

## EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT FORM INCLUDING SOCIO-ECONOMIC DUTY

(Revised March 2021)

Please refer to the current Equality Impact Assessment guidance when completing this document. If you would like further guidance please contact the Diversity and Inclusion Team on 01443 444529.

An equality impact assessment **must** be undertaken at the outset of any proposal to ensure robust evidence is considered in decision making. This documentation will support the Council in making informed, effective and fair decisions whilst ensuring compliance with a range of relevant legislation, including:

- Equality Act 2010 (Statutory Duties) (Wales) Regulations 2011
- Socio-economic Duty – Sections 1 to 3 of the Equality Act 2010.

This document will also contribute towards our duties to create a More Equal Wales within the

- Well-being of Future Generation (Wales) Act 2015.

The [‘A More Equal Wales – Mapping Duties’](#) guide highlights the alignment of our duties in respect of the above-mentioned legislation.

## SECTION 1 – PROPOSAL DETAILS

Lead Officer: Nick Kelland

Service Director: Caroline O'Neill

Service Area: Library Service

Date: 27/01/2026

1.a) What are you assessing for impact?

Strategy/Plan	Service Re-Model/Discontinuation of Service	Policy/Procedure	Practice	Information/Position Statement
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

1.b) What is the name of the proposal?

RCT Library Strategy 2026 - 2030

1.c) Please provide an overview of the proposal providing any supporting links to reports or documents.

To set a five-year strategic framework to deliver a comprehensive, efficient, bilingual and inclusive public library service in Rhondda Cynon Taf. The strategy focuses on: keeping the service relevant through digital innovation and staff upskilling; improving the library experience through inclusive programming and partnerships; and developing services fit for the future that support literacy, health and wellbeing, culture and heritage, and community resilience..

1.d) Please outline where delivery of this proposal is affected by legislation or other drivers such as code of practice.

The Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964 requires local authorities to ensure the provision of a 'comprehensive and efficient' library service without specifying what that entails. In Wales the duty 'to superintend and promote the improvement of the public library service provided through local authorities' has been devolved to the relevant Welsh Minister and since

2002 this duty has been fulfilled through the Welsh Public Library Standards. These standards consist of 13 core entitlements and 15 Quality Indicators.

Core entitlement 12 of the Welsh Public Library Standards requires public library services in Wales to provide access to their library service strategy, policies, objectives, and vision, in print and online. This is RCT Library Service's fourth Strategy to be developed in line with Welsh Government's Seventh Quality Framework (Supporting Sustainable and Connected Communities).

The Library Service is governed in everything it does by the Universal Offers identified by Welsh Government:

**HEALTH & WELLBEING:** Healthier, Happier, Connected - To support the health and wellbeing of local people and communities through services that inform, engage and connect.

**INFORMATION & DIGITAL:** Inform, Inspire, Innovate - To ensure local communities have access to quality information and digital services, to learn new skills and to feel safe online.

**READING:** Engage, Imagine, Discover - To build a literate and confident society by developing, delivering and promoting creative reading activities in libraries.

**CULTURE & CREATIVITY:** Explore, Create, Participate - To enable local communities to access and participate in a variety of quality and diverse arts and cultural experiences through local libraries.

Libraries play a key role in delivering RCTCBC's Corporate Plan 2024–2030 by supporting all four Wellbeing Objectives.

They help residents live safe, healthy and fulfilling lives through free access to information, welcoming community spaces and skills development. Libraries strengthen the local economy by providing job seeking support and opportunities to upskill, and they contribute to environmental goals through sustainable practices, educational resources and community initiatives. They also promote RCT's culture, heritage and the Welsh language through events, creative activities and bilingual services. Overall, libraries are essential community hubs that align closely with the Well being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and are central to achieving the Council's ambitions.

1.e) Please outline who this proposal affects:

- Service users
- Employees

- Wider community

## SECTION 2 – SCREENING TEST – IS A FULL EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT REQUIRED?

Screening is used to determine whether the initiative has positive, negative or neutral impacts upon protected groups. Where negative impacts are identified for protected groups then a full Equality Impact Assessment is required.

Please provide as much detail as possible of how the proposal will impact on the following groups, this may not necessarily be negative, but may impact on a group with a particular characteristic in a specific way.

### Equality Act 2010 (Statutory Duties) (Wales) Regulations 2011

The Public Sector Equality Duty requires the Council to have “due regard” to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation; advance equality of opportunity between different groups; and foster good relations between different groups. Please take an intersectional approach in recognising an individual may have more than one protected characteristic.

<b><u>Protected Characteristics</u></b>	<b>Does the proposal have any positive, negative or neutral impacts</b>	<b>Provide detail of the impact</b>	<b>What evidence has been used to support this view?</b>
<b>Age</b> ( <i>Specific age groups i.e. young people or older people</i> )	Positive	<p>The vision for Rhondda Cynon Taf Libraries is to support all individuals and communities to achieve their full potential.</p> <p>One of its key priorities is to provide access to the range of opportunities and support required by residents. This includes residents of all ages as follows:</p> <p><b>OLDER PEOPLE</b></p>	<p>RCT Local Insight Report</p> <p>Cwm Taf Ageing Well in Wales Plan</p> <p>Cwm Taf Wellbeing Plan 2023/28 (A more equal Cwm Taf Morganwg) - libraries and the development of community hubs in libraries contribute to the 'Thriving Communities' theme of this plan which aims</p>

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		<p>19.3% (46,790) of residents in RCT are aged 65+, and there are approximately 37,041 pensioner households.</p> <p>More than 75% of women and a third of men over 65 in Cwm Taf live alone. For many older people their library is a lifeline and the librarian may be the only person they speak to in the week.</p> <p>Research shows that loneliness has a similar effect on people's mortality as smoking 15 cigarettes a day and it is linked to poor mental health, and depression as well as health service use.</p> <p>There are 13 libraries in RCT that helps people to keep connected and provides opportunities to engage in activities in their communities that will reduce loneliness and social isolation.</p>	<p>to promote safe, confident, strong and thriving communities improving the well-being of residents and visitors, and building on our community assets.</p> <p>The Library Service Customer Satisfaction Survey 2025 indicated that 100% of respondees of all ages regard libraries as a safe place and 98% an inclusive place.</p> <p>Age Friendly Wales Strategy</p> <p>All Wales Library Management System data</p> <p>RCT Corporate Plan - 2024-2030 Working with our Communities, notes libraries as places where children and families have opportunities to develop, be healthy and enjoy activities.</p>

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		<p>The services provided by the Library Service will contribute to an Aging Well Wales by providing access to free and safe spaces so that they can:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- interact socially, thereby reducing loneliness and social isolation</li> <li>- engage in learning and develop new interests and hobbies that will improve their wellbeing</li> <li>- access a wide range of advice and information on issues that affect their lives ensuring they can get the support they need to remain independent for longer.</li> </ul> <p>Opportunities developed for inter-generational activities developed or facilitated by the Library Service where older people can share their skills and insights with younger people and vice versa benefits all ages and promotes greater</p>	<p>RCT Library Service Community Profiles of its 13 libraries</p>

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		<p>understanding and respect between generations and contributes to building more cohesive communities.</p> <p>The Library Strategy also has a focus on providing support for people to develop digital skills so that they are not excluded from accessing the internet and can benefit from the opportunities this offers (if they wish to do so). Older people are more likely to lack these skills but initiatives such as 'Lets Get Digital', and access to computers will support older people who wish to develop these skills to do so in a supportive and non-threatening environment.</p> <p>However the service also recognises the importance of ensuring that people who do not wish to engage digitally have equal access to information and advice in their preferred format.</p> <p>CHILDREN AND YOUNGER PEOPLE</p>	

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		<p>The Library Service has 11,103 members under the age of 17 and is keen to attract more young people to engage with its services and benefit from what it has to offer. Recognising that many young people may not initially be attracted by hard copies of books the Strategy proposes investing in more digital programmes and activities for children and young people in RCT libraries and, also exploring the possibility of library use of other social media platforms and in particular Instagram and tik-tok.</p> <p>The Children and Young People's Library team will continue to develop activities at library branches so that children have an opportunity to interact with each other. Partnership working with other organisations that provide activities for children and their families such as the Children's Book Trust will be expanded.</p>	

