

Guille-Allès Library Child Safety Policy and Guidelines

1. Introduction – why a child safety policy?

“Child safety is a society-wide responsibility. It is important for library staff to be aware that as part of the community working with children, they share in this responsibility.”

A Safe Place for Children CILIP 2005

The Guille-Allès Library believes that the safety and welfare of children in the library is the responsibility of every member of staff, from front-line staff to the Head of Service.

It is every child’s legal right to feel safe and secure in the library and all staff have a responsibility to ensure that this basic principle is upheld. Library staff do not assume the responsibility of a parent but do have responsibility to provide for the care, control and safety of children visiting the library.

This policy provides a framework of good practice to make the Guille-Allès Library a safe place for children to use and enjoy.

The Child Safety Policy also applies to vulnerable adults who use libraries. A vulnerable adult is defined as someone who “is or may be in need of community care services by reason of mental or other disability, age or illness; and who is or may be unable to take care of him or herself, or unable to protect him or herself against significant harm or exploitation”.

All Library staff must undergo Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks.

2. General staff guidelines for ensuring child safety

All staff must all ensure that the Library is a place where children can feel safe.

- Always listen to children and value and respect them as individuals
- Always ensure another member of staff listens and/or observes, when in a difficult or sensitive situation involving a child

- Avoid being alone with a child – a meeting with a child or young person should take place as openly as possible – always remain in public view
- Never initiate physical contact with a child
- Never lead a child by the hand out of the library in search of a parent or carer – the child should be kept in the library until parent/carer returns
- Do not make contact with children for non-library business
- Never do things of a personal nature for a child that the child could do for him or herself
- Never accompany a child into a toilet, or assist a child in using the toilet or in adjusting his/her clothes

3. Unsupervised children

Children are the legal responsibility of the parents and carers, who should always accompany young children (under the age of 8) whilst at the library. However, there will always be occasions when young children visit the library unaccompanied. Whilst not wishing to discourage children from visiting the library, staff need to take reasonable steps to ensure the safety of the child and to inform parents or carers of their responsibilities.

However, the library is a safer place for children than the streets, and while following the suggested courses of action, library staff should allow children to remain in the library.

3.1 Guidance when a young child (under 8 years of age) is found alone in the library

- Avoid being left alone with a child – try to ensure colleagues are present when dealing with unsupervised children and remain in public view
- Ask the child if an adult is aware that they are here and if s/he is expecting to be collected
- Try to contact the parent or carer; see if the child can give an address or telephone number; check registration details to see if the child or a parent/carer is a library member
- Record any response from the parent or carer on an incident form – a letter may be sent to the parent or carer reminding them of library policy regarding unaccompanied children

If you are not happy to allow the child to leave alone, and if all attempts to contact the parent or carer fail, encourage the child to stay in the library while you contact the local police station (725111). The Police Public Protection Unit will contact Children's Health and Social Care and take over protection of the child.

3.2 Unaccompanied young children at closing time

- Check on the child's situation with the support of another member of staff – are they waiting for a parent or carer to collect them?
- Try to contact the parent or carer; see if the child can give an address or telephone number; check registration details to see if the child or a parent/carer is a library member
- Wait for the parent/carer to collect the child and then explain the library's policy to them. Two members of staff should wait with the child
- Where a parent or carer cannot be contacted, contact the Police Station (725111).
No member of staff should ever take a child home
- Complete a written incident report and pass to the Customer Services Librarian. A letter will be sent to the parents and carers, reminding them of the library service's policy regarding unaccompanied children.
- If a child wishes to leave, every effort should be made to persuade him or her to stay until help has arrived. However, staff must not attempt physically to restrain a child except to prevent accident or injury when there are reasonable grounds to believe there is a real risk to the child **or** in self defence

4. Children out of school

During term-time, children of school age would not normally be using the library during the period of the school day, unless as part of a class visit or organised library activity. If a child or group of children and young people is using the library when they would normally be in school, library staff should:

- Talk to the children and attempt to discover why they are out of school
- Ask to see the appropriate pass or letter of permission if they have been allowed out of school
- If no pass or letter is produced, and the child's name and school can be identified, library staff should contact the school for advice
- If the child says they have been excluded, contact the school for advice
- If the school cannot be identified, library staff should contact the Police Station (725111)
- Complete an incident form outlining action taken and pass to the Customer Services Librarian

The library is a safer place for children than the streets, and while following the above courses of action, library staff should allow children and young people to remain in the library.

