

CHILD SAFETY POLICY and GUIDELINES

MANCHESTER LIBRARIES, INFORMATION AND ARCHIVES SERVICE

CHILD SAFETY POLICY

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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

Manchester Libraries, Information and Archives Service believes that the safety and welfare of children in libraries 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 our libraries and all staff have a responsibility to ensure that this basic principle is upheld. Library staff are not generally in loco parentis (i.e. taking the responsibility of the parent), but we have a duty of care to ensure that visitors will be reasonably safe in using premises for the purpose for which they are permitted to be there. The standard of care expected in relation to children is higher than in relation to adults because staff must expect children to be less careful than adults. All library staff should be guided at all times by the essential principle in the 1989 Children Act: **“The welfare of the child is paramount”** reinforced in the 2004 Children Act.

This policy provides a framework of good practice to make Manchester libraries 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 “.

The policy will be reviewed in 3 years.

2. GENERAL STAFF GUIDELINES FOR ENSURING CHILD SAFETY

We must all ensure that Libraries are places where children can feel safe.

Library staff should follow this code of behaviour when dealing with children:

- 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
- Comfort a child who is obviously distressed, but 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 safe in the library until the 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
- Call the Manchester Contact Centre (**0161 234 5001** 24 hours - also known as the Emergency Duty Service) or the police if there is cause to believe that the child has been abandoned or forgotten (see section 3 **Specific situations**)
- Follow the Service's and the City Council's Child Protection Procedure if they have serious concerns about a child's welfare. Remember - it is not the responsibility of anyone in the service to decide whether or not abuse has taken place, but there is a responsibility to pass on concerns to the designated members of staff –Citywide Services Manager or Service Development Manager, Children and Access (see section 10 **Child Protection**)
- Report incidents relating to child safety to an immediate line manager using an incident report form and also send a copy of the form to the Citywide Services Manager.

3. UNSUPERVISED CHILDREN

The way in which library staff deal with unaccompanied children discovered in the library must be based on an awareness of the legal responsibility of the parent or carer, and the library's duty of care to all children on library premises. **Children under the age of 8 years should be accompanied and supervised by a parent, carer or other suitable, responsible adult.** All libraries should display a sign to this effect, and all publicity relating to children's activities should include the statement.

However, there will always be occasions when very 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 if the child is (apparently) under 8 years of age, bearing in mind that children are 'less careful' of their own safety than adults (*see good practice response below*). A letter may be sent by the Neighbourhood Manager or member of the Children and Access Team to the parent or carer of the child, reminding them of library policy regarding unaccompanied young children.

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 A good practice response to discovering a very young child (below 8) unaccompanied in the library:

If the child is under 8 and you are concerned about their safety:

- 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
- avoid being left alone with a child - try to ensure colleagues are present when dealing with unsupervised children and remain in public view
- record any response from the parent or carer on an incident form - a letter may be sent to the parent or carer as outlined above

If staff are not happy to allow the child to leave alone, and if all attempts to contact the parent or carer fail, staff should encourage the child to stay in the library while they contact the Manchester Contact Centre (0161 234 5001) for advice. If this is not possible, then contact the local police station.

3.2 Unaccompanied young children expecting to be met at closing time

Library staff should:

- 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?
- The child may be allowed to use library phone to phone home to ask a parent or carer to collect them. However, children should be reminded to organise this in advance if it is happening on a regular basis
- Telephone the child's home from the library to clarify the situation if necessary;
- 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 and let the ECO know (0161 234 4440)
- Where a parent or carer cannot be contacted, contact the Manchester Contact Centre (**0161 234 5001**) for advice and contact the ECO (0161 234 4440)
- If the Contact Centre cannot be contacted, or on their advice, contact the police to collect the child. **No member of staff should ever take a child home**
- Complete a written incident report and send to the appropriate line manager, copied to the Citywide Services Manager. 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 are 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 One Education on 219 6814.
- Complete an incident form outlining action taken.

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. EMERGENCY EVACUATION OF THE LIBRARY

A poster clearly displaying the library's fire regulations and assembly points must be displayed in every library.

