



Equality Impact Assessment Proposed closure of Billinge Library

To inform the development of policy
or service decisions

This form is to be used for recording the Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) of Council activities. EIA is particularly important in supporting the Council to make fair decisions. The Public Sector Equality Duty requires the Council to have regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations.

Using this form will help Council officers to carry out EIA in an effective and transparent way and provide decision-makers with full information on the potential impact of their decisions. The purpose is to avoid inadvertent disadvantage or discrimination resulting from decisions.

EIA is not a fixed process – it will vary according to the scale and type of activity. The form and guidance are designed to cover all eventualities. Officers should not be discouraged by the form but should use their discretion in using it flexibly according to the activity they are assessing.

EIA does not happen at a single point in time. It is an ongoing and integral part of the development of the activity or proposal. This EIA template should be kept open and live as a planning document and updated as the activity or proposal progresses.

Section 149 of the Equality Act states:

(1) A public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to:

(a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation, and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;

(b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;

(c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

(2) A person who is not a public authority but who exercises public functions must, in the exercise of those functions, have due regard to the matters mentioned in subsection (1).

(3) Having due regard to the need to advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it involves having due regard, in particular, to the need to:

(a) remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that are connected to that characteristic;

(b) take steps to meet the needs of persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that are different from the needs of persons who do not share it;

(c) encourage persons who share a relevant protected characteristic to participate in public life or in any other activity in which participation by such persons is disproportionately low.

(4) The steps involved in meeting the needs of disabled persons that are different from the needs of persons who are not disabled include, in particular, steps to take account of disabled persons' disabilities.

(5) Having due regard to the need to foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it involves having due regard, in particular, to the need to:

(a) tackle prejudice, and (b) promote understanding.

(6) Compliance with the duties in this section may involve treating some persons more favourably than others; but that is not to be taken as permitting conduct that would otherwise be prohibited by or under this Act.

(7) The relevant protected characteristics are:

age; disability; gender reassignment; marriage and civil partnership; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion or belief; sex; sexual orientation.

(8) A reference to conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act includes a reference to:

(a) a breach of an equality clause or rule; (b) a breach of a non-discrimination rule.

Section 1 – Service Details and Summary of EIA Activity

Title of activity:	Proposed closure of Billinge Library	
Lead Officer:	William Renshaw	
Directorate:	Place Directorate Communities Department	
Service or Team:	Library Service	
Head of Service	David Boocock	
Director:	Tanya Wilcock	
Executive Director:	Lisa Harris	
<p>What stage has the EIA reached? This table provides a ‘cover note’ of progress to be maintained as the EIA is developed over time. Note the stage reached and any consultation or engagement carried out. Simple activities may not need all these stages. Provide details of population/individuals affected in Section 2</p>		
Stage	Date	Summary of position
Stage 1: Initial Officer Assessment. Whole Population likely to be affected identified	March 2023	<p>Billinge Library has been temporarily closed since March 2020.</p> <p>The proposed permanent closure of Billinge Library is likely to have a high impact on all those who used it and have been unable to access any other library facility due to socio-economic/health issues. An assessment of the groups and individuals with protected characteristics who used Billinge Library has been undertaken - for details refer to stage 2 below.</p>
Stage 2: Further Assessment. Target Population likely to be affected identified	March 2023	<p>If Billinge Library closes, this equality impact assessment using library membership and local demographic data, has identified that whilst its closure will impact all local residents and users, out of the 9 protected characteristics, there will be high impact on three protected characteristics: age, disability and sex (women and girls).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Greater numbers of library membership in older people in Billinge Library than the service average (age). •Greater numbers of older people in the Billinge & Seneley Green ward than both Borough and England average (age) •Of the groups that met in Billinge Library, they were predominantly attended by children, older people and women (age; sex). •Greater numbers of female library members than the service average (sex) •Greater numbers of people in the Billinge & Seneley Green ward with day-to-day activities limited than the England average (disability) <p>There will be low impact on the protected characteristics of gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion and belief and sexual orientation.</p> <p>The data used to assess the impact of the closure on the protected characteristics includes library group attendance, library membership data and library performance data as well as census and ONS data. The impact of the library closure on individuals with protected characteristics includes</p>

		<p>difficulty travelling to other libraries, lack of access to books and other resources, lack of access to library digital provision, potential loss of social interaction and the impact on mental health and wellbeing from the loss of a safe, neutral space within the community.</p> <p>The identified mitigations include signposting to alternative library provision both within and outside the borough, providing travel planning information to other libraries (bus routes etc.), promotion of digital services and access to the Home Delivery Library Service where appropriate.</p> <p>Full details outlined in section 3.</p>																																
Stage 3: Further Assessment. Individuals likely to be affected identified	August 2023	<p>The findings of the consultation exercise has provided more evidence of the impact if Billinge Library permanently closes, this equality impact assessment using library membership and local demographic data and now the consultation findings, has identified that whilst its closure will impact all local residents and users, out of the 9 protected characteristics, there will be high impact on four protected characteristics: age, disability, race (ethnic minorities), and sex (women and girls).</p>																																
Stage 4: Analysis of Findings	August 2023	<p>The closure of Billinge Library will have a high impact on four protected characteristics: age, disability, race (ethnic minorities), and sex (women and girls). It may also impact disproportionately members of different ethnic minority communities.</p> <div> <table border="1"> <caption>Likely course of action as a result of proposals</caption> <thead> <tr> <th>Group</th> <th>Stop using St Helens Library Service</th> <th>Visit a library in another borough (for example Knowsley or Wigan)</th> <th>Visit the nearest library as often as I visited my local library</th> <th>Visit the nearest library less frequently as I visited my local library</th> <th>Download books/magazines online</th> <th>Visit St Helens Library at TWOG</th> <th>None of these/don't know</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>All active visitors</td> <td>35%</td> <td>4%</td> <td>19%</td> <td>17%</td> <td>2%</td> <td>23%</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Nearest library closing</td> <td>53%</td> <td>5%</td> <td>9%</td> <td>18%</td> <td>2%</td> <td>14%</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>On street respondents*</td> <td>38%</td> <td>5%</td> <td>12%</td> <td>20%</td> <td>4%</td> <td>13%</td> <td>7%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>*Active & lapsed visitors whose library is proposed to close</p> </div> <p>The Consultation has identified that 53% of those currently using the library will not access another Library if the library nearest to them closes. The consultation identifies that learning disabled people and people with long term health conditions are more likely to stop using the service as a result of the proposed closures. One of the mitigations for people with learning disabilities is the offer of familiarisation visits to other libraries in the Borough to help them feel more safe and comfortable with the idea of visiting another library. One of the mitigations for people with long term health conditions who are unable to physically access a library is the offer of the Home Delivery Library Service.</p>	Group	Stop using St Helens Library Service	Visit a library in another borough (for example Knowsley or Wigan)	Visit the nearest library as often as I visited my local library	Visit the nearest library less frequently as I visited my local library	Download books/magazines online	Visit St Helens Library at TWOG	None of these/don't know	All active visitors	35%	4%	19%	17%	2%	23%		Nearest library closing	53%	5%	9%	18%	2%	14%		On street respondents*	38%	5%	12%	20%	4%	13%	7%
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Stage 5: Reporting and Action Planning	Sept 2023	A detailed action plan has been produced. This has been informed by the Consultation exercise																																
Stage 6: Sign-Off	October 2023	To be completed following all other stages																																

<p>What Council proposal is being assessed? (including the main purpose and aims)</p> <p>St Helens Borough Council's statutory Library Service currently operates 13 libraries, as well as the Archive Service, Home Delivery and Schools Library Services.</p> <p>At present only 11 libraries are accessible by the public as Billinge Library has been closed since 2020 due to the condition of the building and the landlord of Peter Street Library terminated the lease as of 31st March 2023. Library buildings are geographically spread across the borough with opening hours ranging between 8 to 36 hours per week. Performance data demonstrates that there are certain times in the day and certain days of the week when visitor numbers are low. The library buildings themselves range in quality, many fail to meet customer expectations and the standards expected of a modern service.</p> <p>The draft Library Strategy and Delivery Plan outlines how the service is expected to transform over the next five years, with outcomes focussed on increasing access to digital services, expanding outreach activity in partnership and offering the Home Delivery Library Service to children and adults with medical issues preventing them from using a library. The strategy also outlines a reduction in the number of library buildings and changes to library opening hours.</p> <p>Billinge Library is proposed to permanently close and therefore this Equality Impact Assessment considers the impact this closure will have on those with protected characteristics. It will also consider how any identified impacts can be mitigated through the provision of alternative services or by helping those with protected characteristics to engage in alternative library venues.</p>
<p>In relation to the proposal being assessed, please set out the following.</p> <p>1 What must the LA provide under statute?</p> <p>2 Any discretionary element of provision?</p> <p>3. What is currently provided under that discretion?</p> <p>4. What could change as a result of the proposal and how could it change?</p> <p>5. What is being consulted on?</p>
<p>1. What must the LA provide under statute?</p> <p>Local authorities (unitary, county or metropolitan borough councils) have a statutory duty under the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964, 'to provide a comprehensive and efficient library service for all persons' for all those who live, work or study in the area (section 7). In providing this service Local Authorities must, among other things:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• encourage both adults and children to make full use of the library service (section 7(2)(b))• lend books and other printed material free of charge for those who live, work or study in the area (in accordance with section 8(3))
<p>2. Any discretionary element of provision?</p>

The statutory duty referred to above is not prescriptive in how local authorities should provide their library services or when they should be open, although library buildings in St Helens enable adults and children to access books and other resources free of charge. For this reason, the delivery mechanisms and geographical spread of service provision is discretionary in nature.

The St Helens Borough Library service offers a number of discretionary elements of provision outlined at point 3.

3. What is currently provided under that discretion?

The statutory Library Service in St Helens provides discretionary elements of provision these include events and activities such as Read and Rhyme times, and Reading Groups, free access to Wi-Fi and computers, Digital Library Service, Home Delivery and Schools Library Services as well as the Cultural Hubs Arts in Libraries programme. This discretionary provision supports Borough priorities and tackles inequalities, for example developing speech, language and communication skills in young children.

