

Library reopening FAQs

1) Why are you only opening 12 libraries? When are you going to open more?

We are starting with our busiest and largest libraries first to ensure we have coverage across all 12 Kent districts. Where it may not yet be practical to open one of our larger/busiest sites we have used our professional judgement in selecting the site to open. We believe these are the ones that most people will be able to access. We want people to continue to use our online service offers as much as possible, but we recognise not everyone can use these. As such, we wanted to ensure we have a physical book and IT/public computer service as soon as possible.

Social distancing is a new way of living and working, so we are taking a careful approach to our reopening not just for many of our customers, but also for our staff. As a result, we are starting with a basic offer which we will build on. We will look at further library openings in due course.

We appreciate this may be frustrating for many customers, and we hope you can understand why we are doing this. and support us in our collective effort to ensure we do control the virus and do all we can to prevent a second peak.

We will be ensuring that we keep you updated on developments, so you know when new buildings and services are becoming available.

2) What are your opening hours going to be?

For these first 12 libraries we will be opening 10-4 Monday to Saturday.

3) Shops have browsing, why not you?

We are taking a careful, phased approach to our reopening. We know one of the joys of libraries is being able to browse our shelves and discover new books. However, we must put your safety and that of our staff first which is why we are starting with these first offers, reviewing and then progressing to include a browsing offer. We do know that when we get back to browsing like most shops this will still not be our full offer and we may need to make use of queuing systems, reduced numbers of people at any one time in our buildings, one way flows, and limited time in the building.

4) What is Select and Collect?

Select and Collect will provide a book borrowing service where orders can be made both online, and over the phone. Customers can then pick their items up from one of the 12 libraries at an agreed date and time. The Select and Collect service removes the need for physical bookshelf browsing, keeping our customers and staff as safe as possible.

To use the online service, visit our website at www.kent.gov.uk and visit the Select and Collect section.

Then, complete the online form – letting us know which specific books or audio books you want, or if you'd like us to choose some books for you based on your preferences. You'll also need to let us know which library you want to collect your items from.

Please be aware that we are unable to transport books across the county at the moment, so it's possible that certain titles might not be available. You can check the availability of books you might want at your chosen library using the library catalogue on our website.

Once you have listed the books you want, and selected a library, you'll also have the opportunity to book a date and time when you'd like to pick up your books.

When you have completed and submitted your form, our staff will do the rest and will contact you by email or phone to let you know when to come and collect your items.

If you can't get online, please call us on 03000 413131.

You can order books right now and you'll be able to collect them after our 13th July opening date.

5) What happens when I visit the library?

When you come to pick up your items you may need to queue for a short period of time outside the library. Please ensure you maintain social distancing from other customers where possible.

A member of staff will greet you near the entrance to establish your pick-up slot. You will be shown into the library where your items will be waiting on a table, bagged with your name on.

If you have booked a timeslot to use our public computers or WiFi, then a member of staff at the entrance will ensure you are shown where to go.

You will be asked to use our hand sanitizer station on entering the library, and anti-bacterial cleaning materials will be available at computer and Wi Fi stations. Hand sanitizer stations will be available to use when you leave the library.

Our staff will be ensuring social distancing, regular cleaning of equipment, and hand hygiene is always maintained.

6) I don't have internet at home can I use this service.

Yes – as well as online you can also use select and connect by calling 03000 413131

7) How many books will I have to take out and will I have to pay overdue fines

6 books is the maximum and we will be offering an extended loan period of 6 weeks. Normal overdue charges will then apply.

8) Will I have to pay for this service?

No, this is a free service offer.

9) How long will I be able to use a public PC for?

You will be able to use a PC or WiFi station for 1 hour a day. Customers who hold an exempt borrower card or have an important online service to access will be able to book a 2 hour slot if they need more time to complete tasks.

10) How do I book at public PC or WiFi station?

You can book in the normal way, using our Netloan booking system which is available from our homepage at www.kent.gov.uk/libs.

11) Can I do printing? How do I pay for this?

Yes, printing will be available, and for the first few weeks will be free to customers as part of our initial pilot offer. We will restart charges shortly which will be card payment only.

12) I have an important form to fill out on the internet that I know will take me more than an hour to fill out, will I be able to have more time?

We will of course look to be flexible where there is an important need for you to have extra time. This does need to be for specific reasons such as a job application form or a benefit claim for example and will be dependent on us having the computer facility to enable this.

13)What will you be doing with books that come back to ensure that they are safe to go back out?

In line with Public Health England guidance all returned books will go into a quarantine area of our buildings where they will stay for 72 hours before they are then available for customers.

14)What about your events and study space?

These will not be available to begin with. We will bring these back when it is safe to do so and we will update customers as our offer develops.

15)Is Kent the only library authority taking this approach?

The phased approach to reopening is something all Library authorities are taking in line with a national library sector recovery toolkit. Some other authorities are bringing back browsing earlier, others are offering a similar select and collect offer.

16)When can I resume my volunteering with LRA?

The safety of our customers, staff and volunteers is of paramount importance. As soon as it is safe for volunteers to be involved in our services we will contact our volunteers to welcome them back.