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		<p>We will continue to develop more innovative ways to engage with children such as exploring the continued use of new technologies for example VR headsets to engage children and young people in library events.</p> <p>Developing platforms that children and young people use will ensure that the service is able to target these age groups more effectively and act on their suggestions for service development and improvement.</p> <p>The Library Service invests approximately 16% of its materials budget on books and materials for children and young people.</p> <p>No fines are levied for late return of children or young peoples' books in order to reduce any barriers to engagement in a society that increasingly values knowledge, literacy and the dependence of being able to find and use information. This</p>	

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		<p>benefits families who cannot afford to buy books or materials to support their children's education.</p> <p>PEOPLE OF ALL AGES</p> <p>The National Survey for Wales (2022 - 23 (the last time this question was posed)) indicates that 48% of people in Wales feel lonely at least sometimes. Particular age groups such as 16-24 year olds have identified as the age group that has the most loneliness.</p> <p>The Library Strategy highlights the further partnership working that will be developed in 2026/30 so that activities are provided that engage and connect individuals and communities. These include community groups such as reading groups, knitting, cultural activities, crafts, early years groups, coffee mornings, reminiscence groups, coding clubs etc.</p>	

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		<p>One example of the impact of activities can be seen in A Reading Agency Report 2022-24 that indicated that over 90% of those who engaged in reading groups said they felt more connected to others as a result of the activity, the study highlighted that whilst reading itself is a solitary act, reading groups act as a powerful tool for community cohesion, social participation and emotional support.</p> <p>Support for development of reading skills and engagement in community groups and activities are particularly important for people of all ages that are disabled and the service ensure that access to these activities are available to all by providing materials in a range of formats including online and in braille.</p> <p>INTERSECTIONALITY</p>	

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		<p>It is recognised that some people have more than one protected characteristic and that there is an intersectionality between these that affect people's personal experiences. In such cases it is not possible to generalise the impact. However, we are committed to ensure that the range of provision at our libraries will meet the needs of people who have a range of protected characteristics and this will be achieved by working with partners who have specialist knowledge and services so that the offer at each library is expanded to reflect the needs of their customers.</p> <p>It should be noted that community profiles of the catchment area of each branch library have been completed and that provision in branches may differ in response to local needs.</p>	
<b>Disability</b>	Positive	The Council has a legal duty to anticipate the needs of disabled customers and to take reasonable	The Strategic Equality Plan 2024 - 28 identifies that we should recognise the needs of

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<i>(people with visible and non-visible disabilities or long-term health conditions)</i>		<p>steps to remove or reduce barriers that prevent disabled people from accessing services and should take positive steps to ensure that disabled people can access services including making reasonable adjustments.</p> <p>People with disabilities often face the challenge of being medicalised, a medical model defines disabled people by their medical conditions and has been criticised for primarily focusing on what people cannot do because of their differences, rather than what they can do if barriers in society were removed.</p> <p>Library services as outlined in this Strategy have been developed to ensure accessibility for all residents removing the barriers wherever possible that prevent them from engaging with our services.</p> <p>People's health and wellbeing are determined by a range of factors. This strategy will ensure that the</p>	<p>communities and the barriers that exist for them especially young people, disabled people and those from ethnic minority backgrounds.</p> <p>Reading books is well-established as a means of improving well-being and bibliotherapy is used as a therapeutic approach to use literature to support good mental health.(Libraries.wales)</p> <p>Significant research has been undertaken in recent years into the importance of the arts and cultural sector for health with a recent Arts Council report - Arts, Culture and the Brain (Bone &amp; Fancourt 2022) noting engaging in creativity and culture is linked to positive wellbeing, feeling connected and being motivational. Mental wellbeing of people in highly</p>

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		<p>Library Service will continue to offer access to a range of facilities, activities, advice and information that will promote the health and wellbeing of all residents and will support those with long-term conditions or have complex needs.</p> <p><b>ACCESS TO BOOKS AND MATERIALS</b></p> <p>This proposal will ensure that people with disabilities can access books and other materials which will help to promote their independence and increase their wellbeing. This includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- large print books and books in braille for people with sight difficulties</li> <li>- a wider range of audiobooks, e-audiobooks and e-books for people who cannot or do not wish to visit a static library</li> </ul>	<p>deprived areas can benefit from these activities. Parent and child relationships can be strengthened with children being more ready to start school, particularly if they are less economically advantaged. Creative activity helps reduce 'negative' behaviours in teenagers including criminal behaviour and substance use.</p> <p>UK Research on the impact of Mental Illness (2011) indicated that it has a significant impact on life expectancy and that people who suffered from enduring and severe mental illness die on average 10 years earlier than the general population. In addition it should be noted that people who live in deprived communities have the poorest mental health and wellbeing and this reflects the situation in RCT.</p>

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		<p>- support for use of ipads and public access computers in libraries with specialist equipment such as hearing loops and specialist keyboards</p> <p>- expansion of digitisation of materials and to share library collections via the Our Heritage website which will ensure that they are accessible to a much wider audience 24/7. This will benefit residents who are unable to visit the Local Studies collections at Llys Cadwyn, Treorchy and Aberdare libraries.</p> <p><b>REDUCING BARRIERS</b></p> <p>The ability to register online rather than visit a library to register as a member has made this more accessible to people with disabilities that would have barriers to attending a venue.</p> <p><b>ADVICE, GUIDANCE AND INFORMATION</b></p>	<p>Welsh Public Library Standards Assessment Report 2024/25. RCT Library Service met all 13 core entitlements that focus on free access to books and services, high quality customer service that reflects and meets the needs of customers including those with special requirements, wide partnerships with other providers that enhance the offer on health and wellbeing, lifelong learning, cultural activities etc.</p> <p>The employment rate for disabled people in Wales was 52.7% in the year ending March 2025, this is up 1.7 percentage points compared to the previous year. This compares to a rate of 81.9% for non-disabled people, which is unchanged over the year.</p>

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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- access to a broad range of information, advice and guidance on a range of issues related to health and wellbeing</li> <li>- access to One4All services at 6 libraries for services such as getting a Blue Badge, Council Tax reduction scheme</li> <li>- access to disabled-friendly facilities at local venues for social interaction and opportunities to engage in learning, cultural and other activities, all of which increase well-being and reduce social isolation and loneliness. This includes the installation of 3 adult changing places at Porth, Pontypridd and Canolfan Pennar Libraries that enhances access to services for people with the most severe disabilities so that they are more likely now to be able to use their library and engage in more provision.</li> </ul>	<p>The unemployment rate for disabled people in Wales was 5.5%, an increase of 0.1 percentage points on the previous year. This compares to a rate of 3.0% for non-disabled people, unchanged over the year.</p>

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		<p>ACCESS TO HEALTH INFORMATION AND SUPPORT</p> <p>1 in 4 adults and 1 in 6 children and young adults (aged 8 -24) in Wales experience mental health problems or illness at some point during their lifetime (Welsh Government, Mental Health and wellbeing Strategy 2025 - 2035).</p> <p>The proposed strategy will continue to develop the good work achieved between 2021/22 and 2025 and build on the support that will be available for people of all ages who experience mental health issues:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- RCT libraries are part of the Reading Well scheme - this encompasses the Book Prescription Scheme mentioned in the previous strategy which provides self-help reading for several common mental and physical health conditions.</li> </ul>	

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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The Library Service works in partnership with a wide range of organisations - such as MIND and the Alzheimer's Society to facilitate support for residents with a range of conditions and facilitate access to counselling etc at local venues to reduce the need to travel</li> <li>- Facilitation of community activities that reduce social isolation and loneliness (such as Knitting Nannas, coffee mornings etc)</li> </ul> <p>FACILITATING LEARNING AND ACCESS TO EMPLOYMENT SUPPORT</p> <p>Libraries across RCT play a key role in facilitating learning and providing access to Employment Support by working with other Council Services, external partners and third sector organisations. This Strategy will support the further development of these partnerships so that relevant and appropriate support can be</p>	

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		<p>offered to people with disabilities to improve their employment prospects.</p> <p>Expansion of the provision of SMARTBOARDS across the Library estate (10 of the 13 libraries have at least one of these boards) has allowed us to enable hybrid delivery of classes that widens access to learning for people who have barriers to engaging face-to-face whether that is due to lack of transport, disability, childcare etc.</p> <p><b>STAFF TRAINING</b></p> <p>Library staff are provided with training on a range of issues such as dementia awareness, autism awareness and neurodiversity awareness training. This equips staff with the skills required to provide an excellent service to people who have different needs and has the impact of reinforcing the message that our libraries are for everyone.</p>	

