



Mobile Library Service Strategy

Consultation Document

September 2012

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 Libraries NI was established in April 2009 when it assumed responsibility for public library service provision across Northern Ireland; this was previously held by the five Education and Library Boards (ELBs). The mobile library service is an integral and essential part of public library service provision. The implementation of a single public library service means there is a need, and indeed an opportunity, to establish a single strategy for mobile library service provision with the aim of increasing use of the mobile service and ensuring that it meets the needs of current and future users.
- 1.2 The proposals in this document refer to a strategy for the mobile library service which serves the general public i.e. visits 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 and also visits a limited number of schools and playgroups.
- 1.3 The other types of mobile provision are:
- **Homecall service:** provided for anyone who has significant difficulty in visiting a branch or mobile library due to ill health, disability or lack of mobility and who does not have anyone who can collect library materials for him/her and;
 - **E-Express:** a vehicle kitted out with computers.

Libraries NI intends to make only very minor changes to these types of provision which will not significantly affect the level of the service provided.

2. Current position

2.1 Service delivery

- 2.1.1 Libraries NI currently operates 28 public mobile library vehicles, with over 700 stops in both urban and rural areas across the whole of Northern Ireland, serving a wide range of settlements of various sizes. The number of stops in each District Council area is set out in Appendix 1. The service is provided using a dedicated fleet of vehicles and represents 5.5% of the overall library service (in terms of book borrowing).

2.1.2 Currently the mobile service seeks to provide stock for customers of all ages and interests, which is a challenge in the limited space available. This is supplemented by a free request service.



2.1.3 Some of the vehicles provide public ICT access in some locations but this relies on the availability of appropriate connectivity. The level of use of ICT on mobile libraries, where it is available, is very low.

2.2 Policies

2.2.1 Prior to 2009, the location and frequency of stops and the range of services provided were determined by the five ELBs. When the service was inherited by Libraries NI there was considerable variation in terms of provision and frequency of service. Libraries NI has made a number of changes to harmonise the service and increase efficiency, but the development of this strategy presents an opportunity to ensure that the service across Northern Ireland is well used, equitable and fit for purpose.

2.3 Users

2.3.1 A customer survey was carried out in June/July 2011 to assess customer satisfaction with aspects of the current service and to identify any additional needs. Respondents were also asked how, and how far, they travel to the mobile library stop. Almost 3,000 responses to the questionnaire were received from users aged 16+. The executive summary of the survey report is set out in Appendix 2 and shows 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.

3. Drivers for change

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

3.2 Libraries NI Vision

3.2.1 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. The Mobile Library Service is an integral part of the achievement of the vision.

3.3 Programme for Government¹

3.3.1 The N Ireland Executive's over-arching aim is to build a peaceful, fair and prosperous Northern Ireland. To ensure that Government is clearly focused on achieving that aim, the Executive has established five key strategic and interdependent priorities for 2011-2015:

- growing a sustainable economy and investing in the future;
- creating opportunities, tackling disadvantage and improving health and well-being;
- protecting our people, the environment and creating safer communities;
- building a strong and shared community;
- delivering high quality and efficient public services.

3.3.2 The fourth priority, "building a strong and shared community", includes reference to "unlocking the potential of the culture, arts and leisure sectors as

¹ Programme for Government 2011-15, OFMDFM, March 2012

instruments for positive change". The fifth priority, "delivering high quality and efficient public services", identifies as one of the building blocks: "modernisation of the public library service". The development of this service strategy seeks to address these priorities through a Mobile Library Service which is fit for purpose in the 21st century and can contribute towards positive changes in society.

- 3.3.3 The Mobile Library Service will also make a significant contribution to the achievement of the NI Executive's objectives under a range of strategies and programmes which constitute building blocks for the Programme for Government, for example:

"Shaping our Future" is the Regional Development Strategy which provides a strategic and long-term framework for the future development of Northern Ireland up to the year 2025. The Strategy includes a chapter on the strategic importance of the rural economy in Northern Ireland, concluding that rural communities can be disadvantaged by virtue of their remote location being some distance from a range of facilities and essential services but this disadvantage can be lessened by innovative use of existing services and the application of new and developing technologies. The Strategy encourages the use of mobile and outreach services to keep people living in rural areas connected.

"Cohesion, Sharing and Integration" is a draft strategy combining approaches to community relations and race relations. It differs from previous policy in its emphasis on delivery at the local level. One of the main aims of the draft strategy is to build a society where cultural diversity is embraced and celebrated and it is clear that access to culturally diverse materials and information can play a major part in achieving this objective.

