

INFECTION CONTROL GUIDE FOR LIBRARIES

ADVICE AND GUIDANCE TO PUBLIC LIBRARIES AND SCHOOL LIBRARIES DURING THE CORONAVIRUS OUTBREAK (COVID-19) SPRING 2020.

Norwegian Library Association
Librarian Association

1 . Introduction

This infection control guide advises how public libraries and school libraries can gradually and in a controlled way resume services. It has been prepared by the Librarian Association and the Norwegian Library Association based on general infection control rules, as well as information from official websites such as the FHI, the Directorate of Health, the Labour Inspection Authority and from several contributing resource persons in the library sector.

The implementation of the Infection Control Act has been delegated to individual municipalities. There are major differences in libraries, and the advice in this guide must therefore be adapted to local conditions. The size of the municipality, the personnel situation, the design of the premises, etc. all have implications for how a reopening should take place.

If necessary, specific risk assessments should be made as well. It may be appropriate to make a plan for reopening in different phases, where what is considered as the main offers, open first. According to the Directorate of Health, general library operations, such as loans and the submission of books, are not in the category of cultural events, and is not covered by the provisions for these.

There will always be a risk of infection and cases of infection may occur even if good infection protection is exercised. Infection prevention measures are being taken to reduce the risk. This guide shall provide insight and advice on how library services can be organised while ensuring infection control in a proper manner.

The library must continuously keep up to date with relevant changes made by public health authorities and facilitate offers and activities in accordance with this.

2. Responsibility

It is the management that is responsible for ensuring that operations take place in accordance with applicable laws and regulations. It is also bound to comply with the authorities' infection control measures.

For public libraries and school libraries in primary and lower secondary schools, it is the municipal leadership who is responsible, while for school libraries in upper secondary school it is the county council.

The provisions of the Working Environment Act to "ensure a that working environments provide the basis for a health-promoting and meaningful work situation, [and] provide complete reassurance to physical and psychological adverse effects" remains in force (The Working Environment Act, 2005). This is the employer's duty to provide.

Delegates in charge of safety and, if necessary, working environment committees also play an important role in this context. This is underlined by the Labour Inspection Authority, which among other things, says: "All employers must assess whether they have employees or hired staff who may be in a situation of contagion. The employer shall map and risk assess all hazards and problems. (...) The employer shall take measures to prevent the spread of infection in the business. (...) Mapping and risk assessment should be done in cooperation with the workers and their elected representatives." (Labour Inspection Authority, 2020).

Management shall ensure proper operation within contagion protection considerations and, if necessary, allocate responsibility for various tasks in connection with the infection control measures. The management of the library may ask for a municipal decision in order to be able to expel users who do not follow the library's instructions.

3. Contact with the Local Infection Control Authority

Infection control measures prepared on the basis of this guide must be adapted to each library. The measures are drawn up by the library's management and approved by local health authorities. Different phases of the pandemic and different spread of infection may require specially adapted measures. The local infection control authority will provide feedback on this.

4. Training of Staff

It is the responsibility of management to ensure training and information to staff and users of the library. Both employees and users should feel confident in the infection control measures and be able to adhere to the measures. The library should consider having a plan for how to deal with situations where staff or users show symptoms of disease, such as having relevant phone numbers available. It should be set off a room where it is possible to isolate a person, and identify which surfaces should be cleaned.

5. Overall Measures against Infection

A) Sick persons should not be present

The most important infection control measure is that sick people stay at home. This applies to both staff and users of the library. Symptoms of COVID-19 can be mild and difficult to distinguish from other respiratory infections. The most frequently described symptoms of COVID-19 are a sore throat, colds and light cough, as well as malaise, headache and muscle pain. People with even mild symptoms should not meet physically at work or in other contexts where they meet others. Employees or users who get sick while at work or present in the library must keep their distance from others and go home as soon as possible. Sick people should not take public transport.

B) Good hygiene and cleaning

Good hand and cough hygiene, and especially avoiding touching your face with unclean hands, is important to prevent contact infection. Good hygiene reduces infection via objects and hands as well as infection by coughing. At a minimum, hands should be washed upon arrival, between different tasks (for example, if one moves or changes equipment), after toilet visits, and before and after kitchen work and eating. Wash hands frequently and thoroughly. Wipe your hands with disposable paper towels.

