

## **West Berkshire Libraries Stock Management Guidelines**

### **Section 1    How We Select Stock**

### **Section 2    How We Manage and Utilise Stock**

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## **1        How We Select Stock**

### **1.1    General**

These guidelines define stock as being all the materials, both printed and electronic, acquired or borrowed to meet the needs of the community. Materials are provided in a variety of formats including books, e-books, large print books, maps, spoken word on CD and e-audio as well as subscriptions to digital resources.

Selection is done both directly by our professional Librarians and by our specialist suppliers working to a specification drawn up by the Librarians. We aim to provide books and other materials that promote books, reading, information and lifelong learning for the maximum benefit and support of the people of West Berkshire, within the budget available.

When ordering stock, we allocate each item to a specific library. Some items will remain at the same library throughout their shelf life, but many are programmed to rotate around our branch network. Any lending item may be requested for use in another library at any time.

Regional and national plans and policies also have an influence on the management of our stock. Libraries Connected is the support organisation for libraries and as part of its vision for an inclusive, modern, sustainable public library service, it has developed a suite of Universal Offers. These are Reading, Health and Wellbeing, Information and Digital, and Culture and Creativity. Delivering these Offers influences the way stock is purchased and used.



## 1.2 Methods of Selection

We aim to select stock in an efficient and cost-effective way. We regularly review our methods to ensure continued efficiency and effectiveness. It is important that we get a good deal from our suppliers and to that end we work within the Central Buying Consortium, (a group of local authorities that collaborate on a range of procurement related activities) in order to improve supplier terms and monitor their levels of service. Being part of the Consortium enables West Berkshire to achieve discounts on book purchases and book servicing which we would not be able to negotiate on our own. The CBC contract goes out to tender and runs for five years, with the option of a two-year extension. Stock from the contracted library supplier is delivered shelf-ready, with date labels, RFID security tags, jackets and spine labels.

## 1.3 Criteria

In making our decision to select or reject any items of stock we assess each item on the following grounds:

- Value for money
- Content
- Scope
- Authority
- Format and presentation
- Suitability for use in a library setting (e.g. not workbooks or books that are single use)
- Suitable for a general audience (We are not trying to be an academic library but to stock items of general appeal to a layperson)
- Language (We provide books in a foreign language and dual language texts)
- Expanding and replenishing areas that are under-represented (e.g. stock gaps)
- Requests (e.g. lists from schools and requests from customers which are passed for consideration)
- Demand (We buy extra copies of books with long reservation waiting times)
- Book groups (We buy extra copies of books to create or complete reading group sets)
- Areas of particular interest to West Berkshire communities (e.g. the horse racing collection)

## 1.4 Stock Profiles

To ensure a systematic approach to stock management and cost-effective use of resources, libraries are classified into four bands according to population, usage and community: -

- Main library – Newbury
- Major libraries -Thatcham, Hungerford
- Community libraries – Burghfield Common, Lambourn, Mortimer, Pangbourne, Theale
- At Home Library Service and Pop-Up libraries

## 1.5 Types of Materials

- **Adult Fiction** - A wide range of new, popular bestsellers in both hardbacks and paperbacks are purchased monthly via our supplier's pre-publication lists. Fiction titles are also purchased on standing order for major prize-winning book awards, as well as books that appear in the Top 20 bestseller lists. We also have a stock gap basket for requests and buy extra copies to reduce reservation numbers. Fiction stock is not only purchased for recreational / leisure purposes but also for education and social needs. West Berkshire Libraries aim to stock and promote new authors, popular authors, English translations, classics, and literary fiction. Adult Fiction genres include crime and thrillers, fantasy, historical fiction, family sagas, romance, science fiction and westerns, as well as general fiction and graphic novels.
- **Adult Non-Fiction** - A broad range of titles in subjects of popular interest / general appeal are covered to support lifelong learning, social development, research, study, leisure, and health and wellbeing. Please note that we do not purchase titles for in-depth academic study. Non-fiction titles are also purchased on standing order for major prize-winning book awards, as well as books that appear in the Top 20 bestseller lists. We also have a stock gap basket for non-fiction requests and buy extra copies to reduce reservation numbers. Content, currency and authority are used to select non-fiction stock, along with the requirement to reflect all points of view on a subject. Community needs and gaps in subject coverage are considered, taking into account budget restraints and whether or not a title has general appeal and likely demand to earn its place on West Berkshire library shelves.