All library staff must be familiar with procedures to ensure the safety of children in the event of the evacuation of the library premises. When the alarm sounds, a member of library staff must check that no unaccompanied children are left in the library or related spaces (meeting rooms, toilets, etc.).

In the event of an evacuation staff should take any unaccompanied children to the assembly point. An assessment of the length of the expected evacuation should be made in consultation with the designated fire officer at the location. If returning to the premises is not feasible before the library is expected to close, children who are expecting to be met by a parent/carer should be kept with library staff until the parent/carer claims them. Children who are not expecting to be met and who are allowed to leave the library unaccompanied should be allowed to make their own way home.

If there is an evacuation during an organised library activity for children, the responsible staff must lead children to the assembly point, taking 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.

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 may 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 children's library area, but not seeming to use it, should be offered seating in the adult library, or help in finding the information they require.

Concerns about an adult's behaviour should be immediately shared with the senior staff member on duty in that library. If there is no senior member of staff on site, staff must telephone the manager on duty or contact the Emergency Contact Officer. (0161 234 4440)

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. 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 PCSOs or the police
- 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 Neighbourhood Manager who may contact the parent or carers of the child.
- It may also be appropriate to follow the hate crime reporting procedures (see appendix)
- Only the Head of the Libraries, Information and Archives may ban a child or young person from using the library service for a specified period

8. USE OF STAFF TOILETS

Where there is no public toilet, staff should allow children to use the staff facilities. At certain libraries it has been agreed that this is not possible because of the layout of the building and/or staffing numbers. (Details available from Neighbourhood Managers)

9. USE OF PUBLIC ACCESS COMPUTERS BY CHILDREN:

Manchester Libraries, Information and Archives has Conditions of Use for Public Access Computers and children and young people have the same conditions and rights of access as adults, unless their parent or carer has indicated in writing that they do not wish their child to have this access.

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 ICT to ensure that future access is reviewed and blocked where necessary
- 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 Neighbourhood Manager/Central Library Customer Services Manager, who may decide to contact the parents

10. CHILD PROTECTION

Manchester City Council has its own **Child Protection Manual**. Copies are available for both public and staff in libraries and on the City Council's internet (type 'Children's Manual' into the Intranet search box).

- All library staff will undergo Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) checks or other checks in line with current government legislation.
- All members of staff in designated children's posts must receive child protection awareness training. Where library services are delivered in partnership with other agencies (e.g. Sure Start), the partners will agree a consistent approach to child safety and protection
- If library staff have serious concerns about a child's general welfare, or suspect that abuse (physical, sexual, emotional or neglect) is taking place, they should contact the department's designated officers (Citywide Services Manager, or Service Development Manager, Children and Access) to discuss the concerns and to decide a course of action. If the designated person is not available, contact the ECO (0161 234 4440)

In an emergency, call the Contact Centre (0161 234 5001) for advice, or the local police station and let the ECO know what you have done. **Always follow this procedure if you are worried or concerned about a child**

- If a child tells you they are or have been abused (discloses abuse):

1. Take the child seriously and tell them so

2. Allow the child to say what has happened to him or her, but do not ask leading questions
3. Make a note of what the child says on the Child Protection Concern Sheet (see Appendix C) and fill in an Incident Report if appropriate
4. Tell the child that you are glad they told you
5. Reassure the child that what happened is not their fault
6. Be honest with the child – tell them who you will have to contact and why – do not promise confidentiality
7. Keep the child fully informed about what you are doing
8. Contact the department's designated officer (Service Development Manager, Children and Access or Citywide Services Manager) to decide a course of action
9. If the designated officer is not available, call the Contact centre (0161 234 5001)
10. If the suspicion or allegation of abuse is against a member of staff, refer to the designated officer who will inform the Agency Nominated Officer (Head of Libraries, Information and Archives). The ANO will conduct an investigation
11. See appendix A for a chart summarising these actions

Posters giving information about child protection helplines (such as NSPCC 0800 800 5000 or Childline 0800 1111) will be displayed in every library

Children should be allowed to use library phones to call these numbers if they wish

11. ORGANISED ACTIVITIES FOR CHILDREN ON LIBRARY PREMISES

11.1 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 be estimated in advance of the activity and on safety grounds, these numbers should not be exceeded. 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.

