

Child Protection Guidelines

Clare County Council welcomes children into the library to use its resources, attend organised programmes and to borrow items. Clare County Library pledges to treat all children and young people equally and to respect differences of ability, culture, religion and race.

Library staff cannot completely control what material children borrow and it is the parent/guardian's responsibility to be aware of the child's use of resources. Children are welcome to use the Internet when accompanied by a parent, guardian or teacher. As is the case with other library materials, any restriction of a child's access to the internet is the responsibility of the child's parent or legal guardian.

The library is not a licensed child-minding facility, and therefore Clare County Library cannot take responsibility for and cannot provide supervision of children left unattended in the library. Children, while unattended in the library, could become lost, sick, distressed, leave the premises, or be at risk of approach from strangers.

Children under the age of eight years must be accompanied by an adult at all times in the library. This is for the child's safety. If a young child is left unattended in the library, the staff will attempt to contact the parents or guardian asking them to come and collect the child. If unable to contact the parent, staff should either approach the parent when they come to pick up the child and explain the policy or send a letter home with the child explaining that they cannot be left unaccompanied in the library and that if they continue to do so, the staff have been advised to contact the Gardaí.

In certain libraries due to the large numbers using the library in the after-school period, it may be necessary to restrict the amount of time that children may remain in the library unless accompanied by a parent or guardian.

Children regularly await collection outside libraries on closing, and it is not the responsibility of staff to wait with them. Parents should familiarise themselves with opening and closing hours of libraries. If a young child is left in the library after closing time, the librarian in charge will attempt to contact the parent/guardian. If unsuccessful, the Gardaí will be called.

Good behaviour is expected from children at all times while in the library and children must not be allowed to interfere with other people's enjoyment of the library. Parents/guardians, or if in a school group, their teachers, supervisors and the school which they attend are expected to take responsibility for the behaviour and safety of children while on library premises.

Disruptive behaviour by children in libraries is unacceptable and if it occurs the child in question will be advised that s/he is causing a disturbance and given a warning. If a teenager continues to behave in an unacceptable manner, they will be asked to leave the library immediately. If a younger child continues to misbehave s/he will be offered the opportunity to call a parent to come and collect them. If they refuse to do this, the behaviour will result in the immediate withdrawal of library facilities and services for that child and the child will be asked to leave. The child's parents will be phoned (where contact details are available) and a letter will be sent to the child's parents or guardian outlining the incident and explaining why his/her library services have been withdrawn.

Children who are asked to leave the library because of bad behaviour, will not be allowed to use the library again for at least one month and their parents will be informed of this by phone or in writing where contact details are available. After this suspension, they will be required to sign a Behaviour Contract agreeing to good behaviour. A copy of this contract will be sent home to the

parents/guardians. In the case of primary school children, the parent/guardian must accompany them when signing this form.

On re-admittance to the library after the initial month of barring, library users are advised that their behaviour will be monitored by staff and if there are further incidents of misbehaviour an indefinite barring will occur. The County Librarian will telephone parents to inform them that this second barring has occurred. The child will not be permitted to use the library during this barring period unless a parent or guardian accompanies and supervises the minor while he or she is in the library.

Library staff members may ask a library user to leave the premises without prior warning, depending upon the seriousness of the violation. The Gardaí will be called at the librarian's discretion, if anyone refuses to leave the library when requested to do so. Any abusive or threatening behaviour toward library staff will result in the immediate withdrawal of all library privileges.

Staff Responsibilities

Children could be in the library, unattended for a variety of reasons. If the child is a truant, the librarian in charge should try and establish what school the child goes to, then phone the school and inform the principal that a child is suspected of truanting.

If a child is left in the library after closing time, the librarian in charge should make every attempt to contact the parent/guardian. If no one has arrived to collect the child, then the police should be called. At no stage should a staff member attempt to drive a child home or send the child home with another person without the parent's permission. Where possible, two staff members should stay with the child until collected, or until the police arrive.

All library branches should have an incident book in which to record and date any incidents and observations that may be relevant to child protection and safety.

Patricia Fitzgerald is the person to contact in the event of a child protection concern. Please familiarize yourself with the [Council's Child Protection Policy & Procedure Document](#) (the yellow section applies to the library).