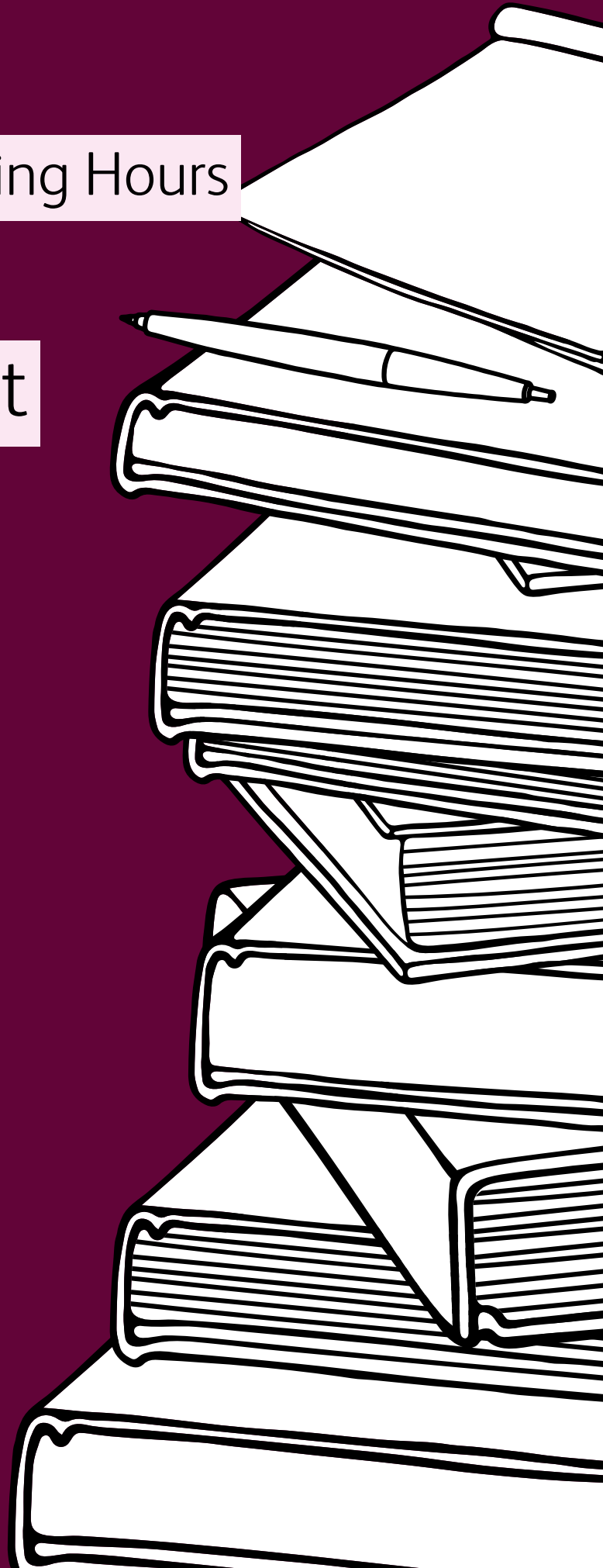


Hackney Libraries: Consultation on Opening Hours

Equalities Impact Assessment (EqIA)

Consultation closes:
27 January 2026



Equality Impact Assessment: Hackney Libraries (January 2025)

The Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) form is a template for analysing a policy or proposed decision for its potential effects on individuals with protected characteristics covered by the Equality Act 2010.

In making decisions, the Council must comply with the Public Sector Equality Duty under s.149 of the Equality Act (2010). This requires the council to have due regard to the need to:

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

S.149(3) of the Equality Act 2010 states:

“Having due regard to the need to advance equality of opportunity involves having due regard, to the need to:

- (A) Remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by people due to their protected characteristics.
- (B) Take steps to meet the needs of people with certain protected characteristics where these are different from the needs of other people and
- (C) Encourage people with certain protected characteristics to participate in public life or other activities where their participation is disproportionately low.”

The s.149 duty applies to the following protected characteristics: age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy/maternity, race, religion/faith, sex and sexual orientation. Marriage and civil partnership status applies to the first part of the duty only. Marriage and civil partnership is not part of the duty to advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations

Although it is not enforced in legislation as a protected characteristic, socioeconomic status is also considered in this assessment as a protected characteristic.

This Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) is complemented by a [Strategic Needs Assessment available on the Consultation page](#) and in libraries to read.

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Responsibility for the Equality Impact Assessment

Name of proposal:	Hackney Library Service Reduction of Opening Hours Proposal
Service Area:	Hackney Library Service
Officer Completing Assessment:	Emma Winch
Equalities Advisor:	Nicola Duncan
Cabinet meeting date:	February 2025
Director/Assistant Director:	Petra Roberts

Executive Summary

The proposal in question seeks to achieve cost savings for library services by reviewing and adjusting operating hours. This reduction will also impact staffing and the stock budget, but there is currently no plan to remove or reduce any other services provided.

The Council faces a significant challenge in reducing its expenditure while continuing to provide services that meet local needs. Among the options presented to the Cabinet in February 2025 are savings for Library Services, including changes to opening hours, which may disproportionately affect certain groups.

Hackney's Library Service fulfills the Council's statutory obligation to provide a public library service under the Public Library and Museums Act (1964). It currently operates across eight buildings, offers a community outreach service, and provides an online collection of digital resources. All libraries offer free Wi-Fi, fixed computers, study spaces, children's libraries, printing facilities, free events and activities, and support for residents seeking information on council services and consultations.

The service engages in a wide variety of developmental and participatory work with residents and local communities, often in collaboration with external organisations and/or internal partners. This includes initiatives such as the Reading Champions scheme with Hackney Education and local schools, pop-up health clinics with Public Health, sustainability and recycling programmes with the Sustainability Team, Housing Surgeries, Digital Buddies with Employment and Skills, Ward Councillor Surgeries with the Mayor's Office, Adult Learning support (Maths, English, Digital Skills, and ESOL), and the Refugee and Asylum Seeker Hub Welcome with Policy, Hackney Works, and the Money Hub, among others.

A number of the Council's equality-driven programmes are led and delivered through libraries. These include Black History 365, Pride 365, Diwali, LGBT History Month, Trans Awareness Month, Local History Month/Hackney History Festival, Women's History Month, and a broad array of events celebrating Jewish, South Asian, Chinese, African, and African Caribbean heritage.

Hackney Libraries serve a highly diverse customer base. In 2024, the Engagement and Development Team conducted a comprehensive analysis of the borough profiles around each library. Customer data (from Sirsi-Dynix) was compared with local borough data (from the Census, Hackney and City, and Neighbourhood statistics) to help the service better understand the community in order to identify gaps and tailor its offerings. London Libraries data was also used to benchmark services against other boroughs.

Compared to borough averages, libraries experience significantly higher usage by women and young people across all branches. The customer base generally mirrors the ethnic diversity of local wards, with particularly high numbers of Black, Mixed, and Asian customers at most libraries.

Between 2019 and 2024, the customer base has grown more diverse, with an increased proportion of children and young people. Black and Asian customer numbers have surpassed the borough average in several areas: Stamford Hill, Woodberry Down, Shoreditch, Clapton, and Dalston, while maintaining 2019 levels at Hackney Central and Homerton.

The Council is legally required to provide a comprehensive library service that is relevant and accessible to the local population. In Hackney, this service is shaped by the borough's demographic diversity, which necessitates specialised stock selection that is more costly than regular stock. Programming and co-located services/partnerships must also be accessible and relevant to ensure it serves those who need it, where they need it.

This Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) shows that young people, older people, disabled individuals, people of various ethnicities, and those from lower socioeconomic backgrounds are most likely to be negatively impacted by changes to library opening hours. These groups rely heavily on libraries for studying, accessing materials, free services and sessions, socialising, using computers, and accessing the internet. This reliance has grown since Hackney's libraries transformed into community hubs in 2021, following a restructure that included the creation of an Engagement and Development Team focused on community engagement, digital transformation, lifelong learning, stock diversity, and partnership building.

The EqIA has identified several mitigations that should be considered to reduce the impact of reduced opening hours on individuals with certain protected characteristics. These mitigations, outlined at the end of the EqIA, focus on understanding when and how often users from specific groups utilise libraries, and how adjustments to opening times can help preserve their access.

The next step in the decision-making process is public consultation. After the consultation, evidence will be reviewed and integrated into an updated version of this EqIA to further assess the impacts and possible mitigations.

Consultation and Engagement

An engagement and consultation plan, communication plan and Strategic Needs Assessment has been drafted surrounding the decision to reduce hours.

The quantitative data currently held on library usage (registered users) can be broken down by age, gender, ethnicity and postcode, but not other protected characteristics, e.g. disability. Gaps in the data have been filled in using demographic information about each library's estimated catchment area, but we also collect missing data about customers during surveys with users and non-users where we ask respondents about disability, caring responsibilities and housing status.

A large-scale survey of users and non-users in 2021 collected 8,500 responses from library users and non-users across all ages and backgrounds as well as from businesses, cultural organisations and the voluntary and community sector. A further 52 participants engaged in focus groups and qualitative interviews including a wide range of voices from older residents, young people, disabled residents, ethnically diverse communities, Council tenants, LGBTQI+ community and the Orthodox Jewish community.

A socio-economic needs assessment was conducted as part of the libraries review in 2019 and has since been updated using 2021 Census Data. The Strategic Needs Assessment draws together the quantitative and quantitative data collected by the Libraries Service and demographic data relating to the wards and neighbourhoods around each library. This data and insight has been used to develop individual library profiles and customer case studies to create a picture of users, non-users and visiting patterns for each library.

In 2025 a customer satisfaction survey was launched to check in with library users about the service and to compare satisfaction rates, usage patterns and customer needs with data collected in 2019. Library Officers, the Engagement and Development Team and partners gathered both quantitative and qualitative data by either speaking directly to library users or providing them with a form to fill out, in both digital and paper format. 527 library users took part (207 online and 320 face to face). 96% of respondents were Hackney residents.

Neighbourhood libraries

At the start of 2025, neighbourhood libraries have seen a marked increase in use, with a more even distribution of visitors compared to 2021. A growing number of people now consider smaller libraries as their most frequently used, and more individuals report having visited these libraries. Notable increases in usage have been observed at Homerton and Clapton libraries, as well as at Hackney Central. Satisfaction with “library accessibility”, “the variety of resources”, “opening hours”, and “staff knowledge and conduct” has risen significantly across all sites, reaching over 95% since 2021. 59% of customers stated that they “regularly use their local library and value having a smaller library nearby”, compared to just 12% who prefer traveling to larger libraries for their offerings. 72% of customers walk to the library, a habit Hackney Libraries is keen to encourage and would be affected if people were expected to travel to libraries outside local neighbourhoods. Qualitative data shows strong support for local libraries from elders, families, and young people. They expressed concerns about the difficulty and expense of traveling to other locations, preferring the safer, shorter walk to their local branch. The current cost of living crisis and high poverty rates in the borough worsen these challenges, which many noted negatively affect their wellbeing, social connections, ability to study, and job search efforts.

Warm hubs/toilets

In our 2025 survey and previous engagements, many respondents emphasised the vital role of libraries as warm spaces. 46% of survey participants agreed that libraries are crucial for reaching those who truly need them. Among daily computer users, 30% were residents in temporary accommodation, experiencing homelessness, or living in council housing. Additionally, 31% of daily users and 25% of those who visit a few times a week shared this housing status. The qualitative data highlights numerous comments from and on behalf of vulnerable individuals who rely on libraries. These respondents voiced concerns about potential cuts to essential frontline services for these groups, stressing the importance of ensuring their voices are heard in consultations. They also emphasised the need for continued access to toilets, warm spaces, and face-to-face support and advice.

Variable hours for workers, students and parents

Relying solely on data or consultation feedback to determine opening hours is not sufficient. Some respondents have highlighted the importance of quieter times, such as older people, students, job-seekers, childminders, and parents or carers of young children, who may visit libraries early in the morning when foot traffic is low, to attend groups and classes. It was also noted that these quieter hours are often better suited for disabled children with impairments. Evenings and after-school hours are particularly crucial for children, young people, students preparing for exams, and working individuals. This was confirmed in both our 2021 and 2025 surveys, where under-16s and 16-24-year-olds indicated they are most likely to use the library during these times. In the 2025 survey, respondents expressed general satisfaction with opening hours; however, those who were dissatisfied mainly expressed a desire for longer and more convenient hours. Since 2021 we have significantly increased our after school activities and Homework Clubs across libraries. At Homerton for example we regularly have over 25 children attending Homework Club and 50 children and parents/carers attending Lego Club.

Education/Culture/Socio-Economic/Health and Wellbeing

In our January 2025 survey, the most common response to the question of how people feel about libraries was, "They are absolutely essential, I don't know what I would do without them," with 73% of respondents agreeing. Additionally, 43% of respondents stated that libraries have been "crucial to their health and wellbeing", while 37% said they have been "vital for their education", and 27% use them for "studying or doing homework". The qualitative data reveals numerous comments highlighting the role of libraries in supporting health and wellbeing, social connections, access to services, education and literacy, early childhood development, studying, homework, job seeking, and clubs or activities for learning and social engagement. Our staff have all received training from RNIB, Papyrus Suicide prevention, Homerton Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust, so they are much better informed about making referrals to specialist support groups. Customer insights show that closing a library branch would significantly limit literacy, education, and employment opportunities for disadvantaged communities, potentially leading to worse physical and mental health outcomes in the future.

