

About this guidance

This guidance is for public libraries in Scotland. It comes into effect from 15 July 2020 and applies until further notice. Guidance will be reviewed on a regular basis in line with the regular three weekly review of lockdown requirements.

We are keen to build confidence and create the right environment for supporting safer work as we continue to live with COVID-19. We have worked with organisations and trade unions from across the public libraries sector to ensure that this guidance is evidence-based, fair and ethical, clear and realistic. As each workplace is different it is for individual businesses to work with trade union or workforce representatives to determine how best to apply this guidance in their circumstances.

This is provided as guidance only and does not amount to legal advice. Public library services may wish to seek their own advice to ensure compliance with all legal requirements.

Safer workplace planning in public libraries must align with wider local authority planning based on local priorities. This is also the case for contracted arm's length external organisations (ALEOs), as the statutory responsibility for libraries remains with the local authority. This will ensure consistency of mitigation measures across the library service and other local authority services.

Public libraries in Scotland range in size and are often situated within different work environments, including office working, museums and archives, and schools. Host or co-located organisations need to be involved in the library recovery planning to ensure plans are aligned and integrated. There are a number of strands of work currently underway looking at guidance for safer workplaces. This document is designed to be relevant for organisations who provide and people who work in public libraries.

Links to related guidance can be found at the end of this guidance. Please also see [Scottish Government Publications Website](#) for the latest information.

This guide is underpinned by a spirit of collaborative working between organisations and their workforce. Throughout, the term trade union or workforce representatives is used in that context, recognising that public library services have a legal responsibility to maintain workplace health and safety and must consult with the health and safety representative selected by a recognised trade union or, if there is not one, a representative chosen by workers. Public library services cannot decide who the workforce representative will be.

This document is one of a set of documents about how to work safely in different types of workplace. It emphasises in particular the importance of undertaking a robust and ongoing risk-based assessment with full input from workforce representatives, and to keep all risk mitigation measures under regular review so

that public libraries continue to feel, and be, safe. Each public library service will need to translate this into the specific actions they need to take using this document as a guide.

Publication of this guidance **does not signal** an immediate change in Scotland's lockdown policy. To judge whether and when restrictions can be changed we will consider a range of evidence on the progress of the pandemic in Scotland using the principles set out in [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): framework for decision making](#) and our long established commitment to fair work. As Scotland continues to ease lockdown restrictions, organisations including the Institute of Directors (IoD), SCDI, STUC, COSLA and SCVO have signed a [fair work statement](#) underlining the collaborative approach needed between employers, unions and workers to ensure workplaces can operate safely.

The remainder of this guidance sets out our minimum expectations across five key areas public libraries will need to consider as part of their planning for a restart and ongoing production while minimising the transmission of the virus:

- **assessing risk** - involving the workforce in a risk-based approach to a safer workplace
- **workforce planning** - supporting those who should come to work, and those who should not
- **operational guide and checklist** - changing the workplace environment to protect your workforce
- **deliveries, distribution and visitors** - protecting your workforce and those who come on-site
- **training and compliance**

The regulator for health and safety at work is the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) who will utilise the powers under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 to ensure people at work or possibly enforcement of this legislation is undertaken by Environmental Health and Trading Standards local authority staff in agreement with Police Scotland.

If you can suggest ways we can improve the guidance please contact chedcovid19@gov.scot.

Where we are now

The First Minister announced that Scotland would be entering a lockdown on 23 March 2020. Under law, the Scottish Government must review that lockdown at least every three weeks (most recently on 20 August 2020). The [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): framework for decision making – Scotland's route map through and out of the crisis](#), was published on 21 May and sets out the phases by which we will aim to ease lockdown. They will be gradual and incremental and will be matched with

careful monitoring of the virus. The restoration of public library services is able to proceed from phase 3 with preparatory work for ensuring physical distancing and enhanced hygiene measures able to take place during phase 1.

Physical distancing duties are set out in regulation 4(1) of the Health Protection (Coronavirus) (Restrictions) (Scotland) Regulations 2020. A person who is responsible for carrying on a business or providing a service must take **all reasonable measures**:

- to ensure that a distance of two metres is maintained between any persons on the premises (except between members of the same household or a carer and the person assisted by the carer)
- to ensure that they only admit people to its premises in sufficiently small numbers to make it possible to maintain that distance
- to ensure that a distance of two metres is maintained between any person waiting to enter the premises (except between members of the same household or a carer and the person assisted by the carer)

This guidance does not supersede any legal obligations relating to health and safety, employment or equalities and it is important that as a business or an employer you continue to comply with your existing obligations, including those relating to individuals with protected characteristics. It contains non-statutory guidance to take into account when complying with these existing obligations. When considering how to apply this guidance, take into account agency workers, contractors, staff on zero hours contracts, and volunteers, as well as your employees.

Public libraries should therefore use this guidance to look forward and engage with trade union or workforce representatives to develop workplace specific plans for a managed transition away from current restrictions, allowing sufficient time for that joint work. And while those plans should be fully developed, with measures put in place and tested where possible, they should not be implemented until after 15 July. Decisions on the phasing of a sector wide return for public libraries will be made in line with the route map.

Decisions around restoring services and what that might look like will be made by local authorities to suit the local context and services may be restored with a phased approach determined by library services. These decisions will be made in line with Scottish Government decisions and Public Health Scotland guidance. This guidance should be applied for all phases of restoring services.

