

Leith Library to move to Fort Community Centre

Services provided by Leith Library will be available at Fort Community Centre the council has announced on Monday.

The council says it is looking at how it can offer alternative locations for library services on a temporary basis for communities such as Leith where buildings are currently being used as COvid-19 Testing Centres – these are mainly Leith, Oxfangs and Newington Libraries.

Work to take forward plans to prepare and adapt the space available in Fort Community Centre has already begun, which will allow some library services to restart alongside the Early Years Centre in North Fort Street.

The community centre is a six minute walk from Leith Library and, once ready, will aim to provide the following services:

- customers borrowing, returning and reserving library stock
- bus pass applications
- Hey Girls sanitary provision
- hearing Aid batteries
- food recycling bags
- Bookbug under 5s rhyme times for children and their parents/ carers

The council is also looking at ways of providing adult group activities in the building subject to Covid guidance. The intention is for the services to be running from Monday to

Saturday and to build up the opening hours to closely match those which were in place at Leith Library.

More information will be provided soon, as the plans are developed further. Work is also underway to identify suitable alternative properties in the Oxgangs and Newington areas for their library services.

Meantime an online petition was begun to have the library reopened. The petition states: “The library is a vital service which is used by a broad spectrum of our community – from parents and children accessing books and toys to elderly people reading the newspapers to job hunters using the computers. For many, the warm and friendly Leith Library is a lifeline.

“While we understand the community needs a Covid testing centre, in areas such as Morningside and Stockbridge alternative Covid testing sites have been found and their libraries have re-opened. Why not move Leith’s testing centre to some of the empty space in Ocean Terminal?”



Oxgangs is also being used as a test centre

Cllr Donald Wilson, Culture and Communities Convener, said: "I'm really pleased we'll be able to relocate these essential services to the Fort Community Centre, which is only a few minutes walk from the existing Leith Library building, on a temporary basis until we get Leith Library back fully functioning."

"There is so much more to libraries in addition to borrowing books – they are trusted and much-loved hubs and bring local communities together. Although our online provision during the pandemic has been incredibly successful there's no substitute for physical access."

Cllr Amy McNeese-Mechan, Culture and Communities Vice Convener, said: "I'm sure the local community will be delighted to hear that the services provided by Leith Library will soon be available from the nearby Fort Community Centre. All our libraries are centres of learning and information and are also essential for the wellbeing of our citizens."

"We're actively looking at how we can provide more services for our other communities where libraries are being used as test centres and we'll do everything we can to get these up and running as well. I want to thank all the hard work and efforts from the various Council teams who worked so hard to achieve this."



Leith Library interior