Phased Reopening Recovery Plan for Essex Libraries

10th May to end of May	From 1st June	From 6th July	From 2nd September	Winter 2020
• Redeployed library staff start being pulled back to the service, starting with management team. • Priority groups of library staff receive training on taking birth appointments. • Risk assessment of each library takes place and work starts on implementing social distancing arrangements. • Detailed planning for work to be done during June.	• Library layout adjustments taking into account social distancing arrangements completed. • Pre-opening activity takes place incl. stock take and reservations for customers. • Workforce planning and rotas prepared for opening. • Furloughing lifted.	• Those libraries that can open reopen, with social distancing arrangements and amended service offer. • Where capacity allows, library staff may be able to assist with birth appointments. • Summer Reading Challenge commences from 18th July online.	• Temporary service offer will be reviewed on an ongoing basis. • Specifically from 2nd September, school autumn term restarts, which will hopefully increase available staff.	• Review risk assessment of each library as approach winter time, e.g. minimum staff numbers, queuing arrangements outside libraries

In line with government instructions, all Essex Libraries have been closed since 21 March 2020 as part of the response to the Covid-19 pandemic. Libraries are closed in order to:

- Reduce non essential travel and movement
- Reduce people congregating in places other than their homes or key-worker settings
- Reduce the risk to staff

Whilst details of how and when lockdown arrangements will end are likely to vary widely, based on the medical, political, economic and demographic context at the time, it is important to try and anticipate this as far as we can in order to:

- have the smoothest possible reopening, when it happens
- make best use of the closed time given that we do have staff available to undertake work while libraries are closed
- ensure that any virus related risks continue to be appropriately managed and we stay in line with guidance, supporting key public health messages
- be ready to be adaptable and flexible as the situation may continue to change, in terms of restrictions tightening or loosening in small steps either way
- be able to continue to deliver our current 'digital only' service without interruption
- be able to support our customers well by communicating facts to them clearly and effectively
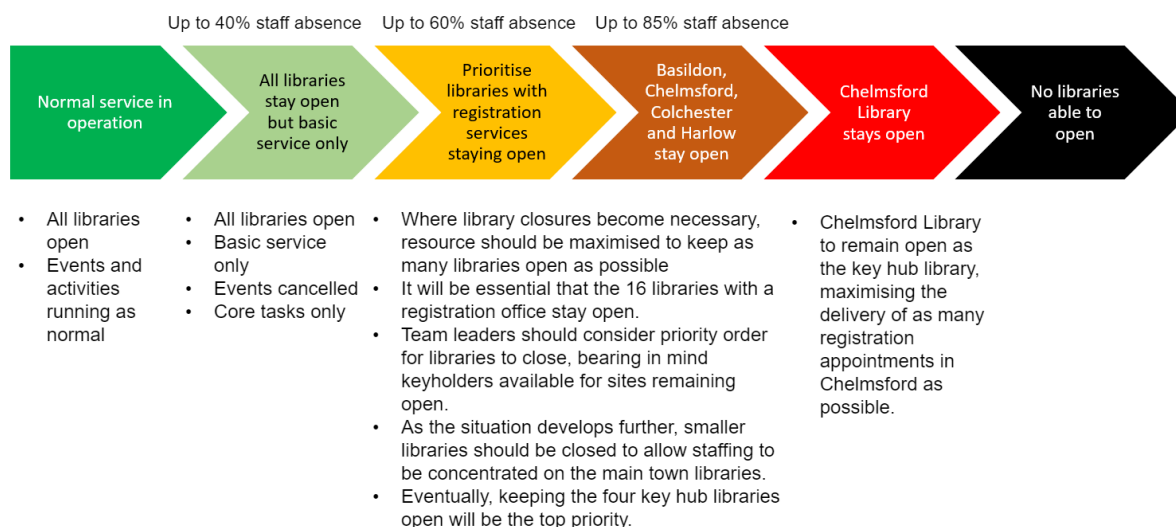
Policy statement

At the point at which libraries are considered for reopening, there will be factors preventing an immediate return to a full business as usual environment, especially around the workforce, premises issues and the level of service offer that can be provided. The amount of risk around these has been explored during the lockdown period, including some scenario planning.
In all scenarios, the core principles laid out in the Essex Libraries Business Continuity Plan remain appropriate. These principles outline the approach the service takes in scenarios in which the service offer needs to be reduced from the normal service offer, notably a priority ordering of which sites should be opened. The below summary gives an indication of what proportion of the staff would be required at each stage of the plan.

The Essex Libraries Business Continuity Plan identifies the importance of keeping the 16 libraries co-located with registration offices open wherever possible and this principle underpins the recommendations in the remainder of this document. In addition to this overarching objective, this document acknowledges that a similar recovery plan is in place for Essex Registration Service (ERS) and that it will be important for the reopening of libraries

and registration services to happen in tandem, maximising appointment availability. This could include essential changes to the internal layout of buildings, use of office/meeting spaces and temporary changes to opening hours that may be required in support of ERS.

Libraries – Normal Business Continuity Plan

Up to 40% staff absence   Up to 60% staff absence   Up to 85% staff absence

Normal service in operation	All libraries stay open but basic service only	Prioritise libraries with registration services staying open	Basildon, Chelmsford, Colchester and Harlow stay open	Chelmsford Library stays open	No libraries able to open

- All libraries open
- Events and activities running as normal

- All libraries open
- Basic service only
- Events cancelled
- Core tasks only

- Where library closures become necessary, resource should be maximised to keep as many libraries open as possible
- It will be essential that the 16 libraries with a registration office stay open.
- Team leaders should consider priority order for libraries to close, bearing in mind keyholders available for sites remaining open.
- As the situation develops further, smaller libraries should be closed to allow staffing to be concentrated on the main town libraries.
- Eventually, keeping the four key hub libraries open will be the top priority.

- Chelmsford Library to remain open as the key hub library, maximising the delivery of as many registration appointments in Chelmsford as possible.

A checklist for managers and staff to follow has been developed that should be used when reopening either individual libraries or a significant part of the service in one go.

When libraries reopen following the lockdown period, the service will not be returning to business as usual. There are likely to be long term changes to how the library service is offered, either required or desired. At the bottom of this plan, we explore some of the immediate considerations once libraries have returned to a stabilised form of BAU.

Context: national picture

Nationally, public libraries are working together using support and advice co-ordinated through Libraries Connected (the national libraries charity representing the public library network). Most authorities are now actively planning to reopen libraries, taking a phased approach to opening sites and the services that will be on offer. For example:

- Kent County Council, which has ninety-nine libraries is also taking a phased approach to libraries with a limited number reopening at first, potentially one library per district.
- Hertfordshire are currently scoping offering a limited service only and risk assessing other services provided by their libraries.
- Newcastle are opening their fourteen community libraries and hubs in July.
- Oxfordshire is likely to reopen between thirteen and forty-four libraries in their first tranche.
- Surrey are also opening libraries in tranches and have created a priority list of reopening branches.

Libraries Connected have been supporting local library authorities by sharing approaches between authorities via forums and by producing a Recovery Toolkit generated by Heads of Service working with members of their teams. This sets out nine key principles for authorities to consider:

Staff, user and volunteer safety is paramount. All planning should be based on risk assessments, carried out with staff, unions and health and safety teams. It must take account of public health guidance and be frequently revisited as risks evolve.	This is set out throughout the document below.
Re-opening will be a phased process based on risk management, availability of staff and resources, and local priorities of need.	This is set out throughout the document below, beginning here.
Vulnerable and disadvantaged users may not be able to physically access libraries while the pandemic remains, so thought should be given to meeting their needs through alternative arrangements.	This is set out later in the document, especially around the offer from the home library service, the mobile library service and the home delivery of reservations.
Planning should anticipate the need to withdraw or suspend services, should public health and government guidance require it, or if there is a shortage of staff and resources.	This is set out throughout the document. A summary of services normally offered across the service that are temporarily suspended are shown here. There is a summary of non-core services and whether these are withdrawn or suspended here.
The practicalities and priorities for reopening will differ for each library service, and careful planning is needed down to branch level.	This is set out throughout the document below.
Planning should take into account preparation time for new procedures, spaces and workflows, and for staff training.	This is referred to throughout the document, but a detailed list of tasks to be carried out during the transition period before reopening is set out here.
Clear communication is essential to manage public expectations of the service and behaviour within the library buildings.	
The situation is changing fast and detailed advice will also change over time, so any plans should be flexible and take account of updated guidance and context. Once in delivery, revised arrangements should be reviewed regularly.	This principle is referred to at various points below.
Library buildings should reopen with the foundations to reshape into the form that best meets the future needs of society, and their communities, and learn from this period of enforced change without being limited by it.	There is an awareness of the need to review and reshape some of our services, both in this document and the supporting documentation. For example, we are aware of the need to make our continuity arrangements for home library service customers more robust; we also know we will need to monitor changes to customer behaviour arising from the lockdown period, such as the increase in loans of e-books and other online content.

Please refer to:
https://www.librariesconnected.org.uk/news/safety-first-recovery-library-services

Easing of lockdown: phased opening of non-essential services whilst maintaining social distancing

Libraries were originally in line with many shops and businesses as well as other public services that had been declared 'non essential' during the lockdown phase. In its Covid-19 roadmap, the government confirmed that libraries were considered as part of Step 3, which will be considered by the Recreation and Leisure Taskforce. The government's planning assumption was that this step would be no earlier than 4 July and subject to further detailed scientific advice, provided closer to the time, on how far we can go. They have given a steer that the country will not return immediately to business as usual and that the reopening of public buildings such as libraries will be phased and follow a conditional approach, with different types of non-essential services opening gradually and proportionately.