4. What could change as a result of the proposal and how could it change?

The draft Library Strategy and Delivery Plan 2023-2028 sets out proposals to deliver a revised statutory library provision by retaining 7 libraries and closing 6, as well as developing and extending outreach and digital services. The proposed library closures have been chosen to reflect the Council's Locality model adopted in March 2021. Each locality will have statutory library provision focused in the area of greatest need. This need has been assessed and is based on a set of key indicators. If more than one library currently operates in the locality, then the library serving the greatest need will stay open. This will impact Billinge Library as it is in a Locality with three other libraries (Moss Bank, Garswood, Rainford). It has been determined through relevant data that Moss Bank Library serves the greater need.

Need has been determined (see table below) through the assessment of:

- Educational Attainment
- Health Inequalities
- Deprivation
- Community Safety
- Population Demographics (high concentrations of young people or older people)

Ward	Library	Health			Community	Young	Older	Overall
		Education Ranking	Inequalities Ranking	Deprivation Ranking	Safety Ranking	People Ranking	People Ranking	Ranking Total
<i>Parr</i>	Parr Library	17	18	18	18	18	1	90
<i>Peasley Cross & Fingerpost</i>	N/A	17	16	17	15	17	2	84
<i>Bold & Lea Green</i>	Chester Lane Library	16	11	15	15	15	6	78
<i>Thatto Heath</i>	Thatto Heath Library	12	14	14	14	13	8	75
<i>St Helens Town Centre</i>	St Helens & Peter St Libraries	13	17	16	17	7	4	74
<i>Newton-le-Willows West</i>	Newton-le-Willows Library	14	12	12	10	16	3	67
<i>Blackbrook</i>	N/A	15	10	8	9	7	14	63
<i>Sutton South East</i>	N/A	10	15	11	10	5	10	61
<i>Sutton North West</i>	N/A	9	13	10	12	5	11	60
<i>Haydock</i>	Haydock Library	11	7	5	13	10	12	58
<i>Moss Bank</i>	Moss Bank Library	7	8	13	6	11	13	58
<i>West Park</i>	N/A	6	9	9	8	9	7	48
<i>Newton-le-Willows East</i>	N/A	8	6	7	7	13	5	46
<i>Windle</i>	N/A	4	5	6	5	12	9	41
<i>Billinge & Seneley Green</i>	Billinge & Garswood Libraries	2	4	4	3	1	17	31
<i>Rainhill</i>	Rainhill Library	2	3	3	4	2	16	30
<i>Rainford</i>	Rainford Library	5	1	2	1	2	18	29
<i>Eccleston</i>	Eccleston Library	1	2	1	2	4	15	25

Residents will be able to access library provision from any of the 7 remaining statutory libraries across the borough, or any library across the City Region through the Library Light scheme. The purpose of this methodology was to enable the Council to target its resources at those areas with greatest needs.

In addition, the strategy also adopts a desire to empower and enable residents to manage and deliver services in areas where there is capacity and community support to do so. A Community Managed Library model is therefore an option for some residents to consider.

5. What is being consulted on?

The draft Library Strategy which contains a proposal to close 6 libraries and change the opening hours of the libraries it continues to operate, as part of a move to a localities model of delivery.

Details of the activity (including the main purpose and aims)

To adopt the draft Library Strategy and Delivery Plan 2023-2028 that proposes to change the current delivery mechanism and current statutory provision by reducing the number of library buildings from 13 to 7 and developing the outreach and digital offer. In addition, the draft Library Strategy and Delivery Plan 2023-2028 supports the development of a Community Managed Library model to complement the revised statutory provision.

The approach of the draft Library Strategy aligns to the Council's Locality model that aims to establish the right service mix in each locality to suit local needs. A locality approach ensures that services are relevant, addresses local need by targeting resources to where they are needed most and offers the opportunity to collaborate with partners at a local level to explore alternative delivery methods.

Where there is more than one statutory library in a locality the service has analysed socioeconomic data to identify the location in the area of greatest need. The socioeconomic data included the consideration of health inequality, equality, diversity and inclusion. This will impact Billinge Library as it is in a Locality with three other libraries (Moss Bank, Garswood, Rainford). The Library Strategy proposes the closure of Billinge Library as it does not serve the greatest need as indicated by the socioeconomic data, demonstrated in section 4 above.

At present, operating hours in some libraries are limited therefore in addition to the location choice, the opening times have also been reviewed using library performance data, to ensure the proposed 7 statutory libraries are open at optimal times.

The public consultation in 2023 enabled residents to feedback about both the proposed library closures and the revised opening times and will enable individuals and groups to outline the impact this will have on them.

Who will be affected by the activity?

Provide details of the groups and numbers of people affected below, updating the table as the EIA develops and the understanding of who will be affected emerges in more detail.

Whole population

St Helens Library Service is a universal service available for anyone to use with or without library membership, for this reason the proposal to close Billinge Library has the potential to affect all current users and any person who wishes to access its library provision, whether they live in the community or elsewhere within the Borough, including those with protected characteristics. This equalities impact assessment identifies several groups with protected characteristics that will be negatively impacted by the proposed closure of Billinge Library. Full details are outlined below.

The proposals will result in a reduction in the number of posts in the library staffing structure and therefore, potential redundancies. Library staff and trade unions are being fully consulted on the proposals and dealt with/supported in accordance with the Council's Policies and Procedures. Every effort will be made to avoid compulsory redundancies.

As the number of library buildings will be reduced, a small number of facilities management staff including cleaners, may be affected by the

proposals. Given demands within the council, it is anticipated that redeployment opportunities will be offered to all staff involved.

Under St Helens Borough Council’s Redundancy Policy

- Selection for redundancy is based on clear, fair, and justifiable criteria set out within, selection is not based on age related criteria.
- Members and Officers making decisions on redundancy must ensure that their decisions are free from the influence of discrimination or prejudicial bias because of protected characteristics.
- St Helens Borough Council’s redundancy payments are based on age and length of service criteria. This is not ‘unlawful’ as the criteria mirror the payments that are set out in a statutory scheme and are therefore exempt from age discrimination legislation.

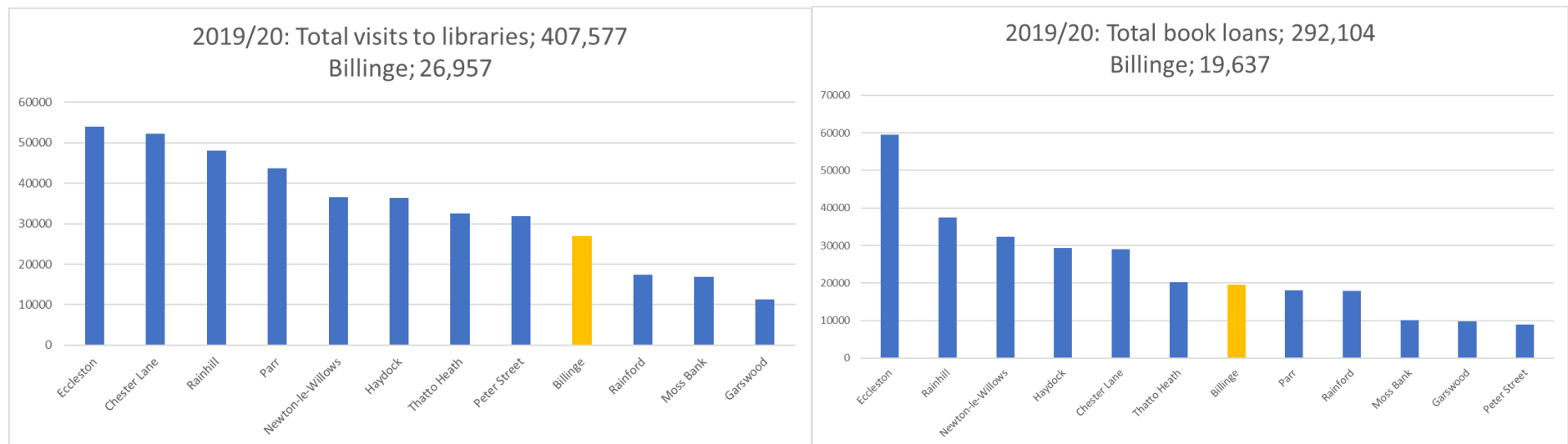
Library performance

Billinge Library was opened by Lancashire author Jessica Lofthouse in 1964. It was developed from the Lancashire sub-branch of Orrell Library and was initially only open on Thursdays. It became part of St Helens Library Service when the Metropolitan Borough was formed in 1974. This library has been closed to the public since March 2020 due to the condition of the building.

St Helens Borough population: 183,200

Local ward population: 10,127

Source: Census 2021

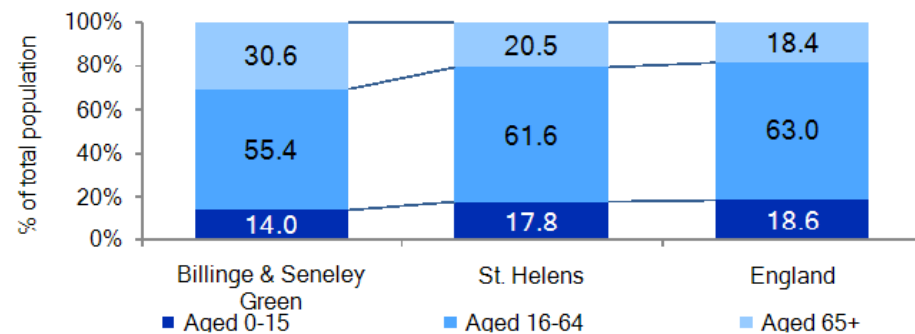


Protected Characteristics

Age

Figure: Population by age

Source: Census 2021



Age breakdown for Billinge & Seneley Green ward:

0-15: 14.0%

16-65: 55.4%

65+: 30.6%

Age breakdown for St Helens Borough:

