

## **Communities Committee budget proposals**

# **Equality Assessment for proposal to introduce self-service technology in libraries – review and update**

**January 2017**

**Lead officer – Sarah Rhoden, in consultation with the relevant senior managers (Steve Miller and Jan Holden) and Jo Richardson, Corporate Planning & Partnerships Manager**

**This revised assessment helps you to re-consider the impact of agree service changes on people with protected characteristics. The assessment can be updated at any time to inform service planning and commissioning.**

**For help or more information please contact Corporate Planning & Partnerships team, email: [cpp@norfolk.gov.uk](mailto:cpp@norfolk.gov.uk) or tel: 01603 222611.**

## Background

1. As part of the budget setting process, Members have previously agreed the following saving:-  
  
CMM022      Libraries self-service - introduce self-service technology to enable libraries to open with self-service machines - £0.622m saving in 2018/19
2. In practice, this means putting technology in place that enables customers to access the library without the need for staff to open the building. Self-service kiosks where customers can check books etc. in and out are already in place. The saving amount would be made through reductions in staffing levels.

The above did not relate to the Millennium Library where a separate proposal to implement self-service technology was agreed, and has been implemented.

The investment needed to fund self-service technology has been included on the corporate capital programme on an invest to save basis.

During 2016/17, Norfolk Library and Information Service invested in the roll out of Open Library technology and a further 18 sites will be open for longer hours by the Autumn of 2017. Open Libraries involves installing more self-service technology which allows Libraries to control and monitor: building access; self-service kiosks; public access computers; lighting, alarms; public announcements; and customer safety. As a result libraries will be able to increase their opening hours, without increasing staff costs, and will help to make accessing libraries more convenient for customers.

During 2016, the Communities Committee raised some concern about this budget proposal. At the November meeting, the Committee received a report about the role of library staff and the qualitative impact they have on communities. The Committee requested that the Equality Impact Assessment for proposal CMM022 be reviewed and updated to reflect the information they received in their report.

## Original assessment

The original assessment, January 2016, is included at Appendix A.

As reported to Committee in January 2016, the conclusion from this assessment was that the proposal **may have some lesser adverse or disproportionate impacts** on people with protected characteristics and/or rural communities.

The assessment carried out originally focussed on the increased accessibility of libraries made possible by the introduction of Open Library technology, and potential impact on library users in terms of access in the context of this technology and reducing staff numbers. The recent discussions at Committee have identified that Members would wish to see greater consideration of the impact on library users in terms of the quality of face-to-face interactions with staff, particularly in the context of a reduction of staff numbers.

## Review of assessment

A review of the original assessment has been carried out, in the context of the information provided to Committee in November in the report titled “Norfolk Library and Information Service: estimating the value of libraries”. In particular, the report highlighted that there was not specific evidence on the social return on investment of libraries, but provided information on the type of work carried out and the qualitative impact of that work on customers. This included the following information:-

- Welcoming 3,736,795 visitors annually, across 79,256 hours of opening
- Majority of borrowing transactions have been carried out through self-service kiosks, which has already enabled some staff reductions, with remaining staff being able to concentrate their efforts on activities to support customers who need most assistance
- Libraries provide face to face and assisted digital council information and signposting, and have done so since the closure of the Council Information Centres in 2011/12
- Digitally excluded groups in Norfolk make up between 15 and 25% of the population, and these tend to be mainly older people and people on low incomes
- There is evidence that library use is linked to increased reading levels among children and young people and that library use is an important factor in educational attainment and positive social economic outcomes

A review of the original assessment, has confirmed the outcome original assessment - that this proposal **may have some lesser adverse or disproportionate impacts** on people with protected characteristics and/or rural communities - continues to be appropriate. This is because:-

