



Opening Hours Policy Report

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1. Introduction and Context

- 1.1 The primary duty of Libraries NI, as set out in the Libraries Act (Northern Ireland) 2008, is to provide a comprehensive and efficient public library service for persons living, working or studying in Northern Ireland.
- 1.2 In providing public library services Libraries NI has a duty to manage its finances within its current budget allocation.
- 1.3 Libraries NI's recurrent budget for 2015/16 is £29,415,000, a reduction of 7.5% compared with the opening figure for 2014/15. One of the four Savings Delivery Plans submitted to DCAL relates to the reduction of the opening hours of libraries, to save on staff costs and premises related costs.
- 1.4 'Emergency' reduced opening hours were introduced urgently without consultation in November 2014 because of the in-year budget cut of 4.4%.
- 1.5 Consultation has now taken place on a draft policy which sets out the overarching approach to establishing the opening hours of libraries and on proposals which show the impact of that policy on opening hours in the context of the 2015/16 budget. This draft policy was agreed by the Board at its meeting on 12 February 2015 as the basis for consultation.

2. Consultation Proposals

- 2.1 The draft policy and proposals were published in a consultation report which appears at Appendix 1. In summary this document states that in determining the opening hours of libraries, Libraries NI will seek to ensure that:
 - a consistent approach is applied across all libraries; exceptions may be made for libraries serving areas of substantial social need
 - opening hours relate to the historic level of use of a library
 - the allocated hours are used in a way that best meets customer need
 - the allocated hours in every library are sufficient to provide a range of opening hours to suit different customer groups and to allow a minimum range of programmes to be delivered in line with Libraries NI's priorities
 - the opening hours are affordable
 - the opening hours are sustainable i.e. ad hoc closures due to staffing shortages should be avoided other than in exceptional circumstances.

2.2 In the context of the draft budget for 2015/16, it is proposed that:

- no library should be open for fewer than 18 hours per week. If a library is open for less time than this, it is difficult to implement the policy of providing a range of opening hours to suit different customer groups and to allow a minimum range of programmes to be delivered in line with Libraries NI's priorities. Many of the libraries which are currently open for 18 hours per week are located in rural communities¹.
- no library serving areas of substantial social deprivation (as listed in the Libraries NI Draft Business Plan 2015/16²) should have its hours reduced by more than 10%.

2.3 It is proposed that there should be eight bands of libraries as follows:

Band	Proposed Hours	Level of Use³ in 2013/14
One	54 hours per week	Over 350,000
Two	50 hours per week	240,000 to 350,000
Three	45 hours per week	180,000 to 240,000
Four	40 hours per week	100,000 to 180,000
Five	35 hours per week	80,000 to 100,000
Six	28 hours per week	70,000 to 80,000
Seven	25 hours per week	47,000 to 70,000
Eight	18 hours per week	25,000 to 47,000

2.4 It then sets out the proposed opening hours for each of the 98 libraries.

3. Consultation Process

3.1 Public consultation on the proposals ran from 18 February 2015 to 17 April 2015 and included the following:

- publication in hard copy and on the Libraries NI website of the consultation document;
- questionnaires which were made available in every library (both in printed format and on the public access computer terminals) and online on the Libraries NI website. The questionnaires could be returned to any library or be completed on-line. A copy of the questionnaire is included as Appendix 2

¹ Rural communities were defined as those in Bands F, G and H i.e. communities of 4,500 or less in NISRA's Statistical Classification and Delineation of Settlements.

² These are Ardoyne, Chichester, Colin Glen, Creggan, Falls Road, Holywood Arches, Shankill, Shantallow, Suffolk, Waterside, Whiterock and Woodstock Libraries.

³ Level of use is defined as visits, issues, renewals, PAT sessions, participation in activities and active members.

- briefing the Culture, Arts and Leisure Committee on the Savings Delivery Plans;
- meeting with the recognised trades unions
- a draft Equality Impact Assessment, published at the same time as the proposals which has since been updated to take account of the comments received and through engagement with Section 75 consultees (see Appendix 3)
- a draft Rural Impact Assessment published at the same time as the proposals which has since been updated to take account of the comments received and through engagement with rural consultees (see Appendix 4).

3.2 The purpose of the public consultation process was to seek the views of the general public, including library users and stakeholders, on the proposals and to obtain any additional information which the Board of Libraries NI should consider in coming to a decision on the way forward.

3.3 The consultation was widely publicised. A press release was issued resulting in a TV interview, radio interviews and substantial newspaper coverage.

3.4 Details of the proposals were sent to councils, elected representatives and equality and rural consultees.

4. Analysis of Responses to the Public Consultation

4.1 In addition to 3,801 responses to the questionnaires, 23 written submissions were received.

Questionnaires

4.2 3,484 responses were received to the adult questionnaire and 317 responses to the children’s questionnaire. A summary of the responses appears below.

Question	% Agreed	% Disagreed	% Neither agreed / disagreed
Policy			
To what extent do you agree or disagree that a consistent approach to opening hours should be applied across all libraries?	67%	21%	13%
To what extent do you agree or disagree that exceptions may be made for libraries	76%	12%	11%

Question	% Agreed	% Disagreed	% Neither agreed / disagreed
serving areas of substantial social need?			
To what extent do you agree or disagree that opening hours should relate to the historic level of use of a library?	66%	18%	15%
To what extent do you agree or disagree that the allocated hours should be used in a way that best meets customer need?	92%	4%	4%
To what extent do you agree or disagree that allocated hours in every library should be sufficient to provide a range of hours to suit different customer groups and to allow a minimum range of programmes to be delivered in line with Libraries NI's priorities?	88%	6%	6%
To what extent do you agree or disagree that opening hours should be affordable?	71%	11%	18%
To what extent do you agree or disagree that opening hours should be sustainable?	86%	5%	9%
Proposals			
To what extent do you agree or disagree that opening hours should be reduced?	40%	43%	17%
To what extent do you agree or disagree that all libraries should be open a minimum of 18 hours per week?	78%	12%	10%
To what extent do you agree or disagree that libraries that serve areas of substantial deprivation should not have their hours reduced by more than 10%	69%	16%	14%
To what extent do you agree or disagree that consultation on the new pattern of opening hours should be undertaken with local users in each library?	88%	4%	8%

- 98% of respondent were members of a library in Northern Ireland
- 80% of adults who responded visit a library at least fortnightly (35% more than once a week)
- 25% of adult respondents lived in a rural location (country village or farm / home in the country)

- 16% of adult respondents believed that the draft policy and proposals would have an effect on them in terms of at least one Section 75 category
- 62% of those who live in a rural location indicated that they or their local community would be affected “a lot” or “quite a bit” if the opening hours of their nearest library were reduced
- 3% of adult respondents were members of Libraries NI staff
- 51% of children who responded think it is a bad idea to shorten opening hours to save money
- 55% of children think that allocating libraries to bands based on how busy they are is the best way to work out how long libraries should be open; and
- 90% of children think it would be good to talk to people who use the library when working out the new opening hours.

4.3 A summary of the report on the analysis of questionnaires in relation to each question is shown at Appendix 5.

Written Submissions

4.4 Responses were received from councils, elected representatives and political parties, community, equality and rural organisations as well as individuals.

4.5 DCAL received a petition containing 201 signatures in relation to Brownlow Library. Not all signatories are library users.

4.6 In Strathfoyle the local community undertook its own consultation in relation to ‘library cuts’ as part of a broader community planning engagement day.

4.7 A list of respondents with a summary of the responses appears at Appendix 6.

Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA)

4.8 Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act requires all designated public authorities carrying out functions in Northern Ireland to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity:

- between persons of different
 - religious belief
 - political opinion
 - racial group
 - age
 - marital status
 - sexual orientation
- between men and women generally
- between persons with a disability and persons without
- between persons with dependants and persons without.

- 4.9 Without prejudice to these obligations, public authorities are also required to have regard to the desirability of promoting good relations between persons of different religious beliefs, political opinion or racial group.
- 4.10 In line with the guidance provided by the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland, the proposals in the opening hours consultation report were screened to determine whether there were any significant implications for equality of opportunity and good relations. The screening process identified that the proposals in relation to the changes in opening hours of libraries may have a differential impact on people in several of the section 75 groups whose access to libraries is restricted by their family and/or work commitments.
- 4.11 A draft EQIA was published for consultation and all Equality Scheme consultees were notified of the availability of the draft EQIA and invited to comment.
- 4.12 As a result of the comments received throughout the public consultation process the draft EQIA has been updated and is included as Appendix 3 to this report.
- 4.13 A range of possible mitigating measures is included in the EQIA report, including tailoring the available hours to best suit local need and alternative libraries with complementary opening hours.

Rural Impact Assessment (RIA)

- 4.14 In line with the guidance published by the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (DARD) Libraries NI published a draft RIA for consultation and rural consultees were notified of the availability of the draft RIA and invited to comment.
- 4.15 Responses were received from organisations with a specific rural remit e.g. DARD and there was a section in the questionnaire devoted to rural issues.
- 4.16 As a result of the comments received through the public consultation the draft RIA has been updated and is included as Appendix 4 to this report.
- 4.17 In March 2015, i.e. during the consultation period, NISRA published *Review of the Statistical Classification and Delineation of Settlements March 2015*⁴. This document makes recommendations for some change to the previous classification of settlements to take account of the 2011 census. Although the recommendations have not yet been formally adopted, the RIA has been updated to take account of the recommendations. 29 libraries are now deemed

⁴ <http://www.nisra.gov.uk/archive/geography/review-of-the-statistical-classification-and-delineation-of-settlements-march-2015.pdf>

to be rural. Crumlin has left this category and Bessbrook and Strathfoyle have been added. Further information is included in the RIA (Appendix 4).

5. Consultation Findings and Assessment of Proposals

- 5.1 These findings take account of all of the feedback received including questionnaires, written submissions, meetings and phone calls, as well as responses to the draft EQIA and draft RIA.

Issues relating to the consultation process

- 5.2 Many respondents stated that the questionnaire was too long and that some of the language was difficult to understand. Some respondents stated that it was difficult to express views within the constraints of a questionnaire. Disability Action was critical of the eight week consultation period, stating that it should have been 12 weeks.
- 5.3 Libraries NI was happy to receive feedback to the consultation in any format and to meet with organisations that preferred to express their views verbally, as happened, for example, with the Action Ability Group in Whiterock Library.
- 5.4 The questionnaire was long as it related both to the policy and to proposals which deterred some people. This will be borne in mind for future consultations. However, almost 4,000 people did respond to the questionnaire including providing a very substantial number of comments.
- 5.5 The next stage in the process i.e. local engagement about the pattern of opening hours will be more user-friendly than the general consultation on the policy and proposals.
- 5.6 The consultation lasted for eight weeks rather than the 12 weeks which would be regarded as best practice. This was necessary in the circumstances. A substantial effort was made to encourage responses and almost 4,000 responses were received.

Issues relating to the draft policy

Consistent approach to opening hours policy

- 5.7 67% of adult respondents agreed that a consistent approach to opening hours should be applied across all libraries and 21% disagreed.
- 5.8 Many of those who disagreed suggested that their local library or type of library (rural, urban, seaside, deprived area) should be exempt from a consistent approach.

Libraries serving areas of substantial social need

- 5.9 76% of adult respondents agreed that exceptions should be made for libraries serving areas of substantial social need and 12% disagreed.
- 5.10 A number of respondents disagreed with Libraries NI's approach to identifying libraries that serve areas of substantial social need. It was suggested that Department of Social Development (DSD) Neighbourhood Renewal Areas should be considered, as well as DSD Areas at Risk. It was also suggested that this approach does not recognise rural disadvantage.
- 5.11 Some respondents stated that all towns have some disadvantaged areas. Others stated that there should be no exceptions to the consistent approach and that it should be a universal service. Some queried whether there was evidence of higher levels of use in libraries serving areas of substantial social need.
- 5.12 The approach that Libraries NI has adopted in its Business Plan for 2015/16, similar to that in previous years, is to categorise 'libraries serving areas of substantial social need' as those which directly serve three or more Super Output Areas (SOAs) which are in the 10% most deprived, as measured by the Northern Ireland Multiple Deprivation Measure (NIMDM) 2010.
- 5.13 There are 36 Neighbourhood Renewal Areas with a total population of approximately 280,000. Areas at Risk are much smaller and were first introduced on a pilot basis in 2006. There are now 26 such areas which were identified on the basis that they were 'at risk' of slipping into a spiral of decline. Libraries NI's approach to targeting social deprivation allows the limited resources that are available to be targeted in a focused way and on the areas with the highest level of deprivation.

Opening hours to be based on historic levels of use

- 5.14 66% of adult respondents agreed that opening hours should relate to the historic level of use of a library and 18% disagreed. 55% of children agreed with this approach. Those adults who disagreed stated that:
- historic use should relate to the recent past
 - this approach disadvantages rural libraries
 - this approach ignores qualitative issues and the true impact of a local library by reducing everything to statistics
 - circumstances change e.g. new schools, new housing
 - reduced hours lead to reduced use and a spiral of decline; conversely the more a library is open the more people will use it (many respondents made this comment)
 - catchment population should be considered rather than levels of use

- specific points were made about Lisnaskea Library and the reasons why historic use is an inappropriate measure there. More detail on this appears below.

Allocated hours to be used in a way that best meets customer need

- 5.15 92% of adult respondents and 90% of children agreed that the allocated hours should be used in the way that best meets customer need. Some commented that staff needs should also be considered.

Allocated hours should be sufficient to provide a range of opening hours to suit different customer groups and to allow a minimum range of programmes to be delivered

- 5.16 88% of adult respondents agreed that the allocated hours should be sufficient to provide a range of opening hours to suit different customer groups and to allow a minimum range of programmes to be delivered and 6% disagreed.

Opening hours should be affordable

- 5.17 71% of adult respondents agreed that opening hours should be affordable and 11% disagreed. Those who did not agree argued strongly that additional funding should be found to provide a library service that meets the needs of its customers and that not to do so is very short-sighted leading to increased costs for other government departments.
- 5.18 Many argued that frontline services and access should be prioritised by Libraries NI with other aspects of the service, especially management, being cut.

Opening hours should be sustainable

- 5.19 86% of adult respondents agreed that opening hours should be sustainable i.e. ad hoc closures should be avoided except in exceptional circumstances and 5% disagreed.

Issues relating to the proposals

- 5.20 60% of adult respondents disagreed with reduction in opening hours. Comments reflected a recognition that in the context of a reduced budget this was preferable to library closures.
- 5.21 78% of adult respondents agreed that all libraries should open for at least 18 hours per week and 12% disagreed. Many of those who disagreed suggested a higher figure than 18 hours.
- 5.22 69% of adult respondents agreed that libraries serving areas of substantial social deprivation should not have their hours reduced by more than 10% and 16% disagreed. Some of those who disagreed stated there should be no reduction at

all in the opening hours of these libraries. Others argued for a universal service with no exceptions.

5.23 88% of adult respondents agreed there should be local consultation on patterns of opening hours and 4% disagreed.

5.24 29% of adult respondents stated that it would be useful if neighbouring libraries were open at different times to maximise access for customers. Many gave examples of libraries that could usefully be 'paired' in this way. Comments from those who disagreed included:

- it is too far to the next library
- this is a useful idea but not at the expense of one's own library
- no transport available
- the local library is part of our weekly routine.

Issues relating to equality

5.25 16% of adult respondents believe that the draft Opening Hours Policy would have an effect on them in terms of at least one Section 75 equality category. The main issue raised is that people in a number of the categories have constraints on when they can visit the library due to caring responsibilities, work or school and health or disability needs.

5.26 The responses indicated a need for long and varied opening hours in all libraries. This is not possible within available resources. Libraries NI will provide a mixture of opening hours in each library i.e. mornings, afternoons, evenings and weekends in order to maximise access. The pattern of opening hours will be determined in conjunction with customers and the local community.

5.27 Libraries NI will also engage with staff on an individual basis about their working patterns in order to mitigate any adverse impacts on them.

Issues relating to rurality

5.28 There was a strong response from rural dwellers emphasising the important role that the library plays in a rural community.

5.29 62% of adult respondents and 41% of children who live in a rural area said that they, or their local community, would be affected 'a lot' or 'quite a bit' if the opening hours in their nearest branch library or the one they visit most often were reduced. Reference was made in particular to the challenges faced by limited public transport, the need to combine the visit to the library with other essential activities in the local town, the poor broadband coverage in many rural areas and the important role of the library as a community hub and shared social space, given the lack of other alternatives in the area.

