

## EQUALITIES IMPACT ASSESSMENT

### **Library Service Strategy - More than Books**

#### **SECTION ONE - THE MAIN AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF STRATEGY**

##### **1. Strategy for the Public Library Service in Gwynedd**

The provision of a comprehensive and efficient public library service is a statutory duty for local authorities requirement under the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964.

##### **2. The overall aim of the Strategy**

To set out the development of the Library Service to meet the challenges of the digital age and provide a modern service that meets the statutory requirements as defined in the Welsh Public Library Standards (WPLS) as defined by the Welsh Government as part of their duty to oversee public library services.

##### **3. The main objectives of the Strategy**

- To define the vision for a modern, sustainable library service ensuring equitable delivery
- To develop a library strategy to assist the library service in meeting its statutory requirements and the Welsh Public Library Standards (WPLS), to include:
  - Access to library service points and their opening hours
  - Reviewing library staffing levels and range of activities offered
  - A wide range of appropriate physical and virtual resources for lending and reference
  - Staff being to assist and support users and to provide specialist and user focused services
  - Provision of multi-purpose centres for Community to use
  - Building partnerships with other service areas e.g. linking to Health and Well Being agenda and Digital Inclusion agenda.
- Including also
  - Mobile Library provision (reviewed in 2011/12)
  - Home Library Provision (reviewed in 2011/12)
  - Review of Library Provision for Children in rural and deprived areas (revised agreement with Education Department, 2013 and to be renewed from April 2017 onwards / joint agreement with Children, Young Peoples and Families Information Service 2012 - to be reviewed following the financial cuts to the Gwynedd Ni budget in 2016, and to address the requirements of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014, and the Futures Generation Act, 2015.)

## Background to Strategy

From 2002 Gwynedd has failed to achieve the level of staffing for public libraries as outlined in the Welsh Public Library Standards (WPLS). The Welsh Government has included statements on its concerns regarding the low level of staffing in its written annual assessments to the authority and that Gwynedd was the lowest, or amongst the lowest, in Wales. This is primarily attributable to continuing resource limitations and that corporate priorities did not include planning for the development of libraries.

The Welsh Government may use its powers under the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964 to take over management of an authority's public library service if it consistently fails to provide a 'comprehensive and efficient' service as defined by the Act together with the guidance provided by the library standards.

This Library Strategy, whilst seeking to improve efficiency, recognizes that further investment in staff is unlikely and that it is important to ensure an adequate investment in resources and maintaining the standard of library buildings and seeking opportunities to modernise library provision (e.g. through co-location with other services or collaborative partnership working).

It is the intention that this Library Strategy will enable the service to face the challenges of the shift to digital provision with virtual access to resources and offer greater flexibility of provision via mobile library and possible extended opening hours. It will also involve promoting awareness of existing facilities and facilitate their use by the community, partnership working and collaboration with other council services.

Proposals from senior Council Management to retain only 3 or 6 libraries, with the intention of transferring the remainder to community control or closure, were rejected by the Council Board. Considering the impact of any reduction in the number of service points in particular on different groups of people in Gwynedd, and in developing this Equality Impact Assessment, it has been confirmed that such drastic proposals would not meet the needs of users or communities and would not meet the needs of WPLS. Initial consultation and the evidence provided by the Library Review, that has led to the proposals in the Strategy, concentrating on 'core offers'. The focus is on a digital offer but includes maintaining capacity of the Mobile and Home Library Service along with a Mobile Service for Children, Young People and Families. A community library model is included as an option to maintain a presence in those areas where the authority has historically provided a physical library for some years.

Following the 'Gwynedd Challenge' consultation process, the Council decided to support a cut of 25% to the book purchasing budget from April 2016 onwards. Following this decision, it became totally evident that it was not possible to maintain the current network of libraries or offer a 'community library' provision in every community and therefore, the Strategy had to be amended and adapted as a result.

#### **4. The Strategy is intended to benefit:-**

- All that live, work, study and visit Gwynedd.
- Library and Information service staff.
- The Library Authority - Gwynedd Council and its Elected members.
- Other Gwynedd Council departments e.g. Education; Adults, Health and Well-being and other sections of the Economic and Community Department Service (Arts, Archives, Museums, Leisure, and Youth).
- Partnerships. (e.g. North Wales Libraries Partnership , Adult and Community Learning partnership, Health and Well Being Partnership )

#### **5. The main consultative groups / communities of interest with regard to the Strategy are:**

Library users, communities with library buildings and the wider community, Library Staff, Elected Members, protected characteristic representative groups (See Section 2), Town and Community Councils. Agencies, services and institutions with which the library service works in partnerships (including services within Gwynedd Council, neighbouring Local Authorities further, and higher education establishments, Local Health Board and CyMAL -Welsh Government Division for Museums, Archives and Libraries ).

#### **6. The main aim of the Assessment**

The aim of this equality assessment is to try and ensure that the Library Strategy meets and the responsibilities of the authority (Gwynedd) to carry out its general duties under the Equality Act 2010 ' to : -

- Eliminate illegal discrimination, harassment and victimization
- Promote equality of opportunity between people who share the same characteristics and those who do not
- Foster good relations between people who share the same characteristics and those who do not

## **SECTION 2 - Equalities and service user information.**

### **The relevance of the information to the Strategy and Protected Groups**

#### **Race**

Library staff attempt to ensure that the resources offered for users in libraries includes a diverse range of reading material. Free Internet access allows users to access a wide range of information in other languages. The Library Service takes part in joint funded projects for all North Wales libraries which provides diverse cultural information. When required library staff are aware of the corporately arranged translation and interpretation service as and when requested by users. The majority of Gwynedd's ethnic minority population resides within the more urban areas of the county and therefore are less likely to be impacted by the changes. The Library Service is not aware of any other issues affecting people from different races.