- **Bestsellers** – A collection of fiction and non-fiction titles that appear in the weekly Top 20 bestseller chart provided by NielsenIQ BookScan is available from Newbury Library for a 2-week loan period with no reservations or renewal options. Thatcham Library has a Top10 fiction Bestseller collection.
- **Book Group Sets** – These are made up of 10 copies of a title for book groups to borrow each month for their meetings. There is an annual subscription charge for this service for all private book groups. This is not applicable to library run book groups. Research has proven that attending book groups offers a number of benefits: from improved mental well-being, increased social cohesion and a sense of community, to a reduction in loneliness and social isolation. Book groups also provide opportunities for readers to share their reading experiences.
- **Large Print** - There is a separate adult collection of fiction and non-fiction titles for those unable to read standard size print.
- **Foreign and Dual Language titles** – These are provided for adults and children whose first language is not English.
- **Children's Fiction and Non-Fiction** – Supplier selection is used for most of the children's stock. Our main supplier selects new stock monthly using criteria in conjunction with community profiles for each library. West Berkshire Libraries aim to support the learning development of young people, making sure material is age appropriate, attractive with relevant covers, suitable for all levels of reading ability and value for money. The Library Service takes no responsibility for the titles that children and young people may access, view or use from library stock, other than to ensure that the stock available complies with the provision in these guidelines. Children are the legal responsibility of their parents or carers, who are responsible for deciding what resources are appropriate for their children. Children's stock includes board books, picture books, beginner reads, children's fiction and non-fiction, teenage and older teenage titles. There are also dyslexia-friendly books, a Family Matters collection, audio books on CD and e-books and e-audio books for children. Children's non-fiction stock supports the National Curriculum.
- **Maps** – West Berkshire Libraries hold a complete set of Explorer and Landranger Ordnance Survey maps for customers to reserve and borrow. There is also a reference collection of local historical maps for use in the library, held at Newbury Library.
- **Reference Collection** – Reference works are purchased on standing order but are increasingly moving to online formats.

- **Family History and Local Studies** – A range of material is maintained to promote the history past and present of West Berkshire, including a complete run of the local newspaper *Newbury Weekly News* on microfilm, from the first publication in 1867 until the present day.

#### **Non-Book Materials: -**

- **Spoken Word or Audiobook CDs** - A selection of popular books in CD spoken word format is made available for adults, young people and children in all libraries. These are purchased via standing order selection, supplemented by stock suggestions.
- **Micro:bits** – Programmable devices available for loan for children to use for coding projects and ideas.
- **Wellbeing Bags and Read and Learn Bags** – With activities to help maintain health and wellbeing and to support children starting school. Activities are selected in conjunction with West Berkshire Council's Public Health team.
- **Reminiscence Collection** -This collection of themed memory boxes can help carers and families to remember the past and share experiences.
- **Jigsaws and Board Games** – These are free for customers to borrow.

#### **1.6 Digital and Online Resources: -**

Digital resources include e-books, e-audio, e-magazines and e-newspapers, all available from one e-supplier to make it easier for customers to access from home and in West Berkshire libraries. For both e-books and e-audiobooks, we offer a range of adult fiction, adult non-fiction, young people's and children's titles, the biggest demand being for adult fiction.

- **E-Audio and e-Books** – These include new releases, campaign / simultaneous access titles, extra copies to meet reservations, and stock suggestion titles. Up to 7 titles can be borrowed for both e-books and e-audio titles for 2 weeks, with an option to renew if the title has not been reserved by another user.

- **E-Magazines and e-Newspapers** – With an e-Press package from our supplier Borrowbox, up to 100 items can be borrowed by users at any one time from a selection of over 1,500 titles.
- **Online Reference Resources** – These cover Family History (*Ancestry, Find My Past*) Historical Newspapers (*British Newspaper Archive*), Encyclopedias and Dictionaries (*Britannica Online, Oxford English Dictionary, Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, Who's Who*) and *Theory Test Pro* (for learner drivers). All are available free of charge from computers and mobile devices within West Berkshire libraries, with some resources available via home computers and devices.