Digital Inclusion

In our 2025 customer survey, 34% of respondents agreed that "The Wi-Fi and computers are essential to me." Among daily computer users, 30% were residents in temporary accommodation, experiencing homelessness, or living in council housing. The qualitative data reveals numerous comments from individuals who lack a computer or printer at home, highlighting the need for free Wi-Fi and access to computers for job-seeking, studying, social connection and work. Since 2021, there has been a shift in how people use the computers, with "reading and learning online", as well as career-related activities like "applying for jobs and creating CVs", now surpassing "general information browsing" as the most popular uses. The number of customers using computers has increased since 2021, particularly among older and younger people. Between 2021 and 2025, the

use of computers for job applications and CV creation rose by 350%, while those using computers for managing or applying for Universal Credit increased by 150%.

Connecting to the council

In 2024, we continued to work with the Mayor's Office to offer Ward Cllr Surgeries in libraries and we expanded our Adult Learning and ESOL classes and Digital Buddies sessions in partnership with Employment and Skills and Adult Education. We also introduced Housing surgeries and a Refugee Hub in collaboration with Housing and the Welcome Hackney Team. As a result, many respondents to our 2025 survey noted they were visiting libraries not for traditional library services, but to access Council support and advice. All of our staff have received training from Make Every Contact Count, the Domestic Abuse Information Service, the Policy Team, Safeguarding Team, and Hackney Education Attendance Team, which has enhanced their ability to resolve customer issues at first contact and increased their confidence in referring individuals to other Council teams for further support. In our 2025 customer survey, 26% of respondents agreed with the statement, "They help me connect to Council services; I use them to get advice, knowledge, and information," and 15% expressed a desire to access more Council services at their local library. Between 2021 and 2025, the number of people using libraries to access other Council services increased by 143%.

Community cohesion and customers with protected characteristics

In 2024, we expanded our community partnerships to include organisations such as Kings Park Moving Together, John Howard Forensic Mental Health Centre, Unity Works SEND Employment, Scope Disability Community Advice, Healing Generations Therapy Group for Global Majority residents, Side by Side Orthodox Jewish SEND School, Stormont House SEND School, Carers First, Positive East Sexual Health, and Gloji SmokeFree City & Hackney, among others. This expansion has allowed us to better support and welcome a broader range of residents with protected characteristics into our libraries. Across all libraries, we see significantly higher levels of women and young people compared to borough averages. Additionally, our customer base consistently reflects higher than average levels of Black, Mixed, and Asian customers (with the exception of Stoke Newington). Half of our libraries also have above-average levels of disabled customers and children and we have higher than borough averages of LGBTQIA+ registered users. As a result, many respondents to our 2025 survey indicated they were visiting libraries not just for traditional library services, but for community-specific, health and wellbeing, SEND, and cost of living support. Their perspectives are well represented in the surveys, with many expressing that they feel more connected to the Council and their communities through libraries. 37% agreed with the sentiment "They help me connect to my community" and 24% told us "They help me to connect to people from other communities". Respondents report feeling less isolated, better equipped to study and search for jobs, and more supported by the inclusive range of community language, LGBTQIA+, Global Majority and Torah stock we've introduced across our sites.

Non-users

In our survey of 2021, non-users told us they were most likely to visit during the day, followed by evenings, then weekends. In the Library Review Engagement Report the most common reason for not using libraries from Non-Users across all ages was "I have access to a computer, tablet or phone at home/work". The most common reason for not using libraries from Council renters and across all ages was "I pay for subscription services (e.g. Netflix, Amazon, Virgin)". The most common response to what would encourage you to use a library in the future was from Council renters was "Attend events for children, adults and the community," "Coffee shop or bookshop on site" "Provision of health and wellbeing activities and information" and "More learning and education activities in the library".

Next steps

Insights gathered during the Strategic Needs Assessment, in-person engagement and customer survey have been used to shape the options and the public consultation on reducing opening hours survey. The survey will provide additional information, which will be considered in an updated version of this EqIA to inform the final decision. Ongoing engagement will reach out to relevant stakeholder groups, including users and non-users of libraries, as well as partners, schools, and VCS organisations. Further consultation and engagement around the proposal will include face to face surveys and focus groups as a further way to fill these data gaps.

Hackney Libraries have recently undergone a restructure, with residents and staff recently surveyed on service provision and opening hours. Any additional public engagement or formal consultation regarding libraries should be approached with caution and only initiated if deemed absolutely necessary to avoid duplicating existing insights about library usage.

Notes on the Data

This EqlA uses not just each library's registered user data but also data for their catchment area. There are several reasons for this:

- Not everyone who uses library services registers at the library.
- Membership is a smaller cohort than the catchment area, and using only membership does not consider all residents who are eligible to become registered users and may do so in the future.
- The library service only collects limited information about the sex, race, age and religion of their registered users. This therefore does not provide a full profile of protected characteristics that may be affected, particularly disability and socioeconomic status.

The catchment area for each library has been calculated by combining borough averages and comparing with registered customer data for the closest library. Each library serves between two and three wards.

Data and Impact Analysis

This section considers how the proposed change will affect people with protected characteristics.

Age

Chart 1: Age Profile of Registered Library Users (all libraries)

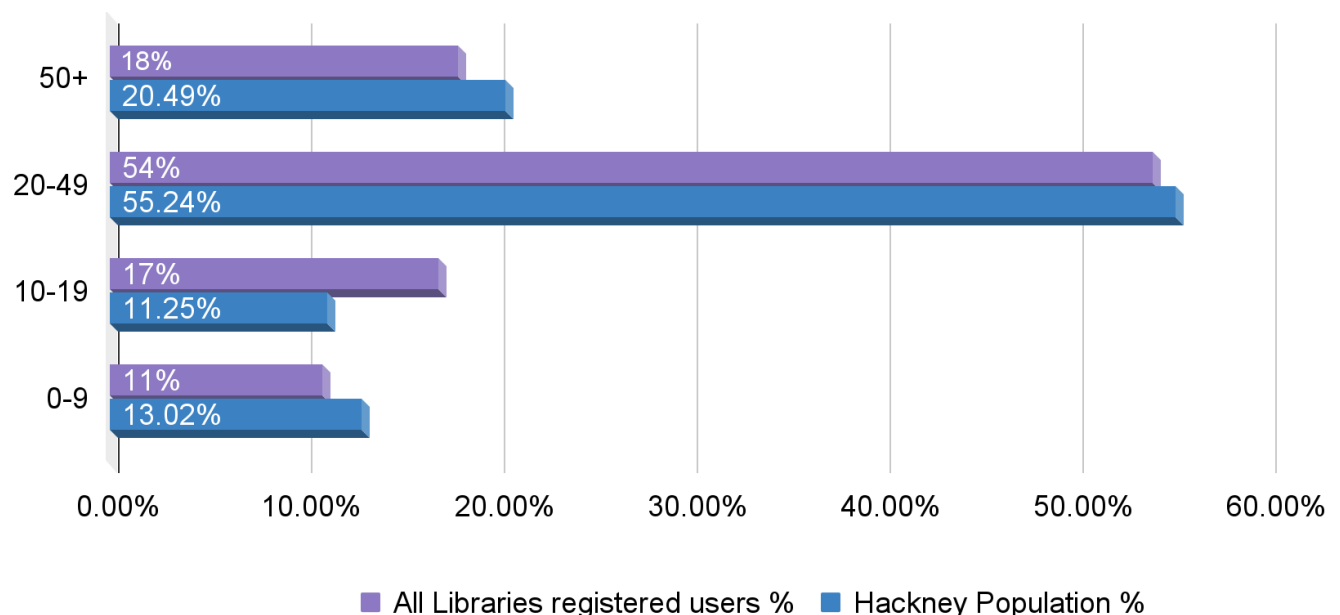
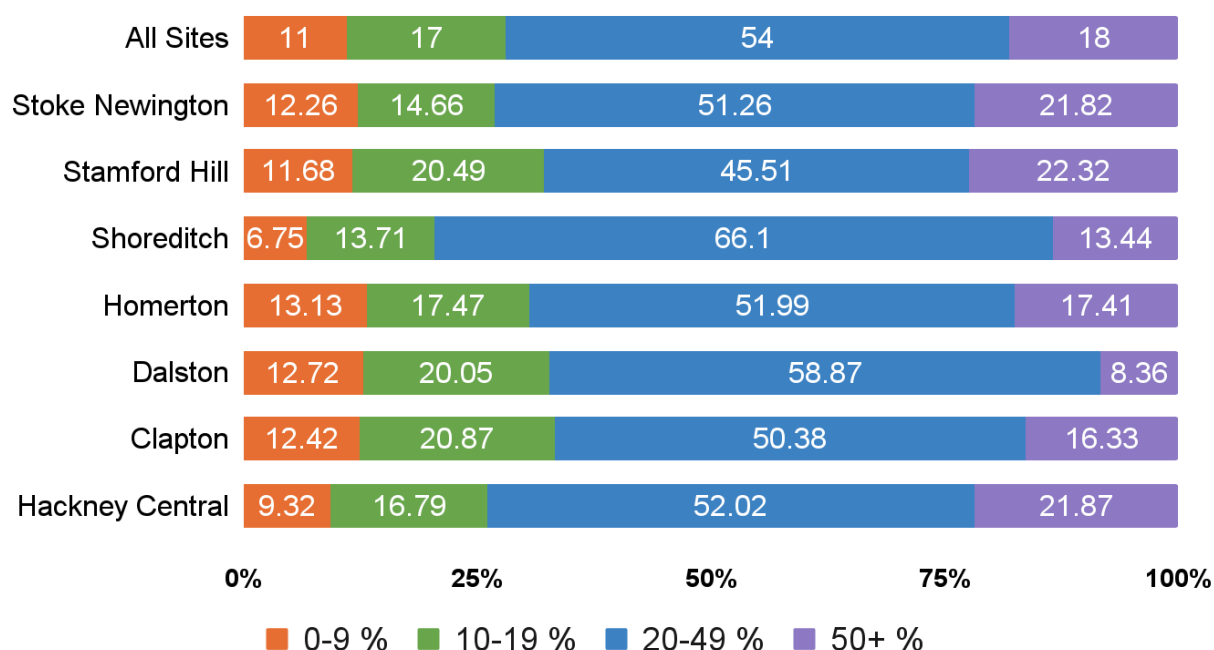


Chart 2: Age Profile of Registered Library Users by Site (%)



What data sources will you use to inform your assessment of the impact of the proposal on people under this protected characteristic?

The data sources used to inform the assessment here include data from the ONS 2021 Census, as well as footfall, membership and service use data collected by Hackney Library service, which, if not presented in this EqlA, can be found in the accompanying Strategic Needs Assessment. This has been combined with customer survey data, studies produced by various external organisations on the use of libraries nationally and the impact of libraries on the target group.

a) Might members of this group be disproportionately affected by the proposal due to overrepresentation? How does this compare with the wider demographic profile of the Borough?

- For all registered library users, residents aged 10-19 are significantly overrepresented when compared to Hackney's population.
- At an individual library level, this overrepresentation of registered users aged 10-19 is true for all libraries.
- When compared to Hackney's population, older people are not overrepresented as registered users at any library.
- 50% of libraries have higher than borough averages of children aged 0-9.
- In the Library Review Engagement Report the most common reason for not using libraries from Non-Users across all ages was "I have access to a computer, tablet or phone at home/work".
- The most common response to what would encourage you to use a library in the future was "a coffee shop or bookshop on site" and "More arts exhibitions and creative activities for all ages", for older people "Availability of a printer, photocopier and scanner" and "A wider range of books (paper), newspaper, DVDs, CDs, audio books" were also popular responses

b) Might members of this group be disproportionately affected by this proposal because of a need related to their protected characteristic?

Children and Young People

Children and young people are a key audience and user group for Hackney's library services. Libraries provide a quiet space for young people to study, particularly where this is not accessible at home, as well as resources (books, internet, etc.) and homework support to supplement and develop their learning. This is particularly important for young people who may not have access to the internet/a computer at home. This extends to students who are home-schooled and, therefore, may use the library as a primary source of learning and tutors who use libraries to provide lessons for children and young people who are not in education.

Libraries also run and host several sessions aimed at children and young people, including stay-and-play and craft sessions, homework clubs and reading groups. These provide a way for parents/carers to develop their children's speech, language and communication skills, especially during school holidays and support families in providing social/fun/meaningful activities for free.

Evidence also strongly advocates for the benefits of children reading for pleasure, including for mental health and literacy and communication skills. A reduction in library services has the potential to restrict access to books and other reading materials for children and young people, making these skills harder to develop. Children and young people, particularly those from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, are likely to have their educational development impeded by reduced access to libraries. Libraries run several programmes, including Hackney Reading Champions, the Hackney Reading Quest and Chatterbooks reading clubs, to support young people reading for pleasure.

The Hackney Education Attainment Scrutiny report for 2023/24 provides key statistics on the educational achievements of children in Hackney Schools.

Profile of children in Early Years and Foundation Stage (EYFS) level in Hackney.

- Higher than national proportions of Free School Meals (FSM): 37% of primary pupils in Hackney are eligible for FSM compared to 23% nationally
- Higher than national proportions of disadvantaged pupils: 39% of primary pupils in Hackney are eligible for pupil premium compared to 24% nationally
- Higher than national proportions of pupils receiving SEND Support: 15% of primary pupils in Hackney have SEND Support compared to 13% nationally
- Higher than national proportions of EHCP pupils: 4% of primary pupils in Hackney have an EHCP compared to 2% nationally
- Higher than national proportions of EAL pupils: 45% of primary pupils in Hackney have EAL compared to 21% nationally
- An ethnically diverse population: nationally, 64% of primary pupils are White British compared to 17% in Hackney.