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		<p><b>INTERSECTIONALITY</b></p> <p>It is recognised that some people have more than one protected characteristic and that there is an intersectionality between these that affect people's personal experiences. In such cases it is not possible to generalise the impact. However, we are committed to ensure that the range of provision at our libraries will meet the needs of people who have a range of protected characteristics and this will be achieved by working with partners who have specialist knowledge and services so that the offer at each library is expanded to reflect the needs of their customers however complex they are.</p> <p><b>OLDER/DISABLED</b></p> <p>The Welsh Governments dementia statistics (2025) estimates around 44,000 people in Wales, most of whom are over 65, suffer from</p>	

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		<p>dementia. with 5,695 (c.13%) of these living in the Cwm Taf Health Board area. Libraries provide safe spaces for residents with dementia to meet with others, engage in arts and other activities, and allow carers to receive advice and support in a warm and friendly environment.</p> <p>All library branches already have Dementia Friendly champions and services in place and are about to host Dementia Hubs and a gadget loan scheme.</p> <p>The Library Strategy includes the maintenance of the @homelibrary service which supports people who are housebound, have mobility problems or do not live within 2 miles of a static library to access books and materials thereby ensuring that they continue to benefit from the positive health effects of reading for pleasure.</p> <p>YOUNGER DISABLED</p>	

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		<p>Reading for pleasure is recognised as a means of reducing symptoms of depression and improve wellbeing. The READING WELL initiative supports health and wellbeing through recommended resources and activities includes Books on Prescription for children all of which are recommended by health experts, as well as people living with the conditions covered and their relatives and carers.</p> <p>This strategy will continue the investment made in the Schools Library Service and in the role of Youth and Children Librarian to ensure that children in RCT can access books and a range of out-of-school activities that promote reading for example the Summer Reading Challenge.</p>	
<b>Gender Reassignment</b> <i>(anybody who's gender identity or gender expression)</i>	Positive	This Strategy will have a positive effect on people with this protected characteristic in several ways:	Stonewall - Public Attitudes Towards Trans People - Report August 2024.

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<i>is different to the sex they were assigned at birth including non-binary identities)</i>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- they will benefit from the focus on continuous improvement of the service and investment in staff training which will ensure a high-quality service</li> <li>- they will be able to access books and materials that they can trust through the Reading Well initiative that will help them to deal with mental health issues, many of which are written by people who have experienced these conditions</li> <li>- support for jobsearching and improvement of skills will be available in an inclusive environment</li> <li>- access to information and advice on financial and welfare benefits.</li> </ul>	WG Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity in Wales (Census 2021) - REvised report January 2023
<b>Marriage or Civil Partnership</b> <i>(people who are married or in a civil partnership)</i>	Positive	The focus on continuous improvement, investment in staff training and investment in library facilities outlined in this Strategy and Action Plan means that people who	Strategic Equality Plan and Public Sector Equality Duty

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		are married or in civil partnerships will receive a high-quality service.	
<b>Pregnancy and Maternity</b> <i>(women who are pregnant/on maternity leave)</i>	Positive	<p>Library buildings are easily accessible and provide toilet facilities as well as baby changing rooms to ensure that expectant mothers, mothers and their babies are able to visit and engage in activities.</p> <p>Significant investment over the period of the last strategy has resulted in improved facilities that has enhanced the environment for facilitation of a range of activities that are aimed at expectant mothers, mothers and their babies. The new strategy is committed to further improvement of facilities, equipment and provision which will have a positive impact on this group in several ways:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- providing safe places for expectant mothers, mothers and their babies</li> <li>- expanding access to relevant information and advice</li> </ul>	Strategic Equality Plan and Public Sector Equality Duty

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		<p>- working with partners in the health sector and Book Start so that reading becomes embedded early</p> <p>- Providing story telling and rhyme time sessions.</p> <p>NHS research in 2024 indicates that between 10-15% of new mothers will be affected by post-natal depression. Access to books and resources that deal with this and engagement with others mothers who have experienced this through parent and baby activities at libraries will have a significant positive impact on women who experience this.</p> <p>Acces to Reading Well for Familes titles which provide information to supportfamily wellbeing in pregnancy and the early years.</p>	
<p><b>Race</b> <i>(ethnic and racial groups i.e. minority ethnic groups, Gypsy, Roma and Travellers)</i></p>	<p>Positive</p>	<p>The strategy focuses on attracting new and diverse audiences by developing new programmes and</p>	<p>Strategic Equality Plan and Public Sector Equality Duty.</p>

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		<p>initiatives as well as ensuring high-quality facilities and well-trained staff.</p> <p>This will benefit people from different races as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- ESOL provision will be supported as part of the service's facilitation of learning opportunities, thereby supporting residents who need to develop English language skills so that they can access the information and services they require</li> <li>- Each library promotes the EYST (Multi-lingual Helpline Wales) Helpline and the services available to individuals who prefer to communicate with service providers in their first language.</li> <li>- A diverse range of books and materials from a wide variety of cultures are accessible through the service and can be accessed through the Books4u scheme if they are unavailable within the county repository.</li> </ul>	<p>WG's Anti-racist Wales Action Plan (ArWAP) outlines the challenges faced by people of a Black and Minority Ethnic background in Wales and identifies actions against key priorities that will address this.</p>

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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Online provision enables access to over 400 language packs and magazines/newspapers in a variety of languages.</li> <li>- Relationships with CTM's Black and Minority Ethnic Outreach team have been developed and there are opportunities going forward to be better able to promote library services to ethnic minority communities.</li> </ul> <p>The Library Service also plays a role in widening the understanding of residents in relation to other cultures and practices and will continue to play a visible role celebrating events such as 'Black History Month,' and Holocaust Memorial Day. Also there will be a focus on encouraging people from diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds to participate in the cultural life of the community thereby meeting the standard outlined in Article 27 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights:</p>	

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		<p>'Everyone has the right to freely participate in the cultural life of the community.'</p> <p>As with other resident groups, libraries are safe and inclusive spaces for people of Black and Ethnic Minority backgrounds and refugees living in RCT.</p> <p>The service adopts an anti-racism approach to service planning and delivery and will ensure that practices, functions, and processes that support delivery will uncover whether and/or how practices and behaviours that 'may appear seemingly benign may inadvertently discriminate against ethnic minority groups.'</p>	
<p><b>Religion or Belief</b> <i>(people with different religions and philosophical beliefs</i></p>	Positive	The Library Service Strategy 2026/30 will have a positive effect on people with this protected characteristic by:	Strategic Equality Plan and Public Sector Equality Duty

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<i>including people with no beliefs)</i>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- continuing to provide access to books and materials, including religious and belief based texts, that they may be interested in;</li> <li>- promoting opportunities for people of different faiths and backgrounds to engage in activities;</li> <li>- collating memories and memorabilia related to different faiths and beliefs in RCT to add to the new heritage website so that their contribution to the history/heritage of the area is recognised.</li> </ul>	<p>The 2021 Census notes that Rhondda Cynon Taf has one of the highest non-religious populations in England or Wales:</p> <p>No Religion: 56.2% (c. 133,500 people)  Christian: 36% (c.85,500 people)  Muslim:0.6% (1,378 people)  Buddhist: 0.2% (588 People)  Hindu: 0.2% (497 People)</p> <p>A small percentage identifying as Sikh, Jewish or other faiths and 5% of respondents not stating a religion.</p>
<b>Sex</b> <i>(women and men, girls and boys)</i>	Positive	<p><b>WOMEN</b></p> <p>100% of respondents to the Library Service's Customer Satisfaction 2025 Survey identified the library as a safe place with 98% finding it also inclusive.</p> <p>In general more women than men attend libraries for a variety of</p>	<p>Library Service Customer Satisfaction Surveys - Adults 2025</p> <p>Strategic Equality Plan</p> <p>Public Sector Equality Duty</p>