"Lifetime Opportunities" is the N Ireland Executive's Anti-Poverty and Social Inclusion Strategy for Northern Ireland and was developed as a result of a review of the Targeting Social Need (New TSN) strategy. The new strategy is structured around a number of general challenges which become the priorities for future policy and action, including tackling area based deprivation and eliminating poverty in rural areas. It has particular implications for children and young people as research shows that chances of escaping from poverty are greatly improved by educational attainment. Access to library services can clearly assist in achieving this objective.

"Our Children and Young People – Our Pledge" is a ten year strategy for children and young people in Northern Ireland to ensure that, by 2016, all

children and young people are fulfilling their potential. It has its foundation in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child 2006 which includes the right to minimum standards of health, social security, physical care, family life, play and recreation, culture and leisure, as well as adequate standards of living and a good quality education. Library services play a significant role in helping children to enjoy and learn through their leisure activities.

“People and Place – a Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal” targets those communities throughout Northern Ireland which are suffering the highest levels of deprivation. Drawing on lessons learned, it seeks to focus resources in more effective ways, co-ordinate action to reduce inequalities within and between urban communities and to promote social inclusion. As people in deprived urban areas tend to be less mobile than those in more affluent areas, the provision of mobile library services ensures that they have an equal opportunity to access services.

3.4 Rural Strategy

3.4.1 The Rural Strategy 2007-2013 (Department of Agriculture and Rural Development) is designed to achieve a number of goals which will address key issues and contribute to the achievement of the Department’s vision of Northern Ireland as a thriving and sustainable rural community.

3.4.2 The Strategy notes that, over the last 20 years, more people in Northern Ireland have chosen to live in rural areas and travel longer distances to work and that approximately one-third of Northern Ireland’s population now lives and works in rural areas. Together with a rising population, this has increased pressure for improved transport networks and better public services in these accessible rural areas. In less accessible areas, which have not witnessed these changes to the same extent (though, nevertheless, experiencing population growth), there is no less an expectation that public services will be provided in an equally accessible manner and to the same standard as in urban areas, taking due account of the particular needs and circumstances of those living in these areas.

3.4.3 The standard of access to basic infrastructure and services has a significant effect on the quality of life and the attractiveness of rural areas as a place to live. It is therefore crucial for the development of sustainable rural communities that such infrastructure and services are as accessible in rural areas as in urban areas.

3.4.4 The Strategy is being implemented through the Rural Development Programme 2007-2013 which includes a specific measure relating to the need

to ensure adequate access to basic services such as health, education, transport, culture, leisure, telecommunications and utilities for rural dwellers. The range of actions undertaken will seek to promote and expand entrepreneurship and employment, community capacity, skills acquisition and organisation for local strategy development. As well as helping to meet cultural and leisure needs, the Mobile Library Service assists rural dwellers to obtain information about employment and acquire the necessary skills to gain employment and therefore makes a significant contribution to the achievement of the Rural Strategy. The service needs to continue to address the changing needs of rural dwellers into the next decade.

3.5 Rural White Paper Action Plan

3.5.1 In July 2012 the NI Executive published the Rural White Paper Action Plan which contains commitments on rural issues by all Departments and provides a framework for a more integrated approach by the Executive in seeking to address the challenges facing rural communities. The Plan sets out the vision for rural areas and the actions which Departments will take in support of achieving that vision and to help ensure the future sustainability of rural areas.

3.5.2 Like the Rural Strategy, the Plan emphasises the importance of a strong community infrastructure in rural areas which can avail of economic, social and cultural opportunities. It also addresses the need for improved infrastructure and transport systems and envisions strong linkages between rural and urban areas so that rural dwellers can benefit from the facilities and services of larger towns and cities.

3.5.3 The Plan identifies 5 key themes including access to services, with the objective of promoting fair and equitable access to key services for all rural dwellers. There is considerable emphasis on improving broadband Internet access in rural areas with a target of extending access to 85% of rural and urban businesses.

3.5.4 Action Point 47 in the plan relates to library services under DCAL's commitment, 'we will enable a broad and diverse range of the population to participate in culture, arts and leisure activities'.

3.6 Best practice

3.6.1 The Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure (DCAL) published Public Library Service Standards in 2006.² These centre on access, stock, performance,

² Delivering Tomorrow's Libraries, DCAL, 2006

usage and satisfaction. The standard which has particular significance for mobile libraries is:

- 85% of households should have access to a library service within 2 miles. This encompasses the mobile library service so that 85% of households are within 2 miles of a library, either mobile or static. A mobile stop should be for at least half an hour and call at least every 2 weeks;

3.6.2 The Department has recently indicated that these standards will be reviewed in the near future, but it is not expected that the access standards will change significantly.