Profile of children at KS4 level in Hackney:

- Hackney has been consistently in the top quartile for key stage 4 outcomes over the period considered from 2018 onwards, with attainment LA rankings across the four attainment measures of between 25th and 43rd. However, Turkish, Kurdish and Turkish Cypriot pupils have consistently had performance gaps when compared to the overall Hackney level.

Potential Impacts: As shown above, children are significantly overrepresented among registered library users, showing they could be particularly impacted by any changes to libraries. Data from the Strategic Needs Assessment shows that children and under 5s use libraries at very specific times compared to other library users (mornings, after school and weekends), making them particularly vulnerable to negative impacts from changing opening hours. The data shows that many libraries are busiest after 3 pm when schools end and that children's computers are only being used after this time. Reducing hours towards the end of the day could, therefore, have a significant negative impact on children's access, and we need to be mindful of this when considering new opening hours.

Young Adults

Due to the current financial context, young adults are much more likely to live with their parents or in houses with multiple occupations. They, therefore, may rely on libraries to provide a suitable environment and space to study for higher/further education or to work remotely.

Potential Impacts: As shown above, young people are significantly overrepresented among registered library users, showing they could be particularly impacted by any changes to libraries. Data from the Strategic Needs Assessment shows that young people use libraries at very specific times compared to other library users (after school/college, evenings and weekends), making them particularly vulnerable to negative impacts from changing opening hours. The data shows that many libraries are busiest after 3 pm when schools end and that children's computers are only being used after this time. All libraries experience an increase in visitor numbers of around 10% during exam periods (April-July and Oct-Dec), but some libraries have a significant surge; Clapton 60%, Shoreditch 38% and Stamford Hill 17%. Reducing hours towards the end of the day could, therefore, have a significant negative impact on young people's access, and we need to be mindful of this when considering new opening hours.

Older People

For older people, libraries may act as a crucial source of social interaction for those more likely to experience social isolation, which is key for health and wellbeing. Some research has shown that access to libraries enables older people to remain independent and in their own homes for longer and can support those with age related conditions, e.g. dementia. The libraries host sessions which are free to attend and give older people the opportunity to socialise in a safe and warm space. Interactions with staff in libraries also represent a significant safeguarding opportunity for older people.

Hackney Libraries also host older people's groups, such as U3A, the Hackney Pensioners and Hackney Circle, and deliver regular sessions including intergenerational storytime, crafting and knitting sessions, which are well attended by older people.

Libraries are a crucial enabler for those who might find themselves digitally excluded, providing access to the internet and digital services, as well as support to use them. This is a key means for older people accessing council and government services, e.g. benefits claims, voter registration, and accessing council services through face-to face interaction.

A higher prevalence of physical disability and mental health challenges in this group means that many of the factors under the 'Disability' section will also be relevant.

Potential Impacts: Older people are underrepresented among library members and generally underrepresented in most catchment areas when compared to the borough. Older people are also significantly more likely to be retired and have more time. This means they will be less likely to be negatively impacted by general changes to opening hours, such as all libraries opening later or

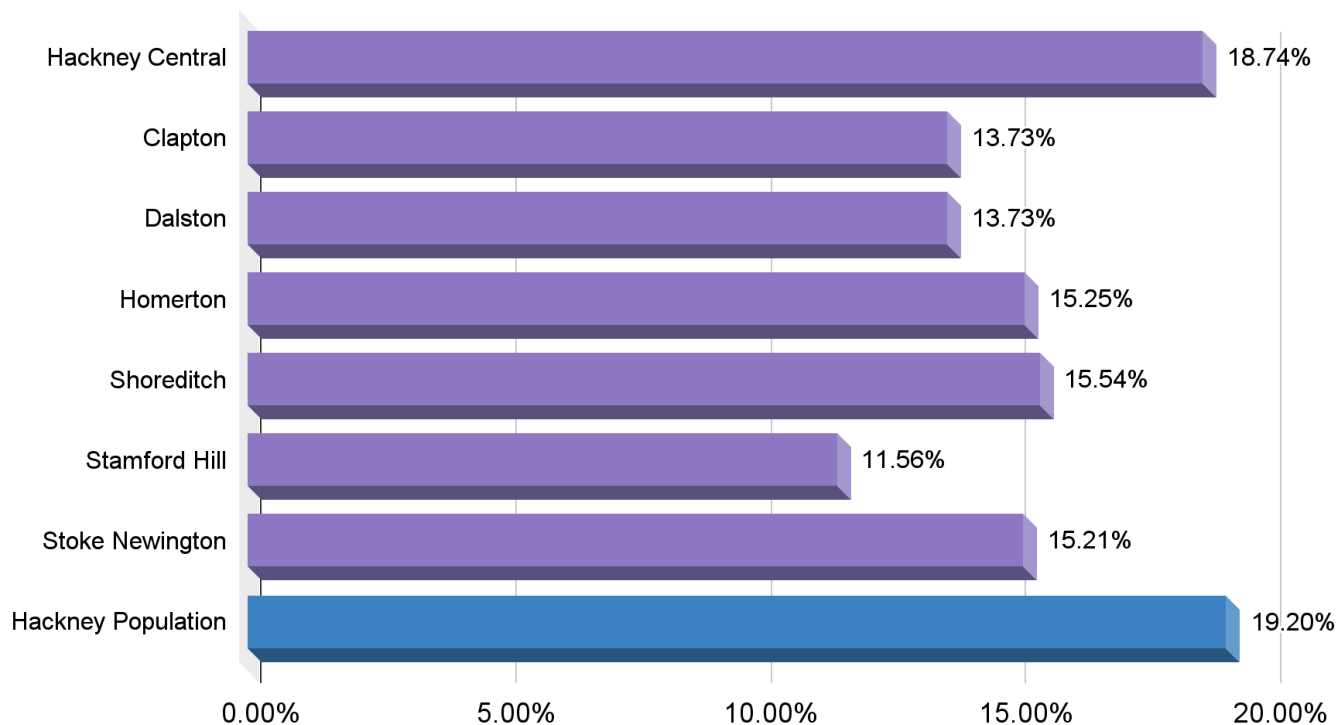
closing earlier. However, older people are less mobile than the rest of the population and may find it harder to get to a library further away than their local one. We should be mindful of this when considering closing one library with the justification that the next closest one is open, as this could have a significant negative impact on older people's library access.

Short delays in accessing books and other issues may not have significant further impacts on older people; at most, they may need to wait until the next day to access their closest library, or alternatively, Community Library Service (CLS) Home Visit Library Service can deliver books directly to older and disabled people regardless of library opening hours. However, decreasing library opening hours may increase social isolation in older people, and restricted access to digital technology may have a significant and lasting impact. Older people are far more likely to be digitally excluded than the general population and may rely on the library for digital access to a variety of things. Lesser and/or delayed access to this could have longer-lasting negative impacts for older people, such as missed medical appointments and late payment of bills that may ultimately lead to poorer health and financial outcomes.

Impacts and Evidence	Mitigation
<p>Needs Assessment 2024 -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'Significantly higher' levels of young people registered as customers than the borough averages (across all libraries) • 'Lower' or 'significantly lower' levels of older people registered as customers than the borough average (across all libraries excluding Stamford Hill and CLS) • All Hackney libraries have higher than the borough averages of young people (12%) ranging from 13% up to over 20% at Dalston, Clapton and Stamford Hill. <p>Library Review 2019 -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Older people and under 16s are most likely to visit in the daytime, and under 16s and 16-24s are also the two groups more likely to use the library in the evening <p>Keplar Visitor Counters 2024 -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All libraries experience an increase in visitor numbers of around 10% during exam periods (April-July and Oct-Dec), but some libraries have a significant surge; Clapton 60%, Shoreditch 38% and Stamford Hill 17%. 	<p>This decision aims to realise library cost saving through changing and reducing opening hours only. There will be no reduction in service provision, such as classes, stock for issue, or number of computers. Services affected by changing opening times will be moved to a different but still appropriate time on a different day. Therefore, this section will only consider the potential impacts of reduced opening hours on this protected characteristic.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Loss of 1 - 1.5 days library access at their local site (excluding Hackney Central, Woodberry down and Stoke Newington) • Protection of all sites for our daily / regular users • Delivery of events and activities for older people, under 16s/18s and pre-school and school children protected during opening hours. • Involve people from different age groups in ongoing service development and improvement • Delivery of partner programmes (Adult Learning, Digital Buddies) during the core hours • Engagement with target groups on service change • Protected afternoons, evening and weekend hours for students and working families

Disability

Chart 1: Disability Status of Registered Users by Site (%)



What data sources will you use to inform your assessment of the impact of the proposal on people under this protected characteristic?

The data sources used to inform the assessment here include data from the ONS 2021 Census, as well as footfall, membership and service use data collected by Hackney Library service, which, if not presented in this EqlA, can be found in the accompanying Strategic Needs Assessment. This has been combined with customer survey data, studies produced by various external organisations on the use of libraries nationally and the impact of libraries on the target group.

a) Might members of this group be disproportionately affected by the proposal due to overrepresentation?

- Disabled people are overrepresented as registered customers in the catchment areas of Hackney Central, Shoreditch, Homerton and Stoke Newington Libraries.
- In our library customer satisfaction survey, 16.8% stated that they were disabled (88) - 13.2% limited a bit (69) and 3.6% very limited (19), indicating higher than borough average levels of customers who may not be registered.
- 10% of participants in our writing groups are disabled.

b) Might members of this group be disproportionately affected by this proposal due to a need related to their protected characteristic?

Libraries are an important centre for access for disabled people. Disabled people may use the libraries for assistance to access services where there might otherwise be a barrier to access.

Libraries also host and run sessions which contribute to mental health and wellbeing, including arts and crafts, exercise classes, mindfulness and music, as well as support with health and wellbeing more generally, with healthy living drop-ins.

Disabled people can feel assured that the libraries represent an accessible space in central locations which they will be able to use, with staff who have received accessibility training. Many access requirements that disabled residents might need can be catered for in libraries; this includes physical access for those with limited mobility but also quiet spaces for those with sensory processing challenges and aids for those with visual and hearing impairments. Libraries are also important spaces for social and participatory opportunities, with many community groups and council services using libraries to reach disabled residents.

Hackney Library Service has established partnerships with Scope Youth Ambassadors, RNIB and Macular Society who have worked with the Engagement and Development Team since 2023 to conduct Access Audits of libraries, the outcomes of which have fed into design briefs for Hackney Central and Stoke Newington Library Improvement Projects. Hackney Libraries also work with the RNIB and Macular Society to run a Monthly Sight Loss support group at Dalston CLR James Library.

Potential Impacts: Due to a wide range of issues, including mobility, some disabled people may not be able to attend their 'next closest' library. We should be mindful of this when considering closing one library with the justification that the next closest one is open, as this could have a significant negative impact on disabled people's library access.

Disabled people may also find it easier and preferable to attend libraries at a time when they are less crowded. Again, we should be mindful of this when considering opening hours as closing libraries for all but the busiest times could have a significant negative impact on access for disabled people.

Access to books and other issues is already mitigated for disabled people by the home delivery service that will deliver to residents' homes if they have are disabled. This does not mitigate for the time when disabled people may need to physically be in the library to use a service.

Disabled people are far more likely to be digitally excluded than the general population and may rely on the library for digital access to a variety of things. Lesser and/or delayed access to this could have longer lasting negative impacts for disabled people, such as missed medical appointments and late payment of bills that may ultimately lead to poorer health and financial outcomes.

Additionally, we are also aware of the high level of correlation between disability, unemployment and indicators of deprivation. A reduction in library hours may make it more challenging for disabled people to access services such as Housing Surgeries, Digital Buddies, Hackney Pensioners and Hackney Circle sessions, Energy Advice and Cost of Living support – which are all services that are hosted by libraries.