#### **Disability**

4.3% of the population of Gwynedd has a limiting long term illness, which could be linked to a disability. However in the Communities First areas this rises to 7.9% in Talysarn (Nantlle Vale), 9.9 % in Peblig (Caernarfon) and 9.5% in Marchog (Bangor) - Census 2011.

There are currently access issues to some of the buildings identified in the council's asset management strategy. These access issues include a lack of automatic/assisted power doors in some library buildings, narrow doorways, not all buildings have public toilets or accessible toilets and there is not always enough turning space to manoeuvre of wheelchairs/mobility scooters. Also, there are no tables and counters of various heights with a notch which could enable wheelchair users to get hold of books easier and speak with staff. These issues will need to be considered when developing any new library provision including authority led Community Libraries.

Some communities have limited poor public transport provision with changes to bus routes or frequency of services reduced in recent times. Some towns that have full-time libraries do not receive the same public transport services as they used to and carrying heavy books on buses or trains is very troublesome for disabled people. Travelling further to the nearest library can limit the frequency of visits by disabled users and the number of items they can borrow.

There may be additional transport costs associated with having to access services further away.

Although there is wheelchair access available on all public library mobiles, users with larger electric powered chairs would find it difficult getting into the mobile library as floor space is restricted.

The Home Library Service is offered on request of those who cannot visit a library with a monthly visit of a selection of books.

Gwynedd libraries provide computerised assistive technology such as large screen monitors and adjustable height desks, trackball mice of benefit to people suffering from physical difficulties such as arthritis. There are also Big-key Keyboards which are larger than the average keyboard and much easier to see. All libraries use the Windows 7 operating system which included access facilities and in three libraries there is ZoomText software, which will enlarge the image on a computer screen to make things clearer, and this also has the ability to read out the on-screen text. There is no loop system for the hard of hearing available.

Possible Impacts of a reduction in the number of service points:

- Loss of opportunity to leave the home, to have contact with others and to socialise via the Library which could lead to isolation and associated illnesses.
- Loss of opportunity to have access to computers and the internet which may restrict on access to information, services and participation in activities.
- Withdrawal of services could impact on social inclusion and access to specific support services e.g. Books on Prescription resources for people with mild to moderate emotional or psychological issues.
- Loss of the opportunity to signpost information on medical issues e.g. Cancer and Long- term illnesses.
- Loss of opportunity to offer promotional material, including sign posting to appropriate educational opportunities and providers of advice e.g. Further Education, CAB etc.
- Loss of access to assisted computerised technology and the provision of specialist equipment.
- Loss of lending resources due to be returned and increase in charges for late return due to greater distance to a library and fewer opportunities to return resources.

### **Gender /Sex**

More female than male people use the library service – this is finding of the regular surveys of library users conducted by the library service in accordance with WPLS. According to the most recent PLUS (Public Library Users Survey, October 2013) survey audited by CIPFA of Gwynedd library 64% were female users and 36% male

users. There is a clear need to promote use of the Service among men - and fathers in particular in order to offer a behavioural pattern for their children.

According to the Office for National Statistics, people who are 65 years old or over and who live alone in the UK are more likely to be women (69%) and this rate increases to 76% when considering people who are 85 years old or over. It is likely that this is due to the fact that women tend to live longer than men. Gwynedd is among the local authorities that have the highest rate of people who live alone in the UK and therefore, it could be concluded that a high rate of these are women. This is especially true in the coastal areas where there are large populations of people who have retired as well as high rates of divorce.

There will be fewer opportunities for people to leave the house and to socialise with fewer libraries in buildings and therefore, this will particularly affect women especially the more elderly ones.

## **Age**

At 20.7% of the population, Gwynedd Council has one of the largest proportions of post-retirement age residents in Wales. As a result, many of the libraries have an older age profile with those in Barmouth, Porthmadog, Cricieth and Harlech, with between 40% and 50% of their users aged 65 or over and libraries in Pwllheli, Tywyn and Nefyn have between 35% and 37% of users from the same age range.

The number of older people in the authority is projected to increase significantly over the next 10 years as a result of increased life expectancy and the baby boom generation entering retirement. From 2015 it is estimated that there will be an increase in Gwynedd of 9% in the number of people over the age of 80 by 2020 and by 2025 there will have been a 26% increase in this age group.

Currently it is estimated that one in five households are occupied by lone pensioners, but by 2025 this is expected to increase to one in four households.

Possible Impacts of a Reduction in number of service points:

Any reduction in the number of libraries would have a significant impact on the elderly.

- Elderly people could lose some services i.e. internet / senior railcards/bus passes and services provided Gwynedd Council and others
- Not leaving their homes, not having contact with others and not socialising could lead to side-effects such as feeling isolated and lonely which can include depression among older people and stay-at-home parents who care for babies and children.

