

Barnsley Libraries

Managing Behaviour and Exclusions Policy

Purpose

Barnsley Libraries is dedicated to providing a safe, welcoming, and friendly environment for all library visitors and staff alike. At times it may be necessary for the service to ban individuals if they are acting in a way that is unlawful, against Library rules and/or detrimental to other users.

As a Universal Service, we generally have a higher tolerance when compared to other services and businesses regarding members of the public, including homeless visitors, people with mental health problems or learning disabilities etc.

The majority of visitors are respectful of staff, other customers and our property, however there are some incidences where the behaviour of individuals causes concern. This policy sets out the approach of the Service to address these incidents, the roles and responsibilities of frontline teams and managers, as well as how customers can appeal against any decisions.

Regulations and Rules

Library Byelaws

ICT Acceptable Use Policy

Anti-Social Behaviour and Policy Act 2014

Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003

This is not an exhaustive list of applicable legislation and others may apply.

Unacceptable behaviour

There are a variety of reasons why excluding a customer from the library may be necessary. Examples of unacceptable behaviour include:

- Any illegal activity, including theft, damage to council property, physical violence, selling banned substances in the library, carrying/brandishing weapons
- Physical intimidation, harassment or abuse towards staff or customers including unwelcome physical attention or touching, attempted or actual assault and failing to respect personal space or excessive or an inappropriate level of interest shown in a member of staff or other visitor
- Aggressive, threatening or intimidating language directed at staff or other visitors including racist or homophobic language, or sexual innuendo
- Disruptive behaviour: e.g., excessive noise, swearing (including gestures) or offensive language, disturbing or upsetting other customers
- Fighting
- Sexual activity

- Drinking alcohol, smoking or using drugs in the library
- Visiting under the influence of alcohol or drugs
- Misuse of library facilities and toilets, including mess, damage etc.
- Photographing, filming or recording staff or other visitors in the building without their express consent
- Misuse of public network computers as set out in the Acceptable Use Agreement and use of personal devices to access, download, copy, forward, load or transmit any pornographic, explicitly sexual, violent, abusive, racist or other unlawful material
- Advocating or promoting personal beliefs or ideas to library staff or other library visitors, e.g. leafletting, proactively engaging with staff or customers to promote beliefs and views

(This is not an exhaustive list. Please refer to the Library Byelaws for other areas of unacceptable behaviour.)

Staff Safety and Support

If a situation escalates to a point where staff feel unable to manage it or if a customer becomes violent or threatening, call the police immediately on 999

If a customer refuses to leave the building when asked by staff, call the Town Centre Wardens or Safer Neighbourhoods Team (contact details in Purple Folders) or Police on 999, depending on the severity of the situation

All staff will act reasonably in any situation and protect themselves from risk. Staff can call on the following support:

1. Request back-up from another member or members of staff if they do not feel comfortable responding to an incident alone
2. Request support from security staff, where they are present in a library
3. Request non-urgent back-up from Town Centre Wardens or Safer Neighbourhoods Team, local police, or Community Support Officers (by calling 101)
4. Request support from a Library Manager if they are concerned or uncomfortable about unacceptable behaviour directed towards them individually. In these incidents the Library Manager will take immediate action and follow up with the customer

Note: Where a member of staff or a customer is affected by an incident of unacceptable behaviour and expresses a preference that the incident is not followed up, the Library Manager will respond in accordance with the guidelines, even if it is contrary to the expressed preference of the member of staff or customer affected.

Procedure

It is important that any challenging behaviour is identified and addressed as soon as it is seen, or reported to, a member of staff.

Early action helps to de-escalate a situation and aims to resolve the incident as quickly as possible.

Informal Stage

All customers will be given a verbal warning when their behaviour is giving cause for concern. We will make any customer aware that their behaviour is not acceptable to give them the opportunity to stop or explain what prompted the situation. All verbal warnings must be given in a public area of the library for the safety of staff and can be given by any member of staff.

If the behaviour continues, the customer will be advised that they will be asked to leave the library for the remainder of the day. Any member of staff can ask a customer to leave for the remainder of the day.

