

STATEMENT ON SAFETY IN PUBLIC LIBRARIES

The IFLA-UNESCO Public Library Manifesto (2022) describes the public library as a living force for education, culture, inclusion and information, as an essential agent for sustainable development, and for individual fulfilment of peace and spiritual welfare through the minds of all individuals.

The public library is a special place where members of a community, regardless of their material wealth or poverty, religion or belief, age, physical or intellectual ability, gender or sexual orientation, ethnicity, nationality or cultural affiliation can freely access and use spaces and information resources to improve their lives.

But to ensure this access:

- Both local and central governments must invest appropriately in the public libraries to ensure that they have the facilities, trained staff, collection resources and technologies to safely and effectively enable this access.
- Libraries must ensure that the curation of physical and digital collections reflects the needs, interests and aspirations of the community, and does not exclude lawful content on the basis of sectarian interests or unlawful censorship.
- Library staff must be safe from physical and online threats or harassment to enable them to fulfil their role of guiding and supporting library users to freely access and effectively use library resources.
- Library staff have a responsibility to protect the safety and privacy of library customers and other staff within the library.
- Customers must be safe to access and use library collections, resources and facilities without physical threats or harassment from other members of the community.
- Customers must be safe from disrespectful and intolerant behaviour or speech related to their age, gender, sexual orientation, religion and beliefs, ethnicity or cultural affiliation.
- Customers must be safe to undertake the self-conducted pursuit of knowledge with the support from library staff.

The governing bodies and the staff of public libraries they fund have an obligation to ensure the safety of all staff and customers of the public libraries for which they are responsible.