Mobile Library Service Strategy

Final Report

March 2013
1. Introduction and Context

1.1 The primary duty of Libraries NI, as set out in the Libraries Act (Northern Ireland) 2008, is to provide a comprehensive and efficient public library service for persons living, working or studying in Northern Ireland.

1.2 One of the key targets established for Libraries NI by the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure (DCAL) from the outset was to undertake a strategic review of library provision within Northern Ireland with a view to ensuring it is fit for purpose and sustainable. Following the strategic reviews of branch libraries, Libraries NI turned its attention to mobile library services.

1.3 In July 2011 the Board considered a report which gave an overview of current mobile library services, identified the issues which needed to be addressed and set out a process for addressing these issues. This report, which provides the context for the development of the strategy, appears at Appendix One.

1.4 At this stage Libraries NI considered the four services that fall under the broad heading of ‘mobile services’.

   a) the ‘general mobile library’, the service which is most familiar, i.e. a vehicle which visits locations some distance from a branch library to lend books and other stock and, in some cases, to provide access to ICT. Libraries NI has 18 such vehicles, which cost an average of £50,000 per annum and generate an average of 16,000 loans. They serve the general population on a weekly, fortnightly or three weekly basis and visit a limited number of schools and playgroups

   b) the Homecall service, the service which is 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”. This may be provided via a dedicated mobile library, a dual purpose mobile library or a delivery van

   c) a service, normally a collection of books which is retained for three months, to nursing homes, folds and day centres

   d) the E Express, a mobile with 8 computers on it and satellite connectivity.

1.5 A way forward was agreed for each service and the need to develop a new strategy for the general mobile library service was identified.

1.6 The need for a new strategy stemmed from a number of factors including:

   • the very different approaches to mobile services inherited from the five Education and Library Boards (differences include frequency and length of stops, criteria for stops, loan period, staffing, access to ICT, stock provision)
   • relatively low levels of use (though customer satisfaction was very high)
   • lack of clarity about the intended users of the service
   • lack of clarity about the services required.

1.7 The Board agreed that the service strategy should:

   • determine the role and purpose of mobile libraries
1.8 In December 2011 the Services Committee considered the findings of the mobile user survey which had been undertaken in June 2011. This revealed high satisfaction levels and provided further insights into the demographics of mobile users.

1.9 The customer survey informed the development of the service proposals which formed the basis of the draft strategy.

1.10 At the meeting of the Services Committee in December 2011 it was agreed that consultation on the draft mobile library strategy should be deferred until September 2012. This was to ensure an effective consultation process with maximum participation, clearly separated from the consultations in 2011 on the Strategic Review Stage Two and the Opening Hours Review and the local consultations in January 2012 on the patterns of opening hours.

2. Consultation Proposals

2.1 The draft mobile library service strategy was based on five service proposals:

- target groups (Mobiles to primarily serve the needs of older people, children and their carers)
- services to be provided (Mostly books and talking books rather than ICT)
- criteria for service delivery (Rural areas – 3 miles from a branch library, minimum 5 users. Urban areas – area of social need, minimum of 5 users, not within easy access of a branch library)
- services to schools and playgroups (Service currently in some areas and not others, to be extended)
- increasing usage (Suggestions sought for achieving this)

2.2 The proposals appear at Appendix Two.

3. Consultation

3.1 Public consultation on the proposals ran from 24 September 2012 to 14 December 2012 and included the following:
3.2 The purpose of the public consultation process was to seek views on the proposals and to obtain any additional information which the Board of Libraries NI should consider in coming to a decision on the way forward.

3.3 The consultation was widely publicised. A press release was issued at the start of the consultation process and part way through. In addition details of the proposals were sent to all Councils, MPs, MLAs and MEPs, also to the main education bodies.

4. **Analysis of Responses to the Public Consultation**

4.1 953 responses were received to the adult questionnaire and 255 to the children's questionnaire. A summary of the report on the analysis of questionnaires in relation to each question appears at Appendix Four.

4.2 A number of submissions, letters and postcards were received from councils, politicians, rural organisations and individuals. A list of these, together with organisations which submitted a questionnaire response, appears at Appendix Five.

4.3 NIPSA was briefed on the proposals and, following detailed consideration, decided not to respond at this stage in the process.

4.4 As a result of the comments received throughout the public consultation process the draft EQIA has been updated and is included as Appendix Six to this report.

4.5 As a result of the comments received through the public consultation, including those from organisations with a specific rural remit such as the Ulster Farmers Union and South Antrim Community Network, the draft Rural Impact Assessment has been updated and is included as Appendix Seven to this report.
5. Analysis of Responses and Resulting Recommendations

5.1 Proposal One: Target groups
The recent customer survey shows that the mobile library service is primarily used by older, retired people and children of various age groups and their carers. Space on mobile vehicles is limited and it is not practical to carry an extensive range of materials for all age groups and interests.

5.2 In order to make the best use of the service, we propose that the space on mobiles will mainly be used to provide services for the target groups identified above. 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.

5.3 85.2% of the adult respondents agreed or strongly agreed with this proposal. The most frequent comment from those who disagreed was that the service should be for everyone. None of the written submissions disagreed with the proposal. Disability Action stressed the importance of ensuring that the needs of people with disabilities are met.

5.4 Recommendation
It is recommended that Libraries NI mobile services should mostly serve the needs of older people, children and their parent/carers. In doing this the needs of people with disabilities will be taken into account as with all library services e.g. stock for people with visual impairments, access for people who use wheelchairs, appropriate staff training.

5.5 Proposal Two: Services to be provided
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. A computer is currently provided on a small number of mobiles and this service is rarely used. The machine takes up valuable space that would otherwise be used for books. There are issues relating to connectivity, lack of privacy and the need to use the Internet more frequently than the mobile calls. 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.

5.6 We propose that mobile libraries should mainly deliver book lending services and should not provide Internet access.

5.7 90.3% of adult respondents agreed or strongly agreed with making books the main service on mobiles. 17.5% thought that Internet access should be provided whilst 36.5% thought it should not be provided. A number of organisations highlighted the importance of Internet access in rural areas. 99.6% of child respondents use the mobile library to borrow books.

5.8 Recommendation
It is proposed that mobile libraries should mainly provide book lending services. However, given the response to the consultation and the opportunities afforded by e2, it is recommended that the Libraries NI strategy
should be to provide Internet access on mobile libraries, where possible and where there is a demand, but in a way that does not reduce the provision of books.

5.9 **Proposal Three: Criteria for service delivery**

(a) **Setting criteria for determining mobile stops**

Libraries NI needs to establish criteria for stops in order to provide an equitable service.

*Our view is that criteria should be set for determining mobile stops and that they should focus on distance from branch libraries, customer demand and continued levels of use.*

5.10 67.8% of adult respondents agreed or strongly agreed that there should be criteria for stops. The most frequent comment made by those which disagreed reflected concern that a current stop would be removed.

(b) **Criteria for mobile stops in rural areas**

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 continued levels of use
- at least 3 miles from a branch library.

5.11 58.4% agreed with the proposed criteria for stops in rural areas. Those who disagreed suggested that 3 miles was too far, that 5 customers was too high or both. Again, the comments reflected concern that a current stop would be removed.

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

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

- 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)
- at least 5 regular customers on an on-going basis with continued levels of use.

5.12 61.3% of adult respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the proposed criteria for stops in urban areas. The comments from those who disagreed varied greatly. The most frequent comments were concern about the requirement for 5 people and opposition to limiting the service to the 10% most deprived wards. Some respondents thought that there should be no stops in urban areas. Again, the comments reflected concern that a current stop would be removed.

5.13 **Recommendation**

It is recommended that the proposed criteria for proposed stops should be implemented but that special circumstances may need to be recognised from
time to time e.g. the closure of a branch library, the commitment to existing customers, temporary circumstances that may reduce the accessibility of a branch library, DCAL or Board priorities.

5.14 **Proposal 4: Services to schools and playgroups**
At present some mobile libraries visit a number of schools and playgroups along the route. 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
- how well used the mobile would be.

5.15 69.1% of adult respondents agreed with the provision of services to schools and playgroups based on clear principles. It was suggested that the purpose of this service should be set out clearly.

5.16 **Recommendation**
It is recommended that the service to schools and playgroups should be extended with the aim of increasing access to library services for children and schools which have difficulty in accessing branch libraries, with account also being taken of social need.

5.17 **Proposal 5: Increasing use**
The mobile library service is valued by our customers but the overall level of use of the service is not high. *We intend to do more promotion of the service and to ensure that the mobile libraries are used to capacity by making arrangements to visit more schools and playgroups, to provide services to individual children and their families.*

5.18 Respondents made a number of suggestions for promoting the service.

5.19 **Recommendation**
It is recommended that following the implementation of the mobile strategy that, a promotional plan is developed and implemented.

5.20 **Equality Issues**
The EQIA concludes that the service proposals may result in some adverse differential impacts for existing customers in a number of Section 75 groups namely racial group, age, disability and dependants. This is because of the current profile of customers and these impacts would only occur in the situation where a local mobile stop was removed.

5.21 The EQIA also highlights the importance of ensuring the service meets the needs of people with disabilities, an important point which is addressed in paragraph 5.4 above.
5.22 There is no intention to disadvantage any existing customers as a result of the mobile strategy. Where a stop does not meet the criteria, Libraries NI will talk to customers about how they can continue to avail of library services. In many cases this may mean transferring to the Homecall Service, designed for people who cannot easily travel, usually for health related reasons.

5.23 **Recommendation**
It is recommended that, in implementing the mobile strategy, Libraries NI will take into account the evidence available from the EQIA and will consider what alternative measures might be put in place in order to reduce the impact of the removal of stops on people in the various Section 75 categories.

5.24 **Rural Issues**
The Rural Impact Assessment concludes that the proposals are generally beneficial for those who live in rural areas. The service proposals have the potential to produce some adverse impacts for customers in rural areas but these are not considered to be significant and will, in any case, be mitigated by the actions which Libraries NI proposes to take.

5.25 Some rural dwellers are concerned that they may lose their local mobile stops. However, there is no intention to disadvantage any existing customers as a result of the mobile strategy. Where a stop does not meet the criteria, Libraries NI will talk to customers about how they can continue to avail of library services. In many cases this may mean transferring to the Homecall Service designed for people who cannot easily travel, usually for health related reasons.

