



Date: Wednesday, 3 December 2025

Time: 10.30 am

Venue: The Council Chamber, The Guildhall, Frankwell Quay, Shrewsbury, SY3 8HQ

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CABINET

TO FOLLOW REPORT (S)

18 Update on the School Library Service (SLS) (Pages 1 - 56)

Lead Member – Councillor Andy Hall, Portfolio Holder for Children and Education

Lead Officer – David Shaw, Director of Children's Services

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Committee and Date

Cabinet

3rd December 2025

Item

Public



Update on the School Library Service (SLS)

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Cabinet Member (Portfolio Holder):	Andy Hall		

1. Synopsis

This report outlines a proposal for the future of the Shropshire Schools Library Service, making a recommendation for Cabinet to consider. Provision of a School Library Service is not a statutory duty that the Council must provide, rather schools have an expectation to provide library resources as part of their curriculum offer. In September 2025, the DfE announced a government commitment to fund libraries in all state primary schools in England by the end of this parliament.

Given the financial emergency declared by Shropshire Council in September 2025, all options to reduce costs and expenditure on non-statutory services, particularly where they are making a financial loss, must be explored.

2. Executive Summary

2.1. On 10th September 2025, Cabinet declared a financial emergency. The Schools Library Service ("SLS") has been operating at a trading loss since 2022/23. The deficit has been increasing each year since that time and is forecast to end the 2025/26 financial year on a deficit of £79-90k. Due to the financial position faced by Shropshire Council, there are no further Council reserves available to underwrite future losses for non-statutory traded services.

- 2.2. Buy-in from schools for 2024/25 was significantly lower than in previous years: this was impacted by the uncertainty created by the limited term offer (the usual annual subscription of three terms was reduced to two, with no indication of provision being offered beyond December 2024) whilst the future of the service was considered by the Cabinet of the previous administration. Compared to 2023/24, SLS lost 47% of its LA maintained subscribers, 39% of academy subscribers and approximately 53% of out-of-county subscribers.
- 2.3. The presentation – and subsequent acceptance – of a Cabinet paper in September 2024 (included as Appendix A) resulted in operational changes to Shropshire SLS. The changes included relocation to a more affordable site, management of stock, and a reduction in the costs of several overheads, specifically transport. Overhead costs were reduced by at least 50%.
- 2.4. The agreed actions were implemented by the then Assistant Director for Education and Achievement. This included the exploration of appropriate grant funding opportunities (as detailed in 2.6). School buy-in has been closely monitored to inform whether it is sufficient to enable the SLS to be cost-neutral from 25/26 onwards.
- 2.5. A revised tariff was offered to schools that allowed them to buy into the service based on affordability and need. The tariff (as seen in Appendix C) allowed schools to loan a range of items on a termly basis rather than commit to a costly annual subscription. The requirement to move from the Shirehall site also meant that stock had to be reduced significantly and this also influenced the nature of the new offer to schools. The revised pricing structure avoided the cost of service level agreements being increased by 40%. Schools had indicated that level of price rise (up to 40%) would be unaffordable and the revised 'pay as you go' scheme would allow schools flexibility according to their budget position. This was also more manageable in view of a stock reduction. The DfE have also launched a pilot programme to trial assistive technology in schools, including 'lending libraries' of devices like reading pens and dictation tools to support SEND students. SLS was ideally placed to assist with this, which would result in additional income of £58k.
- 2.6. The revised tariff was launched in January 2025 with a lead-in time of two months to allow schools to place orders using the new online system. Although several schools that had not engaged with SLS for two or more years started to buy-in, there was a further decrease in orders being placed. Across Shropshire, there are only 13 schools that consistently use the service out of 152 state funded schools.
- 2.7. In the past two terms, the service has received several requests for book banding (a national scheme using colour-coded levels to grade children's reading books by difficulty) and/or training school librarians, indicating these schools already have library stock on-site. Discussions with headteachers indicate some schools have also now established their own on-site library, which is in line with current DfE expectations.
- 2.8. Despite a more flexible offer to schools, the service has not recovered the levels of school engagement pre-2024 when a potential closure was announced.
- 2.9. Considering the DfE's announcement and the uncertainty of future buy in, the following actions are proposed:

Cease trading SLS under Council control

It is proposed that, following Cabinet approval, the Director of Children's Services starts a period of engagement with external agencies to ascertain the viability of the service being maintained by a Multi-Academy Trust, Federation or other third-party organisation (for example, town or parish councils), in order to keep the resource in the county. This would enable interested organisations the opportunity to explore the possibility of assuming operation of the service. It should be noted that if there was no interest by Multi-Academy Trusts, Federations or other third-party organisations to run the service, the SLS would cease trading and close. In this event, the statutory 45-day consultation period with the 4 members of staff would commence.

Given the DfE announcements made in September 2025, schools will be required – and centrally funded by Government – to establish an onsite library. If no external stakeholder expresses an interest in maintaining the service, current SLS stock could be utilised to support this, offering schools in Shropshire the opportunity to build their library – free of charge – from existing stock in the service with resources allocated equitably across the county.

Associated costs:

The costs of transferring to a third-party organisation are to be determined through appropriate processes (e.g. TUPE)

In the event that the service ceases trading, total costs:

£102,102.06 (inc. Pension strain)

Implications:

- Potential loss of staff expertise and traded service if no third-party organisation identified
- Children and young people benefit from free resources to help establish an on-site library
- Risks to SEND/Assistive Technology programme if no suitable delivery alternative is found
- Some further costs associated with estates expenditure to remove items from site will be incurred.

In conclusion, the continued uncertainty of traded income means that the service is likely to end future financial years in a deficit position: the Council has insufficient reserves to cover a non-statutory service. This proposal allows wider engagement with third party groups to explore interest in retaining the service to ascertain the viability of maintaining school library resources for the county.

3. Recommendations

That Cabinet:

- 3.1 Approve the proposal to cease the operation by the Council of the Schools Library Service but before closing the Service altogether, delegate to the Director of Children's Services, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Children and Education, the implementation of an engagement process to ascertain the viability of the service being maintained by a Multi-Academy Trust, Federation, town or

parish council, or other third-party organisation. Should that engagement be unsuccessful in identifying a viable interest in operating the Service, it will be closed

Report

4. Risk Assessment and Opportunities Appraisal

- 4.1. The SLS has been in a constant state of flux for three years now. The impact on staff should be carefully considered.
- 4.2. Recent DfE announcements have indicated the direction of travel for Government policy: the risk is that these intentions are not realised which may result in children across Shropshire having limited access to valuable stock.
- 4.3. An Equality, Social Inclusion and Health Impact Assessment (ESHIA) has been carried out and is attached as appendix to this report, along with the initial ESHIA carried out in September 2024. The recommendation ensures that children and young people in Shropshire continue to have access to valuable resources that benefit them, their role in society and their understanding of the wider community. Retaining the SLS under a third-party organisation means that schools will still have access to buy-in resources.
- 4.4. Potential closure also ensures that schools have access to keep resources to assist in kickstarting their on-site libraries wherever these may be across our rural county, ensuring that children have access to resources in familiar surroundings. This is particularly important for SEND children including neurodivergent children, and those with additional learning needs, for whom familiar surroundings are important in aiding their learning, reducing the academic attainment gap with their peers, and supporting their inclusion in mainstream education. Locally accessible resources are also of importance for children learning about diversity and gaining greater awareness and understanding of themselves and of others in regard to gender reassignment, to race, to religion or belief, and to sexual orientation.
- 4.5. Overall, therefore, the likely equality impact has potential to be low to medium positive for those in the Protected Characteristic groupings of Age and Disability, with potential to be medium positive in impact; and to be low to medium positive in regard to the other groupings given intersectionality between these and the main grouping of consideration, ie Age.
- 4.6. From a health and wellbeing perspective, exploring the potential of moving the service to a third-party organisation would ensure resources which help children understand wellbeing and how to live healthy lives could be kept for continued use in schools across the county. Overall, the focus needs to remain upon children and therefore to Age and to Disability as the principal Protected Characteristic groupings, with regard to intersectionality between these and to other Protected Characteristics groupings to which children may consider that they belong. This will be of benefit to their mental well being and to their social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) needs, provided that resources are available to them in familiar surroundings of their own schools, and that access is ensured to assistive technology resources as well. This access will need to be kept under review whichever option proceeds.
- 4.7. Key risks are outlined below.

<i>Risk</i>	<i>Mitigation</i>
Reputational damage, breakdown of relationship with key stakeholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Consultation with key stakeholders to ascertain viability of service being transferred to an external organisation - If no external organisation is found, align messaging to DfE announcements highlighting that SLS stock will be given to schools equitably, free-of-charge to facilitate DfE's intentions, as well as continue to support promotion of reading and literacy among children.
Impact on health and wellbeing of staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - HR to co-ordinate consultation periods carefully and professionally, ensuring engagement with members of staff off sick or on maternity leave - All potential redeployment opportunities to be explored - Appropriate support from other directorates to be established to assist with any estates matters
Inability to deliver Assistive Technology project	Explore possibility of moving income to other services to support with delivery and promote inclusion of children with SEND in mainstream settings
Reputational damage through loss of expertise which impacts on schools	Explore possibility of retaining some expertise to assist with book banding and/or school librarian training on a casual basis as and when required.
Negative impact on children and young people as a result of loss of resources	Both potential options (transfer of service or distribution of resources) enable children and young people to retain access to resources in an environment already familiar to them.

5. Financial Implications

- 5.1. Shropshire Council continues to manage unprecedented financial demands and a financial emergency was declared by Cabinet on 10 September 2025. The overall financial position of the Council is set out in the monitoring position presented to Cabinet on a monthly basis. Significant management action has been instigated at all levels of the Council reducing spend to ensure the Council's financial survival. While all reports to Members provide the financial implications of decisions being taken, this may change as officers and/or Portfolio Holders review the overall financial situation and make decisions aligned to financial survivability. All non-essential spend will be stopped and all essential spend challenged. These actions may involve (this is not exhaustive):
- scaling down initiatives,
 - changing the scope of activities,
 - delaying implementation of agreed plans, or
 - extending delivery timescales.
- 5.2. One-off exit costs relating to the recommendation total £102,102.06. Ongoing revenue costs are in the region of £192,000; this reflects savings that have already been made to certain areas of expenditure (for example, premises hire, van lease).

6. Climate Change Appraisal

- 6.1. The recommendation would provide positive impact as the carbon footprint would be significantly reduced. Should the service be retained by another organisation, the carbon footprint could still be reduced through consideration of fuel emissions and energy usage. Closure of the service would remove fuel consumption entirely. Useful climate change resources would still be offered to schools to assist in establishing on-site libraries.