The Scottish Government has initiated a broad collaborative process to develop sectoral guidance which will underpin that managed transition and provide clarity and confidence to public libraries, employees and local communities, protect public health and concurrently optimise economic recovery. Aligned with that we are reviewing and enhancing testing and enforcement arrangements, and ensuring that the guidance is coherent and connected, recognising for example transport and other inter-dependencies.

We are working with the UK Government to align our approach and guidance, where possible and on the basis of scientific evidence on the levels of infection in

Scotland. This guidance is intended to work alongside and build upon UK Government guidance and aims to assist employers, businesses and their workforce ensure a safe working environment and readers will recognise consistent themes within this guidance with the UK Government's [Working Safely during COVID-19](#) publications.

This guidance should be read in conjunction with the Scottish Government's [business and physical distancing guidance](#) which still applies.

Other key guidance includes:

- [HPS: COVID-19 Non Healthcare Settings guidance](#) which provides information on the background to COVID-19, symptoms, general principles of infection prevention and control and health protection measures and what to do if someone becomes unwell on site.
- [NHS Inform](#) which has a wide range of useful public facing information including information on symptoms and what to do
- [Test and protect](#) website from Scottish government that contains information on how getting tested and what you need to do.

Assessing risk

Involving the workforce in a risk based approach

As a minimum we expect:

- an equality human rights and risk based approach to be followed to protect health and safety of employees, and ensure the longer-term economic viability of the business and;
- employees to be fully engaged in that process, through trade union or workforce representatives.

The [Health and Safety Executive's short guide](#) can help to support employers with what they need to do to comply with the law.

EHRC have also [produced guidance for public sector employers about equality impact assessments](#) and having due regard to the Public Sector Equality Duty and Scottish Specific Duties during the pandemic.

Joint working

This guidance has been developed in collaboration with sector and trade union representatives on the basis that both have essential roles to play in planning for restart. Companies that have successfully been able to maintain or increase production of essential goods during the COVID-19 crisis have highlighted the importance of joint working. Protecting the health of employees has been at the heart of this joint approach which is fundamental to establishing shared confidence around the safety of returning to places of work and supporting a recovery in productivity.

Implementation phases

Carrying out a robust risk assessment with full workforce involvement (of recognised trade union safety representatives or relevant employee safety representatives) will identify the practical measures that can be put in place to minimise the spread of the virus at a workplace level. The assessment should include a phased implementation timetable, structured broadly as follows:

1. Planning

Plans to re-open a workplace should be developed in consultation with the workforce and updated on an ongoing basis. That planning must be based around risk assessments and safe systems of work [physical distancing, hand washing and surface cleaning](#), and fair work principles and be designed to enable a restart that allows the business to trade while protecting employee health and well-being. Workplaces should make every reasonable effort to enable working from home by default, where possible.

2. Preparation

Physical distancing and hygiene measures require work to be carried out before a restart – for example screens, one-way systems, 2- metre zones, PPE provision, hand sanitisers, quarantining of library stock etc. This is then followed by briefings and inductions into the new ways of working. These all take time and require resourcing and commitment.

3. Pilots

Experience confirms the value of trialling the new way of working before a fuller restart is attempted, so a limited-scale pilot to test systems, find weaknesses and make improvements before a fuller restart is essential.

Public libraries should make sure that the risk assessment for each library venue addresses the risks of COVID-19, using this guidance to inform decisions and control measures. The outcome of the risk assessment is to identify sensible measures to control the risks in workplaces.

Dynamic assessment

A risk assessment or adoption of mitigation measures should not be a one-off exercise, rather part of a regular and ongoing dialogue and feedback loop between employers and trade union or workforce representatives to identify what measures are working, where refinements are possible and any gaps remaining. Reviews of measures and risks should be frequent, with daily assessments of progress initially not unusual. The open and ongoing engagement between trade union or workforce representatives should enable adjustments to be made quickly and smoothly at the relevant stage, including potentially tightening workplace restrictions or reducing numbers onsite if the dynamic risk assessments indicate this is necessary.

Employers have a duty to consult on health and safety. Consultation should occur with full-time, part-time, contractors, shift workers, security staff, facilities and cleaning staff, and volunteers. You can do this by listening and talking to them about the work and how you will manage risks from COVID-19. This should be done in advance of the facilities re-opening. Your employees and volunteers will have an in-depth knowledge of the risks in the workplace and will have a view on how to work safely. In a small service, you might choose to consult your workers directly. Larger services may consult through a health and safety representative, chosen by your employees or selected by a trade union. As an employer, you cannot decide who the representative will be. This process should be a continuation of an existing process in involving employees in optimising health and safety outcomes.

Utilising expertise

Public libraries should ensure their health and safety professionals and representatives have the skills, training and knowledge to understand the risks associated with COVID-19. Where public libraries and their workforce do not have access to these skills in-house they should together explore external support options to put in place appropriate mitigation measures, for example through their trade association, health and safety consultancies or trade union health and safety representatives. All can help public libraries understand the risks associated with different activities and situations within individual branches and offer the support managers and workers may require.

Building confidence, supporting wellbeing

Some workers may be apprehensive about returning to work and may need reassured that measures have been put in place to ensure safety.

Employers should recognise the need to have clear and regular communications with employees and volunteers, using multiple channels to reinforce key messages. Visual signage has proven to be beneficial in demonstrating changes that have or are being made, especially where language barriers exist.

A clear message from employers and trade unions is that building and maintaining employee confidence is vitally important and a challenge that should not be underestimated.

