional language. A reduction in services can multiply the barriers they face.

Cumulative Effects have the potential to increase disadvantage further / act as a multiplier

- The impact of service reductions multiplies for those with intersecting vulnerabilities (e.g. disability + age + low income). Libraries are more than book lenders—they are important for social connection, digital inclusion, and community support

Digital and social exclusion

- 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.



The image above is a screen shot from the Local Insight website, detailing a map of the city and showing the digital exclusion risk index across. It also shows the libraries across the city.

- It is important to note that during the public consultation we heard that having a good level of income or being financially secure does not mean people will not be digitally and / or socially isolated. Having financial security does not necessarily reduce the risk of the impact of loneliness. It is also not the case that individuals being financially secure means they have access to a good range of community spaces/resources/support.
- The recent IMD data shows that deprivation is not just about income, but also about access to services, transport, and community resources. For residents in these areas, the local library is often the only walkable, free, warm, and inclusive public space. Closure would disproportionately affect those who cannot afford or physically manage longer journeys to alternative libraries, especially disabled people, older adults, carers, and low-income families.
- Other disadvantaging factors can impact negatively on people's lives too, regardless of financial security, for example impact of domestic abuse.

What we heard about specific proposals – related to protected characteristics.

These impacts are explored in more detail above, however here is a summary of some key points made in relation to protected characteristics groupings, relevant for this EIA.

Proposed reduction in opening hours at central libraries

- Some working age adults felt that the 5pm closing time reduced after-work access time for them, undermining abilities to study, use the computer and printing and access to a quiet space.
- Families with young children were concerned about potential losses of after school and / or weekend access and that this may impact on children's reading as well as family routines and social connection opportunities.
- Some older adults were concerned that reducing opening hours could increase isolation, reduce access to warm spaces and potentially reduce their use of libraries.
- Some disabled adults and those who are neurodivergent highlight the need for staffed, quiet spaces and were concerned that the reduction in opening hours compromised access, safety and confidence in using the space.
- Both central libraries serve a high proportion of disabled users (Jubilee: 18.2%, Hove: 18.8%). Reduced hours would impact some of those with mobility, sensory, mental health, and neurodivergent conditions, who reported in the survey responses that they rely on extended and quieter hours for access and wellbeing.
- Many disabled users are also elderly. Reduced hours could increase isolation and reduce access to safe, warm spaces, especially for older people who may not wish to use unstaffed Libraries Extra hours.
- Reduced hours could make it harder for carers to access library services after work or school, impacting their ability to support those they care for.
- Jubilee and Hove libraries have the most ethnically diverse user base of all branches, including significant numbers of Black, Asian, Mixed, and Other backgrounds, as well as migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers. Reduced hours could limit access to culturally relevant resources and support.
- The libraries serve users from a wide range of faith backgrounds. Reduced hours could affect access to religious materials, quiet reflection, and community events, especially when opening times may not align with religious observances.
- Female users, especially those with caring responsibilities, could be disproportionately affected, as reduced hours limit access to family-friendly facilities and support.
- The libraries are described by some respondents as essential safe spaces for LGBTQ+ users. Reduced hours would limit access to affirming environments, community events, and support, potentially increasing isolation for LGBTQ+ individuals.
- Trans, non-binary and gender-diverse users express concerns about safety and inclusion during unstaffed hours.
- Many users experiencing poverty, digital exclusion, or homelessness can partially or completely rely on the libraries for free access to computers, Wi-Fi, and support with benefits and job applications. Reduced hours could exacerbate digital exclusion and financial hardship.
- The libraries can provide essential facilities (toilets, shelter, charging points) for people experiencing homelessness or insecure accommodation. Reduced hours could remove a valued safe space during some evenings and weekend afternoons.
- Across all groups of respondents, some described libraries as important for mental health, social contact, and community connection. Reduced hours risk increasing isolation, stress, and negative mental health outcomes.