- 5.30 Libraries NI recognises the importance of the public library in these rural communities and that the opening hours are already limited to 18 hours per week in many cases. The consultation document stated that no library should be open for less than 18 hours per week and this position is confirmed.
- 5.31 Libraries NI also recognises that rural deprivation manifests itself very differently from deprivation in urban areas and that traditional measures of deprivation are not always applicable. In order to mirror the approach being taken to urban deprivation (as set out in paragraph 2.2 above) it is recommended, in the context of the 2015/16 budget, that no library in a rural settlement (i.e. in Bands F, G and H as set out in the Review of the Statistical Classification and Delineation of Settlements, 2015) should have its hours reduced by more than 10%.
- 5.32 In the case of three rural libraries the proposed opening hours would mean a reduction of more than 10%. Consequently it is recommended that for 2015/16 the opening hours of these libraries should be reduced as shown in the table below:

Library	April 2014 Hours	Proposed hours (per consultation)	% reduction	Proposed revised opening hours
Keady	33	28	15.1%	30
Maghera	40	35	12.5%	38
Strathfoyle	30	25	16.7%	28

Issues relating to individual libraries

- 5.33 The comments submitted on the questionnaires referred to almost every library by name, emphasising the important role that it plays in the local community and criticising any proposed reductions in opening hours. However there were a small number of libraries which attracted substantial feedback in the consultation process.

Brownlow Library

- 5.34 A petition with 201 signatures was sent to DCAL opposing cuts in a deprived area

It is not clear how many of the signatories use Brownlow Library. The Library serves one SOA in the 10% most deprived, based on the NIMDM 2010 so does not meet the Libraries NI definition of a library serving an area of substantial social need.

Limavady Library

- 5.35 A similar letter was received from five local politicians who argued that Limavady Library should not have its hours reduced as it serves areas of deprivation.
- 5.36 Limavady Library directly serves two SOAs in the 10% most deprived based on the Northern Ireland Multiple Deprivation Measure (NIMDM) 2010. This means that it does not meet the Libraries NI criteria for a library that serves an area of substantial social need. A number of other libraries would be in the same position as Limavady, in that they directly serve two SOAs in the 10% most deprived.

Lisnaskea Library

- 5.37 Two local MLAs made written submissions arguing that it would be inappropriate to base the opening hours of the new Lisnaskea Library, which opened on 8 April 2015, on the level of use of the old library which had limited facilities and car parking and was in a much poorer location, away from the town centre and up a steep hill. This view was repeated in a number of the questionnaire responses. Respondents pointed out that the historic level of use is only slightly below the level required for it to be in a higher opening hour band.
- 5.38 The new Lisnaskea Library is proving very popular and there is merit in the argument that has been put forward by consultees. There is no other library in this situation i.e. a new library with a proposed reduction in opening hours. It is recommended that Lisnaskea Library's hours be retained at 30 hours per week, rather than reduce to 28 hours, and that this situation should be monitored.

Portrush Library

- 5.39 Respondents stated that a 12 hour reduction in opening hours in Portrush Library, resulting in it being open for 28 hours per week was unacceptable. This is a significant reduction in opening hours, but is based on a consistent application of the draft policy.

Strathfoyle Library

- 5.40 A number of written responses related to Strathfoyle Library including the output from a local community consultation process held as part of a broader community public engagement day, linked to community planning. The issues raised relate to:
- the pivotal role that Strathfoyle Library plays in the local community
 - deprivation, i.e. it is a DSD Area at Risk and is within the 12% most deprived SOAs
 - Strathfoyle should be classed as rural
 - the need to measure the true impact of a local library rather than measuring that which is easy to measure

Strathfoyle was reclassified to rural during the course of consultation and the updated RIA reflects this position. As identified in paragraph 5.32 above, it is recommended that the opening hours in Strathfoyle should be reduced from 30 to 28, instead of 25 as originally proposed, in line with the recommendation that, in 2015/16, no rural library should have its opening hours reduced by more than 10%.

Other Libraries

- 5.41 Some respondents queried the need for two libraries in Antrim i.e. Antrim Library and Greystone Library. At this stage usage figures would suggest that both libraries are viable, but there may be a need longer term to consider the position.

General Issues

- 5.42 Consultees made a number of suggestions about ways to avoid reductions in opening hours. These included reducing expenditure in other areas of the library service, reducing staffing levels in branch libraries, using volunteers and generating income.
- 5.43 Libraries NI has had to make substantial savings since its creation in April 2009. Priority has been given within this process to the protection of frontline services. However the extent of the current budget cuts means that it is impossible to live within budget without affecting access to services i.e. opening hours. In order to live within budget in 2015/16 savings are being made in every aspect of the budget including stock, managerial and support staff and maintenance. Consideration is being given also to means of income generation.
- 5.44 The proposed opening hours are based on the staffing levels necessary to provide an acceptable level of customer care and to deliver agreed programmes
- 5.45 Libraries NI has a volunteer policy, agreed with the unions, and plans to implement a number of volunteer roles in 2015/16. However these will complement the work of paid staff rather than replace them.
- 5.46 It was suggested that Libraries NI should consider library opening hours in the context of community planning. Libraries NI responded to the consultation on the Draft Local Government (Community Planning Partners) Order (Northern Ireland) 2015 suggesting that it should be a statutory partner. Contact has also been established with the new councils and, in several cases, Libraries NI staff have attended workshops and meetings in relation to community planning.
- 5.47 A number of further suggestions were made about issues which Libraries NI should consider for the future, as follows:
- the development of a more robust and refined methodology that distinguishes between needs in urban and rural areas

- a more sophisticated approach to measuring library use that would involve weighting different types of use
- given the disparity in activity levels in similar types of libraries, rolling out best practice across all libraries
- considering the potential offered by 'open libraries', an approach used in a few libraries in the Republic of Ireland and more widely in Scandinavia which uses technology to extend opening hours with a limited range of services available.

All of these issues will be considered further during 2015/16.

Mellon Centre for Migration Studies (MCMS)

5.48 Further consultation and consideration is required in respect of MCMS, a specialist public library at the Ulster American Folk Park. There needs to be a strong relationship between the opening hours of the two organisations and it is not yet clear how the budget cuts imposed on National Museums Northern Ireland will impact on the opening hours of the Ulster American Folk Park. It is recommended that further consultation be undertaken with relevant parties in respect of the MCMS and that a report is brought to the Board via Services Committee in due course

6. Conclusion and Recommendations

6.1 There was a substantial response to the public consultation process, both in terms of completion of questionnaires and through receipt of written responses. Having considered these responses, it is recommended as follows:

6.1.1 The draft Opening Hours Policy should be adopted, with an amendment as highlighted below:

Libraries NI will seek to ensure that:

- a consistent approach is applied across all libraries; exceptions may be made for libraries serving areas of substantial social need **and/or rural libraries**
- opening hours relate to the historic level of use of a library
- the allocated hours are used in a way that best meets customer need
- the allocated hours in every library are sufficient to provide a range of opening hours to suit different customer groups and to allow a minimum range of programmes to be delivered in line with Libraries NI's priorities
- the opening hours are affordable
- the opening hours are sustainable i.e. ad hoc closures due to staffing shortages should be avoided other than in exceptional circumstances.

- 6.1.2 In the context of the 2015/16 budget no library should open for fewer than 18 hours per week.
- 6.1.3 In the context of the 2015/16 budget, no library serving areas of substantial social deprivation (as listed in the Libraries NI Draft Business Plan 2015/16) and no rural library (as listed in the RIA) should have its hours reduced by more than 10%.
- 6.1.4 The opening hours of Lisnaskea Library should be retained at 30 hours per week, given that it is a new library on a new site. Use should be monitored.
- 6.1.5 Further consideration should be given to the opening hours of the Mellon Centre for Migration Studies following consultation with relevant parties and a report should be brought to the Board via the Services Committee in due course.
- 6.1.6 The draft final EQIA and the draft final RIA be noted.

CONSULTATION REPORT – OPENING HOURS POLICY

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The draft Budget for 2015/16 requires Libraries NI to make savings of 7.5%, which is £2.385 million, compared with the initial budget for 2014/15. The draft budget document states *'While the Minister has given the libraries sector a measure of protection from cuts to avoid library closures, there will be reductions in opening hours, and on discretionary spending such as book stocks and building maintenance. Libraries NI will continue to prioritise its resources to encourage new users from areas of social deprivation to make use of the wide range of facilities and activities on offer, whilst at the same time provide a service for everyone. The needs of those in rural communities will continue to be at the forefront of Libraries NI's outreach programme.'*
- 1.2 There is a network of 98 libraries in Northern Ireland and in each library skilled and committed staff deliver a range of valued and valuable services to the public. The Board of Libraries NI believes that it is important to maintain the network of sustainable libraries across Northern Ireland, but in order to do so and live within budget it has no option but to reduce opening hours and is, therefore seeking views on the proposals.
- 1.3 "Emergency reduced" opening hours were introduced urgently without consultation in November 2014 because of the in-year budget cut of 4.4%. This consultation relates to a draft policy which sets out the overarching approach to establishing the opening hours of libraries and supporting documentation which shows the impact of that policy on opening hours in the context of the 2015/16 draft budget.
- 1.4 The revised opening hours take account of the proposed 2015/16 budget allocation to Libraries NI; it is anticipated that this will be finalised in March 2015.

2. Draft Policy

- 2.1 In determining the opening hours of libraries, Libraries NI will seek to ensure that:
- a consistent approach is applied across all libraries; exceptions may be made for libraries serving areas of substantial social need
 - opening hours relate to the historic level of use of a library
 - the allocated hours are used in a way that best meets customer need

- the allocated hours in every library are sufficient to provide a range of opening hours to suit different customer groups and to allow a minimum range of programmes to be delivered in line with Libraries NI's priorities
- the opening hours are affordable
- the opening hours are sustainable i.e. ad hoc closures due to staffing shortages are avoided other than in exceptional circumstances.

2.2 In the context of the draft budget for 2015/16, it is proposed that:

- no library should be open for fewer than 18 hours per week. If a library is open for less time than this, it is difficult to implement the policy of providing a range of opening hours to suit different customer groups and to allow a minimum range of programmes to be delivered in line with Libraries NI' priorities. Many of the libraries which are currently open for 18 hours per week are located in rural communities⁵.
- no library serving areas of substantial social deprivation (as listed in the Libraries NI Draft Business Plan 2015/16⁶) should have its hours reduced by more than 10%.

3. Proposals

3.1 The detail of the proposed opening hours appears in Annex A. For ease of reference, libraries serving areas of substantial social deprivation are marked with a T. Libraries located in rural communities are marked with a R.

3.2 It is proposed that there should be eight bands of libraries as follows:

Band	Proposed Hours	Level of Use
One	54 hours per week	Over 350,000
Two	50 hours per week	240,000 to 350,000
Three	45 hours per week	180,000 to 240,000
Four	40 hours per week	100,000 to 180,000
Five	35 hours per week	80,000 to 100,000
Six	28 hours per week	70,000 to 80,000
Seven	25 hours per week	47,000 to 70,000
Eight	18 hours per week	25,000 to 47,000

3.3 Within all of these bands it is possible to provide a mixture of morning, afternoon, evening and weekend hours.

⁵ Rural communities are defined as those in Bands F, G and H i.e. communities of 4,500 or less in NISRA's Statistical Classification and Delineation of Settlements.

⁶ These are Ardoyne, Chichester, Colin Glen, Creggan, Falls Road, Holywood Arches, Shankill, Shantallow, Suffolk, Waterside, Whiterock and Woodstock Libraries.

- 3.4 Libraries NI provides two specialist heritage libraries, the Mellon Centre for Migration Studies (30 hours per week temporarily reduced to 22 hours) and the Irish and Local Studies in Armagh (40 hours per week temporarily reduced to 34 hours). The measures that can be used to assess the level of use of these specialist heritage libraries are more limited than for mainstream branch libraries. It is proposed that, in both libraries, 35 hours per week should form the basis for public consultation. In the case of MCMS it is proposed that opening hours should be seasonal to reflect the seasonal variations in visits to the Ulster American Folk Park. Detailed discussions with the partner organisations will be required.

Consultation Report: Annex A

Library	April 2014 hours	Nov 2014 hours	Visits 2013/14	Issues 2013/14	Renewals 2013/14	PAT Sessions 2013/14	Participants in activities 2013/14	Active Members April 2014	Total Level of Use	TSE/Rural	Proposed Hours
Belfast Central	57	55	333,321	44,002	18,954	121,522	986	6,451	525,236		54
Derry Central	57	54.5	289,866	75,284	29,069	77,138	8,245	8,667	488,269		54
Lisburn City	57	52	213,833	131,205	44,338	61,348	6,371	12,052	469,147		54
Bangor Carnegie	57	52	206,818	153,324	39,620	32,585	5,642	10,365	448,354		54
Omagh	57	51	147,701	110,059	46,754	42,918	6,801	9,898	364,131		54
Ballymena Central	57	48	148,690	95,891	34,480	36,787	7,061	7,790	330,699		50
Newry City	57	52	147,738	77,467	31,429	39,219	2,592	6,727	305,172		50
Enniskillen	57	51	149,952	64,394	28,985	37,311	4,820	5,457	290,919		50
Dungannon	57	51	140,098	62,732	25,000	32,615	5,516	5,743	271,704		50
Carrickfergus	57	51	112,757	84,645	28,609	33,316	5,394	5,771	270,492		50
Coleraine	57	53	131,788	61,710	20,524	29,740	5,199	4,922	253,883		50
Lurgan	57	51	107,080	73,752	26,514	26,300	8,770	6,506	248,922		50
Finaghy	48	41.5	143,026	54,413	19,628	15,110	11,754	2,674	246,605		50
Glengormley	57	48	91,758	85,455	31,505	20,420	5,752	6,713	241,603		50

Consultation Report: Annex A

Library	April 2014 hours	Nov 2014 hours	Visits 2013/14	Issues 2013/14	Renewals 2013/14	PAT Sessions 2013/14	Participants in activities 2013/14	Active Members April 2014	Total Level of Use	TSE/Rural	Proposed Hours
Ormeau	48	46	114,531	56,545	20,554	31,071	5,109	4,084	231,894		45
Antrim	49.5	45	118,717	59,501	17,320	26,422	4,900	4,325	231,185		45
Portadown	48	45	106,299	59,308	26,489	27,364	3,995	5,081	228,536		45
Cookstown	57	48	87,183	61,709	26,428	27,755	3,639	5,415	212,129		45
Armagh	48	44.5	95,242	56,103	25,159	24,261	1,867	5,075	207,707		45
Downpatrick	48	45	98,417	55,116	19,657	26,262	3,025	4,904	207,381		45
Magherafelt	48	45	86,305	56,962	22,487	20,698	7,802	4,560	198,814		45
Banbridge	48	44.5	77,992	62,673	20,711	19,215	6,345	4,871	191,807		45
Strabane	48	44	94,907	46,318	14,222	21,611	7,684	5,284	190,026		45
Waterside	48	45.5	73,338	64,953	21,605	17,267	3,590	5,281	186,034	T	45
Limavady	48	45.5	81,443	46,027	15,753	17,647	3,397	3,989	168,256		40
Newcastle	40	40	84,327	44,823	15,094	16,538	2,166	3,137	166,085		40
Larne	48	45	78,656	48,609	12,880	16,858	2,027	3,395	162,425		40
Ballyhackamore	40.5	40.5	79,861	47,329	16,269	6,986	2,211	3,468	156,124		40
Holywood	40	40	73,621	47,366	14,847	10,804	1,836	2,956	151,430		40

Consultation Report: Annex A

Library	April 2014 hours	Nov 2014 hours	Visits 2013/14	Issues 2013/14	Renewals 2013/14	PAT Sessions 2013/14	Participants in activities 2013/14	Active Members April 2014	Total Level of Use	TSE/ Rural	Proposed Hours
Newtownards	40	40	71,760	46,527	13,160	11,308	1,932	3,683	148,370		40
Hollywood Arches	40	40	68,424	41,189	10,983	17,677	6,443	2,748	147,464	T	40
Ballyclare	40	40	76,336	41,904	12,383	7,614	6,651	2,363	147,251		40
Lisburn Road	40	40	65,197	46,574	17,887	4,403	4,892	2,899	141,852		40
Grove	40	40	82,102	28,190	8,428	9,367	4,940	2,205	135,232		40
Newtownbreda	40	40	50,021	53,596	18,923	6,798	2,292	3,164	134,794		40
Shantallow	40	36	67,678	34,756	9,576	13,002	6,347	3,271	134,630	T	40
Ballymoney	40	40	50,124	47,636	12,861	9,063	3,868	2,992	126,544		40
Chichester	40	40	62,286	31,362	11,901	7,183	3,016	2,207	117,955	T	40
Warrenpoint	40	36	44,333	39,775	13,762	8,001	2,615	2,906	111,392		40
Cregagh	40	40	44,487	38,652	12,535	8,306	3,343	2,128	109,451		40
Colin Glen	40	40	52,371	27,616	8,488	13,724	3,325	3,583	109,107	T	40
Dundonald	40	40	50,216	31,263	9,676	8,000	3,192	2,247	104,594		40
Woodstock	30	30	51,078	30,876	8,224	7,775	1,741	2,133	101,827	T	40
Shankill	40.5	40.5	55,204	21,168	5,044	15,810	2,169	2,220	101,615	T	40