However, the latest Government guidance "Working safely during COVID-19 in shops and branches was updated on 25 May 2020, and listed libraries under this category, which means they can reopen from Monday 15th June 2020.

In order to be able to fully prepare and plan for the reopening of libraries, the service is planning to continue to work towards the original date advised by the Government and reopen libraries from the week beginning Monday 6th July.

This makes some aspects of the decision-making process easier, but others harder. On the positive side, we have a sensible amount of time to plan, mobilise and implement, since not only do local authorities have discretion over what, when and how much they will reopen services, but it is also easier to justify taking time to put in place appropriate steps to ensure the safety of staff and customers – such as social distancing.

On the other hand, implementing social distancing will be challenging across such a large and extensive library network as exists in Essex; and there might be a bigger gap between expectations of both staff and customers about what level of service we should be providing, where and how much. This will particularly be the case if other neighbouring authorities (e.g. Suffolk, Southend, Thurrock) make different decisions and follow different timescales to us.

Key areas we have considered

1) Social distancing

This is probably the most significant factor influencing the recommencement of services, as this has an impact on most of the secondary factors for consideration including workforce requirements, which premises are suitable to be used and what the service offer looks like. The impact of social distancing is explored in more detail separately below.

2) Amount of notice

We have several weeks to mobilise. More detail is included later in this document on the Transition Period (getting ready stage) but to summarise:

- Premises declared open and staff can access.
- Each site to be individually assessed for social distancing requirements using generic risk assessment.
- Libraries to receive quality clean by MITIE.
- Any building or IT issues that are presented when staff go back into library can be reported and dealt with.

- All libraries to complete stock take.
- Staff to undertake presentation audit to ensure library is well presented.
- Items and monies left in quarantine prior to lockdown can be processed and cleared.
- Basic admin tasks cleared to allow staff to focus on high level of customer traffic upon reopening.

3) Workforce

There are various reasons why workforce availability will be limited at the point at which libraries are scheduled to reopen.

- It is highly likely that other parts of the business (ECC) won't have returned to normal. A significant number of library staff have been redeployed during lockdown and the activity they are doing is expected to carry on. In addition many of those redeployed are in critical roles such as supervisors and team leaders and are key to implementing the steps necessary to reopen. More specifically there may be a need to prioritise how staff are used amidst varying priorities that overlap, especially for library staff who have been redeployed to undertake work for ERS.
  - We have already considered the impact of those staff redeployed being absent. Decisions were made to pull team leaders back from redeployment by 26th May 2020, library supervisors by 2nd June 2020 and staff able to return to work but previously redeployed outside of the library service and ERS began to return on 1st June 2020.
- There will still be a significant proportion of the workforce missing for other reasons (this may also be influenced by wider measures announced by government before July):
  - Existing sickness
  - The staff member shielding or in at risk group
  - The staff member living with someone shielding or in at risk group
  - Caring responsibilities
  - Childcare issues where nurseries haven't reopened and children have either not returned to school or have only returned to school part time.
  - Anxiety from staff about reopening may lead to new occurrences of sickness
  - Volunteers at community supported libraries may not want to return to work.
  - Resignations during closure period and no recruitment has taken place.
    - ODP have confirmed that library staff recruitment can recommence and this is now starting to take place again.
- Any of the above, especially unanticipated new occurrences of sickness, may mean staff with critical skills are missing from the service, e.g. unavailability of both mobile library supervisors and we had no one with an HGV licence.
- With some staff continuing to be absent, team leaders are reviewing their BC measures and rotas to ensure there is no disruption to service when libraries reopen, e.g. reviewing keyholders able to open each building.
- We will be restricting leave granted during the first few weeks of reopening, apart from in exceptional circumstances, to ensure maximum available workforce to be deployed.
- Current staff availability indicates the issues above are polarised in certain parts of the county and so some of the available staff will need to be asked to work further away from home than normal as more libraries reopen. This is being considered now by team leaders as part of their staff scheduling.
- The methods employed during lockdown to contact staff remotely (either via formal cascade or local contact methods such as WhatsApp groups) have been effective in getting comms out to staff quickly when it has been needed.

- We are considering the use of peak relief staff to maximise the number of libraries that can open and cover staff leave and sickness; however this would be at a cost to the service.
- We are looking at opportunities to make use of volunteers to support parts of the service when it reopens, especially widening the pool of home library service volunteers as well as using volunteers to help queue management at libraries.
- Because we have some local discretion as to the service offer and speed of reopening, we are tailoring the service offer and number of libraries that can open based on workforce availability – we will be regularly reviewing the service offer with a view to enhancing it.

4) Premises

- Although there had initially been concerns that premises checks would not have been able to take place while libraries were declared closed, MITIE have confirmed that all libraries can be accessed straight away and essential checks have been carried out. A timeline has been agreed for staff to recommence some of these regular premises checks from MITIE.
- MITIE only require a week's notice to recommence cleaning at all sites. They have also confirmed that a 'deep clean' is not thought necessary.
- Some of the libraries are in third party premises, where we anticipate there will still be restrictions in place, e.g. schools, colleges, council offices. Discussions are taking place with the relevant stakeholders to discuss additional control measures and impact.
- See below for comments about social distancing.

5) Customer and Member expectations

- We are providing clarity and rationale around the available service offer and phased reopening for Members. A CMA has been prepared and the decision is scheduled to be reviewed by Scrutiny Committee.
- A comms plan for the recommencement of services is being prepared finalised. Clarity about the level of service offer will be important to manage customer expectations, especially to mitigate customers queuing outside libraries to gain access only to find temporary changes to the service offer.

6) Technology

- No libraries will be accepting cash payments by customers face to face. Existing methods of accepting cash payments through self-service machines will be permitted, as will online payments through the library catalogue,
- Options are being explored to accelerate existing proposals for chip and pin readers in libraries, including contactless payments.
- A new library app is currently being tested by staff prior to a public launch. When available, it will enable customers to renew items and access their library account, access the library catalogue etc.

Impact of implementing social distancing arrangements

The necessity to implement social distancing guidelines, of which the current guidelines suggested by government is a safe distance of 2 metres, is the core requirement of the recovery plan. This greatly impacts the level of service we will be offering, at least initially, particularly in smaller libraries. Changes to the layout will be required at every library. Consideration is also being given to partners and other building occupants who likewise need to implement social distancing arrangements, including registration appointments.

A risk assessment will be undertaken at each library to review operating procedures. This is a generic document, which contains some actions that will be required at every library, as well as measures that may be implemented on a site by site basis, such as reducing the size of the area that staff need to control and only opening certain parts of the building/certain floors (at the same time registration appointments may need to spread out on the library lending floors if social distancing arrangements cannot be made in their existing office spaces).

The library service is also working closely with colleagues from the Corporate Health and Safety and Property teams within Essex County Council as well as our facilities management partner MITIE to mirror any corporate measures that are introduced in the wider ECC property estate.

The suggested approach to social distancing is detailed below.

What will the service offer look like?

The level of service that will be offered will be influenced by all the areas highlighted above, but the necessity to implement social distancing measures of 2 metres is the most significant, as it will require considerable changes to be made to our spaces and our service offer in a short space of time. This will mean only a very limited level of library service will be provided (set out below) alongside the registration services which will be available in the 16 co-located libraries.

Headline principles

- The service offer will not look like business as usual.
- Local circumstances at each library will influence some details of the available offer.
- Fundamental parts of what would normally be considered part of the 'core offer' for the service will not be available, i.e. a place to meet, sit, study and read, access to public computers.
- There will be no events and activities running.
- Some other services not part of the 'core offer' will also not be running e.g. booksales.
- The service offer will be proportionate to the number of staff who can safely be on duty to provide that service as well as the number of customers who can be present in the library at any one time
- There will be a higher dependency on the self-service facilities – for items that are borrowed and returned, cash transactions, etc.
- We may be able to increase the service offer over time.
- Customers will be encouraged to visit alone where possible, unless they need specific assistance. Customers who are accompanied by children will be reminded that they are responsible for supervising them at all times and should follow social distancing guidelines.

Details of service offer

1. Access to the lending stock available for browsing and borrowing via self service machine only.
2. Customers can return existing items
3. Customers can collect reserved items placed before the service went into lockdown, but will not be able to place new reservations at the moment (see also further down in this document regarding reservations).
4. Browsing time in the library will be time limited.
5. A member of staff will be required to manage customer numbers entering the building at the library entrance.
6. Routing arrangements around the space will have been implemented in advance and, where possible, consideration given to using separate entrance and exits.
7. Seating areas will be removed to prevent customers staying in the library for too long (where they cannot be removed they will be taped off).
8. There will currently be no access to computers for customer use.
9. The number of customers allowed into the library at any one time will need to make allowance for registration customers attending appointments where the library contains a registration office. This will further limit the number of customers who can be undertaking library activity (unless a separate entrance can be made available).