5.26 Some respondents, especially organisations, highlighted the importance of Internet access in rural areas. This can be addressed as set out in paragraph 5.8.

5.27 **Recommendation**
It is recommended that in implementing the mobile strategy Libraries NI will take into account the evidence available from the Rural Impact Assessment.

5.28 **Support for the Mobile Library Service**
Respondents, both adult and children, expressed a high level of appreciation of the service. Typical comments include:

“I enjoy visiting the mobile library. Apart from getting books myself I also get books for my grandchildren I look after them a few days per week. If they are here in the morning, they love to pick their own books.”

“We really think it’s great that the mobile library calls every 3 weeks. Reading is one of my hobbies so I really appreciate the call. The staff are really nice and friendly and this helps a great deal.”

“The mobile library is great, I can get my reading books or anything else that I require for my work at school and the staff are helpful and kind.”

The mobile library is really cool and I love going onto it to pick my books. The man who drives it is really helpful and I just love it! I’d really miss it if it wasn’t there every week.”
“The staff are friendly and helpful. There is also a great choice in books and I have gone there since I was little.”

5.29 It will be important to retain this level of support and commitment throughout the implementation of the strategy.

5.30 Delivering Tomorrow’s Libraries
DCAL has been considering its policy framework for public libraries, Delivering Tomorrow’s Libraries (DTL). Public Library Standard 2 in DTL relates to access to services and states: \textit{Percentage of households living within a specified distance of a static library or a scheduled mobile stop offering a range of library services open to the general public.}

\textit{Target} – 85\% of households should have access to a library service within two miles.

This encompasses the mobile library service so that 85\% of households are within two miles of a library, either mobile or static. A mobile stop should be for at least half an hour and call at least every two weeks. All types of service outlets will be calculated on the basis of postcodes returned by library authorities.

5.31 Currently some mobile stops are three weekly and do not count towards this standard.

5.32 The result of this is that Libraries NI fails to meet the standard currently, achieving 81.1\% based on network analysis i.e. following roads rather than as the crow flies.

5.33 It is likely that DCAL will retain this standard and Libraries NI will need to factor this into the implementation of the mobile strategy.

5.34 Recommendation
It is recommended that the implementation of the mobile strategy should take account of the standard in Delivering Tomorrow’s Libraries.

6. Conclusion

6.1 In general there has been a high level of support for the draft mobile strategy. Some concerns have been expressed about some aspects of the proposals and mitigations for these concerns have been set out in section 5 above.

6.2 It is, therefore, proposed that Libraries NI adopts the strategy set out below for its general mobile library service and that an implementation plan should be developed and brought to the Services Committee in April 2013.

Strategy
6.3 The mobile service is an integral and important part of Libraries NI’s service provision.
6.4 The service will mostly serve older, retired people and children of various age groups and their carers.

6.5 Mobile libraries will mostly provide book lending services. However, Internet access will be provided, where possible and where there is a demand, in a way that does not reduce the provision of books.

6.6 Criteria will be deployed for the location of mobile stops as follows:

Rural areas
- at least 5 regular customers on an on-going basis with continued levels of use
- at least 3 miles from a branch library.

Urban areas
- 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)
- at least 5 regular customers on an on-going basis with continued levels of use
- at least 3 miles from a branch library.

However, special circumstances may need to be recognised from time to time.

6.7 The service to schools and playgroups should be extended with the aim of increasing access to library services for children and schools which have difficulty in accessing branch libraries, with account also being taken of social need.

6.8 Mobile services will be promoted to potential customers.

Implementation of the Strategy

6.9 In implementing this strategy Libraries NI will:

- take into account the evidence available from the Equality Impact Assessment and the Rural Impact Assessment
- take account of the access standard in Delivering Tomorrow’s Libraries
- be mindful of the goodwill and support shown by the current customer base
- continue to monitor the costs and use of the service.

7. Decisions

7.1 At its meeting on 14 March 2013 the Board approved the Mobile Library Service Strategy set out in paragraphs 6.3 to 6.8 above with the addition of one further recommendation namely that the costs and usage of the mobile library service should be reviewed on a regular basis.
1. Introduction

1.1 The term ‘mobile library services’ can in its broadest sense be used to describe four services:

a) the ‘general mobile library’, the service which is most familiar, i.e. a vehicle which visits locations some distance from a branch library to lend books and other stock and in some cases to provide access to ICT. Libraries NI has 18 such vehicles, one of which serves Libraries NI customers for 50% of the time as a cross border service provided to Donegal County Council under a service level agreement. They serve the general population on a weekly, fortnightly or three weekly basis and visit a limited number of schools and playgroups;

b) the Homecall service i.e. the service which is 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”. This may be provided via a dedicated mobile library, a dual purpose mobile library or a delivery van;

c) a service, often a collection of books which is retained for three months, to nursing homes, folds and day centres; and

d) the E Express, a mobile with 8 computers on it and satellite connectivity.

1.2 The five Education and Library Boards took different approaches to many aspects of mobile library services. Since 2009 Libraries NI has addressed a number of urgent operational and harmonisation issues and has procured new vehicles and provided staff training. However, most harmonisation issues can only be addressed sensibly once the strategic issues have been considered in the Review of Mobile Library Services scheduled for 2011/12.

1.3 In preparation for the Review the Services Committee received a presentation on mobile libraries in January 2011 and members availed of the opportunity to visit a mobile library. The key points of this presentation appear in Appendix A. Further information about mobile library services appears in Appendix B.

2. The Review of Mobile Library Services – Proposed Purpose and Methodology

2.1 The review relates in the main to the ‘general mobile library service’. Its purpose is to develop a service strategy for mobile libraries which:

* determines their role and purpose;
* identifies the contribution of mobile libraries to Libraries NI’s overall service provision in both rural and urban areas;
* identifies the target groups to be served by mobile libraries;
identifies the services that are required (particularly in the context of the limited space available on a mobile library);
identifies the most appropriate approach to ICT provision, taking account of customer need and the practical constraints on service provision;
takes account of equality and rurality issues;
seeks to maximise access to services;
seeks to maximises use of mobile libraries;
delivers a harmonised and equitable service;
identifies criteria for mobile library stops (e.g. distance from branch library, TSN, minimum use level, minimum population level);
considers whether schools and/or playgroups should be served; and
considers how mobile library services can be promoted;

2.2 It is proposed that a consultation document be produced which sets out the issues relating to all of the above including an equality impact assessment and a rural issues statement. This would be made widely available and be used as a basis for discussions with interested organisations including councils, equality groups and rural groups as well as including a questionnaire to elicit views on the various issues.

2.3 Following a 12 week consultation period the findings would be analysed and a report brought to the Services Committee for consideration.

2.4 It is proposed that the other issues relating to mobile library services be addressed as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>E Express</th>
<th>Explore how it can be used to deliver the Health in Mind project and Got IT sessions as per the Service plan for Key Themes. Evaluate.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Service to residential homes and day centres</td>
<td>Develop a more efficient and effective approach to deposit collections based on as service level agreement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homecall Service</td>
<td>No substantial change to the nature of the service received is planned. The way in which it is delivered is one of the operational issues to be addressed. Use of a smaller vehicle will be piloted.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Operational and harmonisation issues</td>
<td>Some should begin to be addressed now eg staffing roles, level and grades and data gathering. Others e.g. route planning can only be addressed once the general review has been concluded addressed.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3. Recommendations

It is recommended that the proposed approach to the review of mobile library services set out above be approved.
Appendix A

Key Slides from Presentation to Services Committee

Libraries on the Move

Books Plus
- Other formats of stock
- ICT
- Events
- Partnerships
- Staff

Facts and Figures
- 18 mobile libraries
- £50K each per annum
- 8 are seven or more years old
- 2 on order
- 16K average loans per annum (6K - 29K)

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- 18 mobile libraries
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The Big Questions
- Who should the mobile library serve?
- What services do they require?
- ICT?
- Criteria for mobile library stops?
Appendix B

Additional Information about Mobile Library Services

Overview of services inherited by Libraries NI:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Former Board Area</th>
<th>Criteria for Stops (Minimum Distance from Libraries)</th>
<th>Number of Mobiles</th>
<th>Late Nights – 8pm</th>
<th>Saturdays</th>
<th>Frequency of stops</th>
<th>No. of staff per vehicle</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BELB</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>weekly</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NEELB</td>
<td>2 miles</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Yes (Summer only)</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>3 weekly</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SEELB</td>
<td>2 miles urban 3 miles rural</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>3 weekly</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SELB</td>
<td>3 miles</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>2 weekly</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WELB</td>
<td>3 miles</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>2 weekly</td>
<td>1</td>
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</table>

Vehicles

The majority of vehicles are under 7.5 tonnes which means that they can be driven by any driver with a pre 1997 driver’s licence and are suitable for most roads in Northern Ireland. It is intended that in future all vehicles should be less than 7.5 tonnes.

All vehicles should be less than 10 years old to ensure a reliable service which is not currently the case. A replacement programme is under way but the required capital funding is not available to sustain this.

ICT

There are connectivity issues for computers on mobile libraries which means that staff have to operate the Galaxy system in ‘back up’ rather than online. A limited number of mobile libraries provide public access to ICT. The level of use of this service is low.
Appendix Two

Service Proposals

To achieve the objectives, the strategy is based on 5 proposals. Proposals 1 and 2 aim to make the best possible use of the space available on our mobile libraries. Proposal 3 is intended to make sure the service is equitable. Proposals 4 and 5 are designed to increase use.

Proposal 1: Target groups
The recent customer survey shows that the mobile library service is primarily used by older, retired people and children of various age groups and their carers.

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 mainly be used to provide services for the target groups identified above. 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.

Proposal 2: Services to be provided
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. 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.

We propose that mobile libraries should mainly deliver book lending services (including talking books) and should not provide Internet access.

Proposal 3: Criteria for service delivery

(a) Setting criteria for determining mobile stops
Libraries NI needs to establish criteria for stops in order to provide an equitable service.

Our view is that criteria should be set for determining mobile stops and that they should focus on distance from branch libraries, customer demand and continued levels of use.

(b) Criteria for mobile stops in rural areas
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 continued levels of use; and
• at least 3 miles from a branch library.

