



# **COVID-19**

## **Library Service Restoration Plan**



## Introduction and context

**This Library Service Restoration Plan provides the Council's proposed plan for restoring statutory library services within the County.**

This Library Service Restoration Plan has been developed based on the current operations of the service in the context of COVID-19 and outlines plans for the phased resumption of services in accordance with government guidance, best practice and ensuring that the safety of our staff and public remain at the forefront of our plans.

## The role of libraries in Northumberland

The Northumberland County Council (NCC) Corporate Plan has identified a number of core strategic priorities and supporting key organisational actions of which the following are particularly relevant to the provision of public library services:

1

### Health and Wellbeing

Libraries offer a wide range of information which support public health and wellbeing activities including social activities to be active and well.

2

### Stronger Communities and Families

Libraries offer social support networks and information to support residents of Northumberland to seek advice/support within our communities.

3

### Economic Growth

Libraries provide a hub for individuals to seek support and access with employment and skills which directly contributes to economic growth and regeneration of communities and development.

4

### Education and Skills

Libraries provide a significant role in the development of literacy skills across Northumberland with local activities such as the Summer Reading Challenge being an established initiative across the county for young people and families.



# Library Services in Northumberland

Library Services are currently provided in the following locations within Northumberland:





## National context for Library Services during COVID-19

Library authorities have a statutory duty under the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964 'to provide a comprehensive and efficient library service for all persons' for all those who live, work or study in the area (section 7).




**During lockdown, libraries have moved many facets of their service online which have included:**

- Enhancing the range of ebooks, e-audiobooks and emagazines available for loan.
- Offering virtual story and craft sessions; Lego clubs; reading groups.
- Curating a range of useful online resources.
- Linking into a raft of partners' offers e.g. BBC Arts Culture in Quarantine and National Literacy Trust's Learning at Home.
- The annual Summer Reading Challenge.

Libraries Connected have developed a robust but flexible Recovery Toolkit with input from Public Health England, the Health and Safety Executive and trade unions (Unison, Unite, GMB). The specific pathway taken to full service recovery by Northumberland Libraries will be in line with NCC/public health guidance.

The full library experience with a wide range of group events and unlimited access to library space may still be some way off, as it will not be easy to manage in a COVID-19 secure environment. In this context, the enhanced digital offer that libraries have developed will remain important to engage with users and maintain their relationship with libraries.



## Local context for Library Services during COVID-19

One of the strengths of Libraries Connected is the regional network structure.

In line with colleagues regionally, our service recovery will take a phased approach, both in the range of services offered, the hours they are available and the number of sites from which they are offered. Every authority is tailoring the plans outlined in the toolkit to its own risk assessments, available resources and local priorities of need. The majority will be offering some limited service from mid July onwards and then reviewing each phase before restoring their offer further.

As elsewhere, the Schools Library Service have returned to arrange retrieval of loan collections from schools before the end of term and prepare resources for the Autumn term.

The Prison Library will take good practice guidance and apply it within the regime and service delivery model agreed with prison management.

# Library Services supporting the Council's emergency response to COVID-19

To support the Council's response to COVID -19, Northumberland Library staff have developed our online library service along the same lines as other library services as described above but to meet specific local needs with great success. During COVID-19 there has been:

- A **41%** increase in the number of visits to the website for this period year on year.
- **1,938** library members have signed up to use our digital resources in response to customer feedback we have moved all ebook resources and to be more easily accessible via Borrowbox.
- **48,184** items have been borrowed digitally between 23 March and 23 July, a significant increase in digital issues compared with the same period last year.
- We have remotely supported a number of library users to use our digital libraries when they have encountered problems with their devices.
- We introduced Pressreader on 11 June 2020, which offers a much wider range of magazines and newspapers. Over **200** borrowers used the service in the first 10 days, and over **7,500** items were borrowed in the first six weeks.
- Our social media presence now includes a book group and family history chat group that both have over **100** members.
- Two of our creative writing groups have moved online, and now has a Lego Club, storytime and craft sessions.
- Staff have made over **3,500** befriending telephone calls to library members in the age vulnerable category (**3,869** in total). These calls have identified unmet needs, provided information on the support available and offered a doorstep delivery of fresh reading material.
- Doorstep deliveries began on 1 June, to date, **916** books delivered to **458** residents.
- Staff are supporting pop-up initiatives, and engaging with families in our communities, explaining the benefits of visiting libraries, as well as the importance of reading and related activities by distributing reading materials and activity packs.





## Planned approach to service resumption for Libraries

In advance of the Government's announcement on 4 July, an action plan has been based on sector-led good practice guidance that supplements Government workplace guidance for shops and branches; offices and call centres and vehicles.

This sector-led guidance includes input from Public Health England, the Health and Safety Executive and unions (Unison, Unite, GMB). Our specific pathway taken to full service recovery will be in line with NCC/public health guidance.

### The recovery of the library offer at each site is dependent upon:

- Completion of the deep clean.
- Completion of the statutory and mandatory checks (including building checks).
- Risk assessments for staff use of workplace.
- Completion of the workplace (office) building restart checklist.
- Building size and lay-out (it may be prudent to move straight to a time limited browsing option at smaller sites with insufficient stock to support the Select and Collect style service. However the size may also restrict access to only one customer at a time).
- Risk assessments and mitigations for the public use of the space.
- **Local factors** - a number of our libraries are co-located with other council services or external organisations. Some are keen for us to resume service delivery and for others, it presents a number of concerns. Where we are hosted by an external organisation, the service needs to ensure compliance with NCC standards of cleanliness and safety for both our staff and customers. Discussions will be held with each of these partners to agree how to ensure these standards are met and maintained and to manage customer expectations.
- Staff availability.



## Communications

Our Library Services Restoration Plan is supported by a communications plan. This covers the press, social media and posters at sites, making it very clear which services are available (ebooks, eaudio, magazines and newspapers can be downloaded for free via [mylibrary.co.uk](http://mylibrary.co.uk), a Select and Collect service for books, enquiries via [mylibrary.co.uk](http://mylibrary.co.uk)) and which are not (browsing the bookstock, reservation service, IT, photocopying, printing, study space) .

Communications will also be shared locally with key stakeholders and partners to promote the available services in each area.

## Planned Library openings and associated services

Appendix 1 shows a proposed approach to planned library openings and the associated services that will be available as part of our Library Services Restoration Plan.

This is a proposed approach and is subject to change following any further changes in guidance and the potential impact that this may have on staff and members of the public.

# Appendix 1

 Discussion with partners / stakeholders
  Staff on site undertaking prep
  Select and collect operating
  Anticipated date for time limited browsing and IT
  Anticipated date of freely accessible browsing, IT and study facilities

Library Site	20/07/20	27/07/20	03/08/20	10/08/20	17/08/20	24/08/20	31/08/20	07/09/20	14/09/20	21/09/20	28/09/20	Comments
Allendale												
Alnwick												November
Amble												TBA
Ashington												TBA
Bedlington Station												TBA
Bedlington												TBA
Bellingham												TBA
Berwick												TBA
Blyth												TBA
Corbridge												TBA
Cramlington												TBA
Guidepost												TBA
Haltwhistle												TBA
Hexham												TBA
Hirst												TBA
Kielder												TBA
Lynemouth												TBA
Morpeth												TBA
Newbiggin												TBA
Ponteland												TBA
Prudhoe												TBA
Rothbury												TBA
Seaton Sluice												TBA
Seaton Valley												TBA
South Beach												TBA
Widdrington												TBA
Wooler												TBA
Wylam												TBA