<u>Protected Characteristics</u>	Does the proposal have any positive, negative or neutral impacts	Provide detail of the impact	What evidence has been used to support this view?
		<p>reasons, partly related to the fact that they remain on the whole the main care giver whether that is for children or older members of their family. Also from an economic perspective women in RCT earn less than men per hour and are therefore more likely to look for activities that can be accessed for free and does not involve incurring travel costs.</p> <p>Improving libraries and the services provided within libraries therefore will have a direct positive impact on the lives and opportunities of women as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- access to advice, information and sign-posting to a variety of sources and partners</li> <li>- access to adult learning opportunities that fit in with school times</li> <li>- access to support groups</li> <li>- books and materials that relate to key periods in a woman's life and provide information on health and wellbeing</li> </ul>	<p>NOMIS - data on economic activity and economic inactivity, and salaries in RCT. In September 2025 there were more males (4,200 (5% of the unemployed population of Wales) compared 4% females - the actual figure not given on NOMIS) claiming out-of-work benefits and significant evidence to suggest that white boys from disadvantaged backgrounds are underperforming at school. (FFT Education Datalab)</p> <p>Welsh Government figures indicate that:</p> <p>There was a gradual decrease in the proportion of 16 to 18 year olds in education or training between 2014 and 2019. The proportion has fluctuated since, and has decreased over the latest year</p>

<u>Protected Characteristics</u>	Does the proposal have any positive, negative or neutral impacts	Provide detail of the impact	What evidence has been used to support this view?
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- free activities for pre-school children and opportunities to socialise with other parents (reducing social isolation)</li> <li>- free access to rooms for community group meetings, coffee mornings etc</li> <li>- information on community food support for families in need</li> <li>- local access to employment support focussed around the needs of the family where required</li> </ul> <p>The above is especially important in communities that suffer from deprivation.</p> <p><b>GIRLS</b></p> <p>The Reading Well programme promotes the health and wellbeing and access to relevant information for girls as they grow up. Book titles are recommended by a team of experts in this field and include titles by authors who have suffered from</p>	<p>from 75.7% in 2023 to 73.7% in 2024.</p> <p>In 2024, 14.6% of 16 to 18 year olds were in full or part-time employment and not in education or training, a decrease from 15.1% in 2023.</p> <p>In total, 73.7% of 16 to 18 year olds were engaged in some kind of education or training (full or part-time) in 2024, a decrease from 75.7% in 2023.</p> <p>Participation in full-time education was 59.0% in 2024, down from 62.1% in 2023.</p> <p>A higher proportion of females aged 16 to 18 were in full-time education in 2024 – 61.2% compared with 56.8% of males.</p>

<u>Protected Characteristics</u>	Does the proposal have any positive, negative or neutral impacts	Provide detail of the impact	What evidence has been used to support this view?
		<p>conditions as well as medical professionals.</p> <p>Activities of interest are provided and the library provides a safe space for meeting with friends, doing homework in a quiet space if there is no space at home, and providing access to the internet (with protections in place for children).</p> <p>Advice and support is available for girls in the same way as for other customers, and as services and partnerships are enhanced during the course of the Strategy these will further improve allowing girls to access support and gain informatin from trusted sources within their communities.</p> <p>Opportunities are also offered for girls to try activities that might not necessarily initially appeal to them e.g. coding.</p> <p>Libraries provide period dignity products for those who may not be able to access or afford these items.</p>	<p>By single year of age, 68.8% of all 16 year olds were undertaking full-time education in 2024 compared with 59.0% of 17 year olds and 48.7% of 18 year olds.</p> <p>Participation in training was higher for males than for females. In total, 8,000 16 to 18 year olds were engaged in training (both work-based learning courses and job-related training) in 2024. This is comprised of approximately 5,200 (9.0%) males and 2,800 (5.2%) females.</p> <p>Approximately 20.2% of 16 to 18 year olds were estimated to be engaged in both employment and some type of education or training in 2024, a decrease compared to 25.2% in 2023. Most of these were students in full-time</p>

<u>Protected Characteristics</u>	Does the proposal have any positive, negative or neutral impacts	Provide detail of the impact	What evidence has been used to support this view?
		<p>Libraries also play an important role in ensuring that young people learn to assess the reliability and relevance of online information - a vital skill for all in an online world.</p> <p><b>MEN</b></p> <p>Men appear to access libraries at specific times of their lives - for example, attending employment support programmes such as Work Clubs and 'Lets Get Digital' sessions if they are unemployed or economically inactive and enrolled on an employability programme.</p> <p>Male attendance also appears to rise on retirement with the library becoming a place to socialise, engage in courses and activities that may have been impossible when they were in full-time employment.</p> <p>The continued social media marketing of e-books and e-audiobooks over the past year has boosted downloads of audio titles by 11% and this has undoubtedly made</p>	<p>education who were also working part-time.</p> <p>For the proportion of 16 to 18 year olds in employment, there was a gradual increase between 2014 and 2018, however this fell sharply in 2020 (the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic) to 32.2%. The proportion saw an increase to 42.1% in 2022, however has seen decreases each year since then to 34.9% in 2024.</p> <p>An estimated 13,100 Welsh 16 to 18 year olds (11.7%) were NEET in 2024, compared to 10,100 (9.2%) in 2023. This increase was driven by a rise in the proportion of economically inactive (excluding students) 16 to 18 year olds.</p>

<u>Protected Characteristics</u>	Does the proposal have any positive, negative or neutral impacts	Provide detail of the impact	What evidence has been used to support this view?
		<p>it easier for men who work full-time to benefit from these services.</p> <p>Increased focus on developing the online offer in the coming 5 years will hopefully attract more men to engage with the service.</p> <p>Opening times have changed at all libraries since the previous strategy removing 5pm closing times. All libraries now close at 6pm on fully open days and all branches are open between 9.00 a.m. and 1.00 p.m. on Saturdays to facilitate the needs of customers that work during the week.</p> <p>The intention to widen the learning and training opportunities available may also target male customers who may not have previously engaged with the service.</p> <p>A focus on Men's Health and Wellbeing through the Reading Well programme and access to the Book Prescription scheme benefits all men.</p> <p>BOYS</p>	<p>The number of 16 to 18 year olds who were NEET in 2024 comprised of 3,200 (2.8%) unemployed young people and 9,900 (8.9%) who were economically inactive (excluding students). This compares to 5,200 (4.7%) unemployed young people and 4,900 (4.5%) who were economically inactive (excluding students) in 2023.</p> <p>National Literacy Trust: Boys' Reading Commission Report looked at underachievement of boys in reading and recommended among other things that 'libraries ...work with schools to ensure that children who are least likely to be taken to the library by their parents, or face problems with their reading, can take part in important initiatives such as the Summer Reading</p>

<u>Protected Characteristics</u>	Does the proposal have any positive, negative or neutral impacts	Provide detail of the impact	What evidence has been used to support this view?
		<p>In a National Literacy Trust Childrens and Young Peoples Survey 2025, the biggest drop in reading habits seen in 20 years has been recorded with just 1 in 3 children and young people aged 8 - 18 stating they enjoyed reading in their free time. The steepest drop was seen in boys aged 11 to 16. As reading is an essential skills that forms the foundation of other learning, the importannce of encouraging boys to read cannot be underestimated.</p> <p>Fewer boys engage with the Library Service's Summer Reading Challenge than girls. 380 boys compared to 519 girls engaged with the programme in 2025. It should be noted though that participation rates for boys has remained fairly consistent whilst we saw a drop in girls participation since the Covid 19 pandemic. Book Trust's adoption of themes that might have more appeal for boys such as Space has greatly increased the uptake of the scheme for boys.</p>	<p>Challenge.' This is already happening in RCT.</p> <p>Customer Satisfaction Survey - Children and Young People 2023 indicated that they used the library for the following reasons:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 72% borrowed books</li> <li>- 3% used computers</li> <li>- 31% played with toys</li> <li>- 52% came to a library to read</li> <li>- 38% came to a library to 'look around'</li> <li>- 7% did their homework in the library</li> <li>- 16% said it was somewhere for them to go</li> <li>- 7% went to the library to wait for parents/family members</li> </ul>

<b><u>Protected Characteristics</u></b>	<b>Does the proposal have any positive, negative or neutral impacts</b>	<b>Provide detail of the impact</b>	<b>What evidence has been used to support this view?</b>
		<p>This Library Strategy highlights the important role that libraries play in encouraging people of all ages to read and this will continue to be a key focus going forward. The work of the Schools Library Service in supporting schools to provide interesting reading materials and support for projects has a direct positive impact on boys.</p> <p>In order to attract more boys into libraries and to encourage their participation in reading, libraries have improved the children's areas and created teen areas within their facilities. Development of new activities such as coding clubs and use of VR headsets to make educational activities more attractive will be continued throughout the period of the new Strategy. These types of activities and devices are particularly appealing to boys.</p> <p>The needs of boys are specifically catered for through the Reading Well</p>	

