



Abolishing library fines: Well-being Impact Assessment Report

This report summarises the likely impact of the proposal on the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of Denbighshire, Wales and the world.

Assessment Number: 1073

Brief description: Abolishing the charging of punitive fines to library members who return their books or other items after the due date.

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Responsible Service: Customers, Communications & Marketing

Localities affected by the proposal: Whole County,

Who will be affected by the proposal? Library members (borrowers) Library staff

Was this impact assessment completed as a group? No

Summary and Conclusion

Before we look in detail at the contribution and impact of the proposal, it is important to consider how the proposal is applying the sustainable development principle. This means that we must act "in a manner which seeks to ensure that the needs of the present are met without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs."

Score for the sustainability of the approach

3 out of 4 stars

Actual score : 31 / 36.

Summary for each Sustainable Development principle

Long term

The proposal will remove a barrier to library use which disproportionately impacts on people on lower incomes. It will also treat all library members equitably by not charging fines to adult borrowers, many of whom are older people and people with disabilities, or the borrowers of physical printed books. Borrowing and returning library books encourages people to share and re-use resources, indirectly reducing carbon emissions.

Prevention

The proposal will remove a real and perceived barrier to library use. Borrowing and returning library books encourages people to share and re-use resources, indirectly reducing carbon emissions.

Integration

Proposal will contribute to corporate priority of tackling inequalities and poverty by removing a barrier to library use which disproportionately impacts on people on lower incomes. It will also treat all library members equitably by not fining adults or borrowers of physical books. Fines, and the fear of accruing fines, exclude people from benefitting from the library's services, impacting their access to resources and facilities to support their literacy, learning, skills and wellbeing.

Collaboration

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Proposal has been developed after discussion with the 5 other library authorities in north of Wales in relation to harmonisation of policies and operational practices, and the impact on interlending of library items across region to maximise benefit to library members.

Involvement

We will work with DCC Comms and aim to ensure our engagement and communication makes current and potential library members aware of the proposed change.

Summary of impact

Well-being Goals	Overall Impact
A prosperous Denbighshire	Positive
A resilient Denbighshire	Positive
A healthier Denbighshire	Positive
A more equal Denbighshire	Positive
A Denbighshire of cohesive communities	Positive
A Denbighshire of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language	Positive
A globally responsible Denbighshire	Positive

Main conclusions

Library fines, and the fear of fines, are a punitive and significant barrier to library use - their removal will have a positive impact on the wellbeing of library members, current and potential, by enabling them to use their local library free from the fear or possibility of being fined for returning their books late. The WBIA demonstrates the wide range of areas in which using libraries help to achieve the WB

Abolishing library fines

goals - removing a barrier to that use will therefore have a positive impact overall.

The likely impact on Denbighshire, Wales and the world.

A prosperous Denbighshire

Overall Impact

Positive

Justification for impact

Encouraging use of libraries by removing a barrier will lead to more sharing of resources, more awareness of free public access digital facilities and support, and usage of library facilities and resources to develop skills and learning.

Further actions required

Encourage people to walk, cycle or use public transport when visiting the library

Positive impacts identified:

A low carbon society

Borrowing and returning library books encourages people to share and re-use resources, indirectly reducing carbon emissions.

All our libraries are in town centre locations and accessible by public transport, cycle or walking.

Quality communications, infrastructure and transport

Reducing barriers to library use will improve access to the library's free public access IT facilities and support which reduces digital exclusion

Economic development

[TEXT HERE]

Quality skills for the long term

Reducing barriers to library use will improve access to the library's resources and facilities to support learning and skills

Quality jobs for the long term

Proposal removes fines which disproportionately impact on people on lower incomes.

The experience or fear of fines may prevent a parent from using the library with their children, thus depriving them of the opportunity to access resources and facilities to support their literacy, learning, skills and wellbeing.

Encouraging library use by removing barriers will help Working Denbighshire participants to make the best use of the library's resources to develop their skills and confidence to secure a job or a better job.

Childcare

[TEXT HERE]

Negative impacts identified:

A low carbon society

People may choose to travel by car

Quality communications, infrastructure and transport

[TEXT HERE]

Economic development

[TEXT HERE]

Quality skills for the long term

[TEXT HERE]

Quality jobs for the long term

[TEXT HERE]

Childcare

[TEXT HERE]

A resilient Denbighshire

Overall Impact

Positive

Justification for impact

Sharing and re-using resources will be encouraged

Further actions required

By removing barriers, people will be encouraged to make greater use of the library's shared resources

Positive impacts identified:

Biodiversity and the natural environment

[TEXT HERE]

Biodiversity in the built environment

[TEXT HERE]

Reducing waste, reusing and recycling

Borrowing and returning library books is re-use in action as it encourages people to share and re-use resources, indirectly reducing carbon emissions.

Libraries' withdrawn stock is collected for resale, reuse or recycling.

