COVID ————————— 19

SAFER LIBRARIES

Helping public places to reopen safely

Libraries are places that help to support and sustain the public life of our communities. This Covid-19 Safer Spaces guide is to support staff to understand how to adapt their library to enable safe reopening and operation.

Developed by architects IF_DO, in partnership with Libraries Connected and CILIP, this free-to-use guide sets out clear stages for how to safely reopen libraries across the UK. Visual diagrams illustrate the spatial adaptations required for services to begin to resume, and also offers ideas on how to create a welcoming environment for customers and the wider community.

As an architecture practice, IF_DO is focussed on the design of social infrastructure—places that help to improve lives for people and foster stronger and more resilient communities. These places will be critical to the social recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic, and the Covid-19 Safer Spaces project has been developed to provide expert guidance on how they can be safely adapted.

We are grateful for the support of numerous individuals who have contributed their time and expertise to the development of this guide. With thanks in particular to Isobel Hunter, CEO of Libraries Connected, Ayub Khan MBE, Head of Universal Services for Warwickshire County Council, and James Pearson and his team at Kent County Council.

Developed by

IF_DO

Funded by
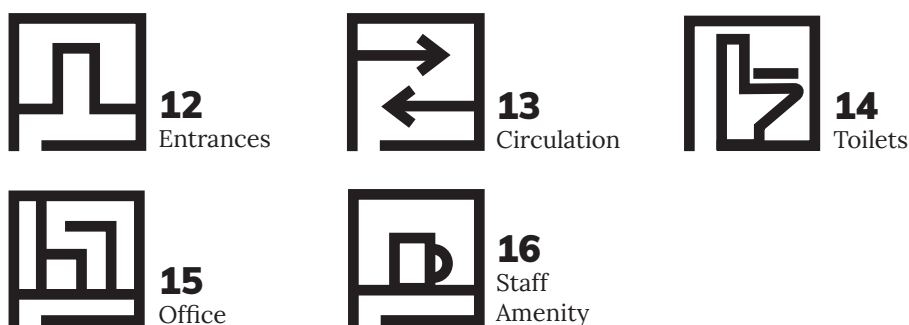
Innovate UK

In partnership with

Libraries Connected

CILIP The library and information association
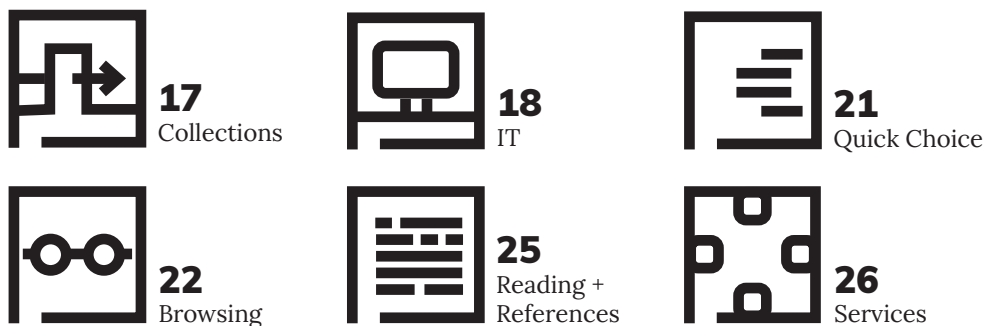
OVERVIEW

The overview diagram below illustrates the core elements for the initial opening of libraries across the UK. The key details the graphical components used throughout the guide.

IT

STAFF

COMMUNITY
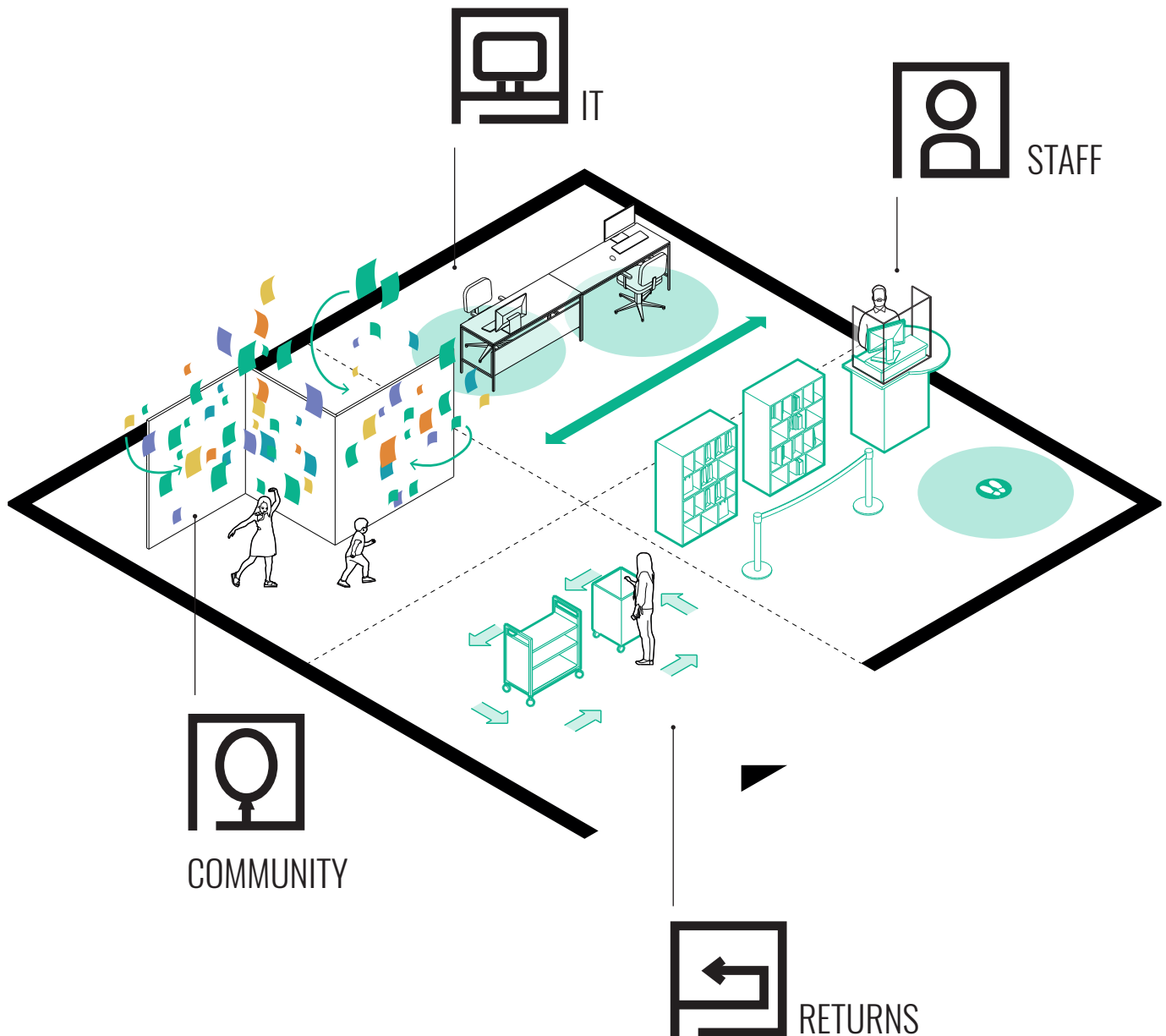
RETURNS

KEY

	2m Distance Zone		Clear Signage		Control Barrier
	Standing Space		Direction Arrow		Sanitising / cleaning point

KEY CONSIDERATIONS

01

Ensuring staff are safe and feel empowered at work. Encourage staff to return to work before the library is open to the public. This will allow them to become familiar with new protocols, and provide the opportunity to develop more safe ways of working.

02

Providing well ventilated spaces for staff and customers. Filters on HVAC systems should be checked and replaced where necessary, and upgrade to a higher-rated filter where possible (consult with an HVAC professional for specific guidance). Windows should be kept open where possible, and if necessary, free-standing air-filtration units can be used.

03

Creating a clear and safe return and borrowing strategy. The reopening of book borrowing is an essential service provided by the library, so a clear return and borrowing strategy, using signage and quarantine protocols, will ensure both staff and customers are safe.

04

Opening up the library by removing soft seating. The removal of soft seating will not only discourage long dwell times in the library, but create more open space for other service to take place, such as quick choice shelving, wifi work spaces, and community displays.

05

Sustaining a welcoming environment. Window displays and a community art wall are two ways to create and sustain a welcoming environment for the community. The use of colour and clear signage will help communicate to the public the current and future services available to them.

06

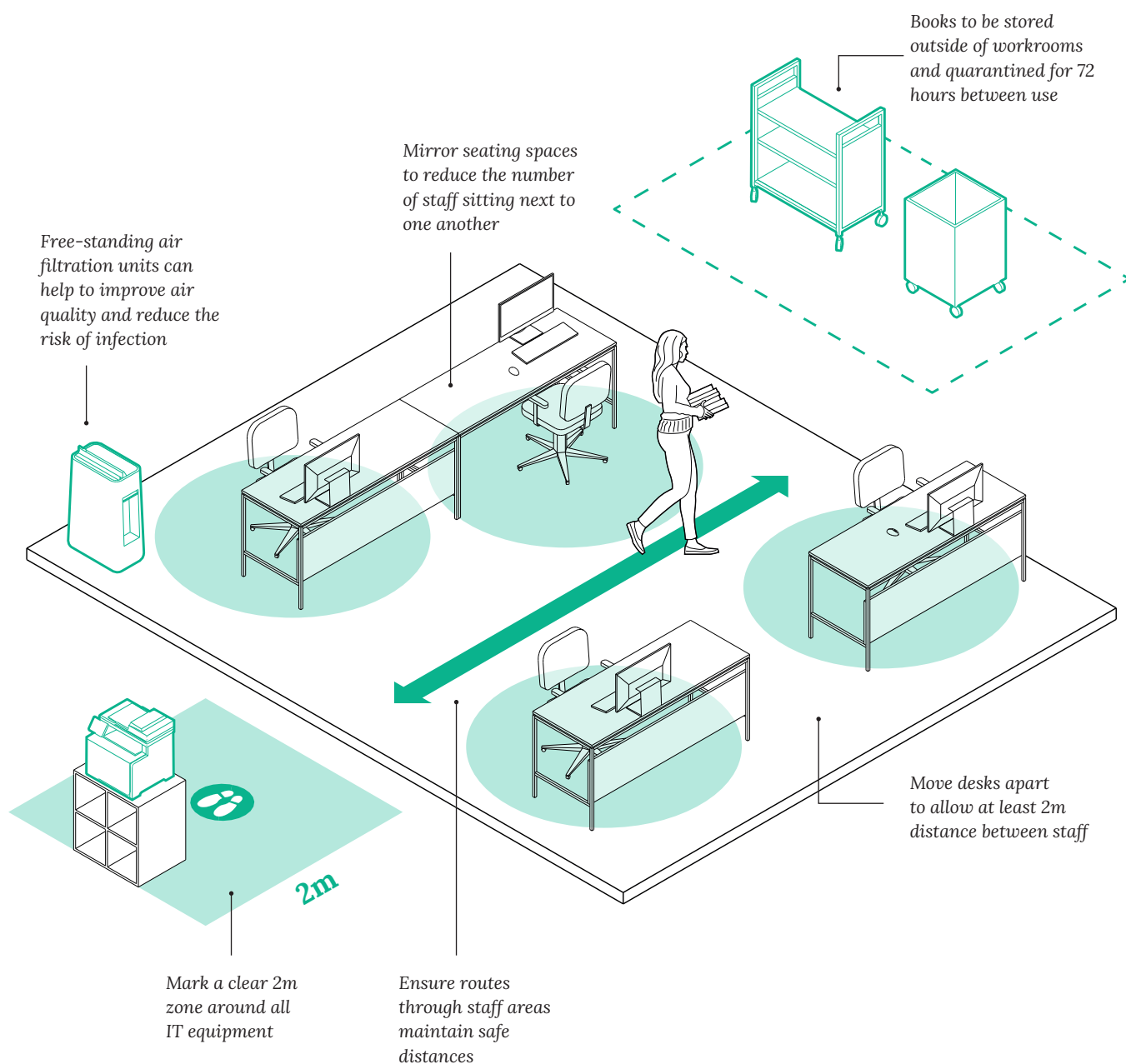**Extending library services off-site and into larger spaces.** Staff should be encouraged to reach out to their local area and extend services off-site and into larger, more open facilities. Collective activities could take place in parks, as services form inside the library can be shared in open space.
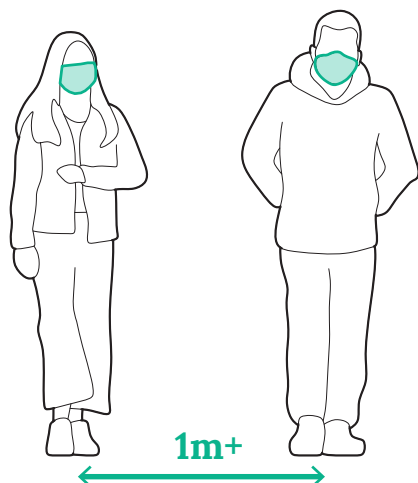
ELEMENTS

INITIAL OPENING
STAFF

Staff & Work Rooms

To ensure staff feel safe and supported, it is encouraged they return to work before the library is opened for public use - allowing them to become familiar with the new protocols, and provide opportunity to feedback with any comments. Staff shifts should be considered, as well as revised opening times to manage demand. Clear book quarantine areas, and a rota system, should to be established to manage the safe control of stock. Please see general facilities section for small and large office arrangements.

Books to be stored outside of workrooms and quarantined for 72 hours between use

Mirror seating spaces to reduce the number of staff sitting next to one another

Free-standing air filtration units can help to improve air quality and reduce the risk of infection

Move desks apart to allow at least 2m distance between staff

2m

Mark a clear 2m zone around all IT equipment

Ensure routes through staff areas maintain safe distances

ENTER + EXIT

1m+

Face Coverings

Face coverings must be warn by customers immediately before entering the library, and these must be kept on until existing the building. There are some circumstances, for health, age or equality reasons, where people are not expected to wear face coverings. Please refer to government guidance for more information. This guide has been developed to allow for 2 meters safe distance between people to ensure the 1 metre+ regulation is maintained at all times.

Use floor and wall markings to clearly sign sanitising points in entrance
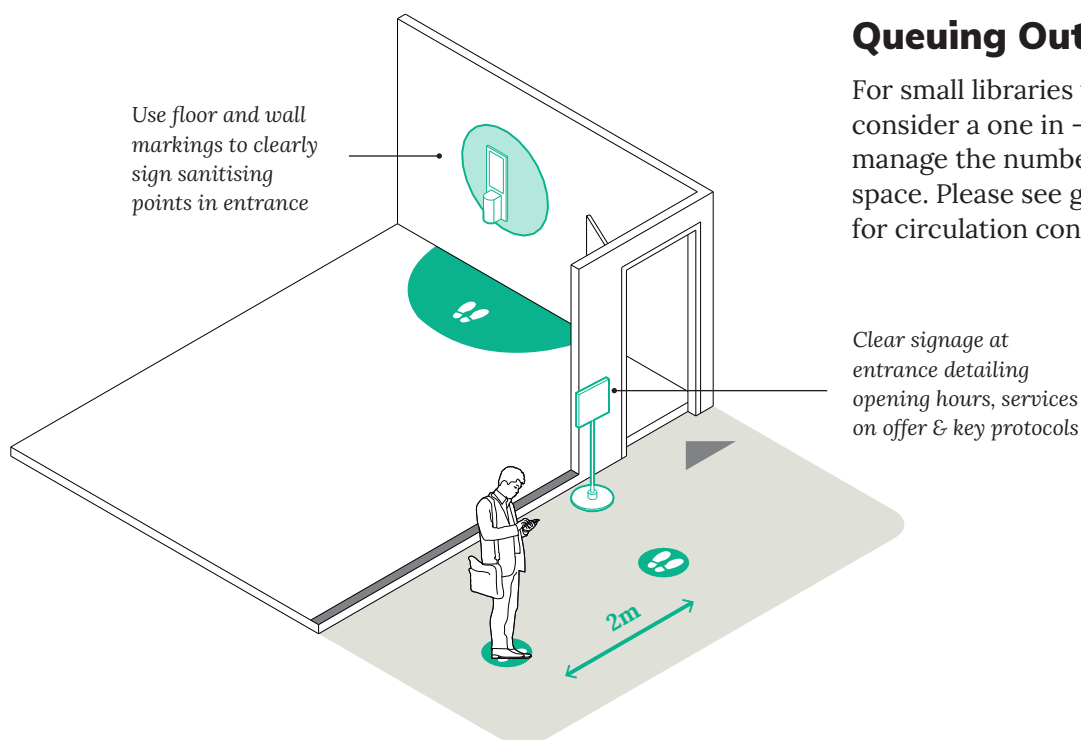
Queuing Outside

For small libraries with a single entrance, consider a one in - one out policy to manage the number of people within the space. Please see general facilities section for circulation conditions.

