



**Mobile Library Service Strategy
Equality Impact Assessment
Report for Consultation**

September 2012

**Consultation Period:
24th September – 14th December 2012**

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Access to information

As part of our commitment to promoting equality of opportunity and good relations, we want to ensure that everyone is able to access the documents we produce. We would therefore be happy to provide any of the information in this document in an alternative format or discuss it with you in person.

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Consultation

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The closing date for receipt of comments is Friday, 14th December 2012. Comments will be accepted in any format.

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1. BACKGROUND

Section 75 duties

1.1 Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 requires all designated public authorities carrying out functions in Northern Ireland to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity –

- between persons of different
 - religious belief;
 - political opinion;
 - racial group;
 - age;
 - marital status;
 - sexual orientation;
- between men and women generally;
- between persons with a disability and persons without; and
- between persons with dependants and persons without.

1.2 Without prejudice to these obligations, public authorities are also required to have regard to the desirability of promoting good relations between persons of different religious beliefs, political opinion or racial group.

1.3 Schedule 9 of the Act sets out the detailed procedure for the implementation of these duties including the conduct of screening exercises and Equality Impact Assessments (EQIAs) of policies.

1.4 Screening and EQIAs are conducted in accordance with the guidance issued by the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland (ECNI); the relevant guidance currently in place includes –

- Guide to the statutory duties (April 2010)
- Practical guidance on equality impact assessment (February 2005)
- Promoting good relations – a guide for public authorities (October 2007)
- Monitoring guidance for use by public authorities (July 2007).

The policy

1.5 The mobile library service is an integral and essential part of the provision of public library services in Northern Ireland. Libraries NI is seeking to establish a new strategy for mobile library service provision which ensures that use of the service increases and that it meets the needs of current and future users.

- 1.6 The strategy focuses on the mobile library service which serves the general public by visiting locations some distance from a branch library to lend books and other stock and, in some cases, to provide access to ICT. This service stops at agreed locations in settlements of various sizes (both rural and urban) and also visits a limited number of schools and playgroups.
- 1.7 Libraries NI has determined that an EQIA of the proposed strategy should be carried out to determine any potential differential impacts on people in different Section 75 groups. The EQIA report will be consulted on in parallel with consultation on the proposed strategy.
- 1.8 Further documents connected with the development of the strategy and full details of the consultation process can be found on the Libraries NI website www.librariesni.org.uk

EQIA process

- 1.9 When undertaking an EQIA, Libraries NI closely follows the ECNI guidance which recommends that there should be seven steps in the EQIA process:

- Step 1: Definition of the aims of the policy
- Step 2: Consideration of available data and research
- Step 3: Assessment of potential and actual impacts
- Step 4: Consideration of measures
- Step 5: Formal consultation
- Step 6: Decision and publication of the results of the EQIA
- Step 7: Monitoring for adverse impact.

- 1.10 This report has been written primarily to provide information to consultees during the formal consultation phase and includes the findings of the first 4 steps of the process. The action to be taken under the remaining 3 steps is also outlined in section 7 below.

2. DEFINITION OF THE AIMS OF THE POLICY

- 2.1 The new Mobile Library Service Strategy is being developed principally to ensure that the use of the service increases, that it meets current and future customers' needs and makes a significant contribution to the achievement of the Libraries NI Vision.

2.2 Libraries NI has the vision of being a flexible and responsive library service which provides a dynamic focal point in the community and assists people to fulfil their potential. Its mission is to enrich and enhance the lives of individuals and communities through providing and promoting a range of high quality library and information services.

2.3 The objectives of the proposed strategy are:

- to increase use of mobile libraries;
- to ensure that the service is accessible;
- to maximise the contribution of mobile libraries to Libraries NI's overall service provision in both rural and urban areas;
- to deliver value for money services;
- to deliver a harmonised and equitable service;
- to deliver a service which is appropriate for target users.