0-15: 17.8%

16-65: 61.6%

65+: 20.5%

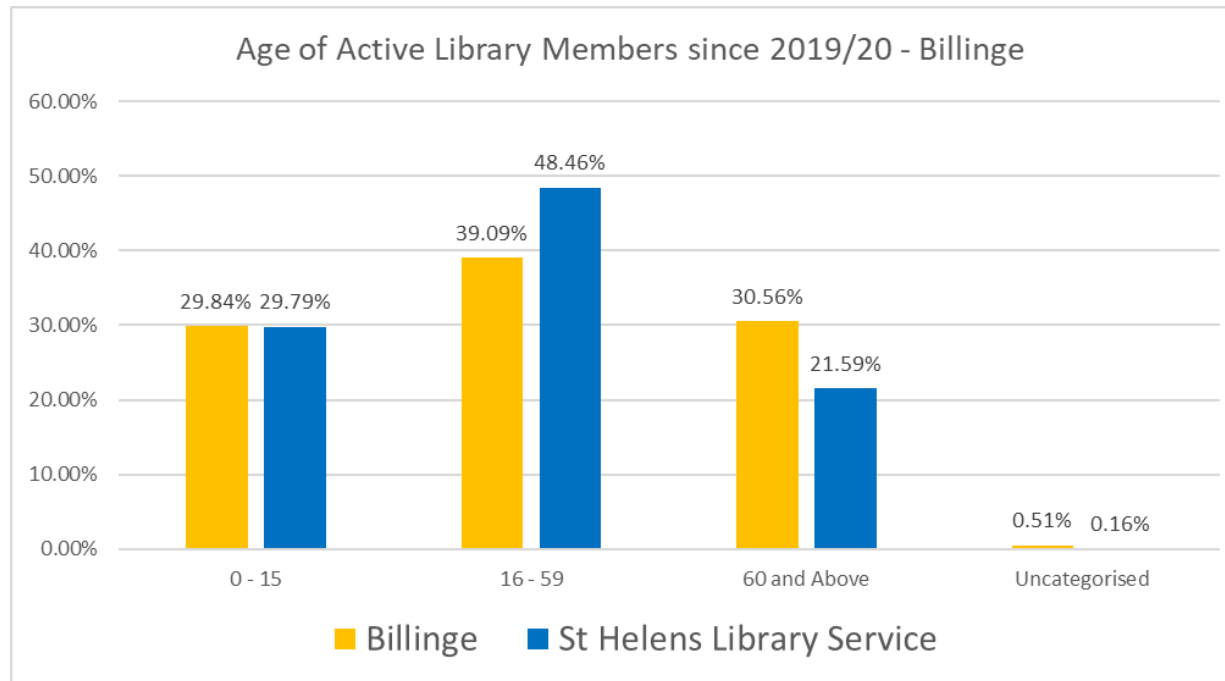
Age breakdown for England:

0-15: 18.6%

16-65: 63.0%

65+: 18.4%

Source: Census 2021



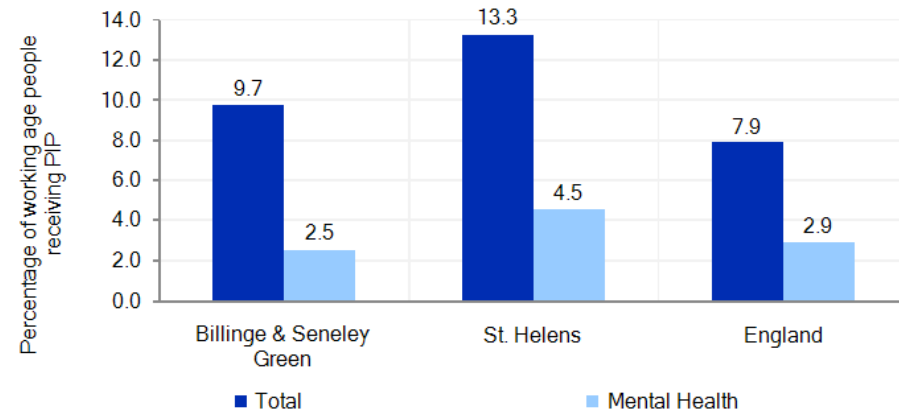
Disability

The Library Service does not hold full and comprehensive data on the disability needs of its members and wider customer base. The Library Membership form asks residents to provide this information, however there is no obligation to disclose this. Therefore, we will use the most recent ward statistics as a proxy to better reflect the current and potential users of the service that may hold this protected characteristic.

The graph below shows the percentage of working-age people receiving Personal Independence Payments (PIP) in the Billinge ward. (Source: Department for Work and Pensions, Apr-23):

Figure: Personal Independence Payment (PIP) recipients

Source: Department for Work and Pensions (Apr-23)



Percentage of people disabled under the Equality Act with day-to-day activities limited:

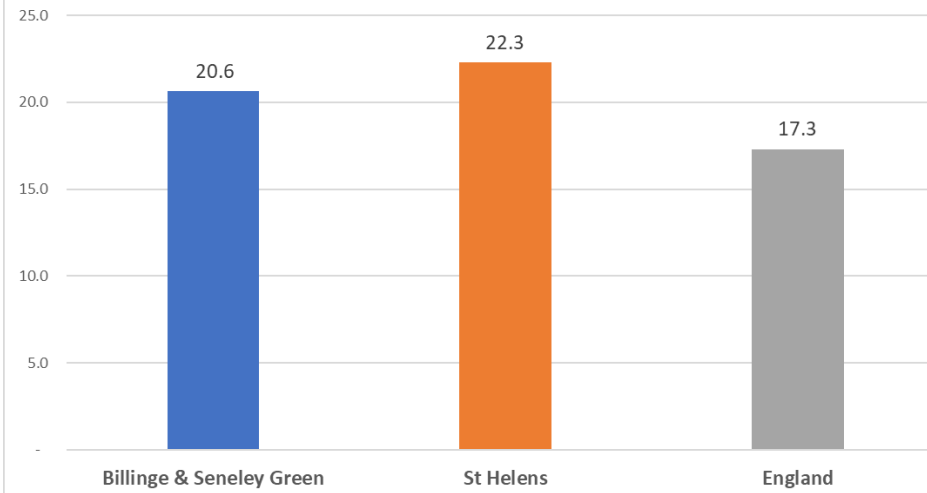
Billinge = 20.6%

St Helens = 22.3%

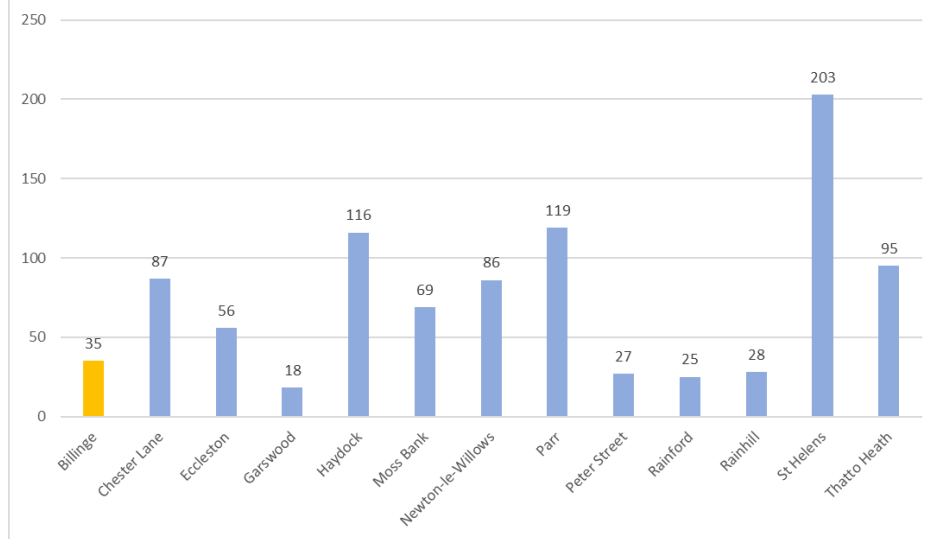
England = 17.3%

Source: Census 2021

Percentage of residents disabled under the Equality Act with day-to-day activities limited



Registered Disabilities of Active Library Members since 2019/20



Gender reassignment

The Library Service does not collect Gender Reassignment membership data. Therefore, we will use the most recent population statistics as a proxy to better reflect the current and potential users of the service that may hold this protected characteristic.

The 2021 Census shows that 0.36% of people aged 16 and over in St Helens Borough had a gender identity different to the sex registered for them at birth. This compares to 0.54% for England and Wales.

The table below shows a breakdown of the answers to the Census 2021 Gender Identity question for the St Helens Population aged 16 years and over.

Census 2021 St Helens Population Gender Identity Data	Percentage
Gender identity the same as sex registered at birth	95.48%
Gender identity different from sex registered at birth, but no specific identity given	0.17%
Trans woman	0.06%
Trans man	0.08%
Non-binary	0.03%
All other gender identities	0.02%
Gender identity not answered	4.15%

Marriage and civil partnership

The Library Service does not collect Marriage and civil partnership membership data.

