



**Libraries
Connected**

Library service recovery toolkit v1

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Library service recovery toolkit

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Introduction

Library service guidance

This toolkit has been developed by Libraries Connected, working with Heads of Service and their teams. It is designed to supplement the English government workplace guidance by addressing the additional library-specific issues and providing examples of good practice from the library sector across the UK and worldwide. It should be read in conjunction with the government guidance on Working Safely During Coronavirus for:

Shops and Branches <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19/shops-and-branches>

Offices and Contact Centres <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19/offices-and-contact-centres>

Vehicles <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19/vehicles>

This toolkit provides a set of resources to support Heads of Service and their teams in planning for service recovery as COVID-19 restrictions are lifted. Although it is designed to align specifically with the government guidance for England, many of the principles and good practice will relate to public libraries in other jurisdictions.

This toolkit is designed for statutory public library services, where recovery planning must align with wider local government planning. This is the case also for contracted and spun-out library services, as the statutory responsibility for libraries remains with the council, and contracted services and spinouts will also want to respond to the local priorities the council has identified. Where a statutory public library service includes community managed libraries, they should be an integral part of the library service's recovery plan.

Libraries must involve unions and staff in their risk assessments and recovery plans. Many libraries are in co-located buildings or work with partners as tenants or to deliver services. The other organisations need to be involved in the library recovery planning to ensure plans are aligned and integrated.

Many of these principles may relate to other types of libraries, such as school libraries and those in universities.

Each library service is different, and each library branch is different, so the assessments of needs, risks and resources will need to take place at the local level and planning adjusted in response. However, this toolkit sets out a broad pathway that most library services will follow as they implement a phased recovery process. Phasing in each library service will vary, depending on available resources and staff, risk assessments and priority community needs.



However, the broad pathway for recovery is likely to be:

1. Digital and remote services offered. Most staff working from home. No public access to buildings before 4 July.
2. Digital and remote services, plus some home delivery service. Many staff working from home. No public access to buildings.
3. Digital and remote services, some home delivery, order & collect, ticketed IT access. Some staff still working from home. Extremely limited public access to buildings. Library opening hours limited, and number of branches open limited.
4. Digital and remote services, home delivery, order & collect, ticketed IT access, browsing and self-service within libraries, controlled mobile libraries. Majority of staff working in libraries. Public access to buildings with key control measures. Increased number of libraries open and opening hours expanded.
5. Digital and remote services, home delivery, IT access, browsing, mobile libraries, events and activities, staff support and interaction. Staff working within libraries. Public access to buildings. Control measures in place but slightly relaxed (e.g. no limit on time public can spend in library). All libraries open for standard hours.
6. New services and offers developed in addition to the existing library offer - service transformation.

How to use this guidance

This document should be read as a supplement to the government guidance on Working Safely During Coronavirus for:

Shops and Branches <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19/shops-and-branches>

Offices and Contact Centres <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19/offices-and-contact-centres>

Vehicles <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/working-safely-during-coronavirus-covid-19/vehicles>

This guidance follows the same format as the government workplace guidance and draws out risks specific to library services and suggests mitigations and good practice approaches. Local authorities will also need to consider their library service recovery planning in the light of their statutory obligations to deliver a library service, as set out by DCMS guidance: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-on-libraries-as-a-statutory-service/libraries-as-a-statutory-service>

Libraries benefit from the support of many volunteers. Organisations have a duty of care to volunteers to ensure, as far as reasonably practicable, they are not exposed to risks to their



health and safety. The government guidance around working safely during COVID-19 should ensure that volunteers are afforded the same level of protection to their health and safety as employees.

What do we mean by 'libraries'

This toolkit is designed for statutory public library services, which may include Community Managed Libraries as part of their provision.

Many of the principles may be applicable to other types of library.

A library service is a complex mix of services delivered from buildings, digitally and remotely. This toolkit will address all these different aspects of the service.

1. Thinking about risk

The relevant sections of the government workplace guidance should be referred to in detail. Libraries are public buildings, so the responsibilities set out in the workplace guidance extend beyond employees to include volunteers, service delivery partners, building tenants and library users.

Libraries must involve unions and staff in their risk and recovery planning.

Library buildings are a complex environment, presenting a mixture of risks absent in other work environments:

- Libraries bring a wide cross section of the public into a confined space, with close contact to staff and volunteers
- Library users include those in vulnerable and high-risk health groups, alongside children whose movements are difficult to control
- Libraries encourage people to stay within the space for a long time and move freely
- Libraries circulate resources including books, which may harbour the virus on surfaces, and encourage frequent touching of objects through browsing
- Libraries provide computers and study desks, which may be used by as many as 20 different people a day
- The public spaces have a lot of high-touch surfaces such as door handles and touchscreens
- There are cash transactions between staff and public
- Staff may work in confined office settings
- Many libraries provide toilets for public use, which are sometimes shared with staff
- Even large library buildings have 'pinch-points' such as staircases, lifts and narrow passages between shelves and may only have one exit and entrance
- Staff may work in more than one library building and with different teams of colleagues.



- Libraries are often co-located with other partner services, so these buildings need co-ordination and planning with other building partners e.g. a shared agreed risk assessment and approach.

Risk assessments may be carried out by colleagues from other corporate teams, such as Estates or Health & Safety. It is essential that library staff work closely with these colleagues to ensure the risks specific to the library environment are addressed.

Risk assessments should be carried out for each building within a library service, and built into the service-wide recovery plan.

How to raise a concern

If staff or volunteers have concerns, they can raise it in these ways as appropriate:

- Contact your manager
- Contact your trade union if you have one (Libraries Connected has discussed this guidance with the national teams at GMB, Unite and Unison)
- Contact HSE at:
HSE COVID-19 enquiries
Telephone: 0300 790 6787 (Monday to Friday, 8:30am to 8pm)
Online: working safely enquiry form

The public and partners can also contact the local authority with responsibility for the library service.

1.1 Managing risk

In addition to the guidance in the relevant section of government workplace documents, there are some other issues to note for libraries:

- Library services are part of larger corporate entities – local authorities, cultural trusts and CICs. Risk assessments and recovery planning needs to be aligned with the wider corporate plan to ensure consistency of mitigation measures such as use of PPE.
- Books may be a vector for the virus. Public Health England has advised the virus risk on plastic is minimal after 72 hours, and on paper and card minimal after 24 hours. Libraries should develop quarantine procedures for returned books and resources. Washing, cleaning or disinfecting books and resources is not practicable.
- Browsing and providing reference services and 'dwell time' in libraries may present particular risks as library users may be in close contact with books, furniture and other users for an extended time. Children and babies may chew books. Libraries can manage some of the risks by:
 - Asking users to wash or sanitise their hands on entry to the library
 - Rotating book stock so it can be quarantined at the end of the day
 - Moving shelves further apart



- Removing chairs and tables
- Limiting entry to the library to support social distancing
- Allowing entry in limited time slots
- Removing or limiting use of reference materials and study areas.
- Computer and IT services are heavily used throughout the day, and an essential service for many in the community. Demand may increase due to the increased number of people seeking work and benefits. Libraries can manage some of the risks by:
 - Moving computers two metres apart and/or installing screens
 - Providing appointments for access, with space between appointments to allow for cleaning and queue management
 - Asking users to sanitise their hands on entry to the library.
 - Asking users or staff to wipe down keyboards and mice after use.
- Libraries handle cash payments for fees and fines and can manage this risk by:
 - Accepting card and online payments (however, this may not be possible in many libraries and due to the small size of most fines and fees).
 - Suspending fees and fines. The impact on the library budget must be clarified with senior management before this step is taken.
- Libraries attract a wide range of people from across the community, many of whom may be in high risk or vulnerable groups. They can consider having opening times set aside for particular groups such as families or high-risk groups.
- Libraries deliver a wide range of services, including events and activities, and digital support that requires close contact with library users:
 - In most cases, libraries will not try to resume physical group events and activities initially. Instead, they will continue to develop online alternatives, such as #LibrariesFromHome.
 - New procedures should be developed for services that require close contact, e.g. online and remote assistance.
 - Where the social distancing guidelines cannot be followed in full, in relation to a particular activity, libraries should consider whether that activity needs to continue for the library service to operate, and, if so, take all the mitigating actions possible to reduce the risk of transmission between staff, users and volunteers.

The government workplace guidance largely focuses on the safety of employees. For the purposes of risk management, the same considerations should be given to volunteers.

Libraries also need to consider the risks to library users in general and specifically to those in higher risk and vulnerable categories including:

- People in high risk health groups including the elderly and pregnant women
- People with a range of mental health issues
- People with autism
- People with Alzheimer's and dementia and their carers



- People with special educational needs and learning disabilities
- Children excluded from school
- Digitally excluded people
- Homeless people
- Drug users
- People with limited or no English and other communication problems.
- The risk assessment should help determine how to tailor services and communication strategies to best meet their needs. Equalities impact assessments should be undertaken for any new services.

1.2 Sharing the results of your risk assessment

You should share the results of your risk assessment with your workforce. This will include sharing the risk assessment for each specific library building with the relevant library staff. There may be a high level of public interest in the safety of the library environment. You should consider publishing your library service risk assessment as part of your corporate strategy for publishing COVID risk assessments. You can also offer to make available risk assessments of each branch on request.

Below you will find a notice you should display in your workplace to show you have followed this guidance. This can be displayed at the public entrance as part of your communication with library users.

Staying COVID-19 Secure in 2020

2. Who should go to work?

In addition to the guidance set out in the government workplace documents, there are a few issues for libraries to consider:

- Libraries should work closely with their corporate HR departments and unions, to ensure their actions in relation to staff are in line with corporate policies and consistent with teams in other departments.
- The government advice is for people to work from home where possible. Recovery of the library service will require staff to be present in branches and in the community for services such as Home Library Services. Careful consideration needs to be given to the location of managers, who may be able to do much of their work from home but will also need to provide onsite management support to staff especially in the early phases of reopening services.
- Staffing shortages. Many libraries expect to have a reduced workforce available, and this will have an impact on their ability to reopen branches and run services, especially as COVID secure processes may be more labour intensive. If staff resourcing is limited, each library service will need to make its own assessment on which branches and



services to prioritise in recovery, taking into account community needs and their local authority's priorities. This may include having to balance the demands of staffing the physical library service and maintaining and expanding the digital offer which may remain the primary library offer for many users throughout the recovery period.

- Staff shortages may be due to a range of factors affecting the library workforce:
 - There is a high percentage of workers over 50, so may have more people than other workforces in high risk and shielding groups.
 - There is a high percentage of female workers, who may be disproportionately impacted by childcare responsibilities if schools remain closed.
 - Library staff have been redeployed to community support roles and may not be released back to the library service at the start of July.
- A large percentage of the library workforce is in front of house roles, so it may be challenging to find alternative work within the library service for those who need to remain at home for health reasons. Consultation with your HR department will be key for these staff in the medium/long term.
- Volunteers. Many library services benefit from support by volunteers.
 - However, a high percentage of volunteers are in the clinically vulnerable or extremely clinically vulnerable groups, as they are over 70 or have underlying health issues so they may not be able to return to the library initially. This may impact on the delivery of specific services with a high level of volunteer involvement, such as home library services, and on the delivery of community managed libraries.
 - There may be an opportunity to recruit new volunteers from the cohort of community volunteers and mutual aid groups. Careful discussion with staff and unions is needed to clarify this is not replacing paid staff roles, but they could be used to temporarily expand things like digital activities and home library services.