3.7 Harmonisation

3.7.1 There is a requirement to make access to the mobile library service more equitable by harmonising the policies of the former ELBs, as well as more efficient by taking advantage of the fact that there is no longer a need to observe artificial boundaries when designing services. Libraries NI has already made a number of operational changes to the existing mobile library service to achieve this goal, but the current strategy provides an opportunity to introduce more extensive changes. However, this strategy seeks to go beyond simply applying one existing policy to all areas; the strategy presents an opportunity to design a meaningful and well used mobile library service for the 21st century.

3.8 Social change

3.8.1 Since mobile libraries were first introduced there has been significant social change in Northern Ireland. The population is ageing and people are remaining active until later in life; the 2010 population projections show that the number of people aged 65 and over is projected to increase by around 42% in the next fifteen years.³ There has been an increase in the percentage of working mothers and a corresponding increase in child care facilities; the number of women in employment in Northern Ireland has increased by 66% in the last 25 years and day nursery places have increased by 65% since 2002.⁴ There has also been an increase in car ownership and access to private transport; the number of vehicles per capita (aged 17+) has increased by 5% over the last 5 years.⁵

³ Statistical Report – 2010 based population projections, NI Statistics & Research Agency, October 2011

⁴ Labour Force Survey, Women in Northern Ireland, NI Statistics & Research Agency, September 2011

⁵ Northern Ireland Transport Statistics 2010-11, Department for Regional Development, 2011

3.8.2 There is, therefore, an opportunity to redefine the target users of mobile library services and ensure that the services provided in the future meet the needs of key audiences and are well used.

3.9 Value for money

3.9.1 In a time of economic recession it is essential that all public authorities take every opportunity to increase value for money and this is an important element of this review. However, while value for money has to be a consideration in the review, the key driver for the Mobile Library Service Strategy is to ensure that the strategy is designed to deliver high quality services which are fit for purpose and well used.

3.10 Targeting Social Need (New TSN)

3.10.1 The Executive's New Targeting Social Need (New TSN) policy aims to tackle social need and social exclusion in Northern Ireland by targeting efforts and available resources on people, groups and areas in the greatest social need. All the former ELBs took account of the need to deliver services to the people in greatest social need when designing mobile library routes. However, there have been some changes in the areas of greatest need over the last 10 years and the strategy offers the opportunity to update the targeting policy to take account of the NI Multiple Deprivation Measures 2010.

3.10.2 The New TSN policy includes initiatives aimed at *Promoting Social Inclusion* and a number of supplementary strategies have been developed designed to promote the social inclusion of specific groups. For example, the *Ageing in an Inclusive Society Strategy* sets out objectives and key recommendations to improve the lives of older people in Northern Ireland. It recognises that participation in culture, arts and leisure activities can enhance the quality of older people's lives but notes that older people, especially in rural areas and urban housing estates, have reduced access to public services because of low levels of car ownership and public transport provision. The Mobile Library Service plays a major role in ensuring that older people have increased opportunities in respect of culture and leisure activities and it is essential that the service is able to meet changing needs as the size of the older population increases.

4. Objectives of the strategy

4.1 Taking into account the drivers for change, the objectives of the Mobile Library Service 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.

4.2 In addition, the strategy will take account of equality and rural impacts. A draft equality impact assessment and a draft rural impact assessment have been developed and separate reports are available on the Libraries NI website www.librariesni.org.uk; a summary of each report is attached at Appendices 3 and 4.

5. Service proposals

5.1 To achieve the objectives, the strategy focuses on a number of key proposals as follows:

- Target groups
- Services to be provided
- Criteria for service delivery
- Services to schools and playgroups
- Increasing usage.

5.2 **Proposal 1: Target groups**

5.2.1 The recent customer survey shows that the mobile library service is mostly used by older, retired people and children of various age groups and their parents and carers.

5.2.2 Space on mobile vehicles is limited and it is not practical to carry an extensive range of materials for all age groups and interests. In order to make the best use of the service, we propose that the space on mobiles will be used to provide services for the target groups identified above. This does not mean that people in other age groups would not be catered for; there is a well established system allowing mobile users to order, free of charge, specific materials for collection during the next visit.

5.2.3 This would mean that more large print and talking books and more novels and popular non-fiction would be on the shelves, and a greater number of books for pre-school and early primary children would be available. A limited amount of academic and niche non-fiction and teenage materials would be carried on the mobiles.