- There have been no significant changes in the evidence considered as part of the assessment e.g. the make-up of people using the library remains about the same
- Although, if implemented, the proposal would reduce staff levels in libraries, there would continue to be some staff resource, but the impact stories collected by library staff over the past 12 months, since the original risk assessment was written, demonstrate that libraries are much more than a collection of books and computers in a room and the needs of individuals in the communities served by Norfolk's libraries are more complex
- Open Library technology satisfies the needs of confident library customers, the people with protected characteristics are less well served by its introduction
- Mobile libraries provide an alternative way for individuals to access a number of library services

Much of the evidence relating to the quality and importance of face-to-face interactions with library users and staff is anecdotal in nature. Whilst the points above remain factual, there are some new pieces of information, not evident at the time of the original assessment, that can now be taken into account. These are:-

- As set out in the report in November, Officers are becoming increasingly aware of the complexity of need presented by library customers to library staff. We have impact stories that show library staff have made a significant contribution to the

mental well-being of Norfolk residents, supported customers in successfully finding employment, making a significant contribution to the reduction of social isolation, a significant contribution to the literacy of children

- Anecdotal evidence is that those people with more complex needs and requiring staff support are typically individuals in the 60+ age group and individuals with disabilities, including those with mental and wellbeing issues. However, detailed records of customer interactions are not maintained and therefore it is difficult to say with any certainty what type of customers are accessing support from staff
- There is evidence that the complexity of library customer needs is increasing. Norfolk has a higher than average number of disabled and older residents compared to other areas of the UK, and this is predicted to increase significantly over the next 20 years. It also has a growing number of disabled young people. These issues may be compounded as changes are being made to reduce and stop other County Council and public services.
- The number of safeguarding referrals by library staff is increasing; around 20 referrals in the last three months, compared to four referrals for the same period in 2015.
- Staffing levels in libraries are based on the size and volume of individual libraries. Libraries in urban areas tend to have higher volumes of use and staff, and libraries in rural areas have lower volumes. Because of this, a reduction in staff across the service could impact more greatly on rural areas, depending on the approach taken.

## Potential impact - conclusions

Taking into account this most recent information, it is considered that this proposal **may have a disproportionate and detrimental impact on people with protected characteristics**, and may have a lesser adverse or disproportionate impact on rural communities.

Additional actions to mitigate this could include:-

	Action/s	Lead	Date
1.	A behaviour change programme for staff, to ensure that those library customers who are able to self-service, do so, ensuring that any staff resource can be available for those who most need it		
2.	Continuing to monitor customer volumes and need		



## 2016/17 Budget proposal Equality impact assessment form

<b>Title of proposal:</b>	Open+
<b>Aims of proposal:</b>	Project to introduce self-service technology to enable libraries to open when staff are not present
<b>Directorate:</b>	Communities and Environmental Services
<b>Lead Officer:</b>	Jan Holden
<b>Names of other officers/partners involved:</b>	Neil Howard

### Analysis of proposal & potential impact

The Government grants that make up most of Norfolk County Council's income have been reducing steadily since 2011 and will continue to do so. In addition, demand for services, particularly from vulnerable residents, continues to grow, and like everyone else, we face year on year rises in some unavoidable costs. Taking these into account, we have a further £111m savings to find in order to balance our budget for the next three years. This is on top of the £245m of savings we have already budgeted (of which £145m are to be achieved through improving efficiency).

This impact assessment looks in more detail at the proposal to install self-service technology to enable people to use libraries at certain times without staff being present in up to 39 of the 47 libraries in Norfolk

The proposal is to install a solution that works with existing library infrastructure, providing the ability to automatically maintain and control self-service kiosks, public access computers, lighting, and security. It will provide the flexibility to open and close the library, without the need for any staff to be on site

The technology will allow savings to be made in staff costs and potentially offers the opportunity to extend opening hours making the library more convenient for library customers