A local decision can be made regarding the number of verbal warnings that are required before a customer is asked to leave the building, depending on the nature and frequency of the behaviour, e.g. for low level disruption it may be appropriate to issue more than one warning.

If a customer refuses to leave the building or their behaviour becomes difficult to handle, request support as identified in the **STAFF SAFETY AND SUPPORT** section above.

All exclusions should be recorded using the appropriate form – Incident form or Violence and Aggression form.

Inform the Library Manager for the site of the unacceptable customer behaviours that have taken place and if appropriate request a formal exclusion.

Exclusions are intended to give space for an individual to reflect on their behaviour and ensure we balance the needs of an individual customer with the needs of the wider public and our staff teams (recognising that customers who use our spaces can do so under the influence of intoxicants or may be going through a period of crisis).

Excluding a customer from using the Library Service should be a last resort.

Formal Stages

A written warning letter should be issued when there is a repeat of unacceptable behaviour after the customer has been asked to leave for a cooling-off period (Informal Stage).

A written warning should explain what happened and why it is not acceptable. It should also state that a ban will be considered if unacceptable behaviour continues.

Written warning letters (see template) can be issued by a Senior Library Manager.

The final option is to issue a **banning letter**. The length of the ban will be determined by the severity of the incident/type of behaviour, with bans usually lasting between 1 month and 12 months. In exceptional circumstances, or to comply with a legal order, a longer or permanent ban could be issued. As well as the seriousness of the behaviour, we will also consider the impact on staff and the public, the person's age and mental state.

It is possible to issue a banning letter without first issuing a warning letter for serious incidents where it is appropriate for the safety of other customers or staff.

For all incidents where a banning letter could be considered staff must:

- **Report the incident on the South Yorkshire Police website [Home | South Yorkshire Police](#)** and use the report menu and select the appropriate category. This will allow the Police to spot patterns of incidents, put appropriate actions and support in place and provide incident numbers. Incidents need reporting even if direct contact has been made with local Policing Teams.
- **Complete an incident report form as soon as possible after the incident.** This needs to be a detailed account of the incident and must include dates, times, a description of what happened – e.g. what was said, how the person behaved, the contact details of any witnesses – customers or staff, the Police incident number. These are available under the Health and Safety section on the Intranet.

1 month or 3-month exclusion

- 1 An exclusion of one month or three months can be made for either a single incident of unacceptable behaviour or multiple low level disruptive incidents evidenced in the Incident/Violence and Aggression forms
- 2 The Library Manager has discretion to request either a one- or three-month exclusion depending on the nature of the incident when completing the action taken section of the online Incident forms.
- 3 If an exclusion recommendation is made, then the investigating manager should make a Senior Library Manager aware and provide the evidence to support the request.
- 4 Where other services are co-located in the library where the incident has occurred, the Library Manager will liaise with other service managers to arrange alternative access to their services for excluded customers
- 5 Where an exclusion is agreed, a standard exclusion letter (see template) will be sent to the customer from the Head of Libraries and filed securely in Sharepoint.
- 6 In instances where an excluded customer enters the library during a period of exclusion staff should immediately make a Senior Library Manager aware along with details of any additional unacceptable behaviour

Follow-On Exclusion

- If, following their return to the library, the customer repeats unacceptable behaviour, a follow-up exclusion can be requested. An extension can also be requested if the customer attempts to use the library during the initial exclusion period.
- At the end of the exclusion period the excluded customer must arrange a meeting with a Senior Library Manager before they are able to re-enter any library. The purpose of this meeting is for the Senior Library Manager to discuss their return as a library customer and to ensure that they make a verbal commitment to behave appropriately in the future.

Exclusions of longer than three months

In exceptional circumstances initial exclusions of longer than 3 months will be considered on a case-by-case basis. Where appropriate, prosecutions will be pursued.

If a pattern of behaviour is observed or a more serious incident happens (where staff feel intimidated, there is intentional harassment or abuse towards staff or other customers, or physical damage of property), this will result in a **6-month exclusion from our buildings**.

If a further incident is seen or reported within 6 months of the exclusion being lifted, this will result in **12-month exclusion from our buildings**.