Workforce planning

There are other issues that employers need to consider to ensure workplaces are inclusive. The [Equality and Human Rights Commission \(EHRC\) Scotland](#) can provide advice on a range of issues such as:

- [non-discrimination](#)
- [reasonable adjustments for disabled people and communication with employees on equality issues](#)
- [support for pregnant employees or employees on maternity leave](#)
- [flexible working for those with caring responsibilities](#)
- [how to deal with harassment at work](#)

Close the Gap, through their *Think Business Think Equality* toolkit, have produced guidance on [employers supporting employees affected by domestic abuse](#) during the pandemic and a more [general online self-assessment resource for employers on domestic abuse](#). The [RNIB](#) also provide information on employing partially sighted and blind workers during COVID, and a COVID risk assessment tool

Supporting those who should come to work, and those who should not

Nobody should go to work if their workplace is closed under current government regulations.

As a minimum we expect:

- working from home to continue or to be offered to employees, where possible
- health factors to be considered in any phasing of who returns to work, with employees living in high risk or shielded households only expected to return when new safe working environment measures have been implemented and a return to onsite work is consistent with individual medical advice
- Employees who are not shielding but identified as at increased risk from Covid-19 are able to attend work in person but should strictly follow physical measures
- new public library arrangements to be tested and modified through collaboration between employers and employees and
- public libraries to take travel to work and childcare considerations into account in decisions around a phased restart

Continue home working

Minimising the spread of the virus will remain important in ensuring the overall protection of public health. Therefore planning for a safe return to work should assume that those able to work from home will continue to do so. Public libraries should plan for the minimum number of people needed on site to operate safely and effectively, with a phased return necessary for many businesses. Home-working is the default, where possible.

Pilot measures

As implementing new enhanced safety measures may take time to embed it is good practice to pilot measures, either within part of a facility and / or with a proportion of the workforce at lower risk from the virus, before rolling out across the workplace as a whole. Travel to work and childcare considerations for individual employees should be taken into account by public libraries, in discussion with trade unions or employee representatives, before deciding which individuals to involve in pilots and a phased restart.

Each time you make any changes or when you intend to open your business more widely, you should re-visit your initial analysis to identify what further/new changes are required. In other words, repeat the process above for the changes you have made.

Employee health and well-being

Employers should ensure the organisation culture is inclusive, with the aim that every employee should feel that they are returning to a supportive, caring and safe environment. The pandemic has had an unequal impact across the workforce, as different employee groups, and individuals, will have been affected in diverse ways according to factors such as their job role, and demographic/personal circumstances. Therefore, it is important organisations foster a fair and inclusive working environment that does not tolerate discrimination. There is also a risk of victimisation of those infected, suspected, or more vulnerable to COVID-19 which should be addressed.

The following guides from the Health and Safety Executive provide useful sources of information:

- [working safely during the coronavirus outbreak - a short guide](#)
- [talking with your workers about working safely during the coronavirus outbreak](#)

Individual health circumstances should be considered and discussed with employees and volunteers before prioritising who is asked to return to work and when. This should recognise the protective measures required to minimise health risks to high risk or shielded workers. Employees in the shielding category should not be expected to physically attend work and every effort must be made to explore how they can work from home.

The shielding category consists of those who have been identified as being at the highest risk from severe illness from Covid-19. See [NHS Inform](#) for further information. People who live with someone who is shielding are not advised to stay away from work; however, they should be supported to stringently follow physical distancing guidance. Companies should explore measures such as suspending the normal application of sickness or disciplinary procedures related to attendance in these cases.

As the number of cases of Covid-19 in Scotland have fallen significantly, from 31 July we have been able to amend our advice. We have paused the advice that those who were identified as being at highest risk of the virus should shield. This means those who were shielding can go back to workplaces where they cannot work from home. Working from home and working flexibly where possible should remain the best option for people who had been shielding. Employer's should support people to safely return to work and ensure they can stringently follow public health guidance around physical distancing and hygiene. An individual risk assessment [guidance and tool](#) has been developed help staff and managers consider the specific risk of COVID-19 in the workplace.

Those identified as being at increased risk from Covid-19 are those following physical distancing advice more stringently. As they are at higher risk of severe illness (for example, people with some pre-existing conditions) they have been asked to take extra care in observing physical (social) distancing. People who live with someone who is at increased risk are not advised to stay away from work, but as above, should be supported to stringently follow physical distancing guidance.

There may be the requirement to revert back to some level of shielding in the future at either a national or local level if the number of cases rise again. Those who previously had to shield will be kept informed of any relevant health advice if things do change. You can also keep up to date with the most recent advice at [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): shielding advice and support](#)

If those at increased risk cannot work from home, they should be offered the option of the safest available on-site roles, enabling them to maintain physical distancing. Workplace activities should be carefully assessed to identify if they involve an unacceptable level of risk.

[Test and Protect](#), Scotland's approach to implementing the 'test, trace, isolate, support' strategy is a public health measure designed to break chains of transmission of Coronavirus (COVID-19) in the community. The NHS will test people who have symptoms, trace people who may have become infected by spending time in close contact with someone who tests positive, and then support those close contacts to self-isolate. That means if they have the virus they are less likely to pass it on to others.

Organisations will play a vital role in ensuring that their workers are aware of and able to follow the public health advice.

Organisations should follow public health guidance if a worker becomes unwell with coronavirus symptoms at work, see further information below. The person should leave work to self isolate straight away and, if possible, wear a face covering on route and avoid public transport.

Organisations should direct workers to NHS Inform or, if they can't get online, call 0800 028 2816, to arrange to get tested.