11.2 Staffing of events and activities

- 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 Area/Neighbourhood/Central Library Customer Services Managers have overall responsibility for the health and safety of everyone using the premises.

11.3 Risk Assessments

The Facilities Management team, Area and Neighbourhood Managers and the Central Library Customer Services Manager are responsible for a general Risk Assessment of their library buildings.

The Service Development Manager (Children and Access) is responsible for ensuring that their team carries out risk assessments for each type of library activity or events carried out by them. Neighbourhood Managers and NDOs should ensure that activities carried out in their libraries have been risk assessed in advance of the activity.

11.4 Planning the activity

When planning an activity, library staff should:

- Ensure there are suitable numbers of adults to supervise the event. If a class or group is visiting, one member of staff can supervise the activity if the accompanying adults remain with the group. When using outside speakers/entertainers, one member of staff should remain with the group at all times.
- Consider general health and safety issues
- Carry out a risk assessment
- Determine a maximum attendance figure based on staffing, space and the type of activity. If there is any doubt about the ability to control numbers or an anticipated high demand, the option of issuing tickets should be considered
- Ensure that obligations under the Disability Discrimination Act are met, taking reasonable steps to enable disabled children to use the service and attend the activity;
- Ensure that they are aware of the library's first aid arrangements
- Ensure that they are complying strictly with the requirements of the library's fire certificate, if there is one, and make sure that they are aware of emergency evacuation procedures (See 5 above)

11.5 Publicity

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.

11.6 Before and during the activity or event

- All children attending an event should be registered. Children under 8 should be registered by their parents and carers
- 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
- Where staff have taken responsibility for a child, they must exercise such care as a reasonable parent would

11.7 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 (copies available on the Intranet or from the Children and Access team).

12. 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.

13. USE OF LIBRARY PREMISES BY OTHER ORGANISATIONS

If an individual or external organisation wishes to use a library for children's events or activities they must fill in the appropriate room bookings form