- Failure to access the internet could affect older people's ability to research and connect with others on the web which keeps their minds busy and prevents them from developing dementia etc.
- It is not easy for older people who read large supplies of books to carry heavy books on public transports and reducing the number of buildings that have a substantial stock of books can result in them having to travel to the nearest library.
- Any reduction in the number of libraries would have a substantial impact on children and young people. They could lose some services e.g. the internet / story time / holiday activities / homework and information about other services provided by Gwynedd Council and others.
- Should there be fewer libraries in buildings, children and young people could lose opportunities to socialise and learn socialising practices and skills such as sharing, giving and receiving, discussing and selecting.
- Fewer opportunities for the older and younger generations to mix in libraries could lead to more social rifts and a lack of understanding between generations.
- Fewer opportunities to form a connection between books and pre-school children and school-age children could have a negative impact on literacy and educational attainment levels.
- Children from underprivileged and low income families could be affected more seriously by the reduction in opportunities to have access to books in buildings especially if they are of school-age.
- With the reduction in the number of libraries in buildings, school-age children could lose 'safe' havens during after-school hours and before parents returned from work.

### **Religion & Belief**

Resources offered for users in libraries include authors from very diverse backgrounds, free Internet access allows users to access a wide range of information.

Library Service is not aware of any specific issues affecting people from different religion or beliefs

### **Sexual Orientation**

Library Service is not aware of any specific issues affecting people differently because of their sexual orientation

### **Gender Reassignment**

Library Service is not aware of any specific issues affecting people because of gender reassignment

### **Welsh Language**

Census figures show that around 65% of the population of Gwynedd aged 3 years old or over are Welsh speakers; considerably above the all-Wales figure of 20.5%. The percentage that can read, write and speak Welsh is slightly lower, with 56% of Gwynedd's population stating so.

In general, the incidence of both Welsh speakers and those born in Wales increases in rural areas (e.g. Llanrug 87.8%). Ability to speak Welsh however is at a peak in the town of Caernarfon (87.4% Welsh speaking), and at its lowest in the coastal communities of Tywyn and Aberdyfi (less than 35.5%) and Bangor (36.4%). By 2011, many communities considered to be the heartlands of the Welsh language had fallen closer to the threshold of 70%, namely the viable level when the language is spoken daily, for example Llanberis, Penisarwaun, Llanaelhaearn and Morfa Nefyn.

The 2011 census also showed a substantial reduction in the number of people over 60 years of age who could speak Welsh which offers evidence of a tendency for older people to migrate into the county. There was an increase of + 13.9% in people over 60 years of age in Gwynedd between 2001 and 2011. The percentage of the population that states that they are able to read Welsh is at its lowest in Bangor (28%), Barmouth (30%), Tywyn (29%) and Harlech (43%). The University's presence in Bangor is a factor that accounts for the lowest percentage there but the impact of inward migration is responsible for the low percentage in the rest.

Gwynedd's libraries play a crucial role in terms of raising awareness of the Welsh language; they enable people to become accustomed with the language and to even learn the language. As the service complies with Gwynedd Council's Welsh Language Plan by using Welsh as the working language, stocking a wide range of Welsh language materials, offering advice for speakers and learners and creating formal and informal opportunities for people of all linguistic abilities to practise and speak the language, it plays an all-important role in terms of promoting the language.

In many communities, full and part time libraries are deemed 'havens of Welsh identity', either fully integrated in the community's natural language such as Penygroes or Bethesda, or as a 'stronghold' in a community where the Welsh language is less prominent, such as Tywyn. Immersion environments such as this one helps families to encourage children to read and speak Welsh; on a more general level, fixed libraries offer social networking opportunities between generations which again helps to develop language skills.



If the number of these locations is reduced, it could have a detrimental impact in terms of introducing newcomers to the language, providing opportunities for learners to speak and read the language or providing resources for Welsh speakers and Welsh speaking families, some of whom are on low incomes.

### **Pregnancy and Maternity**

A reduction in the number of libraries in buildings could lead to fewer opportunities for parents with young children to leave their homes and spend leisure time in locations that are safe, warm, and attractive for young children with a wide range of books and which are free. This could affect the well-being and mental state of the parents and children.

It can be difficult to take buggies / pushchairs inside and around the mobile library.

### **Marriage and Civil Partnership**

The Library Service does not believe people will be affected differently because of this protected characteristic.

### **Other considerations if the Community Library option is chosen:-**

Opportunity to promote services/outreach to restricted groups, volunteering within community library or applying for funding/social enterprise could highlight particular needs. This could improve confidence and self-esteem e.g. for those who are unemployed/excluded. The following areas are more likely to be affected by this proposed change to the library provision: Llanllyfni, Clynnog, Talysarn, namely the communities of the Penygroes catchment area Library which is within 40% of the most deprived areas in Wales in every index: income, housing, employment, access to services, education, health, community safety, the physical environment.

### **Potential impacts of reducing the number of service points:**

Loss of a neutral local community facility to engage with groups that have been excluded i.e. older people

Geographical areas; loss of access to a full library service for people who live in Gwynedd's deprived areas. The following areas are more likely to be affected by the proposed change to the library provision: Deiniolen - namely a community that is within 40% of the most deprived areas.

It is proposed to establish Library Links to offer basic access to the service in affected communities. Journeys of the Mobile Library Service could be reviewed to offer a service where it is needed the most.

### **Potential impact of reducing the total number of opening hours**

Geographical deprivation; reduces library access opportunities for people who live in deprived areas, e.g. Communities First Areas; Peblig and Cadnant (Caernarfon) Marchog (Bangor), namely a community that is within 10% of the most deprived areas in Wales in every index.