Key issues for local consideration

- Library layout as a whole.
- Splitting entrance and exit points where possible.
- Creating agreed routes around the library, using tensa barriers, tape on the floor mapping out a route, bespoke signage or similar to control customer flow.
- Removing furniture that encourages people to congregate or stay for extended periods of time (space elsewhere in the building may be needed to do this).
- Changing or spacing out registration appointment waiting areas.
- Reposition drop boxes for customers to use to return items outside the main library building (to save them having to enter the building). This could be existing external furniture or could be done by moving a self-service return box outside the library – this will be considered as part of the risk assessment for each site.
- A regular, consistent, ongoing supply of sanitisers will be essential.
- Areas with high traffic touching, particularly self service machines as well as door knobs, automatic door push buttons etc, will need to be cleaned regularly. Antibacterial wipes and/or sprays have been purchased to enable staff to do this.
- Creating space for returned items to be quarantined for up to 72 hours (additional trugs, trolleys etc will be needed to accommodate this). Similar arrangements for cash returned via self service.
- Some of the public library space may need to be given over to registration service because using existing offices spaces for appointments may not comply with social distancing arrangements.
- Where libraries are in shared spaces with other partners or tenants, the risk assessment will need to take into account needs and requirements of those other building occupiers.
- Discussion has been had by library management team with Contact Centre colleagues regarding the reopening of the Libraries Enquiries phone line.

The following services normally offered during business as usual will not be available:

- As stated above, events and activities will not run, e.g. baby and toddler rhymetime, bookgroups held in the library.
- Library staff will not be proactively manning Hello Desks or Information Points, but will assist customers where it is absolutely not possible for self service machines to be used.
- Hard copy newspapers and magazines will not be provided.
- Public computers will not be available; there will also not be printing facilities for customers.
- Use of photocopiers and scanners will also not be available.
- Customers will not be able to stay for an extended period of time to read or study,
- Adhoc room hire will not be offered, either because the spaces are not suitable for social distancing; the spaces are being prioritised for use by the Service (e.g. for book quarantining or registration appointments); or will require additional cleaning.
- The Summer Reading Challenge has already moved to an online service for 2020.
- No refreshments will be offered and cafes will remain closed.
- Not checking in registration customers arriving for an appointment as per current arrangement.
- There will temporarily be no access to toilets or baby changing facilities for customers.
- Details of other services offered at some of the libraries across the service and whether they will be available or not are shown in the table here.

The interim measures implemented since libraries closed in March will continue to be in place:

- Longer loan periods.
- Higher number of items that can be loaned.
- The fines amnesty that ran during March 2020 will continue until all libraries have reopened.
- Payments will only be taken through self service equipment or online. No cash taken face to face by library staff. Cash returned through self service machines will be quarantined for 72 hours.
- Enhancements to e-library service such as improved range of e-books
- Improved access to online subscriptions such as Ancestry and Find My Past may remain, subject to agreement with individual suppliers.
- Content being added to the library website and social media channels will continue, including virtual library events such as baby and toddler rhymetime, 1 minute book reviews.
- The suspension of the ability to request items and place reservations, implemented before the service went into lockdown, will continue on a temporary basis.

In some locations, the risk assessment may conclude that additional steps are required on top of the ones above, either because it is not physically possible or is impractical to make changes to maintain social distancing.

Staff requirements

- A minimum of two members of staff will be required at every library to ensure one member of staff is available to manage the number of customers entering the library.
- In larger, busier libraries, in reality it is likely that more than two members of staff will be required to support customers and carry out administrative tasks.

- It should be noted that the minimum staff headcount in some libraries will have to increase from the normal business-as-usual minimum staffing number to accommodate this additional staffing requirement.

Opening hours

Under the normal Essex Libraries Business Continuity Plan, the intention is always to try and maintain the existing advertised opening hours across all 74 libraries. This will be challenging to achieve in post-lockdown circumstances in light of workforce, premises and social distancing considerations.

We have considered a number of options around the opening hours of libraries and our chosen model is explained in full below. We have chosen this option because we believe it provides least disruption to customers, will be understood by the majority of customers and will allow staff time to be used to maximise the number of libraries that can open.

Maintain the existing opening hours, except that libraries that currently close later than 5pm on certain days would close at 5pm.

Pros and cons
- Many retail settings have allowed for earlier start and finish times.
- We hope this is a straightforward and consistent message across the county for people to understand as it doesn't make any changes to regular open days/patterns.
- Closing at 5pm will allow the staffing normally used after 5 to be used at other times, maximising the number of libraries that can open, instead of longer opening hours at fewer libraries.
- Will help to address public transport issues for some staff members.
- Most partners using libraries, including registration services, generally already finish at 5pm.
- Libraries are generally quieter after 5pm.
- Detailed staff scheduling in advance will still be required to address other challenges such as Sunday working and lunchtimes.
- There may still be challenges maintaining these hours following the completion of risk assessments by staff in certain locations.
- Any reductions in opening hours do carry potential reputational risk, as well as not meeting certain types of customers' expectations, but at least these will be communicated clearly and upfront accompanied by a rationale.
- Our comms may not reach all customers and therefore some won't be aware of the partial reopening plans, potentially causing anxiety and distress.
- Disproportionately affects certain customers who can't access libraries during the day.
- Some libraries have high percentage of opening hours after 5pm.
- The opening hours of the registration offices inside the libraries may be increased (see below note specifically about Dunmow Registration Office).

Opening hours provided by partners and volunteers

In normal business-as-usual times, a number of libraries have hours when the library is available outside ECC advertised opening hours, either manned by partners or volunteers; or available in self-service only mode. In addition to this, ECC already provides volunteers who exclusively run Springfield Library and extend the opening hours at Writtle Library.

We already expect that these opening hours will take longer to restore, because decisions made by individual volunteers or partners will be outside ECC's control. It is important therefore to recognise that in libraries where this applies, we are expecting a reduction in the extended opening hours over and above the option chosen above; however this is likely to change and be reviewed through the duration of the phased opening.

ECC has considered addressing this issue in certain locations by recruiting more volunteers through the current business-as-usual process, but this would take time and staff resource to put in place that is currently being prioritised to open libraries. Even if we were to do this, we could not be certain about the level of interest from prospective volunteers.

Risks

- Queue management:
  - Creating queues outside library entrances on the public highway (and the fact that the library service may not have the right to place barriers/social distancing markers outside its own property).
  - Queues being mixed up with neighbouring properties.
  - Managing expectations of the queue and potential disruptive behaviour from customers.
  - Supporting disabled customers in the queue.
  - Libraries where there is nowhere safe to queue – in these cases we are considering a raffle ticket style system to call customers in one at a time.
- Key touch points such as self service machines and entrance doors/buttons will need to be cleaned regularly, which relies on an ongoing regular supply of wipes or sprays.
- Anxiety from staff may lead to increased levels of sickness. If this reached a high level, it may be difficult to maintain the opening hours and service offer consistently.
- Variation in service offer and phased approach to opening might attract negative publicity, reputational risk, complaints etc.
- Potential impact in service if self service machines breakdown and cannot be used.
  - Stansted Library is waiting for its self service machine to be configured for use.
  - 6 libraries currently do not have self service machines. The service is moving machines from other locations.
- Cost implications of introducing additional cleaning and equipment.
- Lost income from room hire, printing and copying facilities, extending the fines amnesty.
- Continuing to provide additional content to maintain enhanced online offer, e.g. virtual events and social media content, alongside the face to face service offer will require simultaneous additional resource we may not have the staff capacity to do so as the phasing is extended.

Some examples of where we already anticipate some challenges with being able to offer a service at all include:

- Debden Library – located within college setting. The library cannot reopen if the college has not reopened.
- Springfield Library – community run by ECC volunteers. We already anticipate an increased reluctance by volunteers to provide a service and/or they may not do so consistently. The library normally operates on a Monday in self service only mode provided by Springfield Parish Council – we have agreed that the library will not be able to run in self service mode at the current time.

- Stock Library – within Primary School, shared entrance. A discussion needs to be held with the school about the risks of library customers using the same entry and exit point as school teachers, parents and pupils.

DRAFT

Detail of phased reopening of libraries

Service managers have reviewed the anticipated level of staff available when libraries are expected to reopen. The service has also reviewed its prioritisation order for libraries across the county as already considered under the normal Essex Libraries Business Continuity Plan. This retains the understanding that libraries co-located with registration offices have highest priority for reopening.

Taking this into account and the proposals outlined above, we are currently confident that when all necessary work has been undertaken to get the libraries ready to open, we can open 60 of the 74 libraries starting on 6th July. It is proposed that this will follow a phased approach, beginning with the 16 libraries co-located with registration offices, and all libraries closing no later than 5pm as outlined above.

The remaining 14 libraries will need additional considerations to be made before being ready to reopen. They will require additional workforce capacity to have returned to the service; and it should be noted that 8 of the libraries have been identified as extremely small and will struggle to be able to open whilst there remains the requirement for social distancing requirement at 2 metres. Further consideration or reduction in service offer may be required to open these libraries unless there are changes to government advice in the intervening period.