7. Background

- 7.1. Cabinet approved previous recommendations presented in a paper in September 2024. This resulted in operational cost savings being made and a new tariff being offered to schools. The paper also suggested further action could be taken to restructure to result in staff cost savings.
- 7.2. The new tariff allowed schools to buy-in flexibly, but this has increased uncertainty around the ability of the service to break even.
- 7.3. The potential of outsourcing the service was also presented in that paper.

8. Additional Information

- 8.1. In September 2025, the Department for Education announced that it will be mandatory for all state schools to have an on-site library, also indicating £10 million of funding to support this. (Further details: [New youth guarantee for eligible young people and funding for libraries in all primary schools - GOV.UK](#))

9. Conclusions

- 9.1. The Schools Library Service has operated at a loss for several years. Whilst the offer has been tailored to help ease pressures on school budgets, schools have not bought into the service at the same levels enjoyed in 2022. The DfE have made a commitment to ensuring each state primary school has its own on-site library and this indicates that buy-in levels for SLS will continue to decrease thus placing further financial pressure on Council budgets. The recommendation made ensures that a valuable set of resources for children in Shropshire can still be retained for their benefit.

Appendices

Appendix A – Cabinet Paper September 2024

Appendix B – ESHIA September 2024

Appendix C – Revised SLS tariff

Appendix D – ESHIA December 2025

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**Committee and Date:**

Cabinet

11th September 2024

Item

Public

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Future Options for Shropshire Schools Library Service

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Cabinet Member (Portfolio Holder):

Kirstie Hurst-Knight

1. Synopsis

- 1.1 This report considers the future of the Schools Library Service, responding to the outcome of the schools and public consultations.
- 1.2 The Schools Library Service is a long-established service offering a library service to Shropshire schools. It is a fully traded service that has a Service Level Agreement (SLA) with schools. There are a small number of schools from outside Shropshire who also subscribe to the library service.
- 1.3 Provision of a School Library Service is not a mandatory duty that the Council must provide under statute: schools themselves, rather than the Council, have a duty to provide library resources as part of their curriculum offer. As a result, a number of other Councils have ceased their equivalent provision. These include Birmingham, Herefordshire, Powys, Sandwell, Solihull, Staffordshire, Stoke and Wrexham.

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 This report sets out the feedback from the consultations, options identified and recommendations related to the future of the Schools Library Service.

- 2.2 The Schools Library Service (“the Service”) contributes to the Healthy People strand of the Shropshire Plan, enhancing the education of children and young people across the county.
- 2.3 The Service is fully traded with details of the Service Level Agreement with schools available at <https://shropshirelg.net/leadership-management-and-administration/service-level-agreements-2023-24/>. Core services include:
- Topic loans
 - Artefact loans
 - Reading set loans
 - Bulk loan of fiction for the school library to enhance choice
 - Door to door delivery and collection service
 - Professional advice and support
 - Access to cost-effective online e-resources
 - Advice on library refurbishment, resources and policy development
 - Assessment of stock and advice on book purchase
 - Training of school library staff and pupil librarians
 - Promoting schools reading for pleasure strategy
 - Key stage appropriate book quiz designed to enhance reading for pleasure
- 2.4 The Service made a trading loss in 2022/3 with the loss being covered by Council reserves. In 2023/24, the Service ended the financial year on a further trading loss, with a deficit of £58,815. Due to the financial position faced by Shropshire Council, there are no further Council reserves available to underwrite future losses for traded services. The Service is forecast to return an in-year deficit in 2024/5, which is forecast to be in the range of previous years and further exacerbated by reduced buy-in from schools during the first two terms of this financial year. The Service also faces increasing cost pressures (e.g. fuel, transport lease, salary costs, premises costs).
- 2.5 At the Cabinet meeting on the 17th April 2024, it was decided to launch a consultation regarding the future of the Service.
- 2.6 Public and school consultations sought feedback on a range of factors impacting the viability of the Service, alongside outlining potential increased costs and requesting views on the impact of closure of the Service. These closed on 7th June 2024. The surveys received 151 public responses and 57 school responded. Full reports are attached in appendices A and B respectively.
- 2.7 Of the 57 schools that responded, 79% were current subscribers to the Service. The survey highlighted that the most valued resources offered by the Service were topic loans, artefact loans and reading set loans.
- 2.8 69% of the schools that responded to specific questions regarding proposed increased costs indicated they would be willing to pay more to keep the Service. Illustrative subscription increases were proposed. The report (appendix B) summarises the budgetary pressures experienced by schools and responses indicate an acceptable price rise would be in the region of 10-20%.

- 2.9 The public response to the consultation highlighted the value of the Service to schools and communities. As with the school responses, most respondents felt that a blanket 40% price increase on subscription costs would be unacceptable.
- 2.10 The Service currently operates on a subscription basis with the current subscription model resulting in over 12 potential pricing structures. The current pricing structure was developed some time ago and it is timely to bring that up to date with schools' current requirements and to better reflect wider trading conditions. All current subscriptions are due to end on 31st December 2024.
- 2.11 Buy-in from schools for 2024/25 is significantly lower than in previous years. It is likely this has been impacted by the limited term offer whilst the future of the Service is considered.
- 2.12 Several ways to reduce the costs associated with delivering the Service (premises, vehicle and staffing) have been explored, with details outlined in section 4 and appendix E.

Options

Option 1: Closure of Service

- 2.13 Redundancy costs relating to option 1 total £98,708.74 (calculated to 31st March 2025). These can be capitalised.
- 2.14 Current school SLAs cease on 31st December 2024 which should not incur any refunds. The Service will need to continue in some form beyond this date in order to reconcile stock and organise returns from schools. Therefore, this option would likely come into effect at the end of the financial year, further increasing the in-year deficit.
- 2.15 Benefits of option 1:
- All future losses are minimised/removed.
 - Removal of the Service allows the Council to focus on statutory functions.
 - Reduction in carbon footprint.
- 2.16 Costs of option 1:
- Reputational damage to the Council, including erosion of relationship with key stakeholders as illustrated by the consultation outcome.
 - Children across the county and beyond may not have access to a wide range of affordable reading materials to support the curriculum.
 - An in-year deficit will still be generated and will need to be addressed as outlined in section 6.
- 2.17 Additional operational detail can be found in Appendix E.

Option 2: Relaunch/Restructure of Service

- 2.18 Initial conversations have been held with a small number of stakeholders (headteachers) prior to the summer recess. Feedback indicates that schools would appreciate a revised offer which retains the most valued aspects of the Service, alongside a new offer which adds further value to the curriculum. Clear packages will be offered to allow schools to buy into the Service on a 'pay as you go' basis.

2.19 The new tariff would be launched via a brochure and a streamlined online ordering facility. Subject expertise would be utilised to issue a termly video newsletter advising schools on recommended reading and their Reading for Pleasure strategy. An example of the enhanced offer can be found in Appendix C.

2.20 Benefits of option 2:

- Maintains the most valued elements of the Service for all children in Shropshire and beyond to access,
- Responds directly to the feedback received in the school and public consultations,
- Offers a range of options and purchasing methods which may be more affordable to schools,
- Schools would be offered an annual brochure (as per other traded services) which outlines the full package and allows for flexibility and transparency in budgeting,
- Encourages an inclusive approach to the curriculum which celebrates culture and diversity through the Artefact offers,
- Allows for some in-year cost savings to be made e.g. premises/storage hire, alternative vehicle hire, reduction in delivery service,
- Reduction in carbon footprint relating to vehicle/premises use.

2.21 Costs of option 2:

- Potential for limited school buy-in: schools have already set their budgets for 2024/25 and may not be able to afford increased or alternative buy-in, thus further increasing the Service's deficit,
- Current internal recharges may remain which would also increase deficit due to current premises and additional premises cost,
- An in-year deficit will still be generated and will need to be addressed as outlined in section 6.

2.22 Additional operational detail can be found in Appendix E.

Option 3: Reduction of Service

2.23 This option would implement all the elements of option 2 but would further reduce current staffing costs by moving to a four-day per week Service. In addition to the in-year savings that could be made through premises hire and vehicle use, staffing costs could be reduced to allow for a further reduction in the projected deficit (see Appendix E for detail.) This would reduce the establishment costs by approximately £25-31k per annum.

2.24 Benefits of option 3:

- As option 2 but with additional staff cost savings thus increasing surplus where possible.

2.25 Costs of option 3:

- As option 2 but with the potential of schools noticing the reduction in Service further negatively impacting buy-in.

Option 4: Outsourcing or subsuming the Service

- 2.26 There is no option to outsource the Service as it currently stands. There is the potential for elements of the Service to be subsumed into other areas of the Council, for example, artefact loan and the artefact plus packages could be co-ordinated by the museums and/or music service (see [Nottinghamshire Music Hub](#) as an example). This option would involve retaining all artefact boxes, along with an artefact plus offer. One member of staff would need to be retained to conduct this work and one smaller storage space would need to be sourced. Appendix E outlines figures predicated on an existing traded Council service subsuming the artefact offer.
- 2.27 Benefits of option 4:
- Some elements of the Service could be retained,
 - Potential to sell stock that will no longer be used.
- 2.28 Costs of option 4:
- Schools lose access to the experience and expertise of trained librarians, along with loss of access to valuable elements of the offer e.g. topic collections,
 - Other services may still require additional storage space and operational staff, placing further burden on their budgets.
 - This option presents a significant risk to other traded services whose income/reserves would be ringfenced to cover the prescribed activity only and not underwrite any potential Service deficit.

Summary

- 2.29 Options 2, 3 and 4 allow for further potential to secure external funding to allow the Service to continue, through exploring – for example – establishing a charitable arm to facilitate bidding for Arts Council/National Lottery grants. For example, an initial grant of £30,000 would enable the Service to revise and replenish its artefact stock in such a way that would increase its value to schools (for example, informational QR codes on each artefact would encourage schools/children and young people to curate their own exhibitions). This could be initiated as a pilot project with a small number of schools, moving to a larger bid of around £100,000 to offer to more schools in year two. It should be noted however that such grants have a 40% applicant success rate.
- 2.30 All of the above options will not significantly address or remove the in-year deficit which has been exacerbated by reduced school buy-in. However, should school buy-in achieve 2023/24 levels on the new tariff then the Service would be financially viable. The options in this report are presented with a view to reducing a projected deficit and securing the future of the Service. Without further action, the deficit is likely to be the same or greater than that accrued in 2023/24.
- 2.31 It is the duty of the Council to be financially viable and prioritise the provision of statutory services. Therefore, traded services must be cost-neutral to avoid exacerbating the unprecedented financial position as budgeted for with the Medium Term Financial Strategy approved by Council on 29 February 2024 and detailed in our monitoring position presented to Cabinet on a monthly basis.