Until they have been tested and told if it is safe to leave home, organisations should make sure that staff do not have to, or feel that they have to, come in to work. Workers can request an isolation note through NHS Inform.

People who have tested positive for the virus will need to self-isolate for a minimum of 10 days. NHS contact tracers will interview them and get in touch with people they have been in close contact with, and tell them they must self-isolate for 14 days. If your employees or volunteers are informed by a contact tracer that they should isolate, you should help them to do so straight away. They may feel well, as the virus could still be incubating when they are asked to isolate. Some people who are asked to isolate may not become unwell, but they must stay at home and self-isolate for the full 14 days. Organisations can ask them to work from home if they are able to and they are not unwell. Organisations should not ask someone isolating to come into work before their period of isolation is complete, in any circumstances.

Where Infection Prevention Control measures have been utilised such as protective screen or use of PPE the contact tracer will conduct a risk assessment to identify contacts at risk. The priority is to public health in order to break the chain of transmission of COVID-19.

See Scottish Test and Protect website and [NHS Inform](#) for further health advice and information including on duration of self-isolation.

A close contact is defined as:

- Those that are living in the same household as a case.
- Face to face contact with a case for any length of time within 1 metre of a case.
- Extended close contact within 2 metres for more than 15 minutes with a case.

Planning should recognise that ongoing physical distancing measures required to reduce the spread of the virus may mean that the number of employees and volunteers able to be accommodated safely in the workplace is limited. The workforce may have questions or concerns about returning to work. Public library services are encouraged to work with trade union or workforce representatives to enable individuals to work from home while self-isolating, if appropriate. If able to work from home, employees should continue to do so after a period of self-isolation has ended.

Apprentices can return to work at the same time as their co-workers. For specific concerns regarding the safe return to work for Apprentices there is information and support and Apprentices can speak to an advisor directly on 0800 917 8000.

It is important to ensure there is a functioning training infrastructure to support economic recovery and the sustainability of apprenticeship programmes. For those Training Providers and assessors that are providing continuity of contracted services for apprentices, learners and employers in the workplace during the pandemic must adhere to the applicable sectoral guidance.

As of Monday 8 June, residents and visitors entering Scotland from outside the Common Travel Area are subject to new measures due to coronavirus. Further information can be found at: <https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-public-health-checks-at-borders/pages/overview/>

Pay for workers who are sheltering, self-isolating, sick or balancing care responsibilities is likely to be a source of concern for employees. Public library services should work with trade union or workforce representatives to provide early guidance to workforces on processes and support for individuals affected by these issues. Again opportunities to facilitate home working where feasible should be actively pursued and maintained.

Public library services should also acknowledge the range of factors likely to cause stress or anxiety amongst employees and volunteers, ranging from living with lockdown arrangements to concerns about travel, schools, caring responsibilities and relatives impacted by the virus, amongst others. This may have implications for mental health with managers encouraged to be conscious of how these factors may impact on the well-being of individual staff members. Public library services and trade union or workforce representatives should be alert to this and direct anyone experiencing mental health issues towards available support.

Operational guide and checklist

Changing the workplace environment to protect your workforce

As a minimum we expect:

- enhanced health and safety measures to be in place before staff are asked to return to work, including physical distancing guidance and hygiene measures, generally and at bottleneck situations and
- safe travel to work arrangements to be considered as part of a risk assessment, with any relevant adjustments adopted

Safe workplace planning and communications

It is vital steps are taken to ensure a safe working environment and related workforce confidence. This is best done through early, regular and ongoing engagement between public library services and trade union or workforce representatives. As it will take time to complete the necessary risk assessment, identify the relevant mitigation measures and put those measures in place, the engagement between employers, trade union or workforce representatives must started well before a planned restart date (or ramp-up where production of essential goods or delivery of essential services have continued at less than full capacity).

It is important everyone understands the measures taken to establish the safe working environment as this is likely to have a significant impact on workforce confidence. Being and feeling safe will play an integral role in supporting a recovery in productivity levels. Provide clear visual signage on physical distancing and

hygiene to staff, volunteers and library users upon arrival, throughout the venue, and before arrival, for example by phone, on the website, or by email.

Enhanced hygiene

Enhanced hygiene measures should be a key plank of workplace-specific measures to create a safe working environment, including:

- promote good **hand hygiene** for all staff, volunteers and visitors. Ensure that adequate facilities are readily available for hand hygiene, including handwashing facilities that are adequately stocked and alcohol based hand rub (ABHR) at key areas, including entry and exit points, reception desk, staff break areas, PCs/study areas, in home delivery vehicles, and on mobile libraries. Employees, volunteers and visitors should be encouraged to use these facilities when entering and exiting the library.
- provide a separate location for returning books so they can be quarantined. Public Health Scotland have advised that books should be **quarantined** for 72 hours upon return to the library. The amount of infectious virus on any contaminated surface is likely to have decreased significantly after this time. Libraries should develop quarantine procedures for returned books and resources. Book drops and book trolleys can be used as they are easy for staff to wheel into a dedicated quarantine area and can be easily labelled.
- consider discouraging the **handling of books** by users, for example through different display methods, new signage or the rotation and quarantine of high-touch stock. Ensure that adequate facilities for hand hygiene are available throughout the premises and in any vehicles used.
- demand for **IT equipment** may increase due to the increased number of people seeking work and benefits. Libraries should manage the risk by moving computers two metres apart and/or installing screens. Libraries should consider providing appointments for access to IT equipment, with space between appointments to allow for the cleaning of work areas and equipment between users. Asking users to sanitise their hands on entering and leaving the building and cleaning the desk or PC after use will reduce the risk of transmission. Self-service photocopiers, scanners and printers should have their touch-points cleaned between users and, if possible, should be restricted to staff use to limit the number of people touching the control pads and therefore reducing the risk. These should be cleaned regularly by staff in line with risk assessments.
- ensure **environmental cleaning** is done regularly. Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces (e.g. telephones, keyboards, handles, desks, steering wheels, etc.) at least twice daily. Ensure that regular detergent cleaning schedules and procedures are in place using a product which is active against bacteria and viruses. Minimise the use of touchpoints throughout the library, including exploring where possible how digital processes, such as self-issue, may replace the need for face-to-face interactions. Asking visitors to sanitise their hands on entering and leaving the building or mobile library, and cleaning the screens will reduce the risk of transmission.