### 1.7 Donated and Unsolicited Stock

Not all donated items are added to stock. Items not required may be disposed of in line with our usual practices. We consider donations to stock on the same selection criteria as purchased stock. We reserve the right to decide on the most suitable location for any donated items we accept. Items accepted would normally be in excellent condition, up to date and likely to issue well. We may relax these requirements in the case of items of significant local interest.

We do not accept items sent speculatively to us by authors or publishers unless we consider them of value to the library service.

### 1.8 Controversial Material and Censorship

The library service does not endorse or promote any political, religious or social ideology and does not exercise censorship. Library collections should offer the customer the greatest possible freedom of choice and reflect all points of view. Items which have not incurred any penalty under the law will not be excluded merely because they are controversial. Items in stock will not be removed from the shelf based on the personal tastes of readers, or controversy relating to the author. In the selection of potentially controversial material, we follow the Arts Council England guidance to public library authorities on the provision of library stock that may be considered controversial. This includes the Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals (CILIP) statement on *Freedom of Access to Information* and CILIP's statement *Managing Safe and Inclusive Public Library Services* (2023). On occasion, individuals may find items in West Berkshire Libraries offensive. We do not label items to warn customers of potentially sensitive content. We only restrict access to materials to protect them from damage or theft.



## 1.9 Equality and Diversity

The library service aims to be as inclusive as possible and to provide appropriate stock to meet the needs of all customers, regardless of age, faith, gender, sexual orientation or ethnicity, and to support our activities in promoting lifelong learning, reader development and social inclusion.

- Consideration is given to reducing health inequalities by providing *Reading Well* book stock and promoting the health and wellbeing Universal Offer. Reading Well is a national offer developed by Libraries Connected in partnership with the Reading Agency.
- We provide book stock relating to the LGBTQ+ community.
- We provide Quick Reads for emergent readers and ESL (English as a second language) students.
- We provide large print and audio books for print disabled customers.
- We provide books in languages other than English and books in English which reflect the diversity of cultures within the community.

## 1.10 Reader Requests and Stock Suggestions

All stock listed in the West Berkshire Libraries online catalogue can be reserved free and delivered to the West Berkshire library of choice for collection. Customers can borrow up to 15 books and 15 audiobook CDs for 3 weeks with an option to renew items if there is no reservation on the title. If a title is in high demand, extra copies will be purchased. Library overdue fees apply for late return of items. If a title is not in the West Berkshire catalogue and is available from the SELMS catalogue, our customers will be charged a non-refundable placement charge for their reservation.

All users can make suggestions of items for library purchase to staff in libraries or via email to [library@westberks.gov.uk](mailto:library@westberks.gov.uk). Please note: due to the high number received, we cannot reply individually to promotional emails from authors or publishers. The library service reserves the right to decline to acquire items if it does not meet our selection criteria; for example, unsuitable formats, budgetary constraints, poor content or presentation, dated information or likely low demand.



## **2 How We Manage and Utilise Stock**

### **2.1 General**

Stock is managed and utilised to provide a good choice of material at each library commensurate with the appropriate Stock Profile.

### **2.2 Rotation**

Items are regarded as part of a whole West Berkshire stock and not as the permanent property of any one branch. We rotate stock from branch to branch to ensure maximum use of the items we buy. Books which have exhausted their use at one library and have potential use elsewhere are moved on. Ideally this is by pre-programmed Stock Rotation, with individual items allocated to a rotation route at point of order.

A large proportion of newly published titles are purchased for rotation, ensuring all libraries have a constantly changing selection from which customers can choose and preventing stock from stagnating in any one library. This allows the best use of financial resources and encourages the purchase of some more expensive and esoteric titles, as a single copy can circulate and be available to the widest range of borrowers across the district. In some areas of stock, where a limited range of titles is published, all new additions will rotate to ensure the widest possible choice in all libraries.

### **2.3 Valuable Items**

As a public library we are unlikely to hold any highly expensive items, which we define as items more than £75. Some local history items are valuable because they are rare and irreplaceable. We assess all such items regarding the best way of protecting and preserving them and include them in the Library's Business Continuity Plan.