3 Recommendations

That Cabinet:

- 3.1 Approve the implementation of option 2 (restructure/relaunch and relocation of the Service).
- 3.2 Delegate the detailed implementation of the agreed actions to the Assistant Director for Education and Achievement, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Children and Education. This should include the exploration of appropriate grant funding opportunities that would allow for additional development of the artefact offer with a view to further enhancing the cultural experiences of children and young people in Shropshire. This may include establishing a charitable arm of the Service.
- 3.3 Note that school buy-in will be closely monitored by the Assistant Director for Education and Achievement to inform whether school buy-in is sufficient to enable the Service to be cost-neutral from 25/26 onwards. If it is determined that further action is required to enable the Service to be cost-neutral from 25/26, this may include exploring implementation of option 3, or if necessary, option 1. Should option 1 need to be considered, a report to Cabinet will be drafted setting out the position before any decision is made.

Report

4 Background and Context

- 4.1 The total forecast salary cost for 2024/25 is £124,920. Some in-year cost savings could be made through a reduction in Service, with business operating hours reduced to four days per week and the delivery service reduced to three.
- 4.2 Compared to 2023/24, the Service has lost 47% of its LA maintained subscribers, 39% of academy subscribers and approximately 53% of out-of-county subscribers so far this year and therefore, the total current buy-in for the period up to December 2024 is as follows:

LA Maintained	£25,525
Academies	£11,342
Out-of-county	£29,387

- 4.3 Artefact loans are popular but as with subscriptions, are priced at three different levels (platinum, gold, and silver) and relate to whether a school is already a subscriber. Loans are currently priced between £20 and £30. This fee does not accurately reflect the value of these assets or appropriately cover the cost to the Service in relation to their preparation and delivery. In addition, there is no breakage or replacement policy: as a result, current stock needs extra attention.

- 4.4 The Service is based in the Annexe at Shirehall and it is expected they will need to vacate the building within the next six months. The cost of the current premises in 2023/24 was £19,500. The proposed recharge for 2024/25 is £19,780 with indication that any reduction in that cost (due to reduced users or vacation of building) would only be applied in 2025/26. This charge is not sustainable for the Service. Potential cost savings relating to alternative accommodation are outlined in 4.6 - 4.7.
- 4.5 Other cost saving options include vehicle lease and running costs. The Service currently has a liveried vehicle on long-term lease. The lease expired in June 2024 and there are no financial penalties for non-renewal. In 2023/24, vehicle costs were £8264.60. Switching to weekly hire of a vehicle and reducing the delivery service from four to three days per week (in term-time only) would reduce base hire costs to £3510 per annum, plus fuel. Annual charges relating to fuel are in the region of £1950.
- 4.6 Based on feedback provided in the consultations, there are four potential options to be considered. With the exception of option 1, all potential options require a vacation of the site at Shirehall and a move to alternative accommodation. The most pressing consideration is housing the Service's significant stock: multiple options have already been explored with the Estates Service which have included commercial space (at a cost of between £65,100 to £72,450 pa) and currently empty Council-owned buildings (which do not have lighting or appropriate facilities). This could be further explored, but at present, it is unlikely that like-for-like accommodation can be found.
- 4.7 Stock will need to be held in containers in commercial storage units and related costs are as follows;
- 225 sq.ft unit (carpeted and climate-controlled) £2,141.79 (+VAT) per annum
 - 220 sq.ft unit (carpeted and climate-controlled) £1,936.57 (+VAT) per annum

It is likely that at least three large units will be required at a total annual cost of **£6425.37*** (+VAT).

*This figure includes a free removal service.

5 Risk Assessment and Opportunities Appraisal

(NB This will include the following: Impact on Children and Vulnerable Adults, Risk Management, Human Rights, Equalities, Community and other Consultation)

- 5.1 Both the school and public consultations indicate that the Service is valued by schools and the wider community. This has been further indicated in subsequent correspondence outlining support which has been directly sent to the Service. Therefore, the main risk with any element of change to the current Service is that of reputational damage and a potential erosion of the relationship between the Council and its key stakeholders (schools, parents, children and young people.)
- 5.2 The four options outlined above have been assessed for risk in the options section of this report. Opportunities have also been outlined accordingly. Further detail for each option is included in appendix E. Key risks are however listed below.
- 5.3 A comprehensive ESHIA based on the recommendation is attached in appendix D. Given the potential positive equality and health and wellbeing impact identified by head teachers, and through public consultation, if Option 2 for restructure and

relaunch is adopted efforts may usefully be directed at achieving such impacts and at keeping these under review in order to maximise them wherever possible.

- 5.4 Overall, if Option 2 for relaunching and restructure of the service is adopted, there is an anticipated medium positive impact for children and young people, their parents and carers and family members, and all those with whom they come into contact in educational settings. Whilst the focus will be upon the Protected Characteristic grouping of Age as defined in the Equality Act 2010, there will be positive anticipated equality impacts across other groupings due to intersectionality between these. E.g., children with Social Emotional and Mental Health needs (SEMH), who may be in the Disability grouping, children of different religions or beliefs, learning about different cultures and heritage, and those we may regard as vulnerable, such as children and young people either in care or leaving care.
- 5.5 In terms of the additional grouping of Social Inclusion, where the Council seeks to give due regard to household circumstances, positive impact is anticipated for children and young people in rural communities, low-income households, and children for whom English is not their first language including refugee families.
- 5.6 The Service offers a range of resources which are focused on learning more about the body, mental and physical health, and healthy eating. These will be promoted accordingly and are likely to have a medium positive impact on children's understanding of how they can live a healthy life. Similarly, the artefact plus offer includes physical activities which promote collaboration, creativity, imagination, and team working.

Risk	Mitigation
Option 1: Reputational damage, breakdown of relationship with key stakeholders.	Careful messaging from directorate which signposts how other council services may assist schools in delivering the curriculum/reading strategies.
Option 2: Continuing low level of school buy-in on launch of new offer.	Marketing will be addressed accordingly: all schools will receive a brochure outlining the offer. Conversations with key stakeholders will continue throughout winter 24 and spring 25 terms to help school leaders transition. Pay-as-you-go offer may encourage schools to be more flexible with their budgets. Regular budget monitoring to ensure tariff is priced appropriately.
Option 2: Cost of premises and IT access, thereby increasing 24-25 deficit.	Work with Resources Directorate to ensure cost savings can be made upon immediate vacation of current premises, alongside addressing list of users to reduce other internal recharges.
Option 3: Erosion of relationship with key stakeholders resulting from a noticeable reduction in service.	Positive messaging from directorate which clearly outlines operating hours, manages expectations, and highlights the expertise that has been retained.
Option 4: Reputational damage through loss of expertise which impacts significantly on schools.	Careful messaging from directorate which signposts how other council services may

	assist schools in delivering the curriculum/reading strategies.
Option 4: Financial risk to other services that may assist with subsuming elements of the Service.	Maintain ringfenced budgets, monitor staff welfare and workload.
Options 2, 3 and 4: Risk to schools and Service staff arising from a change in premises.	The revised offer to schools takes into account the necessity for moving stock to storage units. Service staff will be required to spend time boxing collections appropriately.
ALL OPTIONS: Financial cost of covering an in-year deficit.	Options 2, 3 and 4 allow for additional time for the Service to become self-sufficient and fully traded. Option 1 ensures no further years of deficit will need to be covered.

6 Financial Implications

- 6.1 Shropshire Council is currently managing an unprecedented financial position as budgeted for with the Medium Term Financial Strategy approved by Council on 29 February 2024 and detailed in our monitoring position presented to Cabinet on a monthly basis. This demonstrates that significant management action is required over the remainder of the financial year to ensure the Council's financial survival. While all Cabinet Reports provide the financial implications of decisions being taken, this may change as officers review the overall financial situation and make decisions aligned to financial survivability. Where non-essential spend is identified within the Council, this will be reduced. This may involve
- scaling down initiatives,
 - changing the scope,
 - delaying implementation, or
 - extending delivery timescales.
- 6.2 The Service is paid for through subscriptions made by schools which are themselves funded from their delegated schools budgets – part of the Dedicated Schools Grant ('DSG'), controlled by Schools Leadership Teams in consultation with Governing Bodies.
- 6.3 In previous years, where the Service has incurred an operating loss (deficit) that has been funded via the wider General Fund of the Council, rather than having been attributed to the DSG. This has not previously been a problem, but the current financial environment (noted above, 6.1) means that all opportunities to safeguard the General Fund Balance must be taken.
- 6.4 This report provides a timely opportunity to correct previous practice, which emerged incrementally through previous years and has not attracted detailed scrutiny due to the low materiality of the sums involved. By creating a flexible approach to the Service subscription charges (set out as option 2) which include plans to secure full cost recovery for the Service from subscribing schools, the pressure on the General Fund can be alleviated but also the future of the Service can be planned for in a positive way. Any in-year surplus or deficits will be recovered to the DSG brought-forward balance. Benefits would accrue to future years with the potential for maintained/reduced prices, and costs would be covered in future years by increased prices.

- 6.5 Financial information has been provided throughout this document. As noted throughout, cost savings can be made in premises charges, vehicle usage, and internal recharges.
- 6.6 Allowing the Service a transitional term (January to March 2025) affords time to forecast budget appropriately for 2025/26 at which point, tariffs can be adjusted as required and staffing/establishment costs further considered.
- 6.7 Potential in-year operating deficits are outlined below based on indicative subscription levels:

Income based on 23/24 levels	£155,219	Deficit: £25,401
Income based on 24/25 levels	£114,388	Deficit: £66,232

7 Climate Change Appraisal

- 7.1 **Option 1:** This would present a one-off reduction in the carbon footprint of the Service. However, this will be overshadowed by the loss of educational resources on the subject of climate change and sustainability, which could result in a potential long-term increase in carbon emissions as a result of the loss of educating children about positive behavioural change.
- 7.2 A positive impact is expected in implementing **option 2**. Fuel consumption will reduce, as will carbon emissions. Energy consumption will also reduce when the Service moves to new premises.
- 7.3 As with option 2, a potential implementation of **option 3** adds further benefit, reducing the carbon footprint further as a result of moving to a four-day per week Service.
- 7.4 **Option 4** presents similar outcomes to option 1. The collections that would be retained under this proposal do not include resources on climate change and sustainability.

8 Conclusions

- 8.1 As evidenced in the school and public consultations and in subsequent correspondence received, the Service is valued by schools and parents throughout the county. Restructuring the way in which the Service works will allow for some internal cost savings alongside facilitating the launch of a new offer and pricing structure.
- 8.2 The pricing structure should allow users to engage with the Service in a more flexible manner to account for pressures on school budgets. Relaunching the Service from January 2025 will allow time to work with key stakeholders to further refine and inform the Schools Library Service offer.

