

1 INTRODUCTION

Swindon Borough Council has a duty of care to ensure that all visitors will be reasonably safe in using council premises. Swindon's library staff do not assume the responsibility of a parent but do have responsibility to provide for the care, control and safety of children visiting libraries.

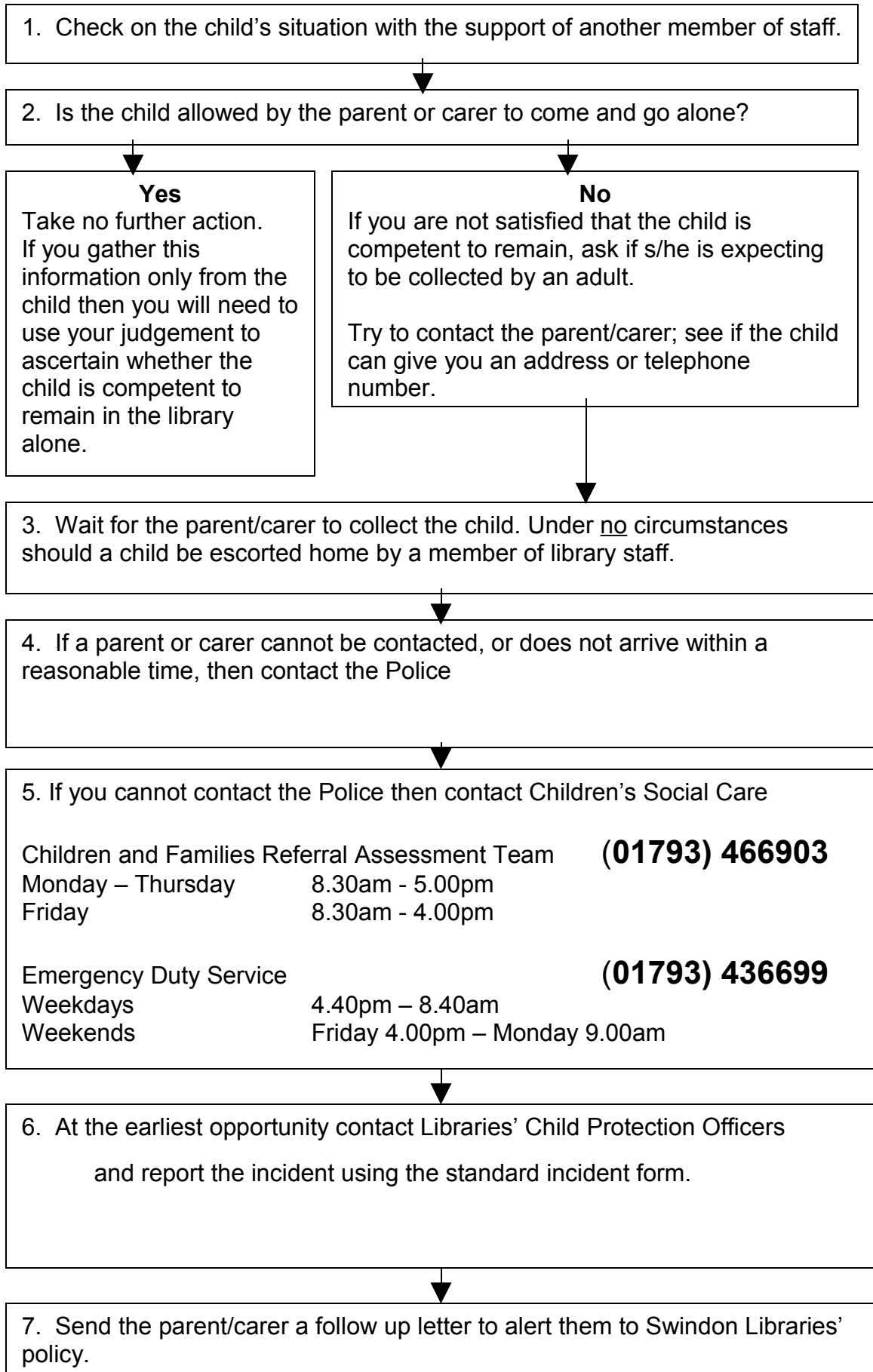
Child safety is a society-wide responsibility. It is important for library staff to be aware that, as part of the community working with children, they share in this responsibility.

This policy conforms with, and relates to, the South West Child Protection Procedures and Swindon Inter-Agency Information Sharing Protocols and Guidance for Practitioners.