2.4 The proposed strategy includes five service proposals which form the main focus of the consultation.

		Summary of proposals
1	Target groups	The limited space on public mobiles should be used to provide services mainly for the key target groups, namely older, retired people and children of various age groups and their carers.
2	Services to be provided	Public mobile libraries are best designed for and should primarily deliver book lending services (including talking books) and should not provide Internet access.
3	Criteria for service delivery	A mobile stop in a rural area must have at least 5 regular customers on an on-going basis with a sustained level of use and must not be within 3 miles of a branch library. A mobile stop in an urban area must not be within easy access of a branch library; must be in an area of social need and must have at least 5 regular customers on an on-going basis with a sustained level of use.
4	Services to schools and playgroups	No limiting criteria but requests for stops will be prioritised on the basis of principles such as practicality, level of need and level of use e.g. distance from a branch library.

5	Increasing usage	Increase the number of the services to schools and playgroups served and develop a more targeted approach to publicising public mobile library services.
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2.5 This EQIA therefore focuses on identifying the potential differential impacts on customers and future customers of each of the service proposals.

3. CONSIDERATION OF AVAILABLE DATA AND RESEARCH

Data on mobile library customers

3.1 A customer survey was carried out in June/July 2011 mainly to assess customer satisfaction with aspects of the current service and identify any additional needs. Almost 3,000 responses to the questionnaire were received from users aged 16+, estimated to be in excess of 50% of the total number of users. Respondents were asked for information about themselves in 6 of the Section 75 categories; given the high response rate, it can be assumed that this Section 75 profile is fairly typical of all customers.

		Respondents
1	Age¹	More than three fifths (64%) of respondents who use the mobile library were aged 60+ years: 18% were aged 60-69 24% were aged 70-79 19% were aged 80-89 3% were aged 90+
2	Gender	Over four fifths (82%) of respondents who use the mobile library were female and just under one fifth (18%) were male.
3	Racial group	The vast majority (99%) of respondents were white, with the remainder coming from Chinese, Irish Traveller, Indian, Pakistani or mixed ethnic origins.
4	Marital status	Almost half (49%) of respondents were either married/cohabiting or in a civil partnership. 30% were widowed or a surviving civil partner and 16% were single.

¹ It should be noted that the survey was not open to customers aged under 16.

5	Disability	Over two fifths (43%) of respondents considered themselves to have a disability or illness that substantially limited their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities. Of these, over four fifths (83%) reported the nature of the disability or illness to be mobility-related, 22% sight-related and 16% hearing-related.
6	Dependants	30% of respondents indicated that they had someone who was dependent on them (i.e. a child, someone with an incapacitating disability or an elderly person).

3.2 Although the survey was limited to respondents aged 16+, questions were asked about whether respondents used the mobile library service for anyone other than themselves and, if so, the age group of the other person(s). 40% of respondents said they used the service for someone other than themselves in the following age ranges:

	No. of respondents	%
Child / children (0-4 years)	389	35
Child / children (5-11)	496	44
Child / children (12-15)	207	19
Young adults (16-17)	64	6
Adult(s) (18-59)	237	21
Senior citizen(s) (60+ years)	311	28

Note: Respondents could select one or more answers to this question so the sum of the percentages will be greater than 100%

3.3 It is therefore clear that children and young people make up a significant proportion of the customers of the mobile library service.

3.4 The survey did not ask for information on religious belief, political opinion or sexual orientation, because of the sensitivity of this information. An indication of the community background of customers can be obtained from Census information on the population of the district council areas where mobile stops are located. Appendix 1 sets out the number of mobile stops in each district council area together with data on the percentage of the population of that district from Catholic and Protestant community backgrounds. No specific information is available on sexual orientation, although the 2003 Life & Times Survey reported that approximately 1% of the NI population identify themselves as gay or lesbian².