Consultation Report: Annex A

Library	April 2014 hours	Nov 2014 hours	Visits 2013/14	Issues 2013/14	Renewals 2013/14	PAT Sessions 2013/14	Participants in activities 2013/14	Active Members April 2014	Total Level of Use	TSE/Rural	Proposed Hours
Kilkeel	40	40	39,575	36,834	14,150	6,180	2,196	2,577	101,512		40
Falls Road	40.5	40.5	45,960	22,037	7,544	13,644	8,332	2,748	100,265	T	40
Suffolk	40.5	38.45	37,910	20,370	6,656	8,342	2,457	2,512	78,247	T	40
Maghera	40	40	34,883	35,772	15,474	5,883	3,522	2,274	97,808	R	35
Ballynahinch	40	40	39,643	30,271	13,589	6,744	3,440	2,114	95,801		35
Rathcoole	40	40	52,285	19,102	5,157	11,192	2,573	1,742	92,051		35
Ballycastle	40	37.5	44,296	27,184	10,059	6,188	2,061	1,837	91,625		35
Donaghadee	40	40	32,957	38,419	9,924	5,296	2,288	2,071	90,955		35
Portstewart	40	40	45,101	25,458	9,705	6,642	1,332	1,664	89,902		35
Comber	40	40	30,828	33,409	13,924	3,878	2,539	2,113	86,691		35
Brownlow	40	39	28,571	30,462	10,104	8,164	1,964	2,120	81,385		35
Coalisland	40	40	34,001	26,896	9,008	5,982	2,054	2,423	80,364		35
Ardoyne	37	37	40,564	13,999	4,382	8,240	4,273	1,676	73,134	T	35
Whiterock	37	37	23,210	12,118	3,445	8,022	4,122	1,886	52,803	T	35

Consultation Report: Annex A

Library	April 2014 hours	Nov 2014 hours	Visits 2013/14	Issues 2013/14	Renewals 2013/14	PAT Sessions 2013/14	Participants in activities 2013/14	Active Members April 2014	Total Level of Use	TSE/Rural	Proposed Hours
Portrush	40	38.5	39,630	20,020	6,435	10,239	1,572	1,304	79,200		28
Lisnaskea	30	30	35,931	21,367	10,861	6,544	2,133	1,680	78,516	R	28
Greystone	30	20	47,449	14,302	6,750	3,506	4,915	1,474	78,396		28
Irvinestown	30	30	35,736	23,734	11,789	3,161	1,705	1,388	77,513	R	28
Keady	33	29	38,896	17,812	5,381	10,562	1,924	1,385	75,960	R	28
Whitehead	30	26	37,480	21,618	6,325	3,686	1,545	1,378	72,032	R	28
Dromore	25	25	29,057	25,540	8,644	4,743	2,357	1,557	71,898		28
Creggan	30	26	27,166	14,630	6,389	4,790	5,612	1,371	59,958	T	28
Strathfoyle	30	30	33,896	16,783	4,256	5,932	3,897	919	65,683		25
Randalstown	30	30	28,847	20,532	9,708	3,210	335	1,418	64,050		25
Rathfriland	25	25	21,411	25,516	11,155	1,845	2,192	1,578	63,697	R	25
Greenisland	30	27	30,091	19,718	6,494	3,639	836	1,225	62,003		25
Castleberg	25	25	25,232	20,510	6,327	4,134	3,803	1,394	61,400	R	25
Dungiven	25.5	24.5	22,677	22,163	5,841	3,933	2,444	1,653	58,711	R	25
Tullycarnet	30	25	21,022	19,885	7,184	5,103	2,130	913	56,237		25

Consultation Report: Annex A

Library	April 2014 hours	Nov 2014 hours	Visits 2013/14	Issues 2013/14	Renewals 2013/14	PAT Sessions 2013/14	Participants in activities 2013/14	Active Members April 2014	Total Level of Use	TSE/Rural	Proposed Hours
Bessbrook	25	25	17,414	25,976	7,557	2,336	1,518	1,282	56,083		25
Castlewellan	25	25	21,376	19,588	8,104	3,671	1,805	1,404	55,948	R	25
Saintfield	25	25	19,679	22,046	9,229	2,290	1,230	1,351	55,825	R	25
Carryduff	18	18	18,669	21,547	6,133	1,781	1,626	1,208	50,964		25
Moira	18	18	16,638	20,887	7,982	839	2,762	1,214	50,322	R	25
Tandragee	25	25	13,761	21,105	6,542	2,973	1,533	1,173	47,087	R	25
Portaferry	18	18	18,264	16,849	5,973	2,731	1,583	1,172	46,572	R	18
Cushendall	18	18	21,295	15,270	4,812	1,641	283	861	44,162	R	18
Killyleagh	18	18	21,631	13,465	4,663	1,506	1,244	970	43,479	R	18
Crumlin	18	18	18,630	14,532	4,946	1,576	1,133	1,192	42,009	R	18
Kilrea	18	18	17,705	14,747	5,659	1,585	665	843	41,204	R	18
Cloughfern	18	18	23,113	11,756	3,593	1,406	232	805	40,905		18
Portglenone	18	18	13,672	17,250	6,214	1,323	418	882	39,759	R	18
Broughshane	18	18	17,503	15,633	3,733	1,103	71	745	38,788	R	18
Fivemiletown	18	18	10,000	16,987	5,892	3,432	1,078	894	38,283	R	18

Consultation Report: Annex A

Library	April 2014 hours	Nov 2014 hours	Visits 2013/14	Issues 2013/14	Renewals 2013/14	PAT Sessions 2013/14	Participants in activities 2013/14	Active Members April 2014	Total Level of Use	TSE/Rural	Proposed Hours
Richhill	18	18	17,154	13,072	5,276	1,306	621	747	38,176	R	18
Draperstown	18	18	10,737	17,229	5,127	2,195	1,258	1,180	37,726	R	18
Fintona	18	18	16,311	12,059	5,132	1,410	1,617	611	37,140	R	18
Crossmaglen	18	18	9,370	13,285	4,986	1,091	669	243	29,644	R	18
Garvagh	18	18	10,025	12,063	4,361	874	897	683	28,903	R	18
Kells and Connor	18	18	13,164	8,605	3,485	816	1,056	594	27,720	R	18
Newtownstewart	18	18	11,769	8,950	2,827	1,437	1,228	535	26,746	R	18
Carnlough	18	18	10,223	10,201	3,906	880	314	507	26,031	R	18



Questionnaire Number:
Branch Code:

Consultation Questionnaire 2015

Section 1 – Opening Hours Policy

- Q1. The draft opening hours policy states that a consistent approach to opening hours should be applied across all libraries.**

To what extent do you agree or disagree with this?

Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

If you disagree or strongly disagree, please give the reason(s) for your answer and/or any alternative suggestions.

- Q2. The draft opening hours policy states that exceptions may be made for libraries serving areas of substantial social need.**

To what extent do you agree or disagree with this?

Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

If you disagree or strongly disagree, please give the reason(s) for your answer and/or any alternative suggestions.

Q3. The draft opening hours policy states that opening hours should relate to the historic level of use of a library.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with this?

Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

If you disagree or strongly disagree, please give the reason(s) for your answer and/or any alternative suggestions.

Q4. The draft opening hours policy states that the allocated hours should be used in a way that best meets customer need.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with this?

Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

If you disagree or strongly disagree, please give the reason(s) for your answer and/or any alternative suggestions.

Q5. The draft opening hours policy states that the allocated hours in every library should be sufficient to provide a range of opening hours to suit different customer groups and to allow a minimum range of programmes to be delivered in line with Libraries NI's priorities.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with this?

Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

If you disagree or strongly disagree, please give the reason(s) for your answer and/or any alternative suggestions.

Q6. The draft opening hours policy states that the opening hours should be affordable.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with this?

Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

If you disagree or strongly disagree, please give the reason(s) for your answer and/or any alternative suggestions.

Q7. The draft opening hours policy states that the opening hours should be sustainable i.e. ad hoc closures due to staffing shortages are avoided other than in exceptional circumstances.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with this?

Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

If you disagree or strongly disagree, please give the reason(s) for your answer and/or any alternative suggestions.

Section 2 – Opening Hours Proposals

- Q8. Because of the funding situation Libraries NI needs to reduce the opening hours of libraries in order to make the savings that are required and to keep all libraries open in 2015/16.**

To what extent do you agree or disagree that opening hours should be reduced?

Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

If you disagree or strongly disagree, please give the reason(s) for your answer and/or any alternative suggestions as to how Libraries NI might achieve the savings required and still continue to provide appropriate services.

- Q9. Based on the draft policy set out earlier the proposal is that all libraries should be open for at least 18 hours per week as it is difficult to provide a range of opening hours to suit different customers if a library is open for less than this.**

To what extent do you agree or disagree with this approach?

Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

If you disagree or strongly disagree, please give the reason(s) for your answer and/or any alternative suggestions about this issue.

- Q10.** Based on the draft policy set out earlier it is proposed that libraries that serve areas of substantial social deprivation should not have their hours reduced by more than 10%.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with this approach?

Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

If you disagree or strongly disagree, please give the reason(s) for your answer and/or any alternative suggestions about this issue.

- Q11.** Libraries NI proposes that consultation on the new pattern of opening hours (e.g. morning/afternoon/evening etc) should be undertaken with local users in each library.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with this approach?

Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

If you disagree or strongly disagree, please give the reason(s) for your answer and/or suggestions for an alternative approach.

Section 3 – About you

Q12. Are you a member of a library in Northern Ireland?

Yes

No

Q13. How often do you visit a library in Northern Ireland?

More than once a week

Once a week

Fortnightly

Once every 3 to 4 weeks

Less frequently

Never → Go to Q15

Q14. Which library do you visit most often? (Write in name of library)

Q15. Are you a member of Libraries NI staff?

Yes

No

Q16. Are you male or female?

Male

Female

Q17. Which age range do you fall under?

16 – 24 years

25 – 34 years

35 – 49 years

50 – 59 years

60 years and over

Q18. Are you... (Tick one only)

- Single
- Married/cohabiting
- Divorced/separated
- Widowed
- Civil partnership
- Civil Partnership Dissolution/Annulment
- Surviving Civil Partner

Q19. What is your country of birth? (Tick one only)

- Northern Ireland
- England
- Wales
- Scotland
- Republic of Ireland
- Other (write in country) _____

Q20. What is your ethnic group? (Tick one only)

- White
- Chinese
- Irish Traveller
- Indian
- Pakistani
- Bangladeshi
- Black African
- Black Caribbean
- Black Other
- Mixed Origin
- Other (please specify) _____

Q21. Are you currently... (Tick one only)

- | | | | |
|-------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------|
| In full time employment | <input type="checkbox"/> | Looking after home/family | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| In part time employment | <input type="checkbox"/> | Temporarily sick/injured | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Self-employed | <input type="checkbox"/> | Permanently sick/disabled | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Unemployed | <input type="checkbox"/> | Retired | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Student | <input type="checkbox"/> | Other (please specify) | <input type="checkbox"/> |
- _____

Q22. Do you consider yourself to have a disability or illness that substantially limits your ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities?

Yes

No → Go to Q24

Q23. What is the nature of this disability or illness? (Tick all that apply)

Mobility Learning

Hearing Mental Health

Sight Other _____
(please specify)

Q24. Do you have someone who is dependent on you, i.e. a child, someone with an incapacitating disability, an elderly person?

Yes

No

Section 4 – Equality Considerations

Q25. Under our commitment to promoting equality of opportunity between certain groups within society, Libraries NI needs to consider the equality implications of the draft policy. A report on the potential equality implications is available on the Libraries NI website.

Do you believe the draft policy would have an effect on you (if any) by reason of... (Tick all that apply)

Your religious belief

Your political opinion

Your racial group

Your age

Your marital status

Your sexual orientation

Your gender

Because you have a disability

Because you have dependants

} If you ticked any of these boxes, go to Q26

No effect → Go to Q27

Q26. Please give the reason(s) for your answer(s).

Section 5 – Rurality Considerations

Q27. Under our commitment to considering the impact of our policies on rural dwellers, Libraries NI needs to consider the rural implications of the draft policy. A report on the potential rural implications is available on the Libraries NI website.

Would you describe the place where you live as... (Tick one only)

- A big city
 - The suburbs or outskirts of a big city
 - A small city or town
 - A country village
 - A farm or a home in the country
- } →Go to Q29

} →Go to Q28

Q28. If you live in a country village, a farm or home in the country, to what extent would you or your local community be affected by the draft policy?

A lot	Quite a bit	A little	Not at all	Don't know
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

If you consider that you (as a rural dweller) or your local community will be affected a lot or quite a bit, please give the reason(s) for your answer.

Section 6 – General Impact

- Q29.** Libraries NI is considering whether neighbouring libraries should open at different times so that customers can visit a different library if their nearest library is closed. To what extent would you find this useful or not?

Extremely useful	Very useful	Somewhat useful	Not very useful	Not at all useful
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

- Q30.** Please give the reasons for your answer.

- Q31.** Do you think there is anything Libraries NI could do to minimise any negative impacts of the draft policy?

Yes → Go to Q32
 No } → Go to end
 Don't know/no opinion }

- Q32.** If 'Yes', please give details.

Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire!

Completed questionnaires should be returned either:

- In the box provided in the library

OR

- By post to: Ms Helen Osborn
Director of Library Services
Omagh Regional Administrative Centre
1 Spillars Place
Omagh
BT78 1HL

The closing date for receipt of completed questionnaires is **17 April 2015**. If you require this questionnaire in an alternative language or format, please contact Diane McGlynn on 028 8225 3703.



Questionnaire Number:
Branch Code:

Opening Hours Review 2015

Consent Form (for children under 16 years of age)

I give consent for my child to be a participant in this public consultation on the Review of Opening Hours in libraries in Northern Ireland

Date:

Signed:
(Parent/guardian)

Please turn over page →

Please answer the following questions about your child (under 16 years of age).

A. What is your child's ethnic group? (Tick one only)

- White
- Chinese
- Irish Traveller
- Indian
- Pakistani
- Bangladeshi
- Black African
- Black Caribbean
- Black Other
- Mixed Origin
- Other (please specify) _____

B. Does your child have a long-term disability or illness that substantially limits their ability to carry out normal day to-day activities?

- Yes → Go to C
- No

C. What is the nature of this disability or illness?

(Tick all that apply)

- | | | | |
|----------|--------------------------|------------------|--------------------------|
| Mobility | <input type="checkbox"/> | Learning | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Hearing | <input type="checkbox"/> | Mental Health | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Sight | <input type="checkbox"/> | Other | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | | (please specify) | _____ |
| | | | _____ |



Questionnaire Number:
Branch Code:

Child/Young persons' Consultation Questionnaire

Section 1 - Library opening hours

Q1 Libraries NI needs to shorten the times that libraries are open so that it can save money and help stop some libraries from closing down. This means that some libraries will be open for shorter hours or on less days than they are now.

Do you think that it is a good or bad idea to shorten opening hours to save money and help stop some libraries from closing down? (Tick one box)

Good idea

Bad idea

Don't know

If you ticked 'Good idea' or 'Don't know', go to Q3 on the next page

If you ticked 'Bad idea', go to Q2 below

Q2. Please tell us why you think it is a bad idea.

Q3. Libraries NI has worked out 8 new sets of library opening hours shown below:

- 54 hours each week
- 50 hours each week
- 45 hours each week
- 40 hours each week
- 35 hours each week
- 28 hours each week
- 25 hours each week
- 18 hours each week

Libraries NI thinks that new opening hours should mostly depend on how busy each library is. This means that busier libraries will be open the most hours and smaller libraries will be open for 18 hours each week.