Alcohol-based disinfection (hand liquor) is an option if no other hand washing options are available.

Display information about hand washing routines and cough hygiene. The coronavirus is easily removed by manual cleaning with water and ordinary cleaning agents.

The virus can survive on surfaces from hours to days, depending on the type of surface, temperature, sunlight and other factors. Therefore, thorough and frequent cleaning is important for preventing infection. Review cleaning routines and make adjustments.

Exposed areas (see separate section) shall have reinforced cleaning. It is not necessary to use additional protective equipment to carry out the cleaning. Wash hands after cleaning has been carried out, even if gloves have been worn during cleaning. It is not necessary to use disinfection routinely. Relevant disinfectants are alcohol-based disinfection and chlorine. Make sure that there is enough soap in the soap dispenser and paper towels. Do not use air hand dryers, but disconnect or mark with Do not use.

C) *Reduced contact between persons*

Increased physical distance between people reduces the chance of infection, even before symptoms of illness occur. The distance between staff and staff and users should be at least 1 meter, 2 meters where possible.

- No-one should stay in common areas which are small or narrow.
- People can pass each other and spend short time s in the same area (up to 15 minutes) without further infection risk.
- If break areas are needed, ensure adaptation in order to avoid as far as possible that people mix.
- Lifts should be provided as a priority for people with mobility difficulties and goods transport, where it is difficult to keep the recommended distance.
- Optionally you can create markings on the floor to ensure distance between people in all rooms, storerooms and other areas where encounters may occur.
- Use video conferencing instead of physical meetings with colleagues where possible.
- Restrict the use of public transport where possible.
- Consider different attendance times if possible and purposeful, so that staff are present at different times and thus can avoid being gathered together and avoiding rush hour on public transport.

6. Indirect Infection

The Directorate of Health indicates that the coronavirus is mainly transmitted through droplet infection by direct contact with an infected person. It is therefore much more likely to be contagious in that you are close in line than by touching the same contact points.

The National Library has been in contact with the Norwegian Public Health Institute regarding the handling of material in libraries. The coronavirus is transmitted through contact with droplets of the virus ejected while coughing or sneezing, and reach a distance of 1-2 meters from an infected person. The droplets also fall on surrounding surfaces and can cause indirect contact infection.

The danger that someone should get sick through indirect contact infection depends on a number of conditions; the surface must contain a sufficient amount of the virus, and the one affecting the contaminated surface must touch their face (nose, mouth and eyes) with contaminated hands shortly afterwards.

Studies have shown that the virus can survive on different types of surfaces from hours to up to days. The FHI considers that the risk of indirect infection from books is low, and so cleaning books due to COVID-19 is not required.

A generally good cleaning of all surfaces and regularly touched surfaces is an important measure (Tinnesand, 2020). For staff, basic hygiene measures, such as washing your hands thoroughly with soap and water, avoid touching the face, and staying away if you have symptoms of COVID-19, are equally effective (and less harmful to materials) than e.g. gloves.

7. Reinforced Cleaning Schedules

Toilets and washbasins must be cleaned at least daily during use. Dry over surfaces such as toilet seat and faucet on the washbasin regularly, depending on how frequent it is in use. Disposable paper towels and soap should be available and you should make sure that the garbage bins are emptied regularly.

Be extra aware of the need for cleaning in the kitchen/dining room. The dining table in the canteen/kitchen should be washed with water and soap after use.

Door handles, stair rails, chairs, other table surfaces and other items that are often touched should be cleaned frequently, at least daily during use. Equipment used by several people in the service (e.g. tablets, touch screens, keyboards, toys, etc.) should be cleaned after use.

8 . Reassigned Staff in the Municipality

Municipal and local government crisis teams should be aware that the library's offerings are of great value to many residents, and that the library may be even more important when many find themselves isolated and cut off from normal life. This applies not least to the elderly residents and families with children.

For many libraries, maintaining a reduced service under infection control restrictions will require more resources than maintaining normal operations. Any reassigned staff should be allowed to return to the Library.

9. Regulations for Staff

The library's management should create a regulation for staff. Display information posters that remind staff of the general infection control measures.

Staff belonging to risk groups should be assessed individually and effort made to provide adapted work opportunities. This could mean both working from home or tasks that do not imply contact with others. Staff in this situation should have a medical certificate.