5.2.4 The consultation questionnaire asks the following in relation to Proposal 1:

To what extent do you agree or disagree that Libraries NI's mobile library service should mostly serve the needs of older people, children and their carers?

5.3 Proposal 2: Services to be provided

5.3.1 In the past the mobile library service has tried to provide the same range of services as a small branch library, including some access to the Internet as well as books, CDs, DVDs etc. In order to maximise the effectiveness of the service, it is important that Libraries NI provides the services that customers want. Our view, confirmed by the results of the recent customer survey, is that mobiles serve people best for borrowing books, including talking books and large print books.

5.3.2 Some mobile libraries provide one computer for public Internet access. The Internet access is not well used for a variety of reasons including a lack of private space and the speed and reliability of connectivity in some areas. Also, if people need to use the Internet, they generally need to do so more often than once every two or three weeks. If the mobile library service stopped providing Internet access, this would free up space for more books and would also allow for shorter stops in some locations.

5.3.3 We therefore propose that book lending should be the main service on mobile libraries and that mobiles should not provide public Internet access.

5.3.4 In order to ensure that the particular needs of customers are taken into account the consultation questionnaire seeks views on the following matters in relation to Proposal 2:

To what extent do you agree or disagree that Libraries NI should make lending of books (including talking books) the main service provided on mobile libraries?

To what extent do you agree or disagree that Libraries NI should stop providing Internet access as a service on mobile libraries?

5.4 Proposal 3: Criteria for service delivery

a. Setting criteria for determining mobile stops

5.4.1 Libraries NI needs to establish criteria for stops in order to provide an equitable service across Northern Ireland, taking account of the ease of

access to branch libraries and the level of usage of mobile services. We do not intend to apply such criteria rigidly – for example, we would not stop serving a particular location simply because the usage level dropped slightly below target – but we would conduct an annual review to ensure that each mobile stop is still justified.

- 5.4.2 In applying criteria, we will also take account of special circumstances. For example, where new mobile library stops have been introduced following the closure of a library, we appreciate that there needs to be a transitional period to establish the level of use and no changes will be made to the stops in the short term.
- 5.4.3 One consequence of adopting the proposed criteria would be that the mobile service will no longer stop at individual homes but arrangements will be put in place to ensure that existing customers are not disadvantaged. 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.
- 5.4.5 Our view is that criteria should be set for determining mobile stops and that these criteria should focus on distance from branch libraries, customer need/demand and continued levels of use.
- 5.4.6 The consultation questionnaire asks the following in relation to this proposal:

To what extent do you agree or disagree that Libraries NI should put in place criteria for deciding mobile library stops, both in rural and urban areas?

(Such criteria may include distance from branch libraries, customer need/demand and continued levels of use.)

b. Criteria for mobile stops in rural areas

- 5.4.7 The mobile library service strategy proposes the following criteria for a mobile stop in a rural area:
- at least 5 regular customers on an on-going basis with a continued level of use; and
 - at least 3 miles from a branch library.
- 5.4.8 The consultation questionnaire asks the following in relation to this proposal:

To what extent do you agree or disagree that Libraries NI should put in place the criteria outlined above for deciding mobile library stops in rural areas?

c. Criteria for mobile stops in urban areas

5.4.9 The mobile library service strategy proposes the following criteria for a mobile stop in an urban area:

- not within easy access of a branch or central library;
- in an area of social need (i.e. within the top 10% most deprived wards); and
- at least 5 regular customers on an on-going basis with a continued level of use.

5.4.10 Urban areas are defined as the Belfast Metropolitan Urban Area and the Derry Urban Area.

5.4.11 The consultation questionnaire asks the following in relation to this proposal:

To what extent do you agree or disagree that Libraries NI should put in place the criteria outlined above for mobile library stops in urban areas?

5.5 Proposal 4: Services to schools and playgroups

5.5.1 At present some mobile libraries visit a number of schools and playgroups along the route. The availability of this service is not based on specific criteria but we have tried to meet requests for stops at schools and playgroups, at a distance from a branch library, where there is capacity and the times of day offered are suitable. This service is aimed at individual children and their families and complements, but does not replace or substitute for, the services provided by the Schools' Library Service.

5.5.2 Our capacity for providing this service is limited and we are aware that we cannot call at all the schools and playgroups that might be interested in the service. We do not wish to establish limiting criteria but we propose to make future decisions on whether individual requests can be met on the basis of:

- the level of need established by the school or playgroup e.g. distance from a branch library;
- whether the stop fits into the mobile route on a suitable day and time;
- whether the stop would adversely affect the use of a branch library; and
- how well used the mobile would be.