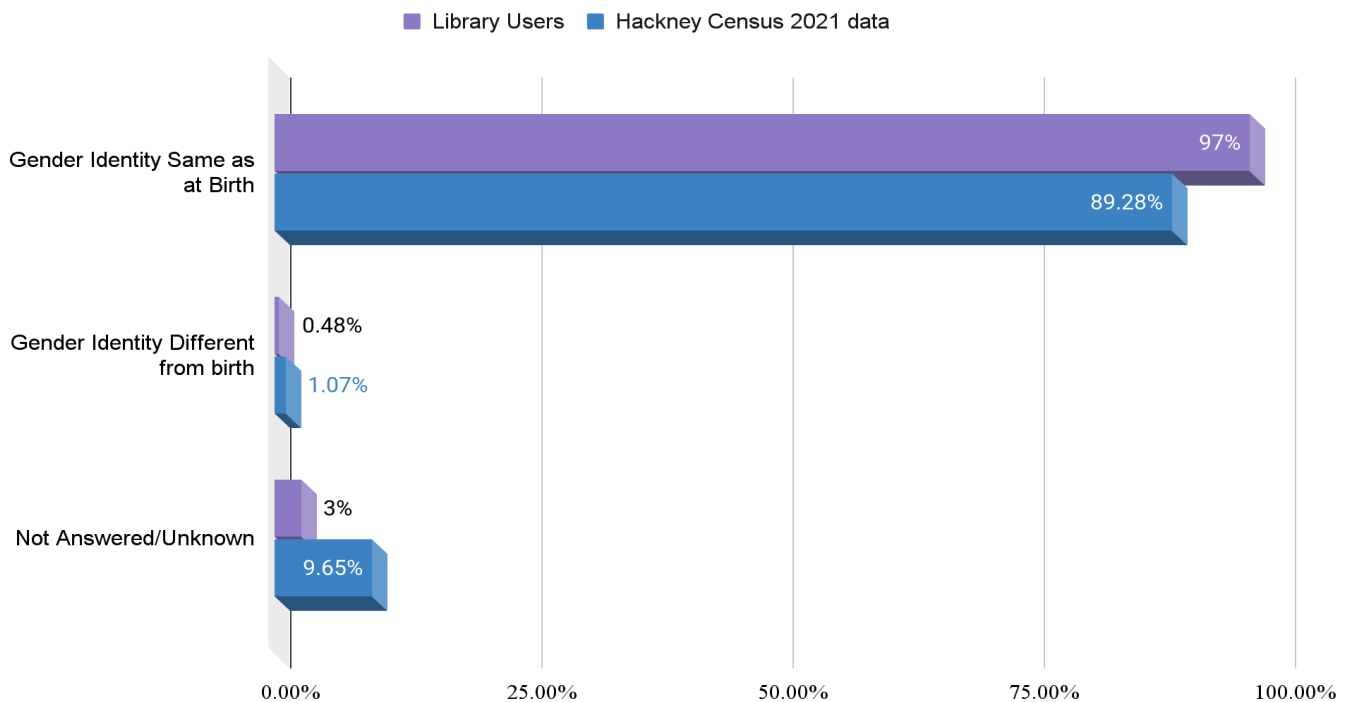
This could also lead to much more significant negative impacts in the long term and poor financial and health outcomes if changes to library hours restrict access to these services.

Finally, any reduction in hours, especially introducing times when whole branch libraries are closed for a whole day, is likely to contribute to the social isolation felt by many disabled people and have a negative impact on their wellbeing. This needs to be considered when deciding on hours.

Impacts and Evidence	Mitigation
<p>Needs Assessment 2024 -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • '60% of Hackney libraries have 'higher' than borough average registered disabled customers and 40% of sites have levels 'in line with borough averages' <p>Library Customer Survey 2025 -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 16.8% of respondents are disabled (88) - 13.2% limited a bit (69) and 3.6% very limited (19) <p>Library SEND Programmes 2024 -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In 2024 we introduced a sight loss support group at Dalston, an ADHD art club at Homerton, SEND work experience placements at Shoreditch and Stamford Hill, SEND digital skills programme for young people at Dalston Library and a rhyme session for deaf children at Hackney Central. 	<p>This decision aims to realise library cost saving through changing and reducing opening hours only. There will be no reduction in service provision, such as classes, stock for issue, or number of computers. Services affected by changing opening times will be moved to a different but still appropriate time on a different day. Therefore, this section will only consider the potential impacts of reduced opening hours on this protected characteristic.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Loss of 1 - 1.5 days library access at their local site (excluding Hackney Central, Stoke Newington and Woodberry Down) • Protection of all sites for our daily / regular users • Delivery of events and activities for disabled people protected during opening hours. • Involve disabled people in ongoing service development and improvement • Delivery of partner programmes (Pensioners sessions, knitting groups, Digital Buddies) protected during opening hours. • Engagement with target groups on service change • Protected afternoons, evening and weekend hours for disabled people • Lift installed at Stamford Hill Library to ensure access to top floor on Sundays

Gender Reassignment

Chart 1: Gender Reassignment Profile of all Registered Library Customers



What data sources will you use to inform your assessment of the impact of the proposal on people under this protected characteristic?

Hackney Library Service does not collect data on registered user gender reassignment. The data sources used to inform the assessment here include data from the ONS 2021 Census, as well as footfall, membership and service use data collected by Hackney Library service, which, if not presented in this EqIA, can be found in the accompanying Strategic Needs Assessment. This has been combined with customer survey data, studies produced by various external organisations on the use of libraries nationally and the impact of libraries on the target group.

a) Might members of this group be disproportionately affected by the proposal due to overrepresentation? How does this compare with the wider demographic profile of the Borough?

- On average, the proportion of registered library users who identify as trans is slightly below the proportion of Hackney's general population, but this may be higher as 3% chose not to answer this question.

b) Might members of this group be disproportionately affected by this proposal due to a need related to their protected characteristic?

Libraries are centrally located spaces where residents can feel safe and non-judgemental. Libraries also represent an important community space during significant events, e.g. LGBTQ+ History Month.

Libraries act as an important social and community base, with dedicated book stock at each library, LGBTQ+ groups such as our QTIPOC (Queer, Trans and Intersex People of Colour) Writing Group at Clapton Library, LGBTQIA+ Therapeutic Counselling Session for Global Majority residents at Dalston Library and Queertopia Group at Dalston CLR James Library Positive East also run targeted LGBTQIA+ sexual health clinics in our libraries.

Libraries also represent a space for people to access impartial and representative information and media anonymously, where there might not be a safe space to do so elsewhere in their personal lives. Our Stock Services team works with staff and partners to co-design recommended reading lists and events for LGBT History Month, Trans Awareness Week and Trans History Month and have partnerships with Gay's the Word and Common Press queer bookshops.

Potential Impacts: Many of the above-mentioned sessions that are aimed at the trans community take place after 5 pm, so any restriction in hours would need to consider the impact this may have and ensure these sessions can still be accessed by those who share this protected characteristic. Missing these sessions could lead to poorer social or health outcomes among trans people. Stock reductions also need to be carefully considered so they don't disproportionately affect this group.

Other than these sessions, there is currently no evidence that trans people need to access library services more frequently than the general population or at specific hours of the day. Therefore, if we can continue to ensure access to these sessions, the impact of reduced opening hours on this protected characteristic should be neutral.

Impacts and Evidence	Mitigation
We have no evidence that the impact should be greater on people with this protected characteristic.	<p>This decision aims to realise library cost saving through changing and reducing opening hours only. There will be no reduction in service provision, such as classes, stock for issue, or number of computers. Services affected by changing opening times will be moved to a different but still appropriate time on a different day. Therefore, this section will only consider the potential impacts of reduced opening hours on this protected characteristic.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Loss of 1 - 1.5 days library access at their local site (excluding Hackney Central, Woodberry Down and Stoke Newington)• Protection of all sites for our daily / regular users• Delivery of events and activities for people with this protected characteristic during opening hours.• Involve LGBTQIA+ people in ongoing service development and improvement• Engagement with target groups on service change• Protected evenings for LGBTQIA+ people

Marriage and Civil Partnership

What data sources will you use to inform your assessment of the impact of the proposal on people under this protected characteristic?

Hackney Library Service does not collect data on marriage and civil partnership. However, in our recent Library Customer Survey (2025) we asked this question to gain a fuller picture of library users. The data sources used to inform the assessment here include data from the ONS 2021 Census, as well as footfall, membership and service use data collected by Hackney Library service, which, if not presented in this EqlA, can be found in the accompanying Strategic Needs Assessment. This has been combined with customer survey data, studies produced by various external organisations on the use of libraries nationally and the impact of libraries on the target group.

a) Might members of this group be disproportionately affected by the proposal due to overrepresentation? How does this compare with the wider demographic profile of the Borough?

Not affected

b) Might members of this group be disproportionately affected by this proposal due to a need related to their protected characteristic?

There is currently no evidence that people within these groups need to access library services more frequently than the general population or at specific hours of the day. Therefore, if we can continue to ensure access to all libraries in the borough, the impact of reduced opening hours on this protected characteristic should be neutral.

Impacts and Evidence	Mitigation
We have no evidence that the impact should be greater on people with this protected characteristic.	<p>This decision aims to realise library cost saving through changing and reducing opening hours only. There will be no reduction in service provision, such as classes, stock for issue, or number of computers. Services affected by changing opening times will be moved to a different but still appropriate time on a different day. Therefore, this section will only consider the potential impacts of reduced opening hours on this protected characteristic.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Loss of 1 - 1.5 days library access at their local site (excluding Hackney Central, Stoke Newington and Woodberry Down)• Protection of all sites for our daily / regular users

Pregnancy and Maternity

Note: Pregnancy is the condition of being pregnant or expecting a baby. Maternity refers to the period after birth and is linked to maternity leave in the context of employment. In the non-work context, protection against maternity discrimination is for 26 weeks after giving birth, and this includes treating a woman unfavourably because she is breastfeeding.

What data sources will you use to inform your assessment of the impact of the proposal on people under this protected characteristic?

Hackney Library Service does not collect data on pregnancy and maternity. However, in our recent Library Customer Survey (2025) we asked this question to gain a fuller picture of library users. The

data sources used to inform the assessment here include data from the ONS 2021 Census, as well as footfall, membership and service use data collected by Hackney Library service, which, if not presented in this EqIA, can be found in the accompanying Strategic Needs Assessment. This has been combined with customer survey data, studies produced by various external organisations on the use of libraries nationally and the impact of libraries on the target group.

a) Might members of this group be disproportionately affected by the proposal due to overrepresentation? How does this compare with the wider demographic profile of the Borough?

- Given the transient nature of pregnancy and maternity, it is hard to come to definitive and long-term conclusions.
- We will consider any potential overrepresentation of pregnant or maternal individuals among library users once we have obtained more data following further engagement and consultation.
- In our recent Library Customer Survey 7.1% of respondents were pregnant or had taken maternity or paternity leave in the past 2 years.

b) Might members of this group be disproportionately affected by this proposal due to a need related to their protected characteristic?

Libraries are an important resource for expectant and new parents, both in terms of accessing books and information and in terms of encouraging the development of babies and young children. Libraries provide a number of services to this end, including the borrowing of books and other forms of media, space for play and social interaction, and sessions centred around childhood development, including story time and music sessions. 6,995 attended Under 5s sessions in libraries 23/24.

Pregnancy and parenthood can represent a vulnerable period in people's lives, and contact with the library service also represents a safeguarding opportunity for expectant and new parents. Our libraries also offer reusable nappy drop-ins, parenting support groups, sensory play, and other sessions aimed at mothers with very young children. Libraries also provide safe space for parents to access information about pregnancy and parenting, whether digitally or in print.

Potential impacts: Many of the above-mentioned sessions aimed at mothers and very young children take place on Saturdays or in the middle of the weekdays, so any restriction in hours would need to consider the impact this may have and ensure these sessions can still be accessed by those who share this protected characteristic. Other than these sessions, there is currently no evidence that pregnant women or women in the period of maternity need to access library services frequently or at specific hours of the day. In fact, this group is more likely to be flexible when they can access libraries due to maternity leave. Therefore, if we can continue to ensure access to the above-mentioned sessions, the impact of reduced opening hours on this protected characteristic should be neutral.

Impacts and Evidence	Mitigation
We have no evidence that the impact should be greater on people with this protected characteristic.	This decision aims to realise library cost saving through changing and reducing opening hours only. There will be no reduction in service provision, such as classes, stock for issue, or number of computers. Services affected by changing opening times will be moved to a different but still appropriate time on a different day.

Therefore, this section will only consider the potential impacts of reduced opening hours on this protected characteristic.

- Loss of 1 - 1.5 days library access at their local site (excluding Hackney Central, Stoke Newington and Woodberry Down)
- Protection of all sites for our daily / regular users

Ethnicity

Note: In the Equality Act 2010, race can mean ethnic or national origins, which may or may not be the same as a person's current nationality.

What data sources will you use to inform your assessment of the impact of the proposal on people under this protected characteristic?

The data sources used to inform the assessment here include data from the ONS 2021 Census, as well as footfall, membership and service use data collected by Hackney Library service, which, if not presented in this EqlA, can be found in the accompanying Strategic Needs Assessment. This has been combined with customer survey data, studies produced by various external organisations on the use of libraries nationally and the impact of libraries on the target group.