Do you think this is the best way to work out how long libraries should be open for? (Tick one box)

Yes

No

Don't know

If you ticked 'Yes' or 'Don't know', go to Q5 on the next page

If you ticked 'No', go to Q4 below

Q4. Please tell us why you ticked 'No'.

Q5. Libraries NI thinks that they should talk to people who use each library when working out the new pattern of opening hours (e.g. morning/afternoon/evening etc).

Do you think it would be a good or bad idea to talk to people who use each library when working out the new opening hours? (Tick one box)

Good idea

Bad idea

Don't know

If you ticked '**Good idea**' or '**Don't know**', go to Q7 in Section 2

If you ticked '**Bad idea**', go to Q6 below

Q6. Please tell us why you think it would be a bad idea.

Section 2 - About you

Q7. Are you a boy or girl? (Tick one box)

Boy

Girl

Q8. How old are you? (Tick one box)

5 - 8 years old

9 - 11 years old

12 - 15 years old

Q9. What country were you born in? (Tick one box)

- Northern Ireland
- England
- Wales
- Scotland
- Republic of Ireland
- Other (write in country) _____

Q10. Are you a member of a library in Northern Ireland?

Yes

No

Q11. How often do you visit a library in Northern Ireland?

(Tick one box)

More than once a week

Once a week

Once every 2 weeks

Once every 3 to 4 weeks

Less often

Never

Q12. Would you describe the place where you live as... (Tick one box)

A big city

The suburbs or outskirts of a big city

A small city or town

} If you ticked one of
these boxes Go to
Q14 in Section 3

A country village

A farm or a home in the country

} If you ticked one of
these boxes Go to
Q13

Q13. If you live in a country village, a farm or home in the country, how much would you or your local community be affected if the opening hours in your nearest library or the one you visit most often were shortened? (Tick one box)

A lot	Quite a bit	A little	Not at all	Don't know
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Section 3 - And finally...

Q14. Do you want to say anything else about the changes to library opening hours?

Yes → Go to Q15

No → Go to end

Q15. If 'Yes', please give details.

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

Now place it in the box in the library or give it to the library staff.

Opening Hours – Proposed Changes

NB. The November 2014 hours are the ‘temporary reduced’ or ‘emergency reduced’ opening hours introduced when Libraries NI was required to make an in-year cut of 4.4% of its budget at short notice.

In the tables below, within each band, libraries are listed in order of level of use from highest to lowest.

Library	Opening Hours April 2014	Opening Hours November 2014	Proposed Hours
Band 1			
Belfast Central	57	55	54
Derry Central	57	54.5	54
Lisburn City	57	52	54
Bangor Carnegie	57	52	54
Omagh	57	51	54

Library	Opening Hours April 2014	Opening Hours November 2014	Proposed Hours
Band 2			
Ballymena	57	48	50
Newry City	57	52	50
Enniskillen	57	51	50
Dungannon	57	51	50
Carrickfergus	57	51	50
Coleraine	57	53	50
Lurgan	57	51	50
Finaghy	48	41.5	50
Glengormley	57	48	50

Library	Opening Hours April 2014	Opening Hours November 2014	Proposed Hours
Band 3			
Ormeau	48	46	45
Antrim	49.5	45	45
Portadown	48	45	45
Cookstown	57	48	45
Armagh	48	44.5	45
Downpatrick	48	45	45
Magherafelt	48	45	45
Banbridge	48	44.5	45
Strabane	48	44	45
Waterside	48	45.5	45

Appendix 2

Library	Opening Hours April 2014	Opening Hours November 2014	Proposed Hours	Note
Band 4				
Limavady	48	45.5	40	
Newcastle	40	40	40	
Larne	48	45	40	
Ballyhackamore	40.5	40.5	40	
Holywood	40	40	40	
Newtownards	40	40	40	
Holywood Arches	40	40	40	
Ballyclare	40	40	40	
Lisburn Road	40	40	40	
Grove	40	40	40	
Newtownbreda	40	40	40	
Shantallow	40	36	40	
Ballymoney	40	40	40	
Chichester	40	40	40	
Warrenpoint	40	36	40	
Cregagh	40	40	40	
Colin Glen	40	40	40	
Dundonald	40	40	40	
Woodstock	30	30	40	
Shankill	40.5	40.5	40	
Kilkeel	40	40	40	
Falls Road	40.5	40.5	40	
Suffolk	40.5	38.45	40	1

Library	Opening Hours April 2014	Opening Hours November 2014	Proposed Hours	Note
Band 5				
Maghera	40	40	35	
Ballynahinch	40	40	35	
Rathcoole	40	40	35	
Ballycastle	40	37.5	35	
Donaghadee	40	40	35	
Portstewart	40	40	35	
Comber	40	40	35	
Brownlow	40	39	35	
Coalisland	40	40	35	
Ardoyne	37	37	35	1
Whiterock	37	37	35	1

Appendix 2

Library	Opening Hours April 2014	Opening Hours November 2014	Proposed Hours	Note
Band 6				
Portrush	40	38.5	28	
Lisnaskea	30	30	28	
Greystone	30	20	28	
Irvinestown	30	30	28	
Keady	33	29	28	
Whitehead	30	26	28	
Dromore	25	25	28	
Creggan	30	26	28	1

Library	Opening Hours April 2014	Opening Hours November 2014	Proposed Hours
Band 7			
Strathfoyle	30	30	25
Randalstown	30	30	25
Rathfriland	25	25	25
Greenisland	30	27	25
Castledearg	25	25	25
Dungiven	25.5	24.5	25
Tullycarnet	30	25	25
Bessbrook	25	25	25
Castlewellan	25	25	25
Saintfield	25	25	25
Carryduff	18	18	25
Moira	18	18	25
Tandragee	25	25	25

Library	Opening Hours April 2014	Opening Hours November 2014	Proposed Hours
Band 8			
Portaferry	18	18	18
Cushendall	18	18	18
Killyleagh	18	18	18
Crumlin	18	18	18
Kilrea	18	18	18
Cloughfern	18	18	18
Portglenone	18	18	18
Broughshane	18	18	18
Fivemiletown	18	18	18
Richhill	18	18	18
Draperstown	18	18	18
Fintona	18	18	18
Crossmaglen	18	18	18
Garvagh	18	18	18
Kells and Connor	18	18	18
Newtownstewart	18	18	18
Carnlough	18	18	18

Library	Opening Hours April 2014	Opening Hours November 2014	Proposed Hours	Note
Heritage Libraries				
Irish and Local Studies	40	34	35	2
Mellon Centre for Migration Studies	30	22	35	2

Notes

There are six libraries for which it is proposed to make an exception to the principle of setting opening hours based purely on the historic level of use taking account of issues, renewals, visits, participation in activities and active borrowers

1. There are 12 libraries which have catchment areas with substantial levels of social deprivation as measured by the Northern Ireland Multiple Deprivation Measure (NIMDM) 2010. These are Ardoyne, Chichester, Colin Glen, Creggan, Falls Road, Holywood Arches, Shankill, Shantallow, Suffolk, Waterside, Whiterock and Woodstock. It is proposed that such libraries should not have their opening hours reduced by more than 10% in order to tackle poverty and social exclusion. In the four libraries indicated this means placing them in a higher band of opening hours than pure levels of use would suggest.
2. Heritage libraries are primarily reference libraries so it would not be appropriate to use the full range of indicators that apply in branch libraries to determine opening hours. Instead, the number of visits has been taken into account.

Opening Hours Policy and Proposals

Equality Impact Assessment: Draft Final Report

1. BACKGROUND

Section 75 Duties

1.1 Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 requires all designated public authorities carrying out functions in Northern Ireland to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity:

- between persons of different
 - religious belief
 - political opinion
 - racial group
 - age
 - marital status
 - sexual orientation
- between men and women generally
- between persons with a disability and persons without
- between persons with dependants and persons without.

1.2 Without prejudice to these obligations, public authorities are also required to have regard to the desirability of promoting good relations between persons of different religious beliefs, political opinion or racial group.

1.3 Schedule 9 of the Act sets out the detailed procedure for the implementation of these duties including the conduct of screening exercises and Equality Impact Assessments (EQIA) of policies.

Screening

1.4 In line with Equality Commission for Northern Ireland (ECNI) guidance, the draft policy and proposals regarding opening hours were screened to determine whether there are potentially any significant implications for equality of opportunity and good relations. Briefly, the screening process identified that the policy may have a differential impact on people in some Section 75 groups whose access to libraries is restricted by their work and/or family commitments. These groups include, but are not necessarily limited to:

- children and young people
- people of working age

- older people
- disabled people
- people with dependants.

1.5 The screening process also identified that there may be some differential impacts on some members of staff.

1.6 It was therefore determined that an EQIA should be undertaken and be subjected to consultation in parallel with the consultation process on the draft policy and proposals.

EQIA process

1.7 When undertaking an EQIA, Libraries NI closely follows the ECNI guidance which recommends that there should be seven steps in the EQIA process:

Step 1: Definition of the aims of the policy

Step 2: Consideration of available data and research

Step 3: Assessment of potential and actual impacts

Step 4: Consideration of measures

Step 5: Formal consultation

Step 6: Decision and publication of the results of the EQIA

Step 7: Monitoring for adverse impact.

1.8 A draft EQIA report was prepared in February 2015 and made available for consultation from 18 February 2015 to 17 April 2015. The purpose of the draft report was to present the preliminary findings of the EQIA with regard to the potential equality impacts on people in the Section 75 categories. A final report has now been prepared taking account of the comments made during the consultation process and including the main findings and conclusions.

2. POLICY AND PROPOSALS

2.1 The principal aim of the draft policy is to ensure a consistent approach to determining the opening hours of libraries.

2.2 The draft policy states that in determining the opening hours of libraries:

- a consistent approach should be applied across all libraries; exceptions may be made for libraries serving areas of substantial social need
- opening hours should relate to the historic level of use of a library
- the allocated hours should be used in a way that best meets customer need

- the allocated hours in every library should be sufficient to provide a range of opening hours to suit different customer groups and to allow a minimum range of programmes to be delivered in line with Libraries NI's priorities
- the opening hours should be affordable
- the opening hours should be sustainable i.e. ad hoc closures due to staffing shortages are avoided other than in exceptional circumstances.

2.3 In the context of the draft budget for 2015/16, it is proposed that:

- libraries will open for 54, 50, 45, 40, 35, 28, 25 or 18 hours, depending on the level of use in 2013/14
- no library should be open for fewer than 18 hours per week. If a library is open for less time than this, it is difficult to implement the policy of providing a range of opening hours to suit different customer groups and to allow a minimum range of programmes to be delivered in line with Libraries NI's priorities. Many of the libraries which are currently open for 18 hours per week are located in rural communities⁷.
- no library serving areas of substantial social deprivation (as listed in the Libraries NI Draft Business Plan 2015/16⁸) should have its hours reduced by more than 10%.

2.4 Although the total opening hours of each library in each band will be the same, there is flexibility to agree individual patterns of opening hours for each library. Libraries NI intends to engage with local customers in May and June 2015, once the policy and proposals have been decided by the Libraries NI Board, to determine the pattern of opening hours that best meet customer needs.

2.5 Although the policy and the proposed reductions in opening hours will affect all users, some people will be able to adjust their pattern of library usage and will not be significantly affected. However, those who use libraries on specific days or at specific times of day may be adversely affected, although it is anticipated that all libraries will continue to operate with a mixture of morning, afternoon, evening and weekend hours, unless local consultation on the pattern of hours indicates a different approach is needed. This should reduce the level of impact.

2.6 This EQIA therefore focuses on identifying the impacts on users whose flexibility to access libraries is restricted. The EQIA also considers the impacts on staff.

⁷ Rural communities are defined as those in Bands F, G and H i.e. communities of 5,000 or less in the Review of the Statistical Classification and Delineation of Settlements (NISRA, 2015)

⁸ These are Ardoyne, Chichester, Colin Glen, Creggan, Falls Road, Holywood Arches, Shankill, Shantallow, Suffolk, Waterside, Whiterock and Woodstock Libraries.

3. CONSIDERATION OF AVAILABLE DATA AND RESEARCH

Available data – library users

- 3.1 Libraries NI maintains records of registered users and active borrowers and also measures usage of each library; however, limited information is currently available by Section 75 group.
- 3.2 This information below relates to age and gender as at 1 January 2015.

	Number	Percentage of Registered Users
Male	338,425	41%
Female	484,205	59%
Children (Under 16)	206,647	25%
Senior Citizens (60 and over)	104,094	13%

Table 1: Registered users by age and gender

- 3.3 The Continuous Household Survey (CHS) is a Northern Ireland wide household survey administered by the Central Survey Unit, Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency. DCAL places questions related to public library use annually in the CHS.
- 3.4 The *Findings from the Continuous Household Survey 2013/14*⁹ states as follows:

Usage of the public library service

Just under three out of every ten (29%) of the adult population had used the public library service in the last year, with a higher proportion of females (35%) than males (23%) having done so. The likelihood of having used the public library service was also related to age with more than a third (35%) of those aged 16-44 years having used the public library service in the last year, a higher proportion than those aged 45 years or more (23%).

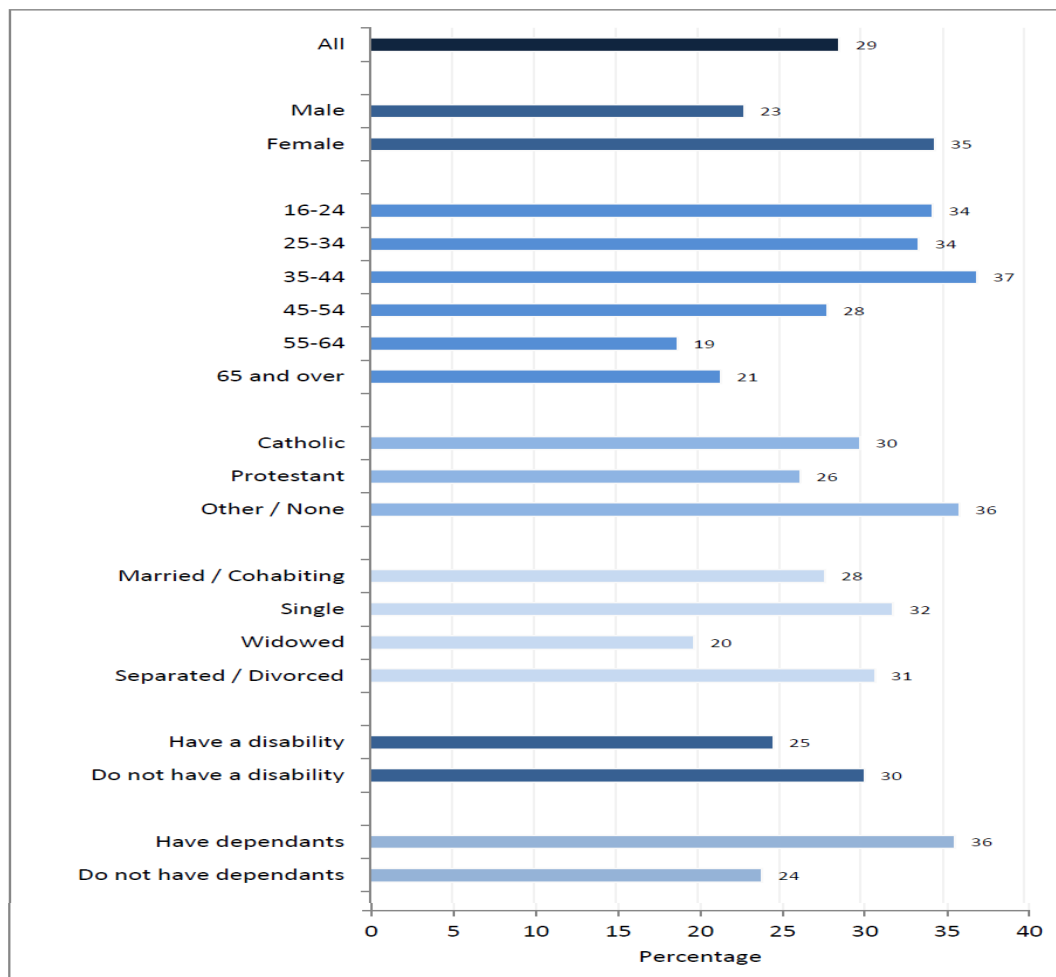
A higher proportion of the population who had dependants had used the public library service in the last year (36%) compared with those who do not have dependants (24%) (see Figure 1 below). In particular, adults with a dependent child were more likely than adults who did not have a dependent child to have used the public library service in the last year (38% and 24%, respectively).