2.1 Protecting people at higher risk

In addition to the issues set out in the government workplace guidance, there are a few additional points for libraries to consider:

- Libraries should work closely with their corporate HR department to ensure their actions align with corporate policies.
- Libraries may have more employees than average at higher risk, as a significant percentage of the workforce is over 50 so are more likely to have underlying health conditions.
- Assessments should consider volunteers as well as employees. A high percentage of volunteers are over 70, some have underlying health conditions so will be in the clinically vulnerable and clinically extremely vulnerable categories. The guidance for clinically vulnerable and extremely vulnerable employees should also be applied to volunteers.
- Careful assessment of the risks facing BAME staff and volunteers.



- Library work has a high level of contact with the public, so risk may remain even when mitigations are in place

2.2 People who need to self-isolate

The government guidance should be applied to volunteers and self-employed people as well as employees.

2.3 Equality in the workplace

In addition to the issues set out in the government workplace guidance, there are a few additional points for libraries to consider:

- Equality considerations should apply to volunteers, self-employed people as well as employees.
- Consideration needs to be given to BAME employees and volunteers, and the levels of risk they face.
- Equality considerations should apply to library users, in particular:
 - Physical access for people with disabilities and small children, including use of lifts, toilets and alternative to queuing arrangements
 - Communications and notices to take account of communication needs, including in other languages
 - Varying fees and charges so that financially disadvantaged people do not face barriers in accessing the service by, e.g., Order & Collect.

See Appendix C: Prioritising services and user groups for further insight into equality considerations for users.

3. Social distancing at work

In addition to the issues set out in the government workplace guidance, there are a few additional points for libraries to consider.

- Risk assessments and mitigations must apply to public areas, as well as staff offices used by employees.
- Social distancing may be hard to maintain in a library because:
- It is an openly accessible public space, where users move around freely. Clear communication with users is vital to explain the changes to the service and the impact this will have on their library experience.
- Users include those with communication challenges, such as limited English and learning disabilities. They may not fully understand the social distancing guidelines.
- Even large library buildings have 'choke points' such as corridors, stairways, lifts, and it may not be possible to install one-way systems.



- Staff offices may be small, and many staff are part-time, so hot desking and desk sharing is common.

Libraries may need to fundamentally review the services they can offer if they are not able to maintain social distancing while delivering them. For this reason, most libraries are planning a phased service recovery, to focus first on services where social distancing can be maintained and limiting public access into the buildings and face-to-face services.

3.1 Coming to work and leaving work

In addition to the issues set out in the government workplace guidance, there are a few additional points for libraries to consider:

- Consider reassigning staff to a branch that is easiest for them to travel to safely. This will require discussion with the staff and unions.
- Consider changing opening and closing times so that both staff and users can avoid peak travel times.
- Safe use of public transport may be an issue for urban libraries.
- Consideration also needs to be given to volunteer as well as employee travel.

3.2 Moving around buildings and worksites

In addition to the issues set out in the government workplace guidance, there are a few additional points for libraries to consider:

- Volunteers, as well as employees, need to be considered.
- Libraries are public buildings, and management of the public areas will be complex.
- Libraries will need to review how they deliver services, and what sorts of services they can deliver to limit close contact between staff, volunteers and users. It may be that the usual range of face-to-face services cannot be offered, or that they need to be offered from behind screened desks rather than on the library floor.
- Consider floor markings and queuing systems to manage entry into buildings.
- Introduce systems to control entry, so that two metre social distancing can be maintained. To calculate the capacity of your buildings, as a broad rule of thumb you can use an allocation of 12.6 square metres per person, which equates to a circle with a two metre radius.
- Consider one-way systems, if possible, or other processes to manage traffic through pinch points such as stairways and entrances.
- Move shelves further apart and install a one-way system for users to move through the aisles.
- Remove furniture such as easy chairs and desks to discourage people lingering in the library. Experience shows that users will move furniture back together if available within the library.



- Move computers and study desks further apart and consider installing screens between them or moving them back-to-back.

See Appendix A: Managing buildings and space for more suggestions and a checklist to support safe movement around the library.

See Appendix C: Prioritising services and user groups for further suggestions of how to review services.

The new processes and necessary adaptations will fundamentally change the experience of users during the recovery period, as they used to a relaxed and welcoming atmosphere. Clear communication will be needed to manage customer expectations.

See Appendix G: Communications with the public and advocacy with stakeholders for some suggested ways to manage your customer communications

3.3 Workplaces and workstations

In addition to the issues set out in the government workplace guidance, there are a few additional points for libraries to consider:

- Volunteers, as well as employees, should be considered.
- Library staff offices can be very crowded spaces, so the ability to move desks apart may be limited. The government guidance outlines other options, such as screening, moving desks back-to-back or taping them off.
- There are many part-time workers and volunteers, so there may be a lot of desk sharing and hot desking. If it is not possible to assign desks to a single user, then high hygiene standards must be maintained with users cleaning the workstation before and after use with the appropriate cleaning materials.
- Where libraries have reception desks and pods for staff, consider installing Perspex screens and changing staff work practice from floor walking to being stationed at the desk or pod, and making the library as self-service as possible.
- In the public area, attention needs to be paid to desks and workstations provided for public use and which may be used by a lot of people throughout the day. Risk assessments may determine that it is not safe to provide study areas or relaxed seating while the COVID risk level remains high.
- Users should be asked to clean or sanitise hands on entering and leaving the building. In most library services it is not practical to provide sanitiser throughout the library and next to every service point, computer or desk as the quantity would be prohibitive.
- Limit access to IT to essential use and within timed slots. This will allow cleaning before and after use by users and/or staff. PHE advises that IT terminals should be cleaned using alcohol containing wipes suitable for this purpose.



- Use of self-service machines will help limit interaction between library staff and users. However, the machines have touchscreens which will be touched by hundreds of people during the day. Users should be encouraged to sanitise or clean their hands when entering and leaving the building, and cleaning regimes introduced for the screens.
- Soft furnishings are hard to clean, so consider removing them from public and staff areas. Removal in public areas will also encourage people not to extend their visit.

3.4 Meetings

In addition to the issues set out in the government workplace guidance, there are a few additional points for libraries to consider:

- Libraries often provide meeting rooms to external organisations, to support the community and to generate income.
- Planning will be needed to ensure these rooms can be used in line with the government guidance. It may not be possible to offer meeting room venues while the COVID risk remains high.

3.5 Common areas

In addition to the issues set out in the government workplace guidance, there are a few additional points for libraries to consider:

- Staff accommodation may be quite small, and common areas such as kitchens and common rooms very small.
- There may be areas that are common to library staff, volunteers and users – such as toilets and washrooms. In these cases, public use of the facilities can be limited or removed, while considering the needs of those with disabilities.
- Changing places and disabled toilets should be kept publicly accessible if possible.
- Many libraries are in shared buildings or co-located with other services. It is vital that risk assessments and recovery planning is aligned across the whole building and the different tenants and services.

3.6 Accidents, security and other incidents

In addition to the issues set out in the government workplace guidance, there are a few additional points for libraries to consider:

- Library users sometimes display inappropriate or aggressive behaviour that needs to be managed by library staff and volunteers, including by removing them from the library.
- Library Bye-Laws set out appropriate standards of behaviour for users, and actions libraries will take if users break the Bye-Laws, including removal from the premises and banning. This can apply to users exhibiting COVID symptoms who can be asked to leave the library. The Bye-Laws should be publicly displayed, and available for staff to refer to if necessary.



- Staff training should cover in detail any revised procedures for providing assistance including First Aid, and managing security incidents and disruptive behaviour. They should be clear on how they can call in additional support if needed, and reporting systems should be in place so that any incidents can be reviewed, and processes revised if need be. Many libraries are introducing 'zero tolerance' policies for disruptive or unsafe behaviour.
- Users should be encouraged to behave safely, by displaying notices at the entrance asking them not to enter if they have any COVID symptoms, to maintain social distancing and to clean their hands on entering and leaving.

4. Managing your customers, visitors and contractors

In addition to the issues set out in the government workplace guidance, there are a few additional points for libraries to consider:

- Managing customers will be the most complex aspect of library service recovery, as libraries serve an incredibly diverse user base. This includes those in high risk categories and the vulnerable, such as people with learning disabilities, mental health issues, homeless, and those with substance abuse issues.
- Libraries have worked hard to be openly accessible, inclusive and welcoming places. COVID-secure libraries will feel very different, with limited entry, reduced services, highly managed spaces and reduced levels of interaction.
- Careful communication is vital to manage customer expectations, explain the new procedures and promote safe behaviour.
See Appendix G for further advice on communications and advocacy, including template texts to use in public messages and notices.
- You may want to consider reserving some entry times for high risk groups, and for small children and families.
- All children must be accompanied by an adult responsible for their behaviour. Libraries can determine their own age categorisation – but in practice many use age 12.

See also Appendix A for further advice and a checklist on managing the building and spaces, and Appendix C on Prioritising Services and User Groups.

4.1 Managing contacts

In addition to the issues set out in the government workplace guidance, there are a few additional points for libraries to consider:

- Order & Collect and Ready Reads services can be offered as an alternative to browsing and self-selection:
 - Users collect books and resources from the library entrance lobby or reception desk, where staff are behind a Perspex shield.



- Books are quarantined for 72 hours after being packed by staff in paper bags.
 - Staff sanitise hands regularly, while issuing the book bags.
 - Returned items are placed in bins and quarantined for 72 hours before reshelfing or reissuing. Wheeled book bins, laundry bins and post trolleys can be used as they are easy for staff to wheel into the quarantine area and can be easily labelled.
 - Queues are managed to support social distancing.
 - Order & Collect allows users to make a selection via the library catalogue, email and phone. However, its operation will depend on stock availability. Some library services may not be able to fulfil requests if their usual stock logistics are compromised (branches closed, staff shortages, vans redeployed, considerable stock out on extended loans).
 - Ready Reads are pre-selected thematic book packs (e.g. crime, romance, children's - grouped by age/ability e.g. board books, picture books, early readers, longer stories, nonfiction lucky dip). This system does not provide full user choice but may be easier to fulfil if stock availability is limited. It may also be a way of introducing new material to readers.
 - Consideration needs to be given to fees and charges, as reservation and overdue fees may be a barrier to some people accessing the library service when the usual access is unavailable or very limited. If fees and charges do apply, then cashless payment is preferable.
- Home library services (HLS) will be an important way to serve shielding, vulnerable and housebound users and ensure they do not need to come into the library:
 - New procedures for no-contact HLS should be developed, where orders are taken over the phone or remotely, books quarantined for 72 hours after being packed in paper bags, and books are left on the doorstep.
 - Returned books should be transported separately from the new books and quarantined for 72 hours.
 - If private cars of staff and volunteers are used, consideration needs to be given to insurance.
 - Plastic sheeting and crates can be used in cars and vans to provide protection, along with adequate cleaning after use.
 - HLS is about more than books, and the social contact they usually provide is vital. Consider offering keep-in-touch phone calls while the HLS remains in no-contact mode.
- Restoring full access to browsing and studying inside the library will be complex. However, some suggested measures can be taken:
 - Control entry into the library to facilitate two metre social distancing. When assessing floor capacity, as a rule of thumb, you can use an allocation of 12.6 square metres per person (a circle of 2m radius). However, you also need to consider pinch points such as stairways, lifts and entrances.