Staff who get sick at work should inform the manager about their symptoms, which areas should be disinfected and contribute to infection tracking.

Staff should avoid public transport to get to work if possible. Alternatively, shifts should be adapted so that staff do not have to use public transport during rush hour.

Office spaces must be customized to make it easy to comply with social distancing rules. Map the use of the premises and the location of the staff. One solution may be to allocate which days of the week employees will meet in the office and when you may work from home.

Open plan offices will require staff to have permanent spaces.

If possible, open windows and air regularly. Spread lunch and other breaks over a longer time interval, so that fewer people need to gather at any one time.

10. Opening hours

The library must consider whether reduced opening times are applicable. This may be necessary because you need increased staff during opening hours to ensure that infection control rules are observed.

Special opening hours may be considered reserved for specific groups of the population, such as elderly users and others in the risk group, or families with children.

11. Staffing

Adequate staffing must be ensured so that infection control rules can be observed. It may be appropriate to reassign resources to gradually open up the various library services.

12. Services for and contact with users

It is important to reduce contact between users and employees. If possible, try to limit the number of staffing points, unless this leads to more congestion. The distance between employees and users should be at least 1 meter, 2 meters where possible.

Setting up protective plexiglass at counters should be considered, as well as steps to ensure a good distance between each employee at the counter. The plexiglass must cover at least 20 cm outside face and chest height in all directions.

If multiple employees use the same equipment at the counter, contact surfaces such as keyboard and mouse should be cleaned frequently. Hand disinfection should be available to both employees and users in the counter area, and the floor may be marked with reminders to keep a distance.

The use of self-service machines should be encouraged as far as possible, and public contact at the counter should be limited to short transactions. Visitors should also be encouraged not to stay longer on the library premises than is necessary to use the service the individual needs.

The library may consider whether it is necessary to set a time limit for stays in the library building. Guidance of longer duration should take place by phone or digital channels.

Payment should be made with a credit card and contactless payment, and payment machines should be cleaned frequently.

13. Loans and Returns

Lending and submission of material should be done via self-service machines if possible. There is no need for quarantine time or special cleaning of submitted material, but employees who handle the material further should follow advice for good hand hygiene. See section on Indirect infection.

14. Numbers of Visitors

It should be considered to put a cap on the maximum number of concurrent users to avoid large accumulations of people. The quantity must be adapted to local conditions such as the size of the library and the design of the premises, the number of floors, etc. Each library must set a maximum number of users according to the venue and knowledge of visitors.

Consideration should be given to organize a queue system that ensures that the number of concurrent users does not exceed the maximum number. It should be considered whether it is possible to look at different solutions for how users can move around the premises, for example, one-way systems can be established and separate entrance and exit routes could be introduced where possible.

In order to reduce the risk of spread of infection, visits by groups should not be allowed (class visits, tours, groups from kindergartens or other institutions) without this being agreed in advance.

Visits by groups assume that the general limitations of the infection control rules are followed. It is recommended that children under the age of 15 only visit the library with family/guardians.

15. Regulations for Users

Users should be encouraged to:

- Use hand disinfection at the entrance and before using computers and self-service machines.
- Keep your distance from staff and other users.
- Avoid touching material unnecessarily if they are sick.
- Use self-service solutions where possible.
- Users who do not follow the library's instructions can be expelled.

16. Limited Use of the Library

It is important to avoid larger gatherings of the public. People can pass each other and spend short periods in the same area (up to 15 minutes) without further infection risk.

Hand sanitiser should be placed at the entrance with a call for good hand hygiene and to keep a distance from staff and other users.

In order for users to stay in the library premises for a long period of time, steps should be taken to ensure that it is possible to keep 1 meter distance by, for example, removing and moving chairs and tables. If this is not possible, it should be considered to block areas. This also applies when using meeting rooms/group rooms.

17. Use of Equipment in the Library Room

When using public PCs, fixed tablets and game consoles, the distance between each device should be at least 1m, and 1 user should only be allowed per machine or game console. If this is not possible or is difficult to control, the machine or console should be made inaccessible.

Alternatively, you can limit the number of machines for use for the public and with limited time spent per use.

When using a computer, copier or self-service vending machines, hand sanitiser should be available with the request to use it before touching.