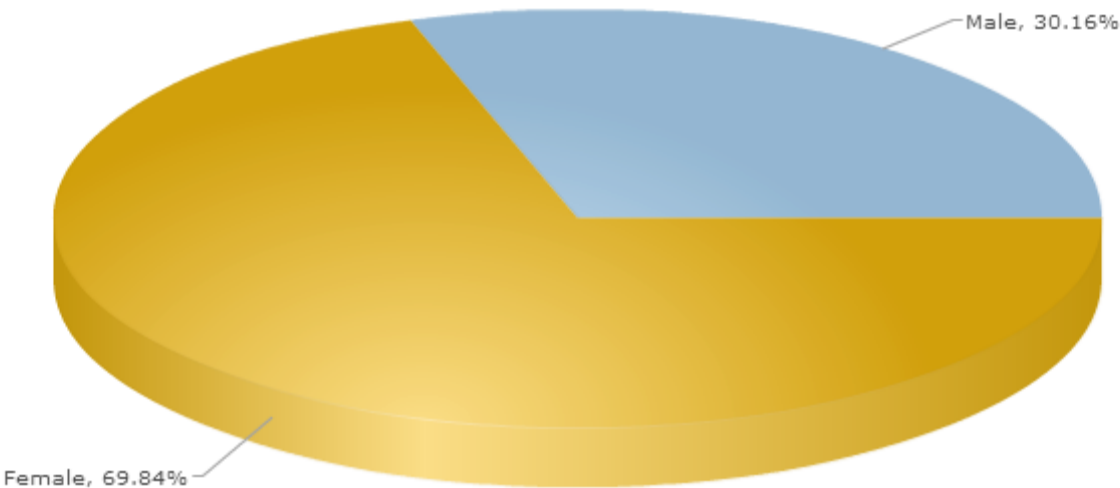
A successful pilot has been carried out at Acle Library

The impact of Open+ has been considered on the following groups

#### Gender

We do not envisage either positive or negative impacts as a result of a person's gender. More information about the gender and age demography of current customers of Norfolk Library and Information service can be found below: This

information has been collated from respondents of a recent survey of library customers where 4,180 customers were surveyed.



**Race**

We do not envisage either positive or negative impact as a result of a person's race or ethnic origin. There could be language difficulties, and consideration will be given to translation user guidance if requested

**Travelling Communities**

We do not envisage either positive or negative impacts as a result of persons living as part of a travelling community

**People with disabilities**

The introduction of unstaffed hours could have a negative impact on some disabled groups who may need assistance with access or use of facilities. Consideration will be given to audible and visual alarms.

A recent survey of customers of Norfolk Library and Information Service asked information about disability. The core staffing hours of the library will be reduced



**Gay, Lesbian and Bisexual**

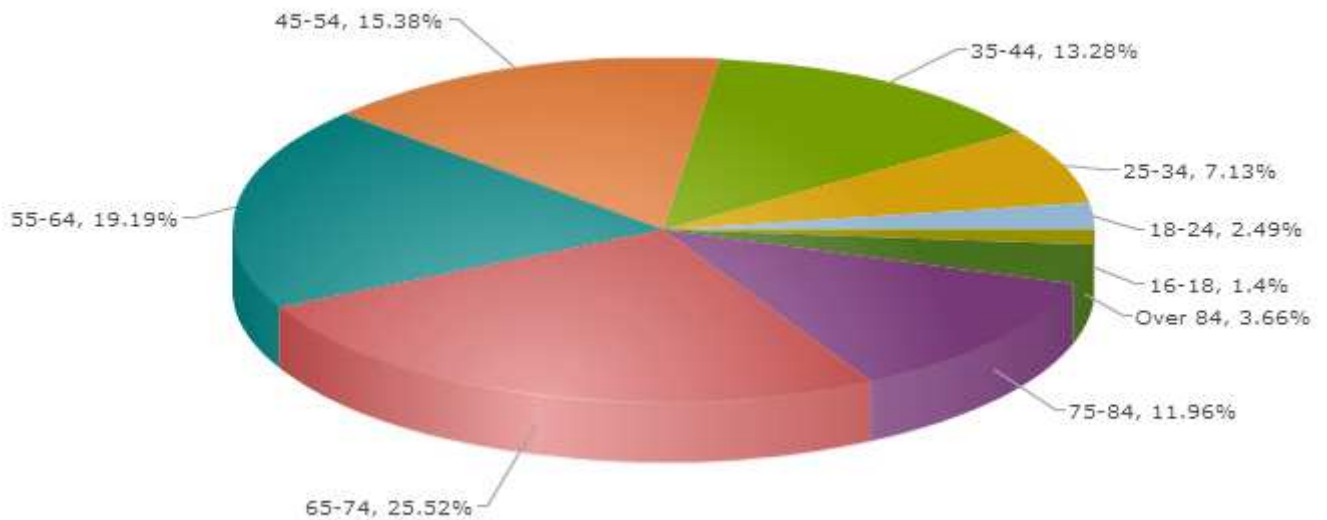
We do not envisage either positive or negative impacts as a result of a person's sexual orientation.

