

# Impact Assessment on equality characteristics, the Welsh Language, and socio-economic disadvantage

See the *How to Do an Equality Impact Assessment leaflet* for help completing this form. You are also welcome to contact Delyth Williams, Policy and Equality Officer on ext 32708, or [DelythGadlysWilliams@gwynedd.llyw.cymru](mailto:DelythGadlysWilliams@gwynedd.llyw.cymru), for further assistance.

The Council is required (under the Equality Act 2010) to consider the effect that a change in any policy or procedure (or the creation of a new policy or procedure) will have on people with protected equality characteristics. The Council also has additional general duties to ensure fairness and foster good relationships. A timely assessment must therefore be made before making a decision on any relevant change (ie which has an impact on people with a protected characteristic).

The Council is also required, under the requirements of the Welsh Language Standards (Section 44 Measure of the Welsh Language (Wales) 2011) to consider the effect of a change in any policy or procedure (or the creation of a new policy or procedure), is to have on any opportunities for people to use the Welsh language and to ensure that the Welsh language is not treated less favorably than the English language. This document therefore ensures that these decisions protect and promote the use of the Welsh language.

From April 1st 2021 onwards the Council has a duty to give due attention to tackling socio-economic disadvantage in strategic decisions.

## 1) Details

### 1.1 What is the name of the policy / service in question?

Living Libraries - Gwynedd Libraries Service Plan 2023-28

### 1.2 What is the purpose of the policy/service that is being created or changed? What changes are being considered?

The purpose of the plan is to set out our vision and priority areas and development for the next five years for the Libraries Service.  
Our purpose - To help me find the books I want to read through the library, my home or online, give me access to computers and IT equipment, help me use IT, provide activities to help me learn or socialise, and to find up-to-date information about things that are important to me.'

### **1.3 Who is responsible for this assessment?**

Nia Gruffydd, Libraries Manager

### **1.4 When did you start the assessment? What version is this?**

22 December 2022 version 1  
January 2023 version 2  
February 2023 – version 3

## **2) Action**

### **2.1 Who are the stakeholders or partners you will have to work with to make this assessment?**

The plan has been drawn up jointly with the Library Team and is based on continuous engagement with staff and users through:

1. Staff interviews held as part of the Ffordd Gwynedd exercise during the summer and autumn of 2022.
2. Ongoing User Satisfaction Surveys with library users, and online surveys with library users and non-library users.
3. Stakeholders and Partners within the Council and externally
4. Consultations or specific engagement with service users at different times

### **2.2 What steps have you taken to engage with people with protected characteristics, regarding the Welsh language or with communities (either because of location or because of need) who live with socio-economic disadvantage?**

As part of service changes we have been making since 2020 and before drawing up this Plan, we have been engaging specifically with users of the mobile library service and the home library service.

We also engaged with users about the proposal to remove fines on overdue books - but the pandemic restrictions prevented this from being done as effectively and fully as possible.

We have also been engaging with the public in specific locations when reviewing our service in terms of individual library opening hours.

We regularly carry out satisfaction surveys with our users and non-users and keep a log of comments in order to monitor improvement actions taken in response to those comments.

We collect the opinions of users and attendees at library activities in terms of the needs of specific groups, for example, children and families, Welsh learners, and work closely with partners such as Dysgu Cymraeg i Oedolion and Cymraeg i Blant. We work with stakeholders in terms of producing resources for those who are visually impaired, namely the North Wales Society for the Blind. Through our collaboration with Dolan, extensive consultation was carried out with the communities involved at Dyffryn Ogwen, Dyffryn Nantlle and Blaenau Ffestiniog regarding the Petha project in terms of need and affordability.

### **2.3 What was the result of the engagement?**

The result of the engagement was to decide on a Petha loan model in the three Petha hubs at Dyffryn Ogwen, Penygroes and Blaenau Ffestiniog Libraries, where toys are borrowed free of charge, and other items for a small fee. The engagement also led to decisions about the type of items users wanted to see available.

