



Safeguarding Children Missing Child Policy

Safeguarding and Welfare Requirement: Child Protection

Providers must have and implement a policy, and procedures, to safeguard children.

Policy Statement

Children's safety is maintained as the highest priority at all times both on and off premises. Every attempt is made through carrying out the outings procedure and the exit/entrance procedure to ensure the security of children is maintained at all times. In the unlikely event of a child going missing, our missing child procedure is followed.

Procedures

Child going missing on the premises

- As soon as it is noticed that a child is missing, the key person/staff alerts the Leader.
- The register is checked to make sure no other child has also gone astray.
- The setting leader will carry out a thorough search of the building and out door areas.
- Doors and gates are checked to see if there has been a breach of security whereby a child could wander out.
- If the child is not found, the parent is contacted and the missing child is reported to the police. A recent photo and a note of what the child is wearing is given to the police.
- The setting leader talks to the staff to find out when and where the child was last seen and records this.
- The setting leader contacts the chairperson and reports the incident. The chairperson, with the management committee, (or proprietor) carries out an investigation and may come to the setting immediately.

Child going missing on an outing

This describes what to do when staff have taken a small group on an outing. The setting has a policy for outings to ensure the safety of children at all times.

What to do when a child goes missing from a whole setting outing may be a little different, as parents usually attend and are responsible for their own child.

- As soon as it is noticed that a child is missing, staff carry out a headcount/ register call to ensure that no other child has gone astray.

- One staff member searches the immediate vicinity but does not search beyond that.
- The senior staff member on the outing contacts the police and reports that child as missing.
- The setting leader is contacted immediately and the incident is reported.
- The setting leader contacts the police and reports the child as missing.
- The setting leader contacts the parent(s).
- Staff take the remaining children back to the setting as soon as possible or contacts all parents for earlier collection as appropriate.
- In an indoor venue, the staff contact the venue's security who will handle the search and contact the police if the child is not found.
- Our manager contacts our [chair, director or owner] and reports the incident. Our [chair, director or owner] comes to our premises immediately to carry out an investigation, [with our management team (where appropriate)].
- Our staff keep calm and do not let the other children become anxious or worried.
- The setting leader, or designated staff member may be advised by the police to stay at the venue until they arrive.

The investigation

- The setting leader together with the chairperson or representative from the management committee or owner, speaks with the parent(s) and explain the process of the investigation.
- The chairperson and management committee or owner, carry out a full investigation taking written statements from all the staff in the room or who were on the outing.
- Each member of staff present writes an incident report detailing:
 - The date and time of the incident.
 - Where the child went missing from e.g. the setting or an outing venue.
 - Which staff/children were in the premises/on the outing and the name of the staff member who was designated as responsible for the missing child.
 - When the child was last seen in the premises/or on the outing, including the time it is estimated that the child went missing.
 - What has taken place in the premises or on the outing since the child went missing.
 - The report is counter-signed by the senior member of staff and the date and time added.
- A conclusion is drawn as to how the breach of security happened.
- If the incident warrants a police investigation, all staff co-operate fully. In this case, the police will handle all aspects of the investigation, including interviewing staff. Children's Social Care may be involved if it seems likely that there is a child protection issue to address.
- The incident is reported under RIDDOR arrangements (see the Reporting of Accidents and Incidents policy); the local authority Health and Safety Officer may want to investigate and will decide if there is a case for prosecution.
- In the event of disciplinary action needing to be taken, Ofsted are advised.
- The insurance provider is informed.

Managing people

- Missing child incidents are very worrying for all concerned. Part of managing the incident is to try to keep everyone as calm as possible.
- Staff will feel worried about the child, especially the key person or the designated carer responsible for the safety of that child for the outing. They may blame themselves and their feelings of anxiety and distress will rise as the length of time the child is missing increases.
- Staff may be the understandable target of parental anger and they may be afraid. Setting leaders need to ensure that staff under investigation are not only fairly treated but receive support while feeling vulnerable.
- The parents will feel angry, and fraught. They may want to blame staff and may single out one staff member over others; they may direct their anger at the setting leader. When dealing with a distraught and angry parent, there should always be two members of staff, one of whom is the setting leader and the other should be the chairperson of the management committee or representative, or the proprietor. No matter how understandable the parent's anger may be, aggression or threats against staff are not tolerated, and the police should be called.
- The other children are also sensitive to what is going on around them. They too may be worried. The remaining staff caring for them need to be focused on their needs and must not discuss the incident in front of them. They should answer children's questions honestly but also reassure them.
- In accordance with the severity of the final outcome, staff may need counselling and support. If a child is not found, or is injured, or worse, this will be a very difficult time. The chairperson or proprietor will use their discretion to decide what action to take.
- Staff must not discuss any missing child incident with the press without taking advice.

This policy is reviewed annually, or as deemed necessary.

Policy reviewed and updated.....(date)

Signed.....