

LiveWire Libraries

Libraries Partnership Board

Update May 2020

Forward

Due to COVID-19 we have taken the decision to cancel the Library Partnership board this month. The closing of the libraries through this period was unfortunate but essential in the current climate.

In the absence of a formal board, I thought it would be helpful to share the update report below. Livewire has undertaken a number of changes to the library service in order to provide a service which ensures that people of all ages are still able to access reading and information services.

Livewire and WBC are working hard in the background planning for the reopening of libraries when it is safe to do so. Livewire are working with partners like Department of Cultural and Media Services, Libraries Connected and with learning from European library services to prepare and open the libraries when the time comes in a safe and correct manner to ensure the safety of its workers and the public.

Take care and stay safe.

Lynton Green – Chair of Libraries Partnership Board

Library update

Prior to closing library sites on 20 March 2020 the following measures were introduced:

- A fines amnesty put into place - No charges for overdue items issued from 1 March 2020
- Extended the loan period - Items loaned until 3rd July
- Increased allowance of items borrowed from 10 to 30 items
- Reserving items - due to COVID-19 removed reservation service

LiveWire expanded the online offer:

- Increase spend on eBooks/eAudio collections in advance of closure to support predicted increase in demand for the offer
- Introduced eComics to our online collection
- Worked with online suppliers to allow immediate access to our online services when individuals join online
- Removed the requirement to collect library cards when joining online to allow immediate access to our online services
- Launched LiveWire libraries Facebook page

Home Library service

From the beginning of March we initiated the natural cessation of the home library service, with many of LiveWire clients and associated volunteers falling into the Governments vulnerable categories. This is reflective of the steps taken by other library authorities in the region who made the decision to suspend the service in March to reduce the spread of the virus to those most vulnerable within communities.

Many of Livewire's housebound volunteers have remained in touch with their clients and are phoning them regularly for a chat, to continue reading with them or are supporting them with their weekly food shopping.

The team at LiveWire has made further contact with all our library volunteers and the 120 housebound members registered on the library system to identify if any of them require any support or assistance at this time. If so, working with the team at Warrington Voluntary Action (WVA), a suitable volunteer has been identified to help the individual.

Engagement/promotional Social Media posts

In light of LiveWire's media partners not circulating print publications at present, the service is reliant on all our information being shared through social media channels, local groups and partners.

Since April, LiveWire libraries have posted a daily update on various Social Media channels based on various themes. Posts include:

- eBook and eAudio adult and children's book reviews
- Publisher Elevenses with *The World of David Walliams* where David Walliams releases a FREE eAudio story every day until end of April
- Amazon audible offering children everywhere the chance to instantly stream an incredible collection of stories during period of school closure
- Learning from home: daily posts promoting our online resource which support home schooling
- Reading for Wellbeing including Mood-Boosting Books and daily online reading sessions
- Resources for under 5's including BBC rhymes and stories www.bbc.co.uk/teach/school-radio/nursery-rhymes-songs-index/zhwdgwx and Storytime for young children at www.bbc.co.uk/cbeebies/stories

LiveWire libraries in the press (Warrington Guardian & Warrington Worldwide online):

- *Warrington libraries to close due to coronavirus outbreak.* Date:19th March
- *Warrington's libraries and leisure centres are still very much open for business online* Date:4th April
- *8 books to give you the perfect escape from lockdown* Date:7th April
- *8 best children's books to stay entertained* Date:15th April
- *LiveWire e-books more popular than ever during lockdown* Date:28th April
- *Warrington Museum and Library searching for your family stories from VE Day* Date:4th May

Other developments

- LiveWire was awarded £1,000 grant from Arts Council England to help develop our eBook/eAudio offer
- In partnership with Time to Read we are working to create an online book club for Warrington. Time to Read have more experience in this area and they are working with other authorities to set up digital reading groups. Regionally, at present, staffing levels across the library services are low, coordinating this through Time to Read creates the opportunity for us all to pool our resource to support the introduction of the initiative.
- Libraries Connected are collating a national bank of resources with associated marketing campaign to promote the library offer, which LiveWire will have access to as members of the group.
- Libraries Connected North West are considering the impact and risks associated with removing barriers to allow online joining for under 16's
- The Reading Agency are working towards launching a Summer Reading Challenge 2020 digital offer. They are developing an innovative and user-friendly web platform that will engage and inspire young readers and their families throughout the summer. They plan to extend the Summer Reading Challenge by a few weeks either side of the usual summer period to ensure libraries can reach as many children as possible. They are continuing with the previously announced creative theme of 'Silly Squad': a celebration of funny books, happiness and laughter, featuring artwork from award-winning children's author and illustrator, Laura Ellen Anderson.

CIPFA annual reporting

CIPFA confirmed they are assessing the situation and envisage the timetable for the annual CIPFA library submissions 2019/20 for questionnaire releases and returns, will be revised to in line with the current situation.

Plans for libraries to reconnect to Warrington's communities aka life after lockdown

Plans for the reopening of the library service are in development and will reflect the advice issued from national bodies such as DCMS, Libraries Connected and learning from European library services.

The plans take into account the Government's guidelines around social distancing and vulnerable residents, with a focus on the following areas:

- Physical spaces
- Priority services and user groups - including IT access, mental health and wellbeing, isolation, business support and Universal Credit applicants
- Staff and volunteer welfare and PPE
- Book and resource circulation and browsing
- Sustaining the digital offer
- Communications with the public to manage expectations and provide reassurance