Clear signage at entrance detailing opening hours, services on offer & key protocols

2m

Test and Trace

There are four suggested options to register staff and customers in line with government test and trace guidance. The first is the use of an app for sign-in. The second is a sign-in slip that is safely deposited into a box. The third is verbal registration to staff at a dedicated station by the entrance. The fourth is digital registration through the library management / booking system.

Smart phone apps can be downloaded and used to scan into a library for contactless registration
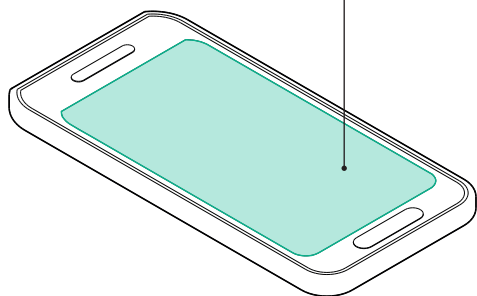
OPTION 1 - CONTACTLESS APP

OPTION 2 - SIN-IN SLIP
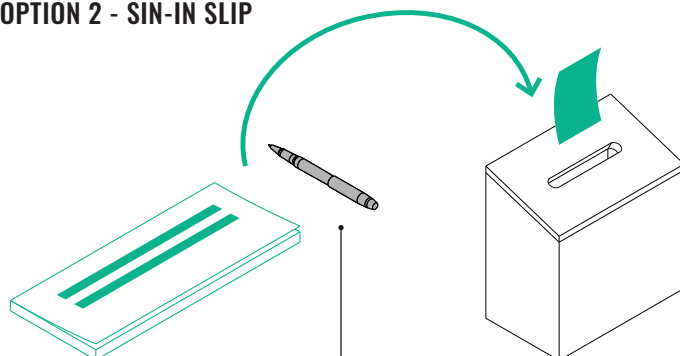
Staff should fill out the slip for the customer if they do not have their own pen

Deposit box can be quarantined for 72 hours before slips removed

Limiting Capacity

To ensure safe distancing, 12.6 sq metres needs to be allowed for per person. A rough rule of thumb is limiting the capacity of your library to 30%, however, it is important to calculate this accurately to your space. To monitor numbers, a dedicated staff member, where possible, should be stationed by the entrance, and count people coming in and out of the library. This station should be separate to the reception area in order to minimise queuing outside.

2m zone

12.6 sqm

Use a single station where possible, and install a perspex screen for protection

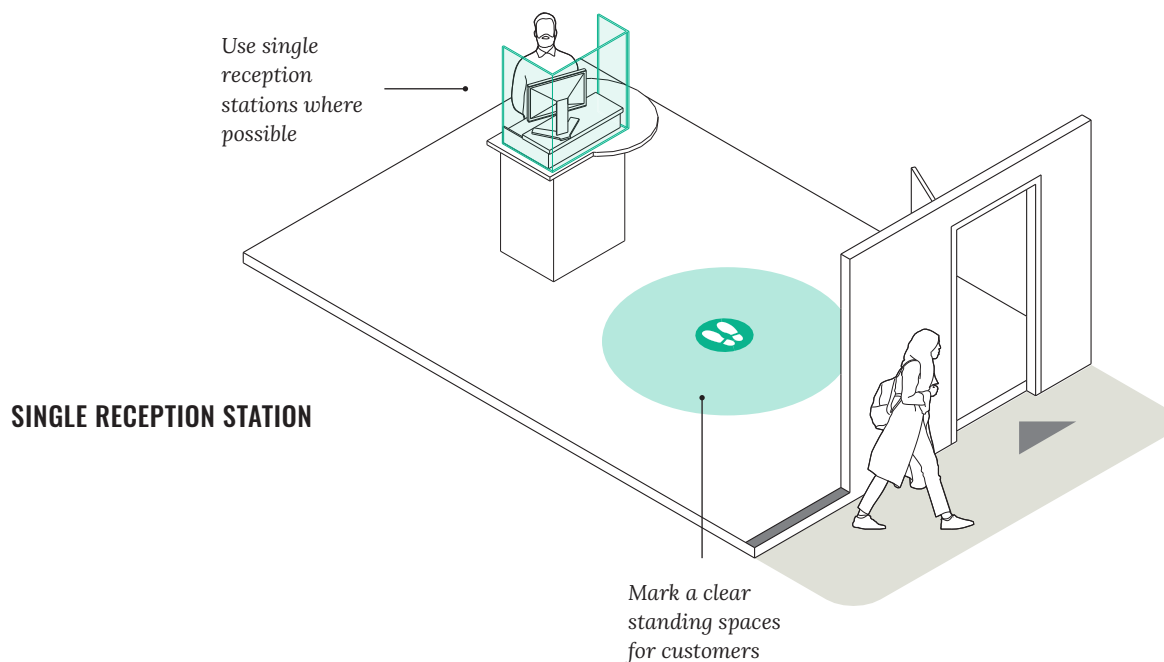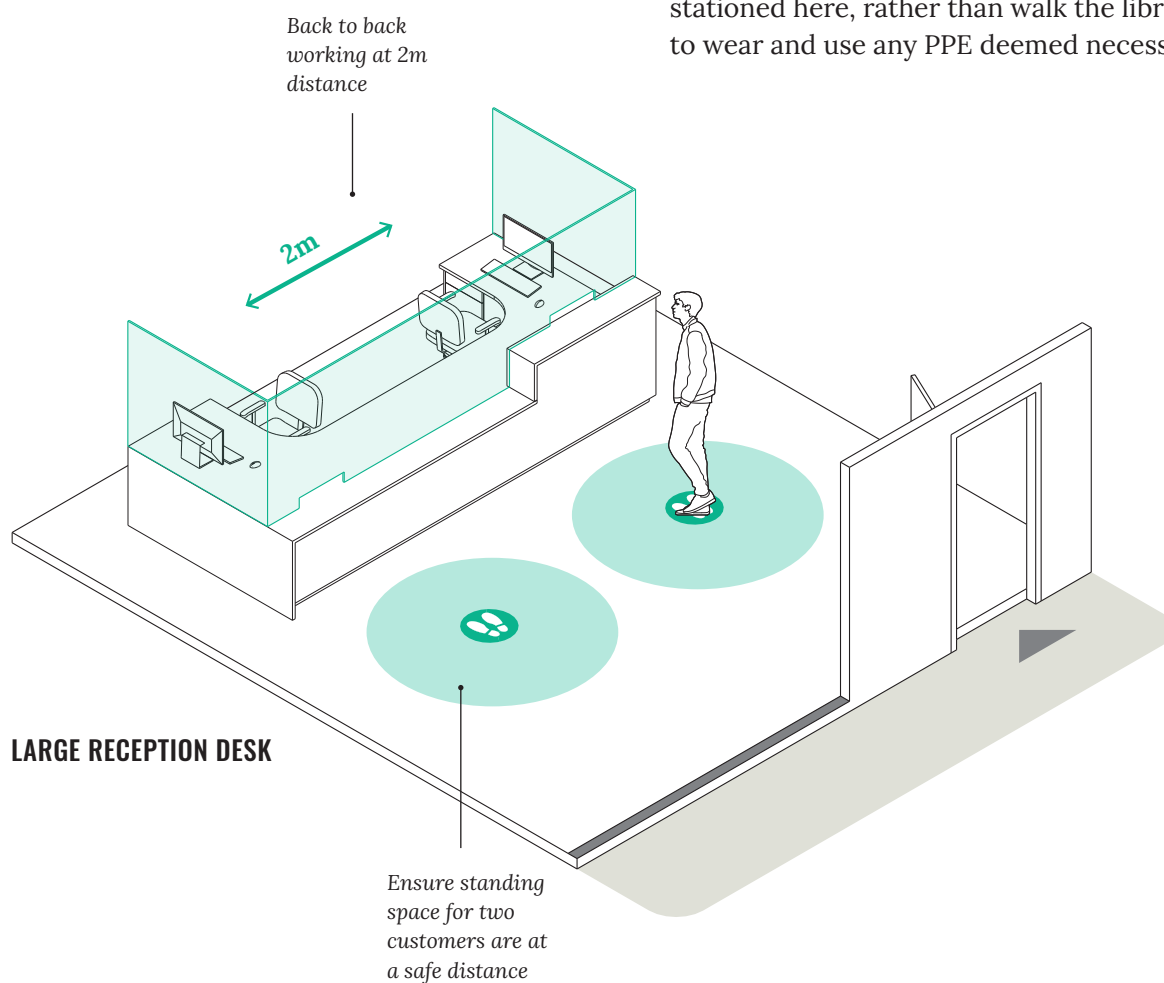*Staff station to be located by the entrance*
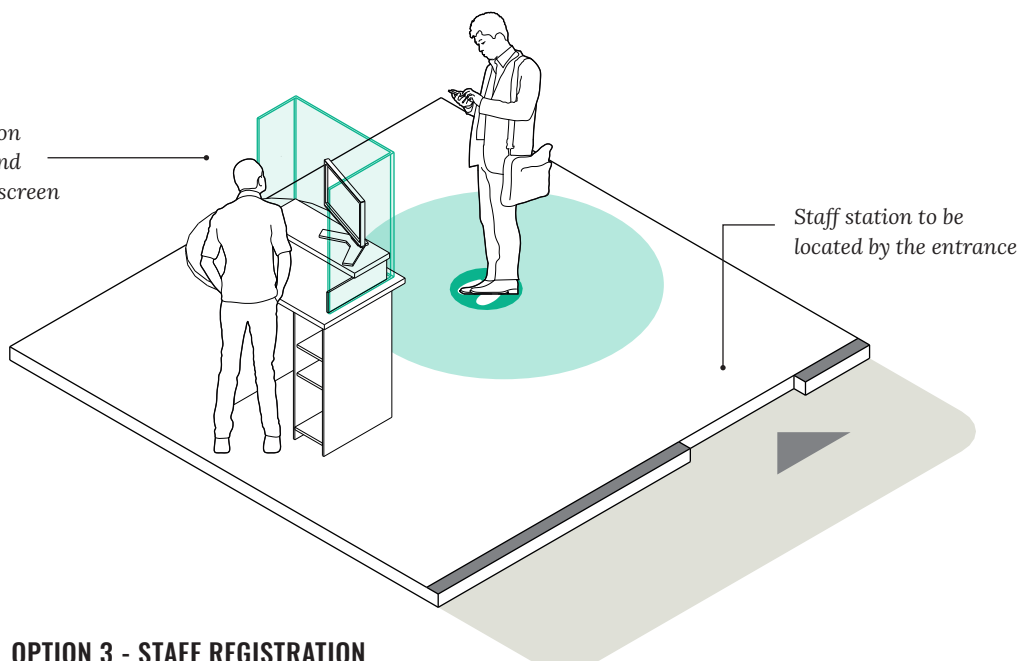
OPTION 3 - STAFF REGISTRATION

Reception Areas

To minimise contact between staff and customers, the use of self-service machines is encouraged. Where libraries have reception desks and pods, Perspex screens should be installed. Desks are to be located close to the library entrance, and staff should be stationed here, rather than walk the library floor. Staff to wear and use any PPE deemed necessary.

Back to back working at 2m distance

2m

LARGE RECEPTION DESK

Ensure standing space for two customers are at a safe distance

Use single reception stations where possible

SINGLE RECEPTION STATION

Mark a clear standing spaces for customers

INITIAL OPENING
RETURNS

Initial return of library stock

Where possible, the return of library stock should take place securely outside of the library, and be protected from the elements. Where this is not possible, an internal return system of bins or trolleys are to be clearly labelled for customer use. A clear walking route should be marked on the floor to ensure safe flow of customers through the space.
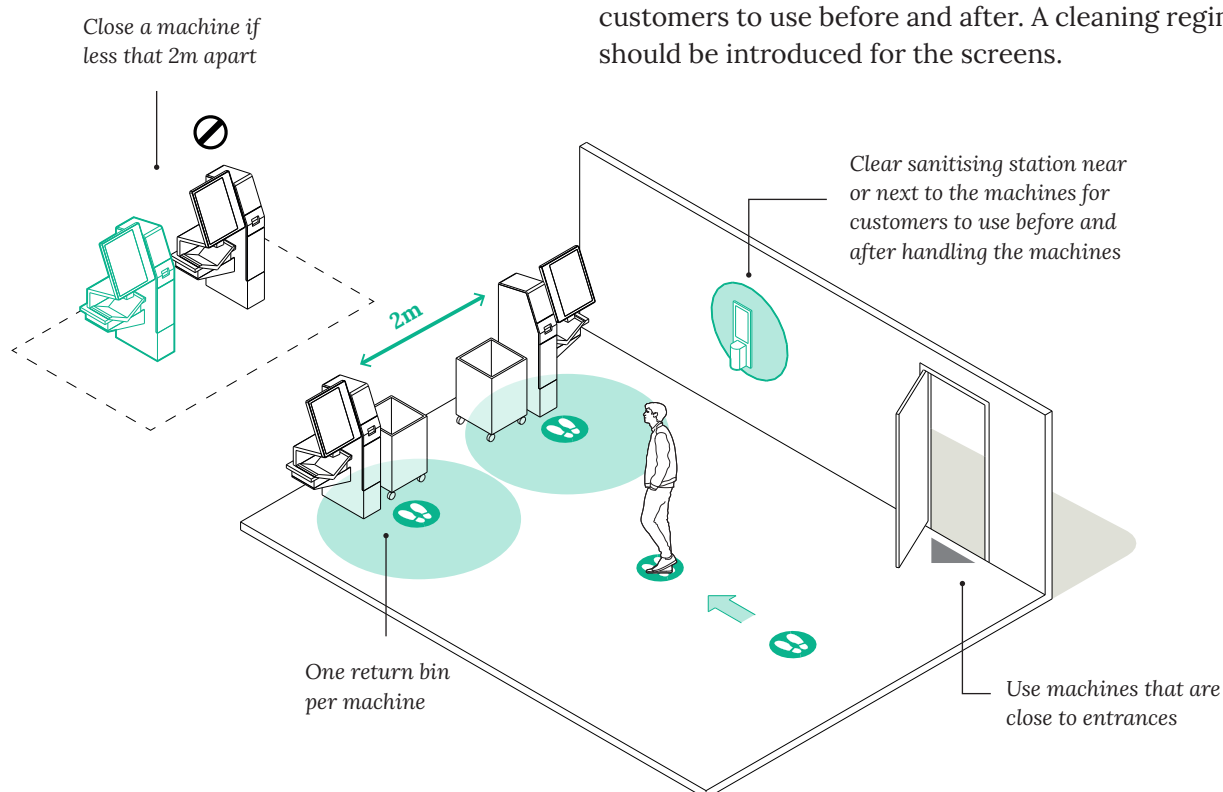
RETURNS INSIDE

