



## Missing Child Policy

### Policy Statement

Children's safety is our highest priority, both on and off the premises. Every attempt is made through our systems and procedures to ensure that children do not go missing or get lost whilst in our care. Staff undertake periodic head counts especially between session transitions.

### Child Missing on the Premises Procedure

In the unlikely event that a child is unaccounted for on the premises, the following procedure is used:

- As soon as it is noticed that a child is missing staff will alert the setting manager/deputy manager.
- The manager/deputy manager will carry out a thorough search of the building and gardens.
- The register is checked to make sure no other child is missing and the child hasn't already been collected.
- Doors and gates are checked to see if there has been a breach of security whereby a child could wander out.
- If, following a thorough search the child is not found, the missing child is reported to police and the child's parents are contacted.
- The manager/deputy talks to staff to establish what happened and find out when and where the child was last seen and records this.
- The manager/deputy will contact the Chairperson of the Management Committee to report the incident.

### Child Missing on an Outing Procedure

In the unlikely event that a child goes missing during an outing where parents are not attending, the following procedure is used:

- As soon as it is noticed that a child is missing, staff on the outing will ask all children to stand with their designated person and carry out a headcount to ensure no other child has gone astray.
- One staff member will thoroughly search the immediate vicinity but does not search beyond that.
- The manager/deputy (if not on the outing) will be contacted and make their way to the venue to aid the search and be point of contact for the police and to support staff.
- The manager/deputy will contact the police using the mobile phone and reports the child missing.
- Staff will take the remaining children back to the setting.
- The manager/deputy will contact the missing child's parents and arrange for them to make their way to the setting or the outing venue



- The manager/deputy will contact the Chairperson of the Management Committee who will come to the setting as soon as possible.
- **In an indoor venue**, the staff will contact the venue's security who will handle the search and contact the police if the child is not found.

### The investigation procedure

- Staff keep calm and do not let the other children become anxious or worried.
- The manager/deputy together with the Chairperson or Representative of the Management Committee speaks with the parent(s).
- The Chairperson of the Management Committee carries out a full investigation taking written statements from all the staff present at the time, or who were on the outing.
- The key person/staff writes an incident report detailing:
  - the date and time of the report
  - what staff/children were in the group/outing and the name of the staff designated responsible for the missing child
  - when the child was last seen in the group/outing
  - what has taken place in the group/outing since the child went missing
  - the estimated time that the child went missing
- A conclusion is drawn to how the breach of security happened
- If the incident warrants a police investigation, all staff cooperate 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 RIDOR arrangements and is recorded in the incident book. 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 is informed.
- The Playgroup's insurance company 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.
- The staff will feel worried about the child, especially the key person or the designated carer responsible for the safety of that child on the outing. Staff may be the understandable target of parental anger. Staff leaders need to ensure that staff under investigation are not only fairly treated but receive support while feeling vulnerable.



- When dealing with a distraught and angry parent, there should always be two members of staff, one of whom is the manager/deputy and the other the Chairperson of the Management Committee or representative. No matter how understandable the parent's anger should 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.
- 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 will use their discretion to decide what action to take. Staff must not discuss any missing child incident with the press without taking advice.