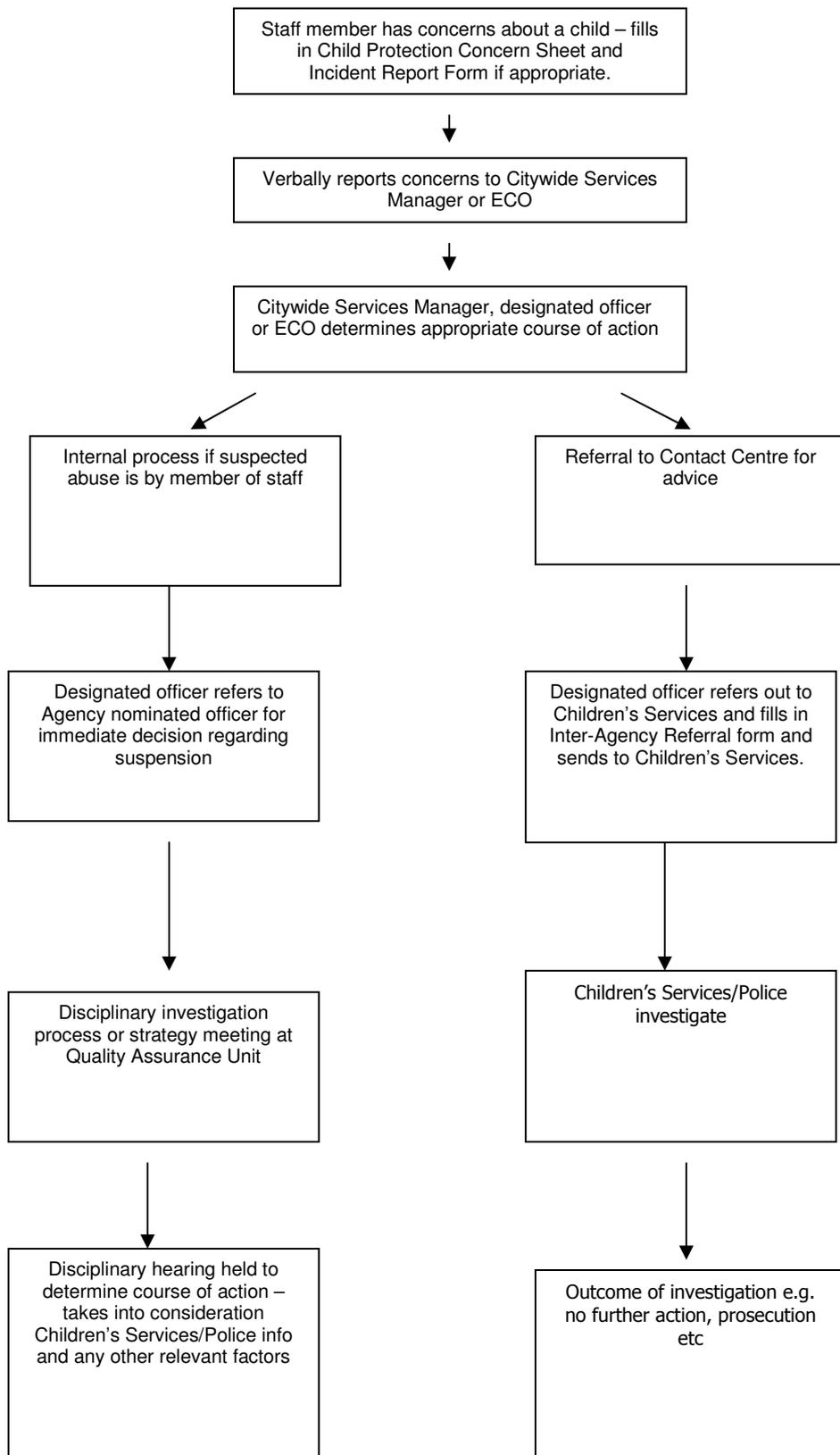
In completing this application form they agree to comply with this Child Safety Policy, as part of compliance with all Libraries Information and Archives policies

14. OTHER POLICIES & PROCEDURES RELATING TO CHILD SAFETY

- Manchester City Council Children's Services Child Protection Manual
<http://intranet.mcc.local/childrens/micare/cm/Pages/default.aspx>
- Manchester City Council Health and Safety Policy
<http://www.mcc/pmg/hsw/policies/hspolicy.htm>
- Manchester Libraries Information and Archives Library Byelaws and Regulations
http://www.manchester.gov.uk/info/500134/using_the_library/826/library_byelaws
- Manchester Libraries Public Access Computers Conditions of Use
http://www.manchester.gov.uk/info/442/computers_and_learning_in_libraries/86/computers_and_the_internet/4
- A Safe Place for Children. CILIP 2005
<http://www.cilip.org.uk/get-involved/special-interest-groups/youth/publications/children/pages/safeplaceforchildren.aspx>
- Children Act 2004
<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2004/31/contents>

APPENDIX A

What to do if you are concerned that a child is being abused



APPENDIX B

Key telephone numbers

Manchester Contact Centre Emergency Duty Service	0161 234 5001 (24 hours)
NSPCC	0808 800 5000
Childline	0800 1111

Service Development Manager (Children and Access): Cheryl Pridgeon/Margaret Clarkson	234 1926 07951 036 661 (Margaret) 07507348648 (Cheryl)
Citywide Services Manager: Jill Sharp/Jane McKelvey	234 1316 / 234 1908 07771 5533 67 (Jill) 07949 525754 (Jane)

APPENDIX C

Child Protection Concern Sheet

Name of young person: _____

D.O.B: _____ Age: _____

Address: _____

_____ Date of concern: _____

Details of concern:

Action taken:

Library: _____

Signed: _____ Date: _____ Time: _____

Named person for Child Protection Care in Library Service: Citywide Services Manager/Service Development Manager Children and Access

Signed: _____

Checklist:

Have you clearly identified:

- What happened?
- Who was involved?
- Where it happened?
- When it happened?
- Why it happened?
- How it happened?

Have you spoken to the named person in Library Service?