Ensure a clear one way system is marked on the floor

Separate entrance and exit if possible

RETURNS OUTSIDE
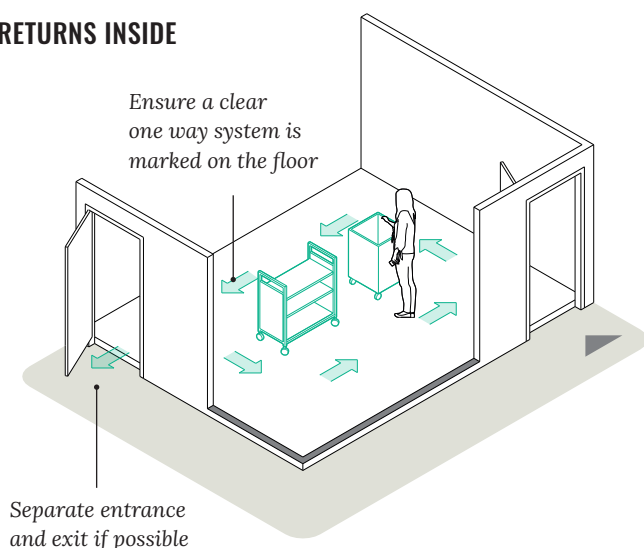
Use an external collection bin if possible, or a collection bag as an alternative
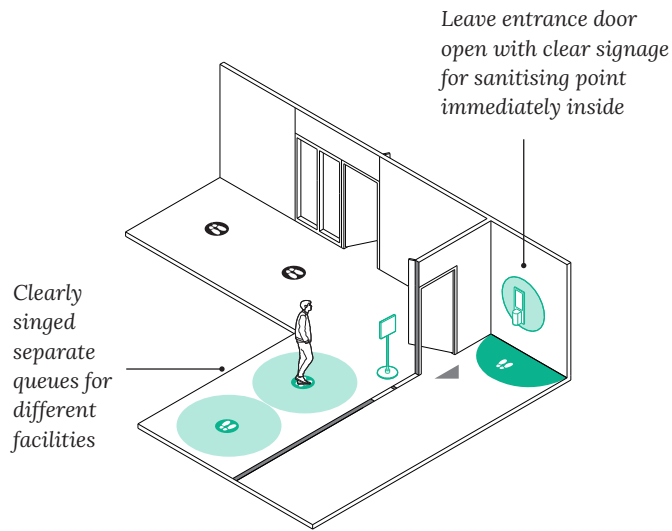
Safe Machines

Self-service machines will help limit interaction between library staff and customers. To ensure the machines are used in a safe way, a clear hand sanitising station should be located next to the machines for customers to use before and after. A cleaning regime should be introduced for the screens.
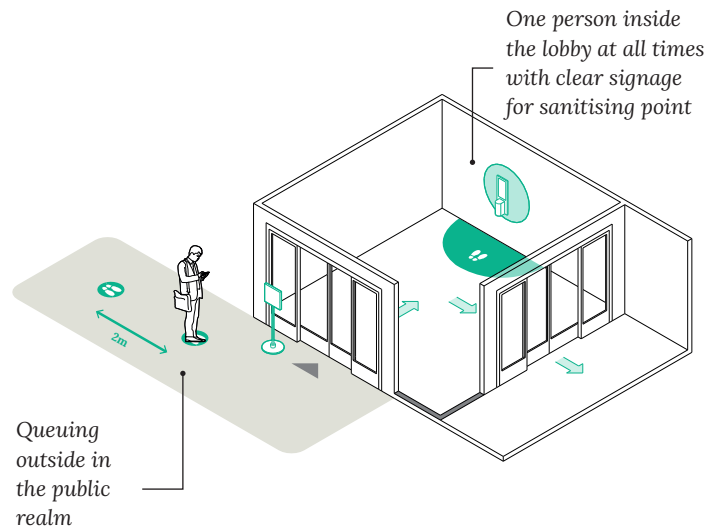
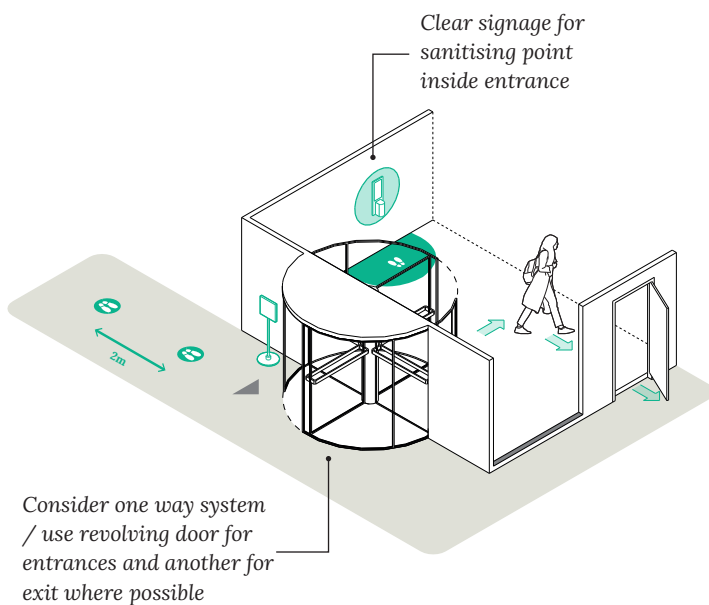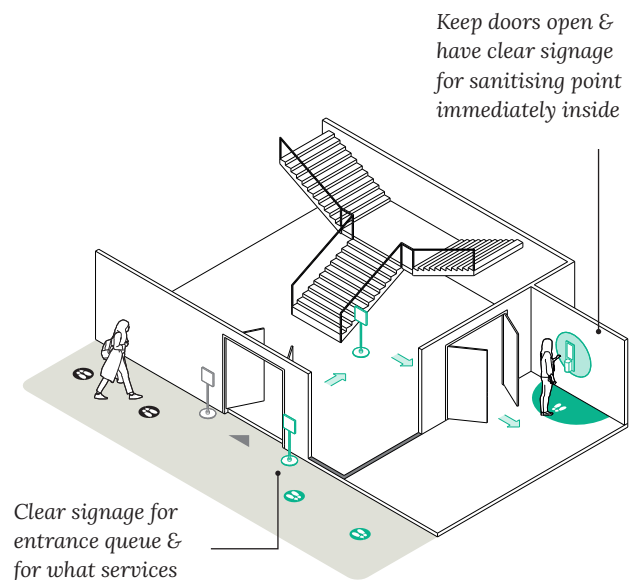*Close a machine if less that 2m apart*

2m

Clear sanitising station near or next to the machines for customers to use before and after handling the machines

One return bin per machine

Use machines that are close to entrances

ENTRANCES

Leave entrance door open with clear signage for sanitising point immediately inside

Clearly singed separate queues for different facilities

One person inside the lobby at all times with clear signage for sanitising point

Queuing outside in the public realm

2m

Single Door without Lobby

Automatic Door with Lobby

Clear signage for sanitising point inside entrance

Keep doors open & have clear signage for sanitising point immediately inside

2m

Consider one way system / use revolving door for entrances and another for exit where possible

Clear signage for entrance queue & for what services

Revolving Door one-way Route

Shared Entrance & Atrium
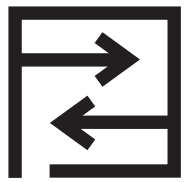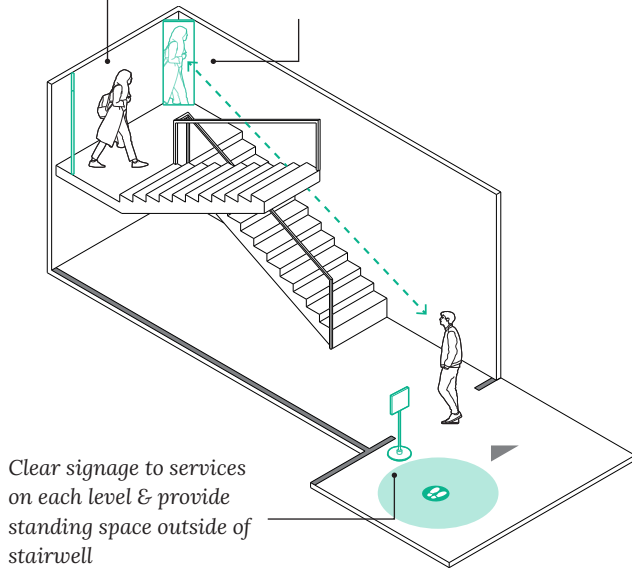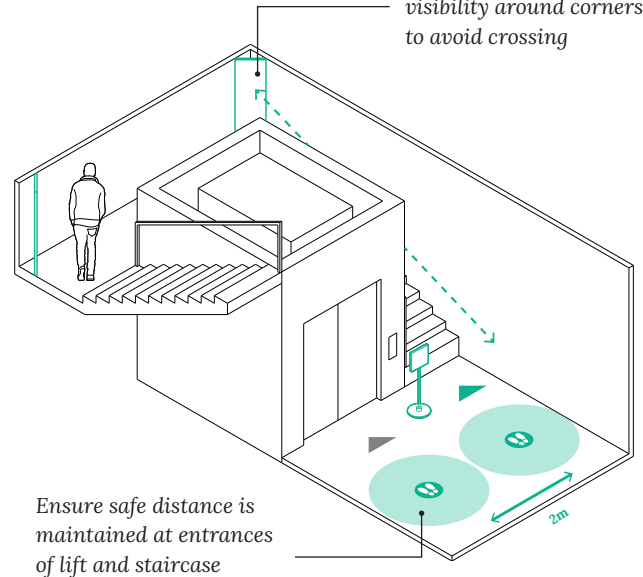
CIRCULATION

One way system on staircases where possible

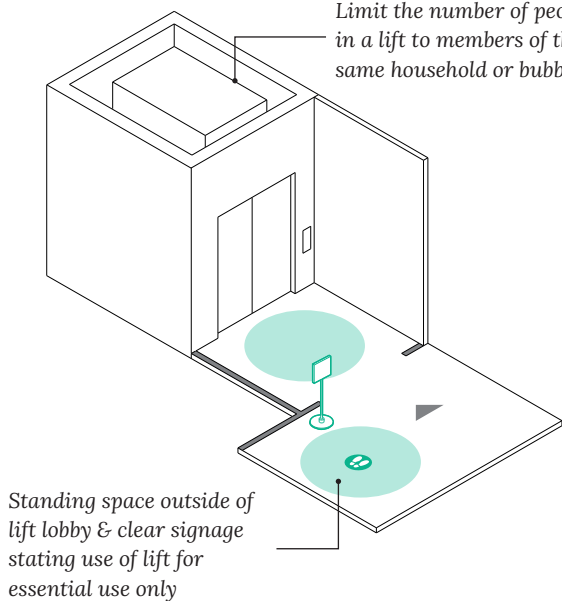*Use mirrors to increase visibility around corners to avoid crossing*

Clear signage to services on each level & provide standing space outside of stairwell

Single Staircase

Use mirrors to increase visibility around corners to avoid crossing

Ensure safe distance is maintained at entrances of lift and staircase

2m

Lift & Stair Core

Limit the number of people in a lift to members of the same household or bubble

Standing space outside of lift lobby & clear signage stating use of lift for essential use only

Lift & Lobby

Use mirrors to increase visibility around corners to avoid crossing

If corridors width less than 2m, consider one-way system
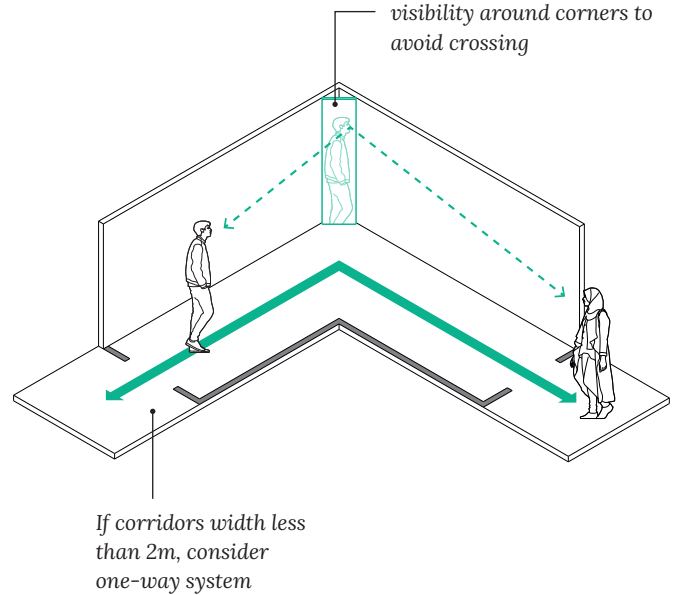
Corridors

GENERAL FACILITIES
TOILETS

Single Person / Disabled

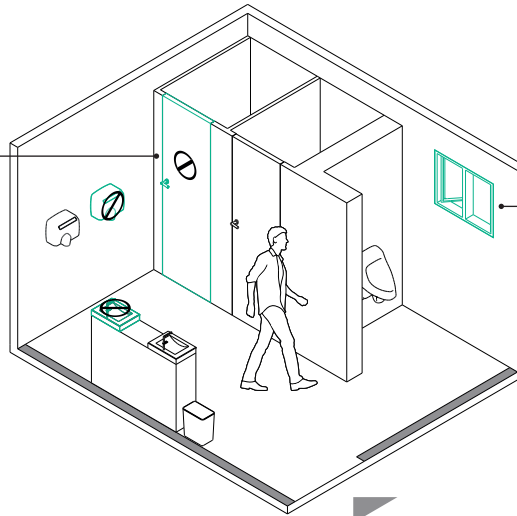*High-contact surfaces to be disinfected regularly*

Disinfectant to be provided in order for users to sanitise surfaces after use
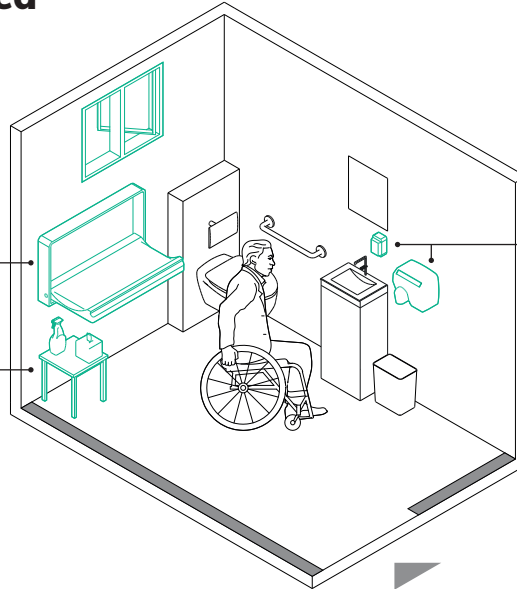
If possible, high-contact surfaces such as soap dispensers, taps and hand-dryers to be fitted with hands-free sensors
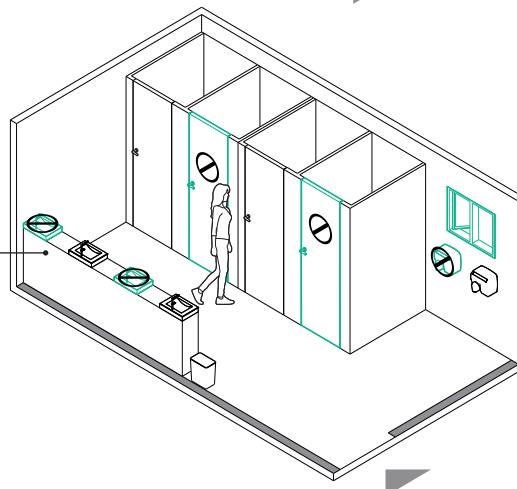
Multiple Cubicles

Alternating cubicles taken out of use to limit the number of users at one time
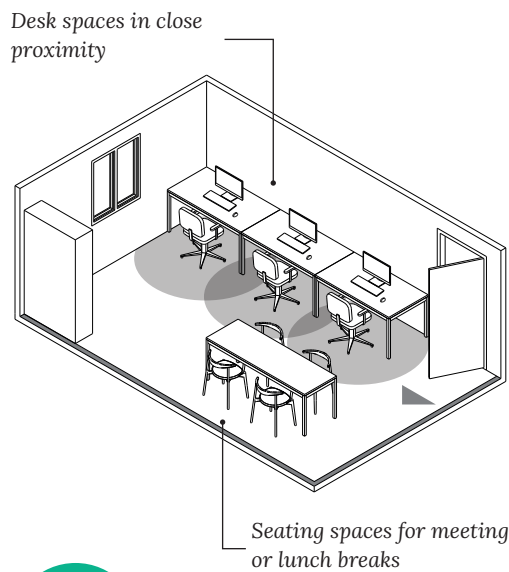
Windows opened to ensure ventilation