### **Transgender/sexual**

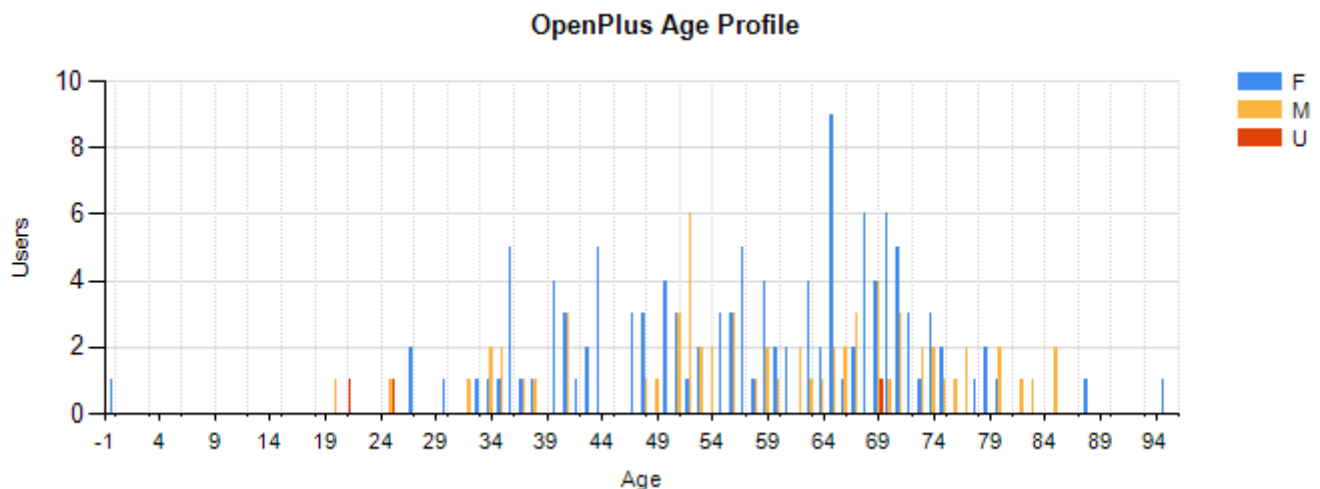
We do not envisage either positive or negative impacts as a result of a person's gender identity

### **Age**

The age profile of current adult customers who completed a recent survey can be found below. We will monitor any changes in the age profile of library customers that occurs as a result of the introduction of this technology.



In addition, here is an example of the age/gender profile of current customers of Acle Library who use the library during unstaffed hours. It shows that the predominant customers are women aged 60+



### **Children and Young People**

During self service hours, libraries will not be accessible for those under 16 years of age who are not accompanied by a parent or guardian. Where facilities are not

staffed access for unaccompanied young persons could pose a safeguarding child protection risk.