2 UNSUPERVISED CHILDREN IN LIBRARIES

- 2.1 Children are the legal responsibility of their parents and carers, who should always accompany young children (under the age of 8) whilst at the library. There will be situations when young children visit the library unaccompanied. Whilst not wishing to discourage children from visiting the library, library staff must take reasonable steps to ensure the safety of the child and to inform parents/carers of their responsibilities.
- 2.2 If a young child is unaccompanied in the library without parental permission library staff will follow the procedure on page 2 which may involve contacting the parent or carer to request that they collect the child. If the parent or carer cannot be reached the Police or Social Services Duty Team may be contacted to ensure the child's safety.
- 2.3 If staff need to physically stop a child from leaving, they are permitted to use reasonable force in order to prevent accident or injury or in self defence. Where possible this should be done in the presence of another member of staff. If relying on the fact that the child may itself suffer accident or injury if not restrained, staff should have reasonable grounds for believing there to be a real risk. They must exercise such care as a reasonable parent would.
- 2.4 Children should only be released into the care of their recognised parent or carer, unless the library has been informed that the child is allowed to leave alone, or they arrived alone. Children should only be allowed to leave in the care of another child if that child is of the age and competence to be able to accept responsibility for their own or another's safety and the library has permission from the parent/carers, or the child arrived in the care of that other child.

PROCEDURE: UNSUPERVISED CHILDREN IN LIBRARIES



3.0 Truancy

If a child of school age is in the library during school hours, staff should politely ask the child why they are not at school. Remember children may have a legitimate reason for absence, or be home educated. If you believe they are truanting:

- inform the school, if this is known, or
- inform the PCSO or local beat officer, or
- inform the Education Welfare's Office, who will follow it up with the school and parent.

4 ORGANISED ACTIVITIES FOR CHILDREN ON LIBRARY PREMISES

4.1 Story and Rhyme Times

These are aimed at children under 5 years and their parents and carers, who are expected to remain with their child.

4.2 Other organised activities

When planning an event staff must ensure:

- Adequate staffing levels to supervise the event.
- Adequate space to accommodate group size.
- A maximum attendance figure is determined, based on staff, space and the type of activity.
- Any guest speakers / entertainers / volunteers should be supervised at all times, ie they should never be in the position of having unsupervised access to children.
- A risk assessment is carried out.
- Staff are aware of the library's first aid arrangements.
- Requirements of the library's fire certificate are strictly complied with.
- Attendees are aware of the evacuation procedure.
- Special needs are catered for in accordance with the Disability Discrimination Act. In providing services staff must not discriminate against any person on grounds of disability and must take reasonable steps to enable disabled children to use the service.
- Staff must not take responsibility for administering any medication.

4.3 Publicity material

Publicity should specify the age of the children at which the event is aimed. It should clearly state starting and finishing times to ensure that parents/carers know when to collect their child.

4.4 During the event

Children under the age of 8 may be left unattended by their parents for a specific organised activity with the agreement of library staff. For health and safety, and fire regulations, the library must have a written record of parent/carer name and contact telephone number for events

where children are left. Records should be kept in accordance with the Data Protection Act.

During the event, all library officers should wear their library staff badge. If a child wishes to leave the event, staff should contact the parent/carer. See also section 2 regarding unsupervised children leaving the library.

- 4.5 In order to emphasise the need for parents to supervise children within the library there are notices for display to remind them of their responsibility (See Appendices).

5 EVACUATION OF THE LIBRARY

- 5.1 All library staff must be familiar with evacuation procedures to ensure the safety of children in the event that library premises need to be evacuated.

- 5.2 In the event of an evacuation any unaccompanied children should be taken by staff to the assembly point. Children who are expected to be met by a parent/carer should remain with a member of staff until the parent/carer collects them. Children who are not expected to be met and who are allowed to leave the library unaccompanied may be allowed to make their own way home.

- 5.3 In the event of an evacuation during an organised library activity for children, staff must lead children to the assembly point and take the register of unsupervised 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.

6 ADULTS IN LIBRARY AREAS DESIGNATED FOR CHILDREN'S USE

- 6.1 It is important to remember that adults will use a children's library to obtain information, borrow or return material and to supervise their children. However staff must be watchful of adults acting in ways, which pose a risk to children.
- 6.2 An adult in a children's library area, but not seeming to use it, should be asked if they need help and directed to the adult library if appropriate.
- 6.3 If staff are concerned about an adult's behaviour they should immediately contact a senior member of staff.
- 6.4 It is essential that library officers are aware of potential dangers of children using the Internet and of the responsibility of parents or carers to ensure that their child uses the Internet appropriately, as outlined in the [People's Network Acceptable Use Policy](#):

<p>Swindon Libraries are not responsible for monitoring unsupervised children's access to the Internet. Parents and carers are responsible for setting and communicating the standards their children should follow when using computers.</p>

- 6.5 Library staff should be watchful and intervene if they have concerns about adults and children using PN terminals in a communal area. If behaviour continues to be a concern then steps should be taken to warn the adult that if the behaviour persists they will be requested to leave or potentially barred.