Adults who state their religion as 'Other' or 'None' were more likely to have used the public library service in the last year (36%) than both Catholic (30%)

⁹ Experience of the public library service by adults in Northern Ireland: Findings from the CHS 2013/14, DCAL Research and Statistics Branch, October 2014 available at: http://www.dcalni.gov.uk/libraries_bulletin_201314.pdf

and Protestant (26%) adults. In addition, Catholic adults were more likely to have used the public library service than Protestant adults.

Adults who have a disability were less likely to have used the public library service in the last year (25%) than adults who did not have a disability (30%).



Findings from the Continuous Household Survey 2013/14

Figure 1: Used the public library service within the last year

3.5 *Findings from the Young Persons' Behaviour and Attitudes Survey 2013*¹⁰ is a report prepared by the Research and Statistics Branch of the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure (DCAL). It presents findings from the 2013 Young Persons' Behaviour and Attitudes Survey (YPBAS) which is a triennial school based survey carried out among 11-17 year olds and covers a wide range of topics relevant to the lives of young people today.

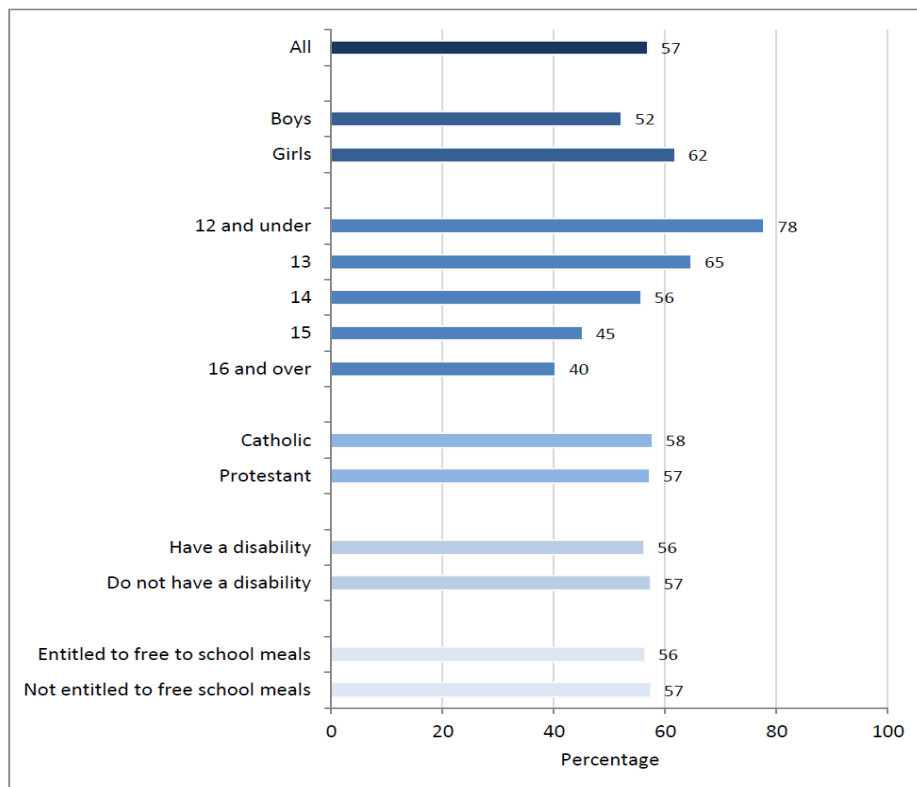
3.6 It states:

More than half (57%) of all young people had used the public library service at least once in the last year, with girls (62%) more likely to have used the service than boys (52%).

¹⁰ Experience of the public library service by young people in Northern Ireland: Findings from the Young Persons' Behaviour and Attitude Survey 2013 (DCAL Research and Statistics Branch, 2014) available at: http://www.dcalni.gov.uk/ypbas_2013_libraries_bulletin.pdf

Usage of the public library service decreased with age, with those aged 12 years and under almost twice as likely to have used the public library service than those aged 16 years and over (78% and 40%, respectively).

There were no differences in usage of the public library service by religion, whether a young person has a disability or whether they are entitled to free school meals (see Figure 2 below).



Findings from the Young Persons' Behaviour and Attitude Survey 2013

Figure 2 Used the public library service in the last year

Available data - staff

3.7 Libraries NI maintains monitoring information on staff by community background and gender. The latest figures (1 January 2015) show that:

- the workforce is predominantly female – approximately 80%
- in terms of community background, there is a good balance within the workforce, with approximately 43% from a Catholic community background and 51% from a Protestant community background and 6% unknown.

3.8 Traditionally women are regarded as care givers and they tend to take the major role in looking after children and elderly/disabled relatives. There is therefore a strong possibility that some members of staff have caring responsibilities and this may affect their ability to cope with new working hours and/or locations. However, there is no data at this stage on the number of staff with dependants; the key issues will be explored with staff and Trade Unions during the consultation period.

Available research

3.9 Libraries NI carried out a review of opening hours in 2011/12. The EQIA carried out at that stage and the associated consultation process indicated:

- children and young people make use of libraries, particularly after school in the late afternoon and early evening, in order to do homework
- children and young people do not have options to travel to the library at varying times, other than after school, due to lack of access to transport and cost
- young people, who do not have access to a computer or have restricted access due to network coverage, use the library to access the computer on a regular basis to do homework
- older people tend to use libraries during daylight hours and many older people's clubs and group activities are held in the library on a regular basis
- older people use the library for a variety of reasons, on a daily basis, other than for accessing books. The library service impacts greatly on their social inclusion, health and wellbeing. Reduced opening hours may impact on the availability of activities and events
- parents of young children (under school age) make extensive use of Rhythm and Rhyme sessions which tend to be held during morning hours
- young children make extensive use of a range of activities in the library and a reduction in opening hours will result in a reduction of activities
- car ownership and use of public transport among disabled people is substantially lower than for people without a disability and they rely on family and friends whose availability is restricted
- people with learning difficulties find it particularly difficult to change their routines and also need evening and weekend activities to enable them to participate more fully
- disabled people require a range of opening times as they are not always well enough to go to the library at set times
- people with a range of mental health issues find the library a safe environment and use it frequently
- newcomer people find the library service a great resource to meet people and access computers. Reduced hours will increase usage of computers at busy times and may therefore reduce access to computers
- people who work normal office hours tend to use libraries in the evenings and at weekends
- people of a working age, who are unemployed, use the library extensively to access job opportunities

- people with caring responsibilities need to manage their time and have less flexibility in terms of when they use libraries.

3.10 In recent years reviews and consultation exercises in relation to library provision and opening hours have been undertaken in England, Scotland and Wales.

3.11 The documents associated with a number of these consultations have been examined for potential learning points. The documents align with the points made in paragraph 3.9.

4. CONSULTATION ON THE EQIA

Consultation Process

4.1 Libraries NI is committed to consultation which is timely, open and inclusive. The consultation process in respect of the opening hours policy and the potential equality impacts was undertaken from 18 February 2015 to 17 April 2015. The process included:

- publication of a consultation report, draft EQIA and draft RIA
- a questionnaire for children and adults available in libraries in both hard copy and electronic format;
- opportunities to comment in writing directly or via the Libraries NI website;
- opportunities to meet with Libraries NI, if requested.

4.2 All consultation documents were made available on the Libraries NI website and could be obtained in hard copy and alternative formats on request. In addition, all Equality Scheme consultees were notified of the availability of the draft EQIA report and invited to comment.

4.3 The consultation questionnaire on the opening hours policy and proposals included questions designed to seek the views of respondents on equality impacts. In total, 3,484 adults and 317 children completed questionnaires:

- 16% of adult respondents believe the draft opening hours policy would have an effect on them in terms of at least one Section 75 equality category. Of these 46% said they would be affected because they have dependents, 36% because of their age and 23% because they have a disability. 12% said they would be affected due to religious belief, 10% because of political opinion, 5% because of marital status, 5% because of racial group and 4% because of sexual orientation.

4.4 A small sample of the comments on the equality related impact of reducing opening hours is shown below:

- *As a parent who studies full-time and also works, it can be difficult to get*

Appendix 3

my children to the library during 9-5 hours Monday to Friday. I would be concerned that, if hours are reduced, their ability to make use of the library for education and leisure purposes would be adversely affected because of my working hours.

- *I am housebound and dependent on others to take me to the library.*
- *I am nearing retirement and I would like to be able to use the library more often – but if hours reduced this could be affected.*
- *As I am retired, I will shortly be giving up my car. This will mean that the library will become even more important to me. Other libraries are not easily accessible by public transport if, as is possible, my mobility levels reduce.*
- *As I have a hearing loss disability I am somewhat limited in choices for recreation and study. For this reason I make great use of libraries and any reduction in opening hours will affect me disproportionately.*
- *At my age there are no other outlets to meet and greet. The library is protective in the therapeutic treatment it provides for me.*
- *Because of my MPN I am unable to travel easily. My Library is within walking distance for me. Were it to close I would be bereft.*
- *Difficulty in travelling time away from dependant.*
- *Due to illness I am unable to just go to library - I have to be feeling able to health wise.*
- *I am a full-time carer for my Mum and the reduced hours would make it harder for me to use the library, as my free time is already limited.*
- *I believe that access to a library is essential for all members of society, irrespective of a person's status. Libraries are places for people to learn, relax, access PCs etc. for children, especially, libraries act as a bedrock for reading, regardless of whether information is hard copy (books) or digital (via PC) access is essential if all in society are to thrive.*
- *I cannot attend the library at the same time or day every week and there are times that I have to give it a miss entirely due to lack of transport or if the children are sick etc.*
- *I feel very strongly that libraries are necessary for both young and old also students and people who are lonely. I think people should be encouraged to join not deterred.*
- *I have 2 young children and work 30 hours per week. I need flexible opening hours to enable my family and I to enjoy the library. In addition, my husband is self-employed and relies on using the library to work from his Mac.*
- *I have a son who is adopted from Thailand and having the use of our local library has helped him immensely to develop his social and*

language skills.

- *I have mobility issues and a fixed rate of income. I use the library on average three times a week, to read/interact with local people, read the paper - without the library I would not be able to read and keep my mind active.*
- *I look after children who have autism, and they enjoy visiting the library. Any change in hours because they are rigid to routine, will completely confuse and cause them severe hardship*
- *I need the library to keep up to date with what is happening, my age and disability make it hard for me to get about, but the library I go to is easy to get into and the staff are helpful if I have a problem.*
- *If funds are cut, I will have nowhere quiet to study and my exam performance will suffer from this.*
- *If hours are cut and books not bought then my child will have fewer opportunities than other children from previous years.*
- *If the hours of opening are reduced then pressure will be put on the library during opening time. As a person suffering mental health issues I like quiet environments with less people and judge my visits accordingly. Hence this will/may prevent me from being able to enjoy or avail of the service if hours are rationed making client numbers peak continuously instead of low peak times convenient and healthier for me.*
- *It is hard enough to be foreign and make a new life in different country as that of my birth. I have set my goals and only because Northern Ireland's library services are so great and available for me, now I have a chance for better life for myself and my children. If coming to libraries will not be possible for me in a future then to gain my degree will be pretty hard time wise.*
- *My child has special needs she absolutely loves the library and we can only take her on a Tuesday evening or Saturday morning so it is limited already.*
- *My elderly parents are "very" dependent on the books I get them every week (9 books each usually), particularly my father, who is housebound.*
- *No family in Northern Ireland so need the library to keep me sane and my 2 kids sane too!*
- *Older people may be more dependent on public transport and so library opening hours should take account of public transport availability.*
- *Older library users want to use the library at its quietest time. The proposals would mean that there are fewer, if any, such times.*
- *Libraries and their use and opening times – widest range needed due to restricted individual spare income so quality of life for me and my*

dependent would be adversely affected by any reductions in opening times and supportive staff services. This must be the case for a very large numbers of carers and those who also work in addition to carer responsibilities and to large numbers of dependents too across Northern Ireland.

- 4.5 Two organisations made written submissions in relation to the draft EQIA: Disability Action and the Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People (NICCY).
- 4.6 Disability Action made a number of comments about the process, specifically that the consultation period was too short and that engagement with local customers should have taken place earlier. It referred to lack of accessible public transport in rural areas and stated that disabled and older people and other low income families do not have the economic power to purchase computers and internet services. It made a number of suggestions about the local engagement process.
- 4.7 NICCY chose not to give a detailed response but to draw attention to the relevant Articles in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and to urge Libraries NI to include children in the consultation.
- 4.8 Other written submissions referred to the potential impact of the policy on users in the age, disability and people with dependants categories.
- 4.9 The Action Ability Group which uses Whiterock Library met with library staff to express their views. The emphasized the importance of the library in their lives and were critical of the consultation questionnaire.

5. KEY FINDINGS

- 5.1 The EQIA process is designed to identify the aspects of the proposals under consideration which may have an impact on various people, whether the impacts are likely to be differential in respect of people in the nine categories defined in Section 75, and whether any of the differential impacts are likely to be adverse.
- 5.2 The assessment in Table 2 is based on the analysis of available data and research and the findings of the consultation process. It is set out under the categories in Section 75, but it is acknowledged that the effects of the proposals will be different for each individual person and will not necessarily relate to a specific Section 75 characteristic.
- 5.3 Libraries NI has found no evidence to suggest that people with different community backgrounds, racial groups, marital status, sexual orientation or gender will be differentially affected by the proposals.

Table 2

Category	Groups	Specific needs	Potential adverse differential impact
Community background	People with a Catholic community background	None identified	None identified
	People with a Protestant community background	None identified	None identified
Racial group	People from a Black or Minority Ethnic background	None identified	None identified
Age	Children and young people of school age	Make extensive use of libraries, particularly after school in the late afternoon and early evening	May be affected if their local library reduces afternoon and/or evening opening hours
	People of working age (16-64)	People who work normal office hours tend to use libraries in the evenings and at weekends	May be affected if their local library reduces evening and/or weekend opening hours
	Older people (65+)	Older people often prefer to use libraries during daylight hours	May be affected if their local library reduces morning and/or afternoon opening hours
Marital status		None identified	None identified
Sexual orientation		None identified	None identified
Gender		None identified	None identified

Category	Groups	Specific needs	Potential adverse differential impact
Disability	Disabled people	Car ownership and use of public transport among disabled people is substantially lower than for people without a disability	May be affected by any changes to opening hours
	People with learning difficulties	People with learning difficulties find it particularly difficult to change their routines and need more evening and weekend activities	May be affected by any changes to opening hours May also be affected by reduced evening and weekend closures
People with dependants	People with dependent children	Parents of young children (under school age) make extensive use of library activities such as Rhythm and Rhyme which tend to be held during morning hours	May be affected if their local library reduces morning opening hours but Libraries NI will try to ensure that such sessions are still provided
	People providing unpaid care	People with caring responsibilities need to manage their time and have less flexibility in terms of when they use libraries	May be affected by any changes to opening hours
	Staff with caring responsibilities	People with caring responsibilities need to manage their time and have less flexibility in terms of their working hours	May be affected by any changes to opening hours

6. CONCLUSIONS

Adverse differential impact

6.1 The EQIA shows that there is potential for people in a number of Section 75 groups to be differentially and adversely affected by the proposed reduction in opening hours. The groups identified include:

- children and young people
- older people
- people of working age
- people with dependants.

Mitigating measures

6.2 The key mitigating measure identified by Libraries NI is the flexibility to determine the optimal pattern of opening hours for each library in conjunction with the library customers. It is intended that each library (even those which are to be open for only 18 hours per week) should offer some morning, afternoon, evening and weekend hours.

6.3 Libraries NI intends to engage with customers in respect of each library where hours are to be reduced. Libraries NI will aim to provide a spread of opening hours across libraries which are geographically close to each other, as far as possible, to enable users to access library services for as many hours as possible.

6.4 Libraries NI is aware of the concerns expressed that reduced opening hours may impact on the provision of activities for younger people and older people. In addition it is noted that concerns regarding the potential increased demand for computer access may restrict service to some users. Libraries NI will pay particular attention to monitoring activity and usage to determine whether revised opening hours meet the needs of users. Libraries NI, will, where possible, consider the possibility of rescheduling activities and events to meet the needs of users.

6.5 In addition, Libraries NI will ensure good communication of any changes to allow library users to plan future visits. Particular attention will be paid to communicating with children, disabled people and people with learning difficulties.

