

Public Library Byelaws for England (August 2025)

Introduction

Libraries matter to people. They are a vital public resource, helping to inspire, educate, support and entertain people of all ages and backgrounds. While visiting the library and making use of the available facilities, library users should respect the space, the facilities at their disposal, as well as library staff members and other library users.

Under section 19 of the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964 a local authority may make byelaws regulating the use of library facilities provided by it under that Act. Such byelaws must be confirmed by the Secretary of State for the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) before they can have effect.

The 1964 Act applies to England and Wales, though the Secretary of State for DCMS only exercises their powers in relation to England. Powers for Wales including the approval of library byelaws have been transferred to Welsh Government Ministers. Scotland and Northern Ireland have their own arrangements.

These model library byelaws are intended to help libraries deliver their service within a safe and comfortable environment, to safeguard library property and to make libraries places everyone can enjoy. They assist the library workforce in their daily role, can be used when necessary to deal with disruptive behaviour and allow for flexibility in dealing with local concerns.

They only apply to statutory libraries. If a local authority is unsure whether the byelaws could be used in a particular type of public library, outside of its statutory provision, it should seek its own internal legal advice.

The model library byelaws for England have been revised to reflect changes in how people use libraries whilst maintaining suitable protections and following close consultation between DCMS and Libraries Connected.

Process

The Act does not require local authorities to have byelaws in place. However, if the local authority chooses to do so, the procedure to secure approval as described below and set out in the Local Government Act 1972 section 236 (1) - (10) must be followed.

Initial Draft

1. Where a local authority wishes to use the model library byelaws to introduce or revise / update its library byelaws, the first step is to provide a completed draft version of the [public library byelaws for England template \(March 2025\)](#) available on [gov.uk](#). This should be submitted to DCMS Libraries team via email: libraries@dcms.gov.uk.
2. The sections that specifically need to be completed by the local authority are highlighted in yellow in the template. The local authority should also indicate whether it is intending to adopt the model byelaws in their entirety, without changes, or whether it is proposing amendments. The local authority is encouraged to seek its own legal advice on any proposed amendments and confirm to the DCMS Libraries team whether or not it has done so when submitting the draft version of the byelaws for consideration.
3. DCMS will consider the request and confirm whether it is content with the draft version.

Public Engagement / Inspection

4. Upon confirmation that DCMS is content with the draft byelaws, the local authority must, at least a month before it applies for formal confirmation of the final byelaws:
 - announce the proposal to revise the byelaws in one or more local newspapers circulating in the area to which the byelaws are to apply; and
 - deposit a copy of the draft byelaws at the local authority's offices (usually the record office), where they must be open for public inspection at all reasonable hours without payment.
5. The local authority is also encouraged to publish the draft byelaws on its website.
6. If a person requests a copy of the byelaws the local authority must provide a copy on payment of such sum, not exceeding 10p for every hundred words contained in the copy, as the authority may determine.
7. Following completion of the one month period for public inspection, consideration of feedback received and sign off in line with the local authority's governance arrangements, the local authority must post, by recorded delivery, the following to the DCMS Libraries team:
 - a copy of the byelaws, with the local authority's common seal;
 - a copy of the newspaper article showing the announcement; and
 - confirmation that the one month public inspection has taken place.

Simultaneously the local authority should email libraries@dcms.gov.uk indicating the sealed copy of the byelaws and supporting documents have been forwarded to DCMS for approval.

DCMS Approval

8. If content, DCMS will approve the revised byelaws and return them to the local authority. DCMS will confirm by email to the local authority that the approved byelaws and supporting documents have been returned to them.

Publication

9. Upon receipt of the approved byelaws, the local authority must display a copy of the approved public library byelaws in every library building and mobile library maintained by them and used by the public. A copy must also be deposited at the local authority's offices, to be open at all reasonable hours to public inspection without payment.
10. A copy of the byelaws shall, on application to the local authority, be furnished to any person on payment of such sum, not exceeding 20p for every copy, as the local authority may determine.
11. The local authority must send a copy of its byelaws to the proper officer of every district council in the county (if any).
12. It is also suggested that a copy is published online on the local authority library website.

Questions / Contacts

These should be addressed to:

- Libraries Connected - info@librariesconnected.org.uk
- Department for Culture, Media and Sport - libraries@dcms.gov.uk