



Equality Impact Assessment

What is an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) and why does the County Council do them?

The [Public Sector Equality Duty](#) (PSED) is an obligation within the [Equality Act 2010](#) ("the Act"), which asks public authorities, like Hampshire County Council, to give 'due regard' to equality considerations, in particular to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act.
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

This includes assessing the impact of policies and practices on individuals and communities with a protected characteristic, as defined in the Act and some other specific groups. The County Council uses EIAs to ensure it has paid 'due regard' to equalities considerations when there are changes to a service or policy, a new project or certain decisions.

EIA author	Position & Department	Contact
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Title:	Hampshire Library Service – Review of Membership Offer & Charges
Related EIAs:	None

EIA for Savings Programme:	No
Service affected	Library Service
Description of the service/policy/project/project phase	<p>Membership to the Hampshire Library Service is available to anyone living, working or studying in Hampshire, last year our service had over 3 million visitors and issued just under 4 million physical books. Standard Membership brings with it a range of free services including: the loan of up to 30 books at a time; loan renewals, free use of computers; full access to our extensive digital library of eBooks, audiobooks, online newspapers and magazines; the Home Library Service for those who can't visit a library; and an array of children's clubs and activities, many of which are free. Although the core service is available for free, as per the Terms of Membership, late fees are charged for the late return of items. Members are also charged for reservations and in some instances charges can be given for the loss or damage of items. Some specialised memberships are offered with an annual charge with additional charges for individual items. In addition to Standard Membership, there are currently over 40 membership categories, these include concessionary offers to meet different needs, a number of age-related memberships in the children's category as well as some group memberships and paid memberships for specialised stock. Over time the membership offer has expanded to meet the changing needs of our customers and to enable us to respond to changing communities e.g. the Emergency Refugee Membership. However, these changes have developed in isolation, meaning the membership offer has become large and complicated, and often difficult for staff and customers to understand and use effectively. A full review of the Membership Offer has been carried out to ensure that it is clear, consistent and fair, whilst meeting the needs of the service.</p>
New/changed service/policy/project	<p>The Membership Review proposal is to simplify and standardise the current offer of 40+ membership categories with differing benefits to just five Groups, consisting of 15 membership categories: Standard; Adult, Under 18 Concession; Adult, Under 18 Group; Adult, Under 18, Home Library, ICL (Independent Community Library) - Reservation, ICL - Stock Subscription; Music Set, Music Set (Outside Hampshire), Reading and Drama, Spoken Word Internal; Branch Card, Stock Services. To simplify the offer, the criteria for each of the groups would be standardised, therefore there are some changes within the categories to allow this to happen; - Individuals</p>

both Standard and Concession would be able to loan up to 20 items at anyone time, this is one of the main impacts to customers as it is a reduction from 30 items for most standard and concession memberships but down from 100 for some of the concessionary categories. - Groups would be able to loan up to 60 items at any one time, reduced from 100 currently. - Concession loan periods currently vary from 4-8 weeks, this would be standardised to 4 weeks in line with the Standard membership. - Group loan periods currently vary from 4-6 weeks, this would be standardised to 6 weeks to align with the Home Library Service offer. - The number of reservations for both Standard and Concession memberships would reflect the changes to loans and be standardised at 20. - Reservation charges for Adult and Under 18 groups will align with Standard membership charges. - Reservation charges to be removed from the Spoken Word Subscription as an annual fee is already paid for this service. - Internally changes are being made to the Branch Card to ensure it meets the needs of the Service and a Stock Services card is being introduced, again to meet the needs of the service. In addition to the changes to the membership offer itself, the proposal recommends; - Date of Birth becoming a mandatory field at sign up or renewal to allow the simplification of a number of age related memberships. - Title to be removed, this is no longer required. - Go online filtering to reflect Hampshire County Council's Adult level of filtering for all users regardless of age, but with an updated permission form for Under 15s. The proposal of the Charges Review recommends the following changes: - Increasing the Adult Loan Overdue charge from £0.25 to £0.30 per item per day. - Increasing the Adult and Group Adult Reservation charge from £1.00 to £1.20 per item. - Increasing the Audiobook Annual Membership (Spoken Word) subscription charge from £30.00 to £40.00 per year but removing the reservation charge of £1.00 per item. These changes are recommended to increase charges inline with inflation rates and align subscription offers, however they are mitigated by the proposed changes to the membership offer, to ensure a fair and consistent offer for all.