6.6 Libraries NI will engage with staff on an individual basis about their working patterns in order to mitigate any adverse impacts.

7. FURTHER ACTION

- 7.1 Following the decisions of the Libraries NI Board the final EQIA report will be made available through the Libraries NI website. Libraries NI will ensure that information is available in accessible formats in a timely fashion, paying particular attention to the special needs of particular groups within each equality category. This will complete Step 6 of the EQIA process.
- 7.2 The results of ongoing monitoring will be reviewed on an annual basis and included in the annual review on progress to the Equality Commission. This review will be published on the Libraries NI website. This will complete Step 7 of the EQIA process.
- 7.3 If the monitoring and analysis of results over a two year period show that there has been a greater adverse impact than predicted, or if opportunities arise which would allow for greater equality of opportunity to be promoted, Libraries NI will take steps to achieve better outcomes for the relevant equality groups.

Opening Hours Policy and Proposals

Rural Impact Assessment: Draft Final Report

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Libraries NI is committed to adopting best practice in its approaches to policy development and review and in accordance with guidance¹¹ on rural proofing, issued in February 2011, sought views on the impact on rural dwellers of a draft policy on opening hours, which sets out the overarching approach to establishing opening hours, and proposals on opening hours in the context of the 2015/16 budget.
- 1.2 A draft Rural Impact Assessment was published as part of the consultation process and comments were sought, particularly from library users in rural communities, about the implications for them of the draft policy and the proposals. The draft Rural Impact Assessment was made available on the Libraries NI website and was forwarded also to the Rural Community Network and the Rural Development Council.
- 1.3 The purpose of the draft Rural Impact Assessment was to present preliminary findings in relation to the impact on rural communities and to seek information on additional sources of data or research which should be considered by the Board in making decisions on the draft policy the proposal to reduce opening hours.
- 1.4 A number of individuals and organisations commented either directly on the draft Rural Impact Assessment or included comments on the implications for rural communities in general responses to the consultation. This report summarises the main issues and sets out the findings of the Rural Impact Assessment.

2. Background

- 2.1 As a result of the draft budget 2015/16, Libraries NI is required to make savings of 7.5% (which equates to £2.385 million) compared with the initial budget for 2014/15. One of the measures being put in place in order to achieve this level of savings is a reduction in the opening hours of libraries (to save on staff costs and premises related costs). In order to ensure a consistent approach to determining the opening hours of libraries a draft policy has been devised, setting out the overall approach that will be used.

¹¹ Thinking Rural: the Essential Guide to Rural Proofing (DARD, February 2011)

3. Draft Policy

3.1 The draft policy states, that in determining the opening hours of libraries:

- a consistent approach should be applied across all libraries; exceptions may be made for libraries serving areas of substantial social need
- opening hours should relate to the historic level of use of a library
- the allocated hours should be used in a way that best meets customer need
- the allocated hours in every library should be sufficient to provide a range of opening hours to suit different customer groups and to allow a minimum range of programmes to be delivered in line with Libraries NI's priorities
- the opening hours should be affordable
- the opening hours should be sustainable i.e. ad hoc closures due to staffing shortages should be avoided other than in exceptional circumstances.

3.2 In the context of the draft budget 2015/16 it was proposed that:

- libraries would open for 54, 50, 45, 40, 35, 28, 25 or 18 hours depending on their level of use in 2013/14
- no library serving areas of substantial deprivation (as listed in the Libraries NI Draft Business Plan 2015/16) should have its hours reduced by more than 10%. These libraries are Ardoyne, Chichester, Colin Glen, Creggan, Falls Road, Holywood Arches, Shankill, Shantallow, Suffolk, Waterside, Whiterock and Woodstock
- no library should be open for less than 18 hours per week. If a library is open for less time than this, it is difficult to implement the policy of providing a range of opening hours to suit different customer groups and to allow a minimum range of programmes to be delivered in line with Libraries NI's priorities.

3.3 Many of the libraries which are currently open for 18 hours per week are located in rural communities. For the purposes of the draft Rural Impact Assessment, rural communities were defined as those in Bands F, G and H (i.e. communities of 4,500 or less) in the Report of the Inter-Departmental Urban-Rural Definition Group Statistical Classification and Delineation of Settlements (NISRA, 2005). After the publication of the draft Rural Impact Assessment, NISRA published a review of the Statistical Classification and

Delineation of Settlements¹², based on the results from the 2011 Census, and recommended some amendments to the classifications. These included:

- raising the boundary between intermediate settlement (Band F) and small town (Band E) from 4,500 to 5,000 people
- defining settlements with a population of at least 10,000 (i.e. Bands A, B, C and D) as 'service centres' on the basis that the town centre of such a settlement is a robust proxy for locations providing sufficient service provision
- showing the drive-times (both 20 minutes and 30 minutes) from settlements within Bands E (small town), F (intermediate settlement), and G (village) to a service centre.

3.4 While the recommendations in the Review of the Statistical Classification and Delineation of Settlements (2015) have not been formally adopted as yet, they have been taken into account in finalising this Rural Impact Assessment. As a result Bessbrook Library (which falls within Band F, intermediate settlement) and Strathfoyle Library (which falls within Band G, village) have been included in the definition of a library serving a rural community and Crumlin Library (which now falls within Band E, small town) has been excluded. Table 2 (below) has been amended accordingly.

4. Available Data and Research

4.1 In developing the draft Rural Impact Assessment, various sources of information were considered in respect of the rural impact of the proposed policy on opening hours, namely:

- Libraries NI data
- Delivering Tomorrow's Libraries (DCAL, first published 2006, revised 2014)
- Northern Ireland Multiple Deprivation Measures 2010 (NISRA).

4.2 As part of the consultation, Libraries NI sought information on any additional sources of data or research which it should consider in making decisions on the impact on rural communities of the proposed policy regarding opening hours.

¹² Review of the Statistical Classification and Delineation of Settlements (March 2015, NISRA) accessed at <http://www.nisra.gov.uk/archive/geography/review-of-the-statistical-classification-and-delineation-of-settlements-march-2015.pdf>

Libraries NI Data

- 4.3 Public libraries are delivered via a network of 96 branch libraries, 2 heritage libraries, 16 mobile libraries and 10 homecall vehicles, as well as online and outreach services.
- 4.4 It is recognised that all libraries have a number of users who are rural dwellers. This information was confirmed by an analysis undertaken by the Strategic Investment Board (SIB) in conjunction with Libraries NI to map the postcodes of library users to Output Areas¹³. Using this information, an analysis was undertaken of the active borrower details for each of the 96 libraries to determine the percentage of active borrowers in each library who are rural dwellers. This information is shown in Table 1 below. In 31 libraries, 51% or more of the active borrowers live in rural communities. It should be noted that this information was collated prior to the recently published Review of the Statistical Classification and Delineation of Settlements and does not reflect the differences in that document.

Library	% Rurality	Library	% Rurality	Library	% Rurality
Antrim	18.84%	Ardoyne	0.59%	Armagh	40.34%
Ballycastle	28.36%	Ballyclare	42.70%	Ballyhackamore	2.20%
Ballymena	40.69%	Ballymoney	46.64%	Ballynahinch	57.99%
Banbridge	36.56%	Bangor Carnegie	5.43%	Bessbrook	36.01%
Broughshane	94.68%	Brownlow	17.39%	Carnlough	91.13%
Carrickfergus	10.33%	Carryduff	23.79%	Castlederg	94.49%
Castlewellan	93.54%	Belfast Central	6.21%	Chichester	0.93%
Cloughfern	2.00%	Coalisland	48.68%	Coleraine	23.48%
Colin Glen	2.85%	Comber	33.75%	Cookstown	49.88%
Cregagh	3.34%	Creggan	2.04%	Crossmaglen	82.52%
Crumlin	97.12%	Cushendall	90.68%	Derry Central	10.91%
Donaghadee	33.57%	Downpatrick	54.19%	Draperstown	99.08%
Dromore	41.72%	Dundonald	3.45%	Dungannon	43.29%
Dungiven	97.34%	Enniskillen	49.25%	Falls Road	2.32%
Finaghy	4.73%	Fintona	91.81%	Fivemiletown	94.81%
Garvagh	97.28%	Glengormley	7.30%	Greenisland	2.09%
Greystone	15.66%	Grove	2.54%	Hollywood Arches	1.72%
Hollywood	5.53%	Irvinestown	88.24%	Keady	89.56%
Kells &	93.49%	Kilkeel	50.51%	Killyleagh	95.43%

¹³ Output Areas (OAs) were designed to have similar population sizes of around 125 households and 350 people; they are also as socially similar as possible. There are 5,022 OAs in Northern Ireland

Library	% Rurality	Library	% Rurality	Library	% Rurality
Connor					
Kilrea	98.08%	Larne	21.51%	Limavady	42.68%
Lisburn	32.17%	Lisburn Road	7.38%	Lisnaskea	92.96%
Lurgan	32.15%	Maghera	95.30%	Magherafelt	55.93%
Moira	96.17%	Newcastle	35.50%	Newry City	38.51%
Newtownards	17.04%	Newtownbreda	5.04%	Newtownstewart	90.33%
Omagh	50.50%	Ormeau Road	3.62%	Portadown	28.72%
Portaferry	97.70%	Portglenone	96.30%	Portrush	16.71%
Portstewart	6.43%	Randalstown	39.50%	Rathcoole	1.79%
Rathfriland	97.55%	Richhill	94.40%	Saintfield	93.92%
Shankill Road	0.88%	Shantallow	2.41%	Strabane	28.76%
Strathfoyle	24.91%	Suffolk	3.59%	Tandragee	96.31%
Tullycarnet	2.26%	Warrenpoint	40.40%	Waterside	24.40%
Whitehead	94.49%	Whiterock	2.05%	Woodstock	2.45%

Table 1: Percentage of users who live in rural areas

- 4.5 Rural areas are served by a combination of mobile library services and library branches in some rural towns and villages. The mobile library service is not impacted by the proposed policy.
- 4.6 Using the new boundary definitions in the Review of Statistical Classification and Delineation of Settlements which defines settlements of less than 5,000 (Bands F, G and H) as rural communities, 29 branch libraries are located in rural communities. The impact of the proposed policy on opening hours on these libraries is shown in Table 2 below.

Library	Opening Hours / week (April 2014)	Proposed Opening Hours / week	Difference
Bessbrook	25	25	0
Broughshane	18	18	0
Carnlough	18	18	0
Castledearg	25	25	0
Castlewellan	25	25	0
Crossmaglen	18	18	0
Cushendall	18	18	0
Draperstown	18	18	0
Dungiven	25.5	25	- 0.5 hours
Fintona	18	18	0

Library	Opening Hours / week (April 2014)	Proposed Opening Hours / week	Difference
Fivemiletown	18	18	0
Garvagh	18	18	0
Irvinestown	30	28	- 2 hours
Keady	33	28	- 5 hours
Kells and Connor	18	18	0
Killyleagh	18	18	0
Kilrea	18	18	0
Lisnaskea	30	28	- 2 hours
Maghera	40	35	- 5 hours
Moira	18	25	+ 7 hours
Newtownstewart	18	18	0
Portaferry	18	18	0
Portglenone	18	18	0
Rathfriland	25	25	0
Richhill	18	18	0
Saintfield	25	25	0
Strathfoyle	30	25	- 5 hours
Tandragee	25	25	0
Whitehead	30	28	- 2 hours

Table 2: Rural Libraries: proposed opening hours

- 4.7 In a further four libraries (Ballynahinch, Crumlin, Downpatrick and Magherafelt) 51% or more of the population are rural dwellers. The impact of the proposed policy on these libraries is shown in Table 3 below.

Library	Opening Hours / week (April 2014)	Proposed Opening Hours / week	Difference
Ballynahinch	40	35	- 5 hours
Crumlin	18	18	0
Downpatrick	48	45	- 3 hours
Magherafelt	48	45	- 3 hours

Table 3: Libraries with more than 51% of active borrowers living in rural communities

- 4.8 Libraries NI has carried out previous consultations in relation to policy decisions regarding a strategic review of library provision in Northern Ireland

and a review of opening hours due to budget cuts in the 2011 – 2015 Comprehensive Spending Review. On both occasions Rural Impact Assessments were undertaken and consideration was given by the Board to comments received on the impact on rural communities of the proposals.

4.9 A summary of comments received in these consultations, and which were reiterated in the 2015 consultation on the draft opening hours policy and proposals, is included below:

- the costs associated with public transport and the fact that public transport routes and timetables often make it impossible to access the next nearest library, especially in the evening
- the public library is one of the few, if not the last, remaining public services in their community and contributes to the social cohesion of the community
- the public library provides important shared social space, particularly for young mothers and elderly people
- the important role that the public library plays in supporting children and young people and the fact that the library is seen as a safe place for young people to meet in a constructive, educational and leisure environment
- the important role that the library plays in supporting people who are unemployed and seeking work and who use the library, and in particular, the free access to the internet, to access information, look for jobs and build their skills
- rural poverty manifests itself very differently from poverty in urban areas:
 - it is not spatially concentrated
 - it exists amongst relative affluence
 - people in rural communities are less likely to identify that they are in poverty and there is a culture of “making do”
- rural dwellers face significant difficulties accessing employment and basic services that other people take for granted
- rural households must earn significantly more than their urban counterparts to reach a minimum standard of income due to the need to maintain a car and the higher cost of heating a home in rural areas.

Delivering Tomorrow’s Libraries

4.10 *Delivering Tomorrow’s Libraries*, DCAL’s policy framework, recognises that within resource constraints, the library service should be available in the

places, at the times and in the ways that enable as many people as possible to use it. The policy states as follows:

“The working week of libraries should include opening hours which extend beyond the normal working day, and include evenings and weekends, when people who work can most easily use libraries and when families can use them together... The views of the community, users and non-users alike, should be sought in determining opening patterns in local areas.”

- 4.11 Libraries NI proposes, as part of the process for implementing new opening hours, that the pattern of opening hours in each library should be determined in consultation with users and that the available hours should be used in the way that best meets the customer need. Libraries NI is of the view that the proposals will enable a mixed pattern of opening hours, including morning, afternoon, evening and weekends, to be implemented.
- 4.12 DCAL has developed Public Library Standards 2014 – 2019 setting out standards and targets against which Libraries NI will be measured. Public Library Standard 6 (Access) specifies that 85% of households should have access to a static or scheduled mobile stop within two miles. Research¹⁴ carried out by DCAL’s Research and Statistics Branch in 2014 showed that 89% of households were within two miles of a static library or mobile library stop. It is not envisaged that the proposed policy will have a detrimental impact on this statistic.

Northern Ireland Multiple Deprivation Measure 2010

- 4.13 The Northern Ireland Multiple Deprivation Measure (NIMDM) 2010 comprises seven domains of deprivation, each developed to measure a distinct form or type of deprivation: income, employment, health, education, proximity to services, living environment and crime. The domains can be interpreted individually or combined to assess deprivation in more than one domain.
- 4.14 The Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) has produced area profiles, based on the Northern Ireland Multiple Deprivation Measure (NIMDM) 2010, for the 11 new Local Government Districts that will come into existence on 1 April 2015. The relevant information for each of the Local Government Districts can be accessed at the following link:
http://www.nisra.gov.uk/deprivation/archive/Updateof2005Measures/NIMDM_2010_Local_Government_District_Profiles.pdf.
- 4.15 During the consultation process Libraries NI sought comments on any specific issues in relation to the information available on the NIMDM 2010 for the new

¹⁴ Mapping the library service in Northern Ireland (DCAL, Research and Statistics, 2014)

Local Government Districts which may be relevant to consideration of the proposed policy on library opening hours. No specific comments were received in relation to this information, however responses from a number of individuals and organisations made reference to the particular needs of rural communities. The responses are summarised in Section 5 below.

- 4.16 The main output geography for the NIMDM 2010 is the Super Output Area (SOA). There are 890 SOAs in Northern Ireland, with an average population of 2,000 people, of which approximately one third are classified as rural.
- 4.17 Table 4 below shows the 20 most deprived rural SOAs in Northern Ireland. All rural SOAs are outside the most deprived 10% when all SOAs in Northern Ireland are considered.