List of Background Papers (This MUST be completed for all reports, but does not include items containing exempt or confidential information)

Local Member: All

Consultation with Local Member – Please consider the Local Member Protocol (see page E60 onwards of part 5 of the Constitution) and determine whether it is necessary to consult with the local member over the proposal set out in this report. This may not always be applicable (eg where the proposal affects all of Shropshire) but it should always be a consideration and in some cases a necessity so as to comply with the spirit of the Protocol.

Appendices [Please list the titles of Appendices]

Appendix A: Public Consultation Report
Appendix B: School Consultation Report
Appendix C: Example of 'Artefact Plus' offer
Appendix D: ESHIA
Appendix E: Operational Detail

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Shropshire Council
Equality, Social Inclusion and Health Impact Assessment (ESHIA)
Stage One Screening Record 2024

A. Summary Sheet on Accountability and Actions

Name of proposed service change
<i>Future Options for Shropshire Schools Library Service</i>

Name of the officer carrying out the screening
<i>Dr Sarah Browne</i>

Decision, review, and monitoring

Decision	Yes	No
Initial (Stage One) ESHIA Only?	YES	
Proceed to Stage Two Full ESHIA or HIA (part two) Report?		NO

If completion of a Stage One screening assessment is an appropriate and proportionate action at this stage, please use the boxes above, and complete both part A and part B of of this template. If a Full or Stage Two report is required, please move on to full report stage once you have completed this initial screening assessment as a record of the considerations which you have given to this matter.

<p>Actions to mitigate likely negative impact or enhance positive impact of the service change in terms of equality and social inclusion considerations</p> <p>In restructuring and relaunching the Schools Library Service offer, we are focused on ensuring the service retains the elements most valued by schools. The results of the school and public consultations conducted in June 2024 indicate that topic collections, artefact collections and group reading sets were of most value to staff and children. These elements have all been retained. The school consultation indicated that a proposed increase of 40% would be unaffordable: the service has taken this into consideration and will be offering a range of fixed-fee packages that will allow schools to choose their level of engagement in-line with affordability. The public consultation response illustrated a desire for the library service to continue to serve isolated, rural communities in particular: the service has kept free delivery of resources as part of its core offer in recognition that this is a key element to improve inclusion for rurally isolated schools.</p> <p>The restructuring of the core offer has allowed for the service to consider how it promotes and markets its topic collections and artefacts. Topic collections have been regrouped by key stage and topics are now more inclusive, for example collections relating to Black history now include resources on the African diasporic experience. In reconsidering the artefact collections, adding an artefact plus</p>
--

experience to the service's offer focuses on fostering a broader understanding and appreciation of culture by allowing children and young people to experience a more diverse approach to a curriculum topic. This offer aligns appropriately to topics directly related to some protected characteristics (e.g. race and religion or belief) and packages will be useful tools to foster appreciation of – for example – Black history month, Holocaust Memorial Day.

The pricing structure has been considered in detail, particularly mindful of the budget pressures on schools, allowing all schools to engage with the service based on affordability. Removal of the subscription fee allows for more schools to engage on a 'pay-as-you-go' basis: it is anticipated that this will help schools purchase single packages that will enhance curriculum delivery for children.

Actions to mitigate likely negative impact or enhance positive impact of the service change in terms of health and wellbeing considerations

The proposed restructure is likely to have a neutral impact on the direct health and wellbeing of individuals. However, the library service offers a range of resources which are focused on learning more about the body, mental and physical health, and healthy eating. These will be promoted accordingly and are likely to have a medium positive impact on children's understanding of how they can live a healthy life. Similarly, the artefact plus offer includes physical activities which promote collaboration, creativity, imagination, and team working.

Whilst the delivery service has been retained in order to continue to serve rural communities, it has been reduced to three days per week which will reduce carbon emissions.

Actions to review and monitor the impact of the service change in terms of equality, social inclusion, and health considerations

Following the public consultations, initial conversations with a small group of school leaders have taken place. Their feedback has informed much of the new offer. In the winter term of 2024, the service will continue to engage with these stakeholders in order to ensure that when the new offer is launched (1st January 2025), it meets the needs of children in those respective communities.

Furthermore, on relaunch, the service will continue these conversations in order to respond to specific need and assist schools in transitioning to a model that can benefit all children and young people. This will help to mitigate any potential negative impact schools may perceive in moving to a different pricing structure.

The service will implement a culture of listening to – and working with – stakeholders. This will be done through the conversations outlined above but through requesting more formal feedback via surveys, particularly following a school purchasing a new package.

A formal review of the service will take place in spring term 2025 with a view to planning for 2025/26. At this point, a further reduction in operating hours for the service may be required and a review of the impact of this will be completed.

Associated ESHIAs

There are no previous ESHIAs relating to restructuring the Schools Library Service.

This assessment aligns with all four corporate priorities of the Shropshire Plan, particularly Health People. It also aligns with the Vibrant Shropshire Cultural Compact ESHIA.

Actions to mitigate likely negative impact, enhance positive impact, and review and monitor the overall impacts with regard to climate change impacts and with regard to economic and societal impacts

Climate change

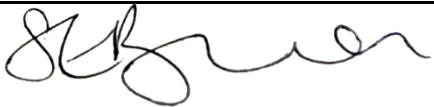

Reduction of the delivery service to three days per week will contribute positively to climate and sustainability targets. Moving to alternative premises will also impact positively on the service's carbon footprint.

Economic and societal/wider community

The restructure of the schools library service has maintained valued elements of its offer in order to continue to serve the wider community. Ongoing conversations with stakeholders will ensure that the new offer is commensurate with the affordability of school budgets. The new offer also allows for internal cost savings to be made whilst maintaining current staffing levels and moving to self-sustainability. The service will market its relaunch appropriately so that schools and the wider community can see the benefits of the enhanced educational and cultural offer.

There are no immediate impacts for the workforce although this will be considered, and a further impact assessment conduction should a reduction in service occur in early 2025.


Scrutiny at Stage One screening stage

People involved	Signatures	Date
<i>Lead officer for the proposed service change</i>		08/08/2024
<i>Officer carrying out the screening</i>		08/08/2024
<i>Any other internal service area support*</i>		
<i>Any external support**</i>		

**This refers to other officers within the service area*

***This refers to support external to the service but within the Council, e.g, the Performance and Research Specialist for Rurality and Equalities, Public Health colleagues, the Feedback and Insight Team, performance data specialists, Climate Change specialists, etc.*

Sign off at Stage One screening stage

Name	Signatures	Date
<i>Lead officer's name</i>		08/08/2024
<i>Service manager's name</i>		08/08/2024

**This may either be the Head of Service or the lead officer*

B. Detailed Screening Assessment

Aims of the service change and description
<p>The aim of the service change is to ensure financial stability for the schools library service. A number of options have been explored, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Closure of the service- Restructure/relaunch of the service- Reduction in service- Outsourcing/subsuming elements of the service

The recommendation is to restructure and relaunch the service with a view to continuing to monitor its financial stability and – if required – making reductions in the next financial year.

In restructuring its offer, the service is endeavouring to work more closely with schools, providing them with the option to buy into the service in a way that is affordable and adaptable, but ever mindful of the need for internal fiscal responsibility. The service change will allow for promotion of some of the most valued assets of the library service, enhancing their use and purpose further to provide improved cultural opportunities for children and young people.

The new offer responds to the outcomes of the school and public consultations by retaining the service and specifically retaining the most valued aspects of the service as outlined in both consultations. The service change seeks to retain and increase school buy-in by offering more affordable, pay-as-you-go packages in the hope that more children and young people throughout Shropshire can access these valuable resources.

Intended audiences and target groups for the service change
--

Children and Young People in Shropshire, teachers, governors, and parents. The service is also offered to schools in Telford and Wrekin and independent schools.
--

Evidence used for screening of the service change
--

Results of School and Public Consultations – closed June 2024.
--

Specific consultation and engagement with intended audiences and target groups for the service change
--

As above in addition to informal consultations with a group of headteachers.
--

Initial equality impact assessment by grouping (Initial health impact assessment is included below this table)

Please rate the impact that you perceive the service change is likely to have on a group, through stating this in the relevant column.

Please state if it is anticipated to be neutral (no impact) and add any extra notes that you think might be helpful for readers.

Protected Characteristic groupings and other groupings locally identified in Shropshire	High negative impact <i>Stage Two ESHIA required</i>	High positive impact <i>Stage One ESHIA required</i>	Medium positive or negative impact <i>Stage One ESHIA required</i>	Low positive, negative, or neutral impact (please specify) <i>Stage One ESHIA required</i>
<u>Age</u> (please include children, young people, young people leaving care, people of working age, older people. Some people may belong to more than one group e.g., a child or young person for whom there are safeguarding concerns e.g., an older person with a disability)			Medium positive impact for children and young people.	
<u>Disability</u> (please include cancer; HIV/AIDS; learning disabilities; mental health conditions and syndromes; multiple sclerosis; neurodiverse conditions such as autism; hidden disabilities such as Crohn's disease; physical and/or sensory disabilities or impairments)			Medium positive impact for children with additional learning needs.	
<u>Gender re-assignment</u> (please include associated aspects: safety, caring responsibility, potential for bullying and harassment)				Low positive impact.
<u>Marriage and Civil Partnership</u> (please include associated aspects: caring responsibility, potential for bullying and harassment)				Neutral
<u>Pregnancy and Maternity</u> (please include associated aspects: safety, caring responsibility, potential for bullying and harassment)				Neutral
<u>Race</u> (please include ethnicity, nationality, culture, language, Gypsy, Roma, Traveller)			Medium positive impact through introduction of artefact plus offer.	
<u>Religion or Belief</u> (please include Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Jainism, Judaism, Nonconformists; Rastafarianism; Shinto, Sikhism, Taoism,			Medium positive impact through	

Veganism, Zoroastrianism, and any others)			introduction of artefact plus offer.	
<u>Sex</u> (please include associated aspects: safety, caring responsibility, potential for bullying and harassment)				Low positive impact.
<u>Sexual Orientation</u> (please include associated aspects: safety; caring responsibility; potential for bullying and harassment)				Low positive impact.
<u>Other: Social Inclusion</u> (please include families and friends with caring responsibilities; households in poverty or on low incomes; people for whom there are safeguarding concerns; people you consider to be vulnerable; people with health inequalities; refugees and asylum seekers; rural communities)			Medium positive impact for rural communities, low income households, children for whom English is not their first language.	
<u>Other: Veterans and serving members of the armed forces and their families</u>			Medium positive impact.	
<u>Other: Young people leaving care</u>			Medium positive impact.	

Initial health and wellbeing impact assessment by category

Please rate the impact that you perceive the service change is likely to have with regard to health and wellbeing, through stating this in the relevant column.

Please state if it is anticipated to be neutral (no impact) and add any extra notes that you think might be helpful for readers.