5.5.3 The consultation questionnaire asks the following in relation to Proposal 4:

To what extent do you agree or disagree that Libraries NI should apply the above principles when deciding whether to meet requests for stops at schools or playgroups?

5.6 Proposal 5: Increasing usage

5.6.1 Libraries NI recognises that the mobile library service is valued by its customers; the recent survey showed that over 97% of respondents were satisfied with the frequency, duration and timing of mobile visits and 83% were satisfied with the variety of stock. However, the overall level of use of the service is not high and the survey results also showed that only 57% of respondents are satisfied with the publicity about the mobile service, while 16% are dissatisfied. This suggests a need for additional promotional work and we intend to develop a more targeted approach to publicising mobile library services.

5.6.2 We also want to ensure that the mobile libraries are used to capacity by making arrangements to visit more schools and playgroups.

5.6.3 We need to make sure that mobile library services are sustainable and deliver value for money. In difficult financial times when we need to ensure that services are well used and continue to be viable, we would welcome views on how we can increase use of the service.

5.6.4 *The consultation questionnaire seeks views on the following matter*

How do you think Libraries NI can increase use of mobile libraries?

6. Consultation

6.1 Libraries NI will consult on the proposals contained in this document over a 12 week period beginning on 24th September 2012 and ending on Friday 14th December 2012. The consultation process will include consulting with mobile customers through a written survey which will be available on all the mobile libraries over a 6 week period. (The questionnaire for those over the age of 16 years is attached at Appendix 5.)

6.2 We will consult with children and young people who use the service, by providing a separate questionnaire tailored for the under 16 age group and by arranging a focus group to discuss the service proposals in more depth.

- 6.3 We will provide opportunities to comment in writing and at face to face meetings. We will also consult with organisations and individuals who have a particular interest in the Equality and Rural Impact Assessments.
- 6.4 At the end of the consultation period, the Board of Libraries NI will make a decision on the service strategy to be adopted, taking into account the views of consultees and the findings of the equality and rural impact assessments.

7. Implementation of strategy

- 7.1 Following the Board's decision on the service strategy, Libraries NI will review the mobile library routes in order to apply the agreed criteria and maximise efficiency (for example by redesigning some routes across the former ELB boundaries). All changes to stops and routes will be implemented within 12 months.
- 7.2 When implementing the strategy, Libraries NI will put in place arrangements to mutually agree future service delivery with existing customers and 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 library stops have been introduced because a branch library has closed, we appreciate that there needs to be a transitional period to establish the level of use and no changes will be made to the stops in the short term.

8. Communication of changes and promotion of service

- 8.1 Libraries NI will communicate the new routes by making them available on the website and in communities in a simple to read format. A promotional plan for mobile libraries to encourage increased usage will also be developed.

9. Monitoring and evaluation

- 9.1 Libraries NI will continue to monitor use of the mobile library service, by means of information on the number of active borrowers and loans across all routes and stops. Where figures at particular stops fall below the agreed criteria for provision of service, consideration will be given to discontinuing those stops.

Public Mobile Library Stops per District Council Area

District Council Area	No. of stops	% of population living in rural areas
Antrim	4	43.6
Ards	44	38.9
Armagh	35	74.4
Ballymena	6	52.2
Ballymoney	5	68.4
Banbridge	14	51.7
Belfast city	49	0
Carrickfergus	0	10.8
Castlereagh	13	5.6
Coleraine	8	32.4
Cookstown	25	67.1
Craigavon	40	27.8
Derry	37	14.9
Down	49	64.8
Dungannon	27	57.5
Fermanagh	74	78.0
Larne	11	40.0
Limavady	14	66.9
Lisburn	78	30.7
Magherafelt	4	80.7
Moyle	7	66.6
Newry and Mourne	41	55.8
Newtownabbey	12	10.3
North Down	85	0
Omagh	27	60.3
Strabane	17	65.0
TOTAL	726	

Mobile User Survey 2011
Methodology and Executive Summary of Results

Methodology

The 2011 Libraries NI Mobile User Survey took place during the field period from the 13th June until 29th July 2011. All mobile users eligible to take part in the survey (i.e. adult readers aged 16 years or over) were asked to complete a paper questionnaire. The questionnaire was taken out for each three/two week cycle and offered to everyone within the target age range who came on to the vehicle. The survey was continued to the next three/two week cycle to include readers who missed or were not on the first timetable.

