

Policy Statement on Library Services to Children and Young People

Adopted by LAI AGM March 1998.

Principles

"The child shall have the right to freedom of expression; this right shall include freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers, either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art, or through any other media of the child's choice."

(U.N. Convention on the Rights of the Child, Article 13 (1), 1989)

1. Every child should have easy access to a library throughout their lives.
2. Library membership for children should be free of charge.
3. Children's library services should be given equal status to that of adults.
4. A fundamental aim of library services to children and young people is to promote literacy.

Services to Children and Young People: The Information Society

Libraries for young people, both public and school, should act as centres for information by providing books, multi-media materials and information technology resources which:

- Inform the mind and stimulate the imagination
- Encourage and foster their intellectual and social development
- Enable them to become independent, resourceful researchers and well-informed citizens
- Foster a love of reading and the pursuit of knowledge
- Help them to be discriminating in their use of information and reference sources.

Services to Children and Young People: Literacy

Libraries have a major role to play in developing and enhancing children's literacy skills by

- Working closely with schools and parents/guardians
- Providing a wide range of quality materials suitable to all ages and levels of ability
- Providing sufficient resources, supported by realistic funding.

A recent international survey on children's literacy levels has established that access to books is the most essential ingredient in the development of literacy skills.

Services to Children and Young People: Culture and the Arts

Libraries should act as cultural centres, designed to stimulate child development and creative self-expression by introducing children and young people to

- The arts (e.g. exhibitions, drama, music events, author visits and storytelling)
- The history and heritage of their communities

Services to Children and Young People: Funding

There should be parity of funding for children's and young people's services. In particular, library authorities should ensure that a bookfund at a level appropriate to its population is provided. IFLA guidelines for public libraries state: "when children up to 14 years of age constitute 25%-30% of the population, children's books should comprise one third of the total stock".

Services to Children and Young People: Staffing

Work with children is an integral and vital part of each public library authority's service provision. It is essential that suitably qualified staff are responsible for the delivery and co-ordination of services, liaising with schools and outside agencies. Each large library within a service should have at least one trained member of staff with responsibility for work with young people.

Services to Children and Young People: Children's Libraries and School Libraries - Working together

Public libraries should maintain close contact with all local schools and the library authority should maintain regular and close liaison with educational services. There should be a statutory obligation to provide libraries in schools at all levels of education. The scope and objectives of school library services, and the role of public libraries in operating them, should be fully defined and properly funded in the context of the educational support services being put in place at regional level. Links should be established with other community groups such as pre-schools and parents' groups.

Services to Children and Young People: Planning and Development

Library authorities should recognise services to children and young people as a distinct and important area of provision in preparing and implementing their library development programmes and should commit sufficient resources - financial, human and material - to this aspect of the service.

Children's libraries should be relaxed, safe, informal, accessible and appropriately

equipped.

Services to Parents, Guardians, & Educators

Library authorities should acknowledge the special role of parents and guardians, and pay attention to their information needs. The provision of child-care information to carers, teachers, and other educators should be supported. Modern information services should include current awareness services and regular targeted programmes on illuminating the role and extent of relevant services and information products.

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