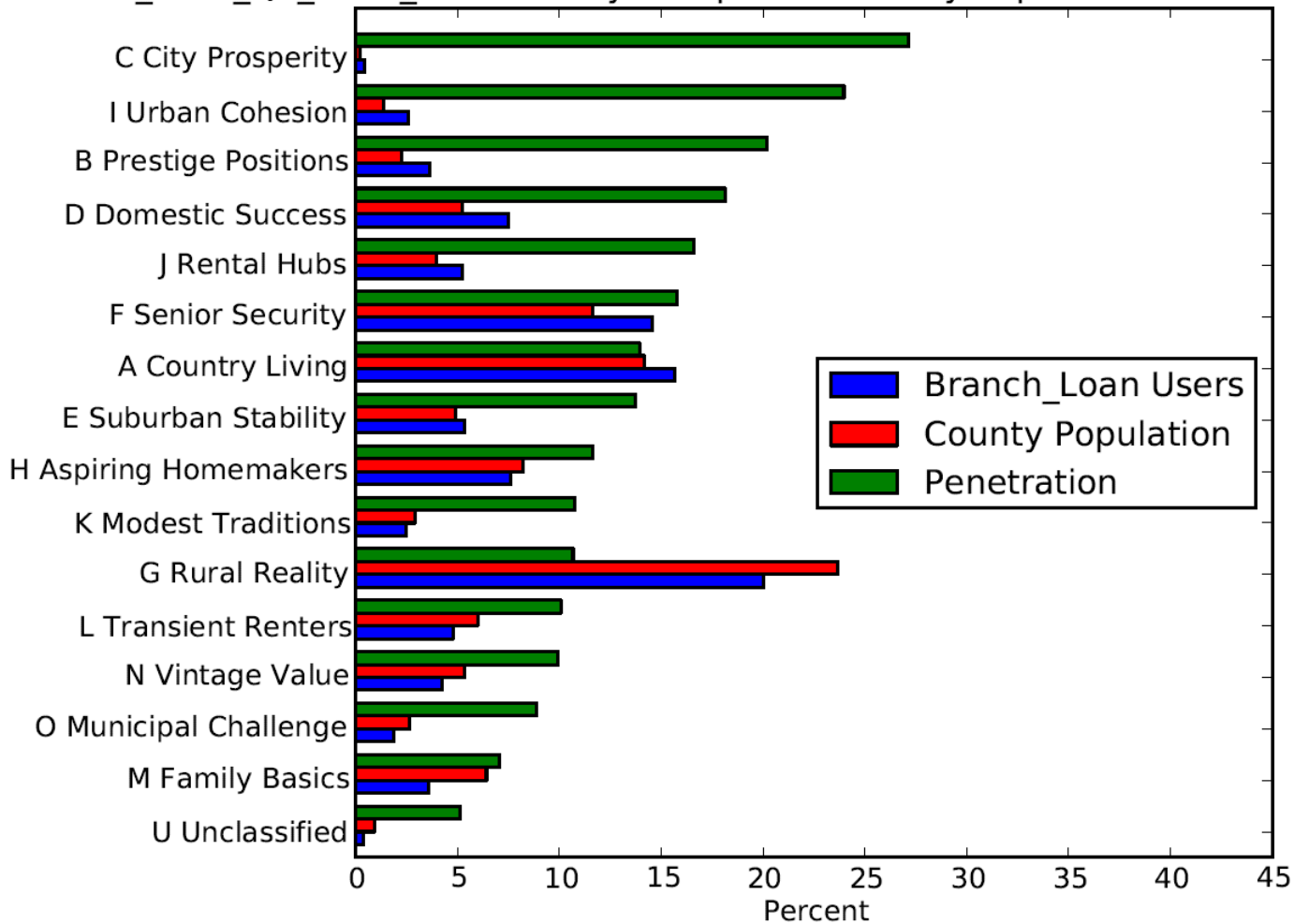
### Religious/Faith groups

We do not envisage either positive or negative impacts as a result of a person's religion or beliefs