The planned phasing of opening libraries is outlined below:

Tranche 1	Tranche 2	Tranche 3a*	Tranche 3b**
w/c 6th July	w/c 20th July	w/c 3rd August (or as soon as possible thereafter)	
		3 miles or more away from nearest lib	Under 3 miles from nearest lib
Basildon ***	Brightlingsea	Great Wakering	Debden
Billericay	Broomfield	Kelvedon	Holland
Braintree	Buckhurst Hill	Silver End	Fryerns
Brentwood	Burnham-on-Crouch	Southminster	Mark Hall
Chelmsford	Canvey Island	Stock	Stanway
Clacton	Chigwell	Thaxted	Vange
Colchester	Chipping Ongar		West Clacton
Dunmow #	Coggeshall		Wickham Bishops
Epping	Danbury		
Harlow	Earls Colne		
Harwich	Frinton		
Maldon	Galleywood		
Rayleigh	Great Baddow		
Rochford	Great Parndon		
South Benfleet	Great Tarpots		
Witham	Greenstead		
	Hadleigh		
	Halstead		
	Hatfield Peverel		
	Hockley		
	Hullbridge		

	Ingatestone		
	Laindon		
	Loughton		
	Manningtree		
	North Melbourne		
	North Weald		
	Old Harlow		
	Pitsea		
	Prettygate		
	Saffron Walden		
	Shenfield		
	Sible Hedingham		
	South Woodham Ferrers		
	Springfield		
	Stansted		
	Tiptree		
	Tye Green		
	Waltham Abbey		
	Walton		
	West Mersea		
	Wickford		
	Wivenhoe		
	Writtle		

Due to Uttlesford Council Offices not being ready to open yet, Saffron Walden Registration Office is not expected to be able to open. Additional hours will be added at Dunmow Registration Office (not affecting library open hours)
*** Ongoing discussions with Bas Centre about reopening Basildon Hub. Although it is expected registration appointments will recommence, if the library is not yet fully able to open, we will provide an alternative service from Fryerns Library.

More detail about the 14 libraries in tranche 3 is provided below. Tranche 3a libraries are 3 miles or from an alternative library earlier in the phasing; Tranche 3b libraries are less than 3 miles from the next nearest library. It is proposed that those in 3a should be reviewed for reopening before those in group 3b if possible:

Tranche 3a – those furthest away from another library

Library	District	Rationale	Nearest alternative
Great Wakering	Rochford	Extremely small library, only a click and collect service would be possible. Low prioritisation within district due to size and level of business.	Rochford Library is 5.9 miles away. Libraries run by Southend are closer than Rochford.
Kelvedon	Braintree	Low prioritisation within district due to size and level of business;	Witham Library is 3.4 miles away,

		also concerns about social distancing arrangements.	Tiptree Library is 4.0 miles away.
Silver End	Braintree	Extremely small library, only a click and collect service would be possible. Lowest prioritisation within district due to size and level of business.	Witham Library is 4.2 miles away, Braintree Library is 4.6 miles away.
Southminster	Maldon	Extremely small library, only a click and collect service would be possible. Lowest prioritisation within district due to size and level of business.	Burnham Library is 3.0 miles away
Stock	Chelmsford	Extremely small library, only a click and collect service would be possible. Lowest prioritisation in district due to poor level of use. Shared entrance with primary school identified as a barrier to opening.	Billericay Library is 3.3 miles away, Galleywood Library is 3.2 miles away.
Thaxted	Uttlesford	Extremely small library, only a click and collect service would be possible. Lowest prioritisation within district due to size and level of business. Staffing shortages are particularly acute in this district	Dunmow Library is 6.4 miles away.

**Tranche 3b – those with alternative facilities within 3 miles

Library	District	Rationale	Nearest alternative
Debden	Epping Forest	Extremely small library, only a click and collect service would be possible. Lowest prioritisation in district due to low usage and proximity to Loughton. Likely to remain closed as college not planning to reopen.	Loughton Library is 1.0 miles away. Chigwell Library is 2.3 miles away.
Fryerns	Basildon	Low prioritisation within district due to proximity to other libraries. Staffing shortages are particularly acute in this district.	Basildon Library is 1.6 miles away, Pitsea Library is 2.2 miles away.
Holland	Tendring	Extremely small library, only a click and collect service would be possible. Low prioritisation within	Clacton Library is 2.0 miles away.

		district due to proximity to Clacton.	
Mark Hall	Harlow	Low prioritisation within district due to size and close proximity to three other libraries. Some concerns about social distancing arrangements. Staffing shortages are particularly acute in this district.	Harlow Library is 1.5 miles away, Tye Green Library is 1.4 miles away, Old Harlow Library is 1.5 miles away.
Stanway	Colchester	Lowest priority within district due to size and proximity to other services. Also concerns about social distancing arrangements.	Prettygate Library is 1.8 miles away, Colchester Library is 2.8 miles away.
Vange	Basildon	Low prioritisation within district due to proximity to alternative facilities. Staffing shortages are particularly acute in this district. Also identified as most difficult in team leader patch for social distancing arrangements to be implemented.	Basildon Library is 2.0 miles away, Pitsea Library is 1.4 miles away.
West Clacton	Tendring	Low prioritisation within district due to low level of business and proximity to Clacton.	Clacton Library is 2.4 miles away.
Wickham Bishops	Maldon	Extremely small library, only a click and collect service would be possible.	Witham Library is 2.9 miles away, Maldon Library is 4.1 miles away.

By the time the phased opening has reached tranche 3, it is likely that there will have been changes in staffing levels, changes to the risk assessment and changes announced by government or other agencies around social distancing requirements and so it is hoped most of these libraries can be opened as soon as possible thereafter.

Movement of stock and browsing

As in other retail environments, the library service needs to consider processes for the movement of goods within its buildings – at the lowest level being influenced most by customers borrowing, returning and browsing the book stock and other items in the library.

As described above, measures were already introduced before libraries went into lockdown to mitigate the risk to staff and other customers of cross contamination of stock. To reiterate these control measures, these include:

- As many items as possible being borrowed and returned through library self service machines and only being processed by a member of staff if absolutely not possible to do it by other means.
- Quarantining of returned stock for 72 hours from the day of return. Libraries will keep returned items in trugs or on trolleys and keep as separate as possible from the other stock – albeit it should be acknowledged that space to do this in the smaller libraries will be limited.
- Items handled by a customer when browsing (e.g. book, DVD) but not borrowed will be placed with the stock being returned that day for quarantining for 72 hours.

Before risk assessments have been carried out, the service has also identified other potential control measures that could be used to support this activity. This would be unlikely to completely remove the risk but would help to mitigate it:

- Insist that all customers entering the library <u>must</u> apply sanitiser before permitted entrance to the library using equipment provided.
- Removal of newspapers and magazines from libraries.
- Once deliveries of new stock start to be received by libraries, we will need to keep these in quarantine for 72 hours as well.
  - o This will have an impact on space at some libraries, so we are carefully planning the recommencement of deliveries and whether some deliveries can be re-routed to a bigger, nearby library with space to store for 72 hours.
- Some libraries will be able to have return boxes outside libraries so customers can return items without having to enter the library itself (this is being looked at site by site).
- Items handled by a customer when browsing (e.g. book, DVD) but not borrowed will need to be placed with the stock being returned that day for quarantining for 72 hours wherever possible.
  - o Signage will be placed to indicate this to customers. Alongside this we will have signage actively discouraging customers from handling an item unless they really intend to borrow it.
  - o Acknowledge this is reliant on customers or staff identifying this and some customers may not tell us.
  - o Risk that could reduce significantly the amount of browsable stock available to customers.
- We will review the layout of certain sections of the library where the existing shelving or layout encourage handling of multiple items of stock.
  - o We will increase where possible face on display so customers only need to handle one item at a time.
  - o Similarly we will change the way we use display furniture such as dumpbins and express zones.
  - o At branch level, we will consider reducing the amount of stock that is on the open shelves and browsable to customers at any one time in high traffic areas to reduce the potential handling of stock. One specific example where

we will do this is with Picture Books for children such as board books which get repeated handling from small children. We will hold surplus stock in a staff area so that staff can top-up shelves through the day and/or bundle together a set bundles of books for customers to borrow in one go rather than browsing and selecting individual items.
  - We will reduce the use of kinderboxes and similar furniture that necessitates customers handling more than one item.
- We will consider whether we remove reference stock from the shelves; or ask that customers wear gloves before handling reference stock.

<u>Additional measures to reduce customer contact</u>

In addition to the above measures specifically around the handling of stock, the service intends to introduce other measures that make the speed of transaction for returning or borrowing an item quicker, easier and less likely to encounter problems.

- As already mentioned, loan periods and amounts permitted to be borrowed are remaining at higher levels as was introduced prior to lockdown.
- Temporarily raising the level of debt customers can have on their account before being blocked from borrowing and renewing items through self service.
- Reducing the numbers of queries arising on customer's membership records that necessitate them having to seek support from a member of staff.
  - We are investigating either removing the customer block from self service where the customer's ticket has expired (preferred option); or automatically extending the expiry date for those who have expired to a future date (less preferred).
- In cases where an item will not scan through self service, e.g. there is a problem with the RFID tag in the book, staff will be asked to write down the barcode number of the customer's ticket as well as the barcode number of the item so that they can then process this on a staff machine afterwards.
  - Staff will be asked to do this in a staff area wherever possible rather than using a Hello Desk machine.
  - Extra laptops are being ordered so each library has a laptop that can be used in a staff area.
  - Staff will be advised not to physically handle the item themselves, just to make note of the borrower/item details. Issues with the item can be addressed when the item is returned following the quarantine period.
- Customers will be encouraged where possible to join the library online and a library card posted to them to reduce the numbers needing to join the library face to face and sit with a member of staff.

