

Swindon Library & Information Service

Services at West Swindon Library

August 2020

On the 23rd March, 2020, we were instructed by the Government to close Swindon's public libraries, due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Our library service's development and delivery management teams continued to work at home, developing and delivering an enhanced digital and online offer for our Library members. To boost this we introduced a new instant digital memberships system, providing faster access to our eResources. This included extra spending on eBooks, eMagazines, and eAudio. We also introduced in eComics eNewspapers.

Incoming customer emails were monitored, with staff offering our members telephone support to help them access resources. We also renewed library members' books for extended periods to ensure no-one incurred unnecessary overdue fines.

Our Outreach team initiated a programme of live and pre-recorded online events: rhyme times, story times, and craft sessions, broadcast through our Youtube channel and Facebook page. This enabled parents and children to continue benefitting from our services. Help was provided to parents with links to homework pages and other useful resources, with our social media and eNewsletter highlighting the full range of digital services we were providing.

Unfortunately, frontline staff – Library & Information Assistants - had no access to SBC IT from home. They were put into SBC's redeployment pool. However, whilst at home our staff were able to complete all their 6 mandatory SBC training modules on FOI, Data protection, etc.

So from April to June they were unable to provide the service that your grant covers. We continued to pay the staff but will not pass on that cost to West Swindon Parish Council for the first quarter.

From July, following Government guidance, SBC risk assessments, and a safer system of working assessment, our staff were able to return to work. Extensive measures have been taken to ensure the workplace is COVID-19 secure, to protect the safety of our staff and library users.

Government guidance was issued in late June/ early July – with a Library toolkit setting out a phased return to library services. The phased recovery of Swindon Library & Information Service is as follows:

Phase #1

- Returns
- Collection of reservations (and all reservations made free of charge).
- Call, Click & Collect service for up to 6 books specified by the borrower, chosen by staff and then available for collection. Service available online or by phone.
- Available at each of the 5 core Libraries for three 4 hour sessions.

Phase #2

- Continuation of all services available in Phase #1 plus our new bookable Quick Choice browsing service during the three sessions.
- Return of bookable PC sessions for computer access – starting this week.
- Universal Credit and job seekers support by phone also available.

www.swindon.gov.uk/info/20026/libraries

We are also planning the reintroduction of other library services, and are following Government guidelines.

In terms of library opening hours, all five core libraries are offering reduced opening hours. However more staff hours are needed to deliver our new tailored service to our members. Much work has gone on behind the scenes to change the layout of the libraries, develop processes and booking systems to ensure people weren't excluded from using services if they are unable to access services online.

Library staff take phone calls or online requests and then have to find specific books or books for more general requests, e.g. - six books on yoga; picture books for a 4 year old; etc. The books for Click Call and Collect are then put into bags for customers to collect and are already issued to the library member.

Before lockdown the number of staff hours used to deliver services at West Swindon Library was 77 hours and since staff have been back in the library the number of staff hours used is 84 as the service is much more reliant on staff being available to take calls, make up collections of books and be on the door to allow customers to return books and collect books.

Without the grant funding support from West Swindon Parish Council we would have to reduce the number of hours the library is open.

Feedback from library members has been very positive, with people really pleased to see the return of Swindon's Library & Information Service:

"I just wanted to send an email to let you know that me and my little girls (aged 5 and 7) thoroughly enjoyed listening to and watching Rhyme Time and also The Witches story that you have recently had on YouTube. My daughters really enjoyed it and it gave me some peace and quiet which was lovely. We shall always remember sitting down together to watch it."

"This is such a great service, I'm really looking forward to collecting my books. I have missed the library so much!"

"I just wanted to drop an email to say thank you to the amazing staff at West Swindon Library this afternoon - as always, they were very friendly and informative. Huge thumbs up to the free reservation service as well, really hoping this will continue once the libraries re-open properly."

"Hi, I would like to just pass on my thanks to your team at the library in the Orbital shopping centre. I came in with my children to collect books that I had reserved on your new click, call and collect service. I was greeted by a very friendly lady who pointed us to our book bags. My children were delighted with the choice of books. This is one of the first outings I've had with the children and is by far the most safe I've felt when it comes to hand cleansing and observing social distancing. Your team were very professional and efficient. I'm so pleased we can start using your library again."

I hope that this demonstrates the service we continue to deliver, even if it's not 'service as normal' and that the grant we receive from you is spent wisely to benefit as many library members as possible.

We will continue to work towards opening more services, in a COVID-19 secure way.

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