NIMDM 2010 Rank (1 = most deprived)	Super Output Area	Local Government District
97	Castledearg	Derry City and Strabane
112	Crossmaglen	Newry, Mourne and Down
126	Glenderg	Derry City and Strabane
134	Newtownstewart	Derry City and Strabane
136	Ardboe	Mid Ulster
141	Sion Mills	Derry City and Strabane
159	Portaferry_2	Ards and North Down
170	Dunnamanagh	Derry City and Strabane
178	Ardglass_1	Newry, Mourne and Down
179	Finn	Derry City and Strabane
180	Pomeroy	Mid Ulster
82	Silver Bridge_1	Newry, Mourne and Down
84	Creggan	Newry, Mourne and Down
189	Dungiven	Causeway Coast and Glens
191	Keady	Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon
197	Clare	Derry City and Strabane
198	Armoy & Moss-side and Moyarget	Causeway Coast and Glens
200	Fintona	Fermanagh and Omagh
202	Irvinestown	Fermanagh and Omagh
215	Ballylough & Bushmills	Causeway Coast and Glens

Table 4: NIMDM: The 20 most deprived rural Super Output Areas

- 4.18 In relation to the rural libraries identified in Table 2 above, in five libraries serving the 20 most deprived SOAs (Castledearg, Crossmaglen, Fintona, Newtownstewart and Portaferry), the hours remain unchanged, with Castledearg remaining at 25 hours per week and the other four remaining at 18 hours per week. In the other three libraries serving the 20 most deprived SOAs, Dungiven would reduce from 25.5 hours per week to 25 hours per week; Irvinestown would reduce from 30 hours per week to 28 hours per week; and Keady would reduce from 33 hours per week to 28 hours per week.
- 4.19 In considering rural deprivation the research would indicate that consideration should be given not only to the overall Multiple Deprivation Measure, but also to the Proximity to Services domain which is particularly relevant in rural areas.
- 4.20 It is mainly Census Output Areas in the west of the province (constituencies of West Tyrone, Fermanagh and South Tyrone and Mid Ulster) which rank as the most deprived in relation to the Proximity to Services domain. Rural libraries in these areas (Castledearg, Draperstown, Dungiven, Irvinestown and Lisnaskea) have a substantial number of active members who reside in one of the top 10% most deprived OAs as measured by the Proximity to Services domain. However other libraries, such as Carnlough, Castlewellan and Rathfriland also have significant numbers of active members from OAs which have low rankings in relation to Proximity to Services.
- 4.21 The Review of the Statistical Classification and Delineation of Settlements recommends consideration of drive-time to a services centre (i.e. a medium town or larger) as an alternative means of defining proximity of services and calculates drive-time boundaries from the geographic centroid of the town centre of a settlement with a population of at least 10,000 using MapInfo Geographic Information Systems (GIS) and an add-on product called 'Drive-time'. The Review of the Statistical Classification and Delineation of Settlements indicates that 93% of the population lives within a 30 minute drive-time of the town centre of a settlement containing a population of at least 10,000 and 80% live within a 20 minute drive time. Table 5 below shows whether the settlement in which a rural library is located is within the 20 minute and / or 30 minute drive-time of a settlement of at least 10,000 people (a services centre)¹⁵.

¹⁵ Review of the Statistical Classification and Delineation of Settlements
<http://www.nisra.gov.uk/archive/geography/review-of-the-statistical-classification-and-delineation-of-settlements-march-2015.pdf>

Settlement in which library is located	2011 Census Population	20 Minute Drive-time from a settlement of at least 10,000	30 Minute Drive-time from a settlement of at least 10,000
Bessbrook	2,739	Yes	Yes
Broughshane	2,851	Yes	Yes
Carnlough	1,512	No	Yes
Castlederg	2,985	No	Yes
Castlewellan	2,792	No	Yes
Crossmaglen	1,608	No	No
Cushendall	1,276	No	No
Draperstown	1,772	No	Yes
Dungiven	3,286	No	Yes
Fintona	1,160	Yes	Yes
Fivemiletown	1,243	No	No
Garvagh	1,274	No	Yes
Irvinestown	2,264	Yes	Yes
Keady	3,036	Yes	Yes
Kells and Connor	2,053	Yes	Yes
Killyleagh	2,928	Yes	Yes
Kilrea	1,679	No	Yes
Lisnaskea	2,960	No	Yes
Maghera	4,217	No	Yes
Moira	4,584	Yes	Yes
Newtownstewart	1,547	Yes	Yes
Portaferry	2,514	No	Yes
Portglenone	1,174	No	Yes
Rathfriland	2,472	No	Yes
Richhill	2,821	Yes	Yes
Saintfield	3,406	Yes	Yes
Strathfoyle	2,412	Yes	Yes
Tandragee	3,486	Yes	Yes
Whitehead	3,786	Yes	Yes

Table 5: Drive-times from settlements in which a rural library is located to a services centre

5. Response to the Consultation

5.1 The consultation questionnaire on the opening hours policy and proposals included questions designed to seek the views of respondents on rural impacts. In total, 3484 adults and 317 children completed questionnaires:

- 25% of adult respondents described the place where they live as a rural location (i.e. country village or a farm/home in the country)
- of those who live in a country village, a farm or a home in the country, 62% said that they or their local community would be affected “A lot” (32%) or “Quite a bit” (29%) if the opening hours in their nearest branch library or the one they visit most often were reduced
- 29% of the children who completed a questionnaire describe the place where they live as a rural location (i.e. country village (17%) or a farm/home in the country (12%))
- of those children / young people who live in a country village, farm or home in the country, 41% said that they would be affected “A lot”/ “Quite a bit” if opening hours in their nearest library or the one they visit most often were reduced.

5.2 A small sample of comments, taken from these questionnaires, on the impact of reducing opening hours in rural libraries is shown below:

Children of the local primary school and nursery will not have easy access to a library and it is extremely important to encourage reading and research in young people.

There is no broadband availability which I can afford. No terrestrial service. Satellite available at a cost!

The libraries are now a very important place for meeting people - for many the social hub of the village.

It is important to have the library open at times when rural dwellers can get transport to the library.

A country village library provides more than just a place to borrow books: meeting people, using computers, consulting references, help with research, children's groups, reminiscence groups for older people, a resource for visitors to the area...the library becomes the heart and focus for all in the community.

Access not easy...poor transport links.

As a shift worker the times do not suit.

As a rural user of the library I will be affected as it is only after work/school we (my son and me) can go to the library as we have to go on the way home from work/school as by the time we get home, the library would be closed when we

would return to our nearest one. With the library already only opening one evening a week this would stop us from using the library completely. The only other time we can possibly use it is a Saturday morning, which we do as often as we can, but again being in a rural area, this is not always possible.

If my local library had reduced opening hours I would probably be unable to use the library as I currently do. Although libraries in Lisburn & Antrim are within 15 miles, with the commitments I currently have, 4 kids aged 8 & under I would find it too much to squeeze this journey in as well. Library closures would make the rural community more isolated.

Limiting my ability to access my library. Reducing my chance to allow my children to meet and mix with other children. Reducing my chance to mix with adults and remain engaged in community activities. Limiting my opportunities to study in a quiet environment.

Limited public transport, less facilities than city or towns.

Quite long hours in agriculture and 6 miles from library.

Taking the children regularly to the library in Coleraine - over 10 miles away will be impossible to manage. I have six children. The children I care for would probably rarely/never visit a library with parents. Our weekly trips are so important in the development of language and social skills which are the foundation for learning.

The reduction of services in general tends to hit rural dwellers more than cities; this is true globally and is as relevant to Northern Ireland, which is in part largely rural. Rural bus services, post office, and now library services have reduced gradually over the last couple of decades. It is not only exclusion based on income, but exclusion based on access to services

There is a high level of unemployment in my local area and the community rely on the library as a vital resource for learning, social interaction, cultural interaction and business tool.

There is no broadband available in my area, and I use the library for this purpose, but when my children were small we used the library all the time for books.

We have no community centre! The library is our community centre!

We need to use rural transport to attend the library, 8 miles away, and odd opening hours will not coordinate with our bus timetable.

- 5.3 The Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (DARD) Sustainable Rural Communities Branch made a written submission to the Rural Impact Assessment. It recognised the valuable contribution that libraries make to the social fabric, community cohesion and sustainability of rural communities. It regretted the reductions in opening hours but welcomed the fact that no

libraries would close and noted that it was important to take account of the view of rural dwellers.

5.4 Written responses were received from a range of other organisations to the public consultation on the draft opening hours policy. A summary of comments relevant to this Rural Impact Assessment are noted below:

- Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon Council: Could impact adversely on rural dwellers; rural transport is very limited
- Arlene Foster MLA: Basing opening hours of the new library in Lisnaskea on the historic use of the old library at Drumhaw would be misleading. New library is in a better location with enhanced services and much better parking and is accessible to pedestrians. Use has increased and will continue to increase. Enniskillen is the only full time library in Fermanagh. Lisnaskea is a hub for surrounding rural communities. Few alternatives if the local library is not available to them. The current hours should be maintained and usage reviewed. Increased hours would be better.
- Derry City and Strabane Council: Rural areas are particularly dependent on libraries
- Disability Action: Lack of accessible public transport in rural areas
- Enagh Youth Forum: An extensive list of comments was provided as a result of questions asked by Enagh Youth Forum at a local public engagement day (one of a series in the Derry City and Strabane council area as part of community planning). 82 respondents considered Strathfoyle a rural community; 84 respondents thought there was a social need in the community; 82 people thought the library was an essential service locally.
- An Individual respondent: Libraries are the lifeblood of a local community, especially small communities
- NIPSA: Libraries have a strong link to local communities, especially in rural areas. Different approaches needed in rural and urban areas to ensure need is met.
- Séan Lynch MLA: Difficult to disagree with the principle of a consistent approach based on levels of use with exceptions in designated areas of social need. But makes case for Lisnaskea to be an exception. New library is very impressive and in a better location. Very busy in its first few days open and will remain so. Consultation proposes a reduction of 2 hours based on levels of use in the old library. This was “off the beaten track” with poor parking. The new library is centrally located with parking to the rear. Lisnaskea use is only 1,484 below the next band.

Fermanagh only has 3 main towns and 3 libraries. Public transport is poor so it is not necessarily possible to travel to the library when you want to. Reduced opening hours restricts public access disproportionately in these circumstances and increases isolation for those living in rural areas.

- UNISON: Libraries have an important role in rural communities as other public services disappear. Cost of public transport and potential loss of public transport services makes it more difficult for people in rural areas to access a service that is only open for 18 hours per week.

6. Assessment of the Proposed Policy on Opening Hours for Rural Areas

- 6.1 This section of the report considers the potential impact of the draft policy and proposals on rural communities.

A consistent approach should be applied across all libraries; exceptions may be made for libraries serving areas of substantial social need.

- 6.2 The proposed policy has been applied consistently across all libraries, with the exception of the following:

- 6.2.1 In four libraries (Ardoyne, Creggan, Suffolk and Whiterock) serving areas of substantial deprivation, historic levels of use, as measured by issues, renewals, visits, public access computer sessions, participation in activities and active borrowers, would provide that opening hours should reduce by more than 10%. Accordingly it was proposed, as set out in paragraph 3.2 above, that these libraries should not have their opening hours reduced by more than 10% because they serve a number of Super Output Areas with significant social deprivation (i.e. in the top 10% as measured by the NIMDM). This means that these libraries would be in a higher band of opening hours than pure levels of use would suggest.

- 6.2.2 It is recognised that these libraries are located in urban areas and that the vast majority of their active members live in an urban setting. Libraries NI is of the view, however, that these exceptions are justified, given that tackling poverty and social exclusion is a key priority of the Programme for Government and the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure, our sponsoring body.

- 6.2.3 No library serving rural communities has Super Output Areas within the top 10% most deprived. However, responses received to the draft Rural Impact Assessment recognised the differences between poverty and disadvantage in rural communities, compared to urban communities and a strong case was made for recognition to be given to rural disadvantage. Accordingly it is

proposed, in the context of the 2015/16 budget, that no rural library, as identified in the Review of the Statistical Classification and Delineation of Settlements (2015) should have its opening hours reduced by more than 10%. This would impact on three libraries as identified below.

Library	April 2014 Hours	Proposed hours (per consultation)	% reduction	Proposed revised opening hours
Keady	33	28	15.1%	30
Maghera	40	35	12.5%	38
Strathfoyle	30	25	16.7%	28

- 6.2.4 Two local MLAs made written submissions arguing that it would be inappropriate to base the opening hours of Lisnaskea Library, which opened on 8 April 2015, on the level of use of the old library which had limited facilities and car parking and was in a much poorer location, away from the town centre and up a steep hill. This view was repeated in a number of the questionnaires returned.
- 6.2.5 Having considered the responses received in relation to the new library in Lisnaskea, it is recommended that an exception should be made also in this case and that the existing opening hours should be retained during 2015/16 and that usage should be monitored.
- 6.2.6 The consultation report noted that an exception would be made also for Heritage Libraries which are primarily reference libraries on the basis that it would be inappropriate to use the full range of indicators that apply in branch libraries to determine opening hours.

The allocated hours should be used in a way that best meets customer need.

- 6.3 Libraries NI intends to engage with customers at an individual library level in May and June 2015, once the policy and approach have been decided by the Libraries NI Board, in order to develop a pattern of opening hours that best meets customer needs. This approach will apply across all libraries, therefore there is no differential impact on rural libraries. However, in developing proposals for the pattern of hours in rural libraries, as far as possible, consideration will be given to other factors that could impact on rural dwellers' ability to use the library e.g. public transport timetables, market day.

Opening hours should relate to the historic level of use of a library.

- 6.4 The proposed opening hours of all libraries (with the exception of those noted in 6.2. above) have been determined by totalling the number of issues, renewals, visits, public access computer sessions, participation in activities and active members in 2013/14. All libraries were assigned to a Band depending on the total level of use in that year. A consistent approach has been applied to all libraries, based on historic patterns of use, with the exception of the libraries identified in paragraph 6.2 above.
- 6.5 Some respondents felt that this approach disadvantaged rural libraries and that it ignored the qualitative issues and the true impact of a local library, particularly in rural areas. Consideration will be given to developing a more refined and robust methodology to be used in the future to distinguish between the needs of urban and rural communities.

The allocated hours should be sufficient in every library to provide a range of opening hours to suit different customer groups and to allow a minimum range of programmes to be delivered in line with Libraries NI's priorities.

- 6.6 Based on implementation of the proposed policy in 2015/16, of the 29 libraries located in rural areas:
- the opening hours of one library (Moira) would increase
 - the opening hours of seven libraries (Dungiven, Irvinestown, Keady, Lisnaskea, Maghera, Strathfoyle and Whitehead) would decrease
 - the opening hours of the remaining 21 libraries would remain the same as in April 2014.
- 6.7 Libraries NI is of the view that the proposed opening hours of each of these libraries are sufficient to provide a mix of morning, afternoon, evening and weekend hours to suit different customer groups and to allow a minimum range of programmes to be delivered in line with Libraries NI's priorities. Local consultation will be used to determine the best pattern of hours to meet local needs. In developing proposals for the pattern of hours in rural libraries, as far as possible, consideration will be given to other factors that could impact on rural dwellers' ability to use the library e.g. public transport timetables, market day.

The opening hours should be affordable.

- 6.8 Based on the draft budget 2015/16 the opening hours are deemed to be affordable. Some respondents argued that additional funding should be found to provide a library service that meets the needs of its customers and that not to do so is short-sighted.

The opening hours should be sustainable i.e. ad hoc closures due to staffing shortages are avoided other than in exceptional circumstances.

- 6.9 Libraries NI is of the view that the draft policy should have a positive impact for all library users, including those in rural areas, in that the opening hours at each library will become sustainable so that ad hoc closures due to staffing shortages will be avoided, except in exceptional circumstances. Certainty about opening hours is particularly important in rural areas, where people may have to travel some distance to access their local library.

7 Conclusions

- 7.1 Responses to the RIA show that the public library is a valuable and valued service in rural communities. Rural dwellers experience a number of constraints which restrict their ability to access their nearest public library, including costly and limited public transport and deprivation. Given the lack of other facilities in many local communities, the library is viewed as an important space for learning, information, leisure and social engagement. The responses indicated a need for long and varied opening hours in libraries. Unfortunately, because of the budget situation this is not possible within available resources.
- 7.2 The key mitigating measure identified by Libraries NI is the flexibility to determine the optimal pattern of opening hours for each library in conjunction with library customers. It is intended that all libraries should offer some morning, afternoon, evening and weekend hours, unless local consultation indicates that an alternative approach is preferable.
- 7.3 Libraries NI will engage with customers at a local level during May and June, after a decision has been made by the Board on the overarching policy, in respect of the pattern of opening hours in individual libraries. Libraries NI will seek to ensure effective communication takes place in relation to any changes to opening hours to allow library users to plan their visits accordingly.