Where less than 2m apart, alternating sinks, hand dryers and urinals should be taken out of use to allow for required social distancing
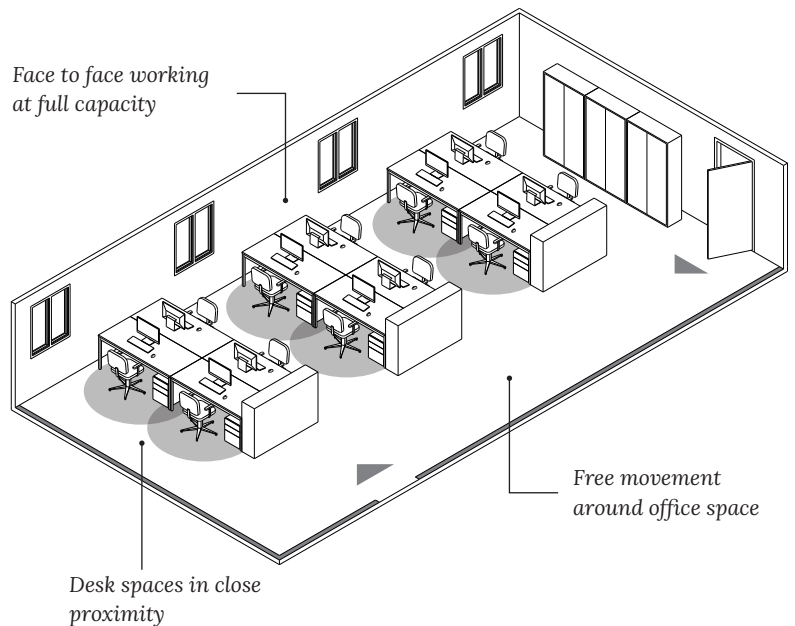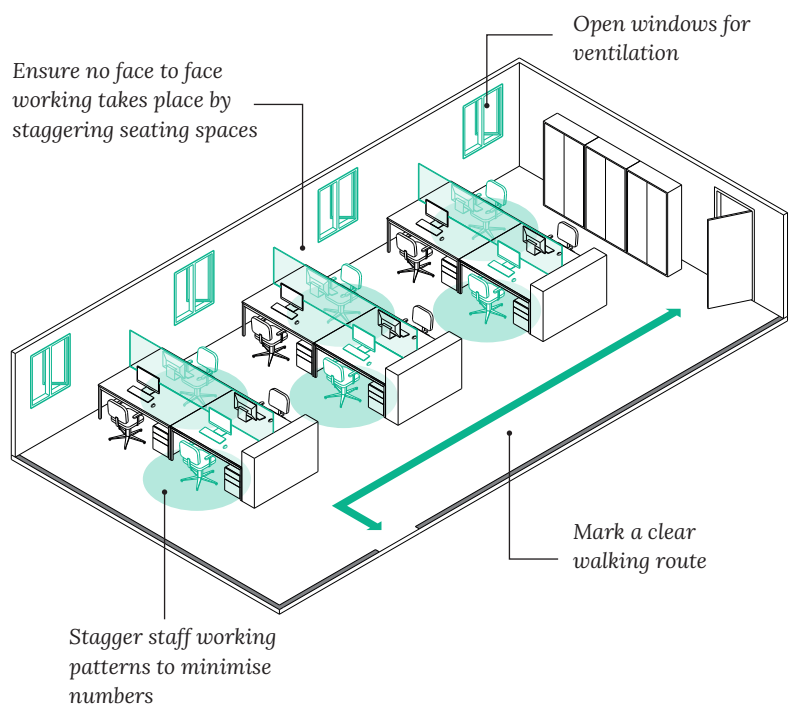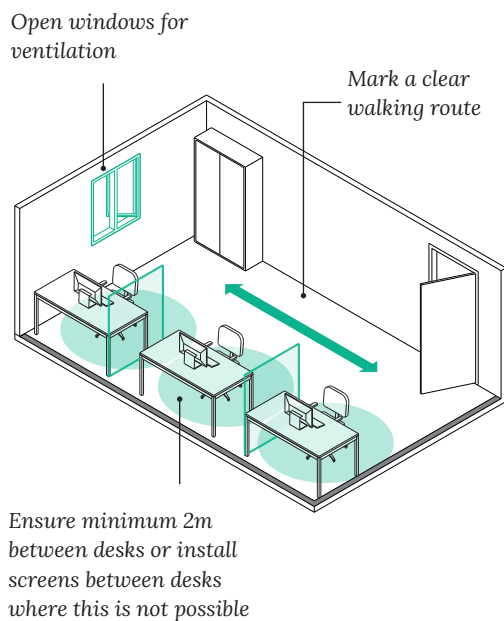
GENERAL FACILITIES
OFFICE

BEFORE

Small/Medium Office

Desk spaces in close proximity

Seating spaces for meeting or lunch breaks

Medium/Large Office

Face to face working at full capacity

Free movement around office space

Desk spaces in close proximity

AFTER

Open windows for ventilation

Mark a clear walking route

Ensure minimum 2m between desks or install screens between desks where this is not possible

Ensure no face to face working takes place by staggering seating spaces

Open windows for ventilation

Mark a clear walking route

Stagger staff working patterns to minimise numbers
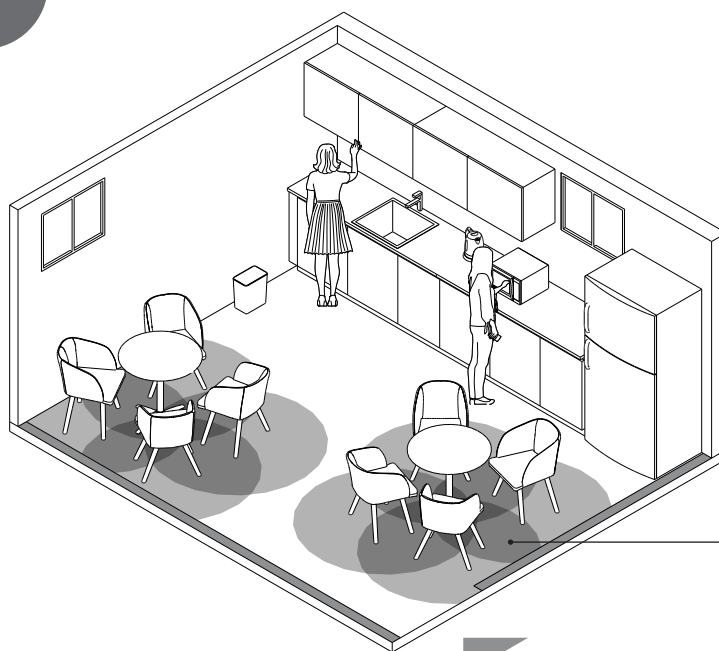
STAFF AMENITY

Staff Kitchen

Limited to essential use with limited capacity determined by size of room.

BEFORE

Existing arrangement of furniture does not comply with social distance guidance

AFTER

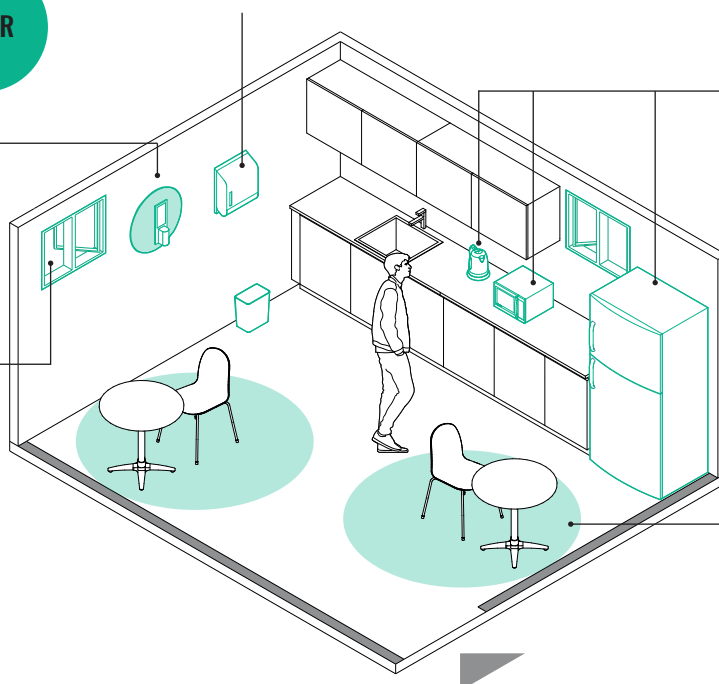*Disposable paper towels to replace tea-towels*

High-contact surfaces to be disinfected regularly

Sanitiser stations to be mounted in key areas

Windows opened to ensure ventilation

Furniture reduced to ensure social distance guidance upheld
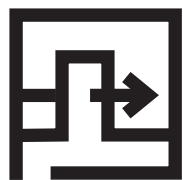
COLLECTIONS

OPTION 1

Collection point using self-service machine

Use signage and barriers to direct customers to collection shelves

OPTION 2

Collection point at reception desk

Use barriers to ensure only staff handle books

Use signage to define waiting point for customer collection
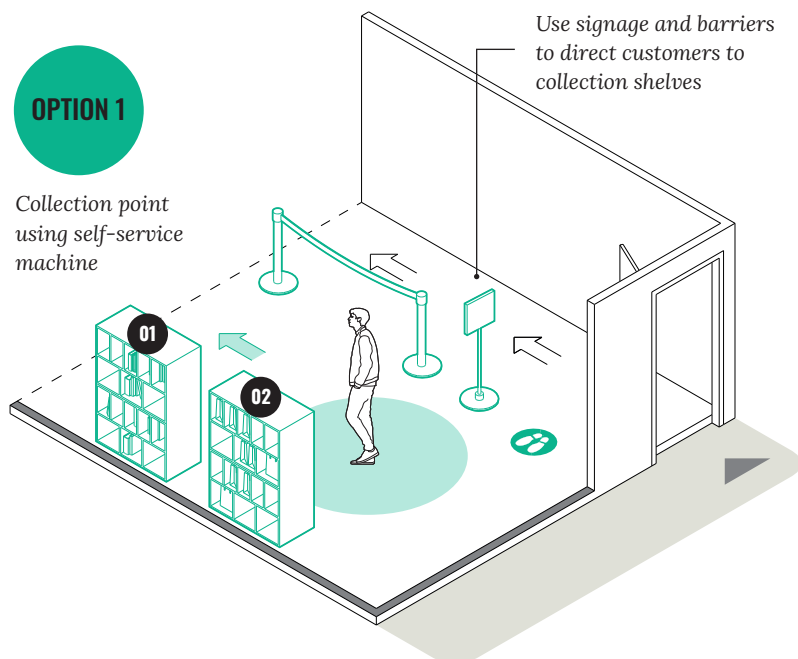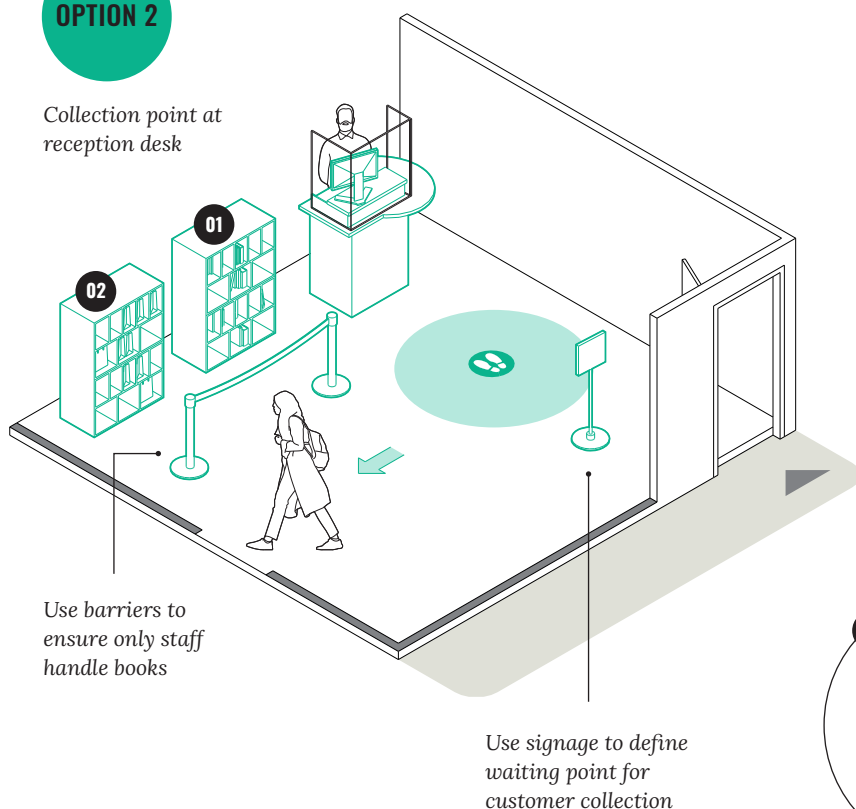
Click & Collect

An initial collection system of click & collect allows customers to choose specific books online and collect at the library. Books are to be packaged securely in a dedicated area in the library A collection date and time should be given to the customer to manage flow throughout the day.

Grab & Go

Broader reading opportunities can be facilitated through a Grab & Go system. A selection of books can be chosen by the librarian upon request (telephone or online) of a specific genre or author. Again, a collection slot should be given to the customer to manage flow.

Collection Points

Option 1 - Self-Service:
Customers locate their order on dedicated shelves with A-Z customer surnames, and check out the order using self-services machines.
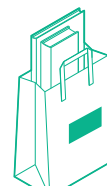
Option 2 - Reception Point:
Staff control the shelves and check out the order before handing the books over to the customer. Staff to wear and use any PPE deemed necessary.
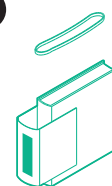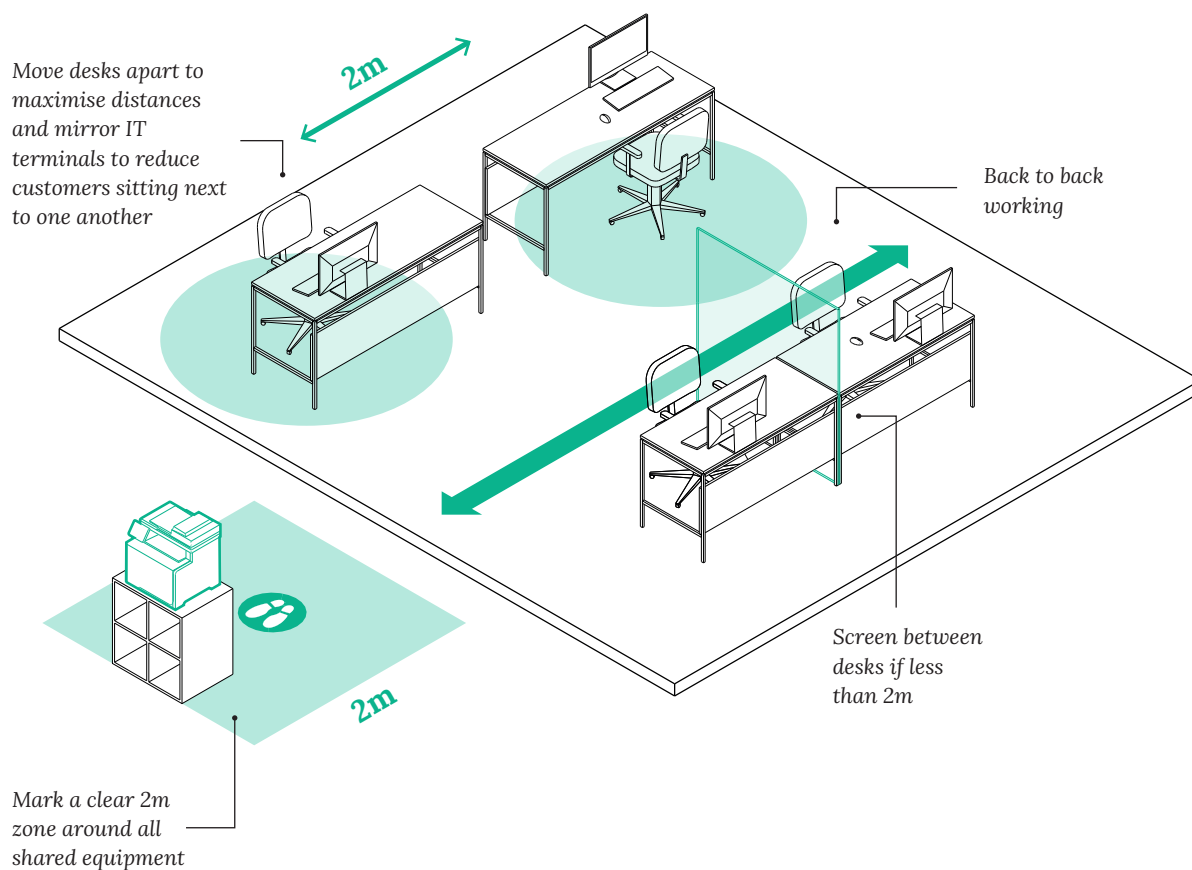
A4 paper wrapped around book stating customer surname

Bag of books with clearly labelled customer surname

LETTING PEOPLE IN
IT

Working Safely

The safe use of IT equipment is to be carefully managed through timed appointments. Each work station should be cleaned between use, either by library staff or by the customer, using a cleaning point as detailed on page 13. The cleaning point is to be located next to IT work stations with clear signage.