### Socio-economic background

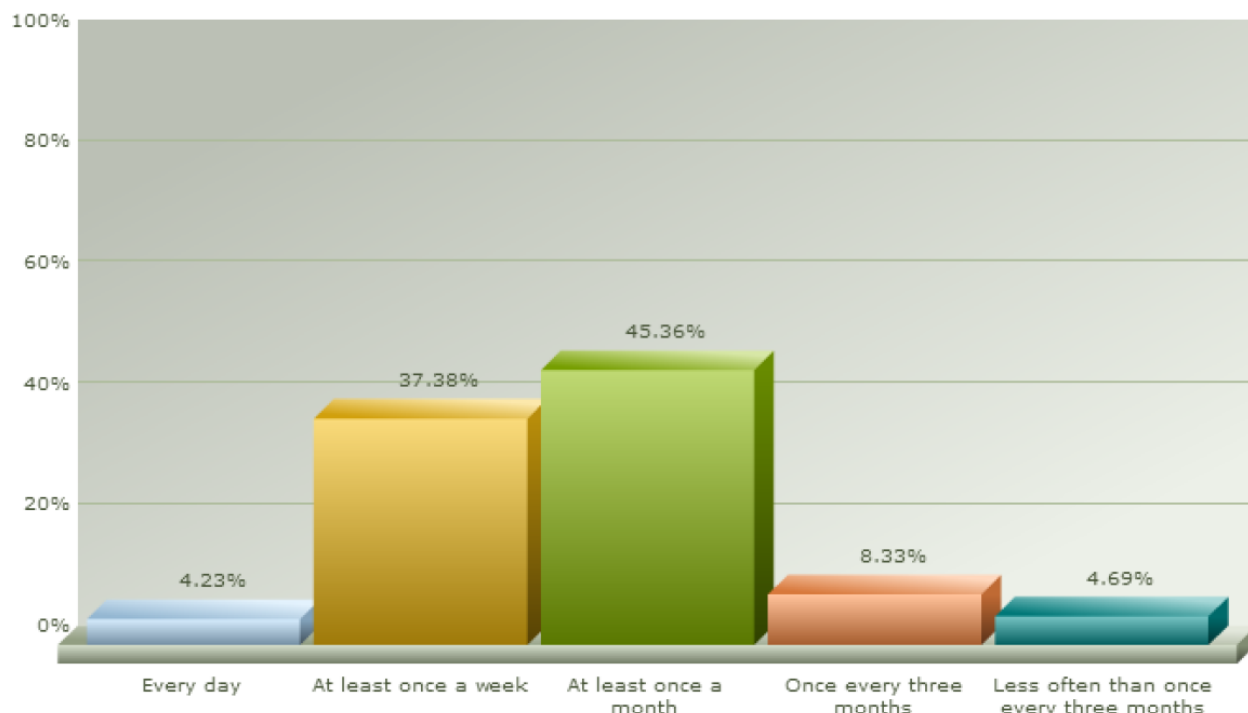
We have used Experian Mosaic to look at the social backgrounds of current customers of Norfolk Library and Information Service – see below

