LIANZA TOOLKIT - FREEDOM TO READ

Quick guide for **council call centre staff** who receive complaints from the public about resources a council-run library offers.
For more information go to https://lianza.org.nz/resources/freedom-to-read-toolkit/

AREA	YOUR ROLE	EXAMPLES AND CASE STUDIES
Situation	Members of the public may make a complaint about an item in a library collection and request for items to be removed. This includes anything in the library's collection: books, DVDs, and e-books. The complaint may also include library events, displays, or posters. The library should have a process in place for dealing with such instances. **Make sure you understand what your library policy and process is.**	Complaint example: *"Today I was in the young children's picture book section with our daughter and was shocked to see a book titled 'If you're a drag queen and you know it'.I do not see this as suitable for young children - generally there are good reasons for R ratings and why should a topic usually found in adult night clubs/entertainment scene be aimed at children? I'm not complaining about diversity - just an age-appropriate consideration of your books as young children will be browsing these."*
Library context	Libraries endorse freedom of access to information and generally oppose censorship. Having an inclusive collection that represents the diversity of our communities means holding a variety of different viewpoints and topics. The library generally does not remove books on the basis of having caused offense or being considered morally objectionable. Each library collections team assesses and places material into age-appropriate collections. Parents and caregivers are responsible for their child's selection and viewing of library materials. If a person believes an item should be censored, they can contact Te Mana Whakaatu classification office.	Know where to find your library's collection policy. Refer questions on the policy to library staff.
Processes	Know the complaints procedure for managing complaints or challenges to items or events in your library. The library might have its own complaints process for handling challenges to items, which their organisation's complaints process might cover.	For example: is there an online form to complete, or an email address for them to write to? If you don't have a system in place for recording complaints, a simple spreadsheet to record them would suffice. Share this with the Collections librarians.
Staff training	Each library should embed its complaints process into the call centre database so staff know what to do, so that call centre staff: ▪ have the process on hand ▪ understand the context behind a library having an item or event.	For example, you might direct them to a form or email address. You may use this statement, *"The library has an inclusive collection which represents the diversity of our community. As such we hold various viewpoints, events and topics."*
Handling media enquiries	Your organisation will have policies for handling media enquiries and often a communications team to support you. Enquiries should be handled differently than public complaints. Please refer to your media contacts or policy for guidance on what to do if the media contacts you about a controversial item.	A recent example was a media request to both LIANZA and Hutt City Libraries on the book 'Welcome to Sex.' LIANZA worked alongside Hutt City Libraries and the Hutt City Council media advisor to respond to the media.

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Goverance structure	Know the governance structure that the library sits within. The library's policies will link with the governing strategy. The complainant may want to escalate to the governing body. Issues may, therefore, need to be escalated to this structure, especially the communications team.	For example, if it is a public library and part of a local council, the complainant may want to complain directly to the council.
Security, de-escalation, and safety	As complaints or challenges about items in a library collection or events are often about morality or offensiveness, there is potential for these exchanges to escalate. Furthermore, the nature of the challenge may threaten a call centre staff member's own beliefs. These library principles on freedom of expression should guide any response: ▪ The public has the right to complain about or challenge items in the collection. ▪ These complaints should be treated fairly and respectfully. ▪ The variety of viewpoints and people's right to express their opinion is endorsed. ▪ Treating complaints seriously encourages user involvement and participation. These must be offset by the protection of staff from abuse. Your organisation should have guidance on unacceptable behaviour by callers/correspondents. **Ensure call centre staff are equipped to deal with difficult and potentially heated conversations by providing training on de-escalation and diffusing situations.**	Library statements on freedom of information: ► LIANZA Statement on Freedom of Information ► IFLA's Freedom of Access to Information ► IFLA Freedom of Expression Mission For example, Auckland Council's "No Excuse for Abuse" campaign.