Where an **exclusion letter cannot be posted** to an individual, if they are a customer but not a member of the library, or we do not have their details, the exclusion letter needs to be provided in person. Where the Police or Safer Neighbourhoods Team are actively involved an **exclusion letter can be issued by the Police or Town Centre Wardens**. Where exclusions are made due to threatening or potentially violent behaviour, staff and managers should not engage with the individual but contact the Safer Neighbourhoods Team to agree the delivery of the exclusion letter.

For children or young people, the exclusion letter will go to the parents/guardian.

The exclusion will apply to all buildings and grounds within Barnsley Libraries.

Excluded Library Members can still use the e library and online resources.

An exclusion from our buildings is separate to removal of access to the People's Network computers. Customers who are restricted from accessing our buildings cannot use the People's Network, however customers with restrictions on the computers can use other services in the libraries.

Appeal Process

- All customers have the right to appeal against sanctions imposed. Any representations against an exclusion must be made to the Head of Libraries within 14 working days from the date of the exclusion letter.
- The customer will be asked to provide further information and evidence to support the appeal.
- All appeals will be considered by the Head of Service.
- Until a decision is made on the appeal, the ban will stay in force.
- The customer will be informed in writing of the outcome within 30 days including any changes to the terms of the exclusion.
- If the appeal upholds the ban, then the recipient may request a formal appeal via the Service Director, Communities. The Service Director will respond within 14 days (however in more complex cases this may take longer)

Reinstatement procedure

After the end date of an exclusion, if the customer wants to resume their use of the Library Service, they will need to contact a Senior Library Manager. The customer will be invited to meet to discuss the incident(s) which led to the exclusion.

The purpose of this meeting is for the Library Manager to discuss their return as a library customer and to ensure that they make a verbal commitment to behave appropriately in the future.

If they cannot accept the terms of the reinstatement, this will not be granted, and they can apply to be reinstated after a further 3 months. A confirmation letter will be sent confirming this and their record on the Library Management System updated.

Upon reinstatement, the customer's library ticket will be re-activated, and any customer messages will be removed from their account on the Library Management System.

Records relating to the exclusion will be kept for a period of two years to consider if any further incidents occur.

Record Keeping

When a customer is excluded, the Manager who has requested the decision needs to block the Library Card and put a customer note on the Library Management System (LMS) of the dates for the exclusion and the relevant Manager. This will prevent an excluded customer borrowing books or booking a computer. Notes on the Library Management System should contain dates of the exclusion period and a brief subject only – e.g. for antisocial behaviour. Full details of the incident should be logged on the incident form but NOT be recorded on the LMS. All notes can be shared with customers who complete a Subject Access Request.

Details of excluded customers will be kept in an individual secure folder on the Library SharePoint site for each incident, and allocated a Reference number, (formatted as: date of incident/library code e.g. 20250521/PE). This should be included on all correspondence sent to the customer, and any communications received from the customer should also be kept in the folder. All correspondence will be kept for two years and then archived.

Archived records will be kept for 6 years plus the current year.

Communicating Incidents of Unacceptable Behaviour and Exclusion Letters

- Senior Library Managers will make other Library Managers aware of any exclusion letters issued in order that the LMS record can be updated and information cascaded to frontline staff to make them aware.
- During ongoing investigations, Library Managers will provide regular updates to the frontline team of how the policy is progressing to ensure that staff are aware of the ongoing situation and can respond accordingly
- Where significant incidents have occurred, the Senior Library Manager will hold de-briefing sessions with frontline teams to provide an opportunity for staff to discuss the incident, identify support requirements and identify lessons learned

General Advice

Offensive comments

- Staff will need to recognise the difference between unintended and intended insulting comments, although both should be treated seriously.
- A customer may hold opinions that staff find offensive, including for example language used to talk about gender, sexual orientation, race, or other protected characteristics. The customer may not intend for these comments to be hurtful or upsetting but may still offend. Depending on the circumstances, staff can ignore the comment, explain why that comment is offensive, or remove themselves from the situation and find another colleague to serve the customer, depending on how staff feel and what they are comfortable doing.
- If a customer has been spoken to about unintended offensive comments but continues to make those comments, the warning/ban policy should be considered.
- Deliberately offensive comments are considered serious enough to follow the warning/banning policy as soon as the comments occur.
- Staff should not appear to agree with any comments that suggest an intolerant or uninformed view of minorities or other communities, including derogatory comments based on someone's ethnicity, gender, sexuality, religion, age, disability etc. Where possible, these views should be rejected at the time so that it is clear to all staff and customers that the library service is an inclusive and welcoming place.