The result of the opening times review was to change the opening hours of some Libraries in order to be more accessible in response to the wishes of our users.

The result of the Mobile Library Service engagement which was done mainly with older individuals was to move to a new model of smaller vehicles providing a delivery service to the home on request and on demand.

All Library Service staff were consulted through face-to-face interviews on the Ffordd Gwynedd engagement model. This engagement showed what staff felt about the Library service, and the need to be more proactive in providing activities to attract audiences.

Based on the engagement below with partners, we have seen the results below:

Providing a space to hold Welsh learning courses in the Libraries which will be supported by reading clubs

Holding two LGBT specific collections in our Libraries in accordance with the wishes of the members of the LGBT+ GISDA group

Provision of audio books and e-audiobook resources in collaboration with the North Wales Society for the Blind

Development of VR hubs in two Libraries in discussion with possible input by the Youth Service

### **2.4 What other evidence do you act on?**

We consider the consultations stated above and take note of the comments that reach us regularly through our user satisfaction survey exercises with library users and non-library users as well as our collaboration with partners and stakeholders. Information from partners

regarding priority areas, comments from users and usage patterns is the basis of our Library Plan.

## 2.5 Are there any gaps in the evidence that needs to be collected?

Yes. We have identified a gap in our understanding and treatment of race and ethnicity in our collections. We will participate in the Anti-Racist Library Collections: training plan for public libraries in Wales, during 2023.

## 3) Identify the Impact

3.1 The Council must pay due attention to the effect any changes will have on people with the equality characteristics below. What is the effect that the new policy/service or the proposed changes will have on people with these characteristics? It is also necessary to consider the impact on socio-economic disadvantage and on the Welsh language.

Characteristics	What kind of effect? *	In what way? What is the evidence?
<b>Race (including nationality)</b>	Positive	<p>A collection of books in the Ukrainian language is available in print format and digitally.</p> <p>We can make inter-loan requests for books in different languages</p> <p>We have identified a gap in our understanding and treatment of race and ethnicity in our collections. We will participate in the Anti-Racist Library Collections : training plan for public Libraries in Wales, during 2023.</p>
<b>Disability</b>	Positive	<p>We try to ensure that our buildings are accessible in terms of automatic doors and a lift where there is more than one floor/stairs.</p> <p>We offer the loan of specific multi-sensory resources for children and adults with a learning disability and we have resources for people living with dementia, and book collections to support carers.</p> <p>Our Reading Well collections include Dementia, Adult Mental Health, Young People's Mental Health and Children's Mental Health collections.</p>

		<p>We have a large number of books that can be considered dyslexia friendly, and it would be very difficult for people to access them outside of them being available in the library.</p> <p>Through our collaboration plans with the North Wales Society for the Blind and Y Lolfa, we are able to produce audio book resources and e-audiobooks, and large print books, through the medium of the Welsh language.</p> <p>Our Delivery service can supply a book service on request monthly or on demand to the home. It is intended to extend the delivery service to Petha items (The Petha - Library of Things) in the future.</p> <p>We provide access to e-books and e-audio books where assistive technology can improve accessibility.</p> <p>We are also able to offer 1:1 Digital Support at home for those who find it difficult to visit their library.</p>
<b>Sex</b>	Positive	<p>Public toilets in all libraries offer free menstrual products. We apply for menstrual poverty support grants and offer access to reusable menstrual products on an occasional basis.</p> <p>Our activities for children and families also have a positive effect on women as data shows that they are the most likely to look after children. This is particularly true in the case of single parents - and data shows that approximately 90% of heads of single parent families are women.</p> <p>The Petha project which lends toys for free also helps parents.</p>
<b>Age</b>	Positive	<p>Our Delivery service can supply a book service on request monthly or on demand to the home. It is intended to extend the delivery service to Petha items (The Petha - Library of Things) in the future.</p> <p>The delivery service means that people who work during Libraries' opening hours can also take advantage of the Service.</p> <p>We provide access to e-books and e-audio books where assistive technology can improve accessibility.</p> <p>Our Reading Well collections include Dementia, Adult Mental Health, Young People's Mental Health and Children's Mental Health collections.</p>