- Ask users to sanitise hands on entering and leaving the library.
 - Gloves do not need to be worn as hand washing is a more effective defence (gloves may not be clean).
 - Provide sanitiser in multiple locations throughout the library if possible.
 - Limit customer handling of books, for example, through different display methods, new signage or rotation of high-touch stock.
 - Consider discouraging extensive browsing and handling of books by customers for the initial reopening period. Timed entry could be an option to limit users' time within the library.
 - Continue to offer Order & Collect and Ready Reads as an alternative to self-selection and browsing.
 - Remove comfortable seating, soft furnishings and study furniture to discourage extensive browsing and long visits.
 - Remove magazines and newspapers.
 - Provide separate a location for returning books that have been extensively handled, so they can then be quarantined for 72 hours before being returned to shelves. Many libraries will provide wheeled book bins, laundry bins or post trolleys for returned books that can be easily moved to the quarantine area by staff.
 - Some booksellers will ask customers to place any book they browse on a quarantine trolley. This may not be a feasible option for libraries that may only have one copy of each book title.
 - Move shelving further apart, if possible, and establish one-way traffic flow through the aisles.
 - Children under 12 must be accompanied by an adult who is responsible for their behaviour and following social distancing guidelines.
 - Change opening hours so staff can restock shelves and manage the library floor etc when the building is closed.
 - Promote self-service issue and return to reduce interaction between staff and users. Asking users to sanitise hands on entering and leaving the building and cleaning the screens will reduce the risk from the touchscreen.
 - If self-issue is not available, install Perspex screens and queue controls at issue desks, and ensure staff can clean their hands frequently.
 - Install Perspex screens on enquiry desks and staff pods, and change procedures so staff do not floor walk to interact with and support customers.
- IT and computer access is a vital service that libraries provide, and demand may have grown with more people seeking work and applying for benefits. It will be a service that libraries will want to restore as soon as possible:
 - Control access by a booking or queuing system, with timed slots. This will allow cleaning of workstations before and after use using alcohol containing wipes suitable for this purpose.



- Users should be encouraged to sanitise hands when entering and leaving the library.
- Move workstations apart or install screens to support social distancing.
- Suspend face-to-face digital assistance. Replace with remote assistance, if possible, and help from staff at an enquiry desk behind a Perspex screen.
- Staff supporting services such as photocopying, scanning, printing should also be behind a screen.
- Self-service photocopiers, scanners and printers should have their touch-points cleaned between users with alcohol containing wipes suitable for this purpose.
- Cashless payment is preferable for any charges for services such as photocopying, scanning and printing cashless payment is preferable.

See Appendix D for more detail on book circulation and browsing and Appendix C for more on IT services.

4.2 Providing and explaining available guidance

In addition to the issues set out in the government workplace guidance, there are a few additional points for libraries to consider:

- The COVID safe library offer and experience will be very different to usual, so clear communication is vital to manage customer expectations.
- Most libraries will deploy a phased recovery, so communication, signage etc will need to be refreshed to reflect the changes.
- Library Bye-Laws should be displayed so staff can refer to them if needed to manage disruptive behaviour.
- Consider presenting a 'User Charter' to set out how users can protect themselves and others.
- Information and notices will need to be designed to take account of the varied user base and their differing communication needs, including people with limited or no English, visual impairment and learning disabilities.

See Appendix G for suggested wording for communications and notices and a draft User Charter.

5. Cleaning the workplace

In addition to the issues set out in the government workplace guidance, there are a few additional points for libraries to consider.

5.1 Keeping the workplace clean

Libraries are openly accessible places, so it may not be possible to identify known or suspected cases of COVID-19 among library users.



Care should therefore be taken with the regular cleaning routine and provision of hand sanitiser for users at entrances and social distancing procedures.

Fogging has been suggested as a cleaning method for some libraries, where they are co-located with leisure facilities, for example. Standard cleaning, as set out in the government guidance is sufficient and fogging should not be needed. It should not be used where there are rare or special collections in the library space.

5.2 Hygiene, handwashing and sanitation facilities

In addition to the issues set out in the government workplace guidance, there are a few additional points for libraries to consider:

- If toilet facilities are shared by staff and users, consider restricting to staff only – particularly in phases where browsing is restricted and users are only spending a short time in the library.
- Access to disabled toilets and Changing Places should be maintained.
- If toilets are closed to public use, then consideration needs to be given to alternative hand cleaning facilities including sanitiser.

5.3 Changing rooms and showers

Follow the government workplace guidance.

5.4 Handling goods and objects

In addition to the issues set out in the government workplace guidance, there are a few additional points for libraries to consider:

- Advice from Public Health England is that the virus risk on plastic covers is minimal after 72 hours, and on paper and card after 24 hours. Libraries should develop procedures to quarantine returned and extensively handled books for 72 hours.
- Suspend book donations or develop quarantine procedures.
- Introduce cashless payment for any fees and charges.
- Pack books for Home Library Service, Order & Collect and Ready Reads in paper bags and quarantine for 72 hours before issue.
- Encourage staff handling books and objects to wash or sanitise their hands frequently.
- Self-service machines have high-touch touchscreens, Users should be encouraged to sanitise hands on entering and leaving the building, and screens should be cleaned throughout the day.

See also section 4.1 for advice on book browsing and loans, use of IT and management of Home Library Services.



See Appendix D for further detail on handling books and resources.

6. Personal protective equipment and face coverings

In addition to the issues set out in the government workplace guidance, there are a few additional points for libraries to consider:

- Libraries provide a very personalised service with a high level of interaction with users. However, every effort must be made to revise procedures to sustain social distancing as set out in the government guidance.
- This may mean suspending some of the core services, such as digital assistance, if they cannot be carried out with social distancing.
- There are a limited number of occasions when it may not be possible to sustain social distancing, and PPE may be needed in line with the risk assessment. These occasions include:
 - Delivery of the visa support service, as staff may need to adjust the camera or help with the equipment.
 - When assisting customers to access stock items. This happens more often in a library than in a shop setting. However, alternative ways of help should be considered, e.g. asking the user to return later when the item will be available for them to collect.
 - Dealing with enquiries in sites without enquiry desks (many libraries have removed enquiry desks in recent years) and dealing with enquiries that occur on the library floor. However, consideration should be given to installing temporary screened desks or pods.
 - Providing IT assistance. People using library computers for essential tasks such as applying for Universal Credit may also have low levels of IT skills, and digital assistance is a key role library staff provide. Consideration should be given to providing remote assistance, e.g. by control of PC terminals.
 - When customers fail to socially distance generally. Some of our customers are going to find it challenging as many have barriers to accessing many other services which is why they use the library. Sometimes they are not aware of their behaviours or in control of them and may unintentionally breach the rules – e.g. if they have learning disabilities, mental health or substance abuse issues, or language barriers.
 - Managing queues and triaging customers to different service points and managing pinch points such as stairways and lifts, although staff should try to maintain a two metre distance from the queues.
 - Cleaning IT kit, study areas etc between users. However, appointment systems should be established to allow a space between users for cleaning to take place.
 - Managing disruptive users.
 - Administering first aid.
- Public Health England has advised that face visors are not appropriate.



- If staff are issued with PPE, then the importance of social distancing and hand washing must continue to be emphasised.

7. Workforce management

7.1 Shift patterns and working groups

In addition to the issues set out in the government workplace guidance, there are a few additional points for libraries to consider:

- Library staff and volunteers often work across many branches, and personnel shortages mean that movement of staff between branches may need to increase rather than decrease.
- Consideration should be given to lone workers and whether there is a need to draft in additional staff to support social distancing and the new more labour-intensive work procedures. This may mean limiting the opening times of specific branches.

7.2 Cars, accommodation and visits, and work-related deliveries

In addition to the issues set out in the government workplace guidance, there are a few additional points for libraries to consider:

- If the private cars of staff and volunteers are used for library work, e.g. home library service, the insurance must be adequate.
- Car drivers can be issued with plastic sheeting to line their boots when collecting returned books and provided with appropriate cleaning materials.
- Returned books should be collected separately from delivery of new books, to avoid cross-contamination.

7.3 Communications and training

7.3.1 Returning to work

In addition to the issues set out in the government workplace guidance, there are a few additional points for libraries to consider:

- Consideration should be given to the training needs of volunteers as well as employees.
- Adequate time needs to be provided before services reopen for staff and volunteer training, to ensure they understand and can implement the new procedures as they will be significantly different to standard library operations.
- Attention needs to be paid to people's emotional wellbeing. Many staff have been redeployed to emergency roles, while others may not have left the house very much during lockdown, and some will have had distressing experiences including illness and bereavement. People may be anxious about the return to work. Mental health support services for staff must be signposted.



- Delivery of a COVID-secure library service will be very different to the normal service, and staff may need additional support to ensure they maintain social distancing and other measures, as they may be motivated to transgress them as they want to provide their usual level of helpful and friendly service.
- Walk throughs and dry runs can help staff become familiar with and confident about new procedures before the service reopens to the public.
- Many libraries have had staff return to buildings weeks in advance of opening, to help design the new ways of working and safety processes, with adequate time for adjustments as plans evolve.
- Particular attention needs to be paid to training staff in how to respond to behaviour that is not COVID secure, including disruptive people and those who may be displaying symptoms. Knowledge of the library bye-laws should be refreshed and clear training given on processes for managing user behaviour and the back-up available.
- As service recovery will be phased, staff need ongoing training and support to support this.

7.3.2 Ongoing communications and signage

In addition to the issues set out in the government workplace guidance, there are a few additional points for libraries to consider:

- Feedback systems need to be in place so that staff can report incidents and suggest ways processes can be revised and improved.
- Mental health support for staff should be signposted.
- Consideration needs to be given to communicating and training of part-time staff and those moving between sites.

See Appendix G for further suggestions on communications with staff and employees.

8. Inbound and outbound goods

In addition to the issues set out in the government workplace guidance, there are a few additional points for libraries to consider:

- Books and resources should be quarantined for 72 hours after return.
- Books selected for home library service, Order & Collect and Ready Reads should be packed in paper bags and quarantined for 72 hours before loan.
- When transporting books for Home Library Service and between libraries, separate returned books from clean books to minimise any cross-contamination risks or deliver these in separate journeys.
- Plastic sheeting can be used to cover car seats and boots, and appropriate cleaning materials should be provided to private car users.



Where to obtain further guidance

Coronavirus (COVID-19): what you need to do

Coronavirus (COVID-19): guidance for employers and businesses

Coronavirus (COVID-19): guidance for food businesses on coronavirus



APPENDICES

The appendices provide detailed suggestions and check lists for specific aspects of library operations.