Health and wellbeing: individuals and communities in Shropshire	High negative impact <i>Part Two HIA required</i>	High positive impact	Medium positive or negative impact	Low positive negative or neutral impact (please specify)
Will the proposal have a direct impact on an				Neutral.

individual's health, mental health and wellbeing? For example, would it cause ill health, affecting social inclusion, independence and participation? .				
Will the proposal <i>indirectly impact</i> an individual's ability to improve their own health and wellbeing? For example, will it affect their ability to be physically active, choose healthy food, reduce drinking and smoking? .				Low positive impact.
Will the policy have a <i>direct impact</i> on the community - social, economic and environmental living conditions that would impact health? For example, would it affect housing, transport, child development, education, employment opportunities, availability of green space or climate change mitigation? .			Medium positive impact. Reduction of carbon footprint and enhanced opportunities for education.	
Will there be a likely change in <i>demand</i> for or access to health and social care services? For example: Primary Care, Hospital Care, Community Services, Mental Health, Local Authority services including Social Services? .				Neutral.

Guidance Notes

1. Legal Context

It is a legal requirement for local authorities to assess the equality and human rights impact of changes proposed or made to services. It is up to us as an authority to decide what form our equality impact assessment may take. By way of illustration,

some local authorities focus more overtly upon human rights; some include safeguarding.

It is about what is considered to be needed in a local authority's area, in line with local factors such as demography and strategic objectives as well as with the national legislative imperatives.

Carrying out these impact assessments helps us as a public authority to ensure that, as far as possible, we are taking actions to meet the general equality duty placed on us by the Equality Act 2010, and to thus demonstrate that the three equality aims are integral to our decision making processes.

These are: eliminating discrimination, harassment and victimisation; advancing equality of opportunity; and fostering good relations.

These screening assessments for any proposed service change go to Cabinet as part of the committee report, or occasionally direct to Full Council, unless they are ones to do with Licensing, in which case they go to Strategic Licensing Committee.

Service areas would ordinarily carry out a screening assessment, or Stage One equality impact assessment. This enables energies to be focussed on review and monitoring and ongoing evidence collection about the positive or negative impacts of a service change upon groupings in the community, and for any adjustments to be considered and made accordingly.

These screening assessments are recommended to be undertaken at timely points in the development and implementation of the proposed service change.

For example, a Stage One ESHIA would be a recommended course of action before a consultation. This would draw upon the evidence available at that time, and identify the target audiences, and assess at that initial stage what the likely impact of the service change could be across the national Protected Characteristic groupings and our additional local categories. This ESHIA would set out intended actions to engage with the groupings, particularly those who are historically less likely to engage in public consultation eg young people, as otherwise we would not know their specific needs.

A second Stage One ESHIA would then be carried out after the consultation, to say what the feedback was, to set out changes proposed as a result of the feedback, and to say where responses were low and what the plans are to engage with groupings who did not really respond. This ESHIA would also draw more upon actions to review impacts in order to mitigate the negative and accentuate the positive.

Meeting our Public Sector Equality Duty through carrying out these ESHIAs is very much about using them as an opportunity to demonstrate ongoing engagement across groupings and to thus visibly show we are taking what is called 'due regard' of the needs of people in Protected Characteristic groupings.

If the screening indicates that there are likely to be high negative impacts for groupings within the community, the service area would need to take advice on whether or not to carry out a full report, or Stage Two assessment. This is resource

intensive but will enable more evidence to be collected that will help the service area to reach an informed opinion.

In practice, Stage Two or Full Screening Assessments have only been recommended twice since 2014, as the ongoing mitigation of negative equality impacts should serve to keep them below the threshold for triggering a Full Screening Assessment. The expectation is that Full Screening Assessments in regard to Health Impacts may occasionally need to be undertaken, but this would be very much the exception rather than the rule.

2. Council Wide and Service Area Policy and Practice on Equality, Social Inclusion and Health

This involves taking an equality and social inclusion approach in planning changes to services, policies, or procedures, including those that may be required by Government. The decisions that you make when you are planning a service change need to be recorded, to demonstrate that you have thought about the possible equality impacts on communities and to show openness and transparency in your decision-making processes.

This is where Equality, Social Inclusion and Health Impact Assessments (ESHIA) come in. Where you carry out an ESHIA in your service area, this provides an opportunity to show:

- What evidence you have drawn upon to help you to recommend a strategy or policy or a course of action to Cabinet or to Strategic Licensing Committee.
- What target groups and audiences you have worked with to date.
- What actions you will take in order to mitigate any likely negative impact upon a group or groupings, and enhance any likely positive effects for a group or groupings; and
- What actions you are planning to monitor and review the impact of your planned service change.

The formal template is there not only to help the service area but also to act as a stand-alone for a member of the public to read. The approach helps to identify whether or not any new or significant changes to services, including policies, procedures, functions, or projects, may have an adverse impact on a particular group of people, and whether the human rights of individuals may be affected.

There are nine Protected Characteristic groupings defined in the Equality Act 2010. The full list of groupings is: Age; Disability; Gender Reassignment; Marriage and Civil Partnership; Pregnancy and Maternity; Race; Religion or Belief; Sex; and Sexual Orientation.

There is also intersectionality between these. Eg a young person with a disability would be in the groupings of Age and Disability, and if they described themselves as having a faith they would then also be in the grouping of Religion or Belief. We demonstrate equal treatment to people who are in these groups and to people who are not, through having what is termed 'due regard' to their needs and views when

developing and implementing policy and strategy and when commissioning, procuring, arranging, or delivering services.

For the individuals and groupings who may be affected, ask yourself what impact do you think is likely and what actions will you currently anticipate taking, to mitigate or enhance likely impact of the service change? If you are reducing a service, for example, there may be further use you could make of awareness raising through social media and other channels to reach more people who may be affected.

Social inclusion is then a wider additional local category we use in Shropshire, in order to help us to go beyond the equality legislation in also considering impacts for individuals and households with regard to the circumstances in which they may find themselves across their life stages. This could be households on low incomes, or households facing challenges in accessing services, such as households in rural areas, and veterans and serving members of the armed forces and their families, or people that we might consider to be vulnerable, such as young people leaving care or refugee families.

Please note that the armed forces are now a grouping to whom we are required to give due regard under recent Armed Forces legislation, although in practice we have been doing so for a number of years now.

We are now also identifying care leavers as a distinct separate local grouping due to their circumstances as vulnerable individuals.

When you are not carrying out an ESHIA, you still need to demonstrate and record that you have considered equality in your decision-making processes. It is up to you what format you choose. -You could use a checklist, an explanatory note, or a document setting out our expectations of standards of behaviour, for contractors to read and sign. It may well not be something that is in the public domain like an ESHIA, but you should still be ready for it to be made available.

Both the approaches sit with a manager, and the manager has to make the call, and record the decision made on behalf of the Council.

Carry out an ESHIA:

- If you are building or reconfiguring a building.
- If you are planning to reduce or remove or reconfigure a service.
- If you are consulting on a policy or a strategy.
- If you are bringing in a change to a process or procedure that involves other stakeholders and the wider community as well as particular groupings

Carry out and record your equality and social inclusion approach:

- If you are setting out how you expect a contractor to behave with regard to equality, where you are commissioning a service or product from them.
- If you are setting out the standards of behaviour that we expect from people who work with vulnerable groupings, such as taxi drivers that we license.

- If you are planning consultation and engagement activity, where we need to collect equality data in ways that will be proportionate and non-intrusive as well as meaningful for the purposes of the consultation itself.
- If you are looking at services provided by others that help the community, where we need to demonstrate a community leadership approach

3. Council wide and service area policy and practice on health and wellbeing

This is a relatively new area to record within our overall assessments of impacts, for which we are asking service area leads to consider health and wellbeing impacts, and to look at these in the context of direct and indirect impacts for individuals and for communities.

A better understanding across the Council of these impacts will also better enable the Public Health colleagues to prioritise activities to reduce health inequalities in ways that are evidence based and that link effectively with equality impact considerations and climate change mitigation.

Health in All Policies – Health Impact Assessment

Health in All Policies is an upstream approach for health and wellbeing promotion and prevention, and to reduce health inequalities. The Health Impact Assessment (HIA) is the supporting mechanism

- Health Impact Assessment (HIA) is the technical name for a process that considers the wider effects of local policies, strategies and initiatives and how they, in turn, may affect people's health and wellbeing.
- Health Impact Assessment is a means of assessing both the positive and negative health impacts of a policy. It is also a means of developing good evidence-based policy and strategy using a structured process to review the impact.
- A Health Impact Assessment seeks to determine how to maximise health benefits and reduce health inequalities. It identifies any unintended health consequences. These consequences may support policy and strategy or may lead to suggestions for improvements.
- An agreed framework will set out a clear pathway through which a policy or strategy can be assessed and impacts with outcomes identified. It also sets out the support mechanisms for maximising health benefits.

The embedding of a Health in All Policies approach will support Shropshire Council through evidence-based practice and a whole systems approach, in achieving our corporate and partnership strategic priorities. This will assist the Council and partners in promoting, enabling and sustaining the health and wellbeing of individuals and communities whilst reducing health inequalities.

Individuals

Will the proposal have a *direct impact* on health, mental health and wellbeing?

For example, would it cause ill health, affecting social inclusion, independence and participation?

Will the proposal directly affect an individual's ability to improve their own health and wellbeing?

This could include the following: their ability to be physically active e.g., being able to use a cycle route; to access food more easily; to change lifestyle in ways that are of positive impact for their health.

An example of this could be that you may be involved in proposals for the establishment of safer walking and cycling routes (e.g., green highways), and changes to public transport that could encourage people away from car usage. and increase the number of journeys that they make on public transport, by foot or on bicycle or scooter. This could improve lives.

Will the proposal *indirectly impact* an individual's ability to improve their own health and wellbeing?

This could include the following: their ability to access local facilities e.g., to access food more easily, or to access a means of mobility to local services and amenities? (e.g. change to bus route)

Similarly to the above, an example of this could be that you may be involved in proposals for the establishment of safer walking and cycling routes (e.g. pedestrianisation of town centres), and changes to public transport that could encourage people away from car usage, and increase the number of journeys that they make on public transport, by foot or on bicycle or scooter. This could improve their health and well being.

Communities

Will the proposal directly or indirectly affect the physical health, mental health, and wellbeing of the wider community?

A *direct impact* could include either the causing of ill health, affecting social inclusion, independence and participation, or the promotion of better health.

An example of this could be that safer walking and cycling routes could help the wider community, as more people across groupings may be encouraged to walk more, and as there will be reductions in emission leading to better air quality.

An *indirect impact* could mean that a service change could indirectly affect living and working conditions and therefore the health and well being of the wider community.