## **7. Summary of the main data, research and management information.**

### **DATA / INFORMATION**

#### **7.1 Authority overview**

Gwynedd Council is located in North West Wales. The Council has an area of 253,498 hectares and a population of 119,911 residents (2013 Mid-year estimate). Its economy relies heavily upon tourism and agriculture. Rural areas and their communities are dependent on agricultural and forestry activities, even though these sectors do not provide a high level of direct employment.

The northern area of Gwynedd, Arfon, has over 49% of the Council's population, with Bangor and Caernarfon the two main settlements in terms of population numbers. Rural Gwynedd is an attractive, mainly agricultural area with limited alternative employment and few development pressures. Its population is widely dispersed and is predominantly Welsh speaking. The main settlements in Dwyfor and Meirionnydd in terms of population catchment areas are the market towns of Pwllheli, Dolgellau and the towns of Blaenau Ffestiniog and Porthmadog.

#### **7.2 Current Library Provision**

Public libraries have changed their role, function, facilities and services over a long period from their beginnings in the mid-nineteenth century. The public provision was diverse with the 'County' Libraries ( Caernarfonshire / Merionethshire) , borough libraries (e.g. Caernarfon ,Bangor ) , urban district libraries (Criccieth) 'Free' libraries ( Dolgellau), parish libraries (Llanddeiniolen) existing together with chapel libraries, working men societies' libraries and the commercial 'penny' libraries - up to the mid twentieth century. The 1964 Public Libraries and Museums Act placed a duty on each Local Authority to run a free public library service with special emphasis on books. The Act authorized attempts to rationalize the fragmented provision that had previously existed. Each Authority interpreted its duty differently and maintained libraries in towns and villages, even in some cases in small villages usually where there had been parish library (e.g. Deiniolen). Differing policies covering different parts of what is now within the area of Gwynedd Council have resulted in the inconsistency that can be seen in the location, size and services offered by the current library provision.

Libraries have always placed an emphasis on providing free books for adults and children for learning, information and leisure. The service has adapted over the years

with the development of new formats and new ways of learning, new technologies and community needs including providing IT for public use.

In 2015-16 libraries in Gwynedd received over 525,000 physical visits, loaned out over 570,000 books and provided over 90,000 hours of internet access via their public computers.

The Library Service in Gwynedd is currently delivered through seventeen libraries, three joint community and home library vehicles and Lori Ni (the mobile library and information for children, young people, schools and families). The level of provision of facilities and services within the static libraries is different due to building and financial constraints. The provision through the mobile services is restricted due to the size of the vehicle that can be used in rural Gwynedd and the lack of Wi Fi coverage for Internet access.

### **Main Libraries (Open 20 hours or more per week):**

Bangor, Caernarfon,

Pwllheli, Porthmadog,

Blaenau Ffestiniog, Barmouth, Bala\*, Dolgellau, Tywyn

(\*Bala Library is also a school library and therefore in use for more than 20 hours per week).

### **Part time Libraries (Open less than Twenty Hours per week)**

Bethesda, Deiniolen, Llanberis, Penygroes,

Nefyn, Criccieth, Penrhyndeudraeth, Harlech

Between 2012/14, Gwynedd Library Service undertook a review of the Service through widespread consultation with users and non-users. The results of the review, together with the requirements of the Welsh Public Libraries Standards (WPLS), are the key drivers for the Library Strategy. Retaining the library service in its current form is not sustainable without maintaining or increasing investment.

An independent company was commissioned to undertake a public consultation to gather the opinions and ideas of residents, users and partners on the contents of the strategy in question, namely "More than Books" during May - July 2015. The report on the public consultation included a range of recommendations which brought together the feedback collected from the public and our partners and they were submitted to the Libraries Service in September 2015.

The report also noted that the vision needed to be adapted and that some of the priorities needed to be strengthened. It was confirmed that continuing with the current situation was unsustainable, but that there was general unwillingness

amongst the public to see any changes to the network of libraries, even in a challenging financial context. One of the consultants' recommendations was that consideration should be given to offering an "authority-led community library service" in the eight libraries which are open for less than 20 hours per week, in addition to maintaining nine main libraries.

The report of the public consultation and the equality impact assessment was submitted to Gwynedd Council's Cabinet on 3 November 2015. The Cabinet resolved to defer the "final decision on the Gwynedd Libraries Service Strategy until after Gwynedd Challenge". The Cabinet was of the opinion that the results of Gwynedd Challenge and people's priorities needed to be considered.

The report of the public consultation and the equality impact assessment was submitted to Gwynedd Council's Cabinet on 3 November 2015. The Cabinet resolved to defer the "final decision on the Gwynedd Libraries Service Strategy until after Gwynedd Challenge". The Cabinet was of the opinion that the results of Gwynedd Challenge and the priorities of Gwynedd residents needed to be considered before moving forward with the development of the "More than Books" Strategy.

Between September and December 2015, the Council commenced the process of identifying possible cuts to services by undertaking the 'Gwynedd Challenge' public consultation throughout the authority. Following the Cabinet's decision (16 February 2016) the Full Council (3 March 2016) resolved to support a cut of 25% (£65,000) to the book purchasing budget from April 2016 onwards.

The Full Council resolved that the Libraries Service should not face any cuts above and beyond the efficiency savings target for its budget. As the Council's financial strategy notes, the service is expected to have an efficiency scheme to secure savings of £101,370 by reviewing the libraries provision in the authority. Those who responded to the Gwynedd Challenge consultation confirmed that they were willing to see a change to the network of library buildings but they did not wish to see the authority going any further. It was noted that the Service should consider, when developing a delivery model, how difficult it is for rural areas to find volunteers and also consider the impact on the different age groups as identified in the equality assessment.

The responses to Gwynedd Challenge also showed the public's support to protecting the mobile service, especially for the elderly and children.

With fewer budgets available to maintain the service and to purchase books (through the Gwynedd Challenge savings and cuts regime) it is not possible to maintain the current network of libraries; nor is it possible to offer a community library arrangement for each one of the eight communities which was noted as a recommendation by consultants in September 2015.

Following decisions regarding the budget of the Libraries Service, as well as feedback gathered through the public consultation process on "More than Books" and Gwynedd Challenge; as well as the outcomes of the equality impact assessment, the Libraries Service has amended and adapted the strategy.

### **7.3 RESEARCH OR COMPARATIVE INFORMATION**

#### **Carers**

The high proportion of elderly residents has led to the authority having one of the highest dependency ratios in Wales. According to the 2011 Census, over 7266 people Gwynedd provide unpaid care and nearly half of these carers (more than 3400 people) provide 50 or more hours of care a week. Such high levels of unpaid care provision will have a huge impact on the economic and social well-being of the carers as well as those being cared for.

#### **Living in isolation**

Geographical access to key services forms part of the Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation (WIMD 2011), which is the official measure of deprivation in Wales. This domain of the WIMD considers the average travelling time by foot or public transport to access a range of services considered necessary for day-to-day living. These include: Public library, food shops, leisure centres, GP surgeries, NHS dentist, primary schools, secondary schools, post office, and transport nodes.

In Gwynedd 24% of local areas feature in the 10% most deprived in Wales for access to services e.g. Aberdaron, these areas cover a population of about 36,000 people. Further than this, the following areas that could be affected by the new strategy of fewer libraries in buildings: Llanllyfni and Clynnog, Deiniolen and Talysarn are within 40% of the most deprived areas in Wales in relation to every indicator: income, housing, employment, access to services, education, health, community safety and the environment.

Isolation within the rural community is a particular issue for those who are older, younger or on lower incomes, and can contribute to other health and wellbeing problems. Isolation for the elderly is, of course, not limited to rural communities with one in five households in Gwynedd Council occupied by a single pensioner, a significant number of whom may not have local family support, having moved to the area to retire.

### **7.4 KEY FINDINGS OF PREVIOUS CONSULTATIONS AND SERVICE USER FEEDBACK**

Research by CyMAL has informed the national strategic frameworks for public libraries in Wales and the current framework 'Libraries Inspire' (2012-2016) has highlighted the need for libraries in Wales to :-

- Be open to all members of their communities
- Be free to join
- Lend books for free
- Deliver free access to information
- Provide free use of the Internet and computers
- Deliver free use of online information resources 24 hours a day
- Provide access to high quality resources in a range of formats, including those in the Welsh language, reflecting changing forms of publication
- Ensure friendly, knowledgeable and qualified staff are on hand to help
- Provide a safe, attractive and accessible physical space with suitable opening hours
- Stage a range of activities to support learning, enjoyment and enable users to obtain the maximum benefit from the available resources
- Work in partnership to open up access to the resources of all Welsh libraries
- Maintain a searchable catalogue of Welsh library resources
- Co-operate to create new bilingual digital content about Wales and its people
- Promote libraries to attract more people to benefit from their services
- Regularly consult users to gather their views on the service and information about their changing needs.

The Modernisation of Gwynedd Council's Library Service Citizen's Panel – February /March 2012 (full report – appendix to Gwynedd Library Review) noted the following:

- Consider the library as the Council's presence in the community and the possibility of relocating some libraries jointly where the locations are more suitable by promoting the concept of a library as a multi-purpose centre.
- invest in the promotion / marketing service important throughout the year, with improvement of external/ street signs included in promotion work
- try to keep the current level of investment in the resources for loan
- the library offer to include the provision of e-books available to the public by taking advantage of the national co-operation (e.g. e- Book Purchasing Consortium) and regional (TalNet) to ensure efficient access to resources.
- Consider the performance of Gwynedd regarding staffing levels carefully for response to the needs of the Library Standards and consider options for regional cooperation to see if there are benefits to the residents of Gwynedd.
- Consider the use of volunteers to be used for additional activities but not to provide the core-service and those that contribute will be part of empowering the community and any process to decide the future of library.

Gwynedd Council Public Library Users Survey combined weighted Authority and service point report.

The Public Library Users Survey – PLUS – is a national model for surveying users of public libraries concerning various aspects of the service. It includes questions about the staff, the stock and the building, and it asks about user satisfaction as well as some questions about the individuals themselves. It proposes a uniform methodology and uniform questions in order to achieve consistency for valid national, regional and local comparisons.

Equality monitoring information from Gwynedd Adult PLUS Survey March 2010 unless stated otherwise:-

### **ADULTS**

#### **AGE** (March 2013 Survey)

15 - 24 6%  
 25 – 44 28%  
 45 – 64 34%  
 65 – 74 21%  
 75 OVER 11%

#### **RELIGION**

No religion 34%  
 Buddhist 1%  
 Christian 61%  
 Hindu 0%  
 Jewish 0%  
 Muslim 1%  
 Other 4%

#### **GENDER** (March 2013 Survey)

FEMALE 64%  
 MALE 36%

#### **ETHNICITY**

Mixed 0%  
 White 98%  
 Asian 2%  
 Black 0%  
 Other 0%

#### **SEXUAL ORIENTATION**

Heterosexual/straight 97%  
 Gay/Lesbian 1%  
 Bisexual 1%  
 Other 1%

## **DISABILITY** (March 2013 Survey)

Users noting one or more disability

(e.g. Hearing /Mobility / Mental Health)	23%
Permanently sick/disabled	2%
Carer /Looking after someone at home	6%

## **CHILDREN**

Equality monitoring information from the Children's Plus Survey October 2009 unless stated otherwise:-

### **AGE** (October 2012)

Under 5	26 %
5 – 10	43 %
11 – 15	29%
16 – 18*	1 %

(\* 15 - 24 in Adult Survey)

### **Nationality** (more than one could be noted)

Welsh	62.1%
British	45%
Irish	0.8%
Indian	0.5%
African	1.0%
Caribbean	0.5%
Pakistani	0.7%
Bangladeshi	0.3%
Chinese	0.7%
Other	3.5%

### **GENDER** (October 2012)

GIRL 57%

BOY 43%

## **ETHNICITY**

Mixed 6.5%

White 87.3%

Asian 2.6%

Black 3.6%

Other 0%



## **8. Consultation and involvement of those possibly affected by any changes**

In 2013/14 via the Citizens Panel, users and non-users were consulted. The Consultation Panel (a cross party group set up by the Portfolio Leader) gathered evidence from a variety of sources. Consultation was also carried out via Staff Meetings (frontline staff and professional /managerial staff) to gather opinion. All reports and minutes included as appendices to Library Review

Between October 2012 and May 2014 a Review of Gwynedd Council's Library Service took place. This included a consultative panel of Elected Members, staff workshops and a public consultation through the Citizens Panel - The results and response to this was published on the Gwynedd Council website.

The biggest potential impact of any change is on :-

**Age – older/younger people and Disabled people, and carers.**

**In 2014/15 and 2015/16 -**

An independent company was commissioned to undertake a public consultation to gather the opinions and ideas of residents, users and partners on the contents of that strategy, namely "More than Books" during May - July 2015. The company was specifically asked to gather evidence of groups that represented Protected Groups. This evidence has been included in the amended version of this equality assessment.

Between September and December 2015, the Council commenced the process of identifying possible cuts to services by undertaking the 'Gwynedd Challenge' public consultation throughout the authority but also considered the impact on different age groups as identified in the equality assessment.

Those who responded to the Gwynedd Challenge process confirmed that they were willing to see a change to the network of library buildings but they did not wish to see the authority going any further. When developing a delivery model, it was noted that consideration should be given to how difficult it is for rural areas to find volunteers and also consider the impact on the different age groups as identified in the equality assessment.

The responses to Gwynedd Challenge also showed the public's support to protecting the mobile service, especially for the elderly and children.

## **9. Impacts or effects of the Strategy for communities / protected groups**

### **RACE / ETHNICITY**

The strategy has no issues which present any adverse impact to users from these groups

## **SEX**

Single mothers especially those without convenient access to private or public transport

Indirect adverse impact on older women who live longer particularly those with limited mobility

## **AGE**

The proposed changes which could lead to a reduction in the number of Library buildings would have a significant impact on the older people/ children and young people and in particular elderly people living alone in isolated in rural properties.

- **Older People**

Loss of access to the internet, learning about computers/software, collect railcards/bus passes and other Gwynedd Council services provided. There may be a loss of social networks/increased social isolation, especially given higher percentage of older people in Gwynedd.

Necessitate travelling further and affect those unable to travel independently. Some disabled people are unable to drive and using public transport to access an alternative library is not always a viable option.

Many older people are unable to travel to other sites and would be without access to a suitable library. Those who can travel would have a greater distance to access the library service.

- **Children / Young People**

Some use the library for homework, for story telling sessions, summer reading programme, social interaction which encourages and develops children skills and to read more or take part Some do not have access to reading resources or computers with internet access at home.

## **DISABLED PEOPLE**

The proposed options relating to reduction in the number of Library buildings could affect wheelchair users who are unable to travel to any other libraries and would not be able to visit the mobile library on the day of their choice. The current four week interval wait for a home library visit may be too long for some users.

The current provision at some buildings has some access issues which cause problems to users with mobility impairments.

Some geographical areas have poor public transport links; some disabled users would struggle to use transport if the links from public transport to other libraries changes.

There may be additional transport costs of accessing services further away e.g. buses, taxi, own vehicle.

Users using larger electric powered chairs will find it difficult getting into the mobile library.

Possible reduction in the number of libraries or withdrawal of services could impact on social inclusion and access to specific support services e.g. Books on Prescription books for people with mild to moderate emotional or psychological issues.

Loss of the opportunity to signpost information on medical issues e.g. Cancer chronic illness support groups.

Loss of resources being returned and increase in charges due to greater distance and access to return items borrowed.

Access to the internet, learning about computers /software, a social opportunity for those who may be socially excluded. For disabled people who are unable to drive there would be the extra cost of travelling on public transport.

There is a lack of automatic/assisted power doors in some library buildings, narrow doorways, not all buildings have public toilets or accessible toilets and there is not always enough turning space to manoeuvring of wheelchairs/mobility scooters.