LINEAR DESK CONDITION

Move desks apart to maximise distances and mirror IT terminals to reduce customers sitting next to one another

2m

Back to back working

Mark a clear 2m zone around all shared equipment

2m

Screen between desks if less than 2m

ROUND IT POD CONDITION

BEFORE *Four IT terminals in close proximity*

AFTER *Two IT terminals at a safe distance with a screen between*
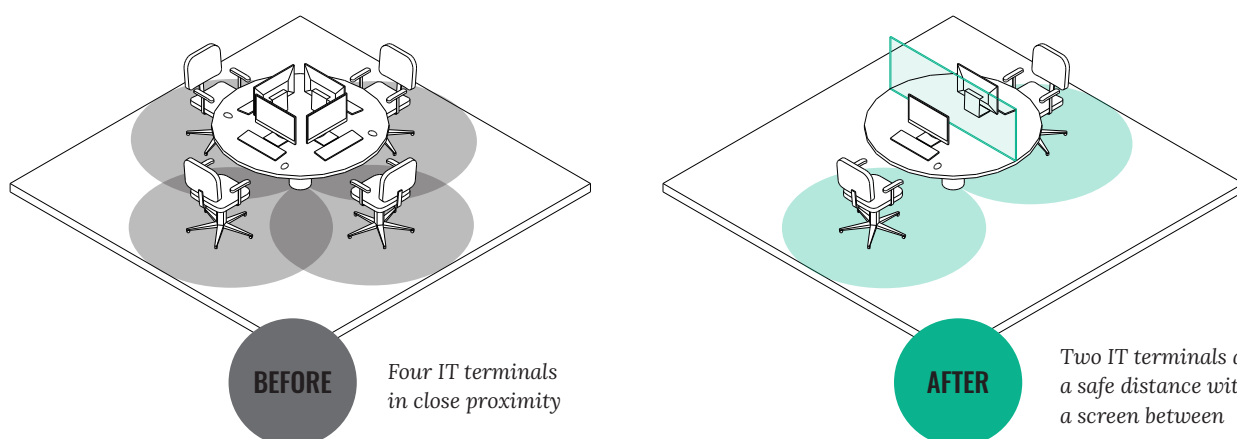
Wifi Spaces

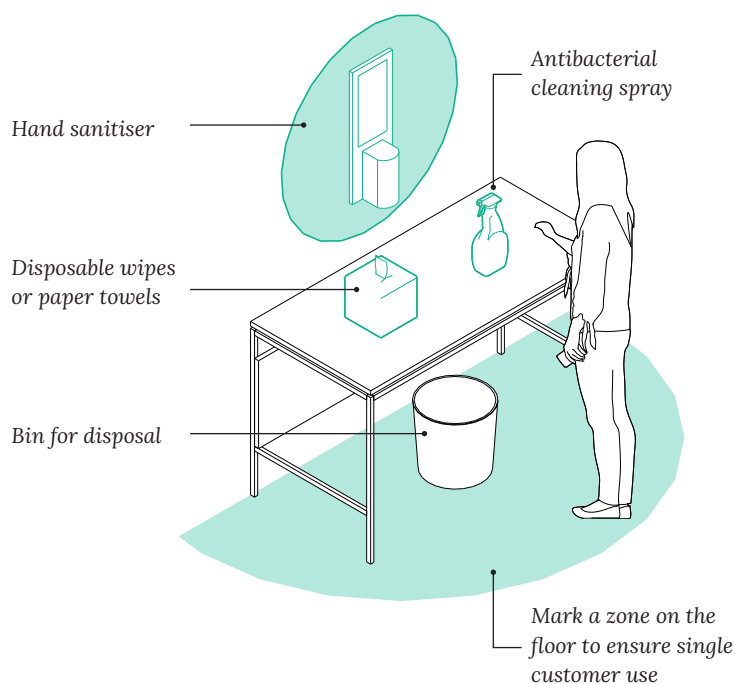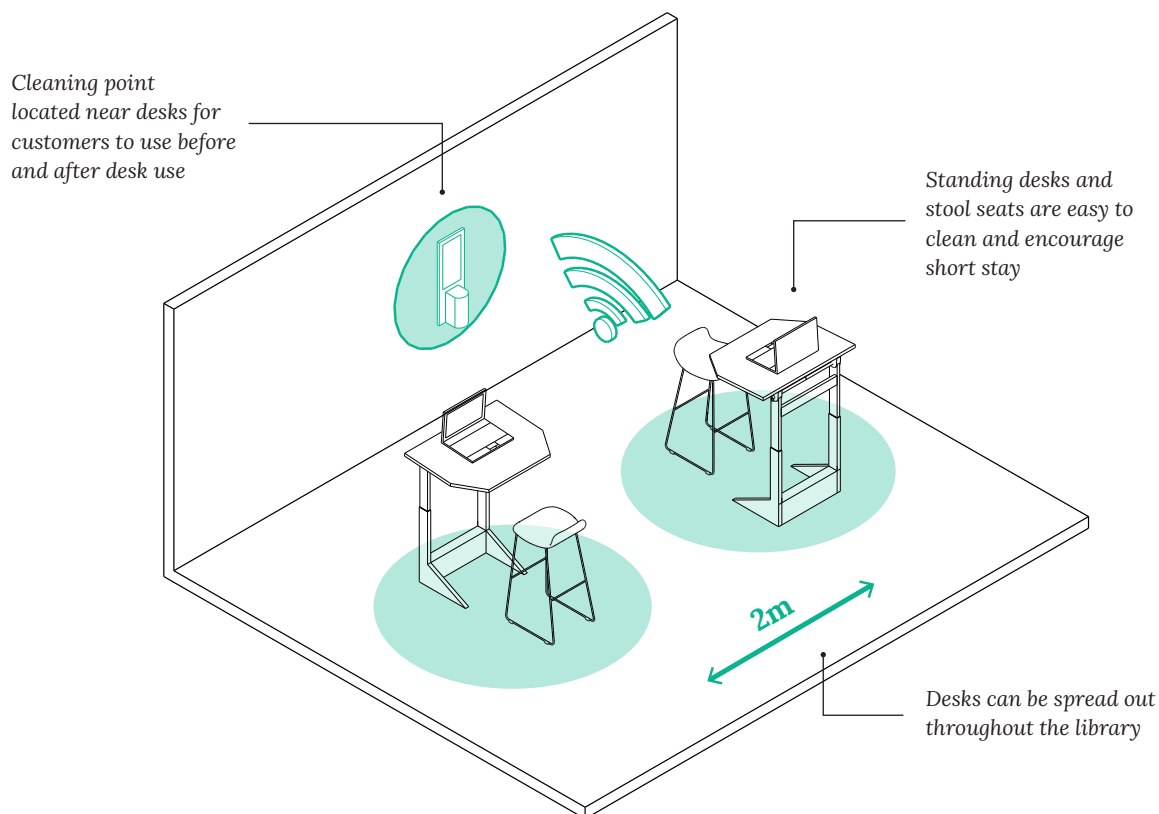To limit the use of shared IT equipment, wifi desk spaces can be created within open areas in the library. Customers can book time slots to access the internet connected through their personal laptop. The compact standing work stations take up less room, and provide a greater service to customers.

Cleaning point located near desks for customers to use before and after desk use

Standing desks and stool seats are easy to clean and encourage short stay

2m

Desks can be spread out throughout the library

Cleaning Point
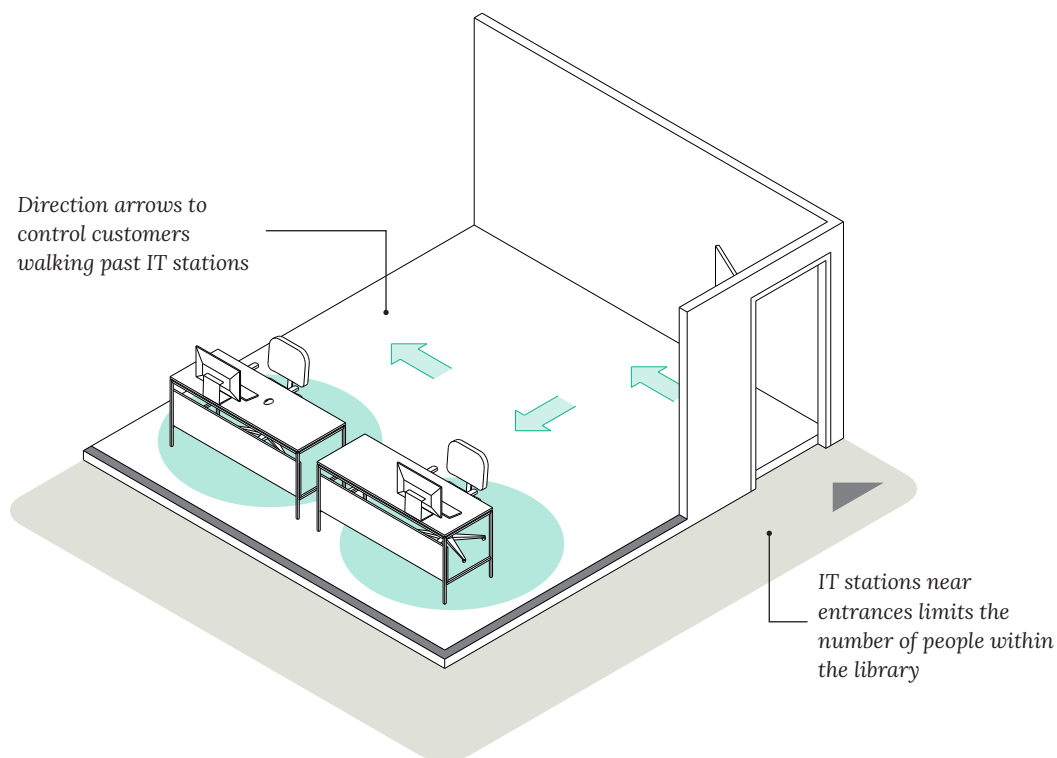
Cleaning points are to be located near IT equipment for customers to use before and after their allocated time slot. Clear singage on the walls and floor will help the customers identify the station and use it in a safe way.

Antibacterial cleaning spray

Hand sanitiser

Disposable wipes or paper towels

Bin for disposal

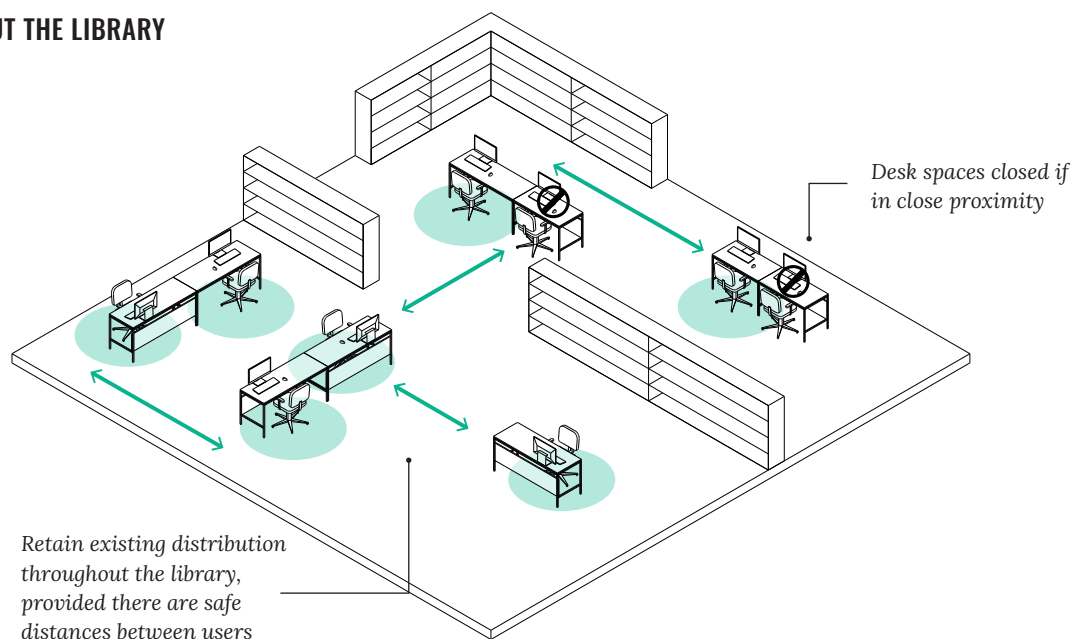*Mark a zone on the floor to ensure single customer use*

IT Distribution

The first IT desk spaces to be opened for public use should be located near the library entrance. This approach controls the number of people in the space, yet provides visibility to show that the library is open for use. The second stage is to allow access to IT facilities across the library. These spaces are often distributed throughout the library, and should remain in existing locations. IT terminals that are in close proximity should be closed to enable social distancing.

ENTRANCE / LOBBY CONDITION

Direction arrows to control customers walking past IT stations

IT stations near entrances limits the number of people within the library

THROUGHOUT THE LIBRARY

Desk spaces closed if in close proximity

Retain existing distribution throughout the library, provided there are safe distances between users
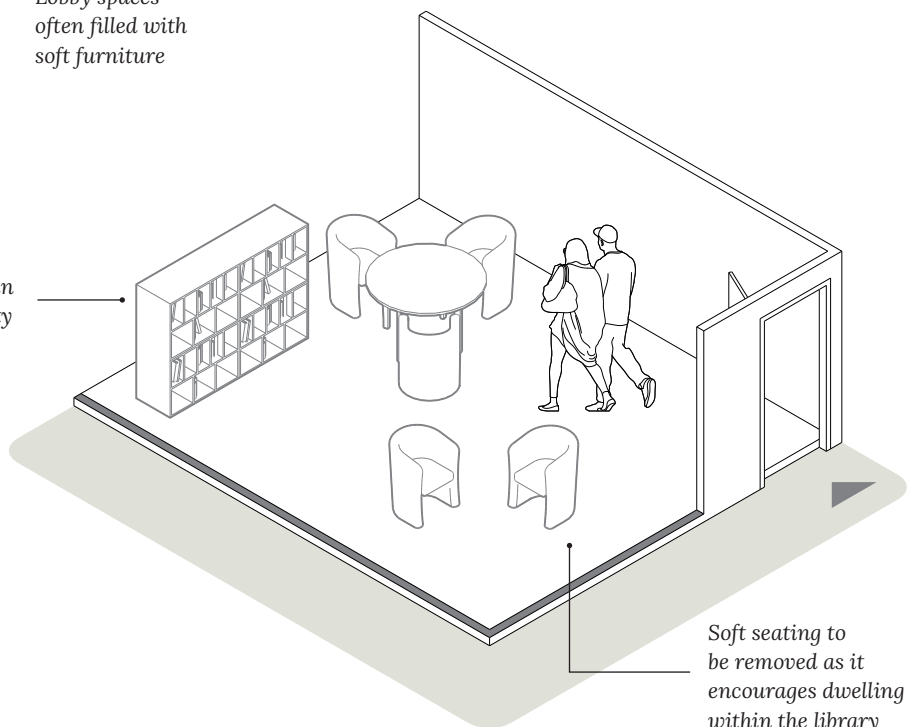
LETTING PEOPLE IN
QUICK CHOICE

Preparation & Space

Quick choice offers customers access to limited stock for borrowing. Within lobby spaces, as much soft seating as possible should be moved, allowing space for mobile shelving. Access to this small library can be controlled by timeslots, and books can be borrowed using self-service machines.