Chart 1: Ethnicity of Registered Library Users (all libraries)

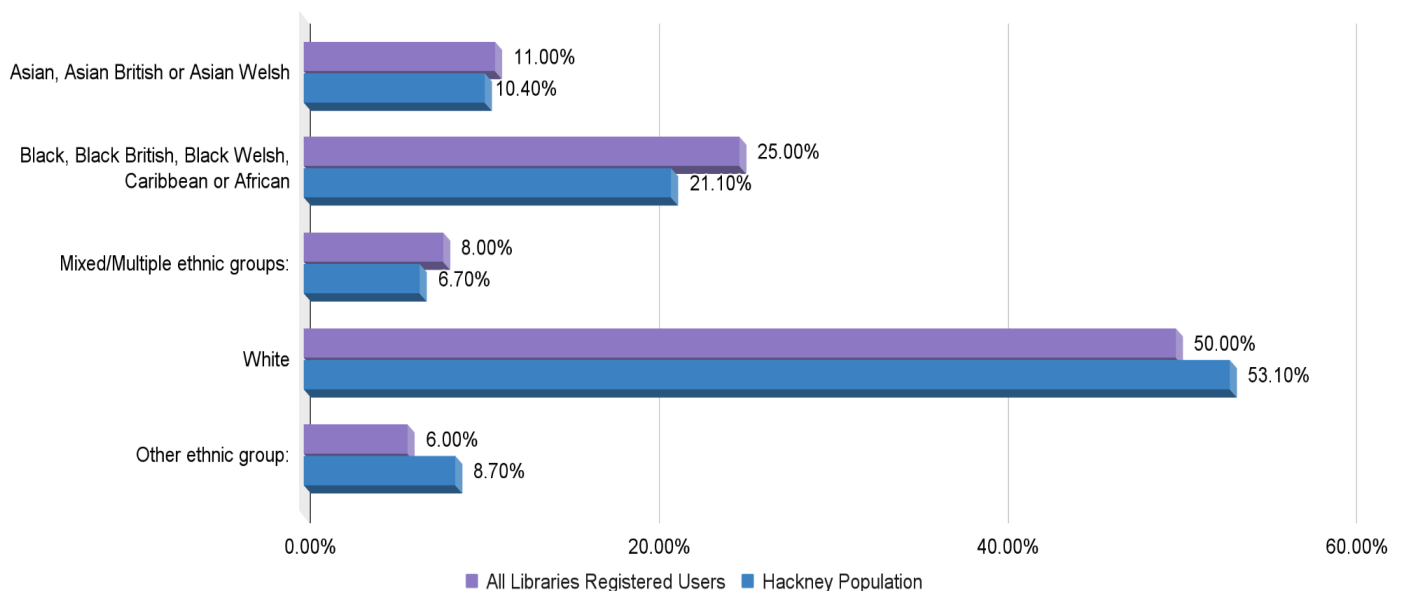
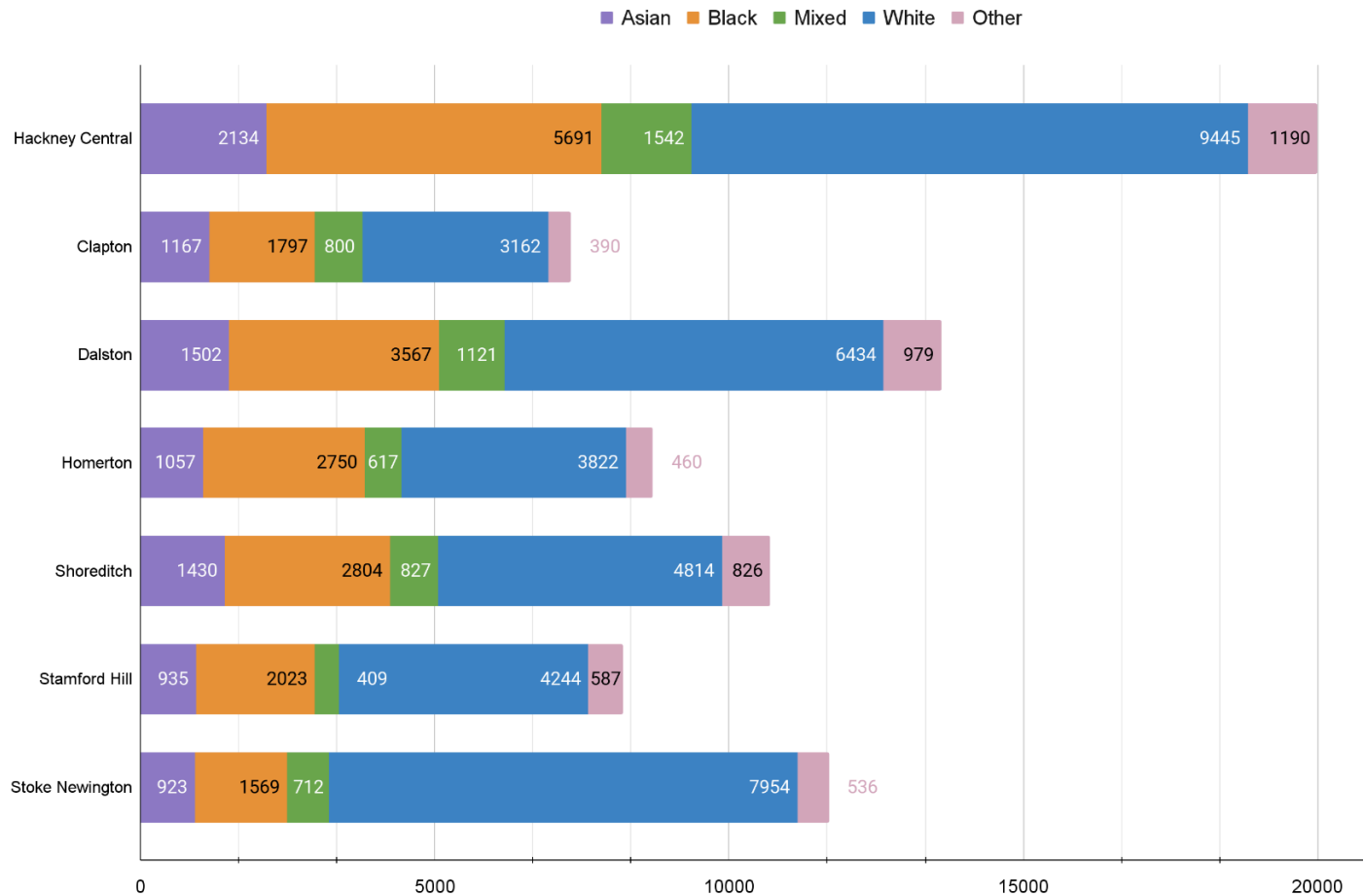


Chart 2: Ethnicity of Registered Library Users by Site (%)



a) Might members of this group be disproportionately affected by the proposal due to overrepresentation? How does this compare with the wider demographic profile of the Borough?

- Asian, Mixed and Black residents are noticeably overrepresented among all registered library users when compared to Hackney's general population.
- White and Other Ethnic Groups are underrepresented among all registered library users.
- Black registered users are significantly overrepresented at Hackney Central, Homerton, Dalston, Clapton, Shoreditch and Stamford Hill Libraries compared to Hackney's general population - all libraries (except Stoke Newington). This is most notable for Hackney Central and Homerton Libraries, where a third of registered users are Black.
- White British registered users are significantly overrepresented at Stoke Newington Library only.
- Although we don't collect ethnicity data about Orthodox Jewish customers, 81% of respondents to our recent customer survey who chose 'Jewish' as their religion and 75% who chose 'Jewish' as their ethnicity also chose Stamford Hill as their local library.
- Mixed Ethnicity and Asian registered customers match very closely to the profiles of the catchment areas for each library at all libraries (except Stoke Newington).

- As with the borough as a whole, the White Other and Other Ethnic Group are significantly underrepresented among registered users when compared to the catchment areas of all libraries.

b) Might members of this group be disproportionately affected by this proposal due to a need related to their protected characteristic?

Hackney has a significant attainment gap amongst children and young people (CYP) following racial lines, with lower attainment most significant among young black residents. Libraries provide an important space where CYP can supplement their study, e.g. through homework support.

For those whose English proficiency is limited, Adult Education provides ESOL classes. Libraries host the majority of these classes and in-person recruitment sessions, supporting accessing services, particularly where digital services are inaccessible to those with limited English proficiency. Our Welcome Hub for Migrants, Refugees and Asylum Seekers provides weekly immigration, benefits, and community integration through libraries.

Libraries are able to provide a diverse range of materials which are representative of the local community, including resources in community languages. Libraries act as an important community space for events such as Black History 365 and Windrush Day, increasing representation of Hackney's diverse communities, and host sessions and create recommended reading lists aimed at cultural education, including music and film from around the world.

Potential Impacts: As discussed in the age section, a reduction in library hours could result in young people having less time to use libraries for studying and accessing study material. This could contribute to a further widening of the attainment gap between different ethnicities and have significant negative impacts on children and young people of certain ethnicities. This should be carefully considered when making a decision about a reduction of opening hours so that young people of all ethnicities still have a quiet environment to study. A reduction of hours at all libraries (except Stoke Newington) could have a disproportionate negative impact on Global Majority young people.

As one of the most severely overcrowded boroughs in the country, and with the negative impacts overcrowding can have on young people widely known, a reduction in opening hours would have a significant impact on children and young people's ability to study.

Caribbean, Turkish, Kurdish and Turkish Cypriot and Mixed Heritage pupils have the lowest Attainment 8 scores in Hackney at KS4. These three cohorts also have the largest gender gap. Caribbean boys (36.7) and Turkish, Kurdish and Turkish Cypriot boys (44.3) have the lowest attainment overall. Indian pupils underperformed compared to the equivalent national cohorts. African girls, on the level 5 benchmark, have an eight percentage point gap to the equivalent national cohort, although the performance gap on the Attainment 8 measure is much smaller.

Lower levels of English proficiency, and higher levels of digital exclusion are known to be present in certain ethnic groups in Hackney: Turkish, Kurdish, Orthodox Jewish and Black residents are more likely to be digitally excluded and have lower levels of English proficiency. Access to computers and support from community groups and Hackney services that operate in libraries can be essential to ensuring positive financial, social and health outcomes. Therefore, any reduction in hours should aim to ensure that the impact on access to these services and computers and WiFi is mitigated as much as possible. If access to these services is limited, people from certain races or ethnic groups may suffer significant long-term impacts and poor financial, social and health outcomes. This is likely to be felt across all libraries that serve high proportions of residents who

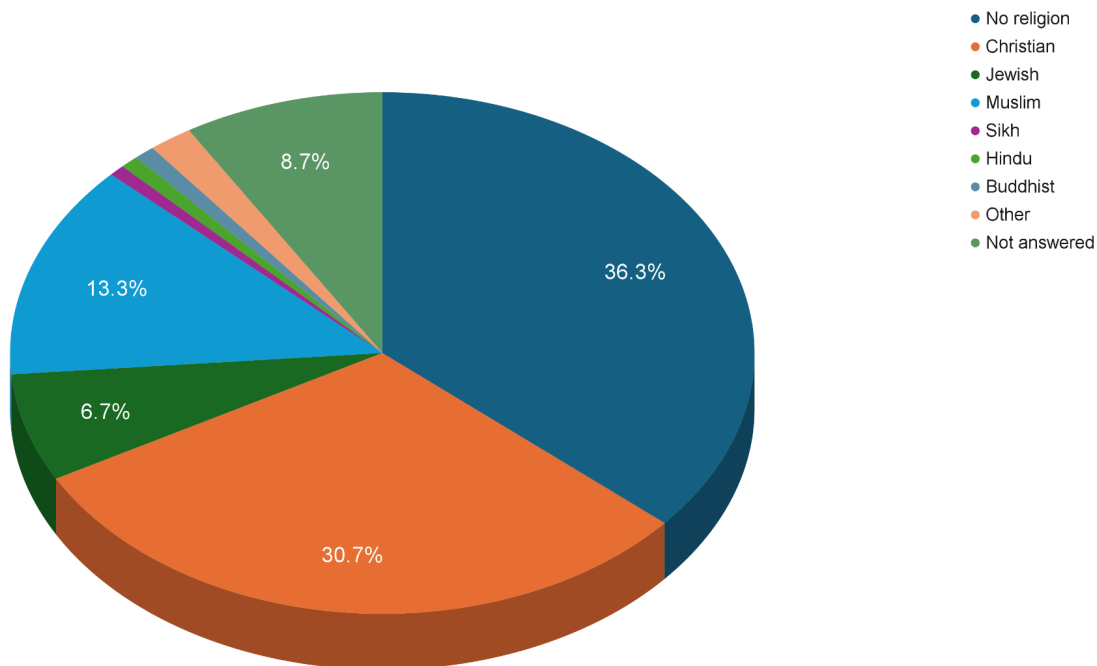
are from a low socioeconomic background (a key indicator of digital exclusion). A reduction in hours in libraries in the east could have a disproportionately negative effect on digital exclusion of Black, Turkish and Kurdish and Orthodox Jewish residents.

Stock reductions also need to be carefully considered so they don't disproportionately affect these groups.

Impacts and Evidence	Mitigation
<p>Needs Assessment 2024 -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Customer base broadly represents the ethnic diversity of the local wards, but in most cases our libraries have 'higher' - 'significantly higher' Black, Mixed and Asian customers than borough averages (across all libraries except Stoke Newington) <p>Library Customer Survey 2025</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Black, Turkish/Kurdish, and Asian customers are more likely to visit daily, a few times a week or a few times a month The same levels of White and Black customers use the computers daily, but higher proportions of Black customers use the computers daily, a few times a week or a few times a month than White customers Our Jewish customers are more likely to use the computers a few times a week and borrow books similar levels of frequency as they use the computers Chinese and Hispanic/Latin American customers are less likely to use the computers daily, but fair proportions use them a few times a week and a few times a month White customers are our largest customer base, but tend to visit less frequently than others <p>Our libraries have a very diverse customer base. Averages across libraries are: 53% White, 7% White Other, 20% Black, 8% Asian, 6% Mixed, 2% Jewish, 2% Chinese, 1% Turkish/Kurdish</p> <p>2 libraries buck this trend:</p> <p>Stamford Hill:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 36% of survey respondents at Stamford Hill Library chose 'White', 26% 'Black', 18% 'Jewish', 1.5% 'Asian', 1.5% 'Hispanic/Latin American'. <p>Stoke Newington</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 61% of survey respondents are White, 12% White other, 3% Black, 4.5% Mixed, 3% Jewish, 1.5% Asian, 1.5% Chinese 	<p>This decision aims to realise library cost saving through changing and reducing opening hours only. There will be no reduction in service provision, such as classes, stock for issue, or number of computers. Services affected by changing opening times will be moved to a different but still appropriate time on a different day. Therefore, this section will only consider the potential impacts of reduced opening hours on this protected characteristic.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Loss of 1 - 1.5 days library access at their local site (excluding Hackney Central, Stoke Newington and Woodberry Down) Protection of all sites for our daily / regular users Engagement with target groups on service changes Protected afternoons, evening and weekend hours for people working from libraries and using the computers

