

Local libraries offer more than just books

Community libraries provide loads of free and cost-saving resources which are available to everyone.

Find out how easy it is to join your local library, and what you can access in-person or remotely from wherever you are.

Library access

You don't need to be a library member to use your local library as a warm space in cold months, sit and read a book or newspaper, or take part in group activities.

You will need to join a library service if you wish to use the computers and other digital services, or borrow anything such as books or audio content. By joining the library service in your area you can access all of your borough community libraries in person, and log in online to access resources and digital content.

Support with digital access

Libraries are a great resource for learning and access to support studying and digital accessibility. Include study areas, digital support, computer and wifi access, internet, learning opportunities,

courses, and printing. Drop in or pre-book a timed slot online to use a computer. They offer digital buddies and courses for residents who wish to learn to use a computer, internet, and mobile apps.

Reading and audio content

You can borrow books (including digital and audio format) newspapers and magazines (including digital version), music CDs, and film DVDs.

Free activities in libraries

A full timetable of events is available online on your local borough libraries website, and there are leaflets at the libraries. Activities vary from one library venue to another, they often include:

Supporting your wellbeing

A wide variety of feel-good activities including exercise classes, social chat groups, wellbeing, knit and natter, chess, poetry and writing classes, film viewing, board games, and art & craft.

Children and family time

Lots of activities including lego building, art & craft, games, and groups for under 5's.

Community events

Activities for communities to come together and celebrate cultural and religious events.



Cold weather support

Warm spaces

During the cold months, libraries are available as warm spaces for people who are worried about their heating bills or cannot afford to heat their home.

Kind coat scheme (Hackney only)

Residents can donate or pick up a warm coat at racks set up in the libraries. Great way to trade-up for a bigger size winter coat for children who have outgrown their existing coats.

How to join a library

If you would like to use computers or borrow items, you can join using online form or in-person at any local library in your borough. You are required to provide proof of address and formal proof of ID. You will get a library card and unique code number.

Access for homeless residents

Local community libraries welcome all residents, regardless of circumstances. If you don't have proof of ID or a permanent address and wish to join a library, just drop in to a library to apply in person and explain your accommodation and document situation. Library staff will sort you out with a library card. Each borough has its own guidelines for supporting residents who do not have ID or home address. See details listed here:

City of London: Borrow up to two books at a time and use of computers.

Hackney: Borrow up to two items at a time, and use of computers and online resources.

Tower Hamlets: Borrow up to two books at a time, and use up to three internet sessions per day on computer as well as access to online resources.

Newham: Library staff will put the library address down as residence. Offer full access for borrowing and use of all library resources and computers regardless of your living situation.

Luton: You will need a letter from a health agency or other official agency in order to join a library. After you provide this letter you will be offered full access for borrowing and use of all library resources and computers regardless of your living situation.

Library details

Addresses, opening times, activity timetables, and joining-up forms.

City of London

<https://www.cityoflondon.gov.uk/services/libraries>

Hackney

<https://hackney.gov.uk/libraries> and <https://www.lovehackney.uk/regular-activities>

Tower Hamlets

<https://www.ideastore.co.uk/> and https://www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/leisure_and_culture/libraries.aspx

Newham

<https://www.newham.gov.uk/libraries-arts-culture/newham-library-services>

Luton

<https://www.lutonlibraries.co.uk/digital-content/libraries>

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Visit <https://www.elft.nhs.uk/service-users-and-carers/cost-living> for more tips and advice on how to save on your household bills.