Engagement

No public consultation required, no change is proposed to the Statutory offer, customers will still have a membership and the same service provision as they do now, the changes are just to simplify and standardise the offer.

Equalities considerations - Impact Assessment

Age

Impact on public	Neutral
Impact on staff	Neutral
Rationale	<p>The impact of the proposed change on Age has been identified as neutral, while there are some changes in the proposal associated with age, the offer and service received by the customer is not directly affected by their age.</p> <p>Currently there are eight standard membership categories that are determined by age, the offer is generally the same with some charges differing for adult and child categories. Also, some of the Library Service offer is age restricted from physical and digital book stock to go-online access determined by filtering applied on membership category.</p> <p>To enable the standard membership offer to be simplified from eight categories to two; Adult and Under 18, Date of Birth information at the point of sign up will become key. This information is collated at sign up now in most cases, but a change will be made to the Library Management System for this to be a mandatory field. However, it is recognised some customers may not be happy to provide this information, in this case staff will be instructed to use 01/01/YYYY if the customer is willing to provide their year of birth or 01/01/1900 if not.</p> <p>For access to public computers anyone under the age of 15 is required to have a responsible adult complete a permission form. The proposed changes will affect the level of filtering (all filtering will be at the adult level) applied for internet access on the public use computers, therefore, all under15 permission forms will need to be redone.</p> <p>The Charges element of this review also has changes associated with age, although not a direct impact based on Age. The proposal for increasing the charge for an overdue item from £0.25 to £0.30 is specific to the Adult categories only, and will therefore not impact anyone under the age of 18.</p> <p>No Staff impact has been identified relating to Age.</p>

Mitigation	
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Disability

Impact on public	Positive
Impact on staff	Neutral
Rationale	<p>The impact of the proposed change on Disability has been identified as positive.</p> <p>Currently there are six concessionary membership categories for individuals and/or their carers which provide a varied and inconsistent offer, therefore a recommendation of the Membership Review, an aim of which was to ensure the offer is fair and consistent, is to simplify the Concession offer to reflect the Standard membership with just two categories; Adult and Under 18. The Concession membership would be available to customers who feel they have a barrier to accessing the library service, whether physical or otherwise, and would allow customers to self-declare their need for a concessionary service.</p> <p>There would be a further sub-category field to identify the reason for the concession but this would be solely for the purpose of understanding the customer base to enable strategic planning around the Library Service provision. Advice has been sought from the Disability staff network on terminology it has been agreed sub-categories relating to Disability would include Accessibility, Accessibility – Carer and Good Neighbour.</p> <p>The current offer includes an Access Adult and an Access Under 18 membership which were originally only available to Adults in receipt of the Adults Health and Care 'Yellow Card' or Under 18s in receipt of a 'Gateway Card' or a letter from a professional. However, the offer was very narrow and prescribed and has naturally evolved over time as staff have adapted the offer to respond to customer need. Our understanding has developed around a greater range of disabilities including health and wellbeing, the proposed concession offer is more inclusive to reflect this improved understanding.</p> <p>In the last 12 months just over 2000 Access memberships were actively used. The requirement for proof of a disability was deemed unnecessary, based on the current numbers of Access memberships and with the objective of removing barriers ensuring an inclusive service.</p> <p>The Charges element of this review has no impact on this characteristic as customers in this category are eligible for the Concession membership which does not incur charges for reservations or overdue items.</p>

	No Staff impact has been identified relating to Disability.
Mitigation	

Gender Reassignment

Impact on public	Neutral
Impact on staff	Neutral
Rationale	<p>The proposed changes do not have any specific impacts on individuals relating to Gender Reassignment, therefore there is not thought to be an impact on this protected characteristic.</p> <p>No Staff impact has been identified relating to Gender Reassignment.</p>
Mitigation	

Pregnancy and Maternity

Impact on public	Neutral
Impact on staff	Neutral
Rationale	<p>The proposed changes do not have any specific impacts on individuals relating to Pregnancy and Maternity, therefore there is not thought to be an impact on this protected characteristic.</p>

	No Staff impact has been identified relating to Pregnancy and Maternity.
Mitigation	

Race

Impact on public	Neutral
Impact on staff	Neutral
Rationale	<p>The proposed changes do not have any specific impacts on individuals relating to Race, therefore there is not thought to be an impact on this protected characteristic.</p> <p>No Staff impact has been identified relating to Race.</p>
Mitigation	