- A. Managing buildings and public spaces
- B. Staff volunteer and user safety and welfare
- C. Prioritizing services and user groups
- D. Book lending and browsing
- E. Restoring events and activities
- F. Sustaining the digital offer
- G. Communications with the public and advocacy with stakeholders

APPENDIX A: MANAGING BUILDINGS AND PHYSICAL SPACES

The table below provides a checklist of some of the key risks that need to be considered and suggested control and mitigation measures.

Question considered	Identified risks	Suggestions for mitigation	Actions needed to be support mitigation	Any opportunities for service development?	Dependencies
General social distancing to avoid contamination	• Need to manage customer numbers within building at any one time • Need to manage customer proximity to support social distancing • Need to manage dwell times to ensure throughput of customers	• Building capacity - limits to be identified as part of Risk assessment process- building by building. • Queuing system outside – 1 in, 1 out. Different queues for different service offers where possible • Assessment of capacity outside building for queues & liaison with neighbouring premises • Staff to facilitate social distancing or, as identified, security on doors to manage entry • One way system and separate entrances/exits where possible • One way system in branches	• Clear advice and guidance advertised throughout buildings as per government templates e.g. advertise that risk assessment completed, and request users adhere to social distancing • Fire safety risk and security assessment to ensure changes are compliant • Demarcation of floor space at service points • E.g. numbered raffle tickets or equivalent issued to customers to support		Communications to customers in advance of visit – manage expectations (e.g. opening hours, dwell time etc) Staff training to what degree are staff required to champion/police social distancing Back up available e.g. management, security, police depending on situation Involve unions and H&S in risk assessment process

		• Remove or reduce seating and tables • Phased reopening (e.g. 'ready reads' and or 'order and collect' service first alongside social distanced public PC offer • Limit browsing time (e.g. half an hour) • Limit Public Computer use by time and consider whether for essential activity only • Enable staff to remote into public PCs to provide remote digital assistance • Remove newspapers/magazines • Study tables – booked in advance if/when available • Appointment system for access to specialist collections for research • Specific opening hours for recovery phase with time closed for staff job time e.g. 9-1 for staff 10-12 public, changeover of staff shift then 1-4 open with 4-5 for closedown.	management of dwell times • Regular review of measures and adaptation /additional where needed		
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Protecting staff	• Staff to staff transmission • Customer to staff (and vice versa) transmission • Staff confidence • Liability of staff and manager	• Reduction of hot-desking where possible • Clear desk policy • Wipes used at beginning and end of day • Staff issued with own keyboard and mouse • Shift working with gap at handover to avoid contact Staggered use of staff areas e.g. kitchens & staffrooms • Perspex screens at help desks if advised and where they are able to be fitted • Reduced opening hours (eg 10-4) to allow staff to work on shop floor when building is closed to customers • Limiting staff on the shop floor at all other times (self-service approach) • Use of signage, help screens, online facilities etc to minimise need for staff/public interventions • Phased reopening of services (e.g. Order &	• Follow government guidance on what PPE will be required • Supply chain and prioritisation issues for sanitiser and PPE will dictate pace of reopening • Regular review of measures and adaptation /additional where needed		Early communications plan will be required for staff to ensure that they are confident in the role they are being asked to take Liaison with Trades Unions to ensure consistent messaging

		Collect first to get staff comfortable with people in the building first) • Adequate PPE and Physical measure in place in advance in line with government guidance • Assessment of travel to work safe options for staff. Relocate staff if needed to other branches			
Minimising risk of contamination between different user groups	• Range of different age groups and vulnerabilities coming together in one space	• Separate sessions (e.g. specific times for vulnerable groups – potentially after weekend decontamination and clean) • Child friendly session (recognising that concept of social distancing may be more difficult in these age groups) • Encouraging single customer access where possible	Clear signage and advertising within building; extensive communications to local communities	Targeted service offer to different customer groups	Able to identify and communicate with targeted groups
Minimising risk of contamination through	• General hygiene and cleanliness	• Sanitisation stations at entry points	• PHE guidance/COVID secure guidance		Book and resource handling

object/surface handling	• Stock handling while browsing • Stock quarantine • RFID/Touch screen • Public access computers • Toilets (Changes Place & other)	• No cash payments. Contactless payments if possible. Consider removing fines and payments if cashless system not possible. • Enhanced cleaning regimes (toilets/ touch screens/public access network) • Closure or limit on use of toilets (need to be balanced with the need for hand washing) • Dropboxes for returned stock, labelled with date to support quarantine period	• PPE requirements and availability identified • Advice and guidance on browsing/book handling • Availability/access to enhanced and frequent cleaning		Staff training in procedures. Contractual obligations by internal/external cleaning companies
Maintaining required levels of statutory service while balancing with public health requirements and equalities impacts	• Book lending enabled • Research and study space limited in initial phase • Community/group activity difficult to maintain	• Continuation of enhanced digital services	• DCMS support for phased approach	Expanding online activities using skills staff have developed e.g. making videos, running virtual groups/events	

Checklist

- ✓ COVID secure risk assessment completed
- ✓ Library layouts assessed/changed for social distancing
- ✓ Cleaning/disinfection regimes in place
- ✓ Bookings system in place where needed
- ✓ Customer flow considered
- ✓ PPE requirements for staff and customers identified and in place
- ✓ Changes to opening hours and nature of offer clearly communicated to customers in advance
- ✓ Appropriate staff support and training in place
- ✓ Equalities Impacts of changes adequately considered

Equalities considerations

Toilets – for customers with disabilities and families with young children

Masks – not helpful for the deaf and hard of hearing. Social distancing is the main control measure

Space changes – need to be adequately communicated to blind or visually impaired

Time limits – may adversely affect customers with disabilities, the elderly

Changed procedures & staff distancing – may confuse & distress customers with mental health and learning difficulties

Reduced access to public PCs – may adversely affect customers without own digital access

APPENDIX B: STAFF, VOLUNTEER AND USER SAFETY AND WELFARE

Question considered	Identified risks	Proposed mitigation	Actions needed to be support mitigation	Any opportunities for service development?
Managing customer behaviour	- Customers failure to understand service framework and social distancing - Customer reactions due to inability to deliver certain service elements	- Library Byelaws - Union request – improve banning processes (we could have printed notices on display for staff to refer customers to when they do not behave in a considerate and orderly manner) - Clear Coms prior to opening to state expectations/policy and consequences - Staff confident in explaining policy and procedures to customer	- Review of internal processes to manage customer behaviour - Staff training - Management presence and support- while the presence may be helpful to staff it could also compromise the numbers of people allowed into the branch – we should look at other ways we can support our staff.	Opportunity to raise awareness of online/self-service options for customers
Framework to assess risk	- For sites and activities – needs to be site specific - Support from internal depts. i.e. facilities. These may have other priorities.	- Worked through with union reps - H&S and Facilities support and sign off needed - Dynamic risk assessments need to be made as well	- Union(s) collective endorsement of TOOLKIT - Support from internal depts. - we can't afford to go ahead without their support but	

		as daily assessments to adapt to change or new issues	also need to be assertive and hold them to account.	
How to manage social distancing	• Limited customer understanding • Increase spread of the virus through staff and customers • Staff inability to manage the new service models • Lack of PPE (If required) and	• Staff induction back into the work place. • Video of each site in the new layout with social distance measures • PPE for staff- where identified there is a need • Regular staff meetings (not necessarily face to face) and management presence (as long as this doesn't compromise social distancing and numbers allowed on premises)	• Staff Charter • Clear visible guidance on site showing the numbers allowed on site along with a crib sheet for staff to check at regular intervals, i.e. is the signage still visible, is there enough PPE (if applicable), are customers/staff behaving correctly?	• Opportunity to raise awareness of online/self-service options for customers
Building staff confidence – is this one actually about morale and motivation and the one below about confidence?	• Concerns over being off work sometime and limited understanding of social distancing	• Send out clear guidance to staff identifying the steps put in place to reassure them and allow them to comment	• Return to work briefings and re-immersions • Clear and visible guidance on the procedures to follow at each site,	• If managed correctly, could lead to staff feeling empowered and more confident/competent

	• Loss of skills or lack of motivation • Divisions between staff – those who have played a significant role during the lockdown and those who haven't	• Re-emphasizing how valued they all are – Ensure Members and Senior Leadership all saying the same thing	must be easily accessible • Regular briefings to staff to update them • Identify roles and ensure staff all know they play a critical role in the team	
Cleaning/Toilets/staff cleaning	• Difficult to manage these spaces and keep clean • Lack of equipment and supplies	• Keep them closed to the public in the early stages or pilot sites (but provide hand sanitiser and consider needs of people with disabilities) • Need support from Unions to clarify what staff should be cleaning • Ensure that sufficient supplies are on site and guidance given to staff • Remove furniture (tables and chairs, soft furnishings) to minimise risk and	• Agreement from facilities teams or • Ensure that there are adequate staff available to carry out the cleaning and guidance given to staff which is site specific where necessary	• Temporary rearrangement of the library space may highlight new ways of working or a better library layout

		prevent additional cleaning		
Staff confidence/re-assurance/	• Reduced confidence in being in a work environment • Concerns about virus transmission	• May want to provide PPE as a reassurance measure, but the importance of social distancing and handwashing must be emphasised. •	• Budgets to purchase required and additional PPE or equipment needed. Ensure that this is place and there is an easy procedure to follow to ensure we don't run out of supplies (local or corporate budget) • Consider new office and work place layouts in line with government guidance	

Further reading

Mind offers useful resources and tools for employers and employees to support mental health and wellbeing in the workplace:

- Mental Health at Work
<https://www.mind.org.uk/workplace/mental-health-at-work/>
- Transitioning back to work after lockdown
<https://www.mentalhealthatwork.org.uk/toolkit/transitioning-back-to-work-after-lockdown/>

APPENDIX C: PRIORITISING SERVICE AREAS AND USER GROUPS

Introduction

Libraries deliver a wide range of services to an incredibly broad swathe of the community. Many of these are delivered in an openly accessible manner, and others have been developed to meet specific needs of priority user groups. However, this inclusive and focused approach of library service delivery will not be possible during the initial recovery phase, and services will have to make choices of which service areas to recover first.

The ability to prioritise which service areas will re-open first and which user groups have access, has a critical dependency on the ability to implement the necessary physical measures required to keep the workforce and customers safe, and the availability of staff. Furthermore, it is likely that the pandemic has increased and created new areas of need in communities – for example, there will be increased unemployment and very high levels of isolation and mental health issues. So libraries will need to reassess need and reprioritise.

Some authorities have already re-opened Home Delivery Library Services, providing books and other reading materials to those shielding and/or over 70. Access to IT remains a priority for most services for those who don't have facilities at home. A phased approach, in line with corporate requirements will result in different Library Services prioritising according to need.

A key consideration for Library Service managers is that corporate conversations may be taking place around which services will **not** re-open again, be that buildings and/or service provision. Appendix G of the Toolkit addresses advocacy, and the steps libraries can take to protect themselves from closure by stealth and to secure any additional investment needed to meet the new community pressures.

A clear communication process should be in place to inform users exactly what will be on offer once the library doors re-open and when each of the defined user groups can access the library. The problems with anti-social behaviour will escalate if communication is weak, ambiguous or lacking in detail. The way the retail sector has dealt with this is useful to consider for Library Services.