(c) Criteria for mobile stops in urban areas (i.e. the Belfast Metropolitan Urban Area and the Derry Urban Area).
The mobile library service strategy proposes the criteria for a mobile stop in an urban area to be:
- 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 continued levels of use.

Proposal 4: Services to schools and playgroups
At present some mobile libraries visit a number of schools and playgroups along the route. 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.

Proposal 5: Increasing use
The mobile library service is valued by our customers but the overall level of use of the service is not high. We intend to do more promotion of the service and to ensure that the mobile libraries are used to capacity by making arrangements to visit more schools and playgroups, to provide services to individual children and their families.
Consultation Questionnaire

If you are at 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.

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?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neither agree nor disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
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<tr>
<td>□</td>
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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?

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neither agree nor disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
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<td>□</td>
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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?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neither agree nor disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
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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]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neither agree nor disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
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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.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neither agree nor disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
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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.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neither agree nor disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
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</table>

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]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neither agree nor disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
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</table>

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 □ → Go to Q17

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: ..........................................................................................................  → Go to Q33
   Address: ........................................................................................................
   ..................................................................................................................
   Telephone: ......................................................................................................
   Fax: ..............................................................................................................
   Email: ...........................................................................................................
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 ☐
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
The suburbs or outskirts of a big city
A small city or town
A country village
A farm or a home in the country

→ Go to Q37
→ Go to Q36

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?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A lot</th>
<th>Quite a bit</th>
<th>A little</th>
<th>Not at all</th>
<th>Don’t know</th>
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</table>

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.
Mobile Library Service Questionnaire

Consent Form
(for children under 16 years of age)

I give consent for my child to take part in this public consultation on the Mobile Library Service.

Date: .......................... Signed: ...................................................
(Parent/guardian)
Please answer the following questions about your child.

A. What country was your child born in? (Tick one box only)
   - Northern Ireland
   - England
   - Wales
   - Scotland
   - Republic of Ireland
   - Other (write in country) _______________________

B. What is your child’s ethnic group? (Tick one box only)
   - White
   - Chinese
   - Irish Traveller
   - Indian
   - Pakistani
   - Bangladeshi
   - Black African
   - Black Caribbean
   - Black Other
   - Mixed Origin
   - Other (please specify) _______________________

C. Does your child have a long-term disability or illness that substantially limits their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities?
   - Yes □ → Go to D
   - No □

D. What is the nature of this disability or illness? (Tick all boxes that apply)
   - Mobility
   - Hearing
   - Sight
   - Learning
   - Mental Health
   - Other (please specify) _______________________
     (please specify) _______________________

   □ □
Children's Questionnaire

Section 1 – Mobile Library

Q1  Why do you visit this mobile library?  
(Tick as many boxes as you need)

- It stops in my village/town/area  
- There is no branch library nearby  
- I can't get to a branch library easily  
- Other reason (please tell us) 

Q2.  What do you use this mobile library for?  
(Tick as many boxes as you need)

- To borrow books  
- To borrow Talking books  
- To borrow CDs/DVDs  
- To use a computer/Internet  
- Something else (please say what) 

Q3.  Is there anything else you would like to use or borrow from the mobile library?  
Yes  [ ]  → Go to Q4  
No  [ ]  → Go to Q5  

Q4.  If 'Yes', please tell us what else you would like to use or borrow from the mobile library?  
_________________________________________________________________  
_________________________________________________________________  
_________________________________________________________________  

Q5.  Is there anything else you would like to add or comment about the mobile library?  
_________________________________________________________________  
_________________________________________________________________  
_________________________________________________________________
Q5. What type of books do you like to read (or listen to)?
(Tick as many boxes as you need)
- Spy/adventure books
- Fairy tales (e.g. Cinderella)
- Fantasy books (e.g. Harry Potter)
- Scary/ghost stories
- Funny stories/books
- Real-life stories/books
- Animal books
- History books (e.g. Horrible Histories)
- Geography books (e.g. mountains/rivers/planets etc.)
- Other (please tell us)

Q6. Do you think there is a good choice of children's books on this mobile library? (Tick one box only)
- Yes, always
- Yes, sometimes
- No
- Don't know

Q7. Do you think there is a good choice of CDs/DVDs on this mobile library? (Tick one box only)
- Yes, always
- Yes, sometimes
- No
- Don't know
Q8. Do you think the way the children’s books/CDs/DVDs are set out on the shelves makes it easy or hard to find what you are looking for on this mobile library? (Tick one box only)

Easy □
Hard □

Q9. How much would you be affected if there was no mobile library service in your area?
(Tick one box only)

A lot □ If you ticked one of these boxes
Quite a bit □ Go to Q10
A little □
Not at all □ If you ticked one of these boxes
Don’t know □ Go to Q11

Q10. If you ticked ‘A lot’ or ‘Quite a bit’, please tell us how you would be affected.

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

Section 2 – About you

Q11. Are you a boy or girl? (Tick one box)

Boy □
Girl □

Q12. How old are you? (Tick one box only)

8 - 9 years old □
10 - 11 years old □
12 - 13 years old □
14 - 15 years old □
Q13. Are you a member of a library in Northern Ireland?
   Yes [ ]
   No  [ ]

Q14. How often do you use a mobile library in Northern Ireland?
   (Tick one box only)
   Once a week [ ]
   Once every 2 weeks [ ]
   Once every 3 to 4 weeks [ ]
   Less often [ ]
   Never [ ]

Q15. How often do you use a branch library in Northern Ireland?
   (Tick one box only)
   More than once a week [ ]
   Once a week [ ]
   Once every 2 weeks [ ]
   Once every 3 to 4 weeks [ ]
   Less often [ ]
   Never [ ]

Q16. How do you usually travel most of the way to this mobile library stop? (Tick one box only)
   Walk [ ]
   Car [ ]
   Public transport (i.e. bus/train/taxi) [ ]
   Bicycle [ ]
   Other (please specify) [ ] ____________________________
Q17. Would you describe the place where you live as… (Tick one box)

A big city
The outskirts of a big city
A small city or town
A country village
A farm or a home in the country

Section 3 – And finally...

Q18. Is there anything else you want to say about the mobile library service?

Yes □ → Go to Q19
No □ → Go to end

Q19. If ‘Yes’, please tell us.

________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________

You have now reached the end of the questionnaire - thank you for taking the time to complete it!

Now please give it to the mobile library staff.
Appendix Four


Executive Summary
(Adult and Child questionnaire)

February 2013
Executive Summary – ADULT QUESTIONNAIRE

Proposal 1: Target Groups
• Overall, 85% of adult respondents (aged 16 years and over) agreed that Libraries NI’s public mobile service should mostly serve the needs of older people, children and their parents/carers.

Proposal 2: Services to be provided
• Overall, 90% of adult respondents agreed that Libraries NI should make lending of books (including talking books) the main service provided on public mobile libraries.
• Overall, 36% of adult respondents agreed that Libraries NI should stop providing Internet access as a service on public mobile libraries while 46% neither agreed nor disagreed and 18% disagreed.

Proposal 3: Criteria for Service Delivery
(a) Setting criteria for determining public mobile stops
• Overall, 68% of adult respondents agreed that Libraries NI should put in place criteria for deciding public mobile library stops in both rural and urban areas.

(b) Criteria for public mobile stops in rural areas
• Overall, 58% of adult respondents agreed that Libraries NI should put in place criteria for deciding public mobile library stops in rural areas.

(c) Criteria for public mobile stops in urban areas
• Overall, 61% of adult respondents agreed that Libraries NI should put in place criteria for deciding public mobile library stops in urban areas.

Proposal 4: Services to Schools and Playgroups
• Overall, 69% of adult respondents agreed that Libraries NI should apply clear principles when deciding whether to meet requests for mobile stops at schools or playgroups.

Proposal 5: Increasing Usage
• Two fifths (40%) of adult respondents think that Libraries NI could do something to increase use of public mobile libraries, the majority of whom suggested a need for more advertising and better publicity about the service.

About you
• The vast majority (96%) of adult respondents indicated that they are responding to the questionnaire as an individual and 4% on behalf of an organisation.
• 91% of adult respondents are a member of a library in Northern Ireland.
• 56% of adult respondents use Libraries NI’s public mobile library service at least fortnightly, while 40% use it once every 3 to 4 weeks and 4% use it less frequently (3%) or never (1%).
• Almost one quarter (23%) of adult respondents use a branch or central library in Northern Ireland at least once every 3 to 4 weeks while 77% use one less frequently (32%) or never (45%).
• 2% of adult respondents are members of Libraries NI staff.
• Almost four fifths (79%) of adult respondents are female and 21% are male.
Executive Summary – ADULT QUESTIONNAIRE (continued)

• Over half (55%) of adult respondents are 60 years of age and over, 22% are in the 35-49 years age group, 12% are in the 50-59 years age group, 7% are aged 25-34 years and 4% are aged 16-24 years.
• 57% of adult respondents are either married/cohabiting or in a civil partnership, 21% are widowed or a surviving civil partner, 16% are single and 6% are divorced/separated.
• Just over one third (34%) of adult respondents have someone who is dependent on them (i.e. a child, someone with an incapacitating disability, an elderly person), while 66% indicated that they have no dependants.
• 87% of adult respondents were born in Northern Ireland.
• Almost all adult respondents (99.7%) are of white ethnic origin.
• Just over half (51%) of adult respondents are retired, 27% are employed (10% full time, 13% part time and 4% self-employed), while 10% are looking after the home/family.
• Just over one quarter (26%) of adult respondents consider themselves to have a disability or illness that substantially limits their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.
  o Of these, 78% reported the nature of the disability or illness to be mobility-related, 13% sight-related and 13% hearing-related; 14% reported other health issues including heart problems, breathing difficulties and cancer.

Equality Considerations
• 13% of adult respondents believe the proposed changes to the public mobile library service would have an effect on them (or their organisation) in terms of at least one Section 75 equality category.
  o Of these, the vast majority (97%) said they (or their organisation) would be affected with regard to age.

Rurality Considerations
• Over two thirds (69%) of adult respondents describe the place where they live (or where their organisation is based) as a rural location (i.e. country village or a farm/home in the country).
  o Of those who live in a rural location (or whose organisation is based there), over half (53%) said that they, or their local community, would be affected “A lot” (30%) or “Quite a bit” (22%) if some or all of the proposed changes to the public mobile library service were introduced.

