

Policy on safeguarding children

1.0 Purpose and overview of policy

- 1.1 The purpose of this policy is to ensure that children (everyone under 18 years of age) is safe on library premises at all times.
- 1.2 Essentially, the policy requires volunteers in the library to report, but not investigate, any instance of abuse that they might become aware of.
- 1.3 Sections 2-4 below deal with the specifics of abuse and reporting it.
- 1.4 Sections 5 onwards contain more general provisions on the library's treatment of children.

2.0 The library's safeguarding officer

- 2.1 The library's safeguarding officer is Fiona Laywood, who can be contacted on 07896 963 024.

3.0 Definition of abuse

- 3.1 Abuse can be one or more of neglect, physical, sexual or emotional. It can also be carried out by other children via bullying.

4.0 Procedure for reporting abuse

- 4.1 Abuse might be witnessed by a volunteer. Alternatively, a child might allege abuse direct to a volunteer (see later in this section for how to deal with the child should this happen). Or a third party alleges it.
- 4.2 If the case does not appear urgent, then the volunteer must pass the details on to the safeguarding officer who will progress the investigation.
- 4.3 If the case appears urgent eg a child is too frightened to go home, then contact Leicestershire County Council's First Response Children's Duty Team on **0116 305 0005**. This number is available 24 hours a day. Once contact has been made, then ensure that the library safeguarding officer is aware of the situation.
- 4.4 If volunteers witness a child being bullied, or if a child complains of being bullied in the library, volunteers have a duty to do whatever they can to stop it. If the bullying is being carried out by a child, then the aggressive or abusive child should be told that his or her behaviour is not acceptable. If necessary, volunteers will insist that he or she leaves the premises, so long as the child in question is not under 8.

4.5 If a child alleges abuse direct to a volunteer, then the volunteer should:

- Take the child seriously and tell them so.
- Allow the child to say what has happened to him or her, but should not ask leading questions.
- Make a note of what the child says.
- Tell the child that you are glad they told you.
- Reassure the child that what happened is not their fault.
- Be honest with the child – tell them who you will have to contact and why – do not promise confidentiality.
- Keep the child fully informed about what you are doing.

5.0 Do's and Don'ts when dealing with children

- Always listen to children and value and respect them as individuals.
- Always ensure that another volunteer 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 out of the library in search of a parent or carer (including by the hand). 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 the toilet or assist a child in using the toilet or in adjusting his/her clothes.

6.0 Unsupervised children under the age of 8

6.1 All children under the age of 8 should be accompanied by a responsible adult.

6.2 If a child under the age of 8 is unaccompanied in the library, then:

- Ask the child if an adult is aware that they are in the library 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 – we may want to send a letter to them.
- If all attempts to contact the parent or carer fail, then contact Leicestershire County Council Central Duty Team on **0116 305 0005**.

6.3 If an unaccompanied child is expecting to be met at closing time Library but no responsible adult has arrived, then the volunteer should:

- Check on the child's situation with the support of another volunteer – are they waiting for a parent or carer to collect them?
- The child may be allowed to use the 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.
- Wait for the parent/carer to collect the child and then explain the library's policy to them. Two volunteers should wait with the child.
- Where a parent or carer cannot be contacted, contact Leicestershire County Council Central Duty Team on **0116 305 0005** for advice.
- If the Central Duty Team cannot be contacted, contact the police on 101. No volunteer should ever take a child home.
- Make a note of the details of the incident: date and time; nature of concern and contact the Library's designated safeguarding officer, copied to Central Duty Team. A letter will be sent to the parents and carers, reminding them of the library service's policy regarding unaccompanied children. The Chair of the committee should decide whether the letter should come from them, or from the Safeguarding Officer.

- If a child wishes to leave, every effort should be made to persuade him or her to stay until help has arrived. However, volunteers 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.

7.0 Child in the library during school hours (other than via organised trip)

7.1 On the occasions that this happens, the volunteer should:

- Talk to the child or children and attempt to discover why they are out of school.
- If they say they have been allowed out of school, ask to see the appropriate pass or letter of permission.
- If no pass or letter is produced, and the child's name and school can be identified, contact the school for advice.
- If the child says they have been excluded, contact the school for advice.
- If the school cannot be identified, volunteers should contact Leicestershire County Council Central Duty Team on **0116 305 0005**.
- Make a note of the date and time and nature of the concern and pass it onto the Safeguarding Officer.

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

8.0 Children and emergency evacuations

8.1 In the event of an evacuation, volunteers should take any unaccompanied children to the assembly point.

8.2 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 volunteers until the parent/carer claims them.

8.3 Children who are not expecting to be met and who are allowed to leave the library unaccompanied (ie 8 or over) should be allowed to make their own way home.

8.4 If there is an evacuation during an organised library activity for children, the volunteers 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.

9.0 Adults in the children's area of the library

- 9.1 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.
- 9.2 If the adult remains in the children's area with no obviously good reason for being there, they should be asked to leave the area.
- 9.3 If the adult refuses to leave the children's area, volunteers 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.
- 9.4 If the adult continues to stay in the children's area, contact Leicestershire County Council Central Duty Team on **0116 305 0005** for advice and ensure that the library's safeguarding officer is made aware.

10.0 Use of public-access computers by children

- 10.1 Access to the internet is filtered, but volunteers should be alert to the possibility that children might still be able to access unsuitable material. If this happens, volunteers should:
 - Inform the child that it is not appropriate and explain why.
 - Pass information about the site to the library management committee to ensure that future access is reviewed and blocked where necessary.
 - Warn the child that their session could be terminated if they continue to access inappropriate material.

11.0 Organised activities involving children, in the library

- 11.1 In these circumstances, the following are relevant.
 - 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 two adults must be present during the activity.
 - The management committee should ensure that activities carried out in their libraries have been risk assessed in advance of the activity.

- 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.
- All children attending an event should be registered. Children under 8 should be registered by their parents and carers.
- If a child under 8 is not accompanied, volunteers must register the child 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 volunteers must wear their library lanyards at any event.
- Children may not be photographed at events, either by volunteers 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.

12.0 Use of library premises by other organisations

- 12.1 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 Children's Safeguarding Policy.

Approved by the library management committee September 2024

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