Religion or belief

Chart 1: Religion or belief - Borough Profile

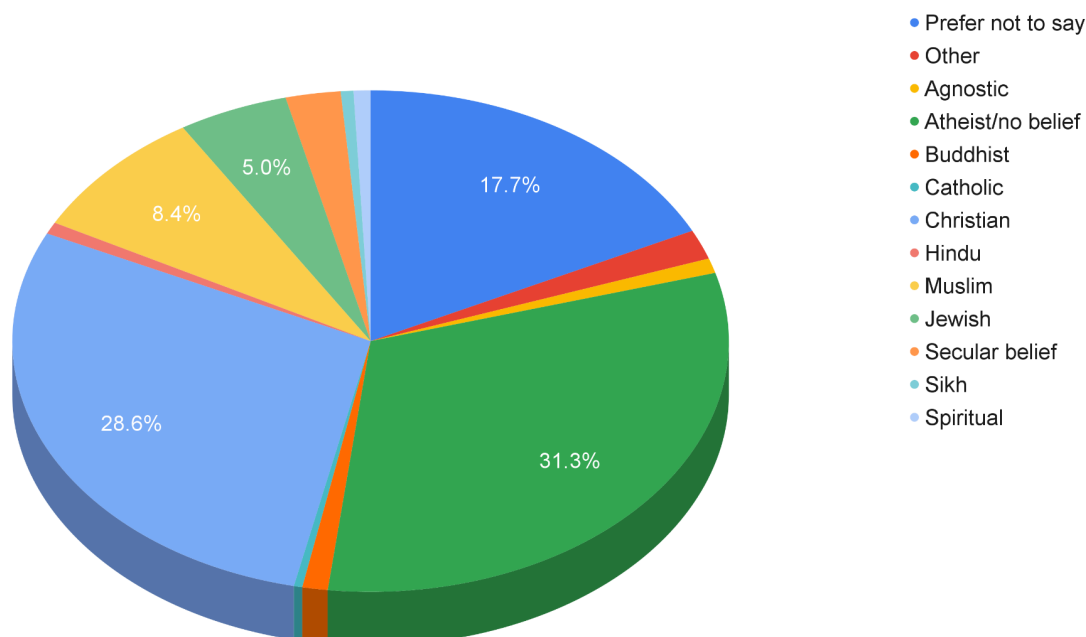


Christian (30.7%), No religion (36.3%), Muslim (13.3%), Not answered (8.7%), Jewish (6.7%), Other (1.9%), Buddhist (0.9%), Hindu (0.8%), Sikh (0.7%)

What data sources will you use to inform your assessment of the impact of the proposal on people under this protected characteristic?

Hackney Library Service does not collect data on religion or belief. However, in our recent Library Customer Survey (2025) we asked this question to gain a fuller picture of library users. The data sources used to inform the assessment here include data from the ONS 2021 Census, as well as footfall, membership and service use data collected by Hackney Library service, which, if not presented in this EqIA, can be found in the accompanying Strategic Needs Assessment. This has been combined with customer survey data, studies produced by various external organisations on the use of libraries nationally and the impact of libraries on the target group.

Chart 2: Religion or Belief of Registered Library Users (all libraries, Hackney Library Customer Survey 2025)



The largest group of respondents 31% were Atheist/no belief (164 people), 29% Christian (150), 18% prefer not to say (93), 8.4% Muslim (44), 5% Jewish (26), 2.5% were secular belief (13), 1% Buddhist (6), 0.8% Hindu (4), 0.6% Sikh (3).

a) Might members of this group be disproportionately affected by the proposal due to overrepresentation? How does this compare with the wider demographic profile of the Borough?

In our recent Library Customer Survey (2025) we asked about religion and belief to gain a fuller picture of library users. Data collected in the surveys shows that the religion and beliefs of library customers broadly reflects borough averages.

b) Might members of this group be disproportionately affected by this proposal due to a need related to their protected characteristic?

Libraries are able to provide a safe and accepting space, as well as a diverse range of materials which are representative of the local community, including with regards to religion, and may enable residents to access impartial information about religion and culture, as well as through educational events hosted by the libraries service.

Libraries function as private and discreet spaces for people to access information about religion or beliefs that may not be available or safe to access at home or in other settings (e.g. educational or religious spaces).

Potential impacts: Hackney has a significant Charedi Jewish community whose beliefs prevent them from accessing library services on a Saturday. This means that if a reduction of hours

includes complete closure on Sundays, the community would be barred from accessing any weekend services. With many people working weekdays, weekends present the best time for accessing libraries, so a blanket Sunday closure of libraries would have a significant negative impact on library access for the Charedi community, and this should be considered when finalising reduced operating hours.

Impacts and Evidence	Mitigation
<p>Needs Assessment 2024 -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Stamford Hill has the highest levels of Orthodox Jewish customers, heavy use by these families and individuals on Fridays and Sundays <p>Customer survey 2025 -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">81% of respondents who chose 'Jewish' as their religion and 75% who chose 'Jewish' as their ethnicity also chose Stamford Hill as their local library30% of customers at Stamford Hill Library chose 'Jewish' 29% 'Christian', 6% 'Muslim', 3% 'Buddhist', 1.4% 'Sikh'.	<p>This decision aims to realise library cost saving through changing and reducing opening hours only. There will be no reduction in service provision, such as classes, stock for issue, or number of computers. Services affected by changing opening times will be moved to a different but still appropriate time on a different day. Therefore, this section will only consider the potential impacts of reduced opening hours on this protected characteristic.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Loss of 1 - 1.5 days library access at their local site (excluding Hackney Central, Stoke Newington and Woodberry Down)Protection of all sites for our daily / regular usersEngagement with target groups on service changesProtected Sundays for Orthodox Jewish families

Gender

Chart 1: Gender - Borough Profile

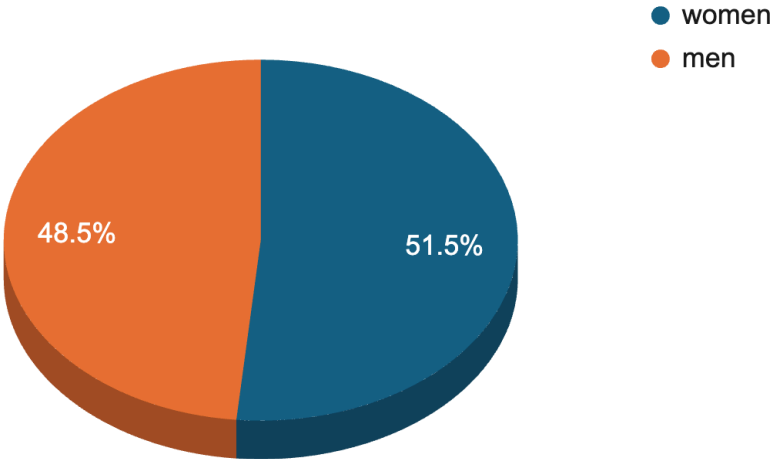
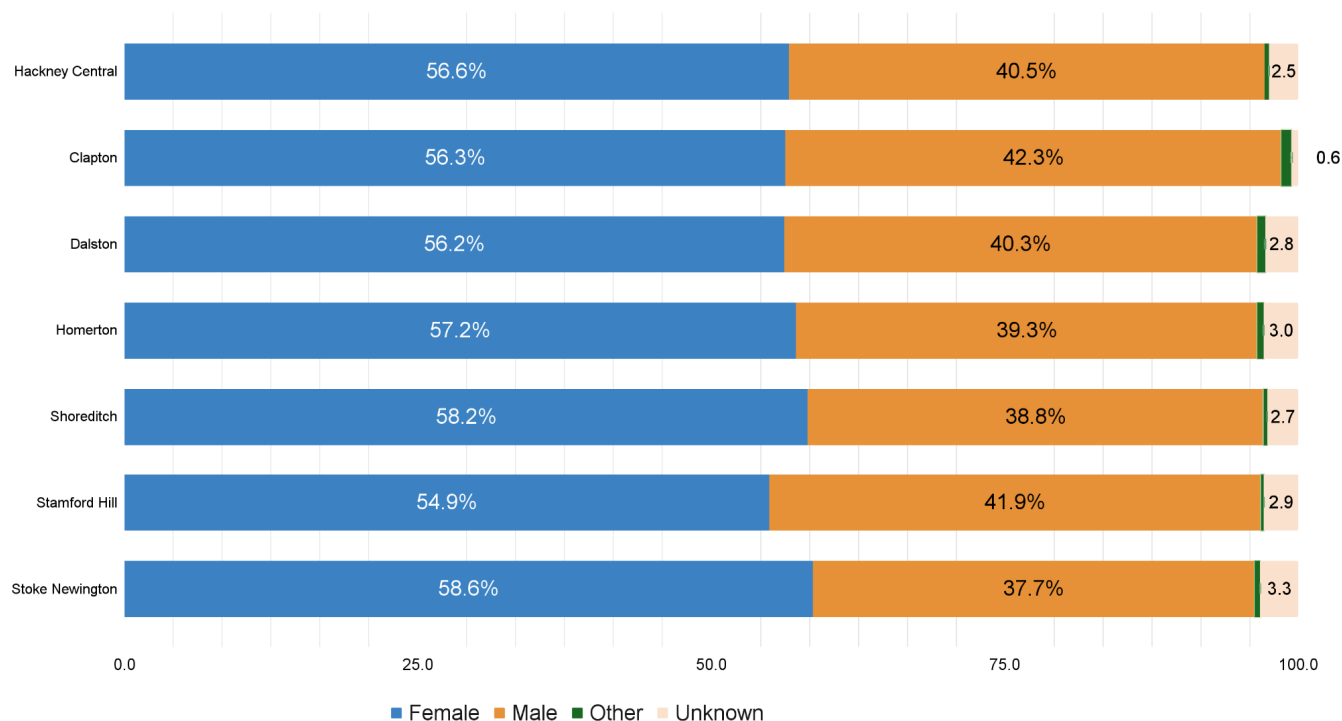


Chart 2: Gender of Registered Library Users by Site (%)



What data sources will you use to inform your assessment of the impact of the proposal on people under this protected characteristic?

The data sources used to inform the assessment here include data from the ONS 2021 Census, as well as footfall, membership and service use data collected by Hackney Library service, which, if not presented in this EqlA, can be found in the accompanying Strategic Needs Assessment. This has been combined with customer survey data, studies produced by various external organisations on the use of libraries nationally and the impact of libraries on the target group.

a) Might members of this group be disproportionately affected by the proposal due to overrepresentation? How does this compare with the wider demographic profile of the Borough?

- Females are overrepresented among registered library users when compared to the general Hackney population.
- This overrepresentation is true for the registered users and catchment area of all of Hackney libraries; the overrepresentation is slightly more significant at Shoreditch, Homerton and Stoke Newington Libraries.
- 1.5% of respondents to our Library Customer Survey were Non-binary

b) Might members of this group be disproportionately affected by this proposal due to a need related to their protected characteristic?

Libraries are an important community space during significant events such as Women's History Month when educational and celebratory events are programmed and hosted. Outside of this, libraries are also able to provide a safe space to access impartial information anonymously and offer a range of representative media.

Libraries represent a safe space in central locations for residents who may be at risk of domestic abuse/violence or sexual harassment. They can also provide resources for residents fleeing domestic abuse and violence, particularly when it comes to accessing support services and where the home is not a safe environment to access information. Our libraries are places that make referrals to Adult Social Care and DAIS and all staff are trained in domestic abuse referral.

There is also an educational attainment gap based on sex in Hackney, with girls performing better than boys overall at the Key Stage 4 level: Caribbean, Turkish, Kurdish and Turkish Cypriot and Mixed Heritage pupils have the lowest Attainment 8 scores in Hackney at KS4. These three cohorts also have the largest gender gap. Caribbean boys (36.7) and Turkish, Kurdish and Turkish Cypriot boys (44.3) have the lowest attainment overall. Indian pupils underperformed compared to the equivalent national cohorts. African girls, on the level 5 benchmark, have an eight percentage point gap to the equivalent national cohort, although the performance gap on the Attainment 8 measure is much smaller.

Potential Impacts: As discussed in the age section, a reduction in library hours could result in young people having less time to use libraries for studying and accessing study material. This could contribute to a further widening of the attainment gap between boys and girls and have a particularly significant negative impact on young boys. This should be carefully considered when making a decision about a reduction of opening hours so that young people of both sexes still have a quiet and productive environment in which to study.

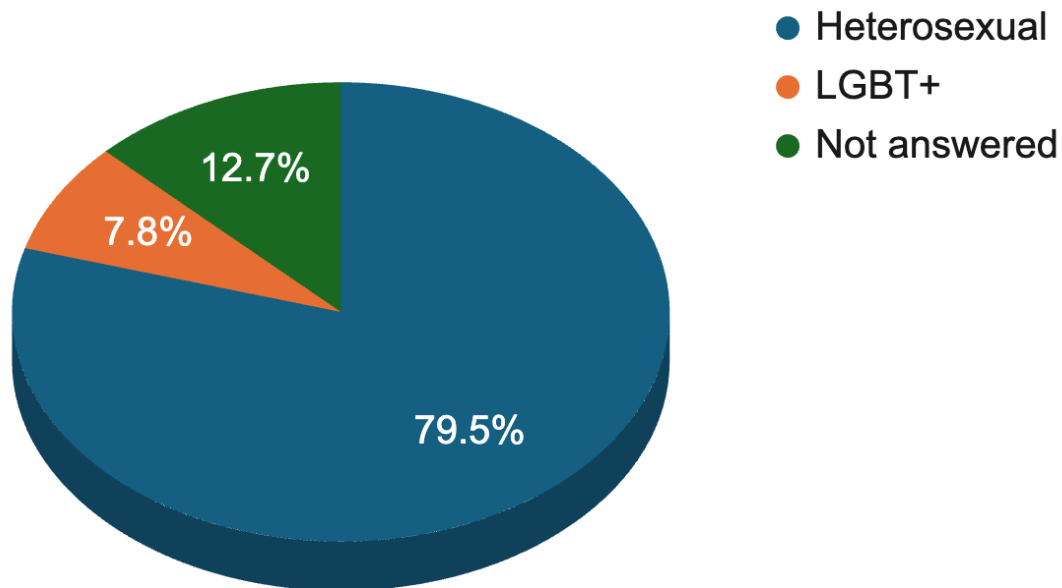
A range of studies show that the typical working hours and times at which work takes place vary between men and women. Men are more likely to work structured traditional 9 am to 5 pm days, and women are more likely to work flexibly and at more unusual hours of the day.