8. Further Action

- 8.1 Following the decisions of the Libraries NI Board the final RIA Report will be made available through the Libraries NI website.
- 8.2 The impact of the policy decisions on library use, including in rural areas, will be monitored and will be reviewed on an annual basis.

Executive Summary – ADULT QUESTIONNAIRE

Section 1: Opening Hours Policy

- overall, 67% of adults (aged 16+ years) agreed that a consistent approach to opening hours should be applied across all libraries
- overall, 76% of adults agreed that exceptions should be made for libraries serving areas of substantial social need
- overall, 66% of adults agreed that opening hours should relate to the historic level of use of a library
- overall, 92% of adults agreed that the allocated hours should be used in a way that best meets customer need.
- overall, 88% of adults agreed that the allocated hours in every library should be sufficient to provide a range of opening hours to suit different customer groups and to allow a minimum range of programmes to be delivered in line with Libraries NI's priorities
- overall, 71% of adults agreed that the opening hours should be affordable
- overall, 86% of adults agreed that the opening hours should be sustainable i.e. ad hoc closures due to staffing shortages are avoided other than in exceptional circumstances

Section 2: Opening Hours Proposals

- overall, 43% of adults *disagreed* that library opening hours should be reduced in order to make the savings that are required and to keep all libraries open in 2015/16
- overall, 78% of adults agreed that all libraries should be open for at least 18 hours per week as it is difficult to provide a range of opening hours to suit different customers if a library is open for less than this
- overall, 69% of adults agreed that libraries that serve areas of substantial deprivation should not have their hours reduced by more than 10%
- overall, 88% of adults agreed that consultation on the new pattern of opening hours should be undertaken with local users in each library.

Section 3: About You

- 98% of adults indicated that they are a member of a library in Northern Ireland
- 80% of adults visit a library in Northern Ireland at least fortnightly
- 3% of adults are members of Libraries NI staff
- 59% of adults are female and 41% are male

- 6% of adults are aged 16-24 years, 12% are aged 25-34 years, 29% are in the 35-49 years age group, 19% in the 50-59 years age group and 35% are 60 years of age and over.
- 56% of adults are either married / cohabiting or in a civil partnership, 29% are single, 8% are divorced / separated or have had their civil partnership dissolved / annulled and 7% are widowed / surviving civil partner.
- over four fifths (83%) of adults were born in Northern Ireland.
- the vast majority (98%) of adults are of white ethnic origin
- 47% of adults are employed (26% full time, 15% part time and 6% self-employed), while 32% are retired
- 14% of adults consider themselves to have a disability or illness that substantially limits their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities:
 - of these, 53% reported the nature of the disability or illness to be mobility-related, 29% mental health-related, 13% hearing-related, 8% sight-related and 6% learning-related.
- 32% of adults have someone who is dependent on them (i.e. a child, someone with an incapacitating disability, an elderly person), while 68% indicated that they have no dependants.

Section 4: Equality Considerations

- 16% of adults believe that the draft opening hours policy would have an effect on them in terms of at least one Section 75 equality category:
 - of these, 46% said they would be affected because they have dependants, 36% because of their age and 23% because they have a disability.

Section 5: Rurality Considerations

- 25% of adults describe the place where they live as a rural location (i.e. country village or a farm/home in the country);
 - of those who live in a country village, a farm or a home in the country, 62% said that they, or their local community, would be affected “A lot” (32%) or “Quite a bit” (29%) by the draft opening hours policy.

Section 6: General impact

- 29% of adults would find it extremely or very useful to have neighbouring libraries open at different times so that customers can visit a different library if their nearest library is closed.
- 31% of adults think that Libraries NI could do something to minimise the negative impacts of the draft opening hours policy.

Executive Summary – CHILD QUESTIONNAIRE

Section 1: Opening Hours

- 49% of children/young people (under 16 years of age) think it is a good idea to shorten opening hours to save money and help stop some libraries from closing down
- 55% of children/young people think that allocating libraries into Bands based mostly on how busy they are, **is** the best way to work out how long libraries should be open
- 90% of children/young people think it would be a good idea to talk to people who use each library when working out the new opening hours.

Section 2: About You

- 63% of the children/young people are female and 37% are male
- 41% of the children/young people are aged 5-8 years, 42% are aged 9-11 years and 18% are aged 12-15 years
- the majority (94%) of children/young people were born in Northern Ireland
- the vast majority (96%) of children/young people are of white ethnic origin
- 4% of children/young people have a disability or illness that substantially limits their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities
- 99% of children/young people indicated that they are a member of a library in Northern Ireland
- 22% of children/young people visit a library in Northern Ireland more than once a week, 28% once a week and 24% once every 2 weeks
- 29% of children/young people describe the place where they live as a rural location (i.e. country village (17%) or a farm/home in the country (12%)):
 - of those who live in a country village, a farm or a home in the country, 41% said that they, or their local community, would be affected “A lot” and 37% “Quite a bit”, if the opening hours in their nearest library or the one they visit most often were shortened.

Section 3: And finally...

- 36% of children/young people provided other comments about the changes to library opening hours.

Summary of Written Submissions

Action Ability Group (Whiterock)

- Action Ability works to promote independency amongst people with disabilities
- Action Ability service users use Whiterock library as a group and many as individuals as well
- the group informed Whiterock Library that the questionnaire was long and difficult and would also cause issues for people with literacy and learning disabilities
- a meeting took place involving group members, a support worker and a Libraries NI Area Manager
- all members expressed support for the Library and explained how they use it and what it means to them
- do not believe that usage alone should determine opening hours
- very critical of the consultation questionnaire, felt it would be a barrier for many other local people
- made suggestions about a simplified approach involving simplified wording, symbols, etc.
- pleased that Area Manager met with them and a commitment was made to continue the dialogue
- 'Group would be lost without their library.'

Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon District Council

- concerned that the budget will have an adverse impact on the library service and in particular that the reduced opening hours and investment in stock will have an adverse impact on local communities and hard to reach groups.
- libraries are an integral part of the community and address issues such as rural isolation, social deprivation and good relations
- concerned about the potential impact on the library estate of reduced maintenance spend
- concerned about potential adverse impact on staff
- reduced opening hours may severely disadvantage users in the Age, Disability and People with Dependants equality categories
- concern that visitor numbers could decline and about the impact on programmes
- could impact adversely on rural dwellers; rural transport is very limited

- 'Council wishes to be assured that full consultation with library users and other stakeholders will take place in a timely manner prior to any further decisions being implemented'
- Council wishes to be kept informed of developments.

Arlene Foster, MLA

- new Lisnaskea Library is fabulous
- basing opening hours of the new Library on historic use of the library at Drumhaw would be misleading
- new library is in a better location with enhanced services and much better parking and is accessible to pedestrians
- use has increased and will continue to increase
- Enniskillen is the only fulltime library in Fermanagh
- Lisnaskea is a hub for surrounding rural communities. Few alternatives if the local library is not available to them
- the current hours should be maintained and usage be reviewed. Increased hours would be better.

Brownlow Library

- petition sent to the Minister opposing cuts in a deprived area
- 201 signatures collected in one day but these were not all library users.

Danny Kinahan, MLA

- concerned by the need to reduce opening hours.

DARD Sustainable Rural Communities Branch

- 'libraries make a valuable contribution to the social fabric, community cohesion and sustainability of our rural communities' which fits well with DARD's vision of 'a thriving and sustainable rural economy, community and environment'
- regrets that opening hours will be reduced but welcomes the fact that no libraries will close
- important to take account of the views of rural dwellers
- values working relationship with Libraries NI, pleased with the outcomes to date.

David McNarry, MLA

- acknowledges letter and expresses concern about cuts.

Derry City and Strabane District Council

- opposed to cuts in frontline service provision. Short term cuts will have long term costs as a result of increased levels of disadvantage
- role of libraries in communities - families, study, health and wellbeing, skills development, employability, cultural heritage
- high level of use of Derry Central Library compared with elsewhere demonstrates unique need in the area
- opposed to level of use as determining factor as this benefits larger centres of population
- proposals will impact on social exclusion
- opportunity presented by community planning
- rural areas are particularly dependent on libraries
- special case should be made for this peripheral area i.e. the North West region
- libraries serving areas of social need should not have their hours reduced at all
- Strathfoyle has unique social and economic needs and there should be no reduction in service delivery
- concerns about loss of employment
- no figures provided for mobile libraries, this could have impacted on the policy proposals
- 'Libraries NI should take account of the unique specific social economic and rural issue in the Derry and Strabane Council area, retain the April 2014 hours and work with the Council in the context of community planning.'

Disability Action

- welcomes opportunity to respond
- consultation too short. Libraries NI should have consulted for 12 weeks
- planned engagement with local customers is welcome but should have taken place earlier to inform the EQIA
- lack of accessible public transport in rural areas

- disabled and older people and other low income families do not have the economic power to purchase computers and internet services
- three potential adverse impacts should be a central tenet of the planned engagement with service users
- engagement exercise should be monitored and, if there are low numbers of people with disabilities responding Libraries NI will need to address this
- communication of changes must include a range of accessible methods
- recognises the time and effort that has gone into this consultation document.

Enagh Youth Forum

- Strathfoyle Library is a community hub which works with many local organisations for the benefit of the community e.g. schools, Surestart, Conservation Volunteers, Enagh Seniors Group, Strive to Work, Outreach Youth Development Project
- Strathfoyle is a DSD Area at Risk and suffers from deprivation. If it were in the 10% most deprived wards it would have lost 2 hours as Creggan did. It is in the 12% most deprived and is losing 5 hours. Reducing library services will increase the chance of social and economic decline
- Libraries NI should measure the impact of local libraries rather than easy to measure usage rates.

Individual

- too many questions in the questionnaire, too complicated
- Government will not fund libraries properly so alternatives need to be found e.g. donation box at counter, Northern Ireland to have its own lottery, sponsorship, room hire
- libraries are the lifeblood of a local community, especially small communities
- important for libraries in socially deprived areas to be open.

Jim Shannon, MP

- disappointed that library opening hours will reduce but pleased that no libraries will close.

Limavady DUP

- welcome no library closures
- concerned for Limavady as it has some of the most deprived electoral wards in Northern Ireland.

- libraries important for educational attainment and for helping people get online
- reduced spending on stock will limit the reading material available and will result in less use of the service
- spending less on maintenance makes no economic sense
- need to be cognisant of impact on staff of these changes. IT facilities important for the unemployed
- reduced hours will restrict the ability to offer programmes such as Knit and Natter and reading groups
- reduced access to collections of local historical importance is a loss
- disappointing that libraries have been targeted in this way
- Limavady is in the top 20 libraries in Northern Ireland. How can reduced opening hours be justified?
- reducing opening hours will be a self-fulfilling prophecy
- a better thought out document should be produced.

Member of a Knit and Natter Group

- questionnaire was confusing and did not feel able to complete it
- knows other people who felt the same
- Library is important.

Member of Highfield Residents Association

- need to take account of the needs of young people who are studying.

NIPSA

- recognises the protection offered to libraries and the commitment made to maintain a service in all 98 service points
- 18 hours is the lowest possible figure
- libraries have a strong link to local communities especially in rural areas (based on findings of previous consultations)
- recognises the decision to limit reductions in opening hours in libraries serving the most deprived areas but more work is needed on targeting social need. May be beneficial to work with the Department of Education (DE)
- not clear why the current formula of adding different types of use is the best one. Further thought should be given to this in future e.g. assigning weightings

- welcomes decision to maintain a mix of opening hours
- given the disparity in activity levels best practice should be rolled out to enhance service provision in other libraries
- eight bands seems a lot although it is not clear how an alternative could be developed at this time
- ad hoc closures should be minimised
- sensible to have a consistent approach but NIPSA urges further consideration of a more refined and robust methodology e.g. different approaches in rural and urban areas to ensure need is met
- supports the concept that opening hours should seek to meet the needs of the different customer groups
- would welcome on-going discussion with Libraries NI.

Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People (NICCY)

- overview of NICCY's role and the paramountcy of the rights of the child
- not giving a detailed response but advises Libraries NI to take account of three most relevant UNCRC Articles i.e.
 - all decisions which affect children's lives should be taken in the child's best interests
 - children have the right to have their voices heard in all matters concerning them
 - all children have a right to relax and play and to join in a wide range of activities
- urges Libraries NI to include children in the consultation.

Sean Lynch, MLA

- difficult to disagree with the principle of a consistent approach based on levels of use with exceptions in designated areas of social need, but will make a case for Lisnaskea to be an exception
- new Library is very impressive and in a better location. Very busy in its first few days open and will remain so
- consultation proposes a reduction of 2 hours based on level of use in the old Library. This was 'off the beaten track' with very poor parking. The new Library is centrally located with a car park to the rear
- use will definitely increase. Lisnaskea is only 1,484 uses below the next band
- should monitor use and then take a view

- Fermanagh only has 3 main towns and 3 libraries. Public transport is poor so it is not necessarily possible to travel to the library when you want to. Reduced opening hours restricts public access disproportionately in these circumstances and increases isolation for those living in rural areas

SDLP

- recognises the financial pressures created by the budget settlement and that Libraries NI is undertaking this exercise reluctantly
- libraries play an important role - learning, information, literacy, social space, employability, partnerships with statutory and community sector
- disappointing that services are threatened by reduced hours
- welcomes proposal that libraries serving areas of substantial social need should have some protection
- urges Libraries NI to monitor the impact of these proposals.

Strathfoyle

- extensive list of comments provided as a result of questions asked by Enagh Youth Forum at a local public engagement day (one of a series in the Derry and Strabane Council Area as part of community planning):
 - Do you consider Strathfoyle to be rural or urban?
82 said rural. Series of comments provided
 - Do you think there is social need in the community?
84 said yes.
 - What do you think of the current proposal to cut a further five hours of opening times from this library?
18 strongly worded comments
 - Do you consider Strathfoyle Library to be an essential service locally?
Yes 82. Series of very positive comments about the library
 - Say what your library means to you
Series of comments e.g. 'togetherness', 'the heart of our community', 'moved here from Poland 5 years ago - the library really helped me settle in', 'I've just recovered from stress and anxiety - a place to relax' (and 21 more).

UNISON

- reductions in services ever since Libraries NI's inception - staff losses, recruitment freeze, reduced stock budget, reduced opening hours, library closures

- stress and hardship caused by use of agency staff, unfilled posts, cuts to opening hours and impact of this on services and programmes, staff shortages, closures due to staff shortages, lack of communication from management, expectation that programmes and services will be delivered whilst short staffed, providing cover for sick leave and annual leave
- further cuts in opening hours (following previous reductions and closure of libraries) calls the viability and sustainability of the service into doubt.
- in 2011 consultation 71% of respondents disagreed with reducing opening hours and 81% believed they should be extended
- 15 of the towns with reductions in opening hours are also the subject of consultation on Ulsterbus routes especially town services, impact on rural communities, older citizens, young people and women's ability to access library services
- increased pressure on staff
- budget allocation is insufficient
- some equality categories in the 2011 EQIA are not mentioned in the current EQIA, specifically migrants and women
- UNISON believes that the proposals will have a disproportionate detrimental impact on older people, people with a disability, young people, people with dependants
- the mitigation of local consultation on patterns of hours is inadequate and disingenuous
- consultation with staff indicates that cuts, staff shortages and uncertainty are impacting on the health and wellbeing of staff
- libraries are an important part of the social fabric of communities. Shared space, meeting place, a place of opportunity, support and assistance, internet, building skills and confidence
- important role in rural communities as other public services disappear
- cost of public transport and potential loss of public transport services makes it more difficult for people in rural areas to access a service that is only open for 18 hours per week.

UUP (Leslie Cree, MLA on behalf of the UUP)

- values the work being carried out by Libraries NI
- recognises the pressures created by the recent budget settlement
- libraries are about more than lending books although that is important. Storytelling, helping people get online, support for employability

- recognise unwelcome decisions may need to be taken
- agrees with the draft policy line by line
- believes many of the reductions will not have a critical impact on service delivery (57 hours reduced to 54, 48 to 45) although this is clearly unwelcome and local communities will be concerned
- reluctantly accepts the majority of the proposals given the financial circumstances.
- lists a number of libraries where reductions which are more significant but recognises that that most of these will be left with a reasonable number of hours (45, 50 and 40 hours), however Portrush will lose almost a third of its hours and reduce from 40 to 28. This is a cause for concern and Libraries NI should re-examine its proposals with a view to implementing a less dramatic reduction in Portrush's hours