An example of this could be: an increase in the availability of warm homes would improve the quality of the housing offer in Shropshire and reduce the costs for households of having a warm home in Shropshire. Often a health promoting approach also supports our agenda to reduce the level of Carbon Dioxide emissions and to reduce the impact of climate change.

Please record whether at this stage you consider the proposed service change to have a direct or an indirect impact upon communities.

Demand

Will there be a change in demand for or access to health, local authority and social care services?

For example: Primary Care, Hospital Care, Community Services, Mental Health and Social Services?

An example of this could be: a new housing development in an area would affect demand for primary care and local authority facilities and services in that location and surrounding areas. If the housing development does not factor in consideration of availability of green space and safety within the public realm, further down the line there could be an increased demand upon health and social care services as a result of the lack of opportunities for physical recreation, and reluctance of some groupings to venture outside if they do not perceive it to be safe.

For further advice: please contact

Lois Dale via email lois.dale@shropshire.gov.uk, or

Phil Northfield via email Phillip.Northfield@shropshire.gov.uk

Welcome to Shropshire School Library Service

November 2024.

We are delighted to launch our new offer for the academic year 2024 – 25.

Our brochure features a range of valuable resources designed to support you in the classroom.

If you're a regular user of the service, you'll note that our offer looks much improved.

We've simplified our ordering process to make it easier for you to choose and budget for resources.

As you know the School Library Service exists to improve your student's learning outcomes and bring the curriculum to life.

We are grateful for your support and are keen to continue to keep improving our service to meet your needs.

To complete your order, please click on the link at the top of each page throughout this brochure. Or [CLICK HERE](#).

We look forward to working with you and your continued support will help us to help your children to succeed.

The SLS Team

sls@shropshire.gov.uk

No subscription is required to access any aspect of our services.

Simply choose everything you need for the term ahead and it will, as always, be delivered free to your door*.

*Please note a minimum order of £150 is required to qualify for free delivery.

The next few months will be busy as we move from Shirehall to our new secure premises whilst fulfilling your orders for January 2025.

Although this will mean we can no longer offer the ability to browse our shelves, we can still visit your school to offer specialist support on your existing library stock or assist with your Reading for Pleasure strategy.

We'll also be offering regular CPD and newsletters to further support you in the classroom and beyond.



Examples of packages available:

New to SLS? Try our Term Taster Package:

Included:

- Two topic boxes (one for key stage 1, one for key stage 2)
- 60 fiction books (choice of one or both key stages)
- One group reader
- One artefact box (subject to availability)

Cost for the first term: £300

New Artefact Plus experiences your children will never forget:



Celebrate Black History with our djembe drumming workshops & African instruments or bring the history of World War II to life with our 'entertaining the troops' workshop.

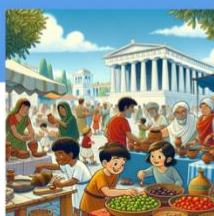
Read more below..

Topic Box

- 30 non-fiction books on a set topic
- Choose from a range of topics suited to the curriculum
- Available for key stage 1 & 2

Popular topics include: Ancient Rome, All About Me, Weather and Climate, Greek Culture, Religions of the World, Continents and Oceans.

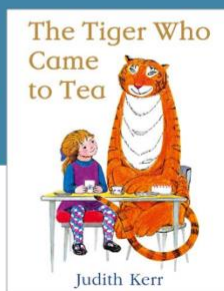
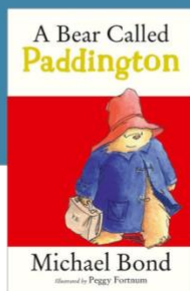
Price per Term: £75.00



- 30 fiction books from popular authors
- Titles chosen to suit relevant key stage

Fiction Collection

Price per Term: £60.00



Individual items: £2.70 per item



Group Reader

- 6 group reading sets
- Each reading set contains 5-7 of the same books
- Titles chosen to suit relevant year group

Price per Term: £105.00



Artefact Boxes

Examples of artefact boxes:

- British Seaside of the Past
- Stone Age
- Industrial Revolution
- Fossils and Dinosaurs

Artefact Box prices - chosen by topic

Small collection: £50.00 per half term

Medium collection: £75.00 per half term

Large collection: £100.00 per half term



*In the unlikely event that artefacts are received damaged, please inform us immediately. Please note that a £20 per item charge will be applied for any damaged items.



Artefact Experiences

Dive into history with Shropshire School Library Service!
Our educational adventures offer young children exciting themes and hands-on experiences, bringing the past to life and sparking curiosity in every young explorer.



Black History

African cultural artefact boxes, a range of African instruments to play PLUS Djembe drumming workshops.

Join us on a musical adventure, exploring African history through lively songs and stories! Dive into the rhythms, melodies, and vibrant tales bringing rich cultural traditions to life.

Embark on a journey through ancient Rome! Explore the legends, heroes, and history of this great empire with captivating stories, making Roman history fun for young explorers.

The Romans!

Roman artefact boxes PLUS a guided tour of Wroxeter Roman city!



WW2

Historical artefact boxes PLUS ukulele workshop!

Experience World War II history through music and stories! Discover the courage and resilience of this era with engaging songs and tales, making the lessons of the past accessible.

Discover the Amazon's wonders and learn about climate change through music and stories. This connects young children to the rainforest's beauty and the importance of protecting our planet.

Climate Awareness

Amazonian artefact box PLUS Samba drumming workshop!



Artefact Experiences

Price per half term including a half day 'experience': £300.00

Shropshire Council
Equality, Social Inclusion and Health Impact Assessment (ESHIA)
Stage One Screening Record 2025

A. Summary Sheet on Accountability and Actions

Name of proposed service change
<i>Future Options for Shropshire Schools Library Service</i>

Name of the officer carrying out the screening
<i>Dr Sarah Browne</i>

Decision, review, and monitoring

Decision	Yes	No
Initial (Stage One) ESHIA Only?	YES	
Proceed to Stage Two Full ESHIA or HIA (part two) Report?		NO

If completion of a Stage One screening assessment is an appropriate and proportionate action at this stage, please use the boxes above, and complete both part A and part B of of this template. If a Full or Stage Two report is required, please move on to full report stage once you have completed this initial screening assessment as a record of the considerations which you have given to this matter.

<p>Actions to mitigate likely negative impact or enhance positive impact of the service change in terms of equality and social inclusion considerations</p> <p>A recommendation for Shropshire Schools Library Service to cease trading under Council control is proposed. Provision of a School Library Service is not a statutory duty that the Council must provide under statute: schools have a duty to provide library resources as part of their curriculum offer. The recommendation allows for alternative options to be explored, namely the possibility of a third-party organisation assuming operational control of the service. If a feasible alternative cannot be found, the service would close with all existing resources offered to state schools in Shropshire to enable them to assist in establishing an on-site library.</p> <p>In September 2025, the DfE announced a Government commitment to fund libraries in all state primary schools in England by the end of this parliament.</p> <p>In light of the DfE's announcement that it will be mandatory for all state schools to have an on-site library, the potential closure of the service means that SLS and Shropshire Council would be uniquely placed to assist schools across the county in establishing on-site libraries. The current stock of resources would be offered free-of-charge to schools in Shropshire, enabling them to kickstart their own</p>

library. Children in Shropshire would still have access to a range of resources that help them understand the world around them.

The proposal ensures that children and young people in Shropshire continue to have access to valuable resources that benefit them, their role in society and their understanding of the wider community. Retaining the service under a third-party organisation means that schools will still have access to buy-in resources. Potential closure also ensures that schools have access to keep resources to assist in kickstarting their on-site libraries wherever these may be across our rural county, ensuring that children have access to resources in familiar surroundings.

This is particularly important for SEND children including neurodivergent children, and those with additional learning needs, for whom familiar surroundings are important in aiding their learning, reducing the academic attainment gap with their peers, and supporting their inclusion in mainstream education. Locally accessible resources are also of importance for children learning about diversity and gaining greater awareness and understanding of themselves and of others in regard to gender reassignment, to race, to religion or belief, and to sexual orientation.

Overall, therefore, the likely equality impact has potential to be low to medium positive for those in the Protected Characteristic groupings of Age and Disability, with potential to be medium positive in impact; and to be low to medium positive in regard to the other groupings given intersectionality between these and the main grouping of consideration, ie Age.

Actions to mitigate likely negative impact or enhance positive impact of the service change in terms of health and wellbeing considerations

Exploring the potential of moving the service to a third-party organisation would ensure resources which help children understand wellbeing and how to live healthy lives could be kept for continued use in schools across the county.

This may also serve to mitigate against potential negative impacts on the health and wellbeing considerations of staff, in regard to potential closure of the service. HR will conduct a thorough consultation period to support staff appropriately and seek redeployment opportunities where they exist. Closure of the service would also place significant pressure on any remaining staff who would be responsible for estates and resource management. Suitable support would be allocated to these tasks.

Overall, the focus needs to remain upon children and therefore to Age and to Disability as the principal Protected Characteristic groupings, with regard to intersectionality between these and to other Protected Characteristics groupings to which children may consider that they belong. This will be of benefit to their mental well being and to their social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) needs, provided that resources are available to them in familiar surroundings of their own

schools, and that access is ensured to assistive technology resources as well. This access will need to be kept under review whichever option proceeds.

Actions to review and monitor the impact of the service change in terms of equality, social inclusion, and health considerations

In restructuring and relaunching the Schools Library Service offer in 2024, following consultation with schools and with the public, the focus was on ensuring the service retained the elements most valued by schools. The results of the school and public consultations had indicated that topic collections, artefact collections and group reading sets were of most value to staff and children. These elements were all retained. The school consultation indicated that a proposed increase of 40% would be unaffordable: the service had taken this into consideration and offered a range of fixed-fee packages to allow schools to choose their level of engagement in-line with affordability. The public consultation response had illustrated a desire for the library service to continue to serve isolated, rural communities in particular: the service has kept free delivery of resources as part of its core offer in recognition that this is a key element to improve inclusion for rurally isolated schools.

The restructuring of the core offer had allowed for the service to consider how it promoted and marketed its topic collections and artefacts. Topic collections were regrouped by key stage and topics are now more inclusive, for example collections relating to Black history now include resources on the African diasporic experience. In reconsidering the artefact collections, adding an artefact plus experience to the service's offer focuses on fostering a broader understanding and appreciation of culture by allowing children and young people to experience a more diverse approach to a curriculum topic. This offer aligns appropriately to topics directly related to some Protected Characteristics (e.g. Race and Religion or Belief) and packages will be useful tools to foster appreciation of – for example – Black History Month, Holocaust Memorial Day.

Removal of the subscription fee allowed for more schools to engage on a 'pay-as-you-go' basis: it was anticipated that this will help schools purchase single packages that will enhance curriculum delivery for children.