Religion or Belief

Impact on public	Neutral
Impact on staff	Neutral
Rationale	<p>The proposed changes do not have any specific impacts on individuals relating to Religion or Belief, therefore there is not thought to be an impact on this protected characteristic.</p> <p>No Staff impact has been identified relating to Religion or Belief.</p>
Mitigation	

Mitigation	
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Sex

Impact on public	Neutral
Impact on staff	Neutral
Rationale	<p>The proposed changes do not have any specific impacts on individuals relating to Sex, therefore there is not thought to be an impact on this protected characteristic.</p> <p>No Staff impact has been identified relating to Sex.</p>
Mitigation	

Sexual Orientation

Impact on public	Neutral
Impact on staff	Neutral
Rationale	<p>The proposed changes do not have any specific impacts on individuals relating to Sexual Orientation, therefore there is not thought to be an impact on this protected characteristic.</p> <p>No Staff impact has been identified relating to Sexual Orientation.</p>
Mitigation	

Marriage and Civil Partnership

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Impact on public	Neutral
Impact on staff	Neutral
Rationale	<p>The proposed changes do not have any specific impacts on individuals relating to Marriage and Civil Partnership, therefore there is not thought to be an impact on this protected characteristic.</p> <p>No Staff impact has been identified relating to Marriage and Civil Partnership.</p>
Mitigation	

Poverty

Impact on public	Neutral
Impact on staff	Neutral
Rationale	<p>The proposed change on Poverty has been identified as neutral.</p> <p>It is recognised the proposal to increase some charges including the charge for overdue items, reservations and Audiobook subscription may have a negative impact on customers in this characteristic. A mitigation to this impact is the proposed changed to the membership offer to reduce the number of loans and reservations a customer can have at any one time, therefore reducing the amount of charges they are able to accrue.</p> <p>A key theme in feedback from the all staff survey completed Autumn 2022 was around fines and charges and the impact this can have particularly on low-income customers. Although the Library provides a free service where books are returned or renewed on time, the proposal to reduce the number of loans a customer can have at any one time will reduce the maximum fine a customer can accrue in one day from overdue items, from £7.50 (30 loans at £0.25) to £6.00 (20 loans at £0.30). Fines continue to be accrued for 28 days, therefore the proposal also reduces the potential maximum fine from £210.00 to £168.00. Part of the implementation of the review is to provide Communications for Customers and Staff to make it clearer that there are charges for overdue items and what those charges are.</p> <p>No Staff impact has been identified relating to Poverty.</p>

Mitigation	

Rurality

Impact on public	Negative - Low
Impact on staff	Neutral
Rationale	<p>The proposed change on Rurality has been identified as negative – low.</p> <p>Reducing the number of items a customer can loan at any one time may mean some customers choose to visit the library more frequently, which may have more of an impact on customers in a rural location.</p> <p>It is also recognised the proposal to increase the daily overdue charge from £0.25 to £0.30 may also impact customers in terms of Rurality, the overdue charges continue to accrue for 28 days, therefore it is possible customers in rural locations who are unable to visit the library regularly may face a small increase in charges.</p> <p>No Staff impact has been identified relating to Rurality.</p>
Mitigation	<p>The impact has been identified as low as only 2% of our customer base loaned more than 20 items at a time last year and although the change may be inconvenient, there is no obligation for customers to attend the library more frequently, therefore no specific mitigation is required.</p> <p>With regards the impact of the overdue charge increase, customers can pay overdue charges online or using the app without the need to come into branch, therefore the impact is deemed to be low.</p>

Geographical Impact:All Hampshire

Equality Statement

Additional information:

To support the Membership Review a survey was issued to all Library staff in late Autumn 2022, enabling staff to engage with the membership review and offering the opportunity for any key ideas or areas of concern to be flagged, the survey received 155 responses (37%). It was incredibly valuable in providing a steer for the review, it helped to understand the priorities from the perspective of the staff who work with memberships daily.

This EIA is to accompany an Officer Decision Report for the changes to the Library Service Membership Offer, the target date for implementation is 3 July 2023.

Overview Statement:

A summary assessment to show that due regard to the Public Sector Equality Duty has been paid, which is undertaken when a full EIA is not needed:

EIA reference number: 00398

Date of production of EIA for publication: 15/05/2023