- Remember that colleagues may be personally affected by derogatory comments and will benefit from the explicit support of their managers and peers.
- All comments that fall under this category should be reported to your manager so they can decide if further action is necessary.

People with mental health problems, behavioural or mental disorders

- As much as we might like to try to help people with mental health problems, that isn't the main focus of our responsibility, and we have to prioritise staff wellbeing and a welcoming, conducive atmosphere in the library.
- Disruptive and antisocial behaviour may be the result of mental health problems and should be handled sensitively. If someone is demonstrating paranoid, schizophrenic or psychotic behaviour, you can contact Safeguarding for guidance on how best to deal with it. The team can be contacted on 01226 773300 during office hours and on 01226 787789 out of hours. The council also has trained Mental Health First Aiders and they may also be able to help (contact details are available on the Intranet).
- Whilst remaining understanding and flexible when dealing with people with mental health problems, the behaviour as described above should still not be tolerated and should be dealt with in the same manner as for other library users. If other members of the public find someone's behaviour disturbing, staff are asked to use their own judgement on how to deal with this, balancing someone's mental health problems with the general harmony of the library. For example, someone with involuntary tics cannot be expected to be quiet or still, so in this instance we would ask the public to be more understanding.

People Experiencing Homelessness

- We should be welcoming of any library users who are able to abide by our policies and standards. Being dishevelled or carrying a lot of luggage is not enough in itself to warrant a warning or a ban. However, we must be aware that there is a link between homelessness and people having mental health problems or using alcohol or drugs.
- We welcome people experiencing homelessness to join the library and use our computers or borrow a book. There is a category on the Library Management System for customers with 'No Fixed Abode' and allows a limited membership.
- A verbal warning should be issued to anyone who consistently spends exceptionally long periods in public toilets where there is no apparent medical or accessibility-related reason. If a person remains in a toilet cubicle for an extended period and there is concern for their wellbeing or safety, staff should first attempt to check discreetly if the individual is okay. Where there is no response and concerns persist, appropriate steps should be taken in line with safeguarding or emergency procedures, which may include contacting a manager or emergency

services. Staff are encouraged to approach such situations with sensitivity and to consider whether health related factors may be involved before taking any action.

- A verbal warning should also be issued to anyone who leaves the facilities in a bad state; who drinks alcohol or comes in under the influence; who sleeps in the library for extended periods or who refuses to leave when the library closes. This applies whether someone is homeless or not.
- If body odour is particularly poor and is affecting other customers, a sensitive conversation can take place, being considerate of the person's situation and focusing on signposting for help and support. Only in exceptional circumstances would body odour result in an exclusion from the library and should only be considered after taking advice from professional colleagues in the Housing Options Team.
- Any damage done to library property as a result of smell, dirty clothing, leakages etc. should be tackled with a warning and/or ban.

Youths

- Younger people may try to push boundaries of what is acceptable and may not be as aware of (or interested in) what is considered tolerable by others.
- Staff are encouraged to use their discretion when dealing with youths, based on what they know of the individuals, circumstances, area and tolerance thresholds of staff and the public. Despite this, the guidance above still applies.
- Certain times of year may be particularly difficult when it comes to antisocial behaviour by youths, e.g. winter. Maintaining a working relationship with schools can help in getting support to help with ensuring their students adhere to policies regarding behaviour in the library, and to help introduce sanctions for those who do not adhere.

Your managers take your wellbeing seriously. Please discuss any issues related to dealing with unacceptable behaviour with your manager.

You can also talk to a trained Mental Health First Aiders.

Support is also available via the Employee Assistance Programme – details of which are on the Intranet.

21st May 2025