General Comments
• Just over one quarter (26%) of adult respondents provided other comments with regard to the public mobile library service.
Executive Summary – CHILD QUESTIONNAIRE

Section 1: Mobile Library

• Four fifths (80%) of the children/young people (under 16 years of age) visit the mobile library because it stops in their village/town/area, 37% because they can’t get to a branch library easily and 28% because there is no branch library nearby.

• Almost all of the children/young people (99.6%) use the mobile library to borrow books, 10% to borrow CDs/DVDs, 3% to borrow talking books and 2% for something else (including using a computer/Internet).

• One fifth (20%) of the children/young people said they would like to borrow other items from the mobile library such as games/puzzles, computer games (and CDs/DVDs - as not all mobile libraries stock these items).

• Just over three quarters (76%) of the children/young people like to read (or listen to) funny stories/books, roughly half like spy/adventure books (51%) or animal books (50%), roughly two fifths like fantasy books (43%), scary/ghost stories (39%), real-life stories/books (39%) or history books (38%), one third (33%) like fairy tales and 22% like geography books.

• The vast majority (96%) of the children/young people think there is always (61%) or sometimes (35%) a good choice of children’s books on the mobile library.

• Just over one quarter (27%) of the children/young people think there is always (11%) or sometimes (16%) a good choice of CDs/DVDs on the mobile library, while 57% do not know.
  o Removing those children/young people from the analysis who said “Don’t know”, 63% think there is always (26%) or sometimes (37%) a good choice of CDs/DVDs on the mobile library.

• 87% of the children/young people think the way the children’s books/CDs/DVDs are set out on the shelves makes it easy to find what they are looking for on the mobile library.

• 71% of the children/young people said that they would be affected “A lot” (49%) or “Quite a bit” (22%) if there was no mobile library service in their area.

Section 2: About You

• 88% of the children/young people are a member of a library in Northern Ireland.

• Two thirds (67%) of the children/young people use a mobile library at least once every 2 weeks, while 29% use it once every 3 to 4 weeks and 4% it less often.

• Almost one quarter (24%) of the children/young people use a branch library in Northern Ireland at least once every 3 to 4 weeks while 76% use one less often (36%) or never (39%).

• 70% of the children/young people usually walk most of the way to the mobile library stop while 20% travel by car; 10% travel by other means including public transport, by bicycle or the mobile stops at their school.

• Three quarters (75%) of the children/young people describe the place where they live as a rural location (i.e. country village (41%) or a farm/home in the country (33%)).

• 58% of the children/young people are female and 42% are male.

• Almost half (49%) of the children/young people are aged 8-9 years, 30% are aged 10-11 years, 10% are aged 12-13 years and 11% are aged 14-15 years.

• The vast majority (96%) of the children/young people were born in Northern Ireland.
Executive Summary – CHILD QUESTIONNAIRE (continued)

- The vast majority (99%) of the children/young people are of white ethnic origin.
- 5% of the children/young people have a disability or illness that substantially limits their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities; such disabilities or illnesses relate to learning, mobility, hearing and sight.
  - Other disabilities or illnesses cited include asthma, autism and diabetes.

Section 3: And finally...
- Two fifths (40%) of the children/young people provided other comments about the mobile library service.


Appendix Five

Mobile Library Service Strategy – Written Submissions

Submissions were received from:

Ards Borough Council
Banbridge District Council
Cookstown District Council
Donegal County Council *
Omagh District Council

South Antrim Community Network

Ulster Farmers Union

Ian Paisley MP
Mervyn Storey MLA

Donagh Wee Folk Playschool
Hollybush Daycare Nursery
Kindertee Community Playgroup
Little Angel's Den
Little Flower Playgroup
Little Rascals Playgroup
Little Treasures Day Nursery
Oakwood Childcare Centre
Roslea Cross Community Playschool
Roundabout Playgroup
Small Fry Playgroup
St. Josephs Community Playgroup

Belleek Primary School
Gaelscoil na Daroige
Jonesborough Primary School
Kesh Primary School
St Laurence O'Toole's Primary School
St Matthew's Primary School

Pomeroy After Schools

Cloughreagh Residential Home
Inverary Fold
Montlin Court Residential Home
Upper Andersonstown Community Forum

Clanrye Group
Dennett Interchange
Maydown Community Association

Individual members of the public

* Libraries NI currently provides a mobile library service to parts of East Donegal under a service level agreement.
Mobile Library Service Strategy

Equality Impact Assessment

Final Report

March 2013
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Appendix 1: Mobile library stops by District Council area 27
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
- 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 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 was consulted upon over a 12 week period in parallel with consultation on the proposed strategy.

EQIA process

1.8 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.

1.9 This report has been written to assist the Board of Libraries NI to make a decision on the proposed strategy.

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 formed the main focus of the consultation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Summary of proposals</th>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Target groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>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.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Services to be provided</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Public mobile libraries are best designed for and should primarily deliver book lending services (including talking books) and should not provide Internet access.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Criteria for service delivery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>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.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A mobile stop in an urban area must not be within</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
easy access of a branch library, must be in an area of social need and have at least 5 regular customers.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Services to schools and playgroups</th>
<th>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.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

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.

2.5 The 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 3000 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.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Age¹</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than three fifths (64%) of respondents who use the mobile library were aged 60+ years:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18% were aged 60-69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24% were aged 70-79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19% were aged 80-89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3% were aged 90+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Gender</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over four fifths (82%) of respondents who use the mobile library were female and just under one fifth (18%) were male.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

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:

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

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.

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:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Material</th>
<th>No. of respondents</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fiction books</td>
<td>1995</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-fiction books</td>
<td>1209</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Large print books</td>
<td>1209</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children’s/ teens’ books</td>
<td>781</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information (e.g. reference type material)</td>
<td>379</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talking books</td>
<td>284</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Music/ films</td>
<td>136</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Computer/Internet access</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

² ARK (2003) NI Life & Times Survey
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 Survey\(^3\) (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

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\(^3\) Travel Survey 2008-10, Roads Service, Department for Regional Development. 2011
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.

3.12 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 2010-11\(^4\) 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

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\(^4\) Continuous Household Survey 2010/11, NISRA Central Survey Unit, 2012
• 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 figures\textsuperscript{5} show that people with a disability are less likely to use the internet (64% compared with 90% overall). In response to recent consultations (on this and other EQIAs), Disability Action said that disabled people and other low income families do not have the economic power to purchase computers and internet services and they estimated that 50% of disabled people in Northern Ireland do not own a computer.

4. CONSULTATION ON THE EQIA

Consultation process

4.1 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 proposed strategy and the potential equality impacts was undertaken over a period of 12 weeks from 24\textsuperscript{th} September to 14\textsuperscript{th} December 2012.

4.2 The consultation documents were made available on the Libraries NI website and arrangements were in place to ensure that all documents could be made available in hard copy and alternative formats on request. A questionnaire was made available in all mobile libraries, with a separate version for those aged under 16. A copy of the questionnaire was available on the website for consultees to use if they wished to do so.

4.3 All Equality Scheme consultees were notified of the availability of the EQIA report on 24\textsuperscript{th} September 2012 by letter or email and they were encouraged to comment either in writing or by filling in a questionnaire. A record was

\textsuperscript{5} Internet Access Quarterly Update 2012, Q2, Office of National Statistics, 2012
kept of questionnaire responses received from individuals and those sent by organisations.

4.4 A range of Equality Scheme consultees representing a cross section of Section 75 groups was contacted individually and invited to attend a focus group meeting in late November. None of the organisations accepted the invitation and they were contacted again offering the opportunity to meet individually with representatives of Libraries NI. However, again, none of the organisations accepted the invitation.

Responses received

4.5 There were responses to the main questionnaire from 912 individuals and 39 organisations; the latter included a number of playgroups, day nurseries and primary schools, representing the views of children and young people, and several residential homes representing the views of older people. In addition a separate written response, relating to the Draft EQIA, was received from Disability Action.

4.6 There were 255 responses to the questionnaire aimed at children and young people with ages ranging from 8-15 years.

4.7 The individual responses to the main questionnaire represented a range of Section 75 groups as detailed in the table below, although there were very high levels of response from older people and women.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Group</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Racial group</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>99.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Other</td>
<td>0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disability</td>
<td>Disabled</td>
<td>25.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Non disabled</td>
<td>74.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marital status</td>
<td>Single</td>
<td>16.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Married/co-habiting</td>
<td>56.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Divorced/separated</td>
<td>6.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Widowed/ Surviving civil partner</td>
<td>20.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Civil partnership</td>
<td>0.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Category</td>
<td>Group</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------</td>
<td>----------</td>
<td>----</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Racial group</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>98.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Other</td>
<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disability</td>
<td>Disabled</td>
<td>5.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Non disabled</td>
<td>94.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Group</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>8-9</td>
<td>49.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10-11</td>
<td>29.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>12-13</td>
<td>10.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>14-15</td>
<td>10.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>42.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>57.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Comments made**

4.9 The main questionnaire focused on the five service proposals (set out in paragraph 2.3 above) and asked respondents to what extent they agreed with each proposal on a five point scale (ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree). Where respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed, they were asked to explain why.
4.10 The questionnaire aimed at children and young people asked questions about why respondents visited the mobile library, what they used it for and what type of books they liked to read. It asked them what else they would like to use the library for and how much they believed they would be affected if there was no mobile library service in their area.

4.11 The comments made which have a bearing on equality impacts are summarised below.

**Service proposal 1: Target groups**

4.12 The proposal suggested that 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. 92.2% of respondents to the main questionnaire either agreed with this proposal or neither agreed nor disagreed. Most of the 7.8% who disagreed or strongly disagreed commented that mobile libraries should cater for all users. Seven people suggested that the needs of disabled people should be specifically addressed and Disability Action suggested that, given the high response to the 2011 customer survey from disabled people, they should be added as a target group.

**Service proposal 2: Services to be provided**

4.13 The proposal suggested that public mobile libraries are best designed for, and should primarily deliver, book lending services (including talking books). 97.1% of respondents to the main questionnaire either agreed with this proposal or neither agreed nor disagreed. Of the 2.9% who disagreed or strongly disagreed, many suggested that mobile libraries should carry DVDs and CDs, particularly to meet the needs of children and young people. The respondents to the children and young people’s questionnaire also mentioned that they would like to be able to borrow games (both electronic and board games).