### **2.4 SELMS (South East Library Management System)**

SELMS is a partnership of 14 library authorities which work together to improve and widen access to resources for all our customers. West Berkshire is a member of SELMS and supports co-operative and reciprocal links with other SELMS library members for interleading purposes. Reservation changes apply for customer loans from SELMS.



## 2.5 Audit Trail

Library stock is purchased with public money and each item of stock is a West Berkshire Council asset. Our Libraries Senior Management Team monitors the levels of withdrawn stock and issue figure trends through quarterly reports, and any variances are investigated.

To ensure that we are aware of the location and status of all stock items, several reports are run regularly by staff:

- **In Transit:** A Spydus widget is used to search for 'In transit' stock, which is dealt with daily or whenever the library is open. If an item is not found, it is set to missing, and if it has not reappeared after 6 months it is removed from the catalogue. Written procedures are in place for this.
- **Missing:** 'Missing' status is applied to stock not found on the shelves. If the item in question has not reappeared after 6 months, it is removed from the catalogue.
- **Claims returned:** A monthly report is run to identify items that have been set to the 'Claims returned' status. This status is added to an item's catalogue record when the item cannot be found / returned by the user, and it gives the customer and the library 3 months for the item to be located. These items will be set to lost after 3 months and a replacement item charge will be added to the user's account if the item is not found. Items set to claims returned status still accrue fines. Written procedures are in place.
- **Stocktake:** A manual stock count is carried out every 3 years in all libraries, using handheld scanning equipment. This enables reconciliation with the stock registered on our library management system. Missing stock is set to 'Missing at stocktake' status, then removed from the catalogue after 6 months. Statistics are kept for stocktakes.

## 2.6 Monitoring Effective Stock Performance

To maintain an effective and relevant library service for the people of West Berkshire, we continually monitor use of our stock and feed the findings back into our stock management guidelines and practice. We compare our performance with other library authorities and submit annual statistics about our stock to the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA). We also compare internally the relative performance of our branch libraries and main library. Librarians managing the stock have access to issue figure trends and other data to help them make good use of resources. The Libraries Senior Management Team considers issue figure trends at least annually and agrees actions as appropriate.

## 2.7 Annual Budget Requirements

Ahead of the new financial year, senior managers allocate the available funds to stock selectors, who agree an action plan with their line manager outlining in broad terms how they will use their allocation. Senior managers review the budget requirements of each stock area annually, based on need and regarding library service and West Berkshire Council targets.

## 2.8 Stock Promotion

This is undertaken to raise awareness of the range of stock available, to promote books, reading, literacy, lifelong learning and digital skills and to encourage users and potential users to try something new. Physical displays in libraries, use of social media, monthly e-newsletters to customers (optional) and the West Berkshire website [www.westberks.gov.uk/libraries](http://www.westberks.gov.uk/libraries) are used to highlight national promotions, new books and author events in order to target new audiences and to keep customers informed.

**West Berkshire Libraries App** - A way for library users to access their account, search the catalogue, reserve, renew and check out titles.

**Planet Library Children's App** - An interactive app for children.

## 3 How We Dispose of Stock

### 3.1 General

To maintain the appeal of our libraries, stock is regularly reviewed in order to deselect material no longer needed. This work is done by staff using guidelines drawn up by librarians ('Dead stock' guidelines).

### 3.2 Criteria for Withdrawal

The main criteria for withdrawing an item from stock are that it no longer contributes to the library offer as measured by issue figures, or the condition of a book is poor or the information it contains is no longer current and accurate.

### **3.3 Balancing Stock in and out**

In any given year we aim to remove broadly the same number of items as we add, except where investment in new or extended services increases our capacity.

We aim to replenish not less than one seventh of our stock each year to meet sensible standards of complete replacement of our total stock in not more than every 7 years.

### **3.4 Methods of Disposal**

We dispose of withdrawn items by:

- Selling withdrawn items in our libraries
- Offering donations to schools or charitable groups who use or supply books in their work with children or adults
- Collection by a book trade disposal company (World of Books)
- Recycling