



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Research and Information Service Private Member's Briefing Paper

Paper 06/12

31 October 2011

NIAR 711-11

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Analysis of Public Library Standard two (PLS2): Northern Ireland (excluding Belfast)

1 Introduction: Public Library Standard 2

The current libraries strategy for Northern Ireland, *Delivering Tomorrow's Libraries*, contains a number of targets, referred to as Public Library Standards¹. The second of these, PLS2, states the following:

Public Library Standard 2 - Percentage of households living within a specified distance of a static library or a scheduled mobile stop offering a range of library services open to the general public.

Target - 85% of households should have access to a library service within 2 miles. This encompasses the mobile library service so that 85% of households are within 2 miles of a library, either mobile or static. A mobile stop should be for at least half an hour and call at least every 2 weeks. All

¹ Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure. 2006. *Delivering Tomorrow's Libraries: Principles and priorities for the development of public libraries in Northern Ireland*: <http://nia1.me/gp>

types of service outlets will be calculated on the basis of postcodes returned by library authorities.

2 Analysis of the data

In order to analyse the performance of the current library service against this target, the Assembly Research and Information Service obtained (a) postcodes for all of the remaining static libraries throughout Northern Ireland, and (b) the routes and stops of the mobile library service². In analysing this data, the following qualifications are important to note:

- PLS2 states that in order to be considered eligible for the 85% coverage, mobile library stops must last for at least half an hour, and take place at least every two weeks: bearing these two qualifications in mind, although there are a total of 938 mobile stops operating in Northern Ireland (excluding Belfast), just 229 of these were eligible for inclusion in the analysis.
- There are two reasons for these exclusions: either mobile stops do not last for the 30 minute period specified in PLS2, or stops do not occur at least every two weeks.
- Analysis of the total population within a 2 mile 'buffer' of each of the library services has been carried out using 2001 census data for the number of households. The total number of households in Northern Ireland (excluding Belfast) is 470,184.
- The borders of the four parliamentary constituencies of Belfast have been used to define Belfast for the purposes of this analysis.
- The two mile buffer uses a calculation of **2 miles via the road network**, *not* as the crow flies.

3 Results of the analysis

This paper includes one map showing the mobile services eligible for analysis, and the areas within 2 miles of those services via the road network. This distribution map was used to conduct an analysis of Public Library Standard (PLS) 2, the results of which are as follows:

- The result of this analysis is that of the 470,184 households in Northern Ireland (excluding Belfast), 346,582 are distributed within 2 miles of an eligible library service.
- **This is 74% of the total number of households.**
- This figures compares with a total figure across all of Northern Ireland (including Belfast) of 84% of households within 2 miles of a library service.

² Postcode information for static libraries was derived from the list provided on the Libraries NI website: <http://www.ni-libraries.net/libraries> Information on mobile libraries was provided directly by Libraries NI staff following a request for information.

Figure 8: All static libraries and eligible mobiles excluding Belfast

