

# The Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea Library Service

## CODE OF CONDUCT IN LIBRARIES

### INFORMATION FOR MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

#### 1. Policy Statement

The Royal Borough Library staff and users have the right to a non-abusive, safe and friendly environment. We have an Unacceptable Behaviour policy to protect ALL staff and users while on Library premises or business. It is important that senior staff know what is happening on Library premises and are informed about all incidents, however minor, by staff and users.

This policy is run in tandem with the Libraries Internet Usage Policy, and supports it. It is also supported by Corporate policies concerning staff welfare and conduct.

#### 2. Security

The Service is committed to taking any measures appropriate to improve the safety of its premises and environments. In particular the Service will:

- Ensure that staff and visitors to non-public areas wear identification
- Ensure that means of calling for assistance are available in all vulnerable areas, e.g. panic buttons and that these are regularly maintained and tested, and staff trained in their use and the expected response.
- Make available personal alarms to all staff who are required to go into vulnerable areas, in particular those staff required to provide services outside the Library premises, e.g. Community Services.
- Ensure staff and public security will be considered as a high priority when any alterations are made to premises and internal design.

#### 3. Staff duties

It is the responsibility of staff to display acceptable behaviour to the public and colleagues.

The Royal Borough regards harassing or victimising someone for any reason (for instance because of their race, sex or disability) or inciting or condoning such acts by others to be gross misconduct. Similarly, serious physical or verbal abuse or bullying towards fellow employees, clients or members of the public is regarded in the same way.



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#### **4. Reporting Incidents involving members of the public**

Staff or users involved in any incidents that relate to either physical or verbal abuse must report the incident to the senior in charge at the time. Incidents will be recorded appropriately.

The Borough Racial Monitoring form should be used if appropriate. A racial incident is defined as '*any incident which is perceived to be racist by the victim or any other person*'.

The Incident/Accident form will be completed by staff in cases of:

- Any incident which results in you fearing for your personal safety, the safety of others and/or the security of library property
- Threatening behaviour towards staff or members of the public
- Vandalism
- Physical attacks on staff or members of the public
- All cases of injury to staff or public
- Any member of the public who is asked to leave Library premises
- In the case of theft, the *theft of council property form* to be filled in as well
- *Racial incident form* to be completed as well.

The purpose of these forms is:

1. To maintain an accurate record of incidents and witnesses in case any future action or claim for compensation is required.
2. For senior staff to monitor staff and building security and take action where there is felt to be an unreasonable risk.
3. For senior staff to monitor any health and safety issues and take action to ensure that a safe environment is provided for staff and public.

#### **5. Support for the public**

The senior member of staff in charge will make sure that appropriate support is offered in the event of an incident affecting a member of the public. This will include the recording of the incident, and the offer of contacting, or offering facilities to contact, the police. Westminster Pastoral Foundation offers counselling for personal, emotional and relationship problems. This service is available to members of the public on: 020 7361 4800 and charges fees according to clients' means (min. £25).

### **UNACCEPTABLE BEHAVIOUR**

#### **6. Exclusions (banning of offenders)**

The Service is committed to taking every step possible to minimise unacceptable behaviour, and in serious or persistent cases the Head of Library Service may exclude a member of the public from Library premises or services. This is a very serious step and is not taken lightly. Such exclusions are facilitated by the gathering of evidence at the time of the incident (and subsequently), and by the identification of witnesses, both staff and customers. We will keep a record of all such incidents.

In addition to long-term exclusions, senior staff are entitled to ask any individual to leave Library premises whenever the byelaws have been broken. By law, any individual refusing to leave in such circumstances can be removed by the police.

## **7. Information sharing**

The Service will make every effort to ensure that all senior staff are provided with as much information as is available about violent or abusive users, including those individuals who have been formally excluded from Library premises and facilities.

Charter forms for public comments, complaints and praise are available at all service points. All correspondence with the public will follow the Council's complaint procedure.

## **8. Legislation**

Section 4A for 1986 Public Order Act makes it an offence to cause intentional harassment, alarm or distress.

Section 5 of the 1986 Public Order Act makes it an offence to use threatening, abusive or insulting words or behaviour or disorderly behaviour, within the hearing or sight of a person to whom it is likely to cause harassment, alarm or distress, even when no intent is involved.

Protection from Harassment Act 1997 (part 5.2) makes it an offence where a person pursues a course of conduct causing harassment or causing another to fear that violence will be used against them.

**Information Updated March 2007**