		<p>We provide large print books in Welsh and English</p> <p>We have a 1:1 digital support service. We also collaborate with services that help young people looking for a job and help with digital skills and resources can help them and students.</p> <p>We offer tailored sessions for children of different ages and their families, eg Ji Babi Bach sessions for babies Story Time Sessions Summer Holiday Activities</p>
<b>Sexual orientation</b>	Positive	<p>We provide Reading Well Mental Health - Young People collections which include books on sexuality, gender and mental health.</p> <p>We hold designated LGBT collections in the two largest Libraries.</p>
<b>Religion or belief (or lack of belief)</b>	None	We have not identified any impact
<b>Gender reassignment</b>	Positive	<p>We provide Reading Well Mental Health - Young People collections which include books on sexuality, gender and mental health.</p> <p>We hold designated LGBT collections in the two largest Libraries.</p>
<b>Pregnancy and maternity</b>	Positive	<p>Our Libraries are locations that welcome Breastfeeding</p> <p>Our Delivery Service and e-books offer help people to access books and other items (including those for pregnancy and maternity) if they are unable to come to the library due to their pregnancy or when they have young children</p>
<b>Marriage and civil partnership</b>	None	We have not identified any impact
<b>The Welsh language</b>	Positive	<p>By providing access to Welsh books and resources, as well as activities in Welsh, we will contribute to the Welsh Government's ambition to increase the number of people who learn and speak Welsh and who see a benefit in learning and speaking Welsh in order improving skills and job opportunities, and strengthening a sense of national identity.</p> <p>Through our collaboration with the North Wales Society for the Blind and Y Lolfa, we are able to produce audio books and e-audiobooks, and large print books, through the medium of the Welsh language.</p>

		<p>All our services are offered by Library staff through the medium of Welsh , including sessions such as Digital Support.</p> <p>Our activities for children and families are exclusively Welsh or predominantly Welsh/bilingual depending on the area in question.</p> <p>The only exceptions to that are a very small number of activities by external leaders/providers where it is not possible to provide fluent Welsh speakers, and the sessions are offered bilingually, or where the sessions take place through the English language eg a reading group reading English literature.</p> <p>We collaborate with Cymraeg i Blant to hold sessions for children and families in the Libraries.</p> <p>We collaborate with the Canolfan Dysgu Cymraeg to hold Welsh learning sessions in our Libraries which lead to learner reading groups.</p>
<p><b>Socio-Economic Disadvantage</b></p>	<p>Positive</p>	<p>We have fully removed fines on overdue books  We do not charge for books accidentally damaged by babies and young children  It is intended to start a Petha loan scheme where items can be borrowed rather than bought  Free menstrual products are provided through the Libraries  We do not charge for printing documents related to accessing benefits  We are part of the Good Things Foundation's National DataBank scheme and work with partners to refer people to SIM cards for free .  Access to public computers and digital support is available for people who don't have access and helps when looking for a job, taking a course, or socialising. We can also offer 1:1 Digital Support in the home.</p> <p>Our users have said that the Library Service supports their mental health and well-being in terms of being able to have the opportunity and space to socialise.</p> <p><i>" Not owning a computer the library is vital to me. I also read a great deal. Being able to use any library in Gwynedd is wonderful."</i></p>

		<p>"I have used both libraries today in Pwllheli and Caernarfon. In Caernarfon for a computer course and books, Pwllheli to use the computer and more books. This service is vital for my well-being and life progress. Myself, like many would be very disadvantaged without this service and would lose a valuable asset of book reading should it be closed."</p> <p>"Libraries - this is very important when housebound as it helps me through bad days and long nights."</p> <p>"Thank you for always providing us such a fun sanctuary at the library. You've helped me more than you know on numerous occasions"</p> <p>Where possible, we co-locate with other services, so that libraries remain close to people, and services are available to deliver to the home for people who cannot visit because they are living too far / without suitable transport.</p>
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\* To be deleted as needed