² ARK (2003) NI Life & Times Survey

Research into customer needs

- 3.5 The customer survey was conducted to assess satisfaction with aspects of service levels and to identify any additional needs.
- 3.6 When customers were asked why they use the mobile library service, 57% of respondents said that it was difficult to get to their nearest branch library and some gave reasons such as not being able to drive, having no means of transport and health/mobility problems.
- 3.7 Customers were also asked what types of material they used the mobile library for. Respondents indicated the following uses:

	No. of respondents	%
Fiction books	1995	69
Non fiction books	1209	42
Large print books	1209	42
Children's/ teens' books	781	27
Information (e.g reference type material)	379	13
Talking books	284	10
Music/ films	136	5
Computer/Internet access	51	2

Note: Respondents could select one or more answers to this question so the sum of the percentages will be greater than 100%

- 3.8 There was a very high level of satisfaction with the current service; for example, over 97% of respondents were satisfied with the frequency, duration and timing of mobile visits and 83% were satisfied with the variety of stock. Only 8% of respondents said that they would like their mobile library to provide other services; suggestions included access to computer/internet, DVDs/videos, CDs/tapes, more new books/better variety of books and activities for children.

Data on travel

- 3.9 A significant number of respondents to the customer survey said that they found it difficult to get to their nearest branch library because of lack of transport. Data on travel and car ownership is therefore relevant to this EQIA.

3.10 The latest DRD Travel Survey³ (2008-10) showed that:

- a higher proportion of men (81%) hold a full driving licence than women (67%) but there is evidence that the gap is closing slightly;
- the age group where the gender gap in licence holding is most noticeable is the 70+ age group where there is a difference of 40 percentage points between men (81%) and women (41%);
- overall, 19% of respondents said they had some difficulty with travel due to a physical disability or long-standing health problem. As expected, this increases with age: only 5% of 16-29 year olds had difficulty with travel compared to 39% of those aged 60 and over. In the 60+ age group, a higher proportion of women (42%) indicated that they had difficulty with travel than men (34%);
- just under one quarter (24%) of households in Northern Ireland did not have access to a car over the three-year reporting period (2008-2010). There has been little change in this proportion over the years. Car ownership is higher in rural areas than in urban areas.

3.11 During recent consultations on other EQIAs, comments were made by Disability Action and Mencap regarding travel problems experienced by disabled people. The following comments have a bearing on the issues raised in this EQIA:

- some disabled people experience difficulty in travelling; car ownership and use of public transport among disabled people is substantially lower than for people without a disability and many people with learning disabilities find it difficult to travel to new locations;
- there is a higher instance of mental illness for people with sensory and physical disabilities living in rural communities;
- in rural areas women tend to be dependent on men to drive and, as they live longer and may become disabled in later life, they may be further disadvantaged if they need to travel any distance.

³ Travel Survey 2008-10, Roads Service, Department for Regional Development. 2011

3.12 At public meetings relating to library closures the following points were made:

- additional travel can have an adverse impact on those who care for dependants, including children, elderly and disabled relatives, as additional travelling time can have a greater impact on them than on people with no caring responsibilities.;
- a high percentage of the migrant population do not have access to private transport; an estimate of 60% was provided.

Data on Internet access

3.13 One of the service proposals in the proposed Mobile Library Service Strategy is that mobiles should no longer provide access to the Internet. Data on internet access is therefore relevant to this EQIA.

3.14 The Continuous Household Survey provides data on internet usage in Northern Ireland. The most recent statistics relate to 2010-11⁴ and show that:

- 71% of the NI population have access to the internet;
- usage decreases with age; for example, 94% of 16-19 year olds use the internet but only 51% of 60-69 year olds and 24% of those aged 70+ do so;
- overall there is very little difference in terms of gender (72% male, 71% female); however, older women are less likely to use the internet than older men (49% compared with 54% in the 60-69 age group and 19% compared with 29% in the 70+ age group).

3.15 The survey does not provide information on disabled people, but the Office for National Statistics publishes a quarterly bulletin on internet access in GB based on the Labour Force Survey; the latest figures⁵ show that people with a disability are less likely to use the internet (64% compared with 90% overall). In response to recent consultations on other EQIAs, Disability Action said that 50% of disabled people in Northern Ireland do not own a computer.