4.14 The proposal also suggested that mobile libraries should not provide Internet access. 82.5% of respondents either agreed with this proposal or neither agreed nor disagreed. Of the 17.5% who disagreed or strongly disagreed,
several commented on the benefits of Internet access in a library setting to different age groups, particularly:

- older people who (especially in rural areas) may not have access within their own homes
- older people who may need help from a librarian to access the Internet
- younger people who may be encouraged to use mobile libraries if Internet access were available.

4.15 Disability Action did not feel able to comment on this proposal without more information on how the availability of the Internet service on mobile libraries is promoted and the level of accessibility for disabled people in relation to reasonable adjustments. They suggested that Libraries NI should consider these issues when making a decision.

Service proposal 3: Criteria for service delivery

4.16 The proposal suggested that criteria should be applied so that 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. 84.5% of respondents to the main questionnaire agreed that criteria should be adopted (or neither agreed nor disagreed) and 75.2% agreed with the criteria proposed (or neither agreed nor disagreed).

4.17 Among those who disagreed with the proposal, many people commented that 3 miles may be too great a distance for elderly or disabled people or people with young children to travel or that access to the nearest branch library may be difficult for these groups because of lack of parking or the distance from the nearest bus stop. It was suggested that carers may not have the time to travel to the nearest branch library. It was also suggested by some that older people might feel more comfortable using the mobile service even if the nearest branch library was less than three miles away, as a mobile provides a more personalised service within their own locality.

4.18 The proposal further suggested that criteria should be applied so that a mobile stop in an urban areas must not be within easy access of a branch library and must be in an area of social need. 86.6% of respondents agreed
with this suggestion or neither agreed nor disagreed. Among the 13.3% who disagreed or strongly disagreed, similar comments were made in relation to access for older people, disabled people and people with young children. Several respondents queried the use of the term “easy access” and pointed out that this would differ for different groups.

**Service proposal 4: Services to schools and playgroups**

4.19 The proposal suggested that there should be no limiting criteria for stops at schools and playgroups but that stops should be prioritised on the basis of principles such as practicality, level of need and level of use, e.g. distance from a branch library. 94.3% of respondents to the main questionnaire agreed with this suggestion or neither agreed nor disagreed. Among the 5.6% who disagreed or strongly disagreed, the majority suggested that all schools and playgroups that desired the service should receive it, as books plays such an important part in children’s learning.

**Service proposal 5: Increasing usage**

4.20 The proposal suggested that the number of services to schools and playgroups should be increased and a more targeted approach to publicising public mobile library services should be developed. The main questionnaire asked people whether they thought that there was anything Libraries NI could do to increase use of public mobile libraries and, if so, what. 40% of respondents suggested actions mostly based around the provision of better information and increased advertising. There were no issues raised which directly related to equality impacts.

**Other comments**

4.21 The main questionnaire asked people whether they believed that some or all of the proposed changes would have an effect on them (or their organisation) because of any of the equality grounds in Section 75. 13.4% believed that they might be affected; of these:

- 9.5% said they may be affected on account of their religious belief
- 11.1% said they may be affected on account of their political opinion, racial group or gender
- 96.8% said they may be affected on account of their age
- 7.9% said they may be affected on account of their marital status.
4.22 When asked to explain why, respondents commented about age, mobility problems and caring responsibilities. No comments were made to explain why there might be an effect on account of religious belief, political opinion, racial group, marital status or gender. The most frequent comments related to the potential for loss of the mobile service and the need to travel to a branch library which would adversely affect those with mobility problems, parents of young children and carers. It was also suggested that people who did not fall within the target groups would receive a reduced service if the first proposal were adopted.

4.23 The children and young people’s questionnaire asked respondents how much they would be affected if there was no mobile library service in their area and how they would be affected. The comments made showed that children and young people value the independence of walking to the mobile library rather than being taken to a branch library by their parents/carers and believe that they would not be able to visit a branch library as regularly. They also indicated that they use the mobile library to meet their friends.

4.24 In their individual response, Disability Action suggested that when the strategy is implemented and changes to stops are identified, Libraries NI should consult with affected customers. They said that they would be concerned if the review of routes had a negative impact on special schools.

5. **KEY FINDINGS**

5.1 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.

5.2 The assessment is based on the data and research and responses to the consultation process set out above. It is set out under the categories in Section 75 but 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**

5.3 The proposal suggested that 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.

5.4 Clearly this proposal 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 specific materials for collection during the next visit.

5.5 The consultation process indicated that some respondents consider that people with disabilities should be targeted by mobile libraries. 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**

5.6 The proposal suggested that public mobile libraries are best designed for, and should primarily deliver, book lending services (including talking books) and should not provide Internet access.

5.7 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. This conclusion was reflected in the comments made during the consultation process.

5.8 Given the response to the consultation and the opportunities afforded by e2, Libraries NI will seek to provide Internet access on mobile libraries, where possible and where there is a demand, but in a way that does not reduce the provision of books.
Service proposal 3: Criteria for service delivery

5.9 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.

5.10 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 and should be in an area of social need.

5.11 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.

5.12 The consultation process identified the potential adverse impact on people who are less able to travel 3 or more miles to a library, including older people, disabled people, people with young children and carers. It was also suggested that older people might feel more comfortable using the mobile service regardless of their ability to travel because they consider that it provides a more friendly and personalised service in their own community. Children and young people pointed out that they valued the independence of walking to the mobile library rather than being taken to a branch library by their parents/carers and that they believed that they would not be able to visit a branch library as regularly.

5.13 It should be noted that some consultees queried the use of the term “easy access” in relation to criteria for stops in urban areas and pointed out that this would differ for different groups.
5.14 At this stage, the number of stops which will be affected by the adoption of
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 6 below.

Service proposal 4: Services to schools and playgroups

5.15 The proposal suggested that there should be no limiting criteria for stops at
schools and playgroups but that stops should be prioritised on the basis of
principles such as practicality, level of need and level of use, e.g. distance
from a branch library.

5.16 Several respondents to the consultation process considered that all schools
and playgroups that desired the service should receive it and Disability
Action pointed out that they would be concerned if there were any negative
impact on special schools.

5.17 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

5.18 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. No
issues were raised during the consultation process that related directly to
equality impacts and it is not anticipated that this proposal will have any
differential effects on existing or future customers.
6. CONCLUSIONS

6.1 The 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. The potential impacts are summarised in the table below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1</th>
<th>Religious belief/political opinion</th>
<th>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.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Racial group</td>
<td>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.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 3 | Age                               | **(a) Children and young people**  
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.  
**(b) Older people**  
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.  
**(c) Other age groups** |
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.

| 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            | Libraries NI will consider how mobile libraries can serve disabled people to allow them to benefit from a wider range of books and materials designed to meet their needs. Where their local mobile stop is discontinued, there may be an adverse differential impact on disabled people who may find it more difficult to travel. However, it is likely that the majority of disabled 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  | Dependents            | 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.

6.2 The Board of Libraries NI will make the final decision on the adoption of the proposed strategy, taking into account all the evidence available, including the findings of this EQIA. An important aspect of the EQIA process is to consider what mitigating measures might be put in place in order to reduce the impact of the proposed strategy on people in the various Section 75 categories.

**Mitigating measures**

6.3 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.

6.4 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.

6.5 In the light of the comments made by consultees, Libraries NI will consider how best mobile libraries can serve disabled people to allow them to benefit from a wider range of books and materials designed to meet their needs.

6.6 In light of the comments made by consultees, Libraries NI will seek to provide Internet access on mobile libraries, where possible and where there is a demand, but in a way that does not reduce the provision of books.

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

**Decision and publication of the results of the EQIA**

6.8 Following the decision of the Libraries NI Board, the final EQIA report will be published on the Libraries NI website. Information will also be made available to Equality Scheme consultees and publications and media associated with the Section 75 categories. 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. This will complete Step 6 of the EQIA process.

**Monitoring for adverse impact**

6.9 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.

6.10 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.
6.11 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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District Council Area</th>
<th>No. of stops</th>
<th>% population from</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Catholic community background</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Antrim</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>38.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ards</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>12.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Armagh</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>48.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ballymena</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>21.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ballymoney</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>31.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Banbridge</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>31.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belfast city</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>47.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carrickfergus</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Castlereagh</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>18.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coleraine</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>27.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cookstown</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>57.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Craigavon</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>44.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Derry</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>75.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Down</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>61.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dungannon</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>60.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fermanagh</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>58.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Larne</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>25.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limavady</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>56.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lisburn</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>33.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Magherafelt</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>64.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moyle</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>60.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newry and Mourne</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>80.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newtownabbey</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>19.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Down</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>12.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Omagh</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>69.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strabane</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>66.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**TOTAL 726**

---

6 The data on community background has been sourced from the Northern Ireland Statistics website [www.nisra.gov.uk](http://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.
Appendix Seven

Mobile Library Service Strategy

Rural Impact Assessment

March 2013
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2. Background 2
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4. Consideration of available data, research and consultation 8
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1. **Introduction**

1.1 Libraries NI is seeking to establish a new strategy for mobile library service provision. This report sets out the findings of a Rural Impact Assessment of changes proposed in respect of the provision by Libraries NI of mobile library services as a result of the new strategy.

1.2 Consistent with Rural Proofing Guidance from the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (DARD), this report provides information on the following matters:

   - Step 1: The background to the proposals
   - Step 2: Presentation of the policy context
   - Step 3: Consideration of available data and research
   - Step 4: An initial assessment of the impact of the proposals on rural areas
   - Step 5: Consideration of mitigating measures
   - Step 6: Formal consultation
   - Step 7: Decision and publication of the results of the Rural Impact Statement
   - Step 8: Monitoring for adverse impact.

1.3 This report has been written to assist the Board of Libraries NI to make a decision on the proposed strategy.

2. **Background**

2.1 Libraries NI (the Northern Ireland Library Authority) was established on 1 April 2009. The primary duty of Libraries NI, as set down in the Libraries Act (Northern Ireland) 2008, is to provide a comprehensive and efficient public library service for persons living, working or studying in Northern Ireland. In doing so the organisation is required to:

   - Ensure that facilities are available for the borrowing of, or reference to library materials sufficient in number, range and quality to meet the general requirements of adults and children (whether by keeping adequate stocks, by arrangements with other bodies concerned with library services or by any other means)
   - Have regard to the desirability of:
- encouraging both adults and children to make full use of the library service
- providing advice as to the use of the library service and making available such bibliographical and other information as may be required by persons using the service
- promoting literacy and lifelong learning
- maintaining a collection of library materials relevant to the cultural heritage of Northern Ireland
- making library premises available for cultural and community activities
- meeting any special requirements of adults and children by any appropriate means.

