

POLICIES AND STANDARDS

ACCESS POLICY

Issued: May 2002
Updated: October 2005
Updated: March 2009
Review: March 2012

Section 1 Policy Framework

1.1 As a library authority, LIHAS has a statutory duty under the 1964 Public Libraries and Museums Act to provide a public library service and to ensure that it is 'comprehensive and efficient' as defined in the document, *Comprehensive, Efficient and Modern Public Libraries*¹

1.3 This policy covers all aspects of accessibility to library services including location, opening hours, ICT, physical access, furniture and equipment, stock and services, access to staff and adequate space; and sets the standards against which individual users and communities can measure their needs, rights and expectations.

1.4 The Borough Profile

A population of 141,000³ concentrated in the urban centres of Maidenhead and Windsor in the 76 square miles of the Borough

- Highest density of population is in the wards of Clewer South, Belmont and Furze Platt
- 7.5% of the population are from black and minority ethnic groups
- 15.4% of the population is aged 65 or over
- 20% are aged under 16
- 39% of the adult population are qualified to degree level or equivalent
- 19.4% of adults are without qualifications
- RBWM is the 12th healthiest in England and Wales, although 13% have a limiting long term illness
- 14.3% of households have no car or van
- 33,116 people commute out of the Borough each day whilst 35,400 come into the Borough

Section 2 Policy and Standards for Access

2.1 Location policy

¹ Department of Culture, Media and Sport – February 2001

Currently the 11 fixed site libraries and container service cover all the main centres of population in the Borough with the exception of the Knowl Hill area in Hurley ward and the north and west of Maidenhead. In addition the Public Mobile Library Service visits 62 sites and the Special Services mobile visits 11 of the 12 homes and sheltered housing complexes occupied by more than 10 residents in the Borough. In addition over 80 elderly or housebound people are visited in their homes

The appropriateness of the mobile library routes are regularly reviewed to ensure that all rural populations and areas not within 20 minutes walking of a fixed site Library are provided with access to library facilities.

Location standards (based on PLSS)

- 100% of households to be within 2 miles of a public library
- 88% of households to be within 1 mile of a public library
- Communities with up to 1,000 people to be served at least by a mobile library
- All mobile routes to be reviewed annually

2.2 Opening hours policy

At present static and Container libraries are open for a total of 320.5 hours per week. A total of 28 hours per week are after 5pm and a further 39.5 hours on Saturdays. Length of opening hours are dependent on the size of the library and are intended to reflect local needs and interests whilst maintaining the widest possible access by the whole community.

Currently libraries close on bank holidays.

Opening hours are reviewed on a regular basis to ensure that they continue to meet the needs of the community. Opening times of libraries should enable access every weekday evening at least at one library in the Borough. Library closures for whatever reason should be kept to a minimum, as should cancellation of mobile library visits/stops.

Opening hours standards (based on PLSS)

- Proportion of households living within a specified distance of a library set by the Public Library Service Standard at 88% within one mile and 100% within 2 miles.

- Aggregate opening hours per 1000 population for all libraries to be 128. Proportion of aggregate opening hours that fall at weekends or outside 9am to 5pm on weekdays established at 30%.
- Communities with populations between 1,000 and 2,000 to be served by container libraries or static libraries open from 8 - 20 hours a week.
- Communities with populations between 2,000 and 5,000 to be served by static libraries open from 20 – 30 hours a week.
- Communities with a population of 5,000 or more to be served by a branch library open not less than 30 hours per week.
- Communities with a catchment area of more than 40,000 resident population to be served by a central library open not less than 45 hours a week.
- Proportion of planned time that service points were not available to visitors because of emergency closure of central and branch libraries and proportion of planned time that mobile service points were not available to visitors because mobile library visits/stops were missed or cancelled to be monitored.
- Opening hours to be reviewed every 2 years to consider usage, issues and alternative provisions

2.3 ICT access policy

Access to ICT is now fundamental in promoting equal opportunities of access to information and services. It is a government policy objective that *'Libraries should be a major vehicle for providing affordable (or preferably free) access to ICT at local level²*.

One of the main aims of the Library Service's ICT strategy is to 'increase access for customer and staff to information and services through the use of ICT and to bridge the gap between the information rich and the information poor.' Public Internet use in all RBWM libraries is governed by the Public Internet Access acceptable use agreement.³ The library service also aims to maximise the benefits of ICT in enabling access for disabled users to library facilities, including those affected by sensory, intellectual and cultural access barriers as well as wheelchair users. Appropriate means of accessing ICT for these users is provided at all service points.