<u>Protected Characteristics</u>	Does the proposal have any positive, negative or neutral impacts	Provide detail of the impact	What evidence has been used to support this view?
		<p>programme with a wide variety of titles available that supports their health and wellbeing.</p> <p>Use of computers at libraries ensure that access is safe for children with special protections in place. Also support provided to navigate online and assess the reliability and relevance of online information supports the development of vital skills.</p>	
<p><b>Sexual Orientation</b> <i>(bisexual, gay, lesbian, straight)</i></p>	<p>Positive</p>	<p>The Library Service exists to provide a high-quality service and a safe and inclusive space to all people regardless of their background, sexual orientation, ethnicity, or beliefs.</p> <p>Libraries have a positive impact on people with this protected characteristic as they play a role in helping individuals find information about coming out, health and family topics as well as providing access to reading for pleasure and opportunities for participation in a</p>	<p>Alexander Parks (2012): 'Opening the Gate - Young Adult Library Services' is one of many writers to highlight the role of libraries as safe spaces for LGBTQ youth and teens, especially in the face of bullying.</p> <p>LGBTQ in Britain (2018) - Stonewall's report based on YouGov research with 5000 lesbian, gay, bi and trans (LGBT) people across England, Scotland and Wales</p>

<u>Protected Characteristics</u>	Does the proposal have any positive, negative or neutral impacts	Provide detail of the impact	What evidence has been used to support this view?
		<p>wide range of activities, events, exhibitions in a safe environment.</p> <p>The Library Service has long been engaged in events that support colleagues and customers who are LGBTQ+, for example PRIDE.</p>	<p>about their life in Britain today indicated that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Half of LGBT people (52 per cent) experienced depression in the last year</li> <li>• One in eight LGBT people aged 18-24 (13 per cent) said they've attempted to take their own life in the last year.</li> </ul> <p>31 per cent of LGB people had thought about taking their own life in the last year</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 41% per cent of non-binary people said they harmed themselves in the last year compared to 20 per cent of LGBT women and 12 per cent of GBT men.</li> </ul>

In addition, due to Council commitments made to the following groups of people we would like you to consider impacts upon them:

	<b>Does the proposal have any positive, negative or neutral impacts</b>	<b>Provide detail of the impact</b>	<b>What evidence has been used to support this view?</b>
<p><b>Armed Forces Community</b> <i>(anyone who is serving, has served, family members and the bereaved)</i></p>	<p>Positive</p>	<p>Personnel who leave the Armed Forces and their families can face a plethora of challenges including housing, healthcare, employment, social isolation and loneliness.</p> <p>Library services can offer the same range of support and access to services to veterans and their families as identified in respect of other groups including sign-posting to other agencies, employment support and financial advice from partner agencies in their local communities and opportunities to participate in a wide range of activities.</p> <p>Access to library collections for study/research and engagement with heritage and other projects are often of particular interest to veterans and these can be accessed at libraries.</p>	<p>WG Veterans Action Plan</p> <p>'Giving and Receiving Supporting and investing in our Armed Forces Community in Wales.'</p> <p>Strategic Equality Plan Public Sector Duty</p>

		<p>Libraries have also become visible venues of commemoration with a large 'Lest we forget' mural on the outside of Aberdare library and additional memorials being sited in libraries, notably Tonypandy library and in the next few months Treorchy library.</p> <p>The Library Service Strategy commits to continuing to offer volunteering opportunities which can support people to develop new skills and provide additional information for their CV if they are jobsearching, all of which has a positive impact on individuals and their prospects.</p> <p>The Library Service is actively involved in commemoration and Armed Forces Days which provides opportunities for residents and communities to highlight how they value veterans. In addition some veterans and their families might be interested in being</p>	
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		<p>engaged in some of our projects designed to capture memories and experiences so that they can be preserved for the future.</p>	
<p><b>Carers</b> <i>(anyone of any age who provides unpaid care)</i></p>	<p>Positive</p>	<p>Carers groups use library facilities to meet together and a range of self-help groups meet at library venues across the county.</p> <p>A range of activities to support carers who have relatives with dementia have always been facilitated by the Library Service and these will continue over the next 5 years varying to meet the needs identified by carers and the people they care for.</p> <p>The installation of adult changing places in 3 libraries enables more carers to visit a library with the relative they are caring for if they so wish.</p> <p>Libraries are safe spaces for carers as staff have been</p>	<p>State of Caring Survey 2025 (Wales): 21% of carers in Wales said they were struggling to make ends meet; A further 9% are or have been in debt as a result of caring.</p> <p>Caring can have a significant impact on carers' physical health. 42% of carers said their physical health has suffered as a result of caring, and 30% said their physical health was bad or very bad. A fifth (20%) of carers have experienced an injury because of caring.</p> <p>Caring can have a profound impact on carers' mental health and wellbeing. Three quarters (74%) of carers said they had felt stressed or</p>

		<p>trained (and will continue to be trained) to understand, empathise and deal with customers who have a range of challenges. Therefore libraries are friendly and non-judgmental places for carers to take their relatives/friends whose behaviours might be unconventional. It is a place where they can relax, participate in activities or just enjoy socialising with others while the people they care for engage in activities. Access to free activities and free advice is particularly important for this group and another reason for why they choose to meet at libraries.</p> <p>It is difficult to over-estimate the importance of this to carers.</p> <p>As community hubs have been rolled out at library venues access to a wider range of advice on issues such as finances and employment support, social care, health and housing are available on-site, which reduces the need for carers to</p>	<p>anxious, and 40% feel depressed. 35% of carers said their mental health was bad or very bad.</p> <p>Caring can lead to tiredness and in some cases extreme fatigue and exhaustion, often because carers struggle to get a good night's sleep. 65% of carers said they find it hard to get a good night's sleep because of their caring role.</p> <p>43% of carers feel lonely, 59% said their caring role has meant they have lost touch with family and friends, and 57% said that their caring role has led to disagreements with family or friends.</p>
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		travel further afield. All library staff are to be upskilled to provide unpaid carers with the relevant information and signposting as part of the Carers Project.	
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If the initial screening test has identified negative impacts then a full equality impact assessment (section 4) **must** be undertaken. However, if after undertaking the above screening test you determine a full equality impact assessment is not relevant please provide an adequate explanation below:

The Library Strategy 2026–2030 is designed to ensure that library services in Rhondda Cynon Taf continue to meet the needs of all residents and uphold the 13 core entitlements set out in the Welsh Government’s Seventh Quality Framework, Public Libraries Supporting Sustainable and Connected Communities. The Strategy also supports ongoing progress toward achieving the five Quality Indicators that include specific targets.

RCT libraries are free to join and open to everyone. The service provides access to qualified, knowledgeable, and welcoming staff who offer support across a broad range of services, resources, and activities. These are available in multiple formats to promote lifelong learning, personal development and wellbeing, community participation, cultural engagement, and leisure.

The service is committed to ensuring that facilities and services are inclusive and accessible for people with diverse needs, including those with disabilities and individuals requiring tailored support. Library buildings provide attractive, safe, and accessible spaces, while access to books, digital materials, and public computers is offered free of charge. Resources and activities are also available in the Welsh language, supporting linguistic rights and cultural inclusion.

The library service works in partnership with a wide range of organisations to widen participation and ensure that the needs of diverse communities are understood and addressed. Regular consultation with users helps ensure that the service remains responsive and accessible to all. Once approved by Cabinet, the Library Strategy will be published on the Council’s website so that the wider community can access and review it.

Are you happy you have sufficient evidence to justify your decision?

Yes

No

Name: Nicholas Kelland

Position: Library and Information Advice Service Manager

Date:

Please forward a copy of this completed screening form to the Diversity and Inclusion Team.

PLEASE NOTE – there is a separate impact assessment for Welsh Language. This must also be completed for proposals.

Section 3 Socio-economic Duty needs only to be completed if proposals are of a strategic nature or when reviewing previous strategic decisions. Definition of a 'strategic nature' is available on page 6 of the Preparing for the Commencement of the Socio-economic Duty Welsh Government Guidance.