Priority community needs

The pandemic has been an unprecedented global event, and its impact on society is now becoming evident. It is likely that there will be increased needs in local communities. Libraries should consider how they impact on their priorities, as libraries are well placed to respond to many of these challenges. These include:

- Rebuilding the local economy and high street.
- Supporting people back into work and to secure appropriate benefits.
- Tackling isolation and mental health issues, including among older and shielded people.
- Supporting the bereaved.
- Supporting students and children who have not had access to schools and university teaching and resources.
- Tackling the digital divide to get more people online and build their digital confidence.
- Rebuilding connectivity and trust between people and across communities.
- Harnessing new volunteers into longer term volunteer programmes

Key user groups

One of the key values of libraries is that they are a universal service, equally accessible to all in the community. However, to ensure COVID-safety, there will need to be careful thought about different categories of user and what level of service can be delivered to them.

The following user groups have been identified:

- **Children and young people:**
 - It is likely that restrictions will need to be placed on access to libraries by this group for some time following re-opening and while social distancing measures are still in place.
 - Adhering to social distancing will be difficult for young children and most Library Services sometimes have to manage anti-social behaviour from young people in library spaces.

- Unaccompanied children should not be permitted entry into libraries unless a responsible adult is with them, and adults should be informed that they are responsible for children's behaviour (e.g. by a notice displayed at the entrance). Libraries can decide what their age bracket is, and in practice many libraries use under 12 as their definition.
- Events and activities for this group are unlikely to take place in the physical sense for some time, however online sessions are developing and will continue to grow in popularity. Many libraries are running enormously popular rhyme times and story times for small children, and some are now offering online events for young people which as homework support, writing clubs and creative sessions.
- **Adults with mental health problems:**
 - Social isolation and the effect on mental health is likely to be an ongoing issue post-pandemic, and health services are reporting increased levels of stress and depression – including among those who have had previously good mental health.
 - Library services have worked well on tackling this issue prior to the outbreak with targeted initiatives such as Reading Well, and importantly a wide range of activities to support people to connect, share, learn and enjoy.
 - Re-opening services on a phased approach will begin to impact positively on those users who view the library as lifeline; however, access to group activities that help tackle mental illness will be restricted in the first phase after re-opening.
 - The effect of the pandemic on mental health of library service key partners should not be overlooked and consideration should be given to how libraries can support partners who are key workers such as school staff.
 - Frustratingly, in the reopening period libraries will probably not be able to offer the types of events and services they often provide to support mental health and wellbeing. However, some libraries have moved some of these online – like Knit and Natter Groups; and have established remote services like Keep in Touch phone calls.
- **Older people:**
 - People over 70 may not be able to visit libraries for some time if the government continues to advise shielding and self-isolation for clinically vulnerable and extremely vulnerable people.
 - The expansion of Home Library Services is helping to mitigate the lack of the public library in some cases. However not all library services will have the capacity to take new people onto the service. There will be issues with access to volunteers to run some of those services, particularly if the volunteers fall into this group themselves.

- Library services could consider providing sessions reserved for older people sessions for older people to visit the library. Those library services who have offered autism/SEN hours will be familiar with providing sessions for one group only, this process could be expanded across the board and be offered for different user groups.
- **Businesses, job and benefit seekers**
 - Job seekers and benefit applicants will also be at higher levels, and many may need access to library computers, Wi-Fi and IT facilities to apply for jobs and benefits.
 - This will be a priority for many libraries, and new procedures may be needed to allow social distancing and cleaning of equipment between use. For example, a booking system and timed access slots.
 - Local businesses may have been hard hit by the lockdown. Libraries that provide support to SMEs, including via a Business Information and IP Centre will have a valuable role to play in supporting businesses to recover and for new ones to set themselves on firm foundations.
 - It may not be possible to run the usual breadth of support for businesses, including events and coaching sessions. But consideration should be given to prioritising recovery of some elements of this service and developing an online programme

Prioritising services

The Universal Library Offers shape the way library services are offered and in normal times, ensure libraries deliver across a broad programme of services and activities. However, a phased approach will be needed to reinstate activity under each Universal Offer, with an initial focus on how they can be delivered digitally.

The following specific service areas were identified:

- **Books.**
See Appendix D and section 4.1 for information about book and resource lending and browsing.
- **Archive Services:** Likely to be appointment only and numbers in search rooms restricted as social distancing is applied. However, attention needs to be paid to the safe preservation of collections and legal responsibilities for access to documents including under the Public Records Act. The National Archive has released guidance which will be useful to consider

<https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/archives-sector/our-archives-sector-role/coronavirus-update/our-coronavirus-response-and-guidance/>.

- **Buildings:** A recognition that the library building will be used in different ways. Community/meeting rooms will need a booking system and numbers restricted to allow social distancing. In some cases, meeting rooms may need to be used to quarantine stock and be taken out of use. This will impact not just on revenue but also on a library's community programmes.

See Appendix A for more detail on managing buildings and spaces.

- **Culture:** Arts Council England has provided extensive advice and support: <https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/covid19>. This includes advice for NPO Library Services, and more information on this will be available via the Relationship Manager. Most library cultural activity has moved online with artists and performers adapting well to the situation and this is likely to continue for some time.

See Appendix G: Sustaining the Digital Offer for more detail on this.

In the recovery period, libraries could support the local arts and culture economy by employing artists and providing spaces for performance where the public will feel safe to attend.

- **Digital assistance:** the size of the digital divide has been brought into sharp relief by the crisis, and libraries have a key role to play in supporting more people to get online and develop digital confidence.
 - Supported by DCMS, DevicesDotNow is targeting the 1.9 million households who don't have access to the internet, by campaigning for donations of tablets, smartphones, laptops, sim cards and other connectivity. Library staff can play a role in supporting, training and helping people to get online through this.
 - Access to IT will continue to be crucial and library services should be able to offer a booking system for PC use in libraries once consideration has been given to social distancing and layout.

Case study: Bridging the digital divide

Lancashire Library Service and digital inclusion

During lockdown Lancashire libraries have been working with colleagues to provide digital equipment and support in partnership with colleagues in the Education and Children's Directorate and the Vulnerable people cell. The first project, funded through the Department of Education, has been to support the purchase and allocation of thousands of laptops to vulnerable young people and year 10 students.

The second project aligns to the long-term Digital strategy for Lancashire County Council which sets out to ensure all of the people of Lancashire have the digital skills to access all the information and services they require. The project during lockdown is a pan-Lancashire Libraries one to provide digital devices and connectivity to those people aged 60+ initially and then to 18-30 year olds. One element of the project will be with The Good Things Foundation who will provide tablets that are data enabled through the DevicesDotNow campaign. A pilot will begin in June with library staff remotely supporting 50 people to utilise their free device and enabling them to be less socially isolated.

<https://futuresdotnow.uk/devicesdotnow/>

Case study: Providing managed IT access in Westminster Libraries

The situation

Many residents regularly use library PCs as they do not have access to home PCs or Wi-Fi connections (25% of RBKC residents). Some will be particularly disadvantaged or at risk by this due to their circumstances. Access to PCs could prove a lifeline for many during lockdown. A request was made to our Gold Board for approval to deliver a PC offer limited to complete essential tasks only and not for leisure activities. It was made clear that no access to any other library services would be on offer.

Considerations

- The area identified would need to be cleared of books, shelving and unnecessary furniture.
- Access to other parts of the building would need to be closed.
- PCs should be cleaned in between each use.
- The service would be run/organised by library staff/volunteers giving support to customers with support from IT for set up; security to maintain queueing and social distancing.
- PC bookings be to be limited to 45 mins a day with no advance booking.
- A risk assessment has been carried out. By taking precautionary measures, the residual risk is low if staff distance themselves from customers and the PCs are cleaned between each use.
- Laptops were prioritised for the service to avoid additional IT work.
- Clear guidance to staff managing the service is needed.
- A pool of staff were identified to support and to be called on at short notice.

Requirements

The service would require the following to launch:

- Identify computer to be used (laptops recommended)
- IT staff required to support set-up of public access PCs
- Property support is needed to prepare the space
- Security staff to ensure social distancing when queuing for access and to control access to the PC area
- Cleaning equipment and hand sanitiser
- On site cleaner to clean computers in between customer use and to carry out daily clean
- Communications to update website and include in other customer channels

The operating hours are limited to Monday to Friday, 10am-4pm.

The service has been popular and the public are really grateful. The service has been used for applying for benefits, uploading documents, jobs searching, online shopping for items not available in supermarkets and communicating with close family and friends for those that have no other means of contacting them.

Further considerations

Up to now we have not provided printing, but there has been a request to do so, so we are currently risk assessing this can be managed. If this service is provided printing will need to be free of charge to avoid cash handling and the additional work of daily cash reconciliation. At present we are considering WIFI printing.

I cannot stress how important it is to ensure that the space is clear of unnecessary furniture. This really helps staff to manage the space, keep it clean and alleviate social distancing concerns.

APPENDIX D: BOOK LENDING AND BROWSING

Introduction

Providing a public lending function is at the heart of library services yet it provides a significant challenge to deliver in a COVID-safe manner.

During the lockdown, library services pivoted online, and there was a massive uplift in digital library membership and borrowing. However, eLending is only ever a partial substitute for the full library offer for a range of reasons:

- It does not reach the digitally excluded
- The selection and availability of eBooks and eAudio is much more limited than the physical offer, due to the complexities of eLicenses
- The physical library supports a much richer exploration process, with browsing, displays, recommendations, events, reference and study.

How can libraries return to a safe way of reading and browsing in their buildings? Service recovery must take into account the social distancing and hygiene measures which will be required to be maintain according to government guidelines; it will need to engage both staff and customer confidence of its safety; it will need to reflect the physical differences in many buildings.

Phases of recovering book lending and circulation

The library service risk assessment must include book lending, browsing and circulation as one of the key areas to consider.

Risk assessment must consider risks to staff, volunteers and library users. Particular attention should be paid to people in the clinically vulnerable and extremely clinically vulnerable groups, such as older residents and those with health problems.

In the early stages of service recovery, it is unlikely that libraries will be able to restore full access to the library buildings with open access to books, browsing and long 'dwell times' because:

- The risk of virus transmission may be too high in the current phase of the pandemic
- Staff shortages may not allow a full service, especially as new safety procedures may be more labour intensive
- Alterations to library lay-out and equipment will be necessary.

Each library will have its own phased recovery plan, but it is likely that most will follow a broad pathway that looks something like this:

1. Digital and remote services, some home delivery, order & collect, ticketed IT access. Some staff still working from home. Extremely limited public access to buildings. Library opening hours limited, and number of branches open limited.
2. Digital and remote services, home delivery, order & collect, ticketed IT access, browsing and self-service within libraries, controlled mobile libraries. Majority of staff working in libraries. Public access to buildings with key control measures. Increased number of libraries open and opening hours expanded.
3. Digital and remote services, home delivery, IT access, browsing, mobile libraries, events and activities, staff support and interaction. Staff working within libraries. Public access to buildings. Control measures in place but slightly relaxed (eg no limit on time public can spend in library). All libraries open for standard hours.
4. New services and offers developed in addition to the existing library offer; service transformation.