Branch\_Loan\_Q4\_2014\_2015 countywide penetration by Experian Mosaic

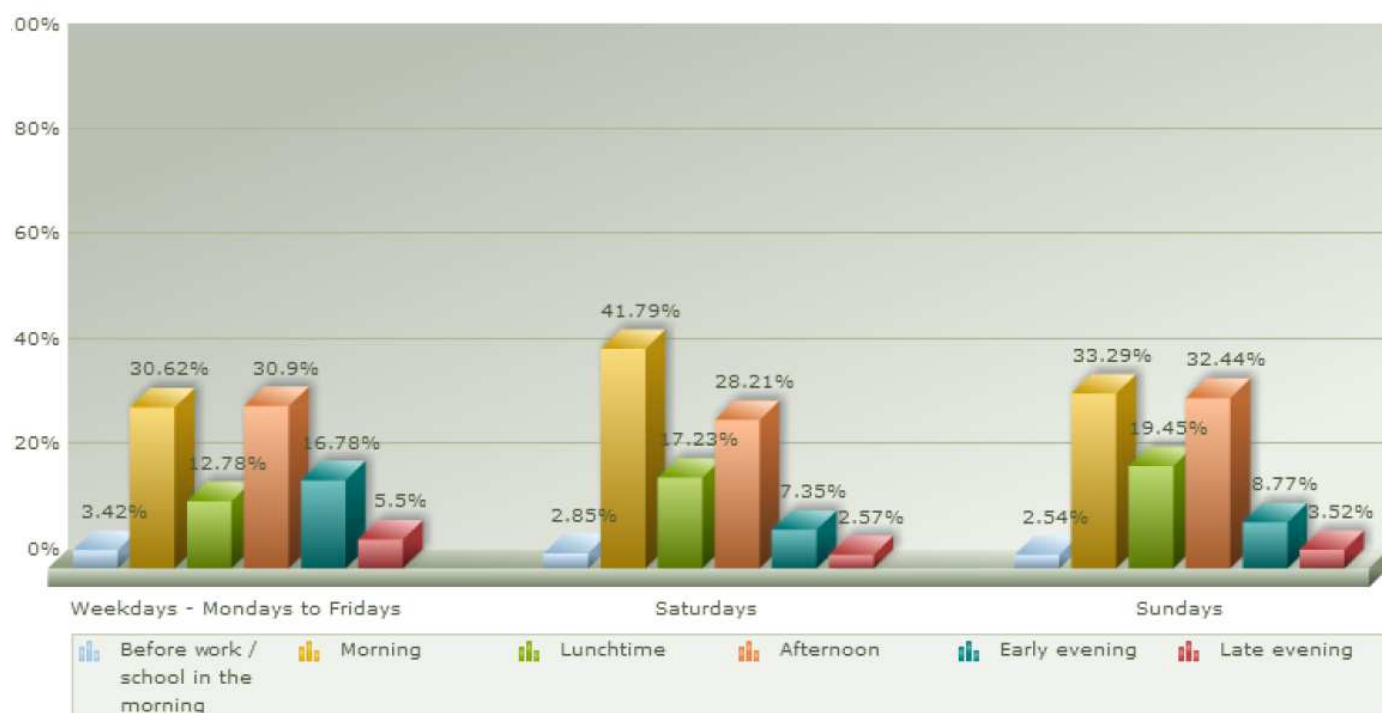


A recent survey of library customers revealed the following frequency of use of library services