2.2 Libraries NI is committed to adopting best practices in its approaches to policy development and review. A separate draft Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) has also been produced. The EQIA considers the impact of the proposals on those within the scope of Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998.

The Mobile Library Service

2.3 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 in line with Libraries NI’s vision.

2.4 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 fulfill 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.

2.5 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.
2.6 Libraries NI will continue to provide its other mobile services. These are the 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 the E-express, a vehicle kitted out with computers.

2.7 Libraries NI operates 18 general mobile library vehicles, with over 700 stops in both urban and rural areas across Northern Ireland, serving a wide range of settlements of various sizes. Usage of the mobile library service currently represents 5.5% of overall library business, in terms of book borrowing.

2.8 Prior to the establishment of Libraries NI the service was provided by the five Education and Library Boards (ELBs). Each ELB had its own approach to the provision of mobile services and accordingly Libraries NI inherited a service where there was considerable variation in terms of provision and frequency of service.

2.9 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; and
   - to deliver a service which is appropriate for target users.

2.10 The proposed strategy includes five service proposals which formed the main focus of the consultation. These proposals are summarised in the table below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Summary of proposals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td><strong>Target groups</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Services to be provided</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>-------------------------</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 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 have at least 5 regular customers with a substantial level of use, must not be within easy access of a branch library and must be in an area of social need. |
| 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. |

### 3. Policy Context

#### 3.1 Libraries NI considers that the principal rural policy contexts relevant to the proposed strategy for mobile library provision are contained in the following documents:

- Rural White Paper Action Plan (Department of Agriculture and Rural Development, 2012);
- Tackling Rural Poverty and Social Isolation Framework 2011 - 2015 (Department of Agriculture and Rural Development, 2012);
- Shaping Our Future, Regional Development Strategy for Northern Ireland 2025 (Department for Regional Development, 2011); and
- Delivering Tomorrow’s Libraries (Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure, 2006).

#### Rural White Paper Action Plan

3.2 The Rural White Paper Action Plan contains commitments on rural issues by all government departments and provides a framework for a more integrated approach by the N Ireland Executive in seeking to address the challenges
facing rural communities. The document identifies 5 Key Themes and associated policy priorities in relation to rural issues. The following Key Themes and policy priorities are relevant to the mobile library strategy:

**Key Theme:** Access to Services  
**Policy Priority:** To promote fair and equitable access to key services for all rural dwellers

**Key Theme:** Rural Communities  
**Policy Priority:** Seek to minimise, where it exists, disadvantage, poverty, social exclusion and inequality amongst those living in rural areas and in particular amongst vulnerable groups

3.3 By developing and implementing the proposed strategy for mobile library services, Libraries NI is seeking to promote equitable access to the service across N Ireland. The service, while available to everyone, will target specifically the elderly and children and their carers, who are the biggest users of the service and who have been identified in the Rural White Paper Action Plan as amongst the most vulnerable.

**Tackling Rural Poverty and Social Isolation Framework**

3.4 Tackling Rural Poverty and Social Isolation Framework was developed taking account of the views of a range of stakeholders and builds on DARD’s rural anti-poverty and social exclusion work from 2008 – 2011. It identifies 3 priority areas for intervention: access poverty, financial poverty and social isolation.

3.5 The document refers to one of the Multiple Deprivation Measures that government uses to help target those in need i.e. ‘proximity to services’ which identifies particular problems of access and connectivity for rural dwellers which can potentially have adverse impacts on vulnerable groups, including the elderly, children and young people and those with disabilities.

3.6 Libraries NI recognises that the mobile library provides a valued service for people who are unable, or find it difficult, to access a branch library and is
seeking through its proposed strategy to make the service more relevant to the needs of vulnerable groups.

**Shaping Our Future**

3.7 Shaping our Future is the Department of Regional Development’s Regional Development Strategy for Northern Ireland, which recognises that accessibility to facilities and services can be difficult in rural areas, particularly for women, the elderly and young people and can contribute to rural isolation and peripherality. The Strategy also recognises that the rural community living in small towns, villages and small settlement clusters has experienced a fast rate of population growth in recent years, with the largest growth of population over the last 25 years occurring in the Belfast ‘travel to work’ hinterland reflecting the trend to use the countryside as a residential area for townspeople. The effect is to introduce into the countryside a population which looks to the towns and cities for services and social contacts, contributing to socio-economic differentials within rural areas.

3.8 The overall aim of the Strategy is to develop an attractive and prosperous rural area, based on a balanced and integrated approach to the development of town, village and countryside, in order to sustain a strong and vibrant rural community, contributing to the overall well-being of the Region as a whole. The mobile library service has a key role to play in helping to realise this aim.

**Delivering Tomorrow’s Libraries**

3.9 The Department of Culture Arts and Leisure’s policy framework for libraries (Delivering Tomorrow’s Libraries) recognises that within the resource constraints, the library service should be available ‘in the places, at the times and in the ways that enable as many people as possible to use it’.

3.10 It specifically articulates that ‘the use of mobile libraries should ensure optimal access in rural areas, including to the internet, through strategically located stops, with the duration and frequency of stops according to the needs of the locality’.
3.11 Delivering Tomorrow’s Libraries also recognises that within the context of being a universal service, the public library service is well placed to make a particularly effective contribution to those citizens who are, or who are at risk of becoming, socially excluded, including those who live in rural communities, where the library service can provide an effective support to other government departments.

3.12 Only some of the current mobile libraries have a public access computer with internet access and where this facility is available it is not well used for a variety of reasons, including lack of privacy and the speed and reliability of connectivity in some areas. Accordingly the proposal in the draft strategy was to stop providing a public access computer in mobile libraries and use the space to provide more books, which users have identified as the main reason for using a mobile library.

4. Available Data, Research and Consultation Findings

4.1 In developing this Rural Impact Assessment various sources of information have been considered in respect of the rural impact of the proposals on mobile services, namely:

- Libraries NI data
- Published data:
  - Neighbourhood Statistics for Northern Ireland (NINIS)
  - Northern Ireland Multiple Deprivation Measures 2010 (NISRA).

Libraries NI Data on Mobile Library Users

4.2 A customer survey was undertaken in June/July 2011, mainly to assess customer satisfaction with aspects of the current mobile library service and identify any additional needs. Almost 3,000 responses to the questionnaire were received from users aged 16 years +. The questionnaire asked customers for certain information about themselves and given the high response rate, it can be assumed that the profile is fairly typical of all customers.

4.3 63% of customers who returned a questionnaire described the place where they live as a rural location (i.e. a village or farm/home in the country. Three
fifths of respondents (60%) said that the mobile library stopped at their house and of those respondents for whom the mobile did not stop at their house, more than half (56%) lived less than 0.5 miles from the mobile stop and just over three fifths (61%) normally walked to the mobile library stop and two fifths (40%) travelled by car. 78% of respondents said that they did not use any other library services in addition to the mobile library. Less than one in ten respondents (8%) said that they would like the mobile library service to provide services other than books.

4.4 Other relevant information relating to the profile of users is summarised in the Table 1 below.

**Table 1: Profile of Mobile Library Users**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Age</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than three fifths (64%) of respondents who use the mobile library were aged 60+ years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- 18% were aged 60-69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- 24% were aged 70-79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- 19% were aged 80-89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- 3% were aged 90+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gender</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over four fifths (82%) of respondents who use the mobile library were female and just under one fifth (18%) were male.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Racial group</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The vast majority (99%) of respondents were white, with the remainder coming from Chinese, Irish Traveller, Indian, Pakistani or mixed ethnic origins.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Marital status</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>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.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Disability</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>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.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Dependants</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>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).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.5 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:

Table 2: Age Groups Using the Mobile Library Service

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

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

4.6 Information from the survey confirms therefore that older people (i.e. those over 60 years of age) and young children (0 - 11 years of age) make up a significant proportion of the customers of the mobile library service.

Other Libraries NI Information on Rurality

4.7 Public library services are currently delivered via a network of 96 branch libraries, 28 mobile library vehicles (18 general and 10 Homecall) and two specialist heritage libraries. Rural areas are served by a combination of mobile library services and library branches in some rural towns and villages.

4.8 During January – April 2011, Libraries NI carried out public consultation on proposals resulting from Stage 2 of the Strategic Review of Library Provision in Northern Ireland. As part of that process, a Rural Impact Assessment was undertaken which included consideration of comments received on the impact on rural communities of the proposed closure of some libraries.
Feedback which was of particular relevance to the proposals regarding the mobile library service included the following:

‘The costs associated with public transport and the fact that public transport routes and timetables often make it impossible to access the next nearest library, especially in the evenings’.

4.9 During September – December 2011, Libraries NI published a draft Rural Impact Assessment on proposals to reduce the opening hours of libraries in order to achieve financial savings. General information received during this consultation about the circumstances of rural dwellers which respondents felt needed to be taken into account in relation to rural deprivation included the following:

- rural poverty manifests itself very differently from poverty in urban areas:
  - it is not spatially concentrated
  - it exists amongst relative affluence
  - people in rural communities are less likely to identify that they are in poverty and there is a culture of “making do”

- in 2007-08 in Northern Ireland, of those who earned 50% below the United Kingdom Mean Income Before Housing Costs, almost half (46%) lived in rural areas

- 54% of households living in rural areas are in Fuel Poverty

- rural dwellers face significant difficulties accessing employment and basic services that other people take for granted

- rural households must earn significantly more than their urban counterparts to reach a minimum standard of income due to the need to maintain a car and the higher cost of heating a home in rural areas.