- **Carers**

Access to the internet, learning about computers /software, a social opportunity for those whose work is a solitary occupation. For carers that are unable to drive there would be the extra cost of travelling on public transport.

## **RELIGION & BELIEF**

There are no issues in Strategy which present any adverse impact to users from this group

## **SEXUAL ORIENTATION / GENDER REASSIGNMENT**

There are no issues in Strategy which present any adverse impact to users from this group

## **HUMAN RIGHTS**

The modernisation of libraries will not negatively impact upon the right to education, the right to a private and family life or to the protection of property.

## **WELSH SPEAKING COMMUNITIES**

Ability to speak Welsh is at a peak in the community of Caernarfon (85% Welsh speaking), and at its lowest in the eastern coastal communities of Tywyn & Aberdyfi (less than 30%).

Reducing Library provision in a rural area would impact the service to those in Welsh speaking community.

### **PREGNANCY AND MATERNITY**

Lack of accessibility to mobile library e.g. for parents with young children (buggies). Possible difficulties travelling to the nearest library if there is a reduction in number of library buildings.

### **MARRIAGE AND CIVIL PARTNERSHIP**

There have no issues in Strategy which present any adverse impact to users from this group

### **OTHER SOCIALLY EXCLUDED GROUPS OR COMMUNITIES**

Reduction in number of libraries could cause some users on low income to have the burden of additional cost of a bus to reach a library.

Loss of neutral community facility to engage with excluded groups e.g. intergenerational context

Geographical deprivation; loss of convenient library access to people living in e.g. Communities First areas Talysarn ( Dyffryn Nantlle) community.

## **SECTION 3 - PROCUREMENT AND PARTNERSHIPS**

### **Relation of Strategy to work with partnership organisations**

The review of the library service has been carried out by the local authority but will link in with collaborative partnerships established to promote access to library resources and services e.g. TalNet (North West Wales Bibliographic Services) , LINC y Gogledd (Libraries in Corporation –North Wales (LINC ) and the strategic programme of activities sponsored by CyMAL ( Welsh Government Division - Museums, Archives and Libraries ) such as Joint-Marketing of library services and access to library Digital Resources.

The Library Service is mindful of equalities legislation and monitoring when undertaking procurement procedures. Where possible procurement will be from organisations which strongly recognise equalities work and which have an established track record in equalities. To do this guidance from the Gwynedd Council Equalities Officer will be sought where appropriate.

If the proposal for community supported libraries is agreed, the authority will need to ensure that as part of the Service Level Agreement, it is ensured that the authority in partnership with the community continue to deliver on the Equality Act 2010 requirements to comply with the General Duty.

## **SECTION 4 - ASSESSING THE IMPACT**

### **Evidence of higher or lower take-up or satisfaction with service by any group or community**

The current library management information system (Capita/TALIS) which holds user membership details does not contain equality monitoring data.

The limited equality monitoring data results from the last Gwynedd Adult PLUS Survey October 2013 demonstrates that higher take up are from those age groups between the ages 45 and over (66%), compared with a lower take up from those aged 25-44 (28%) particular. Female respondents accounted for 64% of library users, and male 36%, of library users.

In the coastal towns of Harlech, Porthmadog, Cricieth and Barmouth, the largest proportion of their library users are aged 65 years and over - varies from 40% to 50%. 35% to 37% of Nefyn, Tywyn and Pwllheli library users are over 65 years old. Due to the problems and challenges of growing older in relatively isolated - rural and coastal - communities, library buildings and mobile services can play a key part

*Use by children under 16 years old is especially high which represents 39% of all members compared to the percentage of children in the population (approx. 18%)*

## **Geography or demography of service users**

Geographical access to key services forms part of the Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation (WIMD 2011), which is the official measure of deprivation in Wales. This domain of the WIMD considers the average travelling time by foot or public transport to access a range of services considered necessary for day-to-day living. These include: Public library, food shops, leisure centres, GP surgeries, NHS dentist, primary schools, secondary schools, post office, and transport nodes.

24% of areas in Gwynedd Council feature in the 10% most deprived in Wales for access to services e.g. Aberdaron and the Llŷn Peninsula. These areas in Gwynedd cover a population of about 36,000 people.

Isolation within the rural community is a particular issue for those who are older, younger or on lower incomes, and can contribute to other health and wellbeing problems. Isolation for the elderly is, of course, not limited to rural communities with one in five households in Gwynedd Council occupied by a single pensioner, a significant number of whom may not have local family support, having moved to the area to retire.

## **Service Delivery**

Factors that may prevent or reduce the likelihood of any groups or communities from using or accessing the service or create any other barriers for them are: - limited income, location, time of day when service available, access to buildings, access to translation service, eligibility rules, and cultural reasons.

The Service operates opening times which may hinder some users to visit.

The possible reduction in the number of library buildings will cause impact as outlined through this impact assessment.

According to research undertaken by Welsh Government in 2010, in large parts of Gwynedd, 60% or less of the 18+ year old adult population were designated as "digitally included". The consultation provided evidence that Gwynedd libraries play an important part in terms of offering free access to computers to meet digital engagement needs.

Staff of the Department of Work and Pensions (the Job Centre) refers claimants to libraries to use computers, for example. During 1 of the consultation sessions in the smaller, part-time libraries, namely Deiniolen, Penygroes and Bethesda, the perception of being a 'deprived community' strongly corresponded with a lack of digital engagement and therefore inclusion.

