

Waltham Forest Early Years Guidance

Lost or missing child policy and procedure prompt guidance

Early Years, Childcare & Business Development Service

London Borough of Waltham Forest (LBWF) Early Years, Childcare & Business Development Service have written this document to help you write a lost or missing child policy for your setting. This document is for reference only and you must adapt it to reflect the service your setting offers. To download guidance on other policies and procedures go to <https://thehub.walthamforest.gov.uk/>

Whenever we say parents in this document, we mean parents and carers and whenever we say child, we mean children and young people aged 0 to 19 years old (up to 25 years old for young people with SEND).

Aim

The purpose of developing this policy statement is to give all staff a clear understanding of how to respond and who to inform should they discover a child is missing.

Therefore, the aims of such policy are to:

- Provide a clear procedure which is understood and effectively implemented by staff.
- Enable the missing child to be located as quickly as possible

Staff need to be mindful that a child can go missing at any time of the day.

What measures do you currently have in place to ensure that a child does not go missing from your setting or on an outing?

- Do you have information to Parents and staff about challenging unknown persons on the premises and at the door?
- If a parent/carer arrives at your setting to collect a child who is not on the register that day what are your procedures? Do you follow up with the school/club where the child was last known to be? Do you keep a record? Do you follow up with the parent/carer
- Collection policy for children? Do you have one? is this made known to staff and parents
- Do you use a Password system for collecting children? Do you record children's entry and departure times of attendance?
- How do you ensure you are always aware that all attending children are on site?
- How often do you check the register?
- How do parents and visitors access your premises bell, reception area? Are your areas of access secured monitored?

- What do you do as part of your daily risk assessments to ensure doors and gates are checked to see if there has been a breach of security whereby a child could wander out?
- Supervision of children at all times- do staff know what the expectations are i.e. head counts, staff deployment, clear about transