



# Library Policy: Unaccompanied Minors

## Purpose

To provide guidance for library staff and our customers when children are unaccompanied in any library in the Whanganui District Libraries network.

## Definitions

In accordance with the Oranga Tamariki Act 1989 children are defined as persons under the age of 14.

Unaccompanied child refers to any child whose adult caregiver is not on library premises.

In our role as Whanganui District Council we are providers of services to schools, children and their families and, as such, we ensure that our policies meet the criteria set by the Ministry for Vulnerable Children under the Vulnerable Children's Act 2014.

## Principles of Care

Children are welcomed by Libraries to use its collections, services and spaces. The safety and wellbeing of children on our premises is our guiding principle at all times.

Parents or caregivers are responsible for the safety of their children, and under the law as per the Summary Offences Act 1981 must make reasonable provision for their care and supervision. Our expectation of parents and caregivers is that they supervise children while in the libraries; they are strongly recommended not to leave children under the age of 14 years unaccompanied on the premises. Caregivers must be 14 years or older and should be in a position within the building to provide adequate supervision.

While the library recognises it may be reasonable to expect older children not yet 14 years to sometimes visit on their own, each situation involving an unaccompanied child of any age will be considered on its own merits and context. Any children in our libraries during school term hours will be asked for an explanation, and a Truancy Officer may be called.

Library staff will act on any reasonable concerns about the care or safety of unaccompanied children but will not assume responsibility for the care of those children. Children behaving inappropriately – not respecting the space, the people with whom they are sharing the space, or following the direction of staff, may be asked to leave. The Police or Oranga Tamariki may be contacted if a caregiver cannot be found or contacted.

The Libraries will comply with the Whanganui District Council – Child Protection Policy. The purpose of this policy is to take all practicable measures to protect young people under the age of 14 years by providing a safe environment for children attending council-owned and operated facilities. Whanganui District Council will work in partnership with government and social development agencies to ensure the safety and wellbeing of children whilst meeting the requirements of the following legislation:

- Vulnerable Children Act (2014)
- Te Oranga Tamariki Act 1989
- Education Act 1989
- Summary Offences Act 1981