The questionnaire used in the survey comprised of 2 sections:

- The Mobile Library Service – including questions on why respondents use the mobile library service, who they use it for, which type(s) of material they access and satisfaction levels with various aspects of the service;
- About you – including various demographic-style questions (e.g. gender, age, marital status etc).

A total of 2,929 mobile users completed the questionnaire either fully or in part.

Results: The Mobile Library Service

- Three fifths (60%) of survey respondents use the mobile library service for themselves only while two fifths (40%) use it for someone other than themselves.
 - Of those respondents who use the mobile library service for someone else, 44% said they use it for a child/children aged 5-11 years, 35% for a child/children aged 0-4 years and 28% for senior citizen(s) (aged 60+ years).
- Almost three fifths (58%) of all respondents found out about the mobile library service through seeing the vehicle, 37% through friends or family and 8% through a leaflet (6%) or poster (2%).
- Just over three fifths (61%) of respondents said they use the mobile library because it is a more suitable service than the nearest branch library while 57% said it is difficult to get to their nearest branch library.
- Almost four fifths (78%) of respondents said that they do not use any other library services in addition to the mobile library.
- Over two thirds (69%) of respondents use the mobile library for fiction books (e.g. romance, family, crime etc), 42 % for large print books, 42% for non-fiction books (e.g. sport, biographies, cookery, travel etc) and 27% for children's/teens books.

- Less than one in ten respondents (8%) said they would like the mobile library to provide other services.
- Three fifths (60%) of respondents said that the mobile library stops at their house.

Of those respondents for whom the mobile does not stop at their house...

- more than half (56%) live less than 0.5 miles from the mobile stop;
- just over three fifths (61%) normally walk to the mobile library stop and two fifths (40%) travel by car.

Overall...

- more than half (57%) of respondents are satisfied with the publicity about the mobile service, while 16% are dissatisfied;
- the vast majority (99%) of respondents are satisfied with the location of the mobile stop;
- the vast majority (97%) of respondents are satisfied with the frequency of mobile visits;
- the vast majority (99%) of respondents are satisfied with the duration of mobile visits;
- the vast majority (98%) of respondents are satisfied with the punctuality of mobile visits;
- the vast majority (98%) of respondents are satisfied with the timing of mobile visits;
- just over four fifths (82%) of respondents are satisfied with the attractiveness of the exterior of the vehicle;
- 95% of respondents are satisfied with ease of access to the vehicle;
- 87% of respondents are satisfied with the attractiveness of the interior of the vehicle;
- almost all respondents are satisfied with the helpfulness of mobile staff;
- just over four fifths (83%) of respondents are satisfied with the variety of stock;
- 92% of respondents are satisfied with the layout of stock;
- more than half (56%) of respondents are satisfied with computer/Internet access.

Results: About you

- Over four fifths (82%) of respondents who use the mobile library are female and just under one fifth (18%) are male.
- More than three fifths (64%) of mobile users are senior citizens aged 60 years and over.
- Almost half (49%) of respondents are either married/cohabiting or in a civil partnership, 30% are widowed or a surviving civil partner and 16% are single.

- The vast majority (99%) of mobile users are of white ethnic origin.
- Just over half (52%) of mobile users are retired.
- Over two fifths (43%) of mobile users consider themselves to have a disability or illness that substantially limits 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, over one fifth (22%) sight-related and 16% hearing-related.
- Three in ten mobile users (30%) have someone who is dependent on them (i.e. a child, someone with an incapacitating disability, an elderly person), while 70% indicated that they have no dependants.
- Over three fifths (63%) of mobile users describe the place where they live as a rural location (i.e. country village or a farm/home in the country).

Summary of Equality Impact Assessment

The EQIA focuses on identifying the potential differential impacts on customers and future customers of each of the service proposals set out in section 5 of the strategy. It considers 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. The assessment is based on data and research collated for the EQIA, which is set out in detail in the full EQIA report.

Summary of impacts

The preliminary findings of the 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).

		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.

Consideration of measures

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.

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.

It is anticipated that these measures will allow all existing customers to continue to benefit from library services.

Summary of Rural Impact Assessment

A Rural Impact Assessment has been carried out in accordance with the Rural Proofing Guidance from the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (DARD) to identify the potential impact of the proposal on people living in rural areas.

Summary of impacts

The preliminary findings of the draft Rural Impact Assessment are that the service proposals have the potential to produce adverse impacts on customers in rural areas but that these are not considered to be significant. Further, the mitigating measures proposed by Libraries NI (outlined below) will address these potential problems.