Proposed closure of Hollingbury Library

- Hollingbury Library is considered accessible for disabled residents, offering step-free access and proximity to essential services. Closure could affect disabled adults and children, who may face barriers in travelling to alternative libraries due to long, hilly walks and limited direct public transport.
- The library is described by some as a “lifeline” for elderly residents, who may not be able to travel further to alternative libraries, and for families with young children who rely on combined visits to the library, playground, and nearby food bank. Closure could increase isolation and reduce access to educational resources for both groups.
- Hollingbury serves a more ethnically diverse community than some other community libraries, with a higher proportion of Black, Asian, Mixed and Other backgrounds. Some Black and Racially Minoritised families may rely on the library for access to culturally relevant books, computers, and events, language learning, and social connection. Closure could impact these families, increasing isolation and digital exclusion.
- The library supports a more religiously diverse community than some other community libraries, including Muslim, Jewish, Hindu, and Buddhist families. It provides access to some religious education materials and the library has been described as a safe space for some faith-based families. Closure could affect these groups, especially those on low incomes or with limited transport options.
- Some female respondents, particularly carers and older women, described the library as an important space for social contact, respite, and children’s literacy. Closure could impact women, especially those who are carers, disabled, or on low incomes.
- Some carers, especially those supporting disabled children or elderly relatives, rely on the library for support and social connection. Closure could increase isolation and stress for carers, particularly those without access to a car.
- The library serves a community with high deprivation, financial hardship, and digital exclusion. It is a valued, free, warm space for those experiencing poverty or homelessness. Closure could increase isolation, reduce access to digital resources, and remove a support hub for the most vulnerable.

Proposed Closure of Westdene Library

- Westdene Library serves a proportion of disabled users. 17% of survey respondents who use Westdene Library told us they are living with a disability or limiting health condition which is approximately reflective of census data. Closure could affect those with mobility issues, as other libraries may not be seen as viable alternatives due to distance, steep hills, bus connections and limited free parking.
- While the user group is predominantly White British, there are respondents from Black and Racially minoritised backgrounds. Some of those families, especially those less likely to own a car, could be affected by the loss of a local, walkable, and inclusive library.
- Some female respondents, particularly mothers and grandmothers, described the library as essential for after-school visits and as a safe space for children.

- Some LGBTQ+ respondents, including families with children at the local school, described Westdene as a safe, inclusive space. Closure could affect LGBTQ+ people who may not have access to a car or feel less comfortable in other venues.
- Carers (especially mothers, grandmothers, and those caring for disabled or elderly relatives) may rely on Westdene for respite, support, and social connection. Closure could increase isolation and stress for carers, particularly those on low incomes or without access to a car.
- Despite perceptions of affluence and the low scores on the Index of Multiple Deprivation, Westdene is also home to low-income families, single parents, and older people living in poverty. The library provides free resources and social contact; closure could impact those unable to afford paid activities or travel further afield.
- Westdene Library is described by some as the only free, safe, warm space in the area, acting as a community hub. Closure could increase digital exclusion, isolation, and reduce access to books, computers, and social contact for disabled and vulnerable residents.

7. Action planning

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

Ensure communications about any agreed changes to library services are fully accessible to all affected groups.

- Develop an accessibility statement for communications in January 2026
- Ensure information about service changes are provided in digital and paper formats.
- Provide information about service changes in accessible formats as requested (plain English, Braille, Easy Read, BSL, translated into different languages).
- Conduct accessibility audits on identified alternative libraries to those which may close
- Plan and host 'welcome events' and informal inductions at alternative libraries.
- Promote the online 360 tours to help users familiarise themselves with new spaces.
- Develop a promotion strategy for Libraries Extra, ensuring all who use a library which is closing have every opportunity to use Libraries Extra in the future.