7 USE OF STAFF TOILETS

Where there is no public toilet, it is reasonable to allow children to use the staff facilities. Direct the child to the toilet, but do not enter the cubicle with the child. All staff should be made aware that children may be using the toilet.

8 VISITING OTHER ORGANISATIONS

- 8.1 When a member of library staff visits another organisation, e.g. a school, supervision of the children remains the responsibility of the organisation being visited. At least one member of staff from the organisation should be present at all times.
- 8.2 Any concerns a member of staff has about child protection issues whilst on a visit, should be reported to the designated child protection person in that setting, who will undertake the necessary response. Appropriate senior management should be informed.

9 SURVEYING AND CONSULTATION

Library officers must be aware of sensitivities regarding talking to children.

9.1 Surveys

If a survey gives rise to statistical data only there will be no data protection concerns. However, if library officers are collecting information from which a child could be identified, parent/carer consent is required.

Staff do not need permission from parents to ask children general questions where staff will not use or publish the information in such a way that individual children could be identified. If surveying in libraries make sure that notices are displayed that explain why children are being approached.

9.2 Interviews

When library officers are surveying children under 14 in focus groups or more detailed consultation, permission is needed from parents or the adults acting in loco parentis. Staff must provide adequate information and notice to ensure parents are kept informed.

Staff must not interview children alone, and must ensure that all one-to-one interviews with children are in public places.

All staff should wear identification while they are conducting a survey or interview.

10 AVOIDING SITUATIONS WHERE LIBRARY STAFF MAY BE IN A VULNERABLE POSITION

- Never accompany a child into a toilet.
- Avoid initiating physical contact with children, except when preventing accident, injury or in self-defence or when a young child is in distress.
- In a difficult situation involving a child try and ensure another member of staff is present.
- Do not lead a child by the hand out of the library in search of a parent. Keep them safe until a parent returns or call the police if you have cause to believe that the child has been abandoned/forgotten.
- If a child is obviously distressed do try and comfort them.
- Do not make arrangements to contact children outside the library.
- Do not do things of a personal nature for a child that the child could do for him or herself.

11 DEALING WITH UNACCEPTABLE BEHAVIOUR

Libraries should be places where children feel safe. Staff should ensure that they are aware of what constitutes unacceptable behaviour as defined in the Library Byelaws.

All staff have a responsibility to ensure acceptable behaviour in libraries, without putting themselves or others in danger.

If behaviour by an adult or child contravenes library byelaws or is deemed to put a child or another person at risk, staff have a duty to do whatever they can to stop the inappropriate behaviour, i.e. tell them that their behaviour is unacceptable. If necessary, tell them to leave the library. Complete an incident form if appropriate.

12 PHOTOGRAPHING CHILDREN IN THE LIBRARY

Care should be taken to seek consent when taking photographs of children in the library. Use the standard SBC Photograph Release Form, found at Appendix 1. The main reasons are to protect children's identity and to prevent images of children being manipulated online.

- Never identify a child in a photograph by name in any circumstance, including publicity, posters or website, e.g. do not say “Julie from Crawley enjoying story time”.
- Never use a photograph of an individual child or children without seeking the consent of the parent(s).
- Generally it is acceptable to use large group shots where it is impossible to identify an individual child; these should be captioned very generally, e.g. “story time”.
- Parental permission is required for all children under 18. For children aged 12-18, the child’s permission must also be given.

13. CHILD PROTECTION ISSUES

13.1 Criminal Record Checks

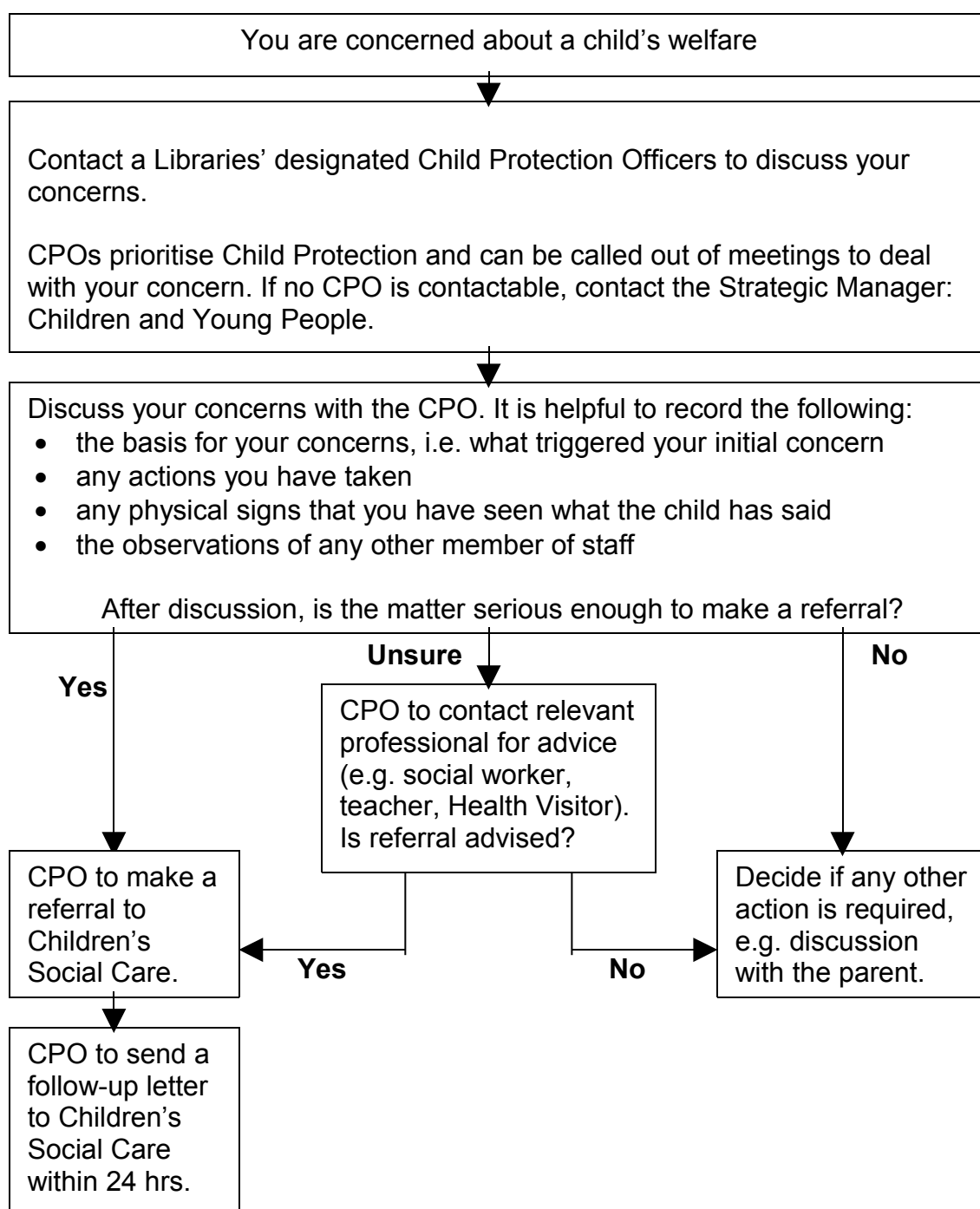
An enhanced Criminal Records Bureau Disclosure is usually required for any library staff or volunteers working with children. Please contact your line manager or HR for guidance.

13.2 Children at Risk

Local authorities have a duty to protect and investigate if a child is felt to be at risk of significant harm. As employees of the local authority and as responsible adults all library staff have a duty to report any suspicion of significant harm. SBC follows the locally agreed multi-agency South West Protection Procedures and protocols in respect of child protection (<http://www.swcpp.org.uk/>). All staff should be alert to the signs of abuse and neglect and know how to act upon concerns about a young person’s welfare. Child protection should be covered during staff induction and additional training provided in conjunction with the Local Safeguarding Children’s Board.

In reporting a concern, it is not necessary to have proof but staff do need to have serious concern. In cases of suspected ill treatment, severe neglect or abuse, the child’s welfare is paramount and staff will not be contravening the Data Protection Act if they disclose names and addresses to Children’s Social Care or the police. It will help Children’s Social Care to investigate the case if staff can supply context and evidence and their reasons for suspicion. Staff with concerns about a child should follow the procedure on **page 8**.

PROCEDURE: CHILD PROTECTION CONCERNS



Where a child or young person discloses information

Children are most likely to disclose information about abuse to people outside the family and often to a trusted adult. If this should happen stay calm:

- Listen and respect what the child is telling you
- don't interrupt, prompt or ask questions unless it is to clarify what the child or young person said (without leading them)

- reassure the child if they are upset
- you must tell the child that you cannot keep the information secret, but that you will only pass it on to people who need to know and that you will support them. Children usually disclose because they want the abuse to stop.
- write down everything: date, time, what has been said, any injuries seen
- often children will not want to make eye contact with you but will carry on looking at a book or colouring as they talk.

If a referral is made, the social worker will check files and contact the police and school to find out if anything is known about the family. From this information they will decide whether they need to take the matter further. It could be that no action is required or that the family can be offered support. Formal child protection procedures will only be followed if all the information they collate suggests it is appropriate.

Where a child protection investigation is indicated, the Child Protection Social Worker will arrange a meeting with the police officer from the Child Protection Unit to decide what action the investigation requires. You should be contacted and informed about what is happening.

13.3 **What to do if you have suspicions about another member of staff**

Dealing with an allegation that a staff member has abused a child is difficult but must be taken seriously and dealt with carefully and fairly. If it appears that the person has:

- behaved in a way that has harmed a child, or may have harmed a child, or,
- possibly committed a criminal offence against or related to a child, or,
- behaved in an inappropriate way towards a child which may indicate that he or she is unsuitable to work with children,

then the correct procedures must be followed. In many cases it may be difficult to judge on the basis of the information provided; it may be more about unprofessional behaviour or blurred boundaries between a staff member and a child or there may be no foundation in the allegation at all. However all allegations must be taken seriously and objectively and dealt with in a timely manner.

Staff should report any concerns to the Designated Senior Manager (DSM) for Child Protection:

The Strategic Manager: Children and Young People

In her absence the matter should be brought to the attention of the most senior member of staff available.

The DSM will contact the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO), for advice and guidance within one day of receiving the report, unless it appears that a child has been harmed or is at risk of significant harm. In this case an immediate referral must be made to social care or the police for investigation.

The staff member will be informed that concerns have been raised. After discussions with the person concerned they may be removed from duties that involve direct contact with children. Social services advise that, unless there has been a complaint from a child or a referral is made, the situation can be dealt with as an internal matter.

Photograph Release Form Swindon Borough Council (Version One for Internal Depts wanting to take pictures of the public which they will then use internally and externally)

Swindon Borough Council often takes photographs for publicity purposes. These may appear in our printed publications, on our website or both.

Before taking any photographs of you and your child (ren) if under 18, we need your permission and that of the child if aged 12 or more.

Please circle.

1. May we use your photograph, or that of your child (ren) if under 18, in publicity materials produced by Swindon Borough Council including printed publications, presentations and exhibitions. **Yes/No***
2. May we use your photograph, or that of your child (ren) if under 18, in publicity materials produced by Swindon Borough Council on our website? **Yes/No***
3. We regularly send publicity material about our services, including photos where appropriate to the media, especially local press. Can we use you or your child's photo in this way? **Yes/No***
4. We regularly send publicity material about our services, including photos where appropriate to the media, especially local press. Can we use you or your child's photo in this way if they wish to it on any of their websites? **Yes/No***

Please delete as appropriate. *

Please note that websites can be viewed throughout the world, not just in the United Kingdom where the law applies.



Data Protection

The photograph (s) and information you provide will be kept on file for five years and then securely destroyed under the council's disposal procedures. The council will seek renewed consent if the photograph(s)/film are to be re-used after that time. If you wish it to be destroyed before then please contact the council's Photo/film Commissioner who will be named on the form below.

Name:-----

Please Print in Capitals.

Signature:-----

Date:-----

Name of Child (if aged between 12 – 18)-----

Signature: -----

Date: -----

It would be helpful to have contact details for you, either telephone or address, please note that you are under no obligation to provide this information.

Daytime telephone number: -----

Address: -----

Please return this form to (name and address of photo commissioner at the relevant council department)

To be filled in by Council Staff

Council Department:

Photo Commissioner:

Contact Details:

Reason for Photo/filming:

Brief Description of Photo/filming:

Name of Photographer:

Contact Details:

FAO Photo Commissioner. It is your responsibility to ensure these forms are kept securely under the rules of Data Protection and to appoint another person to safeguard should you leave the employ of Swindon Borough Council. For further information contact the Data Protection Department.

Appendix 2

Supervision of Children

Library staff are here to help,
but please do not leave your child
unsupervised in the library.

In the interests of safety,
parents and carers are asked to
stay with children under the
age of 8 to ensure their safe
enjoyment of their visit.

*Thank you for your
assistance.*