The revised tariff was launched in January 2025 with a lead-in time of two months to allow schools to place orders using the new online system. Although several schools that had not engaged with SLS for two or more years started to buy-in, there was a further decrease in orders being placed. Across Shropshire, there are 13 schools that consistently use the service out of 152 state funded schools.

The previous ESHIA impact included an indication that a formal review of the service would take place in spring term 2025, with a view to planning for 2025/26. Given that despite best efforts made following the consultation, and a reduction in overheads, the uptake has remained low, this data has to also be considered

alongside the DfE announcement in regard to requirement for schools to establish on-site libraries and the Council's own financial constraints.

If recommendation for closure is approved, the Director of Children's Services will instigate and lead consultation with potential parties who may be interested in assuming leadership of the service. The HR business partner will be responsible for monitoring the impact of potential closure on the workforce.

The Director of Children's Services and relevant members of his team will consider estates implications of potential closure and removal of stock and allocate suitable resources to this task. A detailed operational timeline will be produced to ensure oversight.

Associated ESHIAs

The ESHIA carried out in September 2024 forms Appendix B to the Cabinet report due to be considered in December 2025. It provides further detail on the decisions at that time, and the commitment to keep these under review.

Actions to mitigate likely negative impact, enhance positive impact, and review and monitor the overall impacts with regard to climate change impacts and with regard to economic and societal impacts

Climate change

The proposal would provide a positive impact as the carbon footprint would be significantly reduced. Should the service be retained by another organisation, the carbon footprint could still be reduced through consideration of fuel emissions and energy usage. Closure of the service would remove fuel consumption entirely. Useful climate change resources would still be offered to schools to assist in establishing on-site libraries.

Economic and societal/wider community


The proposal ensures that children and young people in Shropshire continue to have access to valuable resources that benefit them, their role in society and their understanding of the wider community. Retaining the service under a third-party organisation means that schools will still have access to buy-in resources. Potential closure also ensures that schools have access to keep resources to assist in kickstarting their on-site libraries.

Further actions taken to mitigate likely negative impact include commencing a thorough and detailed consultation period to assess the viability of the service

being transferred to a third-party organisation. This ensures resources are retained in-county to allow schools to access as required.

Potential closure of the service will result in a staff consultation period of 45 days. It is acknowledged that there is a likely negative impact for staff currently employed, ahead of what may become neutral or positive impacts such as may be achieved through redeployment. During this time HR will ensure that redeployment opportunities are comprehensively explored. One member of staff is currently on maternity leave: extended protections are in place. The employee is entitled to be offered a suitable alternative vacancy where one exists. The work to be done in that post must be suitable and appropriate, the capacity and place in which they are to be employed, and their terms and conditions of employment are not substantially less favourable to them than if they had been able to return in the job in which they were originally employed.

Scrutiny at Stage One screening stage

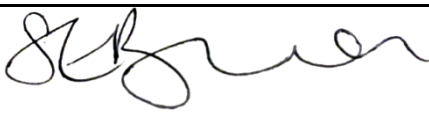
People involved	Signatures	Date
<i>Lead officer for the proposed service change</i>		
<i>Officer carrying out the screening</i> Doctor Sarah Browne		28/10/2025
<i>Any other internal service area support*</i>		
<i>Any external support**</i> Mrs Lois Dale Senior Insights and Research EDI Specialist		02/11/2025
Phil Northfield <i>Public Health Integration & Inequalities Officer</i>		03/11/2025

**This refers to other officers within the service area*

***This refers to support external to the service but within the Council, e.g, the Senior insights and Research EDI Specialist, Public Health colleagues, the Feedback and Insight Team, performance data specialists, Climate Change specialists, etc.*

Sign off at Stage One screening stage

Name	Signatures	Date
<i>Lead officer's name</i>		

Service manager's name Doctor Sarah Browne		28/10/2025

**This may either be the Head of Service or the lead officer*

B. Detailed Screening Assessment

Aims of the service change and description

The aim of the service change is to enable Shropshire Council to focus its limited resources on statutory services and the service should therefore cease trading under Council control.

Cease trading the service under Council control

It is proposed that, pending cabinet approval, the Director of Children's Services starts a period of engagement with external agencies to ascertain the viability of the service being maintained by a Multi-Academy Trust, Federation or other third-party organisation (for example, town or parish councils), in order to keep the resource in the county. This would enable interested organisations the opportunity to explore the possibility of assuming operation of the service. It should be noted that if there was no interest by Multi-Academy Trusts, Federations or other third-party organisations to run the service, the SLS would cease trading and close. In this event, the statutory 45-day consultation period with the 4 members of staff would commence.

Given the DfE announcements made in September 2025, schools will be required – and centrally funded by Government – to establish an onsite library. If no external stakeholder expresses an interest in maintaining the service, current SLS stock could be utilised to support this, offering schools in Shropshire the opportunity to build their library – free of charge – from existing stock in the service with resources allocated equitably across the county.

Associated costs:

The costs of transferring to a third-party organisation are to be determined through appropriate processes (e.g. TUPE)

In the event that the service ceases trading, total costs:

£102,102.06 (inc. Pension strain)

Implications:

- Potential loss of staff expertise and traded service if no third-party organisation identified
- Children and young people benefit from free resources to help establish an on-site library

- Risks to SEND/Assistive Technology programme if no suitable delivery alternative is found
- Some further costs associated with estates expenditure to remove items from site will be incurred.

In conclusion, the continued uncertainty of traded income means that the service is likely to end future financial years in a deficit position: the Council has insufficient reserves to cover a non-statutory service. This proposal allows wider engagement with third party groups to explore interest in retaining the service to ascertain the viability of maintaining school library resources for the county.

Intended audiences and target groups for the service change

Children and Young People in Shropshire, teachers, governors, and parents. The service is also offered to schools in Telford and Wrekin and independent schools.

Evidence used for screening of the service change

Results of School and Public Consultations – closed June 2024.
Cabinet paper – September 2024
Data on uptake of the service offer, following changes made as a result of the September 2024 decisions by Cabinet (showing only 13 Shropshire schools are now regularly buying into the service)
Informal discussions with headteachers including further promotion of the offer at Schools Forum in September 2025.

Specific consultation and engagement with intended audiences and target groups for the service change

The intended audience is children and young people in Shropshire, and also in Telford and Wrekin, in primary school age groups. Engagement will be with those who act on their behalf in terms of their education, ie teachers, support staff, governors, and parents, as well as potentially secondary schools linked to primary schools due to MAT status.

Additional consideration will need to be given to engagement with those acting on behalf of children with SEND needs, in regard to the assistive technology 'lending library' and where that might be located if the SLS closes.

Consultation will take place with potential interested third-party organisations in regard to proposed service changes.

Engagement will also need to take place with Council staff.

Initial equality impact assessment by grouping (Initial health impact assessment is included below this table)

Please rate the impact that you perceive the service change is likely to have on a group, through stating this in the relevant column.

Please state if it is anticipated to be neutral (no impact) and add any extra notes that you think might be helpful for readers.

Protected Characteristic groupings and other groupings locally identified in Shropshire	High negative impact <i>Stage Two ESHIA required</i>	High positive impact <i>Stage One ESHIA required</i>	Medium positive or negative impact <i>Stage One ESHIA required</i>	Low positive, negative, or neutral impact (please specify) <i>Stage One ESHIA required</i>
<u>Age</u> (please include children, young people, young people leaving care, people of working age, older people. Some people may belong to more than one group e.g., a child or young person for whom there are safeguarding concerns e.g., an older person with a disability)				Low to medium positive impact for children and young people
<u>Disability</u> (please include cancer; HIV/AIDS; learning disabilities; mental health conditions and syndromes; multiple sclerosis; neurodiverse conditions such as autism; hidden disabilities such as Crohn's disease; physical and/or sensory disabilities or impairments)				Low to medium positive impact for SEND children and those with additional learning needs if resources are within their own schools and therefore accessible and in familiar surroundings
<u>Gender re-assignment</u> (please include associated aspects: safety, caring responsibility, potential for bullying and harassment)				Low positive impact if resources are within their own schools and therefore accessible and in familiar surroundings.
<u>Marriage and Civil Partnership</u>				Neutral

(please include associated aspects: caring responsibility, potential for bullying and harassment)				
<u>Pregnancy and Maternity</u> (please include associated aspects: safety, caring responsibility, potential for bullying and harassment)				Neutral
<u>Race</u> (please include ethnicity, nationality, culture, language, Gypsy, Roma, Traveller)				Low to medium positive impact if resources are within their own schools and therefore accessible and in familiar surroundings
<u>Religion or Belief</u> (please include Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Jainism, Judaism, Nonconformists; Rastafarianism; Shinto, Sikhism, Taoism, Veganism, Zoroastrianism, and any others)				Low to medium positive impact if resources are within their own schools and therefore accessible and in familiar surroundings
<u>Sex</u> (please include associated aspects: safety, caring responsibility, potential for bullying and harassment)				Neutral
<u>Sexual Orientation</u> (please include associated aspects: safety; caring responsibility; potential for bullying and harassment)				Low to medium positive impact if resources are within their own schools and therefore accessible and in familiar surroundings.
<u>Other: Social Inclusion</u> (please include families and friends with caring responsibilities; households in poverty or on low incomes; people for whom there are safeguarding concerns; people you consider to be vulnerable; people with health inequalities; refugees and asylum seekers; rural communities)				Low to medium positive impact if resources are within their own schools including rural settings and therefore

				accessible and in familiar surroundings
<u>Other: Veterans and serving members of the armed forces and their families</u>				Low to medium positive impact for services children if resources are within their own schools and therefore accessible and in familiar surroundings
<u>Other: Young people leaving care</u>				Neutral

Initial health and wellbeing impact assessment by category

Please rate the impact that you perceive the service change is likely to have with regard to health and wellbeing, through stating this in the relevant column.

Please state if it is anticipated to be neutral (no impact) and add any extra notes that you think might be helpful for readers.

Health and wellbeing: individuals and communities in Shropshire	High negative impact <i>Part Two HIA required</i>	High positive impact	Medium positive or negative impact	Low positive negative or neutral impact (please specify)
Will the proposal have a <i>direct impact</i> on an individual's health, mental health and wellbeing? For example, would it cause ill health, affecting social inclusion, independence and participation? .				Neutral for CYP.
Will the proposal <i>indirectly impact</i> an individual's ability to improve their own health and wellbeing? For example, will it affect their ability to be physically active, choose healthy food,				Low to medium positive impact if resources are within their own

reduce drinking and smoking? .				schools and therefore accessible and in familiar surroundings.
Will the policy have a <i>direct impact</i> on the community - social, economic and environmental living conditions that would impact health? For example, would it affect housing, transport, child development, education, employment opportunities, availability of green space or climate change mitigation? .			Medium positive impact. Reduction of carbon footprint and enhanced opportunities for education in local settings in familiar surroundings.	
Will there be a likely change in <i>demand</i> for or access to health and social care services? For example: Primary Care, Hospital Care, Community Services, Mental Health, Local Authority services including Social Services? .				Neutral.