- work **vehicles** can be issued with plastic sheeting to line boots when collecting returned books and resources and each vehicle should be provided with appropriate cleaning materials. Cleaning should occur between different passengers or shifts as appropriate. Returned books should be collected separately from delivery of new books, to avoid cross-contamination.
- ensure good **ventilation** (e.g. keep windows open). Check whether you need to adjust ventilation systems, for example, so that they do not automatically reduce ventilation levels to due lower than normal occupancy levels. Guidance on ventilation in the work place can be found here: <https://www.hse.gov.uk/coronavirus/equipment-and-machinery/air-conditioning-and-ventilation.htm>
- consider the risk posed by physical **newspapers and magazines**. The virus can survive on any contaminated surface for up to 72 hours which will impact the ability to offer daily newspapers to users. Libraries should consider encouraging use of their digital offering and offering physical newspapers and magazines again only once we enter later phases of the route map.
- there is an increased risk of **Legionnaire's Disease** when buildings have been out of use, or not running at full capacity. This is because water systems may become stagnant when not in use, increasing the risk of legionella within water supplies. Many public and office buildings have been closed during the COVID-19 crisis, making legionella a legitimate concern as lockdown restrictions are eased. The Health and Safety Executive have published advice on the risk of Legionella in buildings which are closed or running with reduced occupancy during the COVID-19 crisis. This can be found on the Royal Environmental Health Institute of Scotland (REHIS) website at <https://rehis.com/story/legionella-risks-during-coronavirus-outbreak>. Building owners or operators should undertake a health and safety check of buildings, and deep cleaning prior to reopening where necessary, to mitigate risks. More information can be found on the HSE website at this [link](#).

Physical distancing

Physical distancing is the other key plank of workplace-specific measures to create a safe working environment. If a service is not able to maintain physical distancing while being delivered then public library services should consider removing them until a later phase in the route map. Areas to consider include:

- public Library Services should continue to promote their **digital and online** offering to reduce the number of in person visits.
- physical distancing of **2 metres** should be adhered to whenever feasible, including at breaks. Look at how staff, volunteers and users walk through the library and how you could adjust this to reduce contact between people, for example queue management or a one-way flow system to manage traffic through

pinch points. Consider library layout and clear signage, including using floor tape or paint to mark areas of help people keep to a 2 metre distance.

- managing **library occupancy** levels can assist in maintaining distancing. Consider discouraging users from turning up in larger groups. Consider staggering entry and exit times to prevent bottlenecks arising as people arrive or leave. If possible, reduce congestion by having more entry points to the library. Consider using outside premises for queuing, for example car parks. Outside queues should be managed to ensure they do not cause a risk to individuals or other businesses, for example by using barriers and having staff direct users. If queueing outside, libraries would need to consider emergency evacuations whilst maintaining physical distancing. Consider limiting capacity numbers in mobile libraries.
- libraries attract a wide range of people from across the community, many of whom may be in **high risk or high risk groups**. Libraries can consider having opening times set aside for particular groups such as families or high-risk groups.
- to **create more space** and allow for physical distancing, consider removing non-essential public furniture, such as tables and chairs for children's activities and soft chairs for reading, to reduce customer time in the branch and to reduce the number of surfaces and associated risk. If possible, move shelves further apart. Rethink demonstrations and promotions to minimise direct contact.
- where possible, ensure that **desk sharing and hot-desking** is minimised amongst library staff and volunteers. If it is not possible to assign desks to a single user, then high hygiene standards must be maintained with users cleaning the workstations before and after use with the appropriate cleaning materials. If workspaces need to be shared, they should be shared by the smallest possible number of people. If it is not possible to move workstations further apart, arrange people to work back-to-back or side-to-side working whenever possible. Only when it is not possible to move workstations further apart, use **screens** to separate people from each other. Staff sharing workspaces over different shifts should have access to their own keyboard etc. when reasonably possible. This will reduce the risk of the virus living on IT equipment.
- there may be **areas that are common** to staff, volunteers and users. In these cases, public use can be limited or removed, while considering the needs of disabled people. Changing places and disabled toilets should be kept publically accessible if possible. Scottish Government have [published guidance on opening of public and customer toilets during the coronavirus pandemic](#). Encourage storage of personal items and clothing in personal storage spaces, for example lockers, during working hours.
- similarly, consider reducing the maximum occupancy of **lifts**, providing hand sanitiser for operation of lifts, and encouraging use of stairs wherever possible. Make sure that disabled people are able to access lifts.
- where libraries have **reception desks**, consider installing screens and changing staff work practice from floor walking to being stationed at the desk and making

the library as self-service as possible. Have clearly designated positions from which colleagues can provide advice or assistance to customers whilst maintaining physical distance.