Freebournes Road teams: Library Support Unit and delivery drivers

Essex Libraries has a team based at the category 1 site at Freebournes Road in Witham. The library team based there comprises:

- An **office based team** who provide backroom/administrative support to the library service. This includes the processing and cataloguing of stock for libraries; the provision of the interlibrary loan service and Performing Arts service; and the processing of standing orders and invoices for the service, for example for newspapers and magazines. The team support library and registration officer colleagues as a distribution point for Bookstart baby packs. The team service both Essex Libraries and provide some of these services on behalf of Thurrock Libraries under an SLA.
- A **team of delivery drivers** who undertake the movement of stock and other reserved items between the Freebournes Road hub and all 74 libraries in Essex as well as the libraries in Thurrock. The team also provide a courier and delivery service on behalf of Essex Registration Service.
- One of the **mobile library vehicles** and drivers is based here too (see next section for more on mobile library service).

Although the Freebournes Road hub has remained open throughout the lockdown period, since it is shared with other priority colleagues such as ECL, the majority of the office based team have been able to work from home, as they all have laptops. Therefore, unless there has been a critical need for them to attend site, or they have needed to come to site to collect work, this team have remained working at home. The delivery drivers have been used to undertake a limited amount of work for both libraries and the registration service, otherwise staff have remained at home waiting for work. The mobile library service has not been operating and staff have been redeployed to other work.

We have been liaising with colleagues from MITIE regarding the recovery plan for the teams based at Freebournes Road, since MITIE are responsible for implementation of social distancing arrangements for most of this category 1 building, including the shared warehouse space.

Below is a summary of the intended recovery arrangements for these teams.

Office based team

As set out above, the office based team have generally been able to continue working from home throughout the lockdown period. Tasks that have been undertaken from home have included:

- Supporting the library Stock Manager with the placing of future stock orders.
- Reconciliation of invoices.
- Cataloguing activity. Ahead of a proposed change in the library management system in 2021, work has been continuing hard to review and update the library catalogue ready to move over to a new supplier. This includes the purging of thousands of inaccurate, missing or miscatalogued items from the library management system.
- The team have attended site to help prepare a one off delivery of stock to HMP Chelmsford, where the library has remained unmanned throughout lockdown.

A risk assessment was carried out of the space on 22nd May, which concluded that a percentage of the team (around 40%) would be able to return to work at Freebournes Road

to undertake work necessary to take place on site. Work identified as needing to take place on site and not from home includes:

Task	Detail	Time frame to get up to date
Receiving of new stock	To process the outstanding new stock left over from lockdown to clear the area for the newly placed deliveries	PRIORITY 1 - clear within 1 month of returning to Freebournes
Unwanted Stock shipped in from other libraries	Min of 40 trugs of unwanted stock that was already in the warehouse prior to lockdown and quarantined	Priority 2 - stock needs to be cleared to make space in the warehouse within 1 month of returning to Freebournes
FDI	As at 03.06.20 there are 364 invoices that need to be received/printed and collated to the FDI batches	End of July
Invoices	Unknown until return	End of July
Performing Arts Service (PAS)	PAS stock is held on site and needs staff to be on site to deliver this service. We currently intend to keep this service suspended when libraries reopen. Returning stock will need to be dealt with and any pending reservations will need to be reviewed / customers contacted.	Unknown until return
Processing new orders to fulfil existing reservations	Placing orders for new stock to meet reservations received prior to lockdown, including Amazon quick turnaround fulfilments	by end of July
Archiving invoices	Unknown until return	by end of August
Bolinda Statements	Unknown until return	by end of July
Newspapers/periodicals	Processing of invoices	by end of July
Interlibrary loans	Contact Unity UK regarding existing interlibrary loan requests or items out on loan (no new requests to be taken currently)	by end of July
Shelf checks – a limited selection of lendable stock is kept at LSU	Print list, find and process books	

Shelving	Filing existing books that were returned prior to lockdown	
Subs and SO's	Some filing to do and printing of invoices	by end of July
Summer Reading Challenge	Allocate and process books bought for SRC collection prior to lockdown	by middle of July

The current intention is that, since staff can do most of their work from home, there will be a phasing of the return for the team back to Freebournes Road, with staff only going on site to undertake a small amount of work during June. When libraries reopen from 6th July, this will be increased in line with the risk assessment, with around 40% of staff time returning to Freebournes, the remainder working at home. This plan will be reviewed and may need to be revised if the service offer available in libraries (both for Essex and for the services provided on behalf of Thurrock) changes in the intervening period or at a further stage in the phased reopening of libraries.

Delivery drivers

The delivery driver team have only been able to do a limited amount of work during lockdown. The team use Freebournes Road as a base location and for storage of stock in between shipment between libraries or registration offices, so they spend the majority of their working hours out on the road undertaking deliveries.

A risk assessment was carried out of the space on 22nd May and the majority of the team returned to working out of Freebournes Road from 26th May.

As noted elsewhere in this document, the delivery drivers are a crucial team to support the recovery for libraries and have been identified as being able to support in a number of ways outside the normal scope of their role. Here is a list of tasks agreed with the team leader of that team to be undertaken in the transition period prior to reopening. Some of these tasks may continue after 6th July as and where the team have the capacity to support those around business as usual:

- Clear all normal trugs / van deliveries held in libraries or at Freebournes Road prior to lockdown – this commenced 26th May.
- Home deliveries to customers of their reserved items (see section elsewhere in this document). The drivers and their team leader are working with one of the library team leaders to organise these deliveries, working with local library staff to facilitate access to the libraries, collation of deliveries and contacting library customers.
- Collection of MCCD (Medical Certificate of Cause of Death) certificates from doctor's surgeries on behalf of registration service. While we've been taking death appointments by phone, MCCD certificates have been scanned over from surgeries or hospitals to ERS, but we will still need the hard copies to come to Seax House. The drivers are collecting these from surgeries and bringing in to Chelmsford.
- There has been some limited work for registrations continuing, such as movement of stock and some register pages. Face to face appointments are scheduled to recommence from 15th June and after that the normal pouch

collections are expected to need to restart, similarly ceremony paperwork deliveries.

- 6 libraries don't have a self service (RFID) machine and we need to move one from one of the other libraries so that every library has one before we reopen.
- We will no longer be providing booksales from libraries. The drivers will collect this up from libraries and return to Freebournes Road for onward distribution to our supplier Better World Books.
- Collection of items, equipment and furniture left over from Essex Book Festival needs to take place as this was never completed in March.
- There has been some discussion about the drivers supporting the home library service over and above delivering reservations as set out above. This would include taking a small amount of additional stock alongside reserved items, but could grow into them undertaking some of the drop offs of stock when the service recommences in July if we don't have enough volunteers returning to the service (see also section on home library service).
- Supporting libraries needing to clear unwanted furniture or other waste for disposal.
- There may also be some support needed in shipping signage and equipment required to implement social distancing arrangements in libraries around the county from the central location in Chelmsford it is being delivered to.

Business as usual work for ERS will return from 15th June when face to face appointments restart. From 6th July onwards, the business as usual arrangements for library deliveries will gradually recommence on a phased basis in line with the opening of the libraries through July and August.

Mobile Library Service

Essex Libraries operates two mobile library vehicles (one based at Witham Library and one based at Freebournes Road, Witham). The service is normally operated by one full time and two part time drivers.

It will still be possible to provide a mobile library service, as both the vehicles are functional and some drivers are available, so the service will recommence on 6th July in line with the phased opening of libraries.

The service will however not be at the same level as business-as-usual and will be more prone to disruption.

- The vehicles have been assessed for social distancing arrangements. Only one customer will be allowed to come onboard the vehicle at any one time to access the service (we will also permit one adult to come onboard with a small group of children provided the adult accompanying the children supervises them at all times and they are in the same family group).
- A hand sanitiser dispenser will be installed on both vehicles fixed to the entrance-way wall, which customers will be asked to use before boarding the vehicle.
- The doors on the vehicle will be shut when the one customer is onboard to prevent further customers attempting to get onboard; notices will be on the doors advising of why we are doing this.
- Handrails will be wiped down with disinfectant before each customer enters (this was being done prior to the service shutting down).
- Since the mobile libraries do not have self-service machines, returned items will be placed in trugs onboard for quarantining and processed at a later date. The necessary space needed to implement this will slightly reduce the amount of browsable stock that can be kept onboard.
- Booksale items will be removed and donations will not be accepted.
- Reserved items being collected will be pre-issued and placed on the open shelves by the drivers before each stop so customers can help themselves to these without them needing to be issued on to their ticket. For bookgroups, items will be placed in a bag to reduce handling *(see however further below regarding home deliveries of reservations).*
- When customers want to borrow an item, there will be some options for how this can be done:
  - Customers stand behind a marked line 2 metres from the counter and call out their library card number and then the barcode number of items they want to borrow so the driver can input on the computer.
    - The fact that the doors on the vehicle will be shut whilst each customer is using the vehicle reduces the potential data protection issues about verbally calling out library card numbers.
  - Where this is not possible or practical, for example for visually impaired customers, the customer will bring their card and the items to the counter. A Perspex screen will be placed on the counter and the driver will look through the screen to take details of library card number and barcode number of items. Driver will also have a visor available to wear.
- The service does not currently have a full complement of drivers due to a vacancy. It has proven difficult to fill this vacancy, as the role has been advertised more than once to date without a successful candidate being appointed, which suggests this may not easily be resolved. In the absence of a full quota of drivers, the service has been using agency staff with the necessary HGV licence to drive the vehicle alongside a trained member of library staff to undertake the library duties. This

arrangement will not be possible because two people travelling together will not meet social distancing arrangements. This will also affect the service provision if the regular drivers are off sick or are on leave.

- o At present we do no believe we can provide an alternative service, other than home deliveries of reservations, whilst complying with social distancing requirements, but we will review this regularly.
- o Details of disruptions will be maintained on the Essex Libraries website.