Libraries NI is clearly committed to providing services for both rural and urban customers. The main thrust of the service proposals is how to recognise increasing resource constraints whilst ensuring a quality mobile library service is maintained. For delivery in rural areas, there is a reality that there is an additional cost attached to supplying a service to a scattered population.

Rural areas will, though, continue to be served by a mobile library service where it is not feasible, in terms of population size, to provide a static library. Clearly mobile services are necessary in rural areas, and valued by those who use them. It is important though, that the routes they take, frequency of visits, and the quality of provision within mobiles is carefully considered.

The Mobile Library Service Strategy can deliver real benefits to rural communities in Northern Ireland, including:

- Improving the accessibility of the rural community to services;
- Providing a needs based approach to outreach provision via a mobile service delivery;
- Reducing the need for rural people to travel by taking services to them;
- Recognising the need for service provision in the rural areas where relative deprivation is high.

Consideration of measures

When implementing the strategy, Libraries NI will put in place arrangements to mutually agree future service delivery with existing customers in rural areas. 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 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.

However, it is acknowledged that there may be a small number of people in rural areas whose local mobile stop will disappear. The strategy may result in fewer, longer stops in some rural areas but the service should still be reasonably accessible to local people.

It is anticipated that these measures will allow all existing rural customers to continue to benefit from library services

Consultation Questionnaire

If you are 16 years of age or older, Libraries NI would welcome views on all aspects of the consultation document but in particular on the service proposals set out in Section 5.

Proposal 1: Target Groups

- Q1. To what extent do you agree or disagree that Libraries NI's public mobile library service should mostly serve the needs of older people, children and their parents/carers?**

Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

- Q2. If you disagree or strongly disagree with the proposal, please explain why:**

Proposal 2: Services to be provided

- Q3. To what extent do you agree or disagree that Libraries NI should make lending of books (including talking books) the main service provided on public mobile libraries?**

Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Q4. If you disagree or strongly disagree with the proposal, please explain why:

Q5. To what extent do you agree or disagree that Libraries NI should stop providing Internet access as a service on public mobile libraries?

Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Q6. If you disagree or strongly disagree with the proposal, please explain why:

Proposal 3: Criteria for Service Delivery

(a) Setting criteria for determining public mobile stops

Q7. To what extent do you agree or disagree that Libraries NI should put in place criteria for deciding public mobile library stops both in rural and urban areas?

[Such criteria may include distance from branch or central libraries, customer need/demand and continued levels of use]

Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Q8. If you disagree or strongly disagree with the proposal, please explain why:

(b) Criteria for public mobile stops in rural areas

Q9. To what extent do you agree or disagree that Libraries NI should put in place the criteria outlined below for deciding public mobile library stops in rural areas?

- Mobile stop must have at least 5 regular customers on an on-going basis with continued levels of use;
- Mobile stop must be at least 3 miles from a branch library.

Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Q10. If you disagree or strongly disagree with the proposal, please explain why:

(c) Criteria for public mobile stops in urban areas (i.e. the Belfast Metropolitan Urban Area and the Derry Urban Area).

Q11. To what extent do you agree or disagree that Libraries NI should put in place the criteria outlined below for deciding public mobile library stops in urban areas?

- Mobile stop must not be within easy access of a branch or central library;
- Mobile stop must be in an area of social need (i.e. within the top 10% most deprived wards); and
- Mobile stop must have at least 5 regular customers on an on-going basis with continued levels of use.

Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Q12. If you disagree or strongly disagree with the proposal, please explain why:

Proposal 4: Services to Schools and Playgroups

Q13. To what extent do you agree or disagree that Libraries NI should apply clear principles when deciding whether to meet requests for mobile stops at schools or playgroups?

[Principles may include the suitability of available days and times, the effect on branch libraries, the potential level of use and the level of need, e.g. distance from a branch library]

Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Q14. If you disagree or strongly disagree with the proposal, please explain why:

Proposal 5: Increasing usage

Q15. Do you think there is anything Libraries NI can do to increase use of public mobile libraries?

- Yes → Go to Q16
No } → Go to Q17
Don't know/no opinion }

Q16. If 'Yes', please explain how you think Libraries NI can increase use of public mobile libraries:

About you

Q17. Are you responding to this questionnaire as an individual or on behalf of an organisation? (Tick one only)

- Individual → Go to Q20
- Organisation → Go to Q18 & Q19

Q18. What is the name of your organisation?

.....

Q19. Please provide contact details:

Name:
Address:
Telephone:
Fax:
Email:

→ Go to Q33

Q20. Are you a member of a library in Northern Ireland?

- Yes
- No

Q21. How often do you use Libraries NI's public mobile library service?