4.10 The Statistical Classification and Delineation of Settlements (NISRA 2005)\(^7\) defines settlements of less that 4,500 (Bands F, G and H) as rural communities. Using this definition and data on population from the 2001 census returns, 28 branch libraries are considered to be rural. These libraries are shown in the Table 3 below:

\(^7\) Report of the Inter-Departmental Urban-Rural Definition Group: Statistical Classification and Delineation of Settlements, NISRA, 2005
Table 3: Rural Branch Libraries

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Library</th>
<th>Carnlough</th>
<th>Castlederg</th>
<th>Castlewellan</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Broughshane</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crumlin</td>
<td>Crossmaglen</td>
<td>Cushendall</td>
<td>Draperstown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dungiven</td>
<td>Fintona</td>
<td>Fivemiletown</td>
<td>Garvagh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irvinestown</td>
<td>Keady</td>
<td>Kells and Connor</td>
<td>Killyleagh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kilrea</td>
<td>Lisnaskea</td>
<td>Maghera</td>
<td>Moira</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newtownstewart</td>
<td>Portaferry</td>
<td>Portglenone</td>
<td>Rathfriland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Richhill</td>
<td>Saintfield</td>
<td>Tandragee</td>
<td>Whitehead</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.11 By plotting postcodes of library users to Output Areas\(^8\) an analysis was undertaken to determine the percentage of active borrowers in each library who live in a rural area. This is presented in Table 4 below.

Table 4: Percentage of Active Borrowers in Each Library Living in a Rural Area

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Library</th>
<th>% Rurality</th>
<th>Library</th>
<th>% Rurality</th>
<th>Library</th>
<th>% Rurality</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Antrim</td>
<td>18.84%</td>
<td>Ardoyne</td>
<td>0.59%</td>
<td>Armagh</td>
<td>40.34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ballycastle</td>
<td>28.36%</td>
<td>Ballyclare</td>
<td>42.70%</td>
<td>Ballyhackamore</td>
<td>2.20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ballymena</td>
<td>40.69%</td>
<td>Ballymoney</td>
<td>46.64%</td>
<td>Ballynahinch</td>
<td>57.99%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Banbridge</td>
<td>36.56%</td>
<td>Bangor Carnegie</td>
<td>5.43%</td>
<td>Bessbrook</td>
<td>36.01%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Broughshane</td>
<td>94.68%</td>
<td>Brownlow</td>
<td>17.39%</td>
<td>Carnlough</td>
<td>91.13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carrickfergus</td>
<td>10.33%</td>
<td>Carryduff</td>
<td>23.79%</td>
<td>Castlederg</td>
<td>94.49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Castlewellan</td>
<td>93.54%</td>
<td>Belfast Central</td>
<td>6.21%</td>
<td>Chichester</td>
<td>0.93%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cloughfern</td>
<td>2.00%</td>
<td>Coalisland</td>
<td>48.68%</td>
<td>Coleraine</td>
<td>23.48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colin Glen</td>
<td>2.85%</td>
<td>Comber</td>
<td>33.75%</td>
<td>Cookstown</td>
<td>49.88%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cregagh</td>
<td>3.34%</td>
<td>Creggan</td>
<td>2.04%</td>
<td>Crossmaglen</td>
<td>82.52%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^8\) Output Areas (OAs) were introduced in Northern Ireland after the 2001 Census. Output Areas were built from clusters of adjacent postcodes. Output Areas themselves nest within the 582 Electoral Wards in Northern Ireland and were designed to have similar population sizes of around 125 households and 350 people; they are also as socially similar as possible. OAs in Northern Ireland are based on postcodes as of January 2000. There are 5,022 OAs in Northern Ireland
4.12 The new Mobile Library Service Strategy includes five service proposals, one of which is that “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 fixed library location”.

4.13 Table 5 below presents an overview of the extent of mobile library stops by Local Government Area together with the location of static libraries in that area. Libraries, defined as rural, are identified in italics.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Mobile Stop Percentage</th>
<th>Static Library Percentage</th>
<th>Area Library Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Crumlin</td>
<td>97.12%</td>
<td>Cushendall 90.68%</td>
<td>Derry Central 10.91%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Donaghadee</td>
<td>33.57%</td>
<td>Downpatrick 54.19%</td>
<td>Draperstown 99.08%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dromore</td>
<td>41.72%</td>
<td>Dundonald 3.45%</td>
<td>Dungannon 43.29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dungiven</td>
<td>97.34%</td>
<td>Enniskillen 49.25%</td>
<td>Falls Road 2.32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finaghy</td>
<td>4.73%</td>
<td>Fintona 91.81%</td>
<td>Fiveemiletown 94.81%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Garvagh</td>
<td>97.28%</td>
<td>Glengormley 7.30%</td>
<td>Greenisland 2.09%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greystone</td>
<td>15.66%</td>
<td>Grove 2.54%</td>
<td>Hollywood Arches 1.72%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holywood</td>
<td>5.53%</td>
<td>Irvinestown 88.24%</td>
<td>Keady 89.56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kells &amp; Connor</td>
<td>93.49%</td>
<td>Kilkeel 50.51%</td>
<td>Killyleagh 95.43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kilrea</td>
<td>98.08%</td>
<td>Larne 21.51%</td>
<td>Limavady 42.68%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lisburn</td>
<td>32.17%</td>
<td>Lisburn Road 7.38%</td>
<td>Lisnaskea 92.96%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lurgan</td>
<td>32.15%</td>
<td>Maghera 95.30%</td>
<td>Magherafelt 55.93%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moira</td>
<td>96.17%</td>
<td>Newcastle 35.5%</td>
<td>Newry City 38.51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newtownards</td>
<td>17.04%</td>
<td>Newtownbreda 5.04%</td>
<td>Newtownstewart 90.33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Omagh</td>
<td>50.56%</td>
<td>Ormeau Road 3.62%</td>
<td>Portadown 28.72%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portaferry</td>
<td>97.70%</td>
<td>Portglenone 96.3%</td>
<td>Portrush 16.71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portstewart</td>
<td>6.43%</td>
<td>Randalstown 39.5%</td>
<td>Rathcoole 1.79%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rathfriland</td>
<td>97.55%</td>
<td>Richhill 94.4%</td>
<td>Saintfield 93.92%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shankill Road</td>
<td>0.88%</td>
<td>Shantallow 2.41%</td>
<td>Strabane 28.76%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strathfoyle</td>
<td>24.91%</td>
<td>Suffolk 3.59%</td>
<td>Tandragee 96.31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tullycarnet</td>
<td>2.26%</td>
<td>Warrenpoint 40.4%</td>
<td>Waterside 24.40%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 5: Mobile Library Stops by District Council Area

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Local Government Area</th>
<th>No. of mobile library stops</th>
<th>Libraries in Local Government Area</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Antrim</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Antrim, <em>Crumlin</em>, Greystone, Randalstown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ards</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>Comber, Donaghadee, Newtownards, <em>Portaferry</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Armagh</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>Armagh, <em>Keady</em>, Richhill</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ballymena</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Ballymena Central, <em>Broughshane</em>, <em>Kells &amp; Connor</em>, Portglenone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ballymoney</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Ballymoney</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Banbridge</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>Banbridge, Dromore, <em>Rathfriland</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belfast City</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>Ardoyne, Ballyhackamore, Belfast Central, Chichester, Falls Road, Finaghy, Grove, Holywood Arches, Lisburn Road, Ormeau Road, Shankill Road, Suffolk, Whiterock, Woodstock</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carrickfergus</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Carrickfergus, Greenisland, <em>Whitehead</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Castlereagh</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>Carryduff, Cregagh, Dundonald, Newtownbreda, Tullycarnet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coleraine</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Coleraine, <em>Garvagh</em>, Kilrea, Portrush, Portstewart</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cookstown</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>Cookstown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Craigavon</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>Brownlow, Lurgan, Portadown, <em>Tandragee</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Derry</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>Creggan, Derry Central, Shantallow, Strathfoyle, Waterside</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dungannon</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>Coalisland, Dungannon, <em>Fivemiletown</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fermanagh</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>Enniskillen, <em>Irvinestown</em>, <em>Lisnaskea</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Larne</td>
<td>11</td>
<td><em>Carnlough</em>, Larne</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limavady</td>
<td>14</td>
<td><em>Dungiven</em>, Limavady</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lisburn</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>Colin Glen, Lisburn, <em>Moira</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Magherafelt</td>
<td>4</td>
<td><em>Draperstown</em>, <em>Maghera</em>, Magherafelt,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural Deprivation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.14 The Northern Ireland Multiple Deprivation Measure (NIMDM) 2010 comprises seven domains of deprivation, each developed to measure a distinct form or type of deprivation: income, employment, health, education, proximity to services, living environment and crime. The domains can be interpreted individually or combined to assess deprivation in more than one domain.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.15 In looking at rural deprivation the research would say that consideration should be given not only to the overall Multiple Deprivation Measure, but also to the <strong>Proximity to Services</strong> domain which is particularly relevant in rural areas.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 4.16 It is mainly OAs in the west of the province (constituencies of West Tyrone, Fermanagh and South Tyrone and Mid Ulster) which rank as the most deprived in relation to the Proximity to Services domain. Libraries in these areas (Castlederg, Cookstown, Draperstown, Dungannon, Dungiven, Enniskillen, Irvinestown and Lisnaskea) have a substantial number of active members who reside in one of the top 10% most deprived OAs as measured on the Proximity to Services domain. It is fair to assume, therefore, that a significant percentage of those who use mobile library stops in these areas also reside in areas which rank among the most deprived in relation to Proximity to Services. However other libraries e.g. Ballycastle, Ballynahinch, Banbridge, Carnlough, Castlewellan and Rathfriland also have significant numbers of active members from OAs which have low rankings in relation to
Proximity to Services and a similar situation is likely to exist as far as users of mobile services in these areas is concerned.

4.17 Table 6 (below) is taken from the NIMDM and shows the twenty most deprived rural SOAs in Northern Ireland. All rural SOAs are outside the most deprived ten percent when all SOAs in Northern Ireland are considered.