- consider how to minimise contacts around **transactions**, for example using cashless payments by accepting card and online payments if possible. Alternatively public library services should consider suspending all payments until later phases in the route map to reduce the risk to staff.
- libraries deliver a wide range of daily **events and activities** that requires close contact with library users. We expect public gatherings will not be permitted for some time – they are included in Phase 4 and will be subject to public health advice at that time. Libraries should continue to develop their online alternatives such as digital Bookbug sessions.
- providing additional **parking** or facilities such as bike stands to help people walk, run or cycle to work where possible. Bike stands should be regularly cleaned.
- physical distancing, hand washing and respiratory hygiene are the most important and effective measures we can all adopt to prevent the spread of coronavirus. Therefore the wearing of **face coverings** must not be used as an alternative to any of these other precautions. Library users should consult [the up to date advice on wearing face coverings](#) which states that people must by law wear a face covering in indoor public spaces, including libraries and public reading rooms, except where an exemption applies. A face covering can be a covering of any type, except a face shield, that covers the mouth and nose. We would encourage the use of re-usable, washable face coverings, rather than single use masks to minimise plastic waste. Face shields may be used, but only if they are worn in addition to a face covering underneath, as the evidence shows that they do not provide adequate protection.

Shift patterns

Public library services may develop plans to change shift patterns to both protect the workforce and optimise productive capacity. This could include considering opportunities to reduce the need for travel at peak times and opportunities for flexible working patterns. This will require proper negotiation with trade union or workforce representatives if it involves a change in employee terms and conditions.

Splitting the workforce into specific teams can avoid cross-team contamination and provide a level of operational resilience in case someone in one team develops COVID-19 symptoms and must self-isolate. Consider returning the number of people each member of staff or volunteers has contact with by reducing location rotation. Consider reassigning staff to a branch that is easiest for them to travel to safely, promoting active travel where possible.

Dealing with emergencies

Protocols for dealing with emergencies, evacuations and accidents will be impacted by the need to maintain physical distancing while individuals who would normally

lead or coordinate site responses in such situations may be amongst those working from home. Emergency, evacuation and accident response processes therefore need to be considered to ensure effective arrangements are still in place. Everyone onsite should be familiar with new processes.

If public library services are managing occupancy levels by requesting users queue outside, libraries will need to consider emergency evacuations whilst maintaining physical distancing.

Travel to work and Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

Health Protection Scotland (HPS) have provided [COVID-19 information and guidance for general \(non-healthcare\) settings](#) which reiterates that people should not travel if they exhibit any COVID-19 symptoms. The HPS advice and any subsequent [safe travelling advice](#) should be factored into decisions on planned returns to work.

Transport Scotland has produced Guidance to assist the public to travel safely during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. It is important that the [latest version of the Guidance](#) is read.

After careful consideration of the medical and scientific evidence and taking into account the representations of transport staff and the views of the public, the Scottish Government have concluded that people must wear a face covering on public transport and in public transport premises such as train and bus stations from 22 June.

The HPS guidance also offers advice on the use of PPE, confirming workplaces should use PPE consistent with local policies and in line with measures justified by a risk assessment. Both the Scottish Government and the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) recommend a risk based approach focused on a hierarchy of control which seeks to eliminate risks, combat risks at source, adapt workplaces to individual needs, ensure adequate staff training around processes to manage the risk and then use PPE where required. Where PPE is deemed necessary, an adequate supply and quality must be maintained which is provided free of charge to workers and which must fit properly. Services may wish to consider providing face coverings and instructions on how to adequately clean/maintain face coverings as part of PPE to staff who need to travel via public transport.

Consult the up to date [advice on wearing face coverings](#) as this may change with each review stage.

Security

The interpretation and use of any guidance should be considered in line with normal protective security operations and practices. Organisations should consult with, and involve, their security departments in the interpretation and implementation of the guidance. In particular, security should be considered in any revised risk assessment.

Under no circumstances do we advise the removal or alteration of, or reduction in, existing protective security measures without providing clear recommendations (e.g. from the National Technical Authority/police CT specialists) on how to maintain effective protective security.

This should extend to measures not primarily intended to provide a protective security benefit, but nonetheless doing so, for example removal of street furniture that could make moving or queueing pedestrians more vulnerable to vehicle-as-a-weapon attacks. Security staff should remain focused on security duties. Where COVID-19 creates additional staffing requirements, e.g. for queue management, employers should ensure additional suitable staff resource is made available. Employers should ensure security staff feel safe, e.g. having access to appropriate PPE and hand-washing facilities, and that they are able and confident to raise any concerns.

Read further detailed guidance on security:

www.cpni.gov.uk/staying-secure-during-covid-19-0

www.gov.uk/government/organisations/national-counter-terrorism-security-office

COVID symptoms within the workplace

The virus is expected to remain in the population for some time, even after lockdown restrictions have been eased and people begin to return to work. This will cause anxiety for people who will also want to understand how any outbreaks in the workplace will be handled. As part of risk assessments, public library services should explore with trade union or workforce representatives how to respond should anyone develop symptoms while at work, including whether it is possible to identify any particular parts of the site the individual may have accessed or equipment used while symptomatic. As part of this, consideration should be given how best to monitor health of all individuals in a workplace.

Employees and volunteers have a responsibility to ensure they adhere to general [COVID-19 advice](#) which says people with symptoms should remain at home and self-isolate. Public library services and employees and volunteers should remain in regular communication throughout any period of self-isolation with public library services encouraged to work with trade union or workforce representatives to enable individuals to work from home while self-isolating if appropriate.