Risks

- If someone was diagnosed with a case and had used the mobile library, this would have the potential to take the mobile off the road for several days whilst the vehicle was cleaned (having the mobile vehicle specially cleaned is a more bespoke service than would be the case at the static library buildings).
- Perspex screen and any other equipment required at stops will need to be able to be stored onboard for safe travel whilst vehicle moving.
- Ongoing disruption if not possible to fill the existing vacancy quickly.
- Reputational risk of not being able to maintain the full service until the vacancy is filled.

Home Library Service

The Home Library Service has not been running since lockdown commenced. There are a number of reasons for this:

- Concerns about social distancing arrangements.
- The closure of the libraries has prevented the volunteers accessing stock to make selections for customers.
- Many of the volunteers are not willing or able to volunteer because of their personal circumstances.
- Many customers are unable to receive the service due to shielding or being in the vulnerable group.

The service is planned to restart on 6th July in line with the phased opening of libraries, but we are making careful considerations to ensure the safety and wellbeing of both the volunteers delivering the service as well as the customers they are visiting. All of the above factors will still be at play on 6th July; and in addition we also expect an increase in demand for the service because customers previously accessing library services from a library will prefer to receive a service at home. All of these factors will influence the ability of the service to meet demand.

During lockdown, the service has regularly reviewed the offer to home library service customers and has implemented the following:

- Keeping in touch calls with the volunteers to check how they are and their current availability for when the service restarts.
- Befriending/keeping in touch calls to customers, either by library staff or their normal volunteer. Again this has been to check how customers are, signpost them to any other services they may benefit from (such as EWS) and to check their readiness to start receiving the service again.
- Starting 1st June we will be making home deliveries to customers of reserved items *(see further below regarding home deliveries of reservations).*
  - When customers are contacted to arrange this delivery, if the customer would also like some additional items to supplement the reserved items they have borrowed, we hope to facilitate a small selection of additional items on top of this.

From 6th July onwards, we intend to restart the service more fully, with volunteers returning to visiting customers' homes, but only to provide a drop-off service and not yet take in returned items. This is because it will be difficult to quarantine items being returned from customers at the same time as making visits to multiple customers with items to be borrowed.

The volunteers will be advised to contact each customer by phone prior to visiting to check:

- That they are happy to be visited
- What the agreed arrangements will be for dropping off the stock (e.g. whether to leave items on doorstep, an agreed time for the drop off etc.)
- If the customer would like more items than normal due to the length of time without a service.

If customers don't want to receive a visit, we may be able to arrange an alternative such as leaving items with a neighbour or carer; or keeping items at a library so that a friend or family member can come and collect them.

The library contact for each volunteer will discuss with the volunteers the practical arrangements that will need to be considered for them to carry out any visits. This will include:

- How items being selected to be taken to customers can be prepared. This will need to be thought about carefully to meet the wider service offer described above (e.g. where volunteers need access to the open shelves to select items for customers). It could be that in the short term, library staff already at the library will make up the selections for the volunteers so they only need to stop and pick up quickly; alternatively the volunteers might be able to access the library during closed times so they can choose items without restriction.
- Discussing how arrangements may need to be revised if the normal library the volunteer works out of is closed or the volunteer currently accesses the library after 5pm when the library will be closed.
- As new reservations cannot be placed, the volunteer may want to visit a different library than normal so they have a wider selection to choose from for their customers.
- Reminder of the longer loan period than normal for customers.
- Provide advice to volunteers about signposting opportunities and safeguarding policy for any concerns about customers.

We hope that the drop-off only service will only be a temporary arrangement and we will be able to reinstate the full service as soon as possible after 6th July, even if this involves the customer being visited twice so that stock being dropped-off and picked-up can be kept separate (but acknowledge this might be a lot to ask from volunteers).

Once the full service is available again, we will still need to have dialogue with the customers/volunteers about their circumstances and whether the volunteer can enter the customer's home as is normally the case – this might vary according to individual customers shielding or displaying symptoms.

As mentioned above, library staff are keeping in touch with volunteers to see how they are to gauge volunteer levels ready to deliver the service. We already know not all volunteers will be ready to volunteer by 6th July. Anticipating a shortage of available volunteers, ECC could look to address this issue by:

- Recruiting more volunteers through the current business-as-usual process, but this would take time and staff resource to put in place – especially so as Home Library Service volunteers are required to have an enhanced DBS check. Even then we could not be certain about the level of interest from prospective volunteers.
- Staff could undertake this work as a temporary measure in place of volunteers – there would be capacity issues with this as well as expense costs and staff would also need DBS check to be carried out.
- We could link up with other providers visiting vulnerable customers for other reasons, e.g. Essex Welfare Service.
  - We are currently working with the Strengthening Communities Team in Essex County Council to explore ways to pool resources and work together to enhance the pool of volunteers we might have available.

Issues for consideration

- Generic risk assessment will need to be developed.
- Until government advice changes, we probably should insist as a duty of care to our volunteers that they do not enter customers' homes, since we have no control over

social distancing arrangements in the home and cannot be sure of the level of risk the volunteers may be exposed to. For some customers this would be removing the most important part of the service (the social aspect with the volunteer).

- Many of the volunteers are only willing to volunteer as a pair (many also meet at their base library and then travel in one car to visit their customers before returning back to their base). Social distancing arrangements will prevent this from happening unless volunteers are in same family group, which we know will act as a disincentive to some volunteers doing their volunteer hours
    - o They could instead travel in separate vehicles, but this would incur additional travel costs to the service in expense claims and even then social distancing arrangements would still apply.
- Activity will require access to sanitisers for volunteers (and potentially gloves if and when they start taking in returned items from customers that need to be handled and then quarantined). Access to this equipment may be hard to come by on a regular and consistent basis. Without these being available, volunteers/staff may be anxious and not want to undertake activity.
- Some volunteers will not want or be able to volunteer if their normal base library has not yet reopened and they have to go somewhere else.
- We would need to review the risk assessment at the point that returned items would be transported and agree the quarantining arrangements (e.g. bags or trugs for items to be placed in to reduce potential for spread of contamination).
- If the regular volunteer for a customer is not available (e.g. due to sickness or shielding), how customer records and stock choices/preferences are kept currently varies significantly across the county. It may be hard to retrieve this information if the library is closed or the regular staff/volunteers supporting this activity aren't around to obtain the information needed to share with another volunteer or staff member.
- Because some of the volunteers will have had a break in service of more than 3 months, we are going to need to consider additional steps under ECC's Safer Recruitment policy. This will include conducting status checks using the DBS Update Service where volunteer roles require a DBS check.
    - o The service is being supported with this by the Customer Demand & Resource Planning team.
    - o If volunteers have not kept their DBS Update subscription up to date and the status check fails, they will not be able to volunteer until a new DBS check takes place.

Transition period before reopening (getting ready stage)

During lockdown, library staff have been told not to attend work at the library at all, apart from in exceptional circumstances, or to support registration appointments. The majority of libraries won't have been visited by staff since the lockdown was announced. There will therefore need to be some work done to get both the building itself and specifically the library ready once go ahead is given to reopen.

As stated above, the current dates provided by government under their roadmap gives the service several weeks in June and early July to carry out necessary activity, which is a good amount of time to be fully prepared. The following activities are planned to start from 1st June onwards and are being scheduled by library managers. There is an associated checklist that library staff and supervisors will be issued to tick off as preparations proceed.

1) Staff at all levels to complete **self-declaration form**, identifying their personal circumstances and those of their household; and the **e-learning induction** programme either prior to returning to work or as soon as they are back at work.
2) **Visual inspection** of each site to check for any issues resulting in the long closure period. This includes an external and internal inspection for any potential damages or leaks.
3) **Risk assessment of each site**. This is required to meet government advice and to investigate changes to the layout of the library (both public space and staff area) to meet social distancing requirements. A team leader and/or area manager within the service will be carrying out this risk assessment to ensure a consistent approach across the service. The results will then be shared with staff.
4) Changes required to be implemented to meet findings of risk assessment. This includes changes to the layout to comply with **social distancing** requirements, removing and changing the layout of furniture, considering customer routing around the space etc as described in social distancing guidelines above.
5) Appropriate **signage** to be displayed to support the revised service offer, e.g. signs advertising the closure of the Hello Desk, signage asking people only to handle stock where they have the clear intention of borrowing it.
6) Site to be **cleaned** by MITIE ready for opening.
7) Checking all **equipment** is working, e.g. computers, self-service equipment.
8) Checking necessary **supplies** in place, including hand sanitisers as well as stationery.
9) **Reshelving** items returned during March 2020 and left in quarantine.
10) Processing any **money** left in quarantine during March 2020 and ensuring this is banked appropriately.
11) Carrying out a **stock take** of each library. This was a task that had commenced in March 2020 and needs to be completed. This is to ensure we have an accurate reflection of stock levels at every library and will allow items missing from the catalogue but currently showing as available to be purged.
12) A review of **posters and display material** in the library, removing items now out of date. Similarly ensuring current posters are on display, including current PLI certificate and 2020/21 fees and charges information.
13) Running a report on the **reserved items** in the library. Many customers were notified of reserved items ready for them to collect, but did not have the opportunity to come and collect them, prior to lockdown. We have decided to contact each customer to find out whether they still require the item awaiting collection; and if yes arrangements will be made to deliver this to the customer's home (see below).
14) Running a report on customers who have joined the library during lockdown but have only received a **temporary membership** number. Many customers have joined online during lockdown and been able to access online services during this period,

but not received a library card or full membership access. We will be updating library memberships for these customers and posting library cards to them so that they will gain full access rights without having to make a special trip to the library when they reopen. Cards will be posted out through Chelmsford Library where there is access to the County Hall mailroom.