**3.2 It is the Council's duty under the Equality Act 2010 to contribute positively to a fairer society by promoting equality and good relationships in its activities in the areas of age, gender, sexual orientation, religion, race, transgender, disability and pregnancy and maternity. The Council must pay due attention to the way any change affects these duties.**

<b>General Duties of the Equality Act</b>	<b>Is it having an effect?*</b>	<b>In what way? What is the evidence?</b>
<b>Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimization</b>	Yes	<p>We remove discrimination by facilitating access to Library services through a number of different ways for the people of Gwynedd, and we try to remove any possible obstacles for people to use the service.</p> <p>For example:            We have completely removed fines on overdue books            We do not charge for books accidentally damaged by babies and young children            It is intended to start a Petha project where items can be borrowed rather than bought            Free menstrual products are provided through the Libraries            We do not charge for printing documents related to accessing benefits</p>



		<p>We are part of the Good Things Foundation's National DataBank scheme and work with partners to refer people to SIM cards for free .</p> <p>Access to public computers and digital support is available for people who don't have access and helps when looking for a job, taking a course, or socialising. We can also offer 1:1 Digital Support in the home.</p> <p>We do not require proof of address from people without a fixed address.</p>
<b>Promote equal opportunities</b>	Yes	<p>Every individual in Gwynedd can apply to be a Library member for free and have items delivered to their home, and we do not discriminate against people who do not have a fixed address.</p> <p>There are several ways to contact the Library Service, online, email, phone or face to face.</p> <p>We recognize that people's needs and circumstances will vary, and we consider the socio-economic situation of Gwynedd residents when planning our service (see point 3.5 below).</p> <p>We provide a service through the libraries, or digitally and can deliver books on request to the home without any restriction.</p>
<b>Cultivate good relationships</b>	Yes	<p>Books and reading can contribute positively towards well-being and mental well-being. Reading can also alleviate feelings of loneliness and isolation.</p> <p>Gwynedd Libraries try to reach out to all individuals who need books and reading, in order to provide an easy, convenient and worry-free way of receiving a Library service.</p> <p>We collaborate with a wide range of partners and organisations in order to improve our service to the people of Gwynedd and to make the best and most efficient use of resources.</p> <p>We regularly poll users and keep a response log to record and review responses.</p>

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\* To be deleted as needed

**3.3 How does your proposal ensure that you work in accordance with the requirements of the Welsh Language Standards (Measure of the Welsh Language (Wales) 2011), to ensure that the Welsh language is not treated less favourably than English, and that advantage is taken of every opportunity to promote the Welsh language (beyond providing services bilingually) and increase opportunities to use and learn the language in the community?**

The Library Plan will put the Welsh language at the heart of everything we do. This means:

1. Ensuring that resources and digital resources are sufficiently available in Welsh for adults and children and that fair expenditure is set aside for Welsh language books
2. Ensure that the interfaces of all systems are available in Welsh
3. Ensuring all our activities for children and adults are provided primarily through the Welsh language
4. Ensure that emphasis is given to activities for adults that encourage speaking Welsh
5. Ensure that training for staff is provided through Welsh or bilingually where possible.

We as a service contribute to several aims in the Council's language strategy (Welsh Language Promotion Plan 2018-23) by offering various opportunities for people to use the Welsh language and to learn the Welsh language.

We follow the Council's Language Policy and ensure that all permanent members of staff reach the appropriate language designation for the role, namely being able to read Welsh at an Advanced level and speak and write Welsh at Intermediate level.

**3.4 What other measures or changes could you include to strengthen or change the policy / practice in order to have a positive impact on people's opportunities to use the Welsh language, and to reduce or prevent any adverse effects that the policy/practice could have on the Welsh language?**

Provide more Welsh language resources digitally, but at the moment they are not commercially available and special arrangements must be put in place to produce them, or ensure that they are available.

**3.5 How does the proposal show that you have paid due attention to the need to tackle inequality due to socio-economic disadvantage? (Note that this is about closing inequality gaps rather than just improving outcomes for all).**

We have tried to be responsive to the socio-economic situation of our users in a number of ways. Although use and access to Libraries is free, we have put some additional measures in place to ensure that Libraries offer a service that can be used by people regardless of their socio-economic circumstances.