### **SECTION 3 – SOCIO-ECONOMIC DUTY (STRATEGIC DECISIONS ONLY)**

The Socio-economic Duty gives us an opportunity to do things differently and put tackling inequality genuinely at the heart of key decision making. Socio-economic disadvantage means living on a low income compared to others in Wales, with little or no accumulated wealth, leading to greater material deprivation, restricting the ability to access basic goods and services.

Please consider these additional vulnerable groups and the impact your proposal may or may not have on them:

- Single parents and vulnerable families
- Pensioners
- Looked after children
- Homeless people
- Students
- Single adult households

- People living in the most deprived areas in Wales
- People with low literacy and numeracy
- People who have experienced the asylum system
- People misusing substances
- People of all ages leaving a care setting
- People involved in the criminal justice system

<u>Socio-economic disadvantage</u>	Does the proposal have any positive, negative or neutral impacts	Provide detail of the impact	What evidence has been used to support this view?
<p><b>Low Income/Income Poverty</b>  <i>(cannot afford to maintain regular payments such as bills, food, clothing, transport etc.)</i></p>	<p>Positive</p>	<p>CHILDREN IN LOW INCOME HOMES</p> <p>Most recent data (2024) shows 23% of children aged 0-19 years in RCT are in absolute-low income families.</p> <p>.</p> <p>This would preclude their families from being able to buy books, comics or magazines for them, or to enrol them on activities that had an associated cost.</p> <p>Having access to an extensive selection of books and other materials has a positive impact on these children and their families, ensuring that they are not disadvantaged from an educational perspective compared to children from wealthier socio-economic backgrounds. In order to encourage parents and carers to register children at their library there are no fines for late return of children's library books.</p>	<p>Local Insight RCT 2024 - data on levels of poverty.</p> <p>Levelling the Field- Libraries and Income Inequality: 'Confronting inequality is integral to the history of libraries and remains at the heart of library service today. The same materials, programs and services are available to anyone who walks through the library's doors, no matter the size (or existence) of their wallet.'</p> <p>The Joseph Rowntree 'Poverty in Wales 2025' report found:</p> <p>There has been little progress in reducing poverty in Wales over the past 20 years, with poverty rates consistently hovering around 21–22%. Currently, over 1 in 5 people in Wales (22%) live in poverty, totalling 700,000 individuals.</p>

<u>Socio-economic disadvantage</u>	Does the proposal have any positive, negative or neutral impacts	Provide detail of the impact	What evidence has been used to support this view?
		<p>LONE PARENTS</p> <p>Lone parent households are the ones most often affected by low income poverty. Services provided at libraries or facilitated through partnerships with other organisations have a positive impact on lone parents in the following ways:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- providing access to books and the internet as indicated above to their children</li> <li>- access to books and the internet for lone parents themselves</li> <li>- access to learning and/or engagement opportunities for lone parents, many of which are provided at times that do not clash with school drop-off or pick-up</li> <li>- access/sign-posting to welfare/financial advice/food support</li> <li>- opportunities to engage in local community groups and projects free of charge</li> </ul>	<p>This includes 400,000 working-age adults, 200,000 children and 100,000 pensioners living in poverty in 2021–24. Over the past 30 years, children have consistently faced the highest poverty rates, with pensioners currently having lower poverty rates than working-age adults, both with and without children.</p> <p>In 2020–23, nearly half a million people in Wales lived in deep poverty, with 310,000 in very deep poverty. Poverty has intensified over time, with the proportion of people in very deep poverty rising from 33% in 1994–97 to 47% in 2020–23. The growing gap between household incomes and the poverty line highlights the deepening severity of poverty in Wales. In 2020–23, a couple with 2 primary-school-aged children living in very deep poverty would have needed an additional £13,500</p>

<u>Socio-economic disadvantage</u>	Does the proposal have any positive, negative or neutral impacts	Provide detail of the impact	What evidence has been used to support this view?
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- access to a range of employability training</li> <li>- opportunities to engage in a wide range of cultural and heritage activities</li> <li>- opportunities to socialise with no added costs to worry about</li> <li>- access to materials and activities in Welsh and English</li> </ul> <p>The range of activities currently on offer will be further enhanced as a result of the introduction of new projects over the next 3 years and these will offer opportunities for volunteering as well as work placements for individuals who wish to improve their CVs and prospects of getting employment.</p> <p>The Library Strategy highlights the intention to continue to work with a wider range of partners including Jobcentre Plus, employment and training providers to further expand the lifelong learning offer and 'in work' support. This will have a positive benefit to people on low income allowing them to engage in</p>	<p>a year to reach the poverty threshold – up from £8,000 in 1994–97, a two-thirds increase – and families in deep poverty faced a shortfall of £10,900.</p> <p>NOMIS Jan - Dec 2024: 19,600 people in RCT have no qualifications which makes it difficult for them to improve their prospects for increasing their income.</p> <p>The number of people with RQF1 equivalent (GCSE) qualifications is 80.3% in RCT, slightly lower than the Wales average of 87.8. As the level of qualification increases the gap between RCT and Wales average widens with those at RQF4 (HNC, CertHE, Level4 NVQ etc) at 35.9% for RCT and 44% for Wales.</p> <p>The World Literacy Foundation indicated in its</p>

<u>Socio-economic disadvantage</u>	Does the proposal have any positive, negative or neutral impacts	Provide detail of the impact	What evidence has been used to support this view?
		<p>opportunities to improve their prospects for promotion and/or increased hours so that they can better their income potential.</p> <p>Sign-posting/referrals to other sources of financial support are also made at libraries which can result in customers having a welfare check through Citizen's Advice or other appropriate organisations to ensure they are claiming everything they are eligible for.</p> <p><b>PENSIONERS</b></p> <p>Pensioners are another group that can be affected by low income poverty. Older people are well-served with activities at their local libraries and many establish their own groups (such as knitting and craft groups, history groups, charitable groups etc) that provide extensive opportunities for socialising as well as learning/developing new skills and interests. Access to free rooms</p>	<p>report on 'The impact of illiteracy and the importance of early intervention' that illiteracy cost the UK economy £80 billion in 2018 due 'to costs associated with welfare, unemployment, and social programmes, as well as reduced government tax revenue and productivity.'</p> <p>The National Literacy Trust states 1 in 8 adults in Wales (12% or c.216,000 people) lack basic literacy skills - the exact rate for RCT is unknown but due to the level of deprivation it is possible that there is a higher percentage of adults in RCT who lack basic literacy skills than for Wales as a whole.</p> <p>Research in 2025 by the National Literacy trust found: Just 1 in 3 (32.7%) children and young people aged 8 to</p>

<u>Socio-economic disadvantage</u>	Does the proposal have any positive, negative or neutral impacts	Provide detail of the impact	What evidence has been used to support this view?
		<p>provided by the Library Service is vital for these to continue and thrive.</p> <p>Pensioners often highlight through Customer Satisfaction Surveys and also through informal feedback how vital free access to books is for their well-being. Investment in books and materials will continue and the service's partnership with other libraries across Wales will ensure access to the widest possible catalogue of hard copy books while investment in digital materials will enhance the offer for those who prefer to download from home.</p> <p>Access to information and advice on a range of grants and benefits can be facilitated at libraries and/or through signposting to organisations who have offices elsewhere.</p> <p>STUDENTS</p>	<p>18 said that they enjoy reading in their spare time. This is the lowest level since they first asked the question in 2005.</p> <p>Only 1 in 4 (26.6%) children and young people aged 8 to 18 said that they enjoy writing in their free time, the lowest level since 2010.</p> <p>2 in 3 (66.5%) young people aged 13 to 18 indicated in 2025 that they used generative AI. The most popular uses of AI among young people were to ask questions (61.2%), for help with homework (60.9%) and for entertainment (52.8%)</p> <p>Nicola Heath: 'Public Libraries are not just about books. At their heart they are about social equity.' (2021) This article indicates that librarians are a:</p>