⁴ Continuous Household Survey 2010/11, NISRA Central Survey Unit, 2012

⁵ Internet Access Quarterly Update 2012, Q2, Office of National Statistics, 2012

4. ASSESSMENT OF ACTUAL AND POTENTIAL IMPACTS

- 4.1 This section of the report considers the service proposals which may have an impact on various people, whether the impacts are likely to be differential in respect of people in the nine categories defined in Section 75, and whether any of the differential impacts are likely to be adverse.
- 4.2 The assessment is based on the above data and research and is set out under the categories in Section 75. However, these headings simply provide a framework; it is acknowledged that the effects of the proposals will be different for each individual person and will not necessarily relate to a specific Section 75 characteristic.

Service proposal 1: Target groups

- 4.3 The customer survey showed that the mobile library service is primarily used by older, retired people and children and young people of various age groups and their parents/guardians. The first proposal is that in future the limited space on public mobiles should be used to provide services for these target groups.
- 4.4 Clearly this will have a positive impact on people in the younger and older age groups as they will have access to a wider selection of materials. There will be a minor adverse impact for people in other age groups, but they will still be catered for and there is a well established system allowing mobile users to order, free of charge, specific materials for collection during the next visit.
- 4.5 It is not anticipated that there will be any significant adverse impacts for people in other Section 75 categories.

Service proposal 2: Services to be provided

- 4.6 The recent customer survey confirmed that mobile libraries serve people best for borrowing books including talking books. Where Internet access is provided, it is not well used. The second proposal is to adopt the principle that public mobile libraries are best designed for and are primarily for the delivery of book lending services and should not provide internet access.
- 4.7 The data on Internet usage set out above (paras. 3.13-15) indicates that people in certain Section 75 groups (older people, particularly older women and disabled people) tend to have more restricted access to

the internet than others. There is therefore potential for these groups to be differentially and adversely affected by the service proposal.

- 4.8 It should be borne in mind that the proposal is based on practical principles; mobile libraries are not an ideal way to deliver Internet access to a wide range of people and, in the limited circumstances where it is available, it is not well used. Even though older women make up a large proportion of mobile library customers, in practice it is likely that the removal of the service would be detrimental to only a very small number of people. Branch libraries will continue to provide full access to the Internet, although it is acknowledged that the groups with more restricted Internet access are also those with less freedom to travel.

Service proposal 3: Criteria for service delivery

- 4.9 In order to provide an equitable service across Northern Ireland, it is proposed that criteria should be introduced to determine mobile library stops, based on ease of access to branch libraries and the level of usage of mobile services.
- 4.10 In rural areas it is proposed that the criteria for a mobile stop should be at least 5 regular customers on an on-going basis with a sustained level of use and that the stop should be at least 3 miles from a branch library. A mobile stop in an urban area should not be within easy access of a fixed library location; should be in an area of social need and should have at least 5 regular customers on an on-going basis with a sustained level of use.
- 4.11 The strategy is designed to result in an equitable service which provides value for money and there is no desire to reduce the number of stops significantly. Nevertheless, there will be some adverse impacts on customers in areas where these criteria cannot be met and the impacts will be differential for young people, older people, women and disabled people simply because they make up a large percentage of existing customers. At this stage, the number of stops which will be affected by the adoption of such criteria is unknown and further analysis of the customers affected is not available, but Libraries NI is committed to working with existing customers to ensure that practical mitigating measures are developed to help them to continue to access library services. Mitigating measures are discussed in more detail in section 5 below.

Service proposal 4: Services to schools and playgroups

4.12 At present some mobile libraries visit a number of schools and playgroups along the route, but capacity is limited and the service cannot be extended to all the schools and playgroups that might be interested. The fourth service proposal is that, although strict criteria will not be adopted, future decisions on whether individual requests can be met will be based on principles, which may include the suitability of available days and times, the effect on fixed libraries, the potential level of use and the level of need e.g. distance from a branch library.

4.13 This proposal is based on a desire to increase usage of the mobile library service, not to cease delivering existing services, so the impact on existing customers should be minimal. The review of routes may result in minor changes which could have an impact on certain schools and playgroups if the revised route did not allow for a stop at a convenient day and time, but Libraries NI will work with existing customers to minimise any negative impact. It is not anticipated that this proposal will result in any significant adverse impact and, in fact, should deliver positive impacts for the additional schools and playgroups which will receive the service in the future.