Guidance Notes

1. Legal Context

It is a legal requirement for local authorities to assess the equality and human rights impact of changes proposed or made to services. It is up to us as an authority to decide what form our equality impact assessment may take. By way of illustration, some local authorities focus more overtly upon human rights; some include safeguarding.

It is about what is considered to be needed in a local authority's area, in line with local factors such as demography and strategic objectives as well as with the national legislative imperatives.

Carrying out these impact assessments helps us as a public authority to ensure that, as far as possible, we are taking actions to meet the general equality duty placed on us by the Equality Act 2010, and to thus demonstrate that the three equality aims are integral to our decision making processes.

These are: eliminating discrimination, harassment and victimisation; advancing equality of opportunity; and fostering good relations.

These screening assessments for any proposed service change go to Cabinet as part of the committee report, or occasionally direct to Full Council, unless they are ones to do with Licensing, in which case they go to Strategic Licensing Committee.

Service areas would ordinarily carry out a screening assessment, or Stage One equality impact assessment. This enables energies to be focussed on review and monitoring and ongoing evidence collection about the positive or negative impacts of a service change upon groupings in the community, and for any adjustments to be considered and made accordingly.

These screening assessments are recommended to be undertaken at timely points in the development and implementation of the proposed service change.

For example, a Stage One ESHIA would be a recommended course of action before a consultation. This would draw upon the evidence available at that time, and identify the target audiences, and assess at that initial stage what the likely impact of the service change could be across the national Protected Characteristic groupings and our additional local categories. This ESHIA would set out intended actions to engage with the groupings, particularly those who are historically less likely to engage in public consultation eg young people, as otherwise we would not know their specific needs.

A second Stage One ESHIA would then be carried out after the consultation, to say what the feedback was, to set out changes proposed as a result of the feedback, and to say where responses were low and what the plans are to engage with groupings who did not really respond. This ESHIA would also draw more upon actions to review impacts in order to mitigate the negative and accentuate the positive.

Meeting our Public Sector Equality Duty through carrying out these ESHIAs is very much about using them as an opportunity to demonstrate ongoing engagement across groupings and to thus visibly show we are taking what is called 'due regard' of the needs of people in Protected Characteristic groupings.

If the screening indicates that there are likely to be high negative impacts for groupings within the community, the service area would need to take advice on whether or not to carry out a full report, or Stage Two assessment. This is resource intensive but will enable more evidence to be collected that will help the service area to reach an informed opinion.

In practice, Stage Two or Full Screening Assessments have only been recommended twice since 2014, as the ongoing mitigation of negative equality impacts should serve to keep them below the threshold for triggering a Full Screening Assessment. The expectation is that Full Screening Assessments in regard to Health Impacts may occasionally need to be undertaken, but this would be very much the exception rather than the rule.

2. Council Wide and Service Area Policy and Practice on Equality, Social Inclusion and Health

This involves taking an equality and social inclusion approach in planning changes to services, policies, or procedures, including those that may be required by Government. The decisions that you make when you are planning a service change need to be recorded, to demonstrate that you have thought about the possible equality impacts on communities and to show openness and transparency in your decision-making processes.

This is where Equality, Social Inclusion and Health Impact Assessments (ESHIA) come in. Where you carry out an ESHIA in your service area, this provides an opportunity to show:

- What evidence you have drawn upon to help you to recommend a strategy or policy or a course of action to Cabinet or to Strategic Licensing Committee.
- What target groups and audiences you have worked with to date.
- What actions you will take in order to mitigate any likely negative impact upon a group or groupings, and enhance any likely positive effects for a group or groupings; and
- What actions you are planning to monitor and review the impact of your planned service change.

The formal template is there not only to help the service area but also to act as a stand-alone for a member of the public to read. The approach helps to identify whether or not any new or significant changes to services, including policies, procedures, functions, or projects, may have an adverse impact on a particular group of people, and whether the human rights of individuals may be affected.

There are nine Protected Characteristic groupings defined in the Equality Act 2010. The full list of groupings is: Age; Disability; Gender Reassignment; Marriage and Civil Partnership; Pregnancy and Maternity; Race; Religion or Belief; Sex; and Sexual Orientation.

There is also intersectionality between these. Eg a young person with a disability would be in the groupings of Age and Disability, and if they described themselves as having a faith they would then also be in the grouping of Religion or Belief. We demonstrate equal treatment to people who are in these groups and to people who are not, through having what is termed 'due regard' to their needs and views when developing and implementing policy and strategy and when commissioning, procuring, arranging, or delivering services.

For the individuals and groupings who may be affected, ask yourself what impact do you think is likely and what actions will you currently anticipate taking, to mitigate or enhance likely impact of the service change? If you are reducing a service, for example, there may be further use you could make of awareness raising through social media and other channels to reach more people who may be affected.

Social inclusion is then a wider additional local category we use in Shropshire, in order to help us to go beyond the equality legislation in also considering impacts for individuals and households with regard to the circumstances in which they may find themselves across their life stages. This could be households on low incomes, or households facing challenges in accessing services, such as households in rural areas, and veterans and serving members of the armed forces and their families, or people that we might consider to be vulnerable, such as young people leaving care or refugee families.

Please note that the armed forces are now a grouping to whom we are required to give due regard under recent Armed Forces legislation, although in practice we have been doing so for a number of years now.

We are now also identifying care leavers as a distinct separate local grouping due to their circumstances as vulnerable individuals.

When you are not carrying out an ESHIA, you still need to demonstrate and record that you have considered equality in your decision-making processes. It is up to you what format you choose.-You could use a checklist, an explanatory note, or a document setting out our expectations of standards of behaviour, for contractors to read and sign. It may well not be something that is in the public domain like an ESHIA, but you should still be ready for it to be made available.

Both the approaches sit with a manager, and the manager has to make the call, and record the decision made on behalf of the Council.

Carry out an ESHIA:

- If you are building or reconfiguring a building.
- If you are planning to reduce or remove or reconfigure a service.
- If you are consulting on a policy or a strategy.
- If you are bringing in a change to a process or procedure that involves other stakeholders and the wider community as well as particular groupings

Carry out and record your equality and social inclusion approach:

- If you are setting out how you expect a contractor to behave with regard to equality, where you are commissioning a service or product from them.
- If you are setting out the standards of behaviour that we expect from people who work with vulnerable groupings, such as taxi drivers that we license.
- If you are planning consultation and engagement activity, where we need to collect equality data in ways that will be proportionate and non-intrusive as well as meaningful for the purposes of the consultation itself.
- If you are looking at services provided by others that help the community, where we need to demonstrate a community leadership approach

3. Council wide and service area policy and practice on health and wellbeing

This is a relatively new area to record within our overall assessments of impacts, for which we are asking service area leads to consider health and wellbeing impacts, and to look at these in the context of direct and indirect impacts for individuals and for communities.

A better understanding across the Council of these impacts will also better enable the Public Health colleagues to prioritise activities to reduce health inequalities in ways that are evidence based and that link effectively with equality impact considerations and climate change mitigation.

Health in All Policies – Health Impact Assessment

Health in All Policies is an upstream approach for health and wellbeing promotion and prevention, and to reduce health inequalities. The Health Impact Assessment (HIA) is the supporting mechanism

- Health Impact Assessment (HIA) is the technical name for a process that considers the wider effects of local policies, strategies and initiatives and how they, in turn, may affect people's health and wellbeing.
- Health Impact Assessment is a means of assessing both the positive and negative health impacts of a policy. It is also a means of developing good evidence-based policy and strategy using a structured process to review the impact.
- A Health Impact Assessment seeks to determine how to maximise health benefits and reduce health inequalities. It identifies any unintended health consequences. These consequences may support policy and strategy or may lead to suggestions for improvements.
- An agreed framework will set out a clear pathway through which a policy or strategy can be assessed and impacts with outcomes identified. It also sets out the support mechanisms for maximising health benefits.

The embedding of a Health in All Policies approach will support Shropshire Council through evidence-based practice and a whole systems approach, in achieving our corporate and partnership strategic priorities. This will assist the Council and partners in promoting, enabling and sustaining the health and wellbeing of individuals and communities whilst reducing health inequalities.

Individuals

Will the proposal have a *direct impact* on health, mental health and wellbeing?

For example, would it cause ill health, affecting social inclusion, independence and participation?

Will the proposal directly affect an individual's ability to improve their own health and wellbeing?

This could include the following: their ability to be physically active e.g., being able to use a cycle route; to access food more easily; to change lifestyle in ways that are of positive impact for their health.

An example of this could be that you may be involved in proposals for the establishment of safer walking and cycling routes (e.g., green highways), and changes to public transport that could encourage people away from car usage. and increase the number of journeys that they make on public transport, by foot or on bicycle or scooter. This could improve lives.

Will the proposal *indirectly impact* an individual's ability to improve their own health and wellbeing?

This could include the following: their ability to access local facilities e.g., to access food more easily, or to access a means of mobility to local services and amenities? (e.g. change to bus route)

Similarly to the above, an example of this could be that you may be involved in proposals for the establishment of safer walking and cycling routes (e.g. pedestrianisation of town centres), and changes to public transport that could encourage people away from car usage, and increase the number of journeys that they make on public transport, by foot or on bicycle or scooter. This could improve their health and well being.

Communities

Will the proposal directly or indirectly affect the physical health, mental health, and wellbeing of the wider community?

A *direct impact* could include either the causing of ill health, affecting social inclusion, independence and participation, or the promotion of better health.

An example of this could be that safer walking and cycling routes could help the wider community, as more people across groupings may be encouraged to walk more, and as there will be reductions in emission leading to better air quality.

An *indirect impact* could mean that a service change could indirectly affect living and working conditions and therefore the health and well being of the wider community.

An example of this could be: an increase in the availability of warm homes would improve the quality of the housing offer in Shropshire and reduce the costs for households of having a warm home in Shropshire. Often a health promoting approach also supports our agenda to reduce the level of Carbon Dioxide emissions and to reduce the impact of climate change.

Please record whether at this stage you consider the proposed service change to have a direct or an indirect impact upon communities.

Demand

Will there be a change in demand for or access to health, local authority and social care services?

For example: Primary Care, Hospital Care, Community Services, Mental Health and Social Services?

An example of this could be: a new housing development in an area would affect demand for primary care and local authority facilities and services in that location and surrounding areas. If the housing development does not factor in consideration of availability of green space and safety within the public realm, further down the line there could be an increased demand upon health and social care services as a result of the lack of opportunities for physical recreation, and reluctance of some groupings to venture outside if they do not perceive it to be safe.

For further advice: please contact

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