BEFORE

Lobby spaces often filled with soft furniture

Book shelves often located in close proximity to seating

Soft seating to be removed as it encourages dwelling within the library
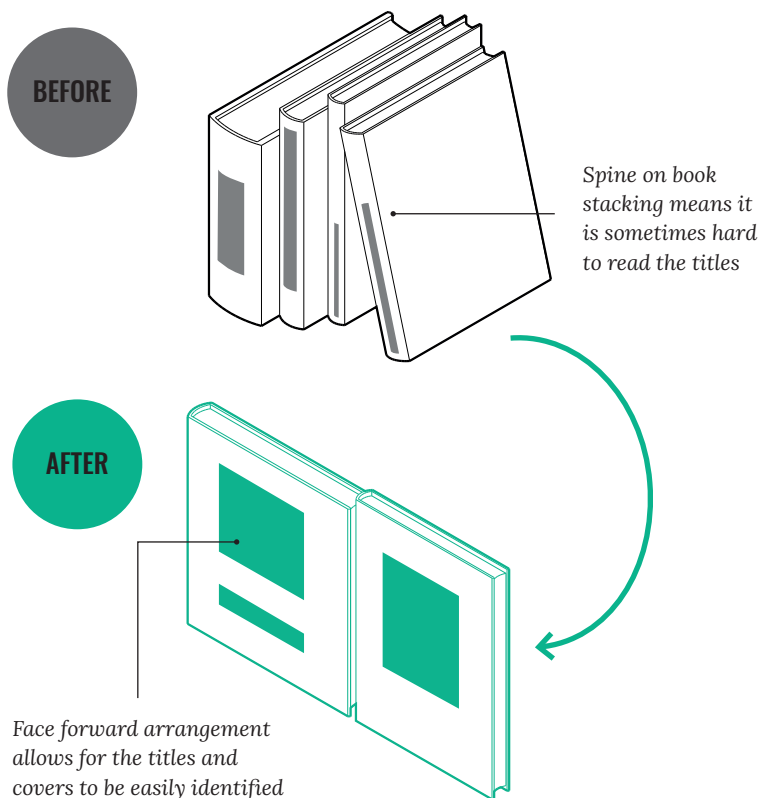
AFTER

Once removed, a quick choice library can be created

Create a one-way system through spaced out book shelves to manage flow & number of people

Consider using a table to clearly display books such as staff recommended reads
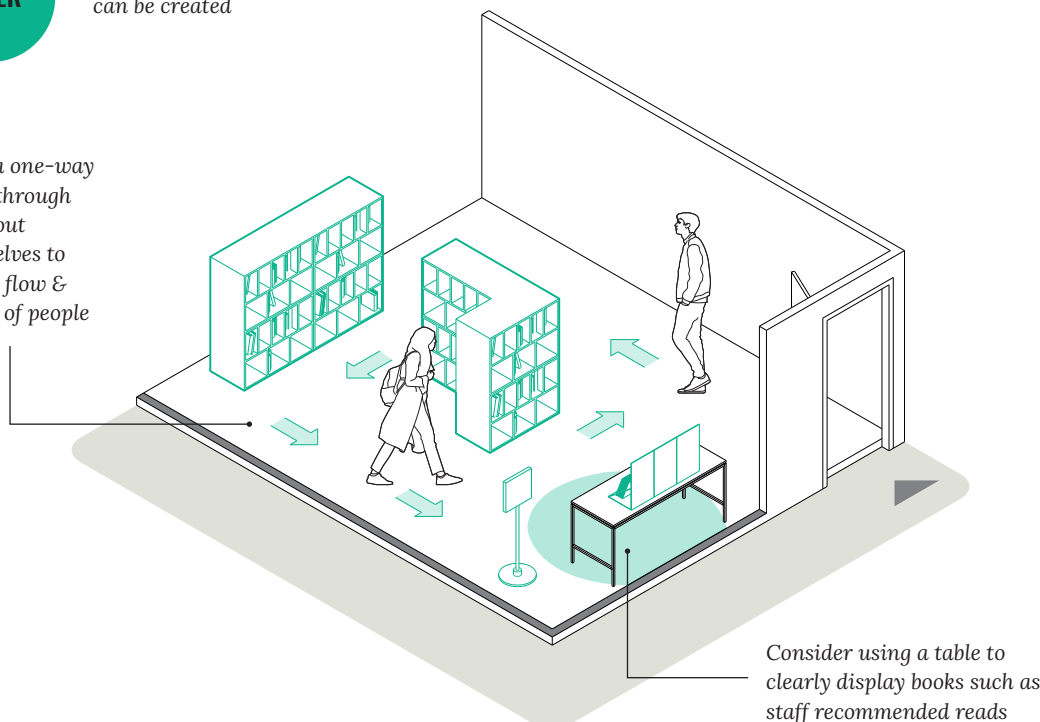
LETTING PEOPLE IN
BROWSING

BEFORE

Spine on book stacking means it is sometimes hard to read the titles

AFTER

Face forward arrangement allows for the titles and covers to be easily identified
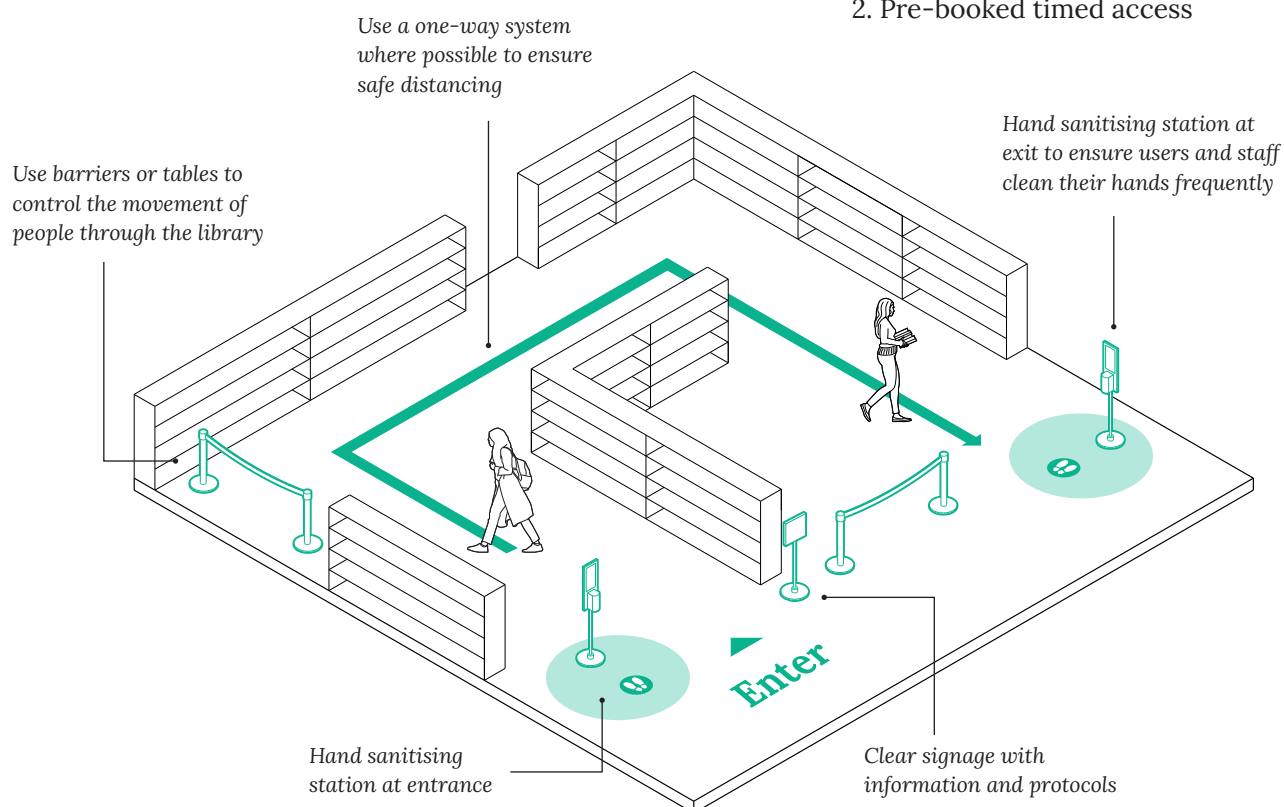
Visibility

Increase the visibility of books by arranging some of them facing outwards. This will reduce the amount of contact customers have with the books, and also make it quicker and easier for them to brows the shelves. It is important to strike a balance between books facing outwards and spine on, to ensure as much stock is available as possible.

Access to Browsing

Where possible, use a one-way system for browsing areas, clearly identifying the entrance and exit. Two suggested options to access browsing areas are:
1. Queuing and controlled entry
2. Pre-booked timed access

Use a one-way system where possible to ensure safe distancing

Use barriers or tables to control the movement of people through the library

Hand sanitising station at exit to ensure users and staff clean their hands frequently

Hand sanitising station at entrance

Enter

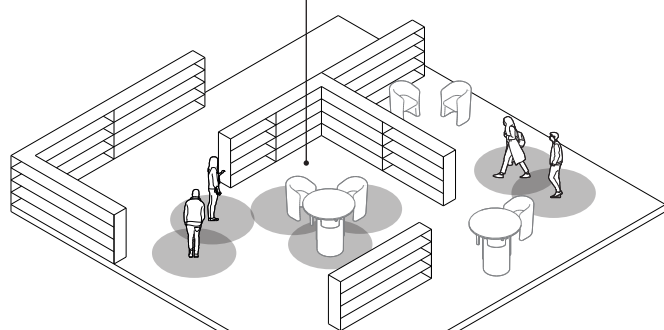*Clear signage with information and protocols*

Flexible Arrangement

If a large area is now empty due to the removal of furniture, consider spacing out the stacks further to the edges of the walls to maximise floor space. Customers may feel more conformable walking around a space that is open and has good visibility around the stacks.
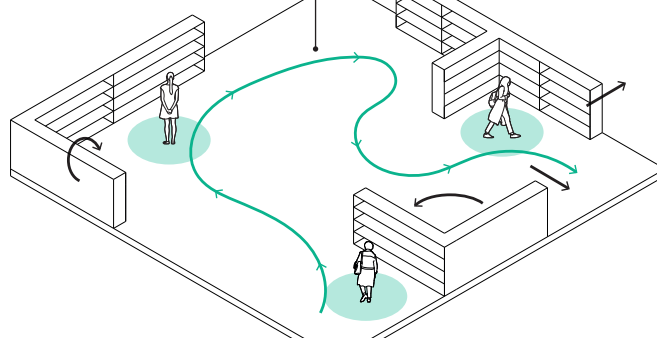
Soft seating encourages long dwell times and should be moved

Move book stacks against walls and rotate them to create a natural single walking route through the library

BEFORE

Soft seating mixed with book stacks is not compliant with government guide
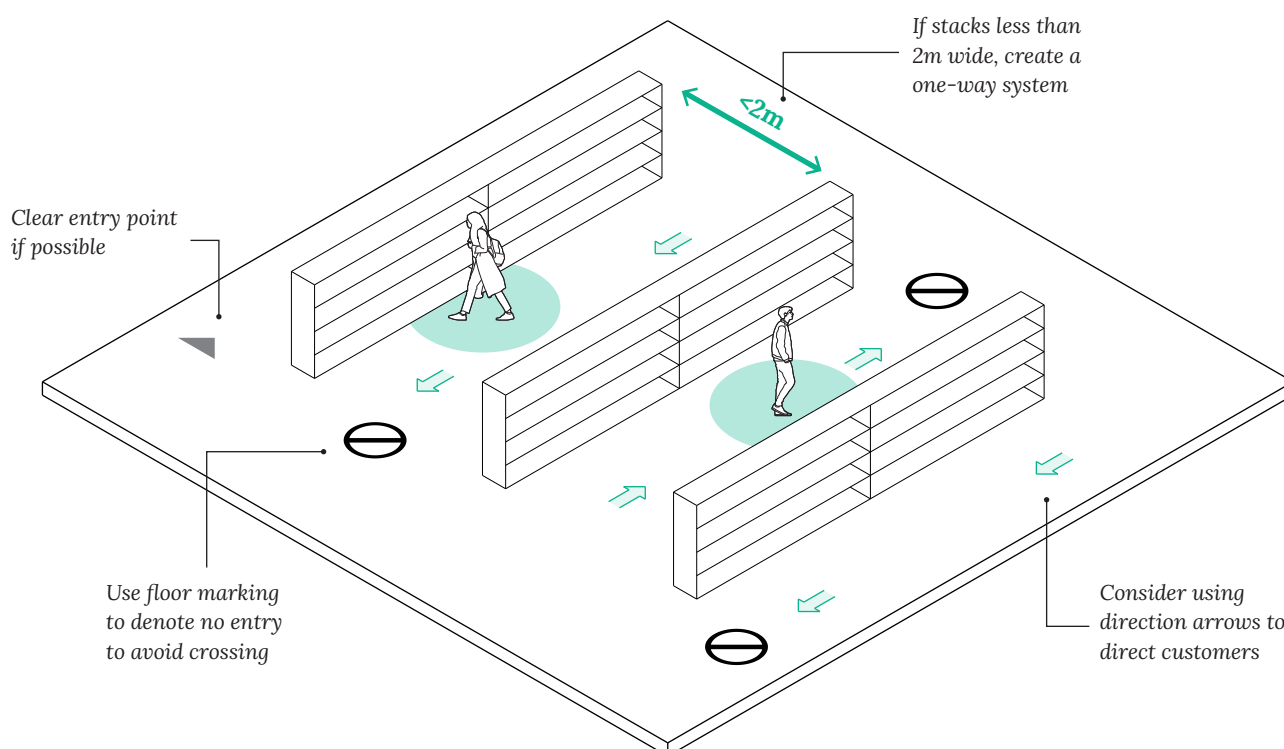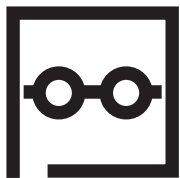
AFTER

Moving soft seating opens up the library and creates a space for safe distancing

Fixed Arrangement

Fixed stack arrangement that have less than 2 metres between them will need to have a one-way system down the isles. Use clear signage to identify entrance point and one-way flows to avoid any crossing.

If stacks less than 2m wide, create a one-way system

Clear entry point if possible

<2m

Use floor marking to denote no entry to avoid crossing

Consider using direction arrows to direct customers

Mobile Libraries

As mobile libraries tend to operate in unique vehicles, a full risk assessment will be needed for each one. Illustrated below are two options of how a mobile library could safely reopen. The first is the internal use of the library that operates using a one in-one-out policy, with a limited browsing offer. The second is a order and collect offer that is either set up outside of the library, or operates through a window of the vehicle, where the librarian retrieves the books for the customer. Staff should ensure all collections are clearly labelled and packaged, as per guidance on page 17.

