

Libraries and community centres will open again – soon

The City of Edinburgh Council will start a three-stage phased plan to reopen its libraries and community centres from today with the second and third stages subject to committee approval.

The new plans outline that some community centres could open in the coming days to enable groups to get access to the buildings to run community-based services like crisis support and local food banks, followed by the first phase of library openings with committee approval.

All actions will be subject to approval to make sure appropriate health and safety measures are put in place.

A report will be brought to the next Policy and Sustainability Committee on Thursday 6 August 2020 when subject to approval, it is hoped stage two will allow the first phase of library openings to proceed. This will ensure limited city-wide access and the reopening of specific community centres to support the wider opening of schools and provision of out of school care.

The report will also consider how the Council balances access to important community facilities with the latest public health guidance and resulting costs from putting in place

additional cleaning and other steps required to open in a safe way.

If approved by committee, the third stage will begin during the week commencing Monday 14 September when more libraries and community centres will re-open based on latest public health guidance.

We reported the story of [Magdalene Community Centre](#) at the end of May where volunteers were providing essential meals and supplies to those in need from a tented village right outside the front door of the centre to which they had no access. When the photo below was taken the group's tents had been stolen.



Stephanie, Hugh, Hannah and Rab at the Magdalene Community Centre. Photo: Martin P. McAdam www.martinmcadam.com

Council Leader Adam Mcvey said: "We all appreciate our community centres and libraries and we're keen to get them open for our communities again, however we're still in the midst of a global pandemic and need to make sure that any buildings we do open is carried out in a consistent and safe way.

"We have a three-stage approach to the reopening of Libraries and Community Centres prioritising safety and we look forward to announcing more details in the coming weeks.

"It will be great to see libraries open again but it's also been heartening to see such a positive response to our digital service which has remained in operation throughout lockdown. We've seen the number of downloads of e-books, e-magazines and e-newspapers continue to increase with over 1.5 million downloads in 2019/20 and in April we saw an increase of 64% (ebooks), 67% (e-audio books) and 118% (e-magazines and e-newspapers) on the same month last year. We hope that this expansion of use of digital services helps more people in our communities continue to access these services going forward."

Council Depute Leader Cammy Day added: “As with all our buildings, reopening them during the Covid-19 pandemic requires additional considerations to make sure they are safe for all to use including additional cleaning and reorganising the space.

“Each building has its own specific considerations which means that some buildings will be able to open sooner than others. Right now we are focussed on getting our schools open for the first day of term and a number of other buildings, including community centres, will be a key part of this work.

“We know how important our services and spaces are to the entire community and, subject to Government guidelines, we will be opening additional buildings over the coming months.

“We appreciate the patience and support from residents while we work to restart our services and we look forward to welcoming them back.”