This appendix will explore in more detail how a COVID-safe Home Library Service and book collection service can be offered, and then go on to explore steps that need to be taken in the next phase as browsing and access into library buildings is restored.

Home Library Service

Home Library Service is a cornerstone for most libraries and is a valued service for recipients that brings measurable health and wellbeing impacts. The service is very personalised, where materials are selected to meet individuals' interests, and the social contact is as important as the books. A COVID-safe Home Library Service will feel very different, and clear communication with the service users and their families is essential.

See Appendix G on Communications with the public and advocacy with stakeholders for advice and key messages.

Key points to consider are:

- May only be for limited priority users if resources are tight.
- Staff and volunteers must be fully trained in new handling procedures to ensure they are confident and competent.
- Consideration needs to be given to who will deliver the service. Many services use volunteers – but the usual volunteers may not be available so staff may need to be redeployed or new volunteers recruited. Conversely, some services may have to draft

in volunteers to expand the work of the core staff. IN all cases, clear communication with staff and volunteers is essential to clarify the distinction between core staff roles and the additional work of volunteers.

- Social distancing and hand hygiene are the key risk control measures. Risk assessments may identify that PPE is needed.
- Selection of books and resources may be more limited than usual, so it may not be possible to offer the standard personalised service, but to provide more generic packs of books and resources.
- Quarantine books and resources 72 hours before and after collection.
- There should be no or extremely limited contact with the customers – with books left on doorsteps or if they need to be carried inside, observing safe social distancing.
- The inside of vehicles and any crates etc should be thoroughly cleaned after return of materials.
- If using staff or volunteers' cars, the boots can be lined with disposable plastic sheeting. You must ensure that individual's vehicles are covered by your workplace insurance.
- Can you deliver a service of 'keep in touch' phone calls to sustain social contact with Home Library Service users?

Order and Collect services

There are a few ways libraries can offer a no-contact or limited contact lending service:

- Order & Collect: User places an order by phone, email, website and collects their books from the library
- Ready Reads: Library staff create packs of themed books for users to collect
- Grab & Go: Users allowed access to a limited selection of books in a managed time slot to select their own books.

There are a few considerations when offering these limited access services:

- Equality of access. Not everyone can access and confidently use the library catalogue to select and order their materials:
 - Can you provide alternative ways to select materials – e.g. by telephone support, staff suggestions or review of users' borrowing history?
 - Does a pre-selected Ready Reads system meet the needs of those not able to interrogate the catalogue?
 - Will reservation fees apply, as these will impact disproportionately on many in your community and may be a barrier to borrowing?

- Availability of stock may be limited: buildings closed, vans redeployed, staff shortages and a lot of popular titles out on loan:
 - Can your LMS filter the selection to stock available in specific branches?
 - Offer pre-selected Ready Reads alongside or instead of user choice.
 - If possible, purchase additional stock before re-opening. Some libraries are considering buying a tranche of their most popular titles, especially those not available as eBooks.
 - Encourage users to return books that have been on loan during lockdown.
 - Do you need to limit the number of items each person can borrow and change the loan period?
- Fines and charges vary between library services and during lockdown most services suspended these:
 - Clarify when and if overdue fines will be reinstated and ensure clear communication to users.
 - Consider whether reservation fees will apply for the pre-ordering service, as this will impact disproportionately on the more disadvantaged in your community and may be a barrier to borrowing.
 - Can you take payments by card or online to avoid cash handling?
- Staffing. Staff may still be redeployed to emergency roles, be shielding or isolating or on sick leave:
 - Running collection services will require a high level of staff experience, familiarity with library stock and reader habits. It's more complex than getting books off a shelf!

New equipment

To deliver these services safely, you may need to procure new equipment such as:

- Perspex screens for reception areas and staff desks.
- Bins for the return and quarantining of books. Ideally, these will have wheels and be of a size that can be easily moved into a quarantine area and can be clearly labelled with the date. If book bins are not available from suppliers, explore alternatives such as laundry bins or post trolleys.
- Physical spaces for storing the bins of quarantined books and clear date/time labelling. It may be that areas of the library need to be used for safe storage and circulation of returned books
- Crates and plastic sheeting for vehicles in Home Delivery Service.
- Bags and labels for Order & Collect, Ready Reads and Home Delivery services.
- Tickets for timed entry for managed browsing services.

- PPE, hand cleaning supplies for staff.
- Posters and signage to explain systems to your users.

NB the government has issued a policy to support urgent procurement by local authorities during the COVID crisis, with an easement of some of the usual regulations: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/procurement-policy-note-0120-responding-to-covid-19>

You should agree clear policies for suspending the service if any of the essential equipment is unavailable due to supply chain problems.

Browsing and access into the library

Public Health England has advised that the virus risks on plastic book covers will be negligible after 72 hours, and on paper and card after 24 hours. Libraries will therefore institute a 72-hour quarantine period for returned books.

However, managing browsing is more complex than managing lending, as readers move around the library, picking up and putting down an unlimited number of books. It is different to browsing in other types of shop, where a shopper may only hold an item for a short time. A browser may hold a book for an extended period, even sitting down with it for half an hour, and small children may put books in their mouths. Furthermore, reference books may be in a user's hands for a considerable period as they are not able to take them out on loan.

In order to restore browsing, a range of control measures are needed and it may be a very different user experience.

Most libraries are not planning on restoring any form of user browsing in their first phase of recovery. Having a gradually phased recovery will:

- Build staff confidence and familiarity with new processes and safety procedures
- Help support users to become familiar with the new processes and safety procedures, and build their confidence in returning to the library
- Allow more time for planning strategies to manage the buildings, including ploughing in any lessons learned from the initial recovery phase

- Allow more time for staff to be released from redeployment and shielding
- Allow more time for stocks to be replenished by returned loans, new purchases and consolidating stock from closed libraries
- Expand services as the government lowers the COVID risk level.

The phases many libraries are planning in recovering their book browsing are:

- Grab & Go service:
 - Public access to a limited selection of stock – e.g. a few shelves in the library lobby
 - Controlled numbers are admitted within a timed slot
 - Cleaning is possible throughout the day and shelves can be replenished or stock swapped over.
- Appointment service:
 - Public given access to books within the library with some form of appointment service to manage numbers within time-limited slots
 - 'Dwell time' not encouraged, and seating removed.
- Managed entry – 'one in, one out' depending on size and layout of the library
- Reference service reopened, with spaced out desks and careful consideration about cleaning/quarantining of books after extended contact with readers
- Dwell time reintroduced, with spaced out seating.

Control measures

Once access to the library book stock has been recovered, there are some control measure you may want to implement:

- Control entry into the library to facilitate two metre social distancing. When assessing floor capacity, as a rule of thumb, you can use an allocation of 12.6 square metres per person (a circle of 2m radius). However, you also need to consider pinch points such as stairways, lifts and entrances.
- Ask users to sanitise hands on entering and leaving the library.
- Gloves do not need to be worn as hand washing is a more effective defence (gloves may not be clean).
- Provide sanitiser in multiple locations throughout the library if possible.

- Limit customer handling of books, for example, through different display methods, new signage or rotation of high-touch stock.
- Consider discouraging extensive browsing and handling of books by customers for the initial reopening period. Timed entry could be an option to limit users' time within the library.
- Continue to offer Order & Collect and Ready Reads as an alternative to self-selection and browsing.
- Remove comfortable seating and study furniture to discourage extensive browsing and long visits.
- Remove magazines and newspapers.
- Provide separate a location for returning books that have been extensively handled, so they can then be quarantined for 72 hours before being returned to shelves. Many libraries will provide wheeled book bins, laundry bins or post trolleys for returned books that can be easily moved to the quarantine area by staff.
- Some booksellers will ask customers to place any book they browse on a quarantine trolley. This may not be a feasible option for libraries that may only have one copy of each book title.
- Move shelving further apart, if possible, and establish one-way traffic flow through the aisles.
- Children under 12 must be accompanied by an adult who is responsible for their behaviour and following social distancing guidelines.
- Change opening hours so staff can restock shelves and manage the library floor etc when the building is closed.
- Promote self-service issue and return to reduce interaction between staff and users. Asking users to sanitise hands on entering and leaving the building and cleaning the screens will reduce the risk from the touchscreen.
- Install Perspex screens on enquiry desks and staff pods, and change procedures so staff do not floor walk to interact with and support customers.

Risks/operational issues

This table sets out some of the key risks you will need to address and some suggested mitigations and actions.

Question considered	Identified risks	Proposed mitigation	Actions needed to be support mitigation	Any opportunities for service development?
Is browsing possible in the new world?	• Cross contamination	• Survey customers to see what services they would	• Need to test out on customers whether	Changed stock and furniture layout.

	• Challenge of maintaining social distancing • Physical space in libraries – lack of capacity due to restrictions in size • Customer perception • Reduction in stock available to customers	like restored? Tailor recovery based on this? • Stock one side of shelves only in order to help direct flow and keep social distancing. • Change layout to enable flow • Set a time limit people can browse for • All stock face on? • Use of PPE (dependent on official guidance) • Volunteers to assist • Not all areas of stock available? • Some form of click & collect or 'staff selection based on customers reading preference' as a first step-see below	they actually want to browse. • Liaise with supermarkets – how are they handling customers browsing and handling stock	Development of new services such as Ready Reads
Would we offer an Order & Collect or Ready Reads service?	• Customer and political expectation • Staff capacity • Managing method of delivery • Reduction in breadth of stock available to customers	• Use of booking system to manage collection. • Volunteers to assist • Collection point outside the building or in the lobby where possible?	• Investment but could be shared across more than one authority.	Question - How is this managed – only reservations collected or genres and staff pick?
How can we provide a safe lending service?	• Size of family groups • How family group browsing is managed	• Consider offering different times for different customer groups.	• Expenditure on systems or physical	

	• Shorter periods of opening hours • How to manage time customers spend in libraries	• Keeping separation between different areas of library. • Some areas not available if not suitable for social distancing • Ensure parents understand their responsibility for social distancing and behaviour of children under 12 • Implement time limits on browsing – eg 30 mins? • Manage numbers entering library with systems like Queuematic, use of coloured bands, or paper tickets • Possible use of a booking system to manage numbers (e.g. Registration system) • Direction arrows on the floor • Volunteers to assist	barriers to keep social distancing • Management of any queuing time management system.	
How do we manage handling of stock?	• Cross contamination • Back office storage • Staff capacity • Continual circulation of stock • Donated stock • Reduction in stock available to customers.	• Books being left for 72 hours before using or putting back on shelves • Suspend accepting book donations • May need to use areas of libraries to house surplus or quarantined stock • Volunteers to assist		

How do we deal with non book materials – eg Newspapers, magazines etc		- Remove magazines and newspapers - Develop careful strategy for managing access to and use of Reference Collections		
Can we maintain request services and Inter Library Loans/Music & Drama Loans?	- Movement of stock between different areas of country - Staff capacity - Transport - Fees and cash handling	- Suspend fees and charges - Accept only card and online payments to avoid cash handling - Offer limited services in these areas, as staff and other resources allow		

Checklist

- ✓ Phased strategy agreed for the gradual reintroduction of lending, browsing and reference services
- ✓ PPE/screens in place where needed
- ✓ Library layouts assessed/changed for social distancing
- ✓ Assessment of level and types of stock to be made available, and number of loans per user
- ✓ Identification of areas for stock rotation/quarantine
- ✓ Cleaning/disinfection regimes in place
- ✓ Bookings system in place where needed
- ✓ Time limiting considered
- ✓ Needs of different age and user groups considered, with due regard to equalities
- ✓ Clear communications and signage to manager user expectations
- ✓ Provision of additional equipment

Further reading

NB regulations and recommendations in different countries vary. In the UK, libraries must comply with the guidance of the relevant national government and health bodies.