Perspex screens should be installed as an additional risk mitigation approach

Only one customer to be inside the library at any one time

OPTION 1

Customers to sanitise their hands before entry. Signage to detail protocols

Standing spaces to ensure safe distancing

Consider using a gazebo to protect staff and books from the weather

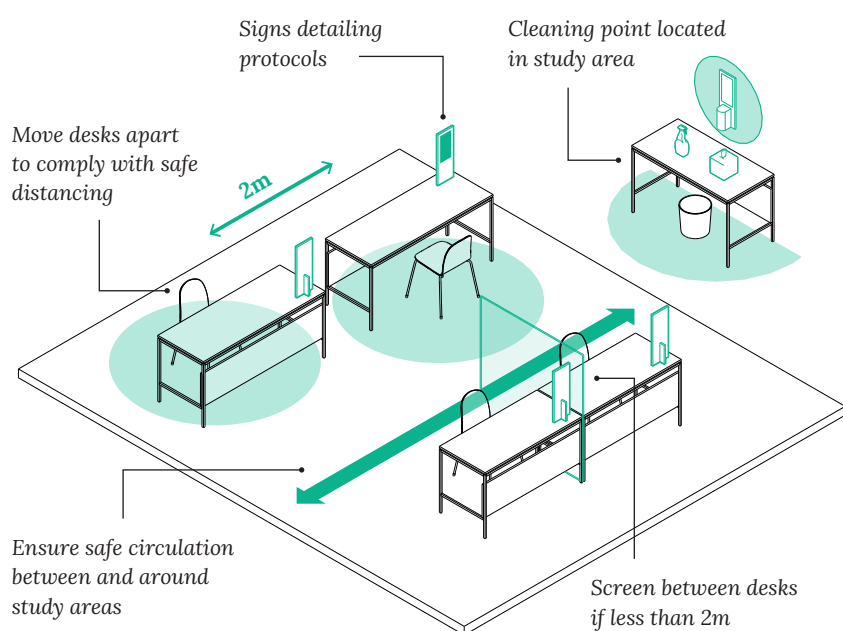*Install a Perspex screen on table if safe distance cannot be maintained*

OPTION 2

Clear signage detailing protocols and marking the waiting area

READING + REFERENCES

Signs detailing protocols

Cleaning point located in study area

Move desks apart to comply with safe distancing

2m

*Ensure safe circulation between and around study areas*

Screen between desks if less than 2m

Study Desks

Study areas may need to operate at a reduced capacity to allow for safe distancing. Customers should book an appointment online with an allocated time slot. Consider including information signage on the study desks detailing protocols, including the use of cleaning points which should be located next to all reference and study desks. Check room capacity limits meet current government guidance.
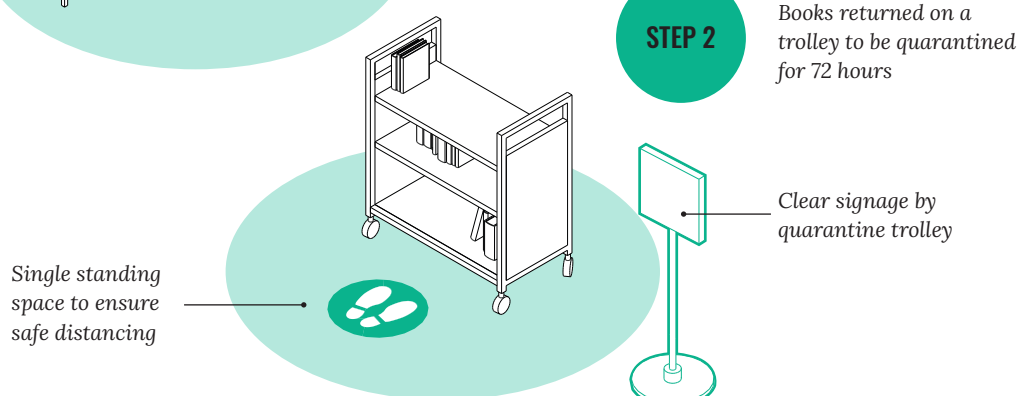
STEP 1

Books to be left on table by staff before appointment

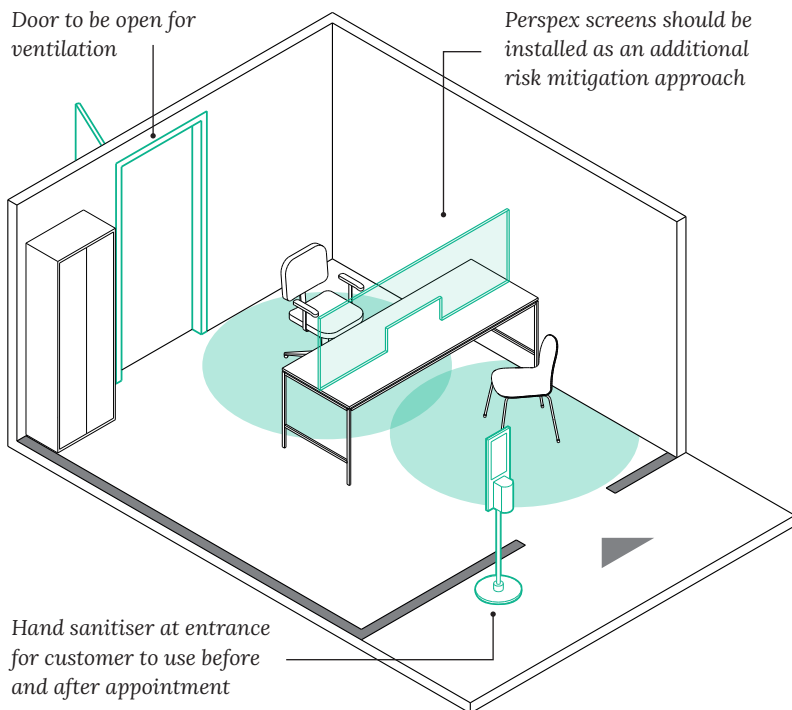*Sign detailing protocols & time slot*
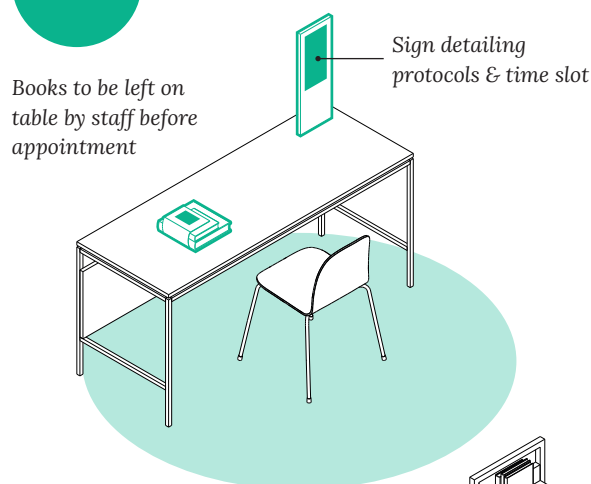
Reference Safely

Using reference books should operate in a similar way to study areas, with safe distances between desks and timed appointments. Reference books should be reserved online and left on the desk ready for the customer to use. Customer should return the books to a quarantine trolley after use.

STEP 2

Books returned on a trolley to be quarantined for 72 hours

Clear signage by quarantine trolley

Single standing space to ensure safe distancing

LETTING PEOPLE IN
SERVICES

Door to be open for ventilation

Perspex screens should be installed as an additional risk mitigation approach

Hand sanitiser at entrance for customer to use before and after appointment
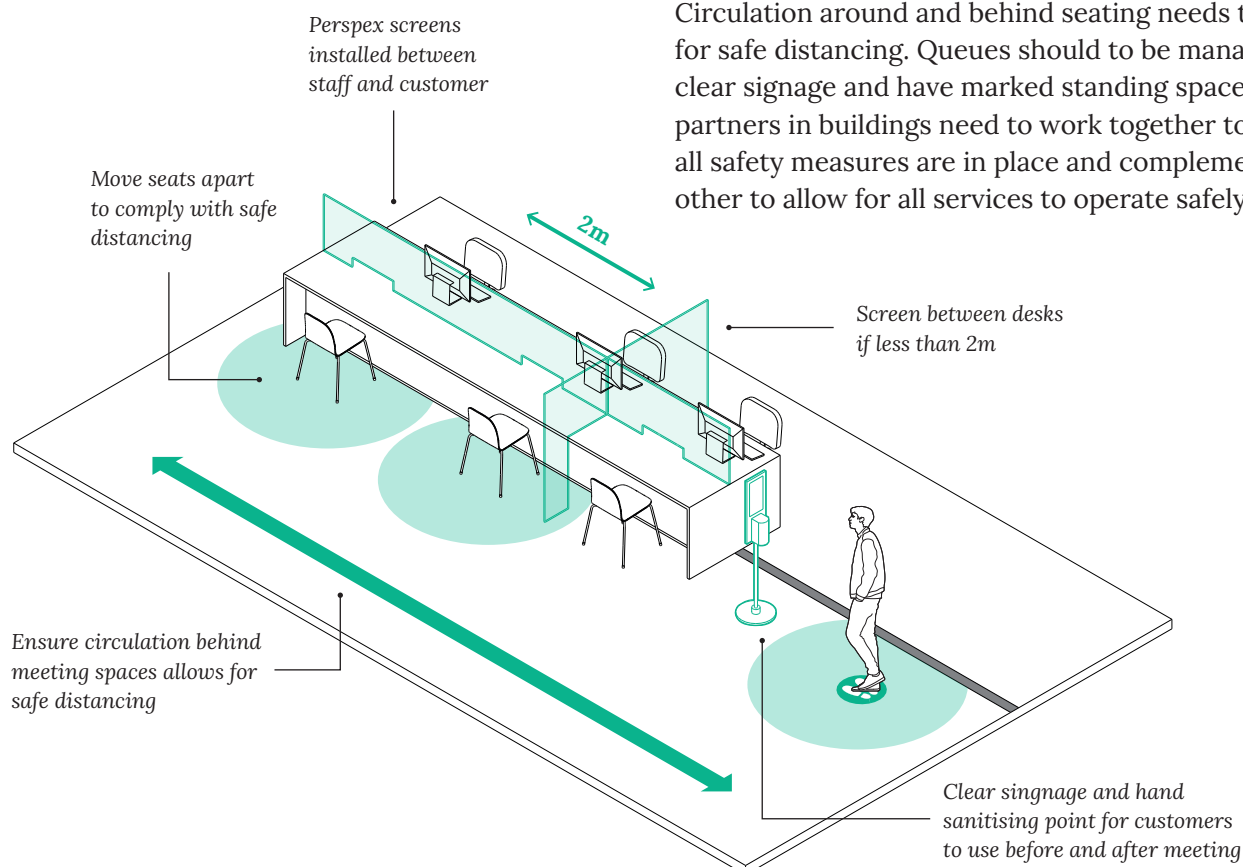
Appointment Rooms

Appointment rooms should operate at a one-to-one capacity if possible. Doors and windows should be kept open for ventilation, however, it is important to check the sound proofing of the room is appropartie for use. Seats should be cleaned before and after use, and soft seated waiting areas outside of appointment rooms should be removed.

Information Desks

Larger information desks such as post office services and council meetings need to be arranged to ensure safe distancing between staff and customers. Circulation around and behind seating needs to allow for safe distancing. Queues should to be managed using clear signage and have marked standing spaces. All partners in buildings need to work together to ensure all safety measures are in place and complement each other to allow for all services to operate safely.


Perspex screens installed between staff and customer

Move seats apart to comply with safe distancing

2m

Screen between desks if less than 2m

Ensure circulation behind meeting spaces allows for safe distancing

Clear singnage and hand sanitising point for customers to use before and after meeting

A WELCOME ENVIRONMENT

Community Art Wall

To ensure a welcome environment is created and sustained throughout the reopening of the library, a community art wall could be created with the local people. This board can be displayed in the lobby area of the library, creating a colourful street presence, and encourage those in the local area to contribute.
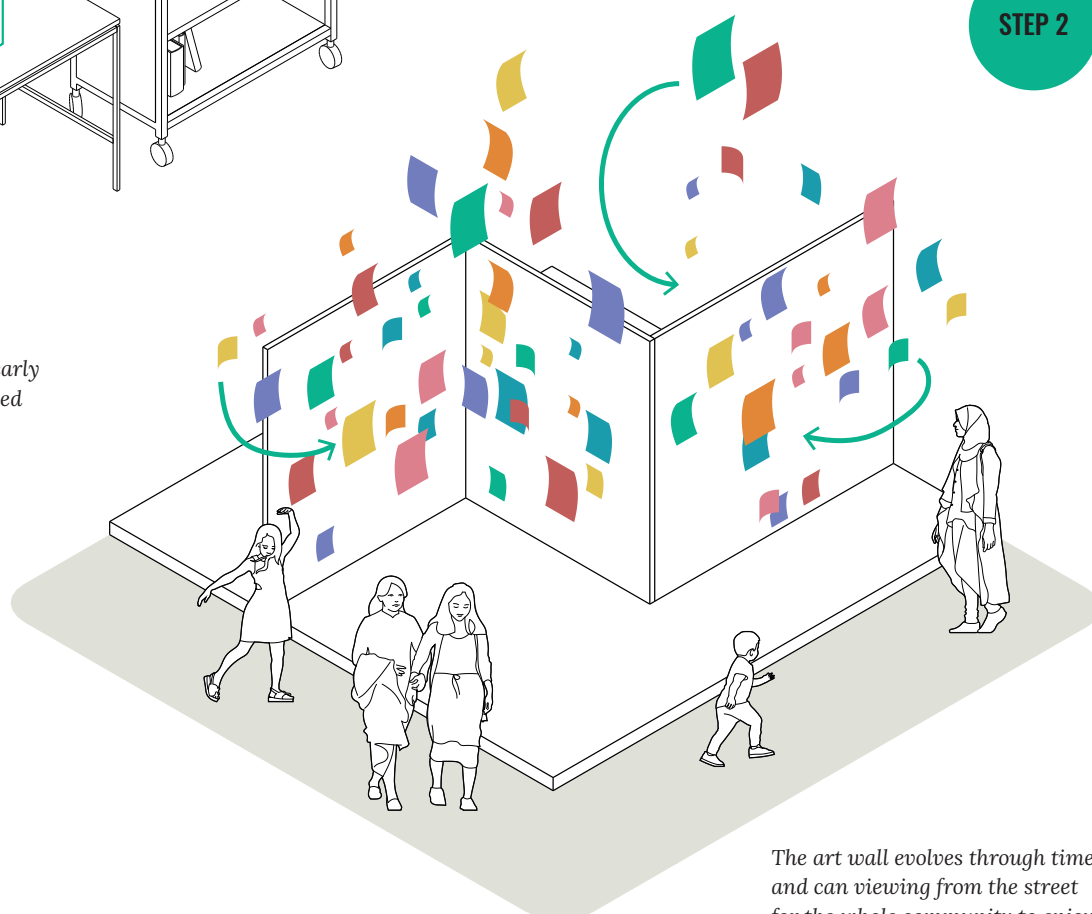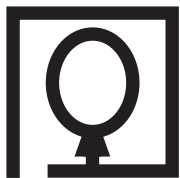
STEP 1
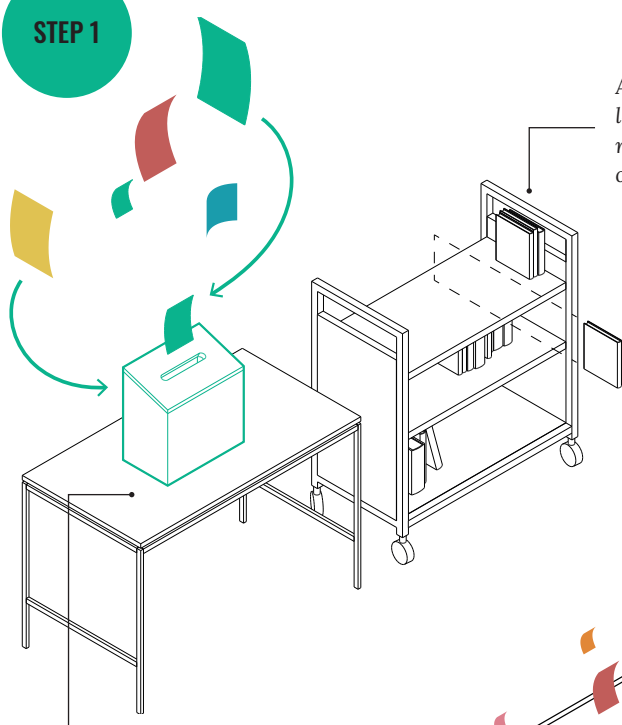
A collection box can be located next to book return area in the lobby of the library