Some examples are:

1. Abolition of fines - meaning that people who cannot afford to pay fines are not excluded from the Service
2. Offer free menstrual products and free reusable menstrual products, so that people can try products that are expensive to buy, to see what suits them best.
3. Offering a free Book Delivery service - of great help to those who do not have transport or who have difficulty traveling for any reason. It means that people without transport, people who live further from the library and people who cannot leave their home easily because of a disability can benefit from the Service.
4. Not charging for printing certain benefit claim documents and using discretion when charging people for printing benefit claim documents in general
5. Promote our Libraries as f Warm Welcome spaces
6. Not charging for items accidentally damaged by babies and small children
7. Facilitating a Chromebook loan scheme for learners registered on Grŵp Llandrillo Menai and Adult Education Wales courses
8. Facilitate a data/SIM card scheme through the National Databank
9. Supporting people who are digitally excluded by offering access to public computers, free wi-fi, and digital support in the library or at home.

**3.6 What other measures or changes could you include to strengthen or change the policy / practice to show that you have given due regard to the need to reduce unequal outcomes as a result of socio-economic disadvantage, in accordance with the Socio-Economic Act?**

Budgetary constraints mean that we cannot extend opening hours in the evenings and at weekends, but we offer a home delivery service as a way of mitigating this.

Low staffing levels mean we cannot do as much outreach as we would like. However, we collaborate with a number of agencies and organisations in order to make the best use of resources.

Space limitations mean that we cannot provide a private space for people to connect online with organisations eg GP surgeries. However, we are exploring possibilities with others such as the Law Centre.

Our staff use the CAB website to assist people with their inquiries and refer them on for further advice.  
 We are exploring the possibility of extending the Petha hubs in collaboration with the Regeneration /Circular Economy Programme.

**4) Analyse the results**

**4.1 Is the policy therefore likely to have a significant, positive impact on any of the above? What is the reason for this?**

The aim of the 2023-28 Library Plan is to be responsive to the different and varied needs of our users.

**4.2 Is the policy therefore likely to have a significant, negative impact on any of the above? What is the reason for this?**

We do not believe that the Library Plan will have a negative impact.

**4.3 What should be done?**

Choose one of the following:

Continue with the policy / service as it is sound	✓
Modify the policy to remove any barriers	
Suspend and remove the policy as the harmful effects are too great	
Continue with the policy because any adverse effect can be justified	
No further steps at this time, it is premature to decide, or there is not enough evidence	

**4.4 If the plan continues, what steps will you take to reduce or mitigate any negative effects?**

The most obvious and possible risk to the Library Plan is the demand for savings and cuts in the coming years.

We have identified areas of savings/cuts in order of priority which will have the least possible impact on all the people of Gwynedd.

If there are cuts to the book fund or service, then the most likely effect is that there will be more delay in people receiving a specific service, eg a request for a book.

The use of self-service technology will allow staff to pay more attention to service aspects of value, eg answering enquiries and digital support.

We are of the opinion that maintaining buildings should not necessarily be at the expense of providing a quality library service, and therefore our intention is to protect larger libraries and the delivery service, looking at every opportunity to co-locate, share space and develop sustainable new services.

**4.5 If you do not take further action to eliminate or reduce negative effects, explain why here.**

None applicable.

## **5) Monitoring**

**5.1 What steps will you take to monitor the impact and effectiveness of the policy or service (action plan)?**

The Library Service reports regularly to the Council through the Performance Scrutiny process and uses the metrics below:

1. User satisfaction percentage
2. Usage – number of physical loans, number of digital loans, number of requests

Furthermore, a log of responses is kept for ongoing review.

The Plan is expected to be a dynamic document that will be reviewed annually in order to respond to new priorities, obstacles or threats. We will revisit the impact assessment at the same time.

We also try to embed the culture of Ffordd Gwynedd throughout our service.