<u>Socio-economic disadvantage</u>	Does the proposal have any positive, negative or neutral impacts	Provide detail of the impact	What evidence has been used to support this view?
		<p>Libraries reduce the pressure on student incomes by providing access to a wide range of materials that supports their studies without the need for them to buy these materials. RCT Library Service is part of the All Wales Library Procurement partnership which enables materials in all formats to be purchased at more reasonable costs, and also the Books4u service which allows staff to procure books from across the country including from academic institutions to meet any requests from customers.</p> <p>Staff are also able to sign-post students and researchers to the free online academic journals, and a host of online materials to support their studies whatever their subject of interest.</p> <p>The service has also retained quiet study areas for students and researchers in the 3 main libraries - Aberdare, Treorchy and Llys Cadwyn. There are specific collections for students and</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-sanctuary for isolated parents</li> <li>- space for the homeless</li> <li>- space for people who live in over-crowded homes to have peace to work</li> <li>- a place of safety for some at moments of crisis.</li> </ul> <p>In RCT libraries were used as places where donations could be made after Storm Dennis, were Community Resilience Hubs during Covid, a repository for food parcels to meet emergency needs. They support the carbon neutral agenda by dispensing recycling bags for individuals and businesses, take in returns of musical instruments when borrowers cannot return them directly to the Music Service and so on.</p> <p>The WG Child Poverty Strategy for Wakes 2024 (an update to the previous strategy of 2015) has the</p>

<u>Socio-economic disadvantage</u>	Does the proposal have any positive, negative or neutral impacts	Provide detail of the impact	What evidence has been used to support this view?
		<p>researchers interested in the history and heritage of RCT available in the Local Studies sections and access to 30,000+ images on the Photographic Archive which is accessible online.</p> <p>Access to this resource benefits students and researchers who are residents of RCT as well as those who live further afield enabling access to collections 24/7 without the cost of travel to a specific venue.</p> <p>CHILDREN AND PEOPLE WITH LOW LITERACY</p> <p>Research on the 'Effects of the home learning environment and preschool centre experience upon literacy and numeracy in early primary school' highlighted 7 indicators which have a proven link to child cognitive development. Second on the list is: going to the library.</p> <p>Investment in making the Children's areas in libraries attractive and a fun learning zone will be of particular benefit for children who come from</p>	<p>purpose to look to, and plan for, the long term and to set the objectives for contributing towards the eradication of child poverty and the eradication of the worst effects of being in poverty in Wales for the next decade or more. This looks beyond standard income measures and seeks to ensure that regardless of a child or young person's financial circumstances they have the same opportunities, they can access the same services and they have the same access to their rights as their peers.</p> <p>One4all Services in RCT are merged with the library service and both services can signpost customers to relevant sources of financial support and advice.</p>

<b><u>Socio-economic disadvantage</u></b>	<b>Does the proposal have any positive, negative or neutral impacts</b>	<b>Provide detail of the impact</b>	<b>What evidence has been used to support this view?</b>
		<p>low income families who would be unable to afford to buy books or participate in activities that required payment.</p> <p>Older people with low literacy or who lack qualifications are more likely to be unemployed, or to find other work if they become unemployed. They are also more likely to be in low paid employment with fewer prospects of moving out of poverty.</p> <p>The Library Strategy aims to provide more access to basic skills provision through working with partners so that people who wish to improve their literacy can do so in their community library. The service will also continue to purchase Easy Read Adult books to support the delivery of these courses and help learners to increase their confidence.</p> <p>Progression onto other courses will also be available at libraries once</p>	

<u>Socio-economic disadvantage</u>	Does the proposal have any positive, negative or neutral impacts	Provide detail of the impact	What evidence has been used to support this view?
		learners' literacy improves if they wish to progress with their studies.	
<p><b>Low and / or No Wealth</b>  <i>(enough money to meet basic living costs and pay bills but have no savings to deal with any unexpected spends and no provisions for the future)</i></p>	Positive	The impact of the Library Strategy on people with low or no wealth is similar to the impact on people in low income poverty as library services are available and free for all at each of its branches and also online and designed to meet the needs of customers that are often complex.	As above
<p><b><u>Material Deprivation</u></b>  <i>(unable to access basic goods and services i.e. financial products like life insurance, repair/replace broken electrical goods, warm home, hobbies etc.)</i></p>	Positive	<p>Libraries have a positive effect on individuals and their families who experience material deprivation in the same way as they have a positive effect on people who have no/low wealth or who live in poverty.</p> <p>They provide access to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- free books and materials in hard copy and online, and in different formats to meet any additional needs</li> <li>- access to advice, information and guidance on a range of issues including health, employment, learning</li> </ul>	<p>WPLS Annual Return and WG WPLS Assessment 2024/25</p> <p>The Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation (WIMD) 2025 is the official measure of relative deprivation for small areas in Wales. It identifies areas with the highest concentrations of several different types of deprivation. WIMD ranks all small areas from 1 (most deprived) to 1,917 (least deprived). It is an accredited official statistic produced by</p>

<u>Socio-economic disadvantage</u>	Does the proposal have any positive, negative or neutral impacts	Provide detail of the impact	What evidence has been used to support this view?
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- free access to the internet</li> <li>- @homelibraryservices for those who cannot attend their local library</li> <li>- a wide range of cultural, reading and arts activities free of charge</li> <li>- good quality facilities in which to socialise with others and reduce the potential of social isolation and loneliness</li> <li>- access to a wide range of courses and online resources to improve their wellbeing, skills and increase their employability</li> <li>- access to community groups</li> <li>- access to Children's activities and materials if they have families</li> </ul> <p>For people in material deprivation, there is the added benefit of being able to spend as much time as they wish in a well-heated space where there is no requirement to engage in any activities, to buy anything or to leave after a limited amount of time - Libraries have always functioned as,</p>	<p>statisticians at the Welsh Government.</p> <p>WIMD is used by Welsh Government and other government bodies, local government and Public Service Boards, academics and students, as well as the third sector and private sector. The purpose of the index is to provide evidence about the most deprived areas of Wales to inform a variety of decisions and research, including funding or targeting of programmes and services for local areas.</p> <p>Being deprived does not just mean being poor, it can also mean having fewer resources and opportunities than we might expect in our society, for example in terms of health, education or access to services.</p>

<b><u>Socio-economic disadvantage</u></b>	<b>Does the proposal have any positive, negative or neutral impacts</b>	<b>Provide detail of the impact</b>	<b>What evidence has been used to support this view?</b>
		<p>and continue to function as warm spaces</p> <p>Libraries in RCT are often frequented by people who are homeless or who have substance abuse issues for this very reason.</p>	

<b><u>Socio-economic disadvantage</u></b>	<b>Does the proposal have any positive, negative or neutral impacts</b>	<b>Provide detail of the impact</b>	<b>What evidence has been used to support this view?</b>
<p><b><u>Area Deprivation</u></b>  <i>(where you live (rural areas), where you work (accessibility of public transport))</i></p>	<p>Positive</p>	<p>The Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation (WIMD) highlights 8 categories that are assessed when considering levels of deprivation. The Library 2026/30 will contribute to improving the following:</p> <p>Employment – by working with partners to facilitate delivery of employment programmes at library branches residents will be able to access the employability programmes and have an increased chance of improving their employment prospects whether that is in respect of gaining employment, increasing employment and/or getting more sustainable work. This benefits not only individuals but also local businesses who can access people with the skills they need to maintain/expand their businesses.</p> <p>Health – providing access to the Reading Well and Book Prescription Schemes as well as providing facilities for a range of health organisations and social prescribers to use library facilities for delivery, will</p>	<p>WIMD</p> <p>For 2025, 27 of the top 10% most deprived LSOAs in Wales are in RCT.</p> <p>NOMIS - the most recent data indicates that (Sept 2025)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 46,000 people in RCT are economically inactive (19% of the population).</li> <li>- 4,310 individuals are claiming out-of-work benefits</li> </ul> <p>- the gross weekly pay for males who work full-time is below the Welsh average</p> <p>WPLS Return and WG WPLS Assessment 2025</p>