Organisations should suspect an outbreak if there is either:

- two or more linked cases (confirmed or suspected) of COVID-19 in a setting within 14 days - where cross transmission has been identified; or
- an increase in staff absence rates, in a setting, due to suspected or confirmed cases of COVID-19.

If a library service suspects a COVID-19 outbreak, they should immediately inform their local NHS board Health Protection Team (HPT). The library service may be then contacted by them, as they may get information from NHS Test & Protect or other sources.

In the event of an outbreak:

- continue to follow 'General Guidelines' to reduce risk, as detailed above.
- the local Health Protection Team will undertake a risk assessment and conduct a rapid investigation. They will advise on the most appropriate action to take.
- Employees and volunteers who have had close contact with case(s) will be asked to self-isolate at home. In some cases, a larger number of other staff may be asked to self-isolate at home as a precautionary measure. Where settings are observing guidance on infection prevention and control, which will reduce risk of transmission, the local health protection team will take this into account in determining whether closure of the whole setting will be necessary.
- depending on the risk assessment outcome, the Health Protection Team may establish an Incident Management Team (IMT) to help manage the situation.
- the Incident Management Team will lead the Public Health response and investigations, and work with the organisation to put appropriate interventions in place.

To control an outbreak the Health Protection Team and Incident Management Team will work with the library service to put appropriate interventions in place. These will generally include ensuring that the preventive measures described in 'General guidelines to prevent spread of COVID-19' (detailed above) are fully implemented.

Other measures may include:

- cleaning in the setting: for cleaning and waste management, refer to guidance on cleaning in non-healthcare settings <https://www.hps.scot.nhs.uk/web-resources-container/covid-19-guidance-for-non-healthcare-settings/> for maintaining hygiene.
- consider wider testing of affected population and staff:
information: ensure that employees and volunteers (and other relevant people) are aware of what has happened and the actions being taken.
- closure: may be done following advice from the Health Protection Team and Incident Management Team or the business may make their own decision on closure ahead of this advice as a precaution or for business continuity reasons

The Health Protection Team or Incident Management Team will declare when the outbreak is over.

Safe home working

Home working will be new to many and may have been implemented at pace, without normal health and safety planning to ensure people have suitable working arrangements and equipment. Public library services should consider that, and how to best support working from home (for example, provision of laptops, mobile phones, video conferencing services etc.). Advice on home working can be found at <https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-for-homeworking/>

Checklist

A checklist to support public library services in implementing this guidance, has been developed in response to initial feedback and trade union feedback. The checklist can be found as an annex to this guidance.

The checklist should reflect the minimum expectations outlined in the sectoral guidance document.

Public libraries who wish to increase workforce or public confidence are encouraged to display the checklist to help to communicate actions being implemented or undertaken.

Deliveries, distribution and visitors

Protecting your workforce and those who come on-site

As a minimum we expect public library services:

- to provide early clarity to their supply chain about honouring of orders in the system, linked to new production capacity and consumer demand/contracts and
- to treat all site visitors including contractors, suppliers and those making deliveries, as if they were employees, ensuring they are offered the same protections and are expected to follow the same rules

Early supplier engagement

Early engagement with suppliers of stock is recommended to understand how well placed suppliers will be to provide inputs at the level required to meet a library services expected demand as they restore services. This should include considering any additional logistical issues associated with the current functioning of supply, delivery and processing networks.

During the COVID-19 pandemic minimising pressures on supply chains is paramount to ensure that suppliers at risk are better able to cope with the current crisis and ensure service continuity and delivery during and after the outbreak. Public library services are encouraged to work with suppliers to understand the specific pressures they face and identify potential solutions on a case-by-case basis, including providing early clarity on the treatment of existing orders.

Site visitors

Many libraries, especially larger libraries, may normally have a number of visitors at any one time, including service users and contractors. This presents increased risk of virus transmission if people do not adhere to the same interpretation of rules. To address this risk public library services should consider limiting access, ensuring safe working practices and implementing a permit to work system for contractors who need to access.

Consider discouraging the use of **temperature checking** employees as a means of testing for COVID-19 due to the low efficacy rate of this method. Further information about the reliability of temperature checking as a test for COVID-19 can be found on the MHRA website: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/dont-rely-on-temperature-screening-products-for-detection-of-coronavirus-covid-19-says-mhra>

Careful communication is vital to manage user expectations, explain new procedures and promote safe behaviour. The successful return of libraries will be dependent on positive customer behaviour. We have produced [guidance intended to be used by customers](#) and can also help to inform signage. As English may not be the first language for everyone, library services should consider how best to use visual materials to reinforce messages.

Guidance has been produced to [support customer and visitor data gathering](#) for businesses and other establishments, including libraries, where the nature of the premises means there may be an increased risk of transmission of COVID-19 due to a higher degree of interaction between unknown individuals. The guidance sets out how to collect individual contact details in a safe and secure manner which is compliant with data protection legislation, to assist NHS Scotland in responding to outbreaks of COVID-19. Collecting contact details will be voluntary, but it is important that both premises and individuals cooperate, as it will be crucial to national efforts to suppress the virus. This measure forms part of enabling premises to open safely, minimising the risk of the number of infections increasing, and will reduce the risk of requiring future restrictions. The guidance does not apply where services are taken off-site immediately, for example, a library operating a click-and-collect service. If premises offer a mixture of an on-site and collection service, contact information only needs to be collected for customers who remain on-site.