Contact surfaces such as keyboard, mouse and touch screens should also be cleaned frequently.

Loose items such as toys and games should be removed.

Newspapers and magazines can be made available as usual, but with hand disinfection available and requested to use it.

18. Events and Activities

From 15 May, events in a public place with up to 50 people are allowed, as long as the infection control rules are complied with. There should be a 1m distance between participants and the organizer must be present.

If the library itself is not the organiser, it must be carefully considered whether for infection control reasons it is prudent to allow others to take this responsibility.

19. Meeting rooms

If the use of meeting rooms is permitted, the room must be arranged so that it is possible to keep 1m distance between the participants. The number of participants allowed must be assessed based on the size of the room, and an upper limit for the number of people allowed in a group must be observed. The meeting manager must be informed about which infection control measures apply before use.

20. Offer to Risk Groups

You should consider how to continue with measures for users who do not wish to visit the library in the usual way, for example, a book and pick-up solution ("Take away Library") where the desired material is loaned and packaged in bags that can be delivered at attendance with minimal risk of infection.

For residents who for health or physical reasons can't make it to the library, home delivery of books can be the solution.

Many libraries have good procedures for home delivery of books in cooperation with, for example, the volunteer centres.

21. 'More Open' Libraries

To ensure compliance with general infection control rules, no access is granted to unstaffed libraries (i.e. those open outside serviced opening hours) in the early phase of the reopening.

22. Information

Good and clear communication with users is important to ensure that they understand the infection control rules. Where users cannot be expected to understand - for example, children or people with cognitive impairment - alternative approaches may be required. It should be considered whether children under 15 years of age should only be allowed to seek out the library with adults.

23. School Libraries

The general infection control rules also apply to school libraries. The most important measure in schools, along with good hand hygiene, is to limit the number of close contacts between pupils and staff, for example by having smaller groups and having permanent employees for each group/class. Year-groups should be mixed to the least extent possible with other groups, and should use the small classroom/room.

Lending

The school library can assess whether it is most secure to use book boxes in the classroom in order to more easily control infection, meaning that students do not need to change rooms. The books are in the teacher's name. The teacher can bring books to their class, and keep a record to keep control of the books.

The books can be exhibited in the classroom so that students can look at the books before choosing the book they want. They should only touch the book they choose.

Visits to the school library

Only one class can visit the school library at a time. Class members can pass each other and be in the same area for a short period (up to 15 minutes). There should be no congestion, and stays in the premises should be managed in such a way that there is no increased unnecessary risk of contact infection.

Based on the size of the school library, it may be necessary to ensure that only even smaller groups can visit the library at a time. Here it may also be possible to give a time limit for the visit. Small groups and short periods of time give greater control over infection control measures.

Young children in particular easily forget about infection control advice such as not coughing/sneeze in their hands, and can then infect others if they touch books or other objects immediately.

Cleaning and sharing of equipment

There shall be limited sharing of equipment, tablets and other school supplies in school libraries as elsewhere in the school. Learning materials should not be shared between classes until they have been cleaned. When using common PCs and tablets, contact surfaces such as monitors and keyboards should be washed after use.

In addition, there should be a generally reinforced cleaning of contact surfaces such as door handles, stair- gel changes, chairs, table surfaces and other objects that are frequently touched.

Homeschooling

For pupils who are home-schooled, schools can make it easier for pupils to order books which can then be brought home. The books can be placed in bags that are collected at an agreed place.

Return of textbooks

Students must be given clear instructions on how to return textbooks to the school. The return should take place under a scheduled plan, and only a few students must come in at a time. Create a queue arrangement with distances of 1m.

The school librarian and those who accept the textbooks must maintain maximum distance from the pupils, but they are allowed at least to take in the books. If possible and appropriate at each school, students should scan the books themselves and put them on the returns counter.

Those students who return their textbooks to designated book stores should avoid touching textbooks that are already there. During returns, the library should be closed for other activity if possible. The library must have sufficient hand sanitiser, extra plastic bags and washing equipment available. It should be taken into account that the return will take longer than usual and may require additional staffing.

24. Information Materials and Posters

[See the original for the Norwegian language materials:

<https://norskbibliotekforening.no/2020/05/smittevernveileder-for-bibliotek/>]