

Equality Impact Assessment

Name of project/proposal

Library fines and charges policy effective from April 2017

Contact name
Department

Julie Edyvean
Culture, Communities and Business Services

Date to be published on Hantsweb

28 Feb 2017

Purpose for project/proposal

The proposal is to implement a revised charging policy for the relevant aspects of library services. Charges apply to reservations and requests, hiring of DVDs, music CDs and audiobooks and replacement costs for lost or damaged items. Fines levied for the late return of items can be avoided but in addition special rates apply to under 18s and concessions ensure that everyone can access services. It remains free to join, borrow books and use computers or public Wi-Fi. Also online resources, eBooks and eMagazines are free to use. The management team will review the policy every three years with the level of fines and charges reviewed annually. Any changes will be communicated in advance of implementation to provide adequate notice to customers.

Consultation

Has engagement or consultation been carried out? Yes

Part of library strategy consultation Nov 2015 to Jan 2016

Statutory considerations

Impact

Age	Low
Disability	Low
Sexual orientation	None
Race	None
Religion and belief	None
Gender reassignment	None
Sex	None
Marriage and civil partnership	None
Pregnancy and maternity	None

Other policy considerations

Poverty	Low
Rurality	Low
Other factors	None

If other please describe

Geographical impact

All Hampshire

Have you identified any medium or high impact?*

Yes

No

The proposed changes from April 2017 affect adult customers and apply specifically to overdue charges, the hire of audiobooks, requests for items not held in Hampshire's stock and performance sets hired by music groups. The increase in charges for national and international inter library loans and for orchestral and vocal sets was identified following not only a comparison with the rates charged by other library services but also an

exercise to identify the full costs involved to deliver these specific services including staff time, transportation, postage, etc.

Age - The proportion of Hampshire library customers aged 60 and over is 32% and compares with 26% for the Hampshire population. The proportion of children (0-17) is 27% for all Hampshire library customers and 21% for the population of Hampshire. Broadly speaking there is good representation of all age ranges and therefore the impact on the adults is spread across the customer profile. Levying fines for the late return of items encourages customers to bring back books on time, making copies available for others to borrow and increasing accessibility to stock. Customers can opt to receive emails reminding them of return dates and allowing them to avoid fines and charges.

Disability – It is not possible to extract data about the disabilities of library customers but, due to the availability of concessions, it is assessed that the impact of the changes to fines and charges is low. Reductions apply for those receiving disability living allowance, personal independence payment or with verification of a long standing disability. Supporting evidence might be a Gateway card, Disability card or letter from a GP, optician, etc.

Potential mitigating actions have been identified as follows:

Loans returned or renewed on time cost nothing. However the library service aims to support people at risk of social exclusion and to satisfy this requirement the policy retains reduced overdue charges for children and vulnerable adults. Home Library Service customers are not charged fines or fees because they rely on volunteers. The small increase in the charge for the loan of audiobooks reflects the fact that these popular items are expensive to purchase. There is an annual audiobook membership available to reduce the cost to customers who borrow books in this format on a regular basis.

There is a small increase for the cost of reservations for titles held in Hampshire's stock to better cover the costs of providing this service. Only 5% of library customers used the reservation service in 2016. The modest increase in the charge for inter library loans reflects the decision not to adopt the practice of other library services where frequently extra charges are applied depending upon the terms and conditions applied by the lender. The costing exercise in 2016 justified this decision but the situation needs to be monitored and reviewed annually. This also applies to the increase in the charge for hire of performance set and the annual membership of music groups. As the full cost is not borne by an individual, it is anticipated that the additional costs can be managed by the choirs and orchestras who appreciate the high standard of service provided. There is no increase in the cost of annual membership for reading groups.

The income from both fines and other charges is used to support the delivery of library services.

Final decision date

Final decision date due
Decision to be made by

03 Jan 2017
DMT