5. Organised activities on library premises

5.1 General guidelines for activities

- There must be access to a telephone on the premises
- Any equipment used must conform to safety standards
- There must be a first aid box complying with the Health and Safety (First Aid) Regulations on the premises
- Risk assessments for each activity or event should be carried out by the relevant manager or by a member of staff designated by them
- Maximum group size for each activity in each location should not exceed 60. Publicity material should advise of maximum numbers
- No child under 8 years of age should be left unaccompanied; a parent, carer or responsible older sibling must stay with the child
- At least 2 adults must be present during the activity, one of whom must be a member of library staff
- A member of library staff must be designated as the adult responsible for the children while they are on library premises
- The 'responsible adult' is responsible for the safety of children attending an event or activity in the library, however the Deputy Chief Librarian overall responsibility for the health and safety of everyone using the premises
- Ensure all reasonable steps are taken to enable disabled children to use the service and attend the activity
- Ensure that everyone is aware of fire evacuation procedures
- Publicity should specify the age of the children at whom the event is aimed, and the reminder that children under the age of 8 should be accompanied by a parent or carer. It should clearly state starting and finishing times

5.2 Before and during the activity or event

- Staff must register all unaccompanied children attending the event and keep a written record of their name and, if possible, their address and telephone number
- This register must be checked during an emergency evacuation
- All staff must wear their name badges at the event and any voluntary helpers should also be identified with name badges

5.3 Photographs

Children may not be photographed at events, either by library staff or by members of the press, unless permission has been given by the child's parent or carer. This may be in person, if the parent is attending the event, or by a permission form signed in advance.

6. Adults in library areas designated for children's use

It is important to remember that adults will use a children's library to obtain information, use the children's computers at designated times, borrow or return material and to supervise their children. However staff must be watchful of adults acting in ways that threaten a child's safety anywhere in the library and they should be responsive to a child's concerns. This is a very sensitive area and staff should be cautious, but the child's welfare must come first

An adult in a library area designated for children, but not seeming to use it, should be asked if they need help and directed to the adult library if appropriate.

If staff are concerned about an adult's behaviour they should immediately contact a senior member of staff.

If necessary, the adult should be asked to leave the area which is designated for children's use. If the adult argues against this, staff should point out they are not accusing the adult, but that the policy is there to protect children and that they are required to apply it

7. Evacuation of the library

All library staff must be familiar with evacuation procedures to ensure the safety of children in the event that library premises need to be evacuated.

- A poster clearly showing the location of the library's assembly point should be displayed in the library
- In the event of an evacuation any unaccompanied children should be taken by staff to the assembly point
- Children who are expected to be met by a parent/carer should be kept with library staff until the parent/carer claims them
- Children who are not expected to be met and who are allowed to leave the library unaccompanied may be allowed to make their own way home
- In the event of an evacuation during an organised library activity for children, staff must lead children to the assembly point and take the register of children attending the event
- The register must be checked to ensure that all children are out of the building. If a child is unaccounted for this should be reported immediately to the emergency services

8. Dealing with unacceptable behaviour

All library staff should take the following steps if confronted by unacceptable behaviour:

- Remind the child/children or young people concerned that they, like adults, are expected to act considerately towards staff and other users
- Communicate with children and young people on an individual basis as much as possible. 'Blanket' condemnation and eviction of whole groups should be avoided where possible
- Deal with challenging or unacceptable behaviour calmly and quietly and avoid putting staff or other members of the public in danger
- Children and young people should be asked to leave the library only if the behaviour is not resolved, and as a temporary measure
- If library staff feel that they or other library users are threatened or are at risk from a situation they cannot resolve, they should call the Police (725111)
- If staff witness a child being bullied, or if a child complains of being bullied in the library, staff have a duty to do whatever they can to stop it. The aggressive or abusive child should be told that his or her behaviour is not acceptable. If necessary staff will insist that he or she leaves the premises
- An incident form should be completed and a copy sent to the Customer Services Librarian who may contact the parent or carers of the child
- Only the Chief Librarian or their deputy may ban a child or young person from using the library service for a specified period

9 OUTREACH VISITS

When library staff visit another organisation for a children's event or activity, that organisation is responsible for the supervision and safety of the children

At least one member of staff from that organisation should be present at all times

Staff should wear their name badges and be prepared to comply with any security procedures required by the organisation, such as signing in and out and wearing a visitor's badge

10 USE OF PUBLIC ACCESS COMPUTERS BY CHILDREN

Public access computers are provided at the library for use by visitors to the library. Parents or carers are asked to indicate on the application form that they give consent for the child to use the internet service. The letter 'i' will be displayed in the computer record to indicate that this consent has been given.

Access to the internet is filtered, but library staff should be alert to the possibility that children and young people may still be able to access unsuitable material. If this happens, library staff should:

- Inform the child or young person that it is not appropriate, and explain why
- Pass information about the site to the Systems Manager or Deputy Chief Librarian
- Warn the child their session could be terminated if they continue to access inappropriate material
- If you are concerned, pass information about the young person and the site to the Police (725111), who may decide to contact the parents.

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