		<p>enhance access to these services and more people will benefit from them.</p> <p>Income – improving skills and knowledge, supporting the development of literacy and reading skills will enhance people's lives and also have a positive impact on their prospects as well as those of any children they might have.</p> <p>Education – providing access to a range of education courses and taster sessions at local libraries offers opportunities for children, young people and adults who cannot/will not engage in learning in more formal settings to engage in learning in the less formal environment of a library. RCT libraries facilitate engagement with young people excluded from school and those who cannot attend for other reasons with face-to-face tuition being offered at libraries by tutors. A wide range of activities is offered to engage with children and young people in attractive surroundings and it is the intention to invest further in activities such as coding clubs that will support children and young people to develop their skills.</p>	
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		<p>Housing – library staff signpost customers to sources of housing support and library venues include information on a whole range of housing-related matters.</p> <p>Community safety - 100% of customers regard libraries as safe spaces. In some areas PCSOs hold their surgeries in libraries as they are easily accessed by residents. Advice and information sessions are organised on a range of issues related to community safety.</p> <p>Access to services – Due to their location at the heart of communities across the county libraries are used a a very wide range of public sector, third sector and voluntary sector partners for delivery of their services. Everything from recycling bags to litter picking equipment, musical instrument loans can be facilitated at local libraries.</p>	
<p><b>Socio-economic background</b> <i>(social class i.e. parents education, employment and income)</i></p>	<p>Positive</p>	<p>Under the Equality Act 2010, the Council has a legal duty to eliminate unlawful discrimination and to have due regard to the desirability of reducing socio-economic inequalities. The services offered by libraries and the vision outlined in the Strategy will</p>	<p>The Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation (WIMD).</p> <p>Well- Being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.</p>

		<p>provide people will opportunities to improve their socio-economic situation.</p> <p>Libraries will level the field for people ensuring that those from socio-economic backgrounds that are less fortunate than others can access resources and services that would otherwise be unattainable. The following objectives included in the strategy will have a positive effect:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Improved and up-to-date digital and computer equipment available at all libraries will ensure that people who have no access to digital devices at home have free access to state-of-the-art technology</li> <li>- More access to a wider range of electronic resources will ensure that people are not excluded from resources that others can benefit from</li> <li>- More digital programmes and activities for children and young people in RCT libraries that are free for all will ensure children from more deprived backgrounds have the same opportunities as those from wealthier homes to have experiences that enhance their well-being and expand their horizons</li> </ul>	<p>Equality Act 2010.</p> <p>RCTCBC Corporate Plan 2024 - 2030.</p> <p>Seventh Quality Framework: Public Libraries Supporting Sustainable and Connected Libraries</p>
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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- continued investment in book stock for Children and Schools will enhance educational attainment</li> <li>- More access to learning opportunities for all ages will ensure that people can improve their skills and increase their knowledge and employability thereby providing more opportunities to improve their circumstances</li> <li>- Greater access to information, including information and signposting for unpaid carers, and advice services within libraries will ensure people have the information they need to make decisions</li> <li>- Increased access to free cultural activities will support people's personal development and improve their wellbeing</li> <li>- investment in training to ensure library staff are well qualified and skilled will provide people with a high quality and reliable service.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Socio-economic disadvantage</b>  <i>(What cumulative impact will the proposal have on people or groups because of their protected characteristic(s) or</i></p>	Positive	Under the Equality Act 2010, the Council has a legal duty to eliminate unlawful discrimination and to have due regard to the desirability of reducing socio-economic inequalities.	<p>Welsh Public Library's 13 core entitlements.</p> <p>RCT library service meets all 13 core entitlements. These alongside the Quality</p>

<p><i>vulnerability or because they are already disadvantaged)</i></p>		<p>This proposal will have a positive impact on all residents affected by socio-economic disadvantage.</p> <p>As a non-judgemental and welcoming space that is free at the point of access, the Library Service is a service for all. The Strategy indicates the direction of travel over the next 5 years and outlines how the service will be adapting and enhancing provision to meet the needs of residents.</p> <p>Through offering access to more services through ever-widening partnerships and programmes the service will ensure that people who are socially and economically vulnerable will not be excluded by lack of access to advances in technology or lack of access to learning, information and knowledge, thereby providing a platform on which they can improve their situation.</p> <p>By offering the range of services outlined in the strategy, public libraries both create opportunities and make opportunity more equal, hence they are well positioned to tackle disadvantage.</p>	<p>Indicators contribute to each of the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act Wellbeing goals.</p> <p>WG Seventh Quality Framework: Public Libraries Supporting Sustainable and Connected Communities indicate how libraries contribute to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- the development of a skilled and well educated workforce</li> <li>- social and economic resilience by encouraging and promoting individual personal development, enabling society to adapt to changing circumstances</li> <li>-physical and mental well-being by providing information on which people can base informed choices for the benefit of their health</li> <li>- inclusivity by offering public engagement activities in socially excluded communities and supporting government initiatives such as Jobmatch, digital skills programmes etc</li> </ul>
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			<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- cohesive communities by offering safe and neutral places for people to meet and connect with each other</li><li>- development of vibrant culture and Welsh language, encouraging participation in the arts and recreation through good book stock in English and Welsh as well as cultural activities and events</li><li>- reduction of pressure on the environment through recycling books and materials and working in partnership to procure stock.</li></ul>
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## SECTION 4 – FULL EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

You should use the information gathered at the screening stage to assist you in identifying possible negative/adverse impacts and clearly identify which groups are affected.

- 4.a) In terms of disproportionate/negative/adverse impacts that the proposal may have on a protected group, outline the steps that will be taken to reduce or mitigate the impact for each group identified. **Attach a separate action plan where impacts are substantial.**
- 4.b) If ways of reducing the impact have been identified but are not possible, please explain why they are not possible.
- 4.c) Give sufficient detail of data or research that has led to your reasoning, in particular, the sources used for establishing the demographics of service users/staff.
- 4.d) Give details of how you engaged with service users/staff on the proposals and the steps taken to avoid any disproportionate impact on a protected group. Explain how you have used feedback to influence your decision.
- 4.e) Are you satisfied that the engagement process complies with the requirements of the Statutory Equality and Socio-economic Duties?
- Yes                       No

## SECTION 5 – MONITORING AND REVIEW

5a) Please outline below how the implementation of the proposal will be monitored:

The performance of the Library Service against this Strategy will be monitored in several ways:

- the Library Service is required to provide an annual return to Welsh Government so that its performance can be assessed against the Welsh Public Library Standards
- the Welsh Government's Assessment of the Library Service's Performance against the Welsh Public Library Standards is scrutinised annually by the Council's Public Service Delivery, Community and Prosperity Scrutiny Committee
- key actions identified in the Action Plan are also incorporated in the Community Services' Delivery Plan which is monitored on a quarterly basis by the Council's Performance Management Team
- the Library Service Management Team meets monthly to review performance of the service

5b) When is the evaluation of the proposal due to be reviewed?

March 2027 and then annually

5c) Who is responsible for the monitoring and review of the proposal?

The Library Service Management team will monitor the plan and reports will be provided to the Public Service Delivery, Community and Prosperity Scrutiny Committee as and when required.

5d) How will the results of the monitoring be used to develop future proposals?

The results of the monitoring will inform annual service delivery plans and an evaluation of the achievement against the Action Plan will be undertaken towards the end of the 3 Year period which will inform any future strategy and action plan.

## SECTION 6 – REVIEW

As part of the Impact Assessment process all proposals that fall within the definition of ‘Key Decisions’ must be submitted to the Review Panel. This panel is made up of officers from across Council Services and acts as a critical friend before your proposal is finalised and published for SLT/Cabinet approval.

If this proposal is a Key Decision please forward your impact assessment to [Councilbusiness@rctcbc.gov.uk](mailto:Councilbusiness@rctcbc.gov.uk) for a Review Panel to be organised to discuss your proposal. The EqlA guidance document provides more information on what a Key Decision is.

It is important to keep a record of this process so that you can demonstrate how you have considered equality and socio-economic outcomes. Please ensure you update the relevant sections below

<b>Officer Review Panel Comments</b>	<b>Date Considered</b>	<b>Brief description of any amendments made following Officer Review Panel considerations</b>
<b>Consultation Comments</b>	<b>Date Considered</b>	<b>Brief description of any amendments made following consultation</b>

## **SECTION 6 – SUMMARY OF IMPACTS FOR THE PROPOSAL**

Provide below a summary of the impact assessment. This summary should be included in the equality and socio-economic impact section of the Cabinet report template. The impact assessment should be published alongside the report.

## **SECTION 7 – AUTHORISATIONS**

Lead Officer:

Name:

Position:

Date:

I recommend that the proposal:

- Is implemented with no amendments
- Is implemented taking into account the mitigating actions outlined
- Is rejected due to disproportionate negative impacts on protected groups or socio-economic disadvantage

Head of Service/Director Approval:

Name:

Position:

Date:

Please submit this impact assessment with any SLT/Cabinet Reports.