



Guidelines for Australian home library services

1 Introduction

1.1 The Australian Library and Information Association supports social inclusion and asserts that all Australians should therefore have access to the resources and services of a public library, regardless of their circumstances. Home library service users have the same rights as other library users and should receive an equal standard of service. The home library service should be a mainstream, integral, part of a public library service, with priority equal to other services of the library.

1.2 Home library services exist to provide services to users who - through reasons including disability, illness and limited mobility - are unable to access public libraries in person.

1.3 These guidelines are intended to be used in establishing, providing and evaluating a home library service of a public library.

1.4 Parts of these guidelines may also be relevant to other libraries, including special libraries, which provide home-based library services.

1.5 The position of the home library service co-ordinator is generally a position for a qualified librarian because of the responsibilities, judgements and duties involved.

2 User eligibility

2.1 Home library services are provided to people who are unable to access a public library in person, including:

- People who have illnesses or disabilities which prevent them from accessing a library. These conditions may be temporary, recurring or permanent.
- People who are able to visit a library, but because of frailty or disability are unable to carry items home.
- People who live in residential establishments, such as nursing homes, hostels, supported-accommodation houses, hospitals or prisons.
- People who are engaged in full-time care for people.
- Young children who are in the care of any of the above groups.

2.2 There should be no age restrictions for home library service members.

2.3 Reassessment of eligibility should be undertaken by the home library service co-ordinators

2.3.1 If users become more mobile, they should be encouraged to visit their library, or to use a community bus service.



3 User profiles

3.1 An initial interview should ascertain eligibility for the home library service and ensure that the home library service is the most-appropriate option.

3.1.1 An assessment interview is to discover an eligible user's requirements of the home library service. This interview should be conducted by the home library service co-ordinator on the first visit to a new user. They should be registered as a library member at this stage if required.

3.1.2 Contact by the home library service co-ordinator should precede an assessment visit.

3.1.3 At the assessment interview, information is collected for the user profile, which is used to select materials.

3.1.4 Information to be collected may include:

- Preferred genres and subjects.
- Suitable day and time for home library service visits.
- Quantity of items needed.
- Format or formats of library materials needed.
- Relevant medical conditions.
- Contact person in an emergency.
- Access information - for example, the patron may live in a flat at the rear of a house.

3.1.5 The confidentiality of information given by home library service patrons must be maintained.

3.2 Reassessment

3.2.1 Because needs and interests may change over time, details in the user profile should be verified regularly.

3.2.2 Feedback from users should be encouraged, and any changes in requirements or interests noted.

4 Organisation

4.1 Home library services may be organised in different ways. The aim is to meet the information, recreation, cultural and education needs by bringing the service to the user.

4.1.1 Home library service users are entitled to the same standard of service as other library users, and should therefore receive service from trained staff. That is, the staff member should be of the same level of training which would normally be available to the user visiting the library in person. For example, if a librarian staffs the information desk at



the library, a librarian should also handle all information requests from home library service users.

4.1.2 The home library service should be able to cater for people with temporary or permanent conditions, and fulfil individual requirements.

4.2 Delivery methods

4.2.1 Methods of delivery may include:

- Visits to individual users, with items selected by library staff and issued to users before visits.
- Visits to individual users, with users themselves choosing from a larger number of items.
- Visits to users in residential establishments.
- Deposit stations/bulk loans at residential establishment. In deposit stations or bulk loans, items are left at a designated site with a nominated person at the residential establishment taking responsibility for the items.
- Visiting libraries at residential establishments.
- Delivery of items for an eligible user in the library, but who is unable to take the items home.

4.2.2 Visits to individual home library service users and residential establishments should be regular.

4.2.3 The average duration of visits to individual users should be fifteen minutes.

4.2.4 Delivery methods depend upon local circumstances, staffing levels, available resources and user needs.

4.3 Resources

4.3.1 Users should have access to all resources held by the library, and to the resources of other libraries through the interlibrary loan. Booklists, reading guides and other promotional material should be made available to them.

4.3.2 A collection of resources primarily for use by the home library service may be maintained. This would include resources in a range of formats, for example standard-print and large-print books and talking books.

4.3.3 A suitable vehicle for delivery of materials to users should be provided. The vehicle should be primarily for use by the home library service and garaged close to the home library service co-ordinator's base. When purchasing and modifying vehicles, occupational health and safety issues should be considered.

4.3.4 Equipment to enable users to use resources should be provided.

4.3.5 Advice on, facilitation of, and training in internet access for the home library service user should be provided.



4.3.6 Resources required by a home library service may include:

- A direct telephone line.
- A direct fax line.
- Mobile telephones.
- Clothing for staff.
- Delivering containers.
- A computer terminal and workstation close to the loading bay/parking area.
- Shelving space for the home library service collection.
- Trolleys - a lightweight trolley for deliveries and a trolley for the work area.
- Badges and cards to identify home library service staff or volunteers on delivery rounds.

4.4 Staffing

4.4.1 Administration, planning and co-ordination of the service should be by trained staff.

4.4.2 Library staff should be responsible for maintaining user-interest profiles, selecting materials, and delivery of materials.

4.4.3 If used, volunteers should be screened, selected, trained, and orientated to their work by the home library service co-ordinator.

4.4.4 Home library service work is physically and emotionally draining. home library service staff should not be involved in visits for more than four days per week.

4.4.5 Two people should visit home library service users together, for reasons of occupational health and safety and security.

4.4.6 Staffing levels should be determined from the number of users of the home library service, the frequency of visits, the level of service provided, the needs of patrons, and local conditions.

4.4.7 In the absence of home library service staff, other adequately-trained library staff should be available to maintain continuity of service.

4.5 Skills development

4.5.1 Staff in the home library service area should have the opportunity to undertake internal or external training in areas such as:

- Interpersonal skills.
- Manual handling.
- Advanced driving skills.
- Ageing awareness.
- Communicating with people with disabilities.
- Stress management.



- First aid (minimum Level One St John Ambulance, Australia).
- Personal safety.

4.6 Security

4.6.1 Home library service staff have little control over their working environments when they are away from library premises. Home library service staff should be aware of potential threats to their safety and should receive appropriate training in managing dangerous situations.

4.6.2 Security devices such as mobile telephones, two-way radios and personal alarms should be available to staff.

5 Promotion

5.1 Staff of home library services should maintain close links with providers of other community and social services likely to serve house-bound people, for example workers with 'meals on wheels' and community nursing services. People involved in the provision of such services are likely to be major sources of referrals to home library services. Similarly, people visiting home library service users should be informed about community services and communicate that information.

5.2 Council community directories, websites, newspapers and other local publications should be used to promote home library services.

5.3 The home library service co-ordinator should identify local residential establishments, ensure that managements are aware of the home library service, and work with them to determine the service needed.

Adopted 2000. Reviewed 2009.