Table 6: 20 Most Deprived Rural SOAs in Northern Ireland

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NIMDM Rank (1 is most deprived)</th>
<th>2010 Super Output Area</th>
<th>Local Government District</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>97</td>
<td>Castlederg</td>
<td>Strabane</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>112</td>
<td>Crossmaglen</td>
<td>Newry and Mourne</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>126</td>
<td>Glenderg</td>
<td>Strabane</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>134</td>
<td>Newtownstewart</td>
<td>Strabane</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>136</td>
<td>Ardboe</td>
<td>Cookstown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>141</td>
<td>Sion Mills</td>
<td>Strabane</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>159</td>
<td>Portaferry 2</td>
<td>Ards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>170</td>
<td>Dunnamanagh</td>
<td>Strabane</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>178</td>
<td>Ardglass 1</td>
<td>Down</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>179</td>
<td>Finn</td>
<td>Strabane</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>180</td>
<td>Pomeroy</td>
<td>Cookstown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>182</td>
<td>Silver Bridge-1</td>
<td>Newry and Mourne</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>184</td>
<td>Creggan</td>
<td>Newry and Mourne</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>189</td>
<td>Dungiven</td>
<td>Limavady</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>191</td>
<td>Keady</td>
<td>Armagh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>197</td>
<td>Clare</td>
<td>Strabane</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>198</td>
<td>Armoy &amp; Moss-side and Moyarget</td>
<td>Moyle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>200</td>
<td>Fintona</td>
<td>Omagh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>202</td>
<td>Irvinestown</td>
<td>Fermanagh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>215</td>
<td>Ballylough &amp; Bushmills</td>
<td>Moyle</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.18 The NIMDM also recognises that when assessing deprivation in rural areas, it may be more appropriate to focus on the Output Area (OA) results. The
OA measures show 15 rural areas in the 10% most deprived OAs in Northern Ireland. The most deprived rural OA is in the Crossmaglen area in Newry and Mourne Local Government District and is ranked 109th most deprived out of 5,022 OAs. Small pockets of deprivation are identified in each Local Government District at OA level, with all Local Government Districts having at least one OA within the 20% most deprived OAs in Northern Ireland.

Consultation

4.19 A consultation process in respect of the proposals in the draft strategy and the potential rural impacts was undertaken from 24th September – 14th December 2012 (a period of 12 weeks). This process included –

- a questionnaire available in mobile libraries;
- a questionnaire available on the Libraries NI website
- opportunities to comment via the Libraries NI website;
- circulation of a questionnaire to following range of rural stakeholders:
  - Rural Development Council
  - NI Rural Community Network
  - Ulster Farmers Union
  - Young Farmers
  - Oakleaf Rural Community Network
  - North Antrim Community Network
  - Rural North West Community Support
  - TADA Rural Network
  - COSTA
  - Rural North West Community Support
  - Cookstown and Western Shores Area Network
  - Omagh Forum for Rural Associations
  - South Antrim Rural Network
  - East Down Rural Community Network
  - NI Rural Development Programme Local Action Groups:
    - ARC North West
    - South West Action For Rural Development (SWARD)
    - North East Region
Grow South Antrim
Lagan Rural Partnership
Southern Organisation For Action In Rural Areas (SOAR)
Down Rural Area Partnership

4.20 The draft Rural Impact Assessment report was made available on the Libraries NI website and comments invited from any individual or organisation with an interest in the proposals.

4.21 The consultation questionnaire included questions that were of particular relevance to assessing the rural impact of the proposed mobile library service changes. These are assessed below and are also referenced in Section Five.

4.22 Question 36 asked, ‘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?’

This question has high validity in terms of rural proofing given that it specific to rural dwellers only. Around half (52.8%) of respondents felt they would be affected by the proposed service changes. However most of the comments made by those who felt that the proposed changes would affect them ‘a lot’ or ‘quite a lot’ were not specific to any particular proposal but reflected general concerns about a mobile library service not being available to them at all. In many ways these responses reinforce the value attached to the mobile service in rural areas by people living there, as shown in the customer survey undertaken in June/July 2011.

4.23 Question 37 asked, ‘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?’

The final comments reflect positivity from rural respondents towards the mobile library service, with no negative points raised as final commentary on proposed service changes. A sample of such comments is presented below:
‘Belleek is a very rural setting - the library bus is potentially the only service available to elderly/children of its type. The loss of the bus would have a negative impact on the rural setting. At present all my class avail of the mobile bus service. Some of these children would never access a library otherwise’.

‘I find the mobile library service excellent and the librarians very helpful and friendly. I would like the service to be more frequent but realise this is not always possible. Please keep up the good work as the mobile library is a god-send to home-bound rural dwellers’.

‘I think the mobile library serves the rural community well and I hope it will continue. Also being able to look up books that may not be currently on shelves, my local mobile library (Altnamackin N/Hamilton) has done this for me and it is a great benefit, as I am not able to get to a town library very often’

‘I would be grateful if this mobile library to keep going, as I think it would disappoint a lot of people in the area. Some of the people that go to it, can’t drive and it would be a huge loss to them if this library service stopped. As a rural area our closest library is Omagh. If cuts are to be made, the library buses closest to these towns should be cut not the rural communities!!

‘Myself and both my children access the mobile library service in the rural village of Pomeroy. Without this service my children and I would not have access to a wide range of books as we are unable to access a main library which is situated at least 10 miles from our home. This service is highly beneficial and we love going to it. The staff are very friendly and helpful and I hope you continue to attend our area’.

4.24 It is reasonable to infer from these final responses that there is limited overall perceived negative rural impact of the proposed changes.

4.25 Separate feedback was received from the Ulster Farmers Union which represents 11,500 members and the South Antrim Rural Network which has
30 rural member groups. Both organisations endorsed the proposed service changes related to the criteria for mobile stops in rural areas.

4.26 The Ulster Farmers Union though, strongly disagreed with the proposal to remove internet access for the future and South Antrim Rural Network also expressed the view that mobiles should provide Internet access.

5. **Assessment of the Impact of Specific Proposals on Rural Areas**

5.1 This section of the report considers the service proposals which may have an impact on people living in rural areas.

**Service Proposal 1: Target Groups**

5.2 According to the survey of customers, the mobile library service is used mainly by children and young people and older people. The survey also identified that 69% of these customers lived in rural areas.

5.3 It is reasonable to conclude that the service proposal to prioritise space on public mobiles for these target groups will not have any significant adverse impact on people living in rural areas and in fact should provide added benefit for those in rural areas most in need of the service.

**Service Proposal 2: Services to be Provided**

5.4 The second proposal centres on the principle that book lending services should be the main service provided by public mobile libraries rather than Internet access which should not in future be provided.

5.5 Libraries NI’s draft strategy took the view that this proposal would not have a significantly adverse impact on rural communities. While recognising that average broadband speeds delivered to premises in rural locations are typically slower than in urban areas, broadband penetration in urban and rural areas is reported to be the same. Ofcom’s most recent research states as follows:

“While broadband penetration [in Northern Ireland] is behind the UK average (76%), it is in line with Scotland and Wales (both 68%). Take-up in Northern
Ireland does not vary between urban or rural areas, with penetration at 69% in both.  

5.6 It is also recognised that Libraries NI has conducted research which shows that Internet access is not well used, that mobile libraries are far from being the best way to deliver Internet access and that these issues are pertinent for the 63% of rural users surveyed.

5.7 Question 5 of the consultation questionnaire asked ‘To what extent do you agree or disagree that Libraries NI should stop providing Internet access as a service on public mobile libraries’.

82% of respondents either endorsed (i.e. Strongly agreed or agreed) or were ambivalent (i.e. neither agreed nor disagreed) to the proposal to stop providing internet access. Whilst these respondents were from the total population and not disseminated to identify rural respondents, of those who stated they ‘disagreed’ or ‘strongly disagreed’, only 8 from 123 (or 7%) of recorded comments made specific reference to the proposals having an adverse effect on rural communities.

It is noted however that the Ulster Farmers Union (with a representation of 11,000 members) strongly disagreed with the proposal to stop providing internet access. South Antrim Rural Network also expressed concerns about this matter.

Service Proposal 3: Criteria for Service Delivery

5.8 Proposal 3 is represented by the criteria for a mobile stop being 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.

5.9 The consultation questionnaire’s Question 9 asked 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?:

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9 Communications Market Report: Northern Ireland, Ofcom, July 2012, Page 43
• 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

75% of respondents either endorsed or were ambivalent to the placing of the criteria for deciding public mobile library stops in rural areas. This strongly suggests that Service Proposal 3 will not have a negative rural impact.

5.10 It is also recognised that the thrust of the strategy is towards ensuring a value for money service in as equitable a way as possible. The proposal does not relate to reducing the number of stops in rural areas although, at this stage, the number of stops which will be affected in rural areas by the adoption of such criteria is unknown and further analysis of the rural customers affected is not available. In this respect, for example, a mapping of all rural library provision (static and mobile) may be considered.

5.11 Libraries NI is committed to working with existing customers in rural areas 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 6 below.

Service Proposal 4: Services to Schools and Playgroups

5.12 This proposal relates to prioritising services to schools and playgroups, including those in rural areas, on the basis of principles such as practicality, level of need and level of use, e.g. distance from a branch library. The practical reality is that capacity is limited and the service cannot be extended to all the schools and playgroups in rural areas that might be interested.

5.13 The proposal should not have an adverse impact on rural communities providing decisions made with regard to visiting schools and playgroups in rural areas are based on principles such as suitability of available days and times, the effect on fixed libraries, the potential level of use and the level of need in rural areas.
Service Proposal 5: Increasing Usage

5.14 Libraries NI seeks through the last service proposal to maximise the contribution of mobile libraries to overall service provision in both rural and urban areas and to deliver value for money services.

5.15 This proposal is not considered to present any potential for an adverse effect on existing or future customers in rural areas.

Summary of Rural Impacts

5.16 The findings of this Rural Impact Assessment are that the service proposals have the potential to produce some 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 in section 6 below) will address these potential problems.

5.17 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.

5.18 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.

5.19 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

6. Consideration of Mitigating Measures

6.1 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.

6.2 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.

6.3 However, it is acknowledged that there may be a small number of people in rural areas whose local mobile stop will disappear. In such cases Libraries NI will talk to customers about how they can continue to avail of library services.

6.4 During 2013/14 Libraries NI will be implementing a much enhanced computer system (e2). In light of the concerns expressed during the consultation about Internet access not being available on mobile libraries, Libraries NI will seek to provide Internet access on mobile libraries, where
possible and where there is a demand but in a way that does not reduce the provision of books.

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

7. **Further Action**

7.1 This Rural Impact report has taken account of all comments received from consultees. The report, together with a full report of the consultation process, will now assist the Libraries NI Board 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.

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.

7.3 Libraries NI is in the process of updating its monitoring systems. 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 rural communities.

7.4 The results of ongoing monitoring will be reviewed on an annual basis and will be published on the Libraries NI website.

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 rural community.