Collection box to be clearly labelled and quarantined for 72 hours
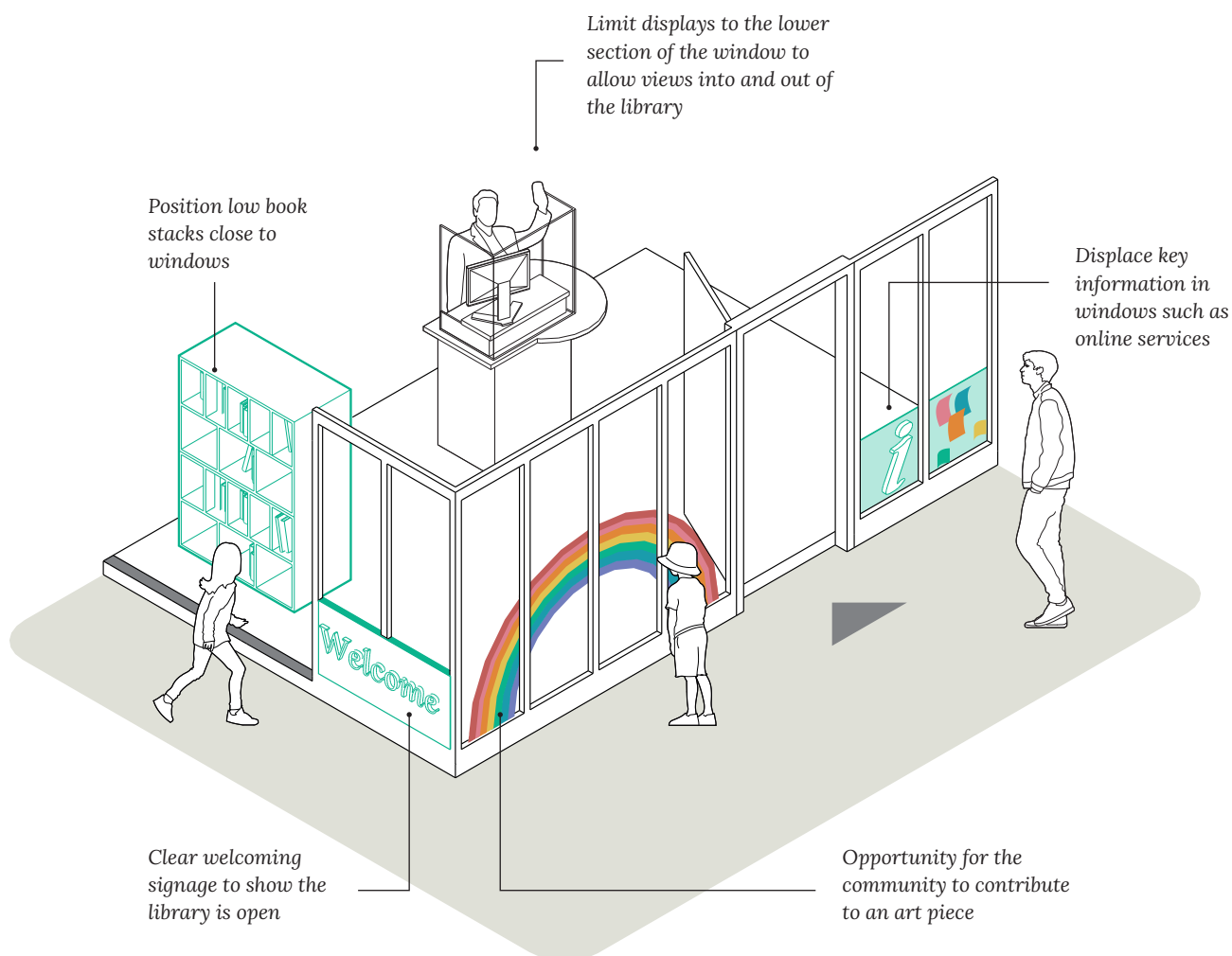
STEP 2

The art wall evolves through time and can viewing from the street for the whole community to enjoy

Window Displays

A colourful, welcoming street presence can increase people using the services available at the library, and help prevent loneliness within the community. Windows should be used to display books, as well as community art projects, and clear information on the services currently being provided.

Limit displays to the lower section of the window to allow views into and out of the library

Position low book stacks close to windows

Displace key information in windows such as online services

Clear welcoming signage to show the library is open

*Opportunity for the community to contribute to an art piece*

UNFOLD THE LIBRARY

Outside Space & Activities

The library need not be confined to its walls. There are opportunities elsewhere that can begin to adapt to provide services for the library, such as larger buildings, community halls, shops and sports centres. Staff should be encourage to reach out to the local area and extend their services off site. Group numbers must not exceed current government guidelines of up to six people from different households.
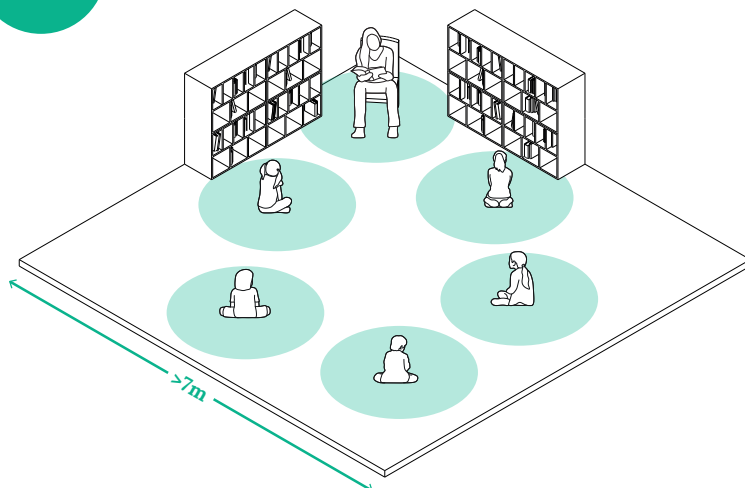
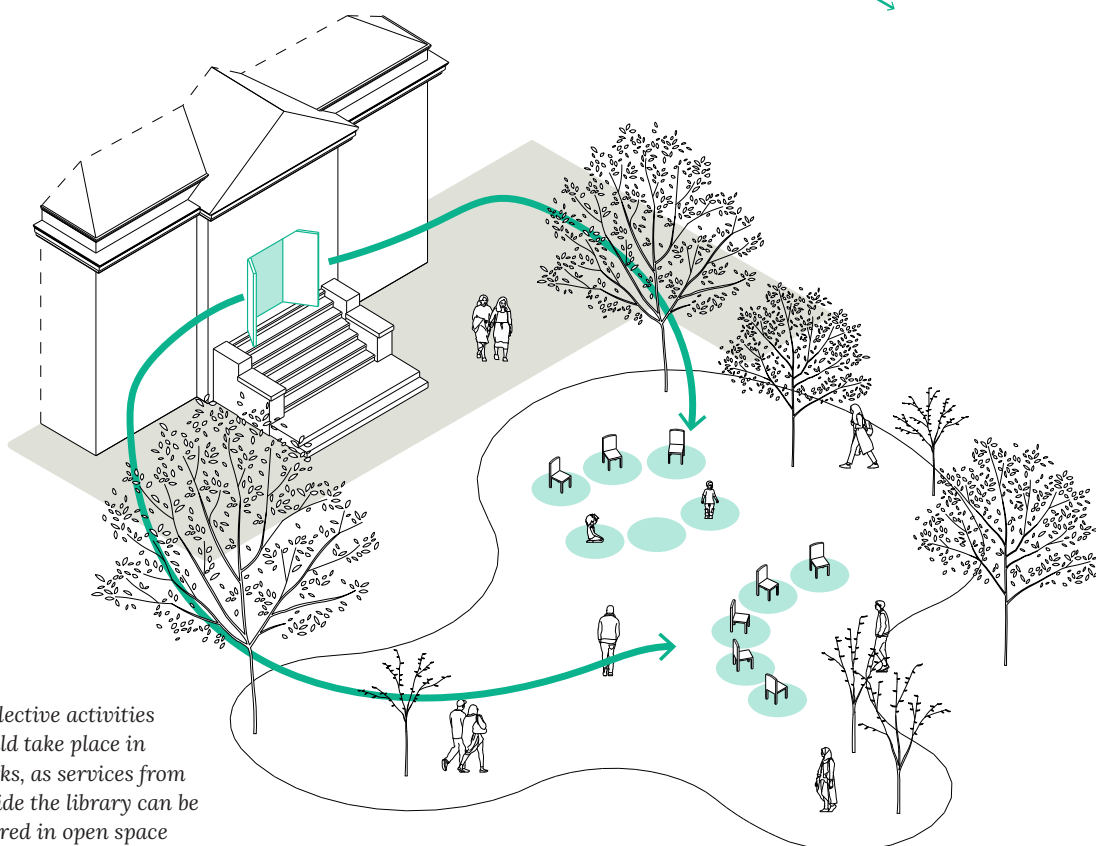**BEFORE** *Children's rhyme time happening in an small part of the library*
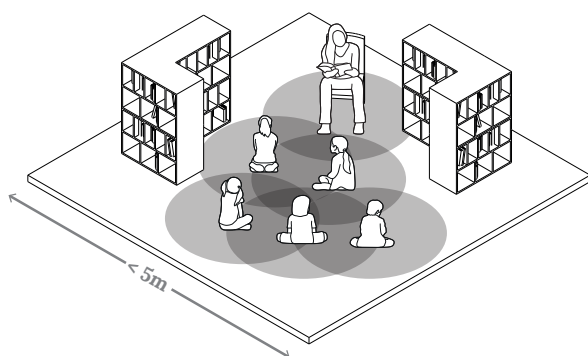
AFTER *Relocated rhyme time in a larger, more open space*

< 5m

>7m

Collective activities could take place in parks, as services from inside the library can be shared in open space
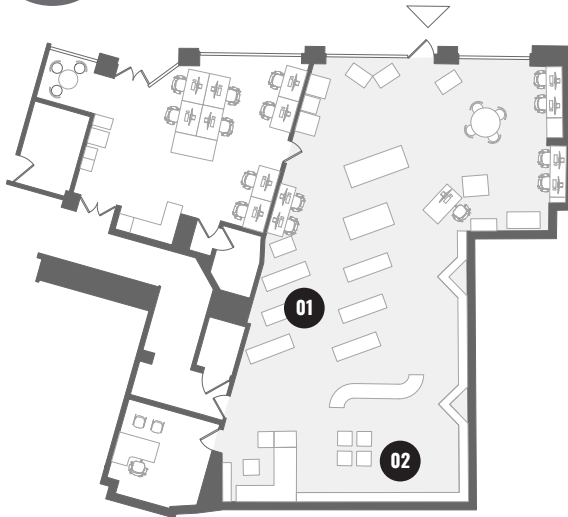
CASE STUDIES

CASE STUDY
SMALL-MEDIUM

Example of a Retail Unit Library

BEFORE

01

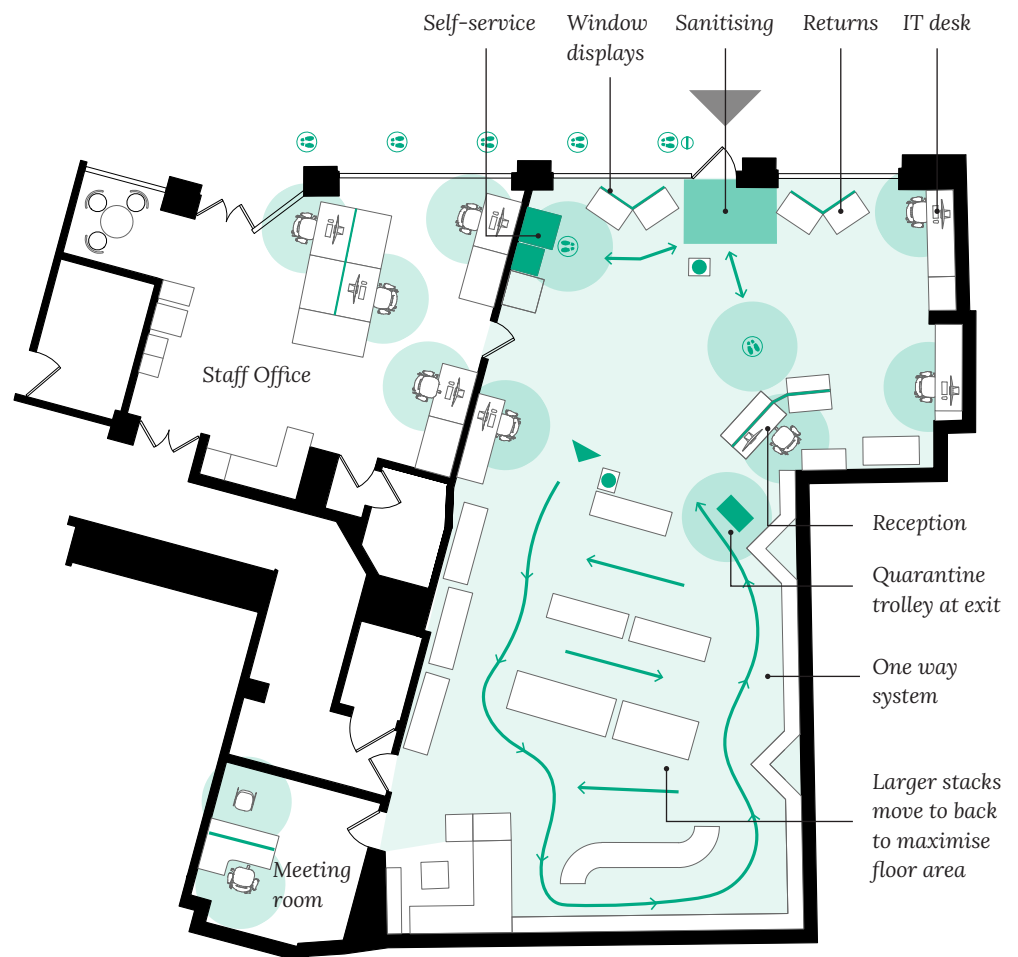*Book shelves are movable, allowing the space to adapt*

02

The children's library at the back of the library has soft seating

AFTER

This small retail unit library has large windows for displays, and a clear single point of entry. A sanitising station is located directly inside the entrance, and clear signage direct customers to the services available. Books can be returned on the shelves in the windows, and collections are made from the shelve parallel to the reception desk. Books are checked out using the self-service machines. Soft furniture has been removed and stacks moved back to create an open lobby. The back of the library offers a timed access browsing offer operated using a one-way system.
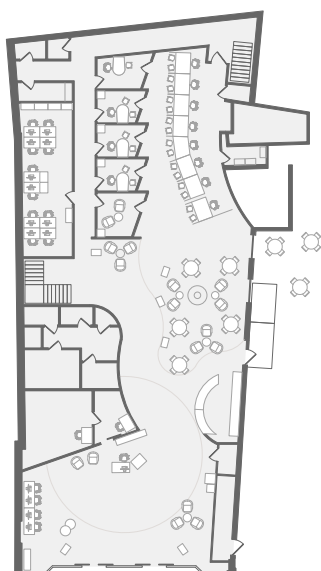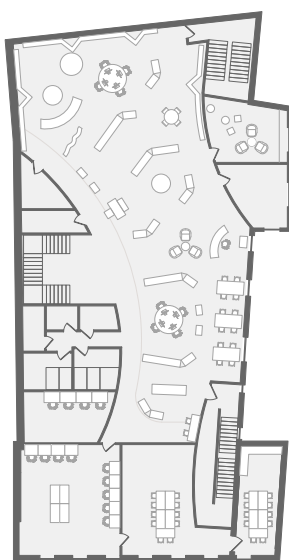
Self-service

Window displays

Sanitising

Returns

IT desk

Staff Office

Reception

Quarantine trolley at exit

One way system

Larger stacks move to back to maximise floor area

Meeting room

CASE STUDY
MEDIUM-LARGE

Sheerness Gateway
38-42 High St, Kent

BEFORE

01

Image from outside shows the shared entrance space to access library facilities and gateway services

AFTER

This large gateway library has a number of services, each sharing a main entrance. The two sliding entrance doors have been used to create a clear entrance and exit flow into the library, with a sanitising station within the lobby. Book collections are made at the reception desk. The soft furniture section has been removed and replaced with a browsing area, where the customers check-out using the self-service machine by the exit. Upstairs is limited access to brows the rest of the library stock with a dedicate self-service machine.

IT pods

Cleaning station

Self-service

Gateway services & queue area

Browsing

Returns

Collections at reception

Self-service

IT desks

Sanitising

Queue control

Version 2 updated 28th August 2020

This document has been developed with and should be read alongside the Libraries Connected Library service recovery toolkit, and all relevant Government guidance. Please note that knowledge of Covid-19 and best practice guidelines in response to it are evolving, and that this document may be updated to reflect ongoing learning.

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COVID————19
SAFER
SPACES