



Department for
Digital, Culture,
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Catherine West MP
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Dear Catherine,

Thank you for your correspondence of 15 June to the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, the Rt Hon Oliver Dowden CBE MP, regarding the reopening of libraries. I am replying as the minister responsible for this policy area.

As you are aware to support the development of new Covid-19 secure guidelines the government announced the intention to establish five ministerial-led 'taskforces', one of which, Recreation and Leisure, includes a sub-group focussed on public library services -

<https://www.gov.uk/government/groups/cultural-renewal-taskforce-and-supporting-working-groups#library-services-working-group-members>.

The restoration of public library services in England has been considered through the Recreation and Leisure Taskforce, as part of Step 3 of the roadmap. Libraries Connected has led work with other key library stakeholders and my officials to create practical guidelines in the form of a toolkit for heads of service and library staff. This is an important piece of work and the toolkit will reflect and be used alongside government guidance and aligned with each local authority's recovery planning.

You will also be aware the government announced that libraries may reopen their doors from 4 July, subject to Covid-19 secure guidelines. The overall process of restoration of public library services across England is likely to vary from area to area, since public libraries are a local service, run primarily through councils. I would also anticipate that this may take place through a phased approach, following a careful assessment of when it is safe to do so and in light of government and public health guidelines. With this in mind I would encourage your constituents to contact Haringey library service to find out its plans for restoration of its services.

Libraries are a vital community asset and I, along with the millions of library users across England, look forward to their doors opening once again; but only when it is safe to do so.

With best wishes,

Caroline Dinenage MP
Minister of State for Digital and Culture