EBLIDA newsletter with round up of library recovery strategies in Germany, Ireland, Italy, Netherlands

<http://www.eblida.org/news/april-newsletter-special-issue3.html>

European public libraries: spreadsheet of approaches to reopening and book circulation:

<https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1qWCVvKA237aL0sql1H7c6yard1DjXL-KoamGmsBPNqE/edit#gid=2004666357>

IFLA Public Libraries Section international round-up

<https://www.ifla.org/covid-19-and-libraries#reopening>

Australian Libraries re-opening checklist

<https://read.alia.org.au/australian-libraries-responding-covid-19-checklist-reopening-libraries>

Guide to Social Distancing on Re-opening: Guide for Bookshops

<https://booksellers.org.uk/Special-Pages/Guide-to-Re-opening-Bookshops.aspx>

States of Jersey draft advice to retailers <https://jerseychamber.com/storage/app/media/pdf/draft%20retail%20guidance.pdf>

'We don't have plexi-glass with little frost!': blog on reopening a library in Finland

<https://akepike.fi/ei-meilla-pleksit-ihan-pienest-huurru-eli-noutopalvelua-pika-asiointia-ja-take-awayta-pike-kirjastoissa/?fbclid=IwAR0fQN0RnybtCMrgrevLTEcjCmRFBYA5XobTCI0OlviawShqQuSY69QFzFM>

Running a pick-up service in Belgium: blog on the practicalities of a collection service in a small library

<https://www.naplesisterlibraries.org/libraries-in-times-of-coronavirus-the-case-of-public-library-of-pittem-belgium/>

There is a crack in everything – that's how the light gets in: blog on reopening libraries in Denmark

<https://christianlauersen.net/2020/05/10/experiences-with-reopening-libraries-in-the-age-of-corona/>

Curbside pickup service at Madison Public Library, USA: webpage with information and order forms for the public

<https://www.madisonpubliclibrary.org/library-cards/curbside-pickup-service>

APPENDIX E: RESTORING EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES

Introduction

As Libraries begin to re-open their doors, keeping staff and customers safe will be a key priority. Social distancing and hygiene will be paramount. We believe it is unlikely that there will be many opportunities for physical events and activities in the short term.

There is an understanding and an ambition that the future will not see a return to pre-covid-19 days, but that we use the learning we've all experienced over the last few weeks to create a new library service where physical and digital work in much more integrated fashion reaching new and different audiences. Libraries want to retain new online audiences and aim to convert some of them to physical library users too. However, library services are also very aware of the importance of their physical offer and the importance of social spaces to communities and supporting their existing loyal customers.

This appendix therefore covers the continuation and development of digital events and activities and suggestions for a gradual return to physical events and activities.

We suggest that events and activities recovery may take the following phases

- Phase 1: Concentration on opening libraries for basic services with a focus on continuation and development of digital events and activities
- Phase 2: Very limited group activities in libraries with strict social distancing and maintaining a vibrant online programme, and use of outside spaces
- Phase 3: (Recovery) A wider range of quality physical activities for groups and events and an integrated well established quality digital programme which reinforce each other.

We recognise that every library and library service is different and will have different needs.

This appendix provides guidance for phase 1 and phase 2

Phase 1 Continuation and development of digital events and activities		
Area of need	Actions	Support from Libraries Connected and partners

Ensuring online events provide a quality experience?	• Build staff skills support the skill development of library staff including where appropriate those shielding at home who may have some capacity to develop activity • Less is more - plan to provide a quality unique offer rather than a packed programme • Be brave – try things out and stop activities that aren't very good or don't engage customers	Library staff across the country have been working with Libraries Connected to develop content for the #LibrariesFromHome pages. This includes creating guidance and support based on learning from libraries. There will be: • Top tips on quality rhymetimes and storytimes • Top tips on online Lego clubs, • Top tips on setting up quality adult reading activities • The team are now also looking at top tips for online safety from a presenter's point of view • A second team are writing how to guides- best practice for Facebook live, podcasts etc. (links to all these)
How do we monitor participation and evaluate impact?	• Monitor participation and understand audience engagement locally and sharing nationally. • Telling the story around engagement will be important in terms of planning content, understanding audiences and identifying groups not engaging	
Developing content – starting to build a programme	• Look at the balance of the programme – a recent snapshot showed that 76% of online library activities are for children. This may change when school resumes, so it would be good to think about more adult content? • Are there key adult events that could be run to reach targeted priority audiences or address locally identified needs - e.g. wellbeing, job clubs etc?	A team from Libraries Connected/CILIP etc. are working towards blanket publishers' permissions for adults and children for a short period of time/ regularly reviewed (Many that we have now run out in June)? Ensuring libraries continue to celebrate the big national events book and cultural events - including working with partners – Libraries Connected will work

	• Ensure the programme is scheduled and runs at regular times • Use partnership with other cultural providers to create unique, innovative online activity. NPOS commission artists to develop online as well as physical content • Work through partners to engage audiences • Share more live and recorded events between library services regionally or nationally to create an inspiring programme? • Invite the community to collaborate with you on events and programming • Explore how you can build interactivity into online events – e.g. feedback on Facebook Live etc.	with national partners running events to create simple toolkits and social media assets Libraries Connected is creating our own national content and event opportunities to make available to libraries?
Equalities and access issues • Consider areas where broadband functionality might be an issue and determine which platforms will be easiest to access • Think about formats is some material better in just audio – moving away from so much screen time • Addressing digital exclusion.		

Phase 2: Initial preparation for small scale physical activities

Question considered	Identified risks	Suggestions for mitigation	Actions needed to mitigation	Any opportunities for service development?	Dependencies
Ensuring Events can be run safely	Events bringing people together brings social distancing challenges	- Events only taking place in the largest libraries to begin with, where social distance can be maintained. If space does not permit this, could libraries consider delivering events in larger local venues where it would be safer - keep events small scale and run them in closed libraries. - All events pre-booked and ticketed – limiting numbers to ensure social distancing, - Timed entry, avoiding anything that involves sharing equipment - Using outdoor spaces when the weather allows		Developing and sharing effective strategies for integrating online and physical activities and promotions	

		for borrowing and some activity? • If events remain online, can they integrated with a physical offer e.g. – doing SRC online, borrowing physical books from the library even by click and collect • Book displays in libraries that people can borrow as part of regular library visits to complement events online			
	• Different groups have different vulnerabilities	• Avoid bringing groups into libraries together • different opening times for different people • Unaccompanied children – some libraries are temporarily raising the age limit for this			
	• Consider who the priority groups for events should be	• Should libraries prioritize events and activities that support specific groups in need – e.g. should they be events that			

		focus on supporting people with mental health issues, and economic/job seeking/small business challenges?			
Equality and access issues	How can libraries support isolated people – still shielded, or unable to get to libraries, or to bring small scale, number-limited events to a wider audience	- Develop a plan to integrate small scale physical events with live streaming or filmed events so that other people can join in remotely - Is there learning from the Reading Friends initiative in Staffs? Etc. to make contact with people who are still at home			
Many people will want and need to take part in physical events but will be concerned about safety	Lack of community confidence	Ensure all safety measures are adhered to		Work on national promotional campaign	Govt guidance on safe reopening

APPENDIX F: SUSTAINING THE DIGITAL OFFER

Introduction

The COVID crisis and the associated closing down of libraries has been a catalyst for rapid development of libraries' digital offers. This has been a great opportunity to bring in virtual and digital alternatives for existing services – such as child focussed events through Facebook, as well as introducing a large number of people to existing digital services, such as the digital content offer through eBook and eAudio aggregators.

Key challenges to consider

The key challenges ahead include:

- Accessibility – there are still 1.5 million people without access to the internet in their homes. While there are projects in place (Devices.now for example) the scale does not come close to meeting the need. There is also likely to be a significant overlap between the people without access to digital services and those who are more vulnerable both in terms of social vulnerability and health, and it is likely that they may have their movement and access to physical spaces restricted over a significant period of time – months and potentially years.
- Staff skills to create digital content and to support users in accessing content.
- The broadcast nature of a lot of the digital offer – while there has been an explosion of library content that members and wider users can access over the past weeks, the level of two way interaction and digital engagement has been slower to increase. This is understandable as this takes more time and planning, so has not been a focus in the initial crisis response, there is a need to consider this as we develop further.
- Coherence of digital and physical offers as the physical space reopens – how can the digital offer complement the physical offer and provide an integrated experience for users, and how can this be used to minimise use of physical spaces while there are restrictions on capacity because of social distancing and staff availability.
- Funding impacts – particularly with digital content as a significant part of physical purchasing has been redirected to spend on digital content and delivery. This increased digital spend needs to be maintained as a significant proportion of library use will still need to be outside the physical spaces – so the expected cost of delivery over the year is likely to be higher while there is an identified loss of income from the library closures.

Risks/operational issues

Operational issues have been broken into the following areas:

- Digital content – specifically eBooks / eAudio / eComics / eMagazines.
- Online activities – the Rhyme times on Facebook / virtual book groups etc.
- Online resources – for example Access to Research and Ancestry.com – how/can we provide home access to these.
- Accessibility – ensuring that people can access the service – equipment / connectivity / skills.
- Discoverability – how do people find the content (this aspect may merge with Single Digital Presence at some point).