Reduced energy/fuel consumption

[TEXT HERE]

People's awareness of the environment and biodiversity

[TEXT HERE]

Flood risk management

[TEXT HERE]

Negative impacts identified:

Biodiversity and the natural environment

[TEXT HERE]

Biodiversity in the built environment

[TEXT HERE]

Reducing waste, reusing and recycling

[TEXT HERE]

Reduced energy/fuel consumption

[TEXT HERE]

People's awareness of the environment and biodiversity

[TEXT HERE]

Flood risk management

[TEXT HERE]

A healthier Denbighshire

Overall Impact

Positive

Justification for impact

Libraries can make a significant contribution to people's wellbeing and health - removing the barrier of fines will enable more people to benefit from the library's services without the fear of being punished for returning their books late.

Further actions required

The promotion and marketing of libraries and their beneficial impacts will be more effective when there are no potentially negative risks such as fines for people who choose to use them.

Positive impacts identified:

A social and physical environment that encourage and support health and well-being

Removing a real and perceived barrier will encourage more people to access libraries and the resources available to support their health and wellbeing such as the Reading Well schemes, memory bags, jigsaws.

Libraries are also a place for social engagement and connection within a community

Access to good quality, healthy food

[TEXT HERE]

People's emotional and mental well-being

Reading is proven to be beneficial to emotional and mental health. By removing a barrier to library use, people will have access to a vast collection of books, free from the fear of incurring an overdue fine.

Using local libraries enables people to feel connected to their local community and to access resources and facilities which help them maintain their mental wellbeing.

Access to healthcare

By removing a barrier and encouraging use, awareness of libraries' resources related to health will be increased enabling people to self-manage and to be more informed about of health conditions

Participation in leisure opportunities

Abolishing library fines

Libraries offer a range of activities and events which can enrich people's lives and leisure time, including reading and craft groups, children's activities, and learning opportunities.

Reading is a key leisure activity for many people, including those who are unable to engage in physical leisure opportunities - libraries offer free access to thousands of books in a range of formats and opportunities to engage with other readers.

Negative impacts identified:

A social and physical environment that encourage and support health and well-being

[TEXT HERE]

Access to good quality, healthy food

[TEXT HERE]

People's emotional and mental well-being

[TEXT HERE]

Access to healthcare

[TEXT HERE]

Participation in leisure opportunities

[TEXT HERE]

A more equal Denbighshire

Overall Impact

Positive

Justification for impact

The proposal will ensure a more equitable service which does not disproportionately impact on

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people on lower incomes who often also have other protected characteristics. It will remove a real and perceived barrier to library use and the benefits which can result for members and their families.

Further actions required

The promotion and marketing of libraries and their beneficial impacts will be more effective when there are no potentially negative risks such as fines for people who choose to use them.

Positive impacts identified:

Improving the well-being of people with protected characteristics. The nine protected characteristics are: age; disability; gender reassignment; marriage or civil partnership; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion or belief; sex; and sexual orientation

Proposal to abolish fines will treat all library members equitably by not charging fines to adult borrowers, many of whom are older people and people with disabilities, or the borrowers of physical printed books who cannot of choose not to use digital resources.

Removing the barrier to library use will encourage people with protected characteristics to access and benefit from the library wide range of resources which include different formats of books to suit people's needs, diverse books reflecting LGBTQ+ and BAME lived experiences, and resources to learn and inform about gender, rights and beliefs.

People who suffer discrimination or disadvantage

[TEXT HERE]

People affected by socio-economic disadvantage and unequal outcomes

Fines disproportionately impact people on lower incomes. Abolishing fines will remove a significant barrier to library use by people affected by economic disadvantage and enable and encourage them to use the library free from the fear of being fined for returning books late. This will enable to access resources, services and support to improve their learning, leisure and enjoyment.

Parents will be more likely to use libraries with their families which will benefit their children's development - and reading for pleasure has a more significant impact on a child's future potential than their family's background.

Areas affected by socio-economic disadvantage

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Fines would be abolished across the whole county, including the areas of greater disadvantage where library usage is currently lower in proportion to population than in more affluent areas. This will enable us to promote the library and its services to people who would benefit from using them.

Negative impacts identified:

Improving the well-being of people with protected characteristics. The nine protected characteristics are: age; disability; gender reassignment; marriage or civil partnership; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion or belief; sex; and sexual orientation

[TEXT HERE]

People who suffer discrimination or disadvantage

[TEXT HERE]

People affected by socio-economic disadvantage and unequal outcomes

[TEXT HERE]

Areas affected by socio-economic disadvantage

[TEXT HERE]

A Denbighshire of cohesive communities

Overall Impact

Positive

Justification for impact

By removing the barrier of fines, more people will be encouraged and able to access the library and benefits from its services and opportunities.

Further actions required

The promotion and marketing of libraries and their beneficial impacts will be more effective when

Abolishing library fines

there are no potentially negative risks such as fines for people who choose to use them.

Positive impacts identified:

Safe communities and individuals

Libraries offer a safe staffed space for people to visit and use, where they can also access a wide range of other services to support their wellbeing and safety (eg Talking Points). By removing a barrier, more people will feel able to engage with the library.