Therefore, depending on the timings, any changes to operating hours could disproportionately impact library access for either men or women. Any changes to library operating hours will need to ensure that there is still broad coverage and a range of opening times to ensure both men and women are not unduly affected based on their more common working hours and, therefore, the hours they would be able to attend a library.

Impacts and Evidence	Mitigation
Needs Assessment 2024 - <ul style="list-style-type: none">Significantly higher levels of women registered as customers than borough averages (across all libraries)	<p>This decision aims to realise library cost saving through changing and reducing opening hours only. There will be no reduction in service provision, such as classes, stock for issue, or number of computers. Services affected by changing opening times will be moved to a different but still appropriate time on a different day. Therefore, this section will only consider the potential impacts of reduced opening hours on this protected characteristic.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Loss of 1 - 1.5 days library access at their local site (excluding Hackney Central, Stoke Newington and Woodberry Down)Protection of all sites for our daily / regular usersEngagement with target groups on service changesProtected mornings, after-schools and weekend hours for parents and working familiesProtected evenings for people working from libraries

Sexual Orientation

Chart 1: Sexual Orientation - Borough Profile



Heterosexual: 79% (national average 89.4%), LGBT+: 7.8% (national average 3.2%), Not answered: 12.6% (national average 7.5%). Hackney has higher proportions of people with LGBTQIA+ identities than the London and national averages

What data sources will you use to inform your assessment of the impact of the proposal on people under this protected characteristic?

The data from the 2021 ONS census does not go down to the required detail to produce a catchment area profile for sexual orientation and Hackney Library Service does not collect data about the sexual orientation of registered users. The data sources used to inform the assessment here include data from the ONS 2021 Census, as well as footfall, membership and service use data collected by Hackney Library service, which, if not presented in this EqlA, can be found in the accompanying Strategic Needs Assessment. This has been combined with customer survey data, studies produced by various external organisations on the use of libraries nationally and the impact of libraries on the target group.

a) Might members of this group be disproportionately affected by the proposal due to overrepresentation? How does this compare with the wider demographic profile of the Borough?

In our recent Library Customer Survey (2025) we asked about sexual orientation to gain a fuller picture of library users.

- Hackney Libraries overall serve a higher proportion of LGBTQIA+ customers (9.6%) compared to the Hackney average (7.8%).
- In our recent Library Customer Survey 70.2% Heterosexual, 20.2% Prefer not to say, 4.6% Bisexual, 2.1% Lesbian, 1.5% Queer, 1.3% Gay Man

- We will consider any potential overrepresentation of LGBTQ+ individuals among library users once we have obtained more data following further engagement and consultation.

b) Might members of this group be disproportionately affected by this proposal due to a need related to their protected characteristic?

Libraries are centrally located spaces where residents can feel safe and non judgemental. Libraries also represent an important community space during significant events, e.g. LGBTQ+ History Month.

Libraries act as an important social and community base, with LGBTQ+ groups such as our QTIPOC Writing Group at Clapton Library, LGBTQIA+ Therapeutic Counselling Session for Global Majority residents at Dalston Library and Queertopia Group at Dalston CLR James Library, Positive East also run targeted LGBTQIA+ sexual health clinics in our libraries.

Libraries also represent a space for people to access impartial and representative information and media anonymously, where there might not be a safe space to do so elsewhere in their personal lives. Our Stock Services team works with staff and partners to purchase dedicated stock, co-design recommended reading lists and events for LGBT History Month, Trans Awareness Week and Trans History Month and have partnerships with Gay's the Word and Common Press queer bookshops.

Potential Impacts: Many of the above-mentioned sessions that are aimed at the LGBT+ community take place after 5 pm, so any restriction in hours would need to consider the impact this may have and ensure these sessions can still be accessed by those who share this protected characteristic. Missing these sessions could lead to poorer social or health outcomes among LGBT+ people. Stock reductions also need to be carefully considered so they don't disproportionately affect this group.

Other than these sessions, there is currently no evidence that trans people need to access library services more frequently than the general population or at specific hours of the day. Therefore, if we can continue to ensure access to these sessions, the impact of reduced opening hours on this protected characteristic should be neutral.

Impacts and Evidence	Mitigation
We have no evidence that the impact should be greater on people with this protected characteristic.	<p>This decision aims to realise library cost saving through changing and reducing opening hours only. There will be no reduction in service provision, such as classes, stock for issue, or number of computers. Services affected by changing opening times will be moved to a different but still appropriate time on a different day. Therefore, this section will only consider the potential impacts of reduced opening hours on this protected characteristic.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Loss of 1 - 1.5 days library access at their local site (excluding Hackney Central, Stoke Newington and Woodberry Down) • Protection of all sites for our daily / regular users • Engagement with target groups on service changes

Socioeconomic Status

What data sources will you use to inform your assessment of the impact of the proposal on people under this protected characteristic?

The data sources used to inform the assessment here include data from the ONS 2021 Census, as well as footfall, membership and service use data collected by Hackney Library service, which, if not presented in this EqlA, can be found in the accompanying Strategic Needs Assessment. This has been combined with customer survey data, studies produced by various external organisations on the use of libraries nationally and the impact of libraries on the target group. Hackney Library Service does not collect data about the housing, education or poverty to assess the deprivation status of registered users. However, in our recent Library Customer Survey (2025) we asked questions about housing tenure to gain a fuller picture of library users.

Indices of Deprivation 2015

Hackney went from 42% of neighbourhoods being highly deprived in the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) in 2010 to 17% in 2015.

- Based on average ranking Hackney ranks as the second most deprived LA in the country. In the same measure in the 2010 IMD, Hackney ranked as 1st
- Based on the 'extent' measure Hackney ranks as the 11th most deprived LA in the country. In the same measure in the 2010 IMD, Hackney ranked as 1st
- Based on the percentage of "lower super output areas" (small area geographies) in the top 10% most deprived nationally, Hackney ranks as the 49th most deprived area nationally. In the same measure in the 2010 IMD, Hackney ranked as 6th

In terms of geographical variation, there are some particular concentrations of deprivation,

- In the eastern part of the borough around Kings Park and Hackney Wick (served by Homerton Library)
- In the north-west of the borough, around Manor House and Woodberry Down (served by Woodberry Down and Stamford Hill Libraries)
- The borders between Victoria and Homerton wards (served by Hackney Central and Homerton Libraries)
- The borders between Springfield and Lea Bridge wards (served by Clapton and Stamford Hill Libraries)
- Areas of Hackney Downs (served by Clapton Library), Hoxton West and Haggerston (served by Shoreditch Library) south Clissold (served by Dalston CLR James Library)

Income

The Index of Deprivation Affecting Children Index (IDACI) and Index of Deprivation Affecting Older People Index (IDAOPI) measure capture income poverty affecting children and older people, and are part of the indices of deprivation.

- Hackney has an IDACI score of 32, indicating that 32% of children in the borough are in income deprived households. In 2010 this was 48%.
- Hackney's IDACI score (rank of average score) places it as the 10th most deprived local authority district for this domain
- Hackney has an IDAOPI score of 43, indicating that 43% of older people in the borough are in income-deprived households. In 2010 this was 45%.
- Hackney's IDOAPI score (rank of average score) places it as the 2nd most deprived local authority district for this domain
- **Child poverty rate:** Child poverty rate (AHC) - 43% (Worse compared to all London Boroughs (33%) *London Poverty Profile*)

- **Income deprivation:** Income deprivation (Hackney is the 3rd most income-deprived borough relative to London and the rest of England *London Poverty Profile*)

Employment

In the employment domain Hackney ranks as the 57th most deprived local authority in the country, and 7% of Hackney's Lower Layer Super Output Areas (LSOAs) are in the top 10% most deprived nationally. There are particular concentrations of employment deprivation in the Kings Park, Homerton, Wick, Springfield and Woodberry Down areas of the borough.

- **Benefits:** Out-of-work benefits - 16.3% (Worse compared to all London Boroughs (12.8%) *London Poverty Profile*)

Educational Attainment

In the education domain Hackney ranks as the 198th most deprived local authority in the country, less than 1% of LSOAs in Hackney are in the top 10% most deprived nationally. Where there is deprivation in this domain it is concentrated in the north-east of the borough and there are some exceptions at KS4 and EYFS regarding attainment and ethnicity.

- At KS4 Caribbean, Turkish, Kurdish and Turkish Cypriot and Mixed Heritage pupils have the lowest Attainment 8 scores in Hackney. These three cohorts also have the largest gender gap. Caribbean boys (36.7) and Turkish, Kurdish and Turkish Cypriot boys (44.3) have the lowest attainment overall. Indian pupils underperformed compared to the equivalent national cohorts. African girls, on the level 5 benchmark, have an eight percentage point gap to the equivalent national cohort, although the performance gap on the Attainment 8 measure is much smaller.
- The five cohorts that perform below the overall Hackney EYFS level are: Turkish, Kurdish and Turkish and Cypriot boys (22 percentage points), Caribbean boys (17 percentage points), African boys (15 percentage points), Turkish, Kurdish and Turkish and Cypriot girls (10 percentage points) and Caribbean girls (7 percentage points).

Health

In the health domain Hackney ranks as the 61st most deprived local authority in England, and 8% of Hackney's LSOAs are in the top most deprived 10% nationally. There are particular concentrations of health deprivation in the south of the borough, in Hackney Wick, pockets of Victoria, London Fields, Hoxton West, Hackney Downs, Hackney Central, South Clissold and Woodberry Down.

- **Premature mortality:** Premature deaths per 100,000 - 404 (Worse compared to all London Boroughs (309) *London Poverty Profile*)

Housing

In the housing and services domain Hackney ranks as the 6th most deprived local authority in England, and 53% of the boroughs LSOAs are in the top 10% most deprived nationally. Housing deprivation is relatively evenly spread throughout the borough with some lower levels in the north-western side of the borough around De Beauvoir and Stoke Newington.

- **Homeless acceptances:** Main homelessness duty owed per 1,000 households - 1.44 (Worse compared to all London Boroughs (0.93%) *London Poverty Profile*)
- **5.3% (28) of respondents in our recent Library Customer Survey (2025) were living in temporary accommodation or experiencing homelessness.** The majority of respondents 48% (245 people) were renters, with 21.6% (113 people) renting privately, 12.8% (67) renting from the council, and 12.4% (65) from a housing association. Next highest were those who owned their property outright 20.6% (108) and being bought on a mortgage 15.6% (82). 9% (47) didn't know.

Crime

In the crime domain Hackney ranks as the 5th most deprived local authority in England, with 44% of the borough's LSOAs in the top 10% most deprived nationally. Crime deprivation is relatively evenly spread throughout the borough, but with some lower levels in Stamford Hill West, Cazenove, and Springfield. In Hackney Council's recent Resident Survey (2024) the data suggests that fear of crime is evenly spread across the borough in Dalston, Stoke Newington and North West, Hackney Central, Wick and South East.

a) Might members of this group be disproportionately affected by the proposal due to overrepresentation? How does this compare with the wider demographic profile of the Borough?

All libraries serve residents in wards with particular concentrations of deprivation,

- In the eastern part of the borough around Kings Park and Hackney Wick (served by **Homerton Library**)
- In the north-west of the borough, around Manor House and Woodberry Down (served by **Woodberry Down** and **Stamford Hill Library**)
- The borders between Victoria and Homerton wards (served by **Hackney Central** and **Homerton Library**)
- The borders between Springfield and Lea Bridge wards (served by **Clapton** and **Stamford Hill Libraries**)
- Areas of Hackney Downs (served by **Clapton Library**), Hoxton West and Haggerston (served by **Shoreditch Library**) south Clissold (served by **Dalston Library**)

All libraries have fixed computers and free wifi and in our recent Library Customer Survey (2025) and residents using the computers is on the rise,

- 57% use them for reading and learning online (up from 25% in 2022)
- 54% use them for careers (applying for jobs, creating CVs) (up from 12% in 2022)
- 46% use them for general browsing for information (up from 17% in 2022)
- 17% use them for casual use (up from 5% in 2022)
- 16% use them to access Council services (up from 7% in 2022)
- 14% use them for connecting with family and friends (up from 6% in 2022)
- 9.5% for shopping and paying bills (up from 6% in 2022)
- 5% for applying for / managing universal credit (up from 2% in 2022)

In the survey residents also told us about their use of libraries

- 73% They are absolutely essential, I don't know what I would do without them
- 43% They have been really important to my health and wellbeing
- 37% They have been really important to my education
- 37% They help me connect to my community
- 34% The wifi and computers are essential to me
- 27% I use them to study or do homework
- 26% They help me connect to Council services, I use them to get advice, knowledge and information

In the Library Review Survey of Non-Users in 2022

- The most common reason for not using libraries from Council renters and across all ages was "I pay for subscription services (e.g. Netflix, Amazon, Virgin)"
- The most common response to what would encourage you to use a library in the future was from Council renters was "Attend events for children, adults and the community," "Coffee

shop or bookshop on site” “Provision of health and wellbeing activities and information” and “More learning and education activities in the library”

- The most common time Council renters would consider visiting a library was “daytime, 9am - 5pm”

b) Might members of this group be disproportionately affected by this proposal due to a need related to their protected characteristic?