Operational area	Specific issue	Risk	Suggestions for mitigation	Actions needed to be support mitigation	Any opportunities for service development?	Dependencies
Digital content	Ongoing demand for eBooks	Cost of meeting demand not feasible Range of titles limited		Improve licensing model Pressure on publishers to increase access	Work together to develop a systematic approach to data gathering. Permission and disclosure from aggregators	eBooks group
Online activities	Maintain local angle	Loss of local connection with library members as	Ongoing local content plan - possible regional coordination	Support to individual libraries - each Regional group to discuss whether to coordinate there	More workforce development	

	National content	Loss of national coherence and big name' or high-profile events	National plan	Libraries Connected developing a national offer and content to support libraries, shared events and promote libraries events	Move into a systematic programme	
	Engaging people	Become broadcast rather than engagement	Increase engagement on existing services where possible Develop innovative services that have two-way engagement built in	Build staff skills and good practice in two-way engagement Skills development Creative digital skills and informational digital skills	As above	
Online resources Making them available at home as well as in the library	Access to Research, Find my past Ancestry	Loss of access - immediately as library opening is limited, and long term as more vulnerable people unable to get to libraries in person	Identify which resources are not currently available from home and determine potential value of negotiating for more access	Discuss with #Librariesfromhome team		
Accessibility	Content consumption	People do not have access to devices	Framework for planning supply and support of devices Devices.now model but with wider sources of eqpt. Managed by regional groups in a	Framework to be developed - IM to draft		
		People do not have skills to access				
		Staff do not have skills to support the public in using devices				

			shared way to ensure access in areas of greatest need			
		People do not have necessary network connections	Libraries Wi-Fi networks available remotely	Possibly addressed in above framework		
	Content engagement	Supporting people to engage digitally with services in libraries	Need to be able to do this remotely by exploring remote access to pcs			Employment and skills
	Content creation	Staff do not have skills or resources needed to deliver classes on digital creation				
Discoverability		Loss of information / consistency across the different aggregators	Aggregators of information: Libraries at Home Libraries from home (Libraries Connected)			
		Learning from #Librariesfromhome and local digital offers lost as SDP developed parallel to this programme	Clear and structured links with SDP team and support their engagement with libraries. Share learning from #Librariesfromhome			
			Comms plan -links to comms group Thinking about advertising -			

			maybe on TV to reach the widest audience			
--	--	--	--	--	--	--

Checklist

Equalities considerations

Accessibility:

- Access to devices
- Access to networks
- Access to skills where needed
- All platforms accessible to screen readers and other assisted devices
- Appropriate levels of web accessibility for LA websites and any aggregators of information

Further reading

<https://www.librariesathome.co.uk/>

<https://www.librariesconnected.org.uk/page/librariesfromhome>

APPENDIX G: COMMUNICATIONS TO THE PUBLIC AND ADVOCOACY TO STAKEHOLDERS

Purpose

In the face of the COVID-19 crisis, libraries have rapidly redesigned their services for a society in lockdown. However, the success of these digital activities, combined with the economic stresses facing local authorities, have the potential to place many aspects of the previous library offer at risk. The purpose of this plan is twofold:

1. To give library managers and workers the tools they need to manage their communications with key stakeholders.
2. To outline the key areas of advocacy for libraries, based on the Universal Library Offer framework, to help us to recreate a comprehensive and valued service to meet the new challenges facing our communities.

Advocacy overview

Goal

To position libraries as a critical local and national partner in the re-establishment of communities across the country.

Priority areas:

- **Economic recovery** – Information and Digital Offer
Job seeker support, business skills, training, volunteering, apprenticeships etc.
- **Education support** – Reading / Digital and Information Offer
For students who struggled to learn at home and SEND students.
- **Digital inclusion** – Information and Digital Offer
Supporting residents with little or no IT skills and/or no access to the Internet.
- **Isolation mitigation** – Health and Wellbeing Offer
Combating the harmful effects for vulnerable groups and tackling loneliness.
- **Cultural ecology** – Culture and Creativity Offer
Helping local artists and cultural organisations to reach an audience.

Audiences

- Local politicians and decision makers
- National government
- Funders and partners
- Local Enterprise Partnerships
- Library staff
- Library volunteers
- Library users
- Health services
- Schools and colleges
- Local cultural organisations

Key messages to decision makers and national partners:

- Libraries are an essential part of the UK's economic, academic and cultural recovery from the Covid-19 crisis.
- The physical library space is vital for effectively meeting the needs of the most disadvantaged and isolated in our communities.
- Our digital services, especially for ebooks, must be improved if social distancing remains in place indefinitely.

Our approach

1. We will consult library users, staff and volunteers on their concerns, expectations and aspirations for libraries.
2. We will gather case studies and data on the impact of libraries in the priority areas.
3. We will negotiate with publishers and partners to improve ebooks licensing.
4. We will work in partnership with other sector organisations to advocate for libraries.

Communications for reopening

1. Key principles:

- Make sure you involve your local authority's or corporate communications team as soon as you begin to think about a communications plan for your service.

- Consult your staff, users, and partners throughout the process of reopening to ensure that you keep on top of any emerging issues or concerns.
- Ensure you have staff monitoring your public communications channels frequently and respond quickly to questions
- Create a page on your website where you put all your re-opening information and link to it in the bio of all your social media accounts.
- Really think about what you want your audience to get out of your communication and almost as important, how you want them to feel as a result e.g. confident, competent, reassured, etc.
- Less is more. People get hundreds of notifications every day so keep your messages succinct, relevant, and easy to digest quickly.
- Keep your messages consistent. For maximum effect, settle on a few sentences as your core message or talking points and repeat those on all your channels. Your audience will miss some of your communications so it's important to keep reiterating the key messages below and any that you agree within your local authority.
- Tailor your approach to the channel you're using but try to keep your tone professional but light, where appropriate.
- For social media, post your message at varying times of the day to make sure that it's seen by as many followers as possible.
- If you are introducing a new service offer (e.g. a preselected book ordering service) think about how you will brand it to ensure users understand and take up the offer.
- Consider posting photographs online of what your venues look like with the changes made, to enable people with additional needs (e.g. Autistic Spectrum Disorder) to prepare for their visit.
- Think about the equalities impacts of the changes made and what advice or guidance you will need to provide for users who might be adversely impacted.
- Proofread!

2. Key messages to staff, volunteers, users, and local partners:

- The safety and health of our staff, volunteers and users is our primary concern.
- We will reintroduce our services gradually, in line with the latest public health advice.
- Together we can recreate our services to meet the challenges of our new reality.

3. Communications lines about services to users (these can also be used for social media)

These lines and those in the next section are designed to 'pick and mix', so that you can use the messages that are relevant to your service now but also have some that may come into play at a later stage.

General

- Where possible, we will prioritise the reopening of services which can address the inequalities caused or amplified by the lockdown (e.g. digital exclusion).
- Our libraries might look and feel quite different when they reopen. These changes have been made to protect the safety of our staff, volunteers and users.
- Please check our website for the latest information before you visit.

Browsing and loans

- We know that one of the joys of libraries is being able to browse our shelves and discover new books. However, we must put your safety first which means that we are only able to issue reserved/preselected books at present.
- Reserving items in advance allows us to make sure that these have been quarantined and sanitised, in line with public health advice, to help limit the spread of the virus.
- However, quarantining may also lead to delays in your reserved items becoming available so we are asking you to be patient if your books take a bit longer during this time – we are committed to making sure that you and our staff are safe.
- We cannot quarantine or sanitise newspapers, magazines, and some reference materials so these will be unavailable until we can be sure that they do not risk spreading the virus.
- Books can be reserved online or on the telephone and during these early stages, these can be picked up at a single collection point in the library.

Browsing and social distancing

- We've only been able to reopen library buildings on the condition that social distancing measures are put in place to help keep everyone in our community safe, in line with the latest public health advice.
- As a result, we've had to alter the layout of the library to allow people to remain two metres apart and close some areas where it's just not possible for people to maintain this distance.

- We also have to limit the number of people who are in the library at any given time and which may lead to some queues outside, and limits on browsing time inside, during busy periods.
- If you have additional needs (for example you are unable to stand to queue for a long period or cannot complete your browsing within the allocated time) please speak to a member of our team who will be happy to help you.
- Unfortunately, some of our libraries are simply too small to reopen at this stage because people will not be able to maintain a safe distance from each other.

Events and activities

- We will continue to bring you our programme of online events and activities as we gradually reintroduce services in our buildings.
- We are working to provide live events and activities again as soon as we can be sure it's safe for everyone involved.

The future

- The Covid-19 situation is evolving all the time and we will continue to shape our response to meet current needs and safety requirements, in partnership with our communities.

Libraries have been serving their communities for a long time and we have a proven track record of rapidly adapting to ensure that local people and communities receive the support they need.

4. Communications lines about services to staff

PPE and sanitising

- We know that coming into greater contact with the public is a significant concern for us all. The appropriate PPE will be provided in line with current scientific guidance and hand washing facilities/sanitisers and surface wipes will be provided in all buildings.
- We know that some staff may wish to use their own PPE and this will be agreed following guidance from senior managers and the latest public health advice.
- The Covid-19 virus can remain on items covered in plastic for up to 72 hours and a cardboard or paper cover for up to 24 hours. So, all returned items must be isolated for this period before being reissued.

Social distancing

- We will ensure that all browsing can be strictly managed within social distancing guidance through limiting the number of people who enter the library and the time they spend inside.
- We will alter and manage our computer and IT space in line with current social distancing guidelines.
- We have no plans to introduce group activities until, in consultation with you, we are sure that these can be managed safely.

Risk assessments

- Risk assessments will be carried out by management, agreed corporately and published.
- However, it is important that all staff can carry out dynamic risk assessments when necessary as senior members of the team may not always be available. We will make sure that you are given the information and training that you need to be able to do this but do remember to check first if there is an existing one in place.
- We will be working closely with our health and safety team and as services are gradually reintroduced, we will have regular weekly reviews with you about how things are working until you are satisfied that these are no longer needed.

5. Charter for staff

We are committed to ensuring the health and safety of all our staff and customers at all times. We all have a part to play to ensure that our libraries can remain open safely to serve our community.

- We will not come into work if we are unwell
- We will go straight home if we feel unwell
- We will always respect and maintain social distancing when in and out of work
- We will leave workstations clear and wiped down at the end of the day
- We will regularly wash our hands for 20 seconds, in line with NHS guidelines
- We will ensure that appropriate risk assessments are in place, adhered to and that these are shared and reviewed regularly
- We will keep these steps under review, and if any of us have concerns, or ideas for improvement, we will raise them appropriately
- We will follow the latest guidance on quarantining books and other loaned items and sanitising computers and other IT equipment

- We will respect and value each other and follow this charter
- If we have any concerns about anyone not following these rules, we will let our manager know.

6. Charter for users

We are committed to ensuring the health and safety of all our staff and customers at all times. We all have a part to play to ensure that our libraries can remain open safely to serve our community.

- I will not enter the library if I feel unwell or if I should be self-isolating after being exposed to someone with the virus, in line with public health guidance
- I will always respect and maintain social distancing both in and out of the library
- I will wait to be called forward when I'm at the start of the queue
- I will wash or sanitise my hands when I enter the library
- I will not remain in the library longer than the set time
- I will not enter any area of the library that is closed off to the public
- I will follow any other instructions from library staff that aim to keep us all safe
- I understand that I may be asked to leave the library premises if I do not follow the guidelines.

7. Managing difficult situations

When people fail to behave as asked by library staff, trying to reason with them should be your first step unless of course you feel threatened, or in any way at risk from the person or people concerned. In that instance, please follow your normal library procedure for dealing with potentially violent or dangerous situations. Managers should remind staff of these procedures.

However, if you feel able to manage their behaviour, begin by showing some empathy, restate the health and safety message and then politely ask them to either obey the rules or perhaps move on somewhere else.

For example:

- **Empathy**

I understand that you may not have seen your friends for some time / that it's really difficult when your child has been cooped up for so long / that you've been queuing a long time and it's really frustrating how long everything takes now, etc.

- **Health and safety**

However, our main concern is keeping everyone as safe as we can so that we can remain open for you and everyone else.

- **The rules**

So I'd be really grateful if can you sit at least two metres apart / keep your child close to you so that they don't bump into other people / choose your books quickly so that others who are waiting outside can come in, etc.

Email:

info@librariesconnected.org.uk

Twitter:

[@libconnected](https://twitter.com/libconnected)

Or join our mailing list at:

librariesconnected.org.uk/signup



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