

Sunderland Public Library Child Safety Policy

The Sunderland Public Library strives to provide a welcoming facility and inviting resources to attract children and encourage them to become lifelong library users. Library staff do their best to ensure the safety of children using the Sunderland Public Library. However, the safety and well-being of children in the library is the responsibility of their parents or guardians. The intention of this policy is to enlist cooperation of parents and other adults responsible for children to ensure that the Sunderland Public Library provides a safe and pleasant experience for all who use it.

Young children left alone at the library for an extended period of time are vulnerable and at risk. Left on their own, young children are not safe from abduction and/or inappropriate attention from strangers. Young children may also become frightened or anxious as well as bored and restless, disturbing the enjoyment of other library users. For the protection of children and the well-being of other library users, the following policy has been established:

- Parents/guardians may not leave children under 10 years of age unattended in the library.
- Children under 10 must be attended by a person 14 years of age or older.
- Children aged 10 and over may be left unsupervised as long as they are able to make appropriate use of the library and are not engaged in disruptive behavior.
- **EXCEPTION:** Children under age 10 may attend a supervised library program as long as the parent/guardian or caregiver is in the building when the program is over.

DEFINITIONS:

Appropriate library use: Reading, browsing for library materials, thinking, daydreaming, conversing quietly, attending programs, using the computers, doing homework, researching, writing or volunteering.

Disruptive behavior: Behavior that represents physical danger to the child and others, or may serve to interfere with legitimate library business by other patrons or staff. Disruptive/inappropriate behavior includes fighting, talking loudly or abusively, moving furniture, throwing, running, vandalizing or any other activity which disrupts the library.

Unattended child: A Child aged 0 through nine left in the library unaccompanied by a parent/guardian or an appropriate caregiver (must be at least 14 years of age).

STAFF PROCEDURE:

If an unattended child is found in the library, an attempt to locate the parent/guardian will be made. The parent/guardian will be alerted to the library's *Child Safety Policy*. If the parent/guardian cannot be located or does not pick up their child within 15 minutes of being contacted, the police will be called to take custody of the unattended child.

If a child of any age proves unable to abide by library rules when left unsupervised, a parent/guardian or caregiver will be required to accompany and supervise the child at all times.

The Sunderland Public Library assumes no responsibility for children of any age left unsupervised at the library.