Libraries are a crucial central service for enabling social mobility and supporting people from lower socioeconomic backgrounds.

The digital and internet access provided by libraries is crucial for claiming benefits, job-seeking (upon which access to some benefits depends) and accessing other forms of information and support. Digital Buddies programmes operate out of most libraries, Adult Education recruit learners and teach English, Maths and Digital Skills and ESOL in Hackney’s Libraries. Hackney Libraries have job and employment support sessions with partners. Research shows that libraries provide spaces where barriers to job-seeking are removed, removing the sense of stigma and anxiety that job centres can sometimes create.

Libraries act as warm and cool spaces, and community hubs for those who may not be able to afford to heat their homes/are experiencing homelessness. All library-run activities and events and most partnership sessions are free to attend and offer access to refreshments and a social opportunity important for health and wellbeing, particularly for those who may be struggling with the cost of energy or food. Money Hub runs a drop-in session out of Hackney’s libraries, which offers advice and support related to personal finances and business finance.

Children, young people and students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds are more likely to live in overcrowded homes and/or have more limited access to places where they can read, study, do hobbies, play and access information. Libraries support students in supplementing their school education in a way that could be critical to closing attainment gaps, particularly when it comes to reading age, which is closely linked both to socioeconomic status and social mobility. The uptick in young people using the libraries study spaces during revision and exam periods demonstrate this need and the homework club in Shoreditch has recently expanded from one session to two to accommodate the need for homework support for primary aged children.

Those who have a lower socioeconomic status are far more likely to need access to council services and much less likely to have the means to do so, particularly digitally. Libraries are crucial in removing these barriers. If libraries have reduced hours and therefore these services are sometimes at a different further away library, some residents may be unable to afford the travel cost to get to them.

It is also important to note here that there is a strong correlation between socioeconomic status and other protected characteristics identified, particularly disability and race. Many of the residents who have a lower socioeconomic status are also likely to face other inequalities, and the impacts listed here apply to them, compounding barriers to access.

Potential Impacts: Reducing the opening hours of libraries, particularly during colder early and late hours during winter, could have significant health and wellbeing impacts on those who rely on libraries as a warm space.

As discussed in the age section of this EqlA, children and young people use libraries as both a place to study and a place to find study material; they do this primarily after 3 pm when school

ends. This provision of study space is likely to be even more essential for children and young people from a low socioeconomic background who are more likely to live in overcrowded housing with no space to study and be unable to afford essential textbooks for study. Any reduction of hours after 3 pm may have a significant impact on the educational attainment of children from a low socioeconomic background, and any final decision about hours will need to ensure libraries remain a space for children to quietly and productively study.

All of Hackney's Library sessions (e.g. homework clubs, under-5s stories & rhymes, wellbeing drop-ins, and craft and reading and writing activities), are free and cater to those from a lower socioeconomic background who would not otherwise be able to afford them. While none of these services are under threat, they do take place throughout the day at different times, and a reduction in library hours could hinder access to them. Lower access could lead to negative impacts, particularly for those from a low socioeconomic background who can't choose to pay for alternatives at a different time, and this could lead to poorer financial, health, social, and education outcomes. Any changes to library hours will need to be taken into account and the effect changing hours has on library sessions and support services must be limited.

There are also many council services such as the Welcome Hub for Refugees, Migrants and Asylum Seekers and Housing Surgeries that are co-located in libraries. Again, those from a lower socioeconomic background are more likely to approach the council for help and missed opportunities to help can lead to greater harm in the long term. Reduced opening hours of libraries will need to ensure that these co-located services can still be provided if a negative impact is to be avoided.

Finally, due to the cost of digital devices and internet access, those from a lower socioeconomic background are more likely to be digitally excluded and rely on libraries for digital access. This is evidenced by computer usage, which is on the rise across all libraries. Reducing library hours could limit some residents' access to digital infrastructure, which in turn will limit their ability to access essential services (e.g., appointment booking, payments) which are increasingly becoming more digitally-focused. This will have a wide range of consequences and could lead to negative financial, health, and social outcomes. Any changes to library operating hours will need to maintain consistent access to digital infrastructure for our residents and be aware of the times of day when residents need to access this infrastructure most.

Other groups

Your assessment should also include addressing the Socio-Economic Duty and other groups identified locally to be facing inequality, for example those identified in the Equality Plan.

The Socio-Economic Duty extends Due Regard under the Equality Act; that public bodies adopt transparent and effective measures to address the inequalities that result from differences in occupation, education, place of residence or social class. The duty states that when making decisions of a strategic nature about how to exercise its functions, public authorities must do so in a way that is designed to reduce inequalities of outcome which result from socio-economic disadvantage.

The Equality Plan 2024-2026 identifies a number of other groups who experience inequality of outcomes locally. These groups should also be considered as part of this assessment, along with any other groups that have been identified in your consultation or evidence gathering that may be impacted. The Objectives of the Anti-Racist Framework, LGBTQIA+ Framework and Poverty Reduction Framework should be considered in your analysis.

Impacts and Evidence	Mitigation
<p><u>Looked after children and single and teen parents Needs Assessment 2024</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Higher than borough average levels of children registered as customers at all sites (except Shoreditch Library) and levels in line with borough averages at Hackney Central and Stamford Hill Library. <p><u>Caring</u></p> <p>Library Customer Survey 2025</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 30.3% of respondents have caring responsibilities • 23% of writing group participants have caring responsibilities <p><u>Migrants, refugees and asylum seekers</u></p> <p>Refugee, Asylum Seeker and Migrant Welcome Hub</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Since May 2024, over 300 refugees, migrants and asylum seekers have attended the Refugee hub at Dalston CLR James Library. To date, 23 members have registered at Dalston Library with a 'Sanctuary' status. <p><u>People in temporary accommodation / experiencing homelessness</u></p> <p>Library Customer Survey 2025</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5.3% of respondents were living in temporary accommodation or experiencing homelessness. • 25% of respondents in temporary accommodation/ experiencing homelessness, use the computers every day and 10% a few times a week • 21% of of respondents in temporary accommodation/ experiencing homelessness, visit the library every day and 9% a few times a week <p><u>People with interconnected mental or physical health challenges</u></p> <p>Library health and wellbeing programmes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In 2024 we introduced therapeutic counselling sessions for Global Majority residents at Shoreditch and Dalston Libraries and new physical activity programmes at Homerton Library. Bikur Cholim use our meeting rooms in Stamford Hill Library to deliver therapy sessions to the OJ communities. 	<p>This decision aims to realise library cost saving through changing and reducing opening hours only. There will be no reduction in service provision, such as classes, stock for issue, or number of computers. Services affected by changing opening times will be moved to a different but still appropriate time on a different day. Therefore, this section will only consider the potential impacts of reduced opening hours on this protected characteristic.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Loss of 1 - 1.5 days library access at their local site (excluding Hackney Central, Stoke Newington and Woodberry Down) • Protection of all sites for our daily / regular users • Delivery of events and activities for all groups protected during opening hours. • Involve people from all groups in ongoing service development and improvement • Delivery of partner programmes (Adult Learning, Digital Buddies, exercise classes) during core hours • Engagement with target groups on service change • Protected afternoons, evening and weekend hours for students

Key Impacts Summary

Key findings of this data analysis.

- This EqIA has shown that young people, older people, disabled people, people of certain ethnicities and those from a lower socioeconomic background are most likely to be negatively impacted by changes to library opening hours.
- This results primarily from a higher reliance on libraries as a place to study, access materials, services and sessions for free, socialise, use computers and access the internet.
- Children and young people will be most affected if changes to hours occur after school in the evenings.
- Older people and disabled people will be most affected if changes result in their local library being completely closed for day or half day periods of time.
- People from a lower socioeconomic background require more frequent and consistent access to libraries and there is no correlation to time of access. Most changes to opening hours would impact this group but the impact would be lessened if changes were shared across libraries.

Intersectionality

Access to books, other material and digital infrastructure is largely based on if you can afford it at home or not. Changes to library opening hours are most likely to have a most significant impact on older or younger disabled people who are from a lower socioeconomic background. Impact will therefore be felt across all libraries, each serving wards where there are higher than the UK average levels of deprivation, racial diversity, younger people and disability.

Data Gaps

Based on your data, are there any relevant groups that have not yet been consulted or engaged? Please explain how you will address this.

- In many areas, we have good data about the protected characteristics of registered library users and/or the residents of library catchment areas. We are, in some cases, missing direct data that links people with protected characteristics to the use of the library, the services they require and the time of day they commonly visit. This particularly applies to disabled people.
- We aim to solve these problems with both engagement and public consultation, where we hope to gather further quantitative and qualitative data about when, why and how residents use libraries.

Overall Impact of the Policy on the Public Sector Equality Duty

This EqIA has identified that a variety of changes to operating hours could have significant and varied negative impacts on those with certain protected characteristics. These will need to be mitigated and, before a final decision is taken, the Council will need to be satisfied that any adverse impacts are justified in light of the aims of the proposal.

Amendments and Mitigations

What changes, if any, do you plan to make to your proposal because of the Equality Impact Assessment?

Potential change	Assessment	Recommendation
No major change to the proposal	The EqIA demonstrates the proposal is robust. The omission of full site closures means the potential for discrimination or adverse impact has been mitigated. All opportunities to promote equality have been utilised.	No major change. The proposal to consult on reducing opening hours can still be taken forward; the final decision on opening times will need to consider a range of mitigations.
Adjust the proposal	The EqIA identifies potential problems or missed opportunities.	No adjustments proposed.
Stop and remove the proposal	The proposal shows actual or potential avoidable adverse impacts on different protected characteristics. The proposal must not be taken forwards.	Proposal to proceed to consultation.

Recommendation: The EqIA demonstrates the proposal is robust. The omission of full site closures means the potential for discrimination or adverse impact has been mitigated. All opportunities to promote equality have been utilised. If you have found any inequalities or negative impacts that you are unable to mitigate, please provide a compelling reason below why you are unable to mitigate them.

The proposal to consult on reducing opening hours can still be taken forward; the final decision on opening times will need to consider a range of mitigations.

What specific actions do you plan to take to remove or mitigate any actual or potential negative impact and to further the aims of the Equality Duty?

The data and insight gathered and analysed in the creation of this EqIA has heavily influenced the proposal put forward that proposes reduced hours across sites and no full site closures.

The decision in question aims to meet the library services' cost-saving proposals by reviewing operating hours only. This will also impact staffing and stock budgets, but there is currently no intention to close a site or to remove or reduce any other provided service. All libraries serve wards with high levels of deprivation, the council has to protect services for these customers.

This EqIA shows that young people, older people, disabled people, people of different ethnicities and those from a lower socioeconomic background are most likely to be negatively impacted by changes to library opening hours.

This results primarily from these groups' higher reliance on libraries as a place to study, access

materials, services and sessions for free, socialise, use computers and access the internet.

This EqlA has evidenced and discussed several mitigations that need to be considered to lessen the impact of reduced opening hours on those with certain protected characteristics.

These mitigations primarily relate to considerations of when and how often users with certain protected characteristics use libraries and how a final decision about exact opening times can help preserve their access.

The consultation on library opening hours will put forward a proposal outlining how the decision on opening hours at each site was made and using the findings of this EqlA to settle on hours that limit or mitigate the negative impacts presented in this EqlA. This public consultation document will emphasise the following:

- Younger people's particular need for libraries after 3pm.
- Library opening hours would be reduced in a way that allows co-located services to still be delivered.
- Disabled and older people's possible inability to travel to their next nearest Library and poorer residents being unable to afford to travel to their next nearest branch.
- Avoiding significantly long (e.g. multi day consecutive) closures of smaller libraries to ensure this does not compound the effects of social isolation on certain groups.
- Library closures should not disproportionately impact the Charedi Jewish community who cannot access them on Saturdays.
- Libraries should retain evenings in some options to provide a warm space for at-risk people and people working /studying from libraries.
- Libraries should have a broad range of opening hours to cater to different working patterns of men and women.
- If classes and sessions need to be moved due to reduced opening hours, extensive thought must be given to find an appropriate new time and/or date that is relevant to the group the session serves.
- For residents who rely on frequent and consistent use of libraries for digital access ensuring changes to hours do not lead to significant increases in digital exclusion.
- Changes to hours align with when residents who require digital access are most likely to use libraries.

The next step for this decision is public consultation. Following this, evidence from the consultation will be considered in an updated version of this EqlA to understand impacts and mitigations further.

Ongoing Monitoring

Summarise the measures you intend to put in place to monitor the equalities impact of the proposal as it is implemented.

- The Library Service will be responsible for monitoring this EqlA.
- Footfall data and customer data will continue to be collected.
- This will not be the final EqlA of this policy, this EqlA will be updated when a final decision is made. Monitoring arrangements will be outlined there.
- Date of EqlA monitoring review: following public consultation