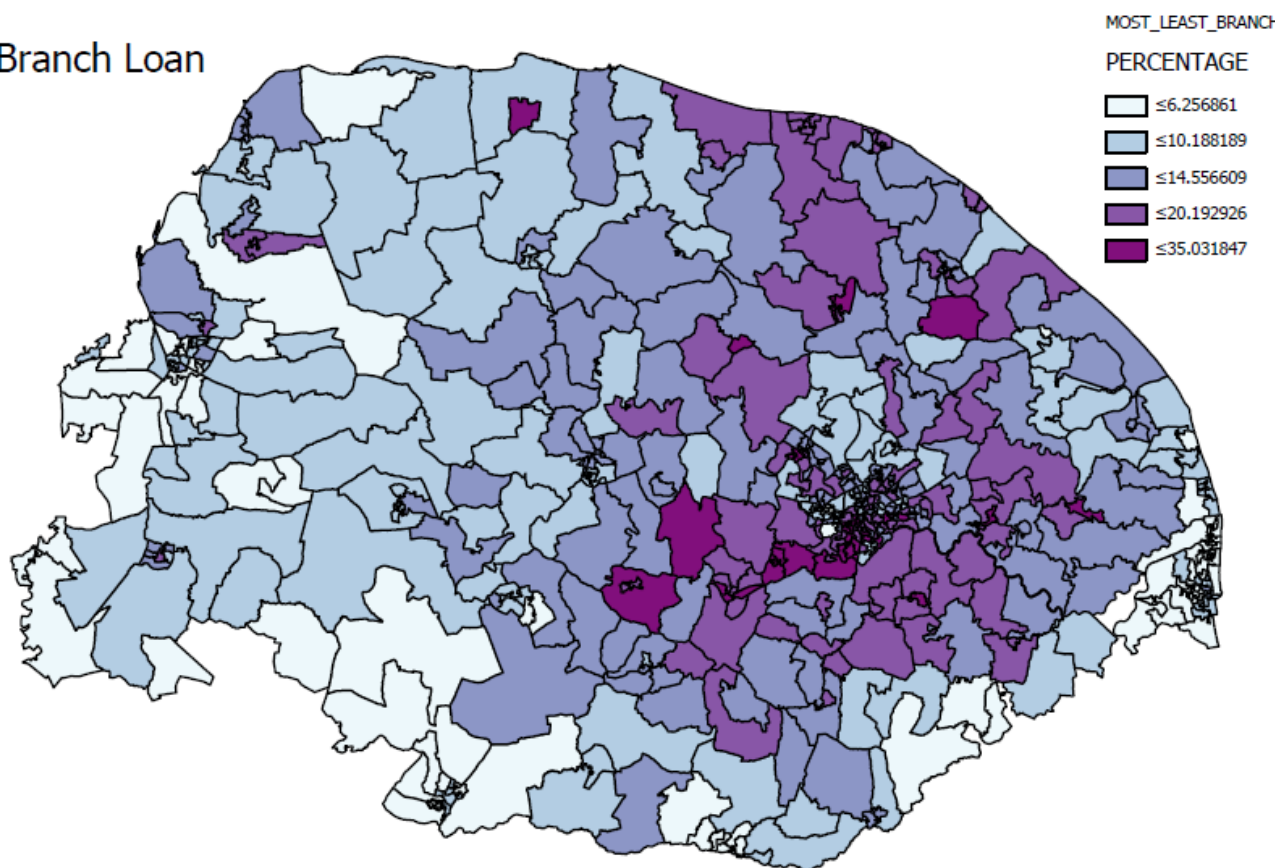
A recent survey of Library customers revealed the following information about preferred service access times



## Rural Impact

Norfolk has 47 libraries situated in larger communities and market towns. The proposal is that 39 out of the 47 libraries will be open using self service technology. This proposal will not disadvantage rural communities. The current use of libraries by Lower Super Output Area can be found below. The darker colours are areas with the most library use.

## Branch Loan



## Action to address any negative impact

If your assessment identified any adverse impact, you must consider measures to avoid or mitigate this before a final decision is taken. This might include taking action to ensure that the needs of a particular protected group are met.

	Action/s	Lead	Date
1.	Consider the need for a visual fire alarm as well as an audible alarm		
2	Following customer recruitment days consideration to be given to the need to provide information to customers in other languages		
3	Continue to monitor the age, gender and demographics of library customers		
4	Information on 'group/organisation' access to be made available		
5	Swipe and password entry points to be provided in an accessible way, both in location and type of equipment used		
6	Where appropriate due to demographics of local communities, consideration to be made for key information to be provided in alternative languages		

## List of evidence used to conduct analysis

List here the evidence you have used to make an informed assessment.

Library membership information

Library survey results

Mosaic information

**An assessment is a live document to help you consider the implications of service changes on service users or employees - particularly potentially vulnerable service users. You can update this assessment at any time so that it informs ongoing service planning and commissioning.**

**For help or more information please contact Corporate Planning & Partnerships team, email: [cpp@norfolk.gov.uk](mailto:cpp@norfolk.gov.uk) or tel: 01603 224196**