15) Discussing opening arrangements with **partners and stakeholders** who share the space with the library service.

16) **Rotas** are produced and discussed with staff. This includes revising staff working patterns, which will need to be different to normal to reflect the different circumstances throughout the phased opening. This may also include booking additional as and when staff and/or asking staff for their willingness to work extra hours.

17) It is anticipated that **face to face registration appointments** will recommence from 15th June and therefore some staff will combine all of the tasks above with acting as a 'receptionist' for those customers to gain access to the 16 libraries with registration offices for their appointment (this will only involve opening the front doors to give them access and likewise at the end of the appointment whilst maintaining social distancing).

18) Staff will be asked to make as much space as possible for revised layouts and quarantined stock to be held and will therefore be asked to **declutter and tidy** the entire library space, especially staff areas.

Impact of social distancing and welfare arrangements for staff

The first actions from the risk assessment carried out by team leaders will be to consider and implement social distancing arrangements for staff areas. Staff will be accessing buildings as soon as possible afterwards, expected to be from 8th June, before customers re-enter the buildings, to prepare the libraries for reopening and to facilitate the recommencement of face to face registration appointments.

Key issues for consideration are:

- Discuss risk assessment with shared building users, e.g. Chelmsford Library will need to fit into wider plans made for County Hall complex; ceremony officers coming and going from library buildings when ceremonies restart.
- Social distancing arrangements for staff entry and exit points – separate entry and exit points if this is practicable.
- Staggered arrival times for staff, especially during the transition period where libraries opening hours do not need to be adhered to.
- Staggered lunch breaks for staff.
- Restrictions to numbers accessing staff kitchen, staffroom and toilet facilities.
- Trying to keep the same group of staff scheduled to work together at the same library on consecutive days wherever possible (this will be challenging as the service has so many part time workers).
- Provision of consistent hand washing facilities and hand sanitisers.
- Facilitate regular handwashing breaks for all staff.
- Access to wipes and sprays to enable high touch points to be wiped regularly.
- Review office checklist and change layouts of workroom areas, including following revised corporate advice about normal hotdesking arrangements.
- Where staff have an allocated laptop, they should use this at all times rather than using a desktop machine within the library. Where staff have to use a desktop computer because there is no alternative, staff should try to use the same machine each time. Should staff have to share a keyboard, mouse etc, sanitisers/hand gel should be used and hand washing breaks be included.
- Each library to have at least one laptop so that there is more flexibility on where staff can sit and work.
- If, during the transition period, libraries only have one member of staff on site doing admin and preparation work, lone working risk assessments will need to be reviewed, e.g. how and who staff contact someone to indicate they have left the building safely.
- Review fire evacuation procedures for staff.
- Remind staff not to share items for example, pens when signing in or out.
- Review of cleaning levels where staff are accessing the library at times when the building would not normally be cleaned as regularly.
- Trade Unions to be kept informed of proposals at high level view for the service.
- All staff will be contacted with revised guidelines before they return to work, as part of a revised health and safety induction encompassing significant changes in working practices. They will need to complete a self-declaration form, identifying their personal circumstances and those of their household; they will also complete an e-learning induction programme on or before their return to work that has been produced corporately by the Essex County Council Corporate Health and Safety team.
- All staff should be asked to review their emergency contact/next of kin details so that local managers can access these in the event of an emergency.

Additional impact for staff when customers return to libraries

The risk assessment for staff will need to take into account the period when staff are in the library alone, but then reconsider this again when customers return to using the libraries. This includes facilities shared by both customers, partners and staff.

Key issues for consideration:

- Any changes to elements mentioned above.
- Staff to be exemplars of social distancing arrangements so followed by customers.
- Review and reinforce disruptive behaviour arrangements. There must be a zero tolerance approach to verbal and physical abuse from customers.
  - Any additional security support we may require to assist with this, for example support from County Hall security at Chelmsford Library, when we immediately reopen.
- There will be currently be no lone working inside a library when libraries are open.

Equipment required to implement proposed measures

Until risk assessments are carried out, we won't know definitively any measures required at individual sites and/or additional requirements for extra equipment. The general advice from PHE is that:

"Where you are already using PPE in your work activity to protect against non-COVID-19 risks, you should continue to do so. When managing the risk of COVID-19, additional PPE beyond what you usually wear is not beneficial. This is because COVID-19 is a different type of risk to the risks you normally face in a workplace, and needs to be managed through social distancing, hygiene and fixed teams or partnering, not through the use of PPE".

Therefore the main message to staff will be to consistently reinforce the importance of:

- Keeping as many people as possible 2 metres apart from those they do not live with
- Regular handwashing

Things that we can be fairly sure will be identified on the risk assessments however are the requirement for:

- Guiding to inform customers about social distancing measures and/or create routing around the library spaces. This will be in the form of posters, barriers, signage, tape or floor guiding.
  - Some of this signage is available for the service through corporate means.
  - Some signage is available from PHE.
- Protective screening at any staff points where customers and staff are regularly expected to come into close contact (especially in registration offices).
- Queue management outside libraries. This will be in the form of barriers, tape or markings on the ground.
- Creating separate entrance and exit points.
- Extra storage solutions for storing returned items in quarantine.
- Furniture will need to be moved, removed or taped off.
- High traffic areas will need to be cleaned or wiped regularly.
- Staff not to handle items that customers are borrowing or returning to reduce contact.

The service already has the following equipment to support this:

- Self-service machines for borrowing and return of items.
- Some libraries have freestanding poster holders.
- Some libraries have hazard tape.
- Some libraries have tensa barriers or similar to cordon off certain areas.
- Some libraries have plenty of storage space where furniture could be stored, both for their own library and potentially other libraries.
- Spare libraries have surplus trolleys for storing books.
- The library distribution centre at Freebournes Road keeps some spare trugs; larger libraries may also have a surplus supply.
- Sack barrows are available at the majority of libraries to assist with moving furniture.
- The library service does have a 0.5 FTE member of staff who assists with low level maintenance work for the service.

In addition to the above, the library service and ERS have jointly ordered:

- Perspex screens to be used in registration offices.
- 200 packs of antibacterial wipes (60 wipes in a pack)
- Smaller Perspex screens for use on mobile libraries.
- 200 bottles of hand gel already arrived and distributed; another 400 bottles have been ordered (for use by staff and volunteers).
- Hand sanitiser pump bottles and 5 litre containers (for use for customers).
- Hand sanitiser dispensers for the mobile libraries – require installation.

Local supervisors and team leaders have also been given permission to buy additional supplies of wipes, hand gel and antibacterial sprays locally using their purchase cards where this is more practicable than orders through County Hall.

As risk assessments take place, further additional equipment may be identified as required; or may need to be shared between libraries (such as sack barrows), particularly to support staff during the 'getting ready' period for reopening.

Areas that will need attention and consideration where supplies are currently limited or not previously required are:

- Queue management outside libraries – this will need to be considered bespoke to each location as to best option such as barriers or markings on the ground. In some shared buildings and shopping centre locations this will be a joint discussion with other stakeholders.
- Hi vis jackets for staff to use where queue management is taking place on or near a road and this is identified as required by the risk assessment.
- Ongoing supply of sanitiser containers for use by customers – review once the 16 libraries open and we can anticipate how long supply purchased will last.
- Additional signage at larger sites advising of routing and social distancing arrangements – this has been ordered from colleagues in ECC property team.

Property related considerations

The fixtures and amenities within the library buildings are considered more fully in the generic risk assessment for use by library managers preparing libraries to open, but at a high level here are a few specific items we have considered not just as property related issues but as impacting on the service offer for customers.

- As stated above, no refreshments will be offered or café spaces to open.
- Ensure that toilets have signage on the outside that indicate that only one person enters the toilet area at a time; and that makes it clear when the toilet is occupied as per corporate guidelines.
  - We will not be offering customers access to our toilets or baby changing facilities as an interim arrangement.
- Lifts to be used only by one person at a time (staff or customers) unless the customers are members of the same household as per corporate guidelines.
- Not using escalators in libraries where there is an alternative staircase.
- Changing use of stairwells to be one way only where possible.
- Some of these facilities are not ECC's property so we will liaise with landlords etc about any local arrangements or risk assessments they may have introduced in shared areas.
- Although discussions will be had during the production of the risk assessment wherever possible, we will share copies of the risk assessment with all tenants or those leasing parts of our library buildings before they return to providing a service.
- Similarly although discussions will be had during the production of the risk assessment wherever possible, we will also request to see copies of risk assessments by partners or landlords where it affects the functioning of our service, e.g. for our libraries on school sites, Basildon Library where there is a shared entrance for multiple services operating from the hub.

What will need to happen if lockdown comes back into force or there is a second wave?

Once libraries reopen, if there was subsequently a second spike in cases of Covid-19, it seems reasonable to assume that how Essex Libraries reacts would be influenced by a steer from central government, either directly or indirectly. This could be in the form of news conferences, as has been the case to date, or could be provided to the local authority to cascade. The library service is aware that ECC is establishing a team to react and coordinate any information received through the new Track and Trace app and so it is possible this team could be used to cascade direction from government.