It is a government policy objective that *'catalogues and key documents should be available on-line via the Internet.'*² The library service is accessible outside opening hours through the library web site. This provides the opportunity to check the library catalogue, join the library, renew items, make reservations, check borrowing details and be informed of events, activities and other library information online.

² *Libraries, Museums, Galleries and Archives for All.- January 2001*

³ RBWM Public Internet Access in libraries – acceptable use agreement [on screen] LCSB11/99 15/6/99

A 24-hour automated telephone renewals and information line should enable library members to renew items or access library information from anywhere and at any time.

Library members can also access a host of electronic information resources provided through the library web pages from basic reference tools to newspapers online.

ICT standards (based on PLSS)

- 100% of static service points open more than 10 hours a week to have access to electronic information resources connected to the internet
- Total number of electronic workstations available to users to equal or exceed 6 per 10,000 population
- All libraries to have appropriate hardware and software to enable access for disabled users and currency of accessibility hardware and software to be reviewed every 2 years.

2.4 Physical access policy

It is important that library buildings are easily accessible and have a welcoming, professional image. Clear external and internal signs and guiding, facilitating self-help are essential, together with appropriate furniture, lighting and equipment. The library service is also required to meet all relevant legislation requirements including health and safety standards, DDA provisions and section M of the building regulations

Physical access standards

- Parking areas are required at all libraries with reserved parking for library users and mother and child/disabled parking to be incorporated.
- Street guiding is required for ease of locating all library buildings. Ideally this will be from town/village centres/local transport links
- Adequate signing for all library buildings, well placed and well lit with clear script and contrasting colours background to include opening hours information.
- Level access from the approaches and within the demesne of the library to allow free and unobstructed passage for wheelchairs and pushchairs
- Entrance access to be ramped with rails where appropriate; steps where provided to be low and deep with the edges highlighted and handrails to be provided.
- Doors should be automatic and main entrance doors should be double doors or wide enough for double pushchair or wheelchair access. They should be glazed or partially glazed especially if outward opening. Spring closures should be avoided where possible and only delayed action type should be used. Minimum

pressure should be required to open and close any manual doors and thresholds should allow unassisted access by wheelchairs.

- Lobbies inside an entrance door should provide sufficient turning space for wheelchairs and pushchairs and any mats should fit into a well and be flush with the floor.
- Lifts should be provided in all buildings where there is more than one floor level and should allow independent use by wheelchair users. Sufficient turning space and mirrors for reverse exits must be allowed where it is not possible to turn in the lift or dual doors are not feasible.
- Corridors and passageways should be sufficiently wide to allow wheelchair access and where possible to allow pedestrian passing of wheelchairs. Seats or perching areas should be provided if the corridor is longer than 10 metres
- Non-slip flooring should be used in all areas with carpeting in public areas unless there is a wet play provision for the children's section when suitable linoleum or equivalent should be used. Short pile carpeting should always be used with anti-static properties.
- Lighting design should allow as much natural light as possible and where artificial lighting is used it should be to a level of 300-500 lux. Lighting should be positioned to avoid shadows falling on shelves or dazzling customers when browsing, and glare on ICT equipment from all sources is to be avoided. Areas of poor natural light should be given types of lighting that mimic natural light where possible. Poorly lit areas should have large areas of wall covered in light, reflective colours and ceilings should be covered in light, reflective colours to maximise the light available.

Furniture and equipment standards

- Counters should be suitable for seated and standing use, at a variety of heights with contrasting surfaces to rounded edges. There should be access for wheelchairs on both staff and visitor sides. There should be no shadowed areas, which stop lip reading, and induction/infra red loops should be included.
- Internal signs should be of a professional standard with no hand written notices, and in the 'house' style. They should have contrasting lettering and backgrounds in lower case. They should be at eye level with easy access for close viewing and glare should be minimised. A clear plan of the building, stock and services should be prominently displayed and tactile signs and symbols should be used where appropriate.
- Equipment must be safely housed at an appropriate height with no trailing wires. Reading tables should be provided to suit the height of the chairs provided whilst being appropriate for wheelchair users. Wheelchair spaces [900mm x 1400mm] should be allowed for at tables and PC's. A variety of seats should be provided at a range of heights with and without arm rests and they must be stable, clean and in good repair. Suitable seating should be provided for ICT use in the appropriate areas. Perching seats should be available where

people may have to wait, and where there are separate floors additional seating should be provided.