- Once a week
- Fortnightly
- Once every 3 to 4 weeks
- Less frequently
- Never

Q22. How often do you use a branch or central library in Northern Ireland?

- More than once a week
- Once a week
- Fortnightly
- Once every 3 to 4 weeks
- Less frequently
- Never

Q23. Are you a member of Libraries NI staff?

- Yes
- No

Q24. Are you male or female?

- Male
- Female

Q25. Which age range do you fall under?

- 16-24 years
- 25-34 years
- 35-49 years
- 50-59 years
- 60 years and over

Q26. Are you... (Tick one only)

- Single
- Married/cohabiting
- Divorced/separated
- Widowed
- Civil partnership
- Civil Partnership Dissolution/Annulment
- Surviving Civil Partner

Q27. Do you have someone who is dependent on you, i.e. a child, someone with an incapacitating disability, an elderly person?

- Yes
- No

Q28. What is your country of birth? (Tick one only)

- Northern Ireland
- England
- Wales
- Scotland
- Republic of Ireland
- Other (write in country) _____

Q29. What is your ethnic group? (Tick one only)

- White
- Chinese
- Irish Traveller
- Indian
- Pakistani
- Bangladeshi
- Black African
- Black Caribbean
- Black Other
- Mixed Origin
- Other (please specify) _____

Q30. Are you currently... (Tick one only)

- In full time employment
- In part time employment
- Self employed
- Unemployed
- Student
- Looking after home/family
- Temporarily sick/injured
- Permanently sick/disabled
- Retired
- Other (please specify) _____

Q31. Do you consider yourself to have a disability or illness that substantially limits your ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities?

- Yes → Go to Q32
- No → Go to Q33

Q32. What is the nature of this disability or illness? (Tick all that apply)

- Mobility
- Learning
- Hearing
- Mental Health
- Sight
- Other _____
(please specify)

Equality Considerations

Q33. Under our commitment to promoting equality of opportunity between certain groups within society, Libraries NI needs to consider the equality implications of the proposed changes to the public mobile library service. A report on the potential equality implications is available on the Libraries NI website.

Do you believe some or all of the proposed changes to the public mobile library service would have an effect on you (or your organisation) because of any of the following...

...religious belief; political opinion; racial group; age; marital status; sexual orientation; gender; disability; or dependants?

Yes → Go to Q34

No → Go to Q35

Q34. If 'Yes', in which regard would you (or your organisation) be affected? (Tick all that apply)

- Religious belief
- Political opinion
- Racial group
- Age
- Marital status
- Sexual orientation
- Gender
- Disability
- Dependants

Please give the reason(s) for your answer(s):

Rurality Considerations

Q35. Under our commitment to considering the impact of our strategy on rural dwellers, Libraries NI needs to consider the rural implications of the proposed changes to the public mobile library service. A report on the potential rural implications is available on the Libraries NI website.

Would you describe the place where you live (or where your organisation is based) as... (Tick one only)

- | | | | |
|--|--------------------------|---|------------|
| A big city | <input type="checkbox"/> | } | →Go to Q37 |
| The suburbs or outskirts of a big city | <input type="checkbox"/> | | |
| A small city or town | <input type="checkbox"/> | | |
| A country village | <input type="checkbox"/> | } | →Go to Q36 |
| A farm or a home in the country | <input type="checkbox"/> | | |

Q36. If you live in a country village, a farm or home in the country (or your organisation is based in a rural area), to what extent would you or your local community be affected if some or all the proposed changes to the public mobile library service were introduced?

A lot	Quite a bit	A little	Not at all	Don't know
<input type="checkbox"/>				

If you consider that you (as a rural dweller) or your local community will be affected a lot or quite a bit, please give the reason(s) for your answer:

General Comments

Q37. Are there any other comments you would like to make or is there anything else you think Libraries NI should be aware of with regard to the public mobile library service?

Yes → Go to Q38

No → Go to end

Q38. If 'Yes', please give details:

You have now reached the end - Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire!

This questionnaire asks for your views on the proposals, including any potential equality or rural proofing issues which you think might arise as a result of the proposals. We would be grateful if you would complete the questionnaire and return it to us either by:

- handing it in at your local library;

OR

- online at www.librariesni.org.uk;

OR

- by post to: Ms Helen Osborn
Director of Library Services
Omagh Regional Administrative Centre
1 Spillars Place
Omagh
Co Tyrone
BT78 1HL

The closing date for receipt of completed questionnaires is 14 December 2012

If you require this questionnaire in an alternative language or format, please contact Anne Todd on 028 25 664 137.