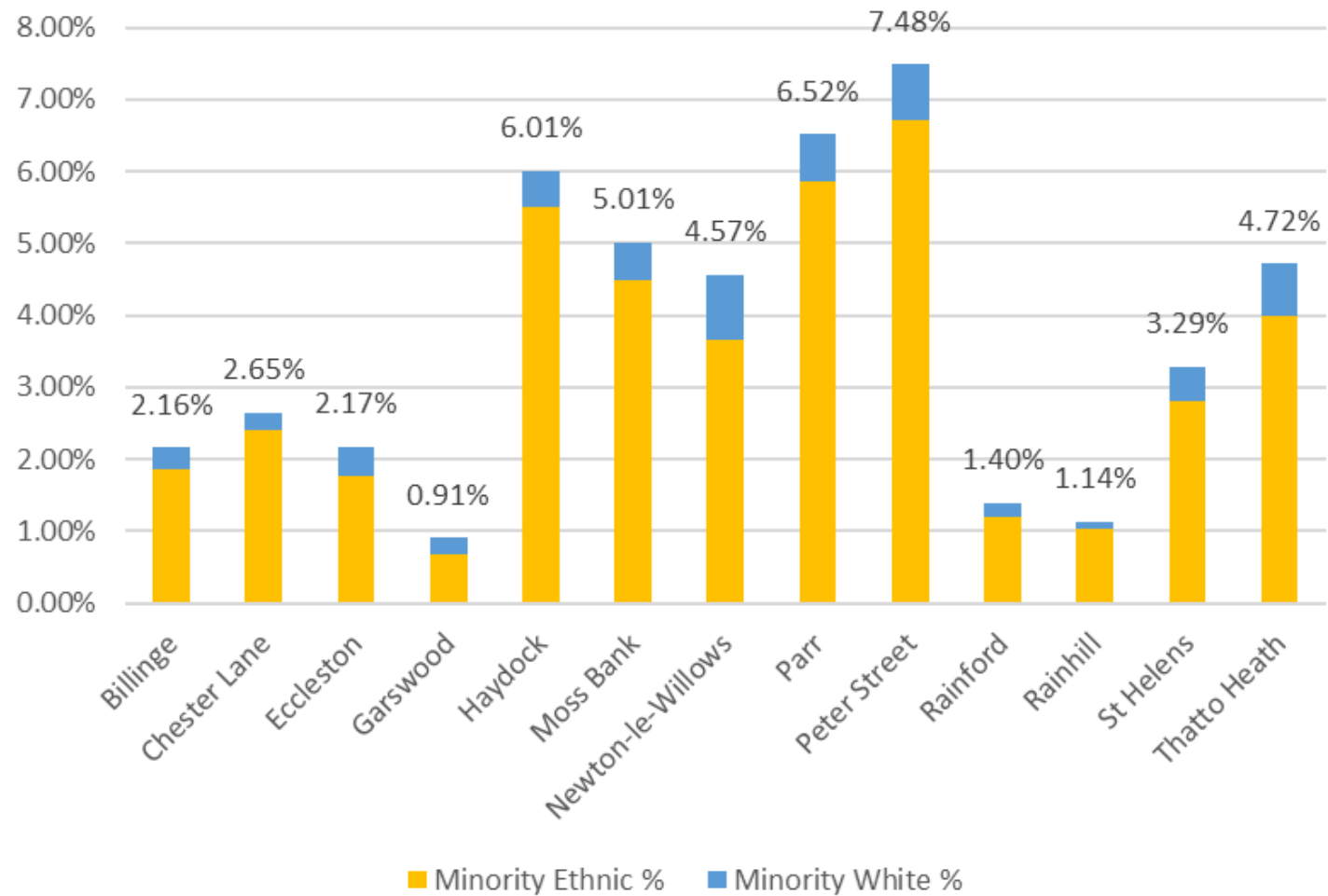
Pregnancy and Maternity

The Library Service does not collect pregnancy membership data.

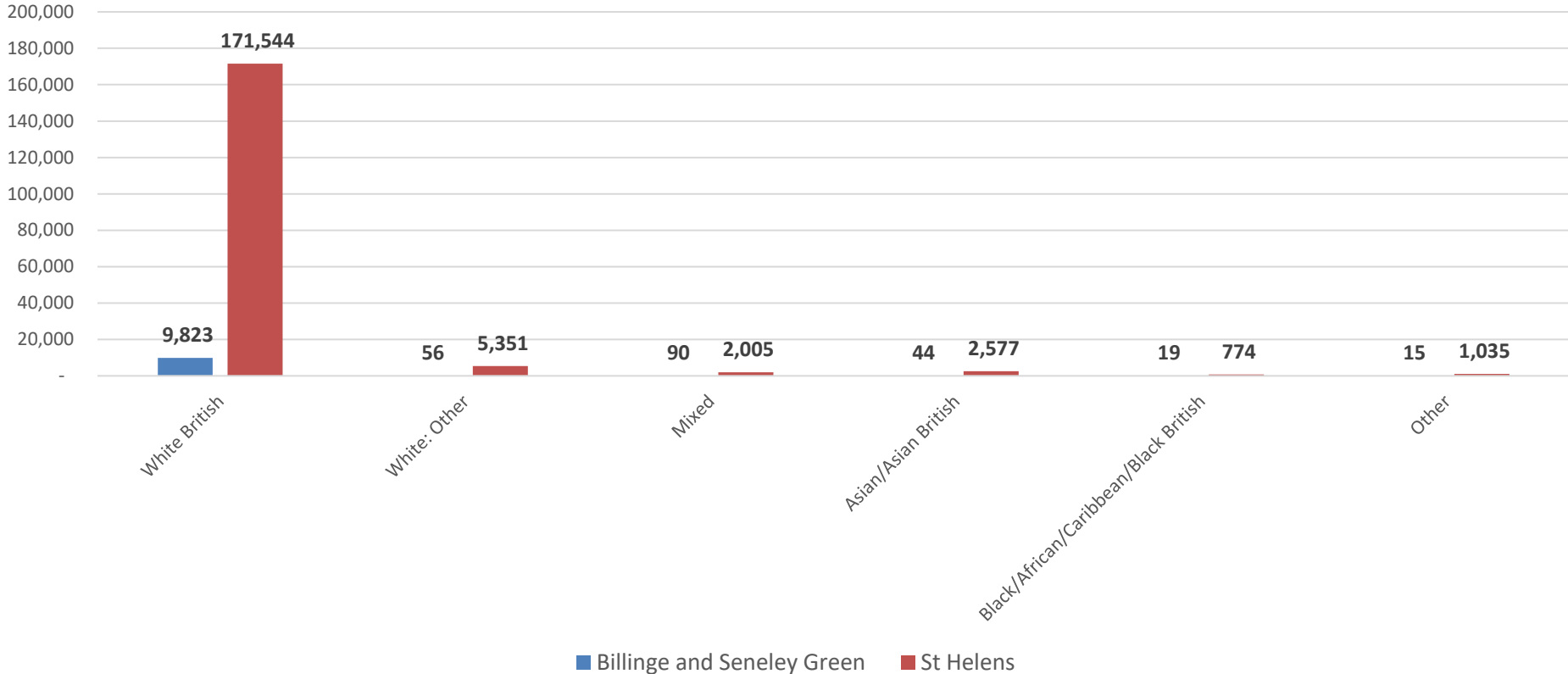
Race

The Library Service does not hold full and comprehensive data on race of its members and wider customer base. The Library Membership form asks residents to provide this information, however there is no obligation to disclose this. Therefore, we will use the most recent ward and borough population by Ethnicity (Census 2021) to better reflect the current and potential users of the service that may hold this protected characteristic.

Active Library Members since 2019/20 - Members of Minority Ethnic and Minority White Communities



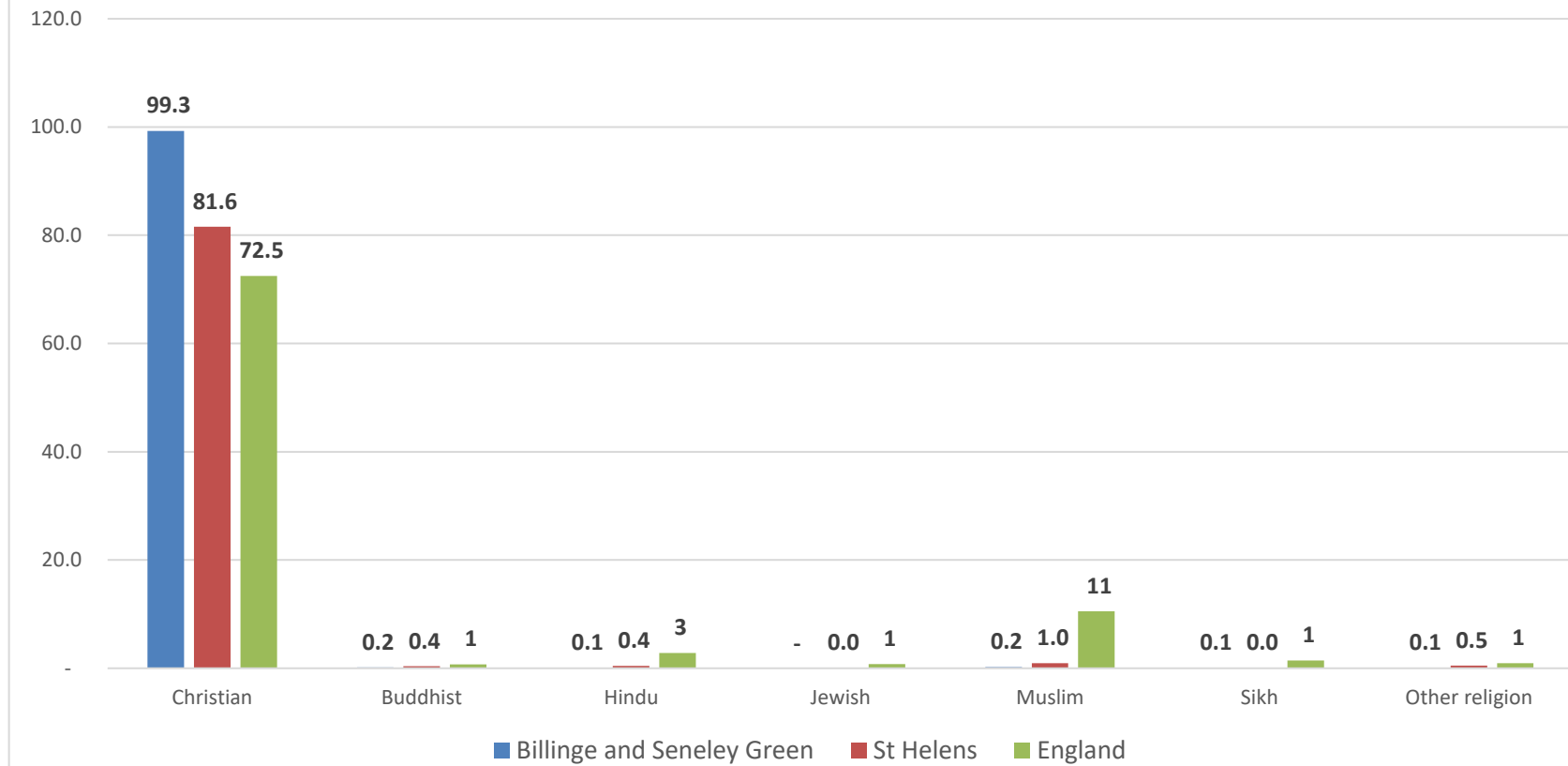
Population by Ethnicity (Source: Census 2021)



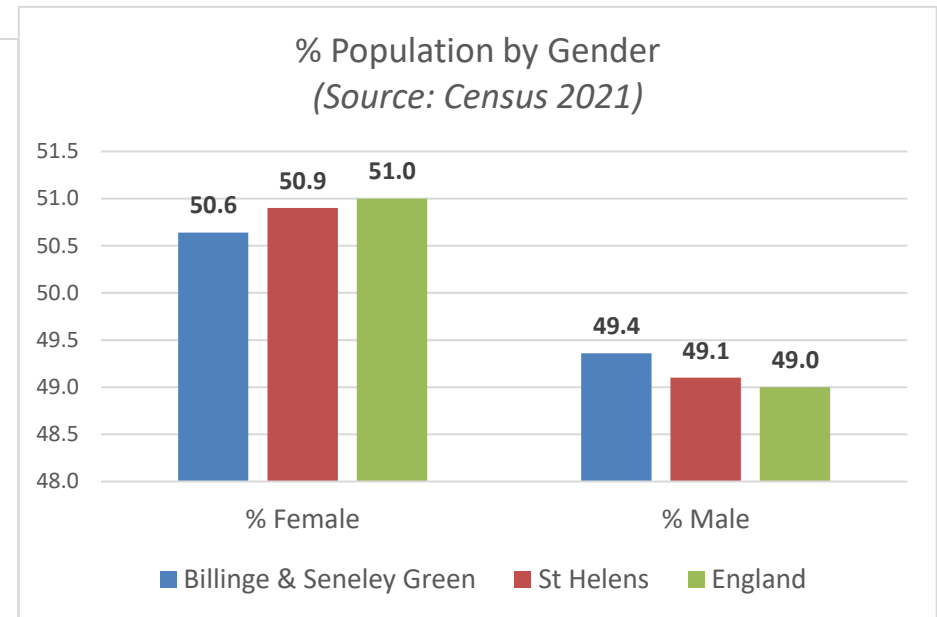
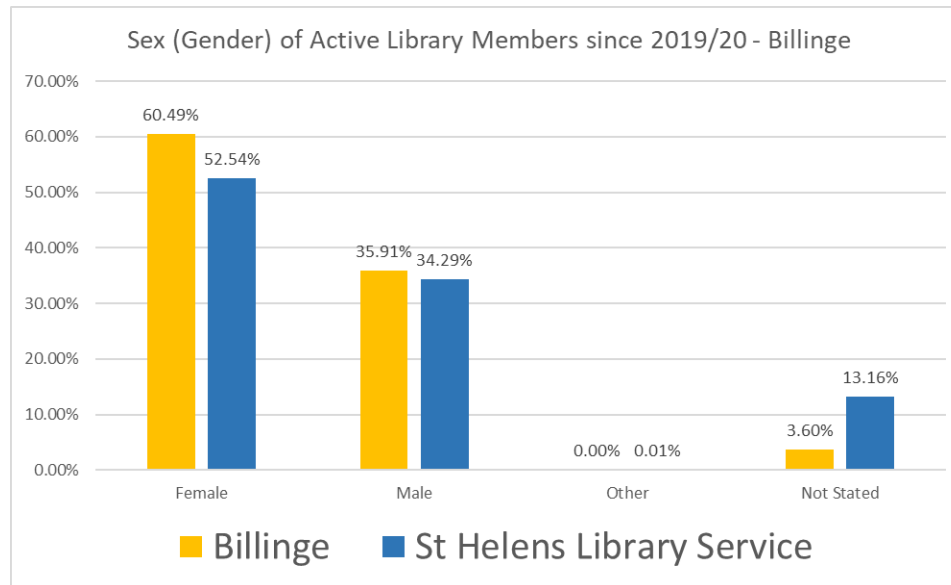
Religion and Belief

The Library Service does not collect religion membership data. Therefore, we will use the most recent ward statistics as a proxy to better reflect the current and potential users of the service that may hold this protected characteristic.

Percentage Stated Religion by Geography (Source: Census 2021)



Sex (sometimes referred to as gender)



Sex

Sex breakdown in Billinge & Seneley Green ward:

Female: 50.6%

Male: 49.4%

Sex breakdown in St Helens borough:

Female: 50.9%

Male: 49.1%

Sex breakdown in England:

Female: 51%

Male: 49%

Source: Census 2021

Sexual Orientation

The Library Service does not collect sexual orientation membership data. Therefore, we will use the most recent Census statistics as a proxy to better reflect the current and potential users of the service that may hold this protected characteristic.

The 2021 Census shows that 2.7% of the Borough population aged 16 years and over recorded an LGB+ orientation (“gay or lesbian”, “bisexual”, or other sexual orientation). This compares to 3.16% for England and Wales

The table below shows a breakdown of the answers to the Census 2021 Sexual Orientation question for the St Helens Population aged 16 years and over.

Census 2021 St Helens Population Sexual Orientation Data	Percentage
Straight or Heterosexual	91.84%
Gay or Lesbian	1.60%
Bisexual	0.89%
Pansexual	0.15%
Asexual	0.05%
All other sexual orientations	0.01%
Gender identity not answered	5.46%

At this initial stage of the equality impact assessment, affected individuals cannot be identified beyond the broad groups summarised in this document. This is due to the equality impact section of library membership forms not always completed fully as residents choose not to disclose this information.

Should any individual specifically affected by the proposal to close Billinge Library come forward following public consultation, further work would be undertaken to identify the impact and to consider action and mitigation.

What data, research and other evidence or information is available which is relevant to the EIA?

The key information for this activity is:

- Census 2021
- Department for Work and Pensions
- Mid-Year Estimates (ONS) 2020
- Library Service performance data 2019/20
- Library membership data
- Locality Profiles

Section 3: EIA Lead Officer Assessment: Billinge Library

Use this table to record your views on the potential impact on **Protected Characteristics**. As the activity and the assessment develop your views may change – record them here.

Protected Characteristics	Potential Impact Positive/Negative/ Not Applicable	Potential level of impact	Summary of impact	Action and mitigation
Age	Negative	High	<p>There will be an impact on both younger and older users if Billinge Library permanently closes.</p> <p>Consultation has also identified that 25–34-year-olds are also more likely to stop using the library service should Billinge Library permanently close.</p> <p>Children and young people The impact on children and young people (CYP) who are unable to access Billinge Library if it closes include them being unable to visit another library as they may not be able to travel independently, and the cost of travel may also affect them disproportionately.</p> <p>CYP will be further impacted as access to books will be more difficult, particularly if they are digitally excluded. They will be unable to use the library’s free Wi-Fi and computers that allow access to a range of digital media, including social media. Access to information and cultural events that can assist with education</p>	<p>Alternative library provision: There will be a network of 7 statutory libraries across the borough that are available to all residents to access. The closest libraries to Billinge are Moss Bank (because of its proximity within the locality) and St Helens (relative ease of access via public transport). These libraries are all accessible to disabled people and the wider community, have car parks and are on bus routes.</p> <p>The library website will be updated with bus and train information, as well as car parking arrangements and disabled parking bays for each library.</p> <p>Library Light. Library Light means any customer with a library card can access libraries across the Liverpool City Region. https://sthlibrarieswp.koha-ptfs.co.uk/library-light/</p> <p>Digital support: This will be targeted at those who most need it, including older people, users with a disability (e.g., visual impairment). Better marketing and promotion of the e-library service offer is needed, as some people may be able to</p>

Use this table to record your views on the potential impact on **Protected Characteristics**. As the activity and the assessment develop your views may change – record them here.

Protected Characteristics	Potential Impact Positive/Negative/ Not Applicable	Potential level of impact	Summary of impact	Action and mitigation
			<p>will reduce considerably if this library closes.</p> <p>Billinge Library provided discretionary service elements when it was open, acting as an outlet for children and families who wished to access social activity groups. Service user feedback highlights the need for social interaction for this protected characteristic.</p> <p>There is a risk that children, families and older people may feel isolated because of losing this social interaction if Billinge Library permanently closes. This premise has been supported by the consultation findings.</p> <p>25–34-year-olds The consultation has shown¹ that this age is most likely to visit a library with a child and that are also more likely to stop using the library service should Billinge Library permanently close.</p> <p>The general outcome of the</p>	<p>download books, audio, newspapers, magazines and comics to their own devices.</p> <p>Home Delivery Library Service: The consultation results will be analysed to assist with the referrals process onto the Home Delivery Library Service, providing people meet the referral criteria as a reasonable adjustment to mitigate any barrier to library service access that they might experience as a direct result of the proposed closures.</p> <p>The consultation exercise has reinforced the importance and need for this service and consequently it is now proposed to double its capacity.</p> <p>Click and Collect The consultation exercise has identified an opportunity to develop a further reasonable adjustment, a click and collect service where residents can call or email the service requesting books which can then be collected by a friend, relative or neighbors.</p>

¹ Consultation key findings “What do we know about the people who use the Library Service” and page 20 of the report

Use this table to record your views on the potential impact on **Protected Characteristics**. As the activity and the assessment develop your views may change – record them here.

Protected Characteristics	Potential Impact Positive/Negative/ Not Applicable	Potential level of impact	Summary of impact	Action and mitigation
			<p>consultation states for those who disagree to the proposed changes... “many also refer to how losing access to Read & Rhyme sessions, school activities and after school and weekend opening times will be detrimental to their children’s development.”²</p> <p>Older People Older people will be impacted if they have to travel to other libraries. Some may find it difficult to travel to other libraries if they have no means of transport and are required to walk or take a journey which requires them to change bus or train to get to a library. The cost of travel may also impact them disproportionately.</p> <p>Older people without access to the internet at home or those lacking digital skills and confidence will be impacted as they will find it difficult to use the digital library offer. They may not be eligible for the Home Delivery Library Service as medical incapacity is the determining factor for inclusion.</p> <p>The consultation identifies that learning disabled people and people</p>	

Use this table to record your views on the potential impact on **Protected Characteristics**. As the activity and the assessment develop your views may change – record them here.

Protected Characteristics	Potential Impact Positive/Negative/ Not Applicable	Potential level of impact	Summary of impact	Action and mitigation
			<p>with long term health conditions are more likely to stop using the service as a result of the proposed closures. One of the mitigations for people with learning disabilities is the offer of familiarisation visits to other libraries in the Borough to help them feel safer and more comfortable with the idea of visiting another library. One of the mitigations for people with long term health conditions who are unable to physically access a library is the offer of the Home Delivery Library Service.</p> <p>Consultation and engagement Plan: A 12-week consultation has taken place between May and July 2023 with residents, communities and key stakeholders to enable the impact of the proposed library closure.</p>	
Disability	Negative	High	<p>Consultation and engagement Plan A 12-week consultation has taken place in 2023 with residents, communities and key stakeholders to enable the impact of the proposed</p>	<p>Alternative library provision: There will be a network of 7 statutory libraries across the borough that are available to all residents to access.</p>

Use this table to record your views on the potential impact on **Protected Characteristics**. As the activity and the assessment develop your views may change – record them here.

Protected Characteristics	Potential Impact Positive/Negative/ Not Applicable	Potential level of impact	Summary of impact	Action and mitigation
			<p>library closures and the changes to library opening hours to be considered. The Equality Impact questions within the public consultation have helped to identify the impact on individuals and have identified further mitigations.</p> <p>This equality impact assessment will be updated following the consultation and where a clear set of final proposals emerge. This will inform any final decision made by Cabinet.</p> <p>The Library Service does not hold full and comprehensive data on the disability needs of its members and wider customer base. The Library Membership form asks residents to provide this information, however there is no obligation to disclose this information.</p> <p>There will be an impact on disabled library users if Billinge Library permanently closes. This includes disabled adults and children with learning disabilities, people who are neuro diverse, people with dementia,</p>	<p>The closest libraries to Billinge are Moss Bank (because of its proximity within the locality) and St Helens (relative ease of access via public transport). These libraries are all accessible to disabled people and the wider community, have car parks and are on bus routes.</p> <p>The library website will be updated with bus and train information, as well as car parking arrangements and, where available, disabled parking bays for each library.</p> <p>Library Light. Library Light means any customer with a library card can access libraries across the Liverpool City Region. https://sthlibrarieswp.koha-ptfs.co.uk/library-light/</p> <p>Digital support: This will be targeted at those who most need it, including users with a disability (e.g., visual impairment). Better marketing and promotion of the e-library service offer will take place, as some people may be able to download books, audio, newspapers, magazines and comics to their own devices.</p> <p>Home Delivery Library Service: The consultation results will be analysed to assist with the referrals process onto</p>

Use this table to record your views on the potential impact on **Protected Characteristics**. As the activity and the assessment develop your views may change – record them here.

Protected Characteristics	Potential Impact Positive/Negative/ Not Applicable	Potential level of impact	Summary of impact	Action and mitigation
			<p>mobility issues, hearing and sight loss and people with mental health needs.</p> <p>People with learning disabilities and people who are neuro diverse, or people with dementia may be impacted if they rely on their visit to this library as a safe, familiar place in which they feel comfortable.</p> <p>Carers may be impacted if they rely on their time at this library as a form of respite. If Billinge Library closed permanently there is a risk that disabled people and people who are carers who used this library for respite and social interaction will be negatively impacted as they will lose this social experience and could feel isolated.</p> <p>Some disabled people may find it difficult to travel to other libraries, especially if they take unfamiliar journeys. Some may find it difficult to travel to other libraries if they are required to walk certain distances, travel lengthy routes, or take a journey which requires them to change bus or train to get to a library.</p>	<p>the Home Delivery Library Service, providing people meet the referral criteria as a reasonable adjustment to mitigate any barrier to library service access that they might experience as a direct result of the proposed closures.</p> <p>The consultation exercise has reinforced the importance and need for this service and consequently it is now proposed to double its capacity.</p> <p>Click and Collect The consultation exercise has identified an opportunity to develop a further reasonable adjustment, a click and collect service where residents can call or email the service requesting books which can then be collected by a friend, relative or neighbours.</p>

Use this table to record your views on the potential impact on **Protected Characteristics**. As the activity and the assessment develop your views may change – record them here.

Protected Characteristics	Potential Impact Positive/Negative/ Not Applicable	Potential level of impact	Summary of impact	Action and mitigation
			<p>People without access to the internet at home or those lacking digital skills and confidence will be unable to access the library digital offers.</p>	
<p>Gender reassignment</p>	<p>Negative</p>	<p>Low</p>	<p>Consultation and engagement Plan: A 12-week consultation took place in 2023 with residents, communities and key stakeholders to enable the impact of the proposed library closures and the changes to library opening hours to be considered. The Equality Impact questions within the public consultation will help to identify the impact on individuals and may identify further mitigations.</p> <p>The consultation link was shared with all active library members via email or text where contact details existed. Drop-in sessions were also run across the borough. This has generated almost 6,000 responses.</p> <p>The Library Service does not currently collect gender reassignment data. National data indicates numbers are low as a proportion of the population, however there may be individuals that are in this</p>	<p>Alternative library provision: There will be a network of 7 statutory libraries across the borough that are available to all residents to access.</p> <p>The closest libraries to Billinge are Moss Bank (because of its proximity within the locality) and St Helens (relative ease of access via public transport). These libraries are all accessible to disabled people and the wider community, have car parks and are on bus routes.</p> <p>The library website will be updated with bus and train information, as well as car parking arrangements and, where available, disabled parking bays for each library.</p> <p>Library Light. Library Light means existing customers can access all libraries across the Liverpool City Region with their current library card. https://sthlibrarieswp.koha-ptfs.co.uk/library-light/</p>

Use this table to record your views on the potential impact on **Protected Characteristics**. As the activity and the assessment develop your views may change – record them here.

Protected Characteristics	Potential Impact Positive/Negative/ Not Applicable	Potential level of impact	Summary of impact	Action and mitigation
			<p>protected characteristic using Billinge Library.</p> <p>There is no evidence that there will be a detrimental impact for people who share this protected characteristic. However, as the library was an inclusive, welcoming and safe community space for anyone to use, there is a risk that closing this library permanently may impact on individuals with this protected characteristic who used Billinge Library as a safe community space.</p> <p>1% of respondents to the consultation stated they had undergone gender reassignment. The consultation provides no evidence that there will be a disproportional detrimental impact for people who share this protected characteristic</p>	
Marriage and civil partnership	Negative	Low	The Library Service does not collect marriage and civil partnership data, however by observation and building relationships with customers, we know that there were people with this protected characteristic using Billinge Library before it closed.	We are not aware of any identifiable impact on this protected characteristic however the public consultation will be available for anyone from the protected characteristic to complete.

Use this table to record your views on the potential impact on **Protected Characteristics**. As the activity and the assessment develop your views may change – record them here.

Protected Characteristics	Potential Impact Positive/Negative/ Not Applicable	Potential level of impact	Summary of impact	Action and mitigation
			The consultation provides no evidence that there will be a disproportional detrimental impact for people who share this protected characteristic	
Pregnancy and maternity	Negative	High	<p>Consultation and engagement Plan: A 12-week consultation took place in 2023 with residents, communities and key stakeholders to enable the impact of the proposed library closures and the changes to library opening hours to be considered. The Equality Impact questions within the public consultation will help to identify the impact on individuals and may identify further mitigations.</p> <p>The Library Service does not collect pregnancy and maternity data, however by observation and building relationships with customers, we know that there were individuals with this protected characteristic using Billinge Library before it closed.</p> <p>Part of the discretionary library offer are Read and rhyme times, which operated weekly in Billinge Library and attended by babies and young children. Pregnant women did attend,</p>	<p>Alternative library provision: There will be a network of 7 statutory libraries across the borough that are available to all residents to access.</p> <p>The closest libraries to Billinge are Moss Bank (because of its proximity within the locality) and St Helens (relative ease of access via public transport). These libraries are all accessible to disabled people and the wider community, have car parks and are on bus routes.</p> <p>The library website will be updated with bus and train information, as well as car parking arrangements and, where available, disabled parking bays for each library.</p> <p>Library Light. Library Light means existing customers can access all libraries across the Liverpool City Region with their current library card. https://sthlibrarieswp.koha-ptfs.co.uk/library-light/</p>

Use this table to record your views on the potential impact on **Protected Characteristics**. As the activity and the assessment develop your views may change – record them here.

Protected Characteristics	Potential Impact Positive/Negative/ Not Applicable	Potential level of impact	Summary of impact	Action and mitigation
			<p>usually with their older child(ren) and then attended sessions with their new baby.</p> <p>Billinge Library provided a social outlet for pregnant women and their children accessing read and rhyme times. Many established friendships with library staff and other group users.</p> <p>The permanent closure of Billinge Library will impact families who used to access social groups as they may feel isolated if these groups are no longer available.</p> <p>Some pregnant women may find it difficult to travel to other libraries if they are required to walk certain distances, travel lengthy routes, or take a journey which requires them to change bus or train to get to a library, particularly if they travel with other young children.</p> <p>The consultation has shown² those who visit a library with a child are more likely to stop using the library</p>	<p>Digital support: This will be targeted at those who most need it. Better marketing and promotion of the e-library service offer is needed, as some people may be able to download books, audio, newspapers, magazines and comics to their own devices.</p>

² Consultation key findings “What do we know about the people who use the Library Service” and page 20 of the report

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Protected Characteristics	Potential Impact Positive/Negative/ Not Applicable	Potential level of impact	Summary of impact	Action and mitigation
			service should Billinge Library permanently close.	
Race	Negative	High	<p>Consultation and engagement Plan: A 12-week consultation took place in 2023 with residents, communities and key stakeholders to enable the impact of the proposed library closures and the changes to library opening hours to be considered. The Equality Impact questions within the public consultation will help to identify the impact on individuals and may identify further mitigations.</p> <p>Pre-Consultation there was no evidence that there will be a detrimental impact for people who share this protected characteristic. However, as the library is an inclusive, welcoming and safe community space for anyone to use, there is a risk that closing Billinge Library permanently may impact on individuals with this protected characteristic who used the library as a safe community space.</p> <p>In general, more members of the ethnic minority communities reported to be significantly affected than the</p>	<p>Alternative library provision: There will be a network of 7 statutory libraries across the borough that are available to all residents to access.</p> <p>The closest libraries to Billinge are Moss Bank (because of its proximity within the locality) and St Helens (relative ease of access via public transport). These libraries are all accessible to disabled people and the wider community, have car parks and are on bus routes.</p> <p>The library website will be updated with bus and train information, as well as car parking arrangements and, where available, disabled parking bays for each library.</p> <p>Library Light. Library Light means existing customers can access all libraries across the Liverpool City Region with their current library card. https://sthlibrarieswp.koha-ptfs.co.uk/library-light/</p> <p>Outreach Team – The team will engage with existing groups representing Asian, Black and Minority Ethnic People in the</p>

Use this table to record your views on the potential impact on **Protected Characteristics**. As the activity and the assessment develop your views may change – record them here.

Protected Characteristics	Potential Impact Positive/Negative/ Not Applicable	Potential level of impact	Summary of impact	Action and mitigation
			survey norm. Although the sample size for people from ethnic minorities was small so less reliable statistically, we acknowledge this impact here	borough to explore the impact of the closure and any further work the Council can do to mitigate the closure.
Religion and Belief	Negative	Low	<p>Consultation and engagement Plan: A 12-week consultation took place in 2023 with residents, communities and key stakeholders to enable the impact of the proposed library closures and the changes to library opening hours to be considered. The Equality Impact questions within the public consultation will help to identify the impact on individuals and may identify further mitigations.</p> <p>The Library Service does not currently collect religion and belief data, however there may be people that are in this protected characteristic who used Billinge Library.</p> <p>There is some evidence that there will be a detrimental impact for people who share this protected characteristic. However, as the library was an inclusive, welcoming and safe community space for</p>	<p>Alternative library provision: There will be a network of 7 statutory libraries across the borough that are available to all residents to access.</p> <p>The closest libraries to Billinge are Moss Bank (because of its proximity within the locality) and St Helens (relative ease of access via public transport). These libraries are all accessible to disabled people and the wider community, have car parks and are on bus routes.</p> <p>The library website will be updated with bus and train information, as well as car parking arrangements and, where available, disabled parking bays for each library.</p> <p>Library Light. Library Light means existing customers can access all libraries across the Liverpool City Region with their current library card. https://sthlibrarieswp.koha-ptfs.co.uk/library-light/</p>

Use this table to record your views on the potential impact on **Protected Characteristics**. As the activity and the assessment develop your views may change – record them here.

Protected Characteristics	Potential Impact Positive/Negative/ Not Applicable	Potential level of impact	Summary of impact	Action and mitigation
			<p>anyone to use, there is a risk that closing the library permanently may impact on individuals with this protected characteristic who used the library as a safe community space.</p> <p>The consultation provides some evidence that there will be a disproportional detrimental impact for people who share this protected characteristic</p>	
Sex (gender)	Negative	High	<p>Consultation and engagement Plan: A 12-week consultation took place in 2023 with residents, communities and key stakeholders to enable the impact of the proposed library closures and the changes to library opening hours to be considered. The Equality Impact questions within the public consultation will help to identify the impact on individuals and may identify further mitigations.</p> <p>More females than males currently use Billinge Library as evidenced by membership statistics. This indicates that females will be impacted more</p>	<p>Alternative library provision: There will be a network of 7 statutory libraries across the borough that are available to all residents to access.</p> <p>The closest libraries to Billinge are Moss Bank (because of its proximity within the locality) and St Helens (relative ease of access via public transport). These libraries are all accessible to disabled people and the wider community, have car parks and are on bus routes.</p> <p>The library website will be updated with bus and train information, as well as car parking arrangements and disabled parking bays for each library.</p> <p>Library Light. Library Light means existing customers can access all libraries</p>

Use this table to record your views on the potential impact on **Protected Characteristics**. As the activity and the assessment develop your views may change – record them here.

Protected Characteristics	Potential Impact Positive/Negative/ Not Applicable	Potential level of impact	Summary of impact	Action and mitigation
			<p>than males should this library permanently close.</p> <p>5% of respondents identified themselves as LGBTQ+ which is a higher than the borough average. The consultation provides no evidence that there will be a disproportional detrimental impact for people who share this protected characteristic.</p>	<p>across the Liverpool City Region with their current library card.</p> <p>https://sthlibrarieswp.koha-ptfs.co.uk/library-light/</p>
Sexual orientation	Negative	Low	<p>Consultation and engagement Plan:</p> <p>A 12-week consultation took place in 2023 with residents, communities, and key stakeholders to enable the impact of the proposed library closures and the changes to library opening hours to be considered. The Equality Impact questions within the public consultation will help to identify the impact on individuals and may identify further mitigations.</p> <p>The Library Service does not collect sexual orientation data, however there may be people that are in this protected characteristic using Billinge Library.</p>	<p>Alternative library provision: There will be a network of 7 statutory libraries across the borough that are available to all residents to access.</p> <p>The closest libraries to Billinge are Moss Bank (because of its proximity within the locality) and St Helens (relative ease of access via public transport). These libraries are all accessible to disabled people and the wider community, have car parks and are on bus routes.</p> <p>The library website will be updated with bus and train information, as well as car parking arrangements and, where available, disabled parking bays for each library.</p>

Use this table to record your views on the potential impact on **Protected Characteristics**. As the activity and the assessment develop your views may change – record them here.

Protected Characteristics	Potential Impact Positive/Negative/ Not Applicable	Potential level of impact	Summary of impact	Action and mitigation
			<p>There is no evidence that there will be a detrimental impact for people who share this protected characteristic. However, as the library was an inclusive, welcoming and safe community space for anyone to use, there is a risk that closing the library permanently may impact on individuals with this protected characteristic who used the library as a safe community space.</p> <p>5% of respondents identified themselves as LGBTQ+ which is a higher than the borough average. The consultation provides no evidence that there will be a disproportional detrimental impact for people who share this protected characteristic.</p>	<p>Library Light. Library Light means existing customers can access all libraries across the Liverpool City Region with their current library card. https://sthlibrarieswp.koha-ptfs.co.uk/library-light/</p>
Employees	Risk of Redundancy	Low	<p>If staff are at risk of redundancy, then the Council will manage this in accordance with its Redundancy Policy. Selection for redundancy is based on clear, fair and justifiable criteria set out within. Selection is not based on age related criteria.</p> <p>Members and Officers making decisions on redundancy must ensure that their decisions are free</p>	Not applicable

Use this table to record your views on the potential impact on **Protected Characteristics**. As the activity and the assessment develop your views may change – record them here.

Protected Characteristics	Potential Impact Positive/Negative/ Not Applicable	Potential level of impact	Summary of impact	Action and mitigation
			<p>from the influence of discrimination or prejudicial bias because of protected characteristics.</p> <p>St Helens Borough Council's redundancy payments are based on age and length of service criteria. This is not 'unlawful' as the criteria mirror the payments that are set out in a statutory scheme and are therefore exempt from age discrimination legislation.</p>	

Section 4: Engagement Decision

The decision about who to engage with, and how and when to engage, is the key to effective EIA.

Is engagement with affected people with Protected Characteristics required, now or during the further development of the activity?	Yes
If YES, proceed to the next section. If NO, briefly summarise below the reasons why you have reached this conclusion.	
Consultation and engagement Plan: A 12-week consultation has taken place in 2023 with residents, communities and key stakeholders to enable the impact of the proposed library closures and the changes to library opening hours to be considered. This includes engagement with groups who use Thatto Heath Library that will potentially be impacted by the change in opening hours.	

Any reports to decision-makers during the development of the activity, for example feasibility or options appraisal reports, should include content on the latest thinking and findings of the EIA even though, like the activity, further development of the EIA may be required before final reporting.

The findings of the officer assessment should be included in any reports to decision-makers. These may be feasibility or options appraisal reports where the activity is at an early stage of development, but it is essential that any equality findings are considered in formal decisions at all stages of development of the activity.

Section 5 – Involvement and Engagement Planning

Has the assessment shown that the activity will treat any groups of people with Protected Characteristics differently from other people?

Yes

Will the differential treatment advance equality for people with Protected Characteristics?

No

Will the differential treatment cause or increase disadvantage for people with Protected Characteristics?

If yes, please state which groups and how.

Some people with protected characteristics may be less well able to adapt to the closure than others.

Disabled people, women who are pregnant or on maternity, people from ethnic minorities, children, young people and older people who cannot access another library due to age, mobility etc.

Section 6: Consultation and Engagement Findings from the 2023 public consultation

	Date/summary of engagement carried out	Summary of impacts identified
Age	<p>Public Consultation was undertaken between the 1st May to 31st July 2023.</p> <p>The consultation link was shared with all active library members via email or text where contact details existed. A street survey sought the views of a representative sample of 2,000 people whose age, gender and area in which they lived reflected the boroughs population. Drop-in sessions were also run across the borough. This has generated almost 6,000 responses in total.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unable to visit another library due to access and/or lack of transport, including lack of/limited bus service, not being able to use public transport/drive, the extra distance, cost or time this would involve. • adverse impacts on reading and literacy levels (particularly amongst children) <p>digital access and capability;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • meeting the socialisation needs of individuals.
Disability	<p>Public Consultation was undertaken between the 1st May to 31st July 2023.</p> <p>The consultation link was shared with all active library members via email or text where contact details existed. A street survey sought the views of a representative sample of 2,000 people whose age, gender and area in which they lived reflected the boroughs population. Drop-in sessions were also run across the borough. This has generated almost 6,000 responses in total.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unable to visit another library due access and/or lack of transport, including lack of/limited bus service, not being able to use public transport/drive, the extra distance, cost or time this would involve. • digital access and capability; and, meeting the socialisation needs of individuals.
Gender reassignment	<p>Public Consultation was undertaken between the 1st May to 31st July 2023.</p> <p>The consultation link was shared with all active library members via email or text where contact details existed. A street survey sought the views of a representative sample of 2,000 people whose age, gender and area in which they lived reflected the borough's population. Drop-in sessions were also run across the borough. This has generated almost 6,000 responses in total.</p>	No specific impacts identified.
Marriage and civil partnership	<p>Public Consultation was undertaken between the 1st May to 31st July 2023.</p>	No specific impacts identified.

	<p>The consultation link was shared with all active library members via email or text where contact details existed. A street survey sought the views of a representative sample of 2,000 people whose age, gender and area in which they lived reflected the borough's population. Drop-in sessions were also run across the borough. This has generated almost 6,000 responses in total.</p>	
Pregnancy and maternity	<p>Public Consultation was undertaken between the 1st May to 31st July 2023.</p> <p>The consultation link was shared with all active library members via email or text where contact details existed. A street survey sought the views of a representative sample of 2,000 people whose age, gender and area in which they lived reflected the borough's population. Drop-in sessions were also run across the borough. This has generated almost 6,000 responses in total.</p>	<p>Those who visit a library with a child are more likely to stop using the library service should Billinge Library permanently close.</p>
Race	<p>Public Consultation was undertaken between the 1st May to 31st July 2023.</p> <p>The consultation link was shared with all active library members via email or text where contact details existed. A street survey sought the views of a representative sample of 2,000 people whose age, gender and area in which they lived reflected the borough's population. Drop-in sessions were also run across the borough. This has generated almost 6,000 responses in total.</p>	<p>The Consultation has identified that more members of the ethnic minority community reported to be significantly affected than the survey norm however the sample size is small so less reliable.</p>
Religion and belief	<p>Public Consultation was undertaken between the 1st May to 31st July 2023.</p> <p>The consultation link was shared with all active library members via email or text where contact details existed. A street survey sought the views of a representative sample of 2,000 people whose age, gender and area in which they lived reflected the boroughs population. Drop-in sessions</p>	<p>No specific impacts identified.</p>

	were also run across the borough. This has generated almost 6,000 responses in total.	
Sex (gender)	<p>Public Consultation was undertaken between the 1st May to 31st July 2023.</p> <p>The consultation link was shared with all active library members via email or text where contact details existed. A street survey sought the views of a representative sample of 2,000 people whose age, gender and area in which they lived reflected the borough's population. Drop-in sessions were also run across the borough. This has generated almost 6,000 responses in total.</p>	No specific impacts identified by the consultation however as women make up a greater proportion of library users, a greater number will be impacted by the closure than men.
Sexual orientation	<p>Public Consultation was undertaken between the 1st May to 31st July 2023.</p> <p>The consultation link was shared with all active library members via email or text where contact details existed. A street survey sought the views of a representative sample of 2,000 people whose age, gender and area in which they lived reflected the borough's population. Drop-in sessions were also run across the borough. This has generated almost 6,000 responses in total.</p>	No specific impacts identified.

Section 6: Engagement Findings – Continued

Drawing on the engagement findings and your understanding of the effects of the activity, indicate how it will contribute, if at all, to the three strands of the Public Sector Equality Duty.

a) How will the proposal help to eliminate discrimination, harassment, and victimisation?

The process has highlighted that people who share 4 different protected characteristics: age, (younger and older people), sex (female), disability (learning disability and long-term health conditions), and race will be negatively impacted upon by this proposal.

However, the strategy will seek to address inequalities by distributing provision across the borough where possible locating where it is best placed to serve areas of greatest need within borough and so seek to tackle and eliminate discrimination, harassment, and victimisation. We will also mitigate any negative impact for those community members who share protected characteristics, as detailed within the assessment.

b) How will the proposal help to advance equality of opportunity?

The process has highlighted that people who share 4 different protected characteristics: age, (younger and older people), sex (female), disability (learning disability and long-term health conditions), and race will be negatively impacted upon by this proposal.

However, the strategy will seek to address inequalities by distributing provision across the borough where possible locating where it is best placed to serve areas of greatest need within borough and so help to advance equality of opportunity. We will promote detailed information on how to access Library Services both digital and physical.

c) How will the proposal help to foster good relations?

The process has highlighted that people who share 4 different protected characteristics: age, (younger and older people), sex (female), disability (learning disability and long term health conditions), and race will be negatively impacted upon by this proposal.

However, the strategy will seek to address inequalities by distributing provision across the borough where possible, locating where it is best placed to serve areas of greatest need within borough and help to foster good relations.

During the engagement process were there any suggestions on how to avoid, minimise or mitigate any negative impacts? If so, please give details.



Community Managed Models

- Meetings have taken place with an organisations who are keen to explore running a Community Managed Library in Billinge and these discussions will progress should the decision be taken to permanently close Billinge Library

Charging for Services / activities and hires

- The Library Service already charges for some services.
- No income generation opportunities have been identified that would provide the income to offset Billinge Library's operating costs.

Improved home delivery service

- Following public consultation, the strategy is being updated to increase capacity within the Home Delivery Library service.
- Explore the viability of delivering a book loan service to care settings within the borough.

Sharing buildings/ facilities with other users / purposes

- The Library Strategy contains a stated aim to relocate libraries to buildings where they are collocated with both other Council Services and those of partners.
- Provide an outreach offer targeting schools and community settings which serve communities affected by Library closures, to ensure the continued engagement of young people in initiatives such as the Summer Reading Challenge.
- Seek to identify community locations where the service can deliver Library activities such as Read and Rhyme, Digital and Information Literacy, Book Clubs etc

Improved parking (particularly at TWOG)

- The concerns of respondents regarding the car parking arrangement at the World of Glass will be fed back to the buildings managers as this is not within the gift of the Council.
- The importance of car parking facilities is defined within the strategy and will be addressed as opportunities arise at those sites to be retained.

Improved Public Transport

- The finding of this consultation will be shared with the Merseyside Transport Authority to help shape their Public Transport Strategy
- Provide detailed advice on Public Transport Routes and availability to customers of Libraries that will close to help them access other libraries

Better Digital Services

- Review the digital offer to improve accessibility and focus on demand.
- Upgrade Wi-fi and public access computers at the libraries being retained.
- Seek to identify community locations in communities served by libraries that will close where the service can deliver Digital and Information Literacy
- To increase the range of IT devices, particularly touch screen, available to the public within Libraries
- Work with city region partners to deliver the LCR Digital Inclusion Plan

Section 7 – Reporting of Findings and Recommendations to Decision Makers

The findings of the EIA may be reported to decision-makers at several stages during the development of an activity. For example, the initial officer assessment findings may be included in a feasibility report or options appraisal to be considered by the Transformation Board or Chief Officers' Executive.

Any report on formal decisions by the Cabinet or Council should include the latest findings of the EIA, even if these are at a relatively early stage. The report recommending final approval of the activity should await and include the findings of the completed EIA. The report should clearly present the impacts that have been identified through the engagement process, including potential cumulative impacts.

The report may include recommendations based on the findings of the EIA, but these should be separate from the reporting of impacts. Recommendations will be developed separately from the EIA and arise from considering equalities impacts combined with other aspects of the activity such as finance, the benefits of the activity, and so on.

Based on the EIA findings, the report may consider the options in the table below, but the report must contain a clear statement of the impacts so that decision-makers can understand the effects of the decision that is being recommended.

What does the review of the information show?	
a)	No negative impact on people because of their Protected Characteristics – continue with the activity and monitor progress on implementation
b)	Negative impact identified – recommend continuing with the activity; clearly specify the people affected and the impacts, and providing reasons and supporting evidence for the decision to continue
c)	Negative impact identified – adjust the activity in light of the identified impact to avoid, minimise or mitigate the impact
d)	Negative impact identified – stop activity and provide an explanation why

Section 8 – Action Plan and Performance Management

The report to decision-makers, and the decision made may require actions to be taken to avoid, minimise or mitigate the negative impacts of the activity.

Any actions to address equalities impacts should be listed below, with performance management review proposals, to complete the full EIA.

What is the negative impact?	Actions required to reduce/eliminate the negative impact (if applicable)	Who will lead on action	Target complete on date
The permanent closure of Billinge Library will impact on groups with protected characteristics who used the library plus any person who wanted to access its library provision, whether they live in the community or elsewhere within the Borough.	Develop a specific set of Equality Impact consultation questions for community groups (and adapt Equality Impact Questions for use in the general Consultation Survey) to understand the impact of the proposed closures and where there is a clear disproportionate or negative impact to identify mitigation	Head of Culture and Wellbeing	March 2023 Complete
Some disabled people, older people and young families may find it difficult to travel to other libraries. Some may find it difficult to travel to other libraries if they are required to walk certain distances, travel lengthy routes, or take a journey which requires them to change bus or train to get to a library. There may also be a financial barrier to accessing alternative travel methods.	<p>The library website will be updated with bus and train information, as well as car parking arrangements and disabled parking bays for each library.</p> <p>The Home Delivery Library Service will be offered to people as a reasonable adjustment to mitigate any barrier to library service access that they might experience as a direct result of the proposed closures, providing they meet the referral criteria.</p> <p>Digital support will be targeted at those who most need it. Better marketing and promotion of the e-library service offer is needed, as some people may be able to download books, audio, newspapers, magazines and comics to their own devices.</p>	Library Support Manager	December 2023 Complete
	The Home Delivery Library Service capacity will be increased and will be offered to disabled people as a reasonable adjustment to mitigate any barrier to library service access that they might experience as a direct result of the proposed closures, providing they meet the referral criteria.	Library Support Manager	January 2024
	Click and Collect will be extended and offered to disabled people as a reasonable adjustment to mitigate any barrier to library service access that they might experience as a direct result of the proposed closures.	Library Operations and Archive Manager	January 2024
	Digital support will be targeted at those who most need it. Better marketing and	Library Support Manager	December 2023

	<p>promotion of the e-library service offer is needed, as some people may be able to download books, audio, newspapers, magazines and comics to their own devices.</p> <p>Review the digital offer to improve accessibility and focussing on demand.</p>		
<p>Some disabled people, older people, children and people with young families rely on regular visits to their library to socialise and establish friendships and experience social and emotional support. User feedback suggests that many people who share different protected characteristics feel the library is a safe, familiar place in which they are comfortable, included, and respected.</p> <p>People from different ethnic minority communities indicated within the consultation that they would experience a significant impact from the proposed closure. Ethnic minority service users also indicated that they would be more likely to travel to other St Helens libraries or use the digital library service. So, the mitigations identified here will also lessen the impact for people from different Ethnic Minority Communities</p>	<p>Familiarisation visits to other libraries will be offered to disabled people, older people, and people with young families who may feel upset and angry that their library is closing and/or anxious about visiting other libraries. This will help them to feel welcome to visit other libraries, encourage them to continue to attend groups that promote social, emotional and wellbeing support and to help with the adjustment to the loss of their familiar library space.</p> <p>Staff will sign post vulnerable residents to additional support agencies.</p>	Library Operations and Archive Manager	December 2023
<p>The Library Service currently only collects data related to the protected characteristics of age, disability and race when someone joins the library, providing they complete the membership form fully. Therefore, there may be users visiting the library who are not library members but have one of the protected characteristics.</p>	<p>Ensure the open survey is available as a paper version and is in libraries and other venues for people to complete. The Library Service will work in partnership with other council officers and stakeholders to make the survey as widely available as possible, particularly to those who work with people who have a protected characteristic, e.g., SEND and Inclusion team. The Equality Impact questions within the consultation survey will help to identify the impact on individuals and may identify further mitigations.</p>	Library Service Manager	May 2023 Complete
<p>Local schools and nurseries visit Billinge Library to look at books and find out about the services on offer.</p>	<p>Ensure the open survey is sent to local schools and nurseries impacted. Use the Equality Impact Questions to understand the impact of the proposed closures and to identify any mitigation.</p> <p>Staff will also sign post to other libraries</p>	Library Service Manager	May 2023 Complete

	and ensure take up and use of the Schools Library service.		
The groups that used Billinge Library will be negatively impacted if the library permanently closes.	Comparison data - gather and utilise information from the consultation/discussion process/approach taken with community groups potentially displaced by library closures to assist with offering alternative places to meet.	Head of Culture and Wellbeing	May 2023 Complete

Performance Management	
Date of the next review of the EIA	December 2023
How often will the EIA action plan be reviewed?	Mitigation actions from this EIA will be included within the Library Service Business Plan and reviewed Quarterly until all actions are complete.
Who will carry out this review?	Library Service Management Team