- Shelving should be no higher than 1500mm from floor level and no lower than 250mm from floor level, especially for Large Print stock, with the exception of the children's area. Here shelves should be no higher than 1200mm from floor level for older children, 600mm for under 5's and no lower than 250mm from floor level. There should be space around shelving and desks sufficient to allow wheelchair and pushchair access, with no protruding feet into the aisles. Where format is appropriate A/V stock should be displayed on shelving as above. Some formats may need to be shelved on tiered display units, in such cases the maximum / minimum heights should be as for books but the 'rake' of the shelving from front to back should be no more than 600mm.
- WC facilities should be accessible to all and this should include provision for assisted transfers and emergency help. Nappy changing facilities should be provided with access for men and women. Sanitary provision should be made in the ladies WC where there are separate facilities or near the nappy changing facilities where there is only one WC.
- Mobile and container libraries will have a separate specification drawn up when required based on current best practice nationally and local need

2.5 Access to Stock and Services

It is a government priority that libraries '*should aim to achieve the widest possible access to collections and knowledge*'. Libraries provide a unique mix of resources and services - they are a community resource, giving local access to networks but global reach to knowledge and opportunities to extend horizons.

LIHAS will ensure that people who have difficulty using facilities are not financially penalised or otherwise disadvantaged and that the service is accessible to the low paid, unemployed and other excluded groups. Information about services should be available and should increase public awareness and promote a positive image of the service

Service standards

- Targeted promotions of the service to excluded groups as defined in the reader development strategy at least 3 times per year.
- An information pack for members to be available at all service points including in large print format. Information will also be available in appropriate languages.
- Leaflets and bookmarks about the service to be available in a variety of formats to include large print as well as printed word. They will also be available in appropriate languages.
- Photocopying facilities will be provided at all branches, together with Internet access

- Number of library visits per 1,000 population to be 6,300 [PLSS 6]

For access to stock policy and standards see the following documents:
The Stock & Information Resource Management Policy and Standards– October 2005

2.5 Access to Staff

Staff are available at all libraries to provide help in finding books and information and with making the most of the services available. They will provide help and support in a non-judgemental way and will be trained in all aspects of customer care and cultural awareness to ensure equality of treatment. All staff will be trained up to or proficient in using relevant ICT programmes so that they can confidently use, and help customers to use the ICT and Internet facilities.

Trained staff will be available in Maidenhead and Windsor libraries at all times when they are open. Trained staff will be available by phone to assist with enquiries at other libraries when necessary and will visit individual community libraries on a regular basis, providing help and assistance to customers and staff as necessary.

Staffing standards

- The training plan will include customer care and related training on an ongoing basis to ensure that new and existing staff have the skills they need.
- In Maidenhead and Windsor libraries there will be a designated member of staff available to help customers who may need additional help.

2.7 Space policy

Section 2.4 covering the physical access policy and standards sets out the detail of what is required in a static library and its environment. For these standards to be met, the space within a static library needs to be adequate to facilitate access for all. Mobile and container libraries will have a separate specification drawn up when required based on current best practice nationally and local need

Space standard

- The net floor space in square metre per 1,000 population of the library buildings to which the general public shall have access to shall be at least 23 square metres per 1,000 population, subject to an absolute minimum of 200 square metres.

2.8 Museum Access Policy

LIHAS also covers the Windsor & Royal Borough Museum, the museum store, activities and museum outreach. There are no statutory

obligations relating to hours or space, but there are published benchmark recommendations from MLA which apply to museums
http://www.living-places.org.uk/fileadmin/user_upload/toolsguidance/Briefing_Paper_Planners.pdf

Opening hours will be clearly published. Physical access, and furniture standards will follow the policy above. Museum staff with detailed knowledge to answer enquiries will be available during their limited working hours. Trained staff will be available at Maidenhead and Windsor Library when open, to answer broad enquiries relating to the museum at other times, or when the collection is closed, or staffed by volunteer stewards. Staff will be trained to the same customer service standard as the library staff.