

Consultation on libraries reopening safely during COVID-19 pandemic Briefing Note No. 20-23

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We wanted to update you on Wiltshire Council's plans to reopen library services safely in Wiltshire during the COVID-19 pandemic. We are keen to receive ideas from residents about what they think the "new normal" might be.

Government has confirmed that library facilities can be reintroduced from 4 July at the earliest.

Before this happens in Wiltshire, we will be holding a four-week public consultation to seek people's views on our plan to gradually return library services safely in a careful phased way during the COVID-19 pandemic.

During this challenging time the council has to manage its resources carefully and has put forward three possible options for how the service might operate during the COVID-19 pandemic. People are being encouraged to provide their own ideas of the "new normal" to help the council deliver the most appropriate service for the circumstances and within current resources.

The options take into account COVID-19 guidelines and social distancing measures, and the resources available – meaning that there will be a staggered reopening of library services.

The possible options being considered include:

1. An 'order and collect' service to be introduced in Wiltshire from 10 August at some main library hubs and in each community area across the county from the end of September.
2. The above option plus bookable computer access. From 10 August some main library hubs would reopen with the aim of operating in each community area across the county at the end of September.
3. From the end of August the public will have socially distanced access to a maximum of six libraries with browsing/loan of stock and computer access. A maximum of a further four libraries to open from the end of September. The aim, in time, is for one library opening per community area subject to staff capacity and distancing requirements.

Following analysis of the feedback received, the favoured option will be likely be introduced initially for a six-month period from 10 August. Monthly reviews will also be carried out to assess how the impact of COVID-19 is changing, the financial impact of operating, lessons learnt and the opportunities for change.

The consultation is now underway and is available on the Wiltshire Council website. It closes on 26 July. You can also find a copy of the [single paper decision notice](#) with more information which has been published on the [Wiltshire Council website](#). We will keep you updated.