It seems reasonable to assume that a second wave, or spike, in cases would once again mean that:
- Non-essential travel and movement would be restricted.
- Restrictions on people congregating would be reintroduced.
- Non-essential shops and businesses would be asked to close.

Since libraries have been treated in government guidance in the same group as non-essential shops, it would follow that libraries would once again be asked to close, albeit it might be a more localised picture than the initial nationwide lockdown.

If government were to provide this direct advice, the experience gained from the first lockdown would allow us to reverse changes and follow a similar process as was the case in March 2020. This would include:
- Announcing libraries as closed – including possible requirement for a new CMA.
- Following the library closure checklist.
- Demobilising the building and addressing any measures required to maintain hygiene such as having rubbish and sanitary waste collected.
- Increasing loan periods and due dates, disabling overdue charges.
- Taking down public access to the library catalogue.
- Mobilising staff for redeployment.
- Working with registration colleagues to support how registration appointments would be delivered.
- Reverting back to the enhanced alternative offers through the e-library and through the Essex Libraries website and Youtube page.

If the government did not provide specific advice that all libraries should remain closed, but other restrictions were introduced that reduced the available workforce, or that influenced the number of buildings that could remain open safely and cleaned, the normal Essex Libraries Business Continuity Plan arrangements would be followed (i.e. starting to prioritise the libraries that remained open, gradually reducing down to the 16 libraries with registration offices in them, then the 4 hubs, then just Chelmsford Library).

If there was a second wave elsewhere in the country that did not directly impact on Essex and libraries were able to remain open, but supplies of sanitiser, hand gel or other cleaning materials were no longer available, the service would still need to be reviewed.

Protocol in the event of a suspected or confirmed case of Covid-19

If someone in one of the libraries reports they are symptomatic (i.e. they have a high temperature and a new, persistent cough) and suspect they may have Covid-19, they would be advised to:
- Return home immediately
- Avoid touching anything
- Cough or sneeze into a tissue and put it in a bin, or if they do not have tissues, cough and sneeze into the crook of their elbow.
- Follow the guidance on self-isolation.
- If they are a member of staff and are advised to self-isolate, they should not return to work until their period of self-isolation has been completed.

In the event that someone accessing one of the library service's buildings (whether staff, partner or customer) reports that they have been diagnosed with a confirmed case of Covid-19, it will be necessary to close that building to be cleaned with immediate effect to reduce the continued risk of contamination.

Current government advice is that the infection risk following contamination of the environment decreases over time and that the risk is likely to be reduced significantly after 72 hours. It is possible to request a deep clean of a library through MITIE, which if done reasonably quickly could allow the library to reopen 24 hours later; however the corporate advice received is that because a specialist contractor would need to be mobilised and the library service is geographically spread, the more realistic alternative is that the library remains closed for the full 72 hours and then receives a normal clean before reopening. In any case it is acknowledged that because the nature of the content of libraries (thousands of books many without plastic covers that cannot be easily wiped or cleaned), remaining closed for the full 72 hours is a prudent measure to mitigate the risk of transmission through the book stock.

In the event of a confirmed case, all staff on duty since the person with the confirmed case accessed the space would be notified and as per PHE guidelines sent home and advised to self-isolate for 14 days. The other household members of that wider class or group do not need to self-isolate unless the child, young person or staff member they live with in that group subsequently develops symptoms. We would as much as possible also notify partners using the space and any customers that we were aware of using the space (this could be verbal where the customers are known to us, or through our social media channels as well as signage visible from outside the library building).

Consideration would need to be given to how short notice closures would affect other building occupiers, such as registration appointments that may be scheduled. The business-as-usual closure checklist would therefore also apply in addition to specific arrangements around the cleaning of the building.

If the library did need to be closed, we could investigate options to provide alternative opening hours at another library for the duration of the closure (subject to having enough staff to do so). This could be the case for example by providing additional opening hours at a library normally closed on certain days; or opening a library that it was hitherto not possible to open due to lack of staff.

Customer reservations

Customer reservations form part of our core library offer, whereby customers can order an item from anywhere in Essex and Thurrock libraries through the online catalogue for collection at their local library. Customers can also place Interlibrary Loan Requests to access items not held in Essex, which are then lent to Essex Libraries by other library authorities for loan to our customers.

During lockdown, the reservation service has been suspended and customers are not able to place new reservations, or collect reservations previously ordered that are awaiting collection at local libraries.

Once libraries reopen, we expect the demand for this service to increase, as customers will have limited browsing time when accessing a library, or will want to reduce the amount of contact time they will wish to have in a library when browsing.

A report run from the library management system in May 2020 indicates that there are approximately 7,000 items awaiting collection at Essex libraries when we reopen (plus 1,000 items in Thurrock libraries). This is a significant number of customers coming in to collect items shortly after libraries reopen, alongside customers wanting to return and borrow stock, at a time when we would be limiting customer numbers able to use the library and customers may have to queue outside waiting to gain access.

For this reason, we will not be reinstating the ability to place reservations as soon as libraries reopen; however reservations already placed but not received by the customers yet will be honoured.

To further mitigate the impact this may otherwise have had, we will be using staff time in the 'getting ready' phase prior to reopening to do the following:
- Staff to go into the library and go through their reservation collection shelf alongside a report from the library management system to check items supposed to be awaiting collection are on the shelf.
- Staff to contact each customer and check whether they still require the item(s).
- If the customer still wants the item, check whether the customer would prefer to have a home delivery of the item rather than collecting in person.
- If the customer would prefer a home delivery, agree how the item can be delivered – this will depend on the size of the item (whether it fits through a letter box); whether the customer would prefer it to be left on the doorstep or in back garden etc; confirmed that we won't physically hand the item to the customer if the customer is symptomatic.
- Arrange for the item to be collected by a member of library staff or one of the library service's van drivers from the local library and brought to the Freebournes Road library hub.
- Staff at Freebournes Road to confirm a home delivery with the customer; and a van driver to make the delivery.

This will be the first time that Essex Libraries has attempted a home delivery service to customers and will require significant capacity from our van delivery drivers, who normally be making deliveries to and from the libraries; however it is felt that should the trial of delivering existing reservations currently sitting in libraries be successful, this could be continued after libraries reopen.

The library management system indicates that there are approximately 25,000 items in Essex and Thurrock either in-between libraries satisfying existing reservations that would be

available for collection soon after we reopen, or are awaiting staff checking the shelves in libraries to process for an existing reservation. If these items could be home delivered, this would reduce the level of stock the drivers would need to move around on their regular deliveries to libraries and so it is hoped could counteract the change in staffing capacity.

It should be acknowledged that there will still be reservations that will need to get to libraries for collection, e.g. where a friend and family member is collecting the reservation on behalf of the customer, or where the customer will not be able to be at home at the time of a delivery. We hope to home deliver all these items before libraries reopen ; however if this proves not to be possible, extending the timescale for the home delivery service could lead to a reduced frequency of deliveries between libraries as per the current arrangements and so the benefits to certain customers of a home delivery might lead to other customers having to wait longer for their items.

It is however felt worth pursuing this option to reduce the potential impact when libraries reopen and to provide a better customer experience, especially for those customers who would either have to queue at libraries to collect their items, or are currently not able to get to the library for other reasons (no transport, reluctance to use public transport, are shielding or are in the vulnerable group).

Additional services normally available at libraries

The library service offers a range of services from its buildings, some of which are offered by the library service itself; others by library staff but on behalf of partners; or others where another organisation delivers a service using the library space. Some of these services are universally offered in all libraries, some only in a handful or even in individual libraries. With social distancing measures in place, it will be very difficult to provide all of these services as normal, either because of the amount of space required, or the level of customer contact involved. A summary of services and proposals are below:

Service	Comments
Battery recycling	As service is not part of the core service and encourages customers to make non-essential journeys, this service will not be available.
Booksales	As service is not part of the core service and encourages customers to make non-essential journeys, this service will not be available.
Café spaces	Service will not be available.
Crisp packet recycling	As service is not part of the core service and encourages customers to make non-essential journeys, this service will not be available.
Donations to stock	We will not be accepting donations to stock until further notice.
Document verification services	These are normally provided on behalf of another organisation. Individual discussions will be held with these organisations.
Electrical waste recycling	As service is not part of the core service and encourages customers to make non-essential journeys, this service will not be available.
EU settlement scheme	This service will be reviewed.
Faxing	Due to the handling requirements of both the documents to be faxed and the money to be taken from customers, this service will not be available.
Gallery spaces	Service may be available but will be subject to space and risk assessment at each library.
Hearing aid batteries	Service will be available.
Interlibrary loan requests	New requests for interlibrary loans (items requested from outside Essex and Thurrock libraries) will temporarily be suspended.
Newspapers and magazines (hard copies)	Due to the high touch nature of the service this service will not be available.
Performing Arts service	New requests through the PAS will be temporarily suspended, however existing items needing to be returned can be returned.
Periodical requests	New periodical requests will not be accepted on a temporary basis.
Photocopying	Due to the high touch nature of the service and many libraries not having coin boxes to take payment, this service is temporarily suspended.
Recycling resources on behalf of district councils, e.g. clear recycling sacks, kaddie sacks, cardboard waste bags.	Service offer looks different in each district. Will depend on individual discussions with district councils.

Scanning	As public computers will not be available, scanning will also not be available.
Sensory walls	We will not be able to provide access to this service until further notice.
Toilets and changing facilities	Service will not be available.

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