Service proposal 5: Increasing usage

4.14 The final service proposal concerns increasing usage in order to maximise the contribution of mobile libraries to Libraries NI 's overall service provision in both rural and urban areas and to deliver value for money services. It is not anticipated that this proposal will have any differential effects on existing or future customers.

Summary of impacts

4.15 The preliminary findings of this EQIA are that the service proposals may result in some adverse differential impacts for existing customers, affecting people in a number of Section 75 groups (summarised in the table below). However, it is anticipated that the mitigating measures proposed by Libraries NI (outlined in section 5 below) will address these potential problems. Any impacts identified by consultees during the consultation process will also be taken into account when the final EQIA report is prepared. Libraries NI would welcome information from consultees on how the service proposals might differentially affect people in any of the Section 75 categories.

		Potential impacts
1	Religious belief / political opinion	The mobile library service covers a wide area in both urban and rural communities. It is not anticipated that the service proposals will differentially affect people because of their religious belief or political opinion.
2	Racial group	There is some evidence that the migrant population has less access to private transport than other groups; there may be a differential impact on people from this group if their local mobile stop is discontinued.
3	Age	<p>(a) Children and young people</p> <p>The proposals to target materials at children and young people and to extend the service to schools and playgroups will have a positive effect on children and young people. Where their local mobile stop is discontinued, there may be an adverse impact where they have no means of accessing a branch or school library.</p> <p>(b) Older people</p> <p>The proposal to target materials at older people will have a positive effect. Where their local mobile stop is discontinued, there may be an adverse differential impact on older people because they have less access to private transport. The proposal to discontinue Internet access on mobiles may have a minor adverse effect.</p> <p>(c) Other age groups</p> <p>The proposal to target materials at children and young people and older people may have an adverse impact on people in other age groups; however, people in other age groups do not make much use of mobile libraries and, where they do, they will be able to order specific books for collection at the next scheduled visit.</p>
4	Marital status	It is not anticipated that the service proposals will differentially affect people because of their marital status.
5	Sexual orientation	It is not anticipated that the service proposals will differentially affect people because of their sexual orientation.
6	Gender	A high percentage of existing customers are women, mostly in the older age groups. They may be differentially affected by the proposal not to provide internet access and if their local mobile stop is

		discontinued, as this group has the least access to the Internet and to private transport.
7	Disability	Although a high percentage of existing customers identify themselves as disabled, it is likely that these people will be able to transfer to the Homecall service if their public mobile service is affected by the strategy. They should therefore continue to receive the same level of service.
8	Dependants	There is some evidence that additional travel can have an adverse impact on those who care for dependants, as additional travelling time can have a greater impact on them than on people with no caring responsibilities. Where their local mobile stop is discontinued, there may therefore be an adverse impact for people with dependants.

5. CONSIDERATION OF MEASURES

5.1 This section of the report looks at the possible measures which could be applied to eliminate or substantially reduce the potential adverse differential impacts identified above.

5.2 When implementing the strategy, Libraries NI will put in place arrangements to mutually agree future service delivery with existing customers. In particular, the new criteria for mobile stops will not be applied rigidly in the first instance and any changes will take account of special circumstances. For example:

- people who are eligible for a service to their home will be transferred to the Homecall service designed for people who cannot easily travel, usually for health related reasons;
- where new mobile stops have been introduced following the closure of a branch library no changes will be made in the short term as Libraries NI appreciates that there needs to be a transitional period to establish the level of use;
- where the level of use drops below the threshold of the new criteria, Libraries NI will consider all the circumstances before removing the stop from the route.

5.3 However, it is acknowledged that there may be a small number of people whose local mobile stop will disappear. In some areas, there has been a tradition of providing several short stops within the same

neighbourhood or estate; this is the reason why there are so many mobile stops in, for example, Lisburn and North Down. The strategy may result in fewer, longer stops in these areas but the service should still be reasonably accessible to local people. However, there may also be some, more isolated, stops which are discontinued at some point in the future; people who rely on these services will need to make alternative arrangements to borrow books from a branch library, either in person or through a relative or neighbour. There is a well established system for ordering books which can be collected by a relative or neighbour and this service is free for people aged 60+.