## **Limitations that could amount to unlawful discrimination**

This assessment has not found that any limitations amount to unlawful discrimination however there may be a possible *differential impact for certain groups*:-

- **Disabled People**

The proposed changes relating to some Library building reduction in the number of may affect mobility scooter users who are unable to travel to any other libraries and would not be able to access the mobile library. The current 4 week interval between home library visits is too long for some users.

The current provision in some buildings, have some access issues which cause problems to users with mobility impairments. There is a lack of automatic/assisted power doors in some library buildings, narrow doorways, not all buildings have public toilets or accessible toilets (e.g. Pwllheli ) and there is not always enough turning space to manoeuvre of wheelchairs/mobility scooters. Some geographical areas have poor public transport provision; some disabled users would struggle to use transport if the public transport routes to other library change.

There may be additional transport costs of accessing services further away e.g. buses, taxi, own vehicle.

Possible closure or withdrawal of services could impact on social inclusion and access to specific support services e.g. Books on Prescription resources for people with mild to moderate emotional or psychological issues.

Loss of the opportunity to signpost information on medical issues e.g. chronic illnesses.

Loss of loan items being returned and increase in charges due to greater distance and access to return resources.

- **AGE**

The proposed changes relating to some reduction in the number of Library buildings of would have a significant impact on the older people/young people and elderly people living alone in isolated in rural properties.

### **Older People**

Would lose access to the internet, learning about PC/software, purchasing senior railcards/bus passes and other Gwynedd Council services provided. There may be a loss of social networks/increased social isolation, especially given higher percentage of older people in Gwynedd.

Travelling further and unable to travel independently. Some disabled people are unable to drive and using public transport to access an alternative library is not always a viable option.

Some elderly people are unable to travel to other sites and would be without access to a suitable library. Those who can travel would have a greater distance to access the library service.

## **Children /Young People**

Some use this service for homework, storytelling sessions, and summer reading programme, good social time which encourages and develops children skills and to read more, some do not have computers at home.

## **Carers**

Reduced access to the internet, learning about PC/software, a social opportunity whose work is a solitary occupation. For carers that are unable to drive there would be the extra cost of travelling on public transport.

## **Other Socially Excluded groups or communities**

Users on low income will find it a burden of additional cost of a bus to reach a library. Loss of neutral community facility to engage with excluded groups e.g. digital inclusion

Areas of deprivation in Communities First areas e.g. Peblig a Cadnant (Caernarfon) / Marchog (Bangor).

## **Information required for making an informed judgement**

Update on the data provided as noted above - the next Adults Opinion Survey will be held in October 2016 and the Children (Parents) survey in March 2017.

Information required about certain communities and equality groups.

## **Data collection that needs be included in the action plan**

More of the latest statistical information is available (e.g. additional data of WIMD indicators - the Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation for 2015 and 2016) for areas of the assessments for specific individual catchment areas but they do not offer evidence that is much different to what is already available in this assessment for the entire Strategy.

## **Possible improvements to the Strategy in order to reduce or remove any adverse impact or the effects identified**

In implementing the Library Strategy, further discussion with users and communities will be required before and after implementation to review users' opinions about the amended service and to make any necessary adaptations where it is unfair or where a provision inconsistency appears.



## **SECTION 5 – DECISION TO PROCEED**

**The information above has informed the Service that it is in a position to continue with the Strategy subject to continual assessment**

The intention is to continue with Strategy but with amendments to remove any areas of adverse impact as much as possible within the resources available.

The Consultation Process is completed and the strategy will be reviewed to ensure the outcomes are consistent.

An Action Plan for the Strategy will address any areas of adverse impact by monitoring and reviewing to continually assess impact.

## **SECTION 6 – ACTION PLAN (with regard to Equalities Impact) -**

A consultation was held to confirm the findings of this assessment and receive feedback.

To be included in the final Strategy

Equality data as up-to-date as possible was presented when gathering the opinions of users.

Mitigation methods were sought for any detrimental impact of the proposed changes to the method of providing the libraries and information service.

A delivery plan that will take any detrimental impact into account was developed

### **Targeted Equality Impact Assessments**

An individual Equality Impact Assessment for each location where substantial change is proposed has been completed. Local evidence does not suggest or provide differing information to that outlined in this overall impact assessment

### **Council Approval**

Report on findings from the consultation on the Gwynedd Library Service Strategy was presented to the Council Cabinet on the 3rd of November 2015. :-

The final Strategy and this latest Equality Impact Assessment will be submitted to the Council's Cabinet on 13 September 2017.

If a decision is made to proceed with Community Libraries and Links, it is intended to ensure a Service Level Agreement for those Libraries (in accordance with national guidelines developed by Welsh Government). The

Service Level Agreement with every community will include provision to ensure compliance with a General Duty under the Equality Act 2010.

It is intended to undertake an evaluation after any change and undertake a further users survey to seek feedback on changes and how they affect users.

## **SECTION 7 – ARRANGEMENTS FOR MONITORING AND REVIEW**

Arrangements will be made for future monitoring and review of this Strategy

- Annual Monitoring and Review arrangements i.e. part of the service performance review /reporting to the appropriate Cabinet Member.
- .
- Lead Responsibility for review equalities matters to be included in Operational Plan for Library Strategy
- Equalities monitoring to be included as part of Library Service Planning Process.