Continue with targeted engagement and support for vulnerable groups about the changes and how to access alternative services

- Maintain proactive engagement with vulnerable and underheard groups (including older people, disabled, carers, minority ethnic communities, migrants, socio-economically disadvantaged). This supports open communication channels through which to promote changes, alternative library options etc.
- Develop a statement to use in all libraries where changes have been agreed, to ensure signposting to good alternatives is clear
- Maintain seven-day access at Jubilee Library, and at community libraries through Libraries Extra, to ensure there is a comprehensive offer all week

- Expand and target promotion of Home Delivery Service for older people, disabled people, and carers who may lose access to local libraries
- Communicate to schools/colleges near libraries affected by service reduction to keep them informed about potential impact on children and young people's ability to study and use library resources at those times
- Further promote online offer of eBooks, eAudiobooks, and online resources for all users, especially when libraries are closed
- Targeted promotion of city-wide facilities supporting sensory needs and disabilities including promotion of Large Print and eAudiobooks for visually impaired users
- Promote and expand access to computers, WiFi, and printing at remaining libraries
- Support regular groups who book space in libraries affected to find alternatives at other times or in other libraries
- Actively promote concessionary library membership for full-time carers and disabled people (longer loan periods, lower fees)
- Consider promotion across libraries about which sites have accessible / gender neutral facilities so users can make informed choices about which alternative sites to use
- Retain existing and publicise gender-neutral facilities
- Proactively inform networks and groups that support care experienced children and young people about changes
- Provide clear information about public transport options to alternative libraries. Highlight bus routes serving areas affected by closures.

Establish way of monitoring any impacts and of reviewing and adapting mitigating actions as required

- Continue to facilitate library service staff to access training and development opportunities focussed on supporting people facing disadvantage and marginalisation, including signposting to local services.
- Develop a manageable way of monitoring the impacts of closures and reduced hours on protected and vulnerable groups, informed by feedback and data collected during the consultation
- Consider ways of expanding equalities monitoring across the library service, building in a focus on intersectional analysis if possible. This data can then inform further mitigating actions and adjustments as needed.
- Explore the potential other models set out within the public consultation and ensure the findings of this EIA inform those considerations
- As part of business-as-usual work within the Library Service we'll continue to review accessibility of libraries, but especially those identified as alternatives for those impacted by closures. This will also be a key way of informing the future strategy for the city's libraries.

Through inclusion in action plans (see below) and through discussions at Library Service Management meetings, consider how progress on these actions can be reported to senior council officers to ensure oversight and holding accountability of these agreed actions.

Which action plans will the identified actions be transferred to?

- The library service business plan for Q4 in 25/26 and the plan for 26/27

- The Families, Children and Wellbeing Fair and Inclusive Action Plan
- At the appropriate time, the new Library Strategy for the City

8. Outcome of your assessment

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

Stop or pause the activity due to unmitigable disproportionate impacts because the evidence shows bias towards one or more groups.

Adapt or change the activity to eliminate or mitigate disproportionate impacts and/or bias.

Proceed with the activity as currently planned – no disproportionate impacts have been identified, or impacts will be mitigated by specified SMART actions.

Proceed with caution – 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.

X

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 decision making and then implementation of changes to city library provision. Actions are identified to increase and enhance underheard and underserved community voices and to minimise the impact of any changes on those protected characteristics at risk of negative impact.

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

A range of mitigations have been identified to offset the impact of reductions in public library services. These are explored in more detail in the Equalities Impact Assessment; they can broadly be summarised as:

- Ensure communications about any agreed changes to library services are fully accessible to all affected groups.
- Continue with targeted engagement and support for vulnerable groups about the changes and how to access alternative services
- Establish a way of monitoring any impacts and of reviewing and adapting mitigating actions as required

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	27/12/2025
Accountable Manager:	Ceris Howard	27/12/2025

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

Signatory:	Name:	Date: DD-MMM-YY
EDI Manager:	Deborah Totney	27 November 2025

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