- 5.4 It is anticipated that these measures will allow all existing customers to continue to benefit from library services. Any further measures suggested by consultees during the consultation process will be welcomed and taken into account when the final EQIA report is prepared.

6. CONSULTATION

- 6.1 Libraries NI is committed to consultation which is timely, open and inclusive, and conducted in accordance with the Equality Commission's Guiding Principles. The consultation process in respect of the proposals in the draft strategy and the potential equality impacts will continue until 14th December 2012 (a period of 12 weeks). This process includes –

- a questionnaire available in mobile libraries;
- opportunities to comment via the Libraries NI website;
- consultation with children and young people (through a tailored questionnaire and a focus group)
- a focus group for organisations representing people in specific Section 75 categories.

- 6.2 All consultation documents can be made available in hard copy and alternative formats on request, although it is envisaged that most people will access the documents via the Libraries NI website.

- 6.3 All Equality Scheme consultees will be notified of the availability of this EQIA report and invited to comment. This report will be made available on the Libraries NI website and comments will be invited from any individual with an interest in the proposals.

- 6.4 As much background information as possible has been included within this report. If there is any information which has not been provided, Libraries NI will make every effort to do so on request. If any consultee has difficulty accessing the background information, Libraries NI will consider providing summaries in other formats or explaining issues on a face to face basis.

7. FURTHER ACTION

- 7.1 At the end of the consultation period, the EQIA report will be revised to take account of all comments received from consultees. The EQIA report, together with a full report of the consultation process, will then be submitted to the Libraries NI Board to assist them to make final decisions on the Mobile Library Service Strategy. The Board's decisions will be incorporated into a final summary report which will set out the consideration given to the impact of alternative policies and mitigating actions. This will complete Step 6 of the EQIA process.
- 7.2 The final summary report will be made available through the Libraries NI website. Libraries NI will ensure that information is available in accessible formats in a timely fashion, paying particular attention to the special needs of particular groups within each equality category.
- 7.3 Libraries NI is in the process of updating its monitoring systems to provide more detailed Section 75 information on library users. As part of this process, a system will be established to monitor the impact of the Board's decisions in order to find out the effect on the relevant groups and sub-groups within the equality categories.
- 7.4 The results of ongoing monitoring will be reviewed on an annual basis and included in the annual review on progress to the Equality Commission. This review will be published on the Libraries NI website. This will complete Step 7 of the EQIA process.
- 7.5 If the monitoring and analysis of results over a 2 year period show that there has been a greater adverse impact than predicted, or if opportunities arise which would allow for greater equality of opportunity to be promoted, Libraries NI will take steps to achieve better outcomes for the relevant equality groups.

MOBILE LIBRARY STOPS BY DISTRICT COUNCIL AREA

District Council Area	No. of stops	% population from ⁶	
		Catholic community background	Protestant community background
Antrim	4	38.6	56.7
Ards	44	12.6	82.5
Armagh	35	48.7	50.0
Ballymena	6	21.0	76.3
Ballymoney	5	31.9	66.2
Banbridge	14	31.5	66.0
Belfast city	49	47.2	48.6
Carrickfergus	0	8.7	85.1
Castlereagh	13	18.3	76.9
Coleraine	8	27.2	69.4
Cookstown	25	57.6	41.1
Craigavon	40	44.7	52.9
Derry	37	75.4	23.2
Down	49	61.9	35.5
Dungannon	27	60.8	38.2
Fermanagh	74	58.7	39.8
Larne	11	25.2	71.7
Limavady	14	56.6	41.6
Lisburn	78	33.4	62.8
Magherafelt	4	64.1	34.8
Moyle	7	60.3	38.3
Newry and Mourne	41	80.6	18.5
Newtownabbey	12	19.4	76.2
North Down	85	12.6	80.5
Omagh	27	69.1	29.7
Strabane	17	66.2	33.3
TOTAL	726		

⁶ The data on community background has been sourced from the Northern Ireland Statistics website www.nisra.gov.uk and Crown copyright material is reproduced with the permission of the Controller of HMSO. The data originates from the 2001 Census.