Training and compliance

As a minimum we expect:

- training around processes and working environment expectations to be provided for all staff before restarting work
- public library services to establish measures, in collaboration with trade union or workforce representatives to monitor compliance with relevant regulations and processes put in place to enable a safe return to production

Workforce training

Every workplace should look and feel substantially different for employees and volunteers. Physical distancing and enhanced hygiene will change how workplaces operate. Training will therefore be essential to build a common understanding of requirements within the new working norm, instilling confidence that changes put in place contribute to a safe workplace.

Training methods should ensure effective delivery of relevant overarching and service-specific measures and expectations of staff while onsite, in a way which

maintains physical distancing. Public library services should consider, as part of their risk-based planning, how training can be safely delivered, especially if elements are normally outsourced to third parties. Visual aids may be required as part of the training and for ongoing guidance and communications. Some organisations have initiated a universal induction process covering their new, enhanced, hygiene and physical distancing measures. This induction process can help demonstrate organisations are taking the COVID-19 risks seriously, building confidence amongst the workforce that they are returning to a safe workplace while also reinforcing the importance of individual employee responsibilities.

Compliance

Employers should also put in place, with trade union or workforce representatives, robust local arrangements to monitor compliance with new operational arrangements. Remedial actions should flow from that monitoring, and be augmented by advice, guidance and support from external enforcement authorities.

It is vital during restart for workers to have confidence in the steps being taken by their employers. Employers should look to establish processes to allow employee and volunteer feedback on physical distancing and safety protocols, enabling employees and volunteers to input on areas of concern and for employers to act upon these concerns.

A single point of contact has also been established for trade union or workforce to help the Scottish Government understand how all COVID-19 workplace guidance is being implemented, and to help shape and refine that guidance based on the real experience of workers in the workplace. The mailbox can be contacted by email: scottishtradeunioncovidenquiries@gov.scot. This contact is not intended to be a reporting mechanism for potential breaches of legislation.

Under the Health and Safety etc. Act 1974 (HSA), your Local Authority Environmental Health Service (EHS) will usually be the relevant enforcing authority for how you control the risk of coronavirus in public library services. In some cases, it may be the EHS but, in any case, enforcing authorities will apply the same requirements. EHS can be contacted by phone on 03000 003 1647 or online at [EHS contact form](#).

Local authorities also have powers under public health legislation, for example, covering whether businesses should be operating, the requirement to take all reasonable measures to maintain 2m distancing, or to ensure your workers in the shielded category can follow the NHS advice to self-isolate for the period specified.

EHS and LAs Environmental Health Services have agreed to maintain the way they allocate different businesses for enforcement according to existing health and safety law for the purposes of workers' health and safety.

Where the enforcing authority identifies employers who are not taking action to comply with public health guidance to control COVID-19 health risks to workers, they will consider a range of actions to improve control of workplace risks including the

provision of specific advice to employers through to issuing enforcement notices or even prosecution.

Next steps

Review and future development

This guidance extends until further notice. It sets out both our current advice and guidance for public libraries in helping to handle COVID-19, as well as beginning to develop a route map towards restarting activities within overarching public health considerations.

Our next step is to continue to develop plans to address the wider issues needed to get public library services restarted again. This will happen in a phased manner as set out in the [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): framework for decision making – Scotland's route map through and out of the crisis](#). The route map provides an indication of the order in which we will carefully and gradually seek to lift current restrictions, but does not attempt to specify dates for all the different phases. All of this will be evidence led.

Easing restrictions will not mean returning to how things were before the virus. Physical distancing, hand hygiene, and other critical behaviours will be essential in each area to ensure public and workforce confidence.

This guidance will be updated and reviewed as required in consultation with the sector's employers and unions. Please ensure you use the latest version.

It is for individual public library services in conjunction with trade union or workforce representatives to decide how best to successfully adopt and adapt guidance for their individual circumstances.

Related information

Scottish Government advice and support

[Summary of COVID-19](#) developments in Scotland

[Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): framework for decision making](#)

[Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): framework for decision making – Scotland's route map through and out of the crisis](#)

[Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): business and physical distancing guidance](#)

Further guidance on physical distancing can be found on [NHS inform](#).

Advice on substantive [support packages available for business and their employees](#)

Guidance on childcare can be found at

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-childcare-closures-and-emergency-provision/> and for Key workers

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/coronavirus-guide-schools-early-learning-closures/>

COVID-19 information and [guidance for general \(non-healthcare\)](#) settings

A list of [Scottish Procurement Policy Notes \(SPPNs\)](#) can be found on gov.scot.

SPPN 4/2020 covers procurement related issues as a consequence of the COVID-19 outbreak.

SPPN 5/2020 sets out guidance for public bodies on options for payment to their suppliers to ensure service continuity during the current COVID-19 outbreak.

Legislation

[Coronavirus \(Scotland\) Act 2020](#)

Fair Work during the COVID-19 crisis

Please see our [Joint Statement with the STUC](#)

Other sources of COVID-19 information

UK Government guidance on [working safely during COVID-19](#) in different workplaces

The [Health and Safety Executive](#) (HSE) have provided advice related to COVID-19

Further detailed guidance on security can be found at <https://www.cpni.gov.uk/staying-secure-during-covid-19-0> and <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/national-counter-terrorism-security-office>.

To contact Police Scotland for Protective Security advice, please contact your local Counter Terrorism Security Adviser:

- North: SCDCTSAAberdeen@Scotland.pnn.police.uk
- East: SCDCTSAEdinburgh@Scotland.pnn.police.uk

West: SCDCTSAGlasgow@Scotland.pnn.police.uk