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Unattended Children Policy

Policy Number	POL/19/7[v3]
Effective Date	8 February 2019
Last Review Date	11 November 2022
Next Review Date	November 2026
Responsibility	Manager Corporate Services

PURPOSE

The Whitehorse Manningham Regional Library Corporation (WMRLC) welcomes children of all ages and their carers to our libraries and events.

WMRLC has a duty of care to all library users and staff to ensure their safety, comfort and wellbeing and that no one is placed in a situation where they are at risk.

WMRLC is committed to child safety and all interactions with children must be in accordance with the Corporation's Child Safe Policy.

This policy details the responsibilities of staff; if and when unattended children are deemed to be at risk in any of the WMRLC libraries or at a WMRLC event.

DEFINITIONS

Unattended Child: a person who is under the age of ten (10) years and not in the apparent care of a responsible person (as per Local Law No. 4; 4.8)

Parent / Carer: the legal guardian of the child or a responsible person over the age of 16 years who has been delegated responsibility for the child by its parent or legal guardian.

SCOPE

The Branch Manager / Team Leader or shift supervisor has the authority to decide if a child is unattended. Children develop and mature at different rates and so whilst 10 years and under is determined as a child that should be supervised by a parent or carer; discretion and judgment will apply when deciding if a child is vulnerable and at risk, or old enough to be alone in the library and / or sent out of the building. Factors that inform decision-making include the time of day.

POLICY

For the safety and comfort of children, a responsible parent / carer should accompany children while they are using the library services. Parents / carers are responsible for a child's welfare as well as monitoring and regulating their behaviour.

WMRLC will not take responsibility for the welfare of children left unattended in the library or at library events. Library staff will therefore seek out parents / carers when:

- an unattended child is found distressed in the library
- an unattended child is perceived to be endangering themselves or another
- an unattended child exhibits inappropriate behaviour
- an unattended child has not been met by a responsible parent / carer at closing time

If a parent / carer is not located within the library or at the library event:

- they will be contacted by phone and asked to pick up the child within an agreed time
- they will be informed that if they do not arrive within the agreed time that the police will be called
- they will be given a copy of this policy upon their arrival to pick up the child
- an incident form will be completed by the shift supervisor

If the parent / carer does not arrive to pick up the child within the agreed time, or the parent / carer cannot be contacted:

- the police will be called and requested to attend the library – the estimated time of their arrival will be noted
- the shift supervisor will continue to try to contact the parent / carer

If the parent / carer does not arrive to pick up the child at closing time:

- the police will be called and requested to attend the library – the estimated time of their arrival will be noted
- staff will continue to try to contact the parent / carer
- the shift supervisor and one other staff member will wait with the child on library premises or at the event until they are collected by a parent / carer or police
- staff will not, under any circumstances drive the child to any location

If there are repeated incidents of the same child being left unattended:

- the parent / carer will be given a copy of this policy when they collect the child and informed by the Branch Manager/Team Leader that the police will be called if this happens again

If there are repeated incidents of the same child being left unattended and being collected by the police:

- the parent / carer will be sent a copy of this policy and notified in writing that the police will be called every time the child is left unattended

Related Policies

WMRLC Occupational Health and Safety Policy
Child Safe Policy

Legislation

Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 (VIC)
Crimes Amendment (Protection of Children) Act 2014