Community participation and resilience

By removing a barrier and encouraging use, people will feel more confident in visiting and using their local library, and by doing so participating in a shared community resource. They will become more aware of, and thus can participate in, a range of activities and opportunities to develop their wellbeing, skills and confidence. Libraries offer universal access, and are safe and trusted places at the heart of local communities.

The attractiveness of the area

Many of Denbighshire's libraries are in iconic town centre buildings, thus maintaining the upkeep of significant historical buildings and enabling continued community access and use of the buildings. Others have green spaces alongside which we are increasingly managing as biodiverse spaces. Library interiors have benefited from a programme of refurbishment and modernising to make them attractive spaces. Removing a barrier to library use will encourage more people to use and enjoy the attractive spaces they offer.

Connected communities

Libraries offer free public access IT facilities to reduce digital exclusion, and a vast range of digital resources to download and access. By removing barriers to library use, more people will become aware of the facilities available to connect with the digital world.

Libraries are located at the heart of the 8 town centres, close to public transport links and access by walking or cycling. 7 of the libraries are also Council One Stop Shops providing face to face customer service on the full range of Council services - removing a barrier to one aspect of library use should encourage more people to visit and discover the other services on offer such as the OSS.

Rural resilience

There are libraries in the town centres which serve the rural parts of the county . People living in rural areas may be able to visit their town centres as often as people in urban areas - so may not visit the library as often to return or renew their books, and therefore be exposed to the risk of fines. By abolishing fines, people in rural areas are not disadvantaged, and removing the perceived barrier of a fine might encourage them to start using or make greater use of the library.

The rural parts of the county have a higher % of Welsh speakers - the library can be the only source of Welsh language books and magazines in the area - removing a barrier to library use would encourage more people to use the library and borrow Welsh books.

Negative impacts identified:

Safe communities and individuals

[TEXT HERE]

Community participation and resilience

[TEXT HERE]

The attractiveness of the area

[TEXT HERE]

Connected communities

[TEXT HERE]

Rural resilience

[TEXT HERE]

A Denbighshire of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language

Overall Impact

Positive

Justification for impact

Libraries actively promote the Welsh language and are a local community-focussed cultural venue and service - removing a barrier to using libraries will enable more people to visit, use and benefit from their services.

Further actions required

The promotion and marketing of libraries and their beneficial impacts will be more effective when there are no potentially negative risks such as fines for people who choose to use them.

Positive impacts identified:

People using Welsh

All libraries have staff able to speak Welsh, to offer service in Welsh and to engage in conversations with people in Welsh, and offer access to a wide range of Welsh books and magazines for people to read. Libraries have Welsh reading groups and organise Welsh and bilingual activities and events for children and adults. By removing a barrier to library use, more people will be encouraged to use the library.

The library can be the only source of Welsh language books and magazines in the area for people who want to read in Welsh. Removing a barrier to library use would encourage more people to use the library and borrow Welsh books.

Promoting the Welsh language

The library actively promotes the language through making available all books published in Welsh for free loan; organises events and activities such as author events and books launches, Summer Reading Challenge, Dechrau Da/ Bookstart, and often works in partnership with key agencies such as Menter Iaith. Removing a barrier to one aspect of the library (the borrowing of books) will encourage people to visit and use in general, and then be exposed to the visible promotion of the language through the bilingual signage, bilingual staff, books and resources on display and the range of activities and events.

Culture and heritage

The public library may be the only cultural facility in the town centre which is open to all and free to

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use. It promotes reading as a participatory cultural activity, and offers a range of activities and events to enrich community and individual lives. Several libraries are located in significant historical buildings, and all libraries hold resources relevant to the local history of its area. Removing a barrier to use should encourage more people to visit and engage with the culture on offer.

Negative impacts identified:

People using Welsh

[TEXT HERE]

Promoting the Welsh language

[TEXT HERE]

Culture and heritage

[TEXT HERE]

A globally responsible Denbighshire

Overall Impact

Positive

Justification for impact

Libraries encourage responsible and sustainable behaviour, based on sharing and re-using, and provide access to reliable information and services - removing a barrier will encourage use.

Further actions required

The promotion and marketing of libraries and their beneficial impacts will be more effective when there are no potentially negative risks such as fines for people who choose to use them.

Positive impacts identified:

Local, national, international supply chains

[TEXT HERE]

Human rights

[TEXT HERE]

Broader service provision in the local area or the region

[TEXT HERE]

Reducing climate change

Public libraries are founded on the principle of sharing and re-using sources for the community's benefit, and are a trusted source of information and learning. Libraries can play a key role in helping people learn about climate change and a more sustainable way of living. By removing a barrier to library use, more people will be encouraged to use and benefit from their library.

Negative impacts identified:

Local, national, international supply chains

[TEXT HERE]

Human rights

[TEXT HERE]

Broader service provision in the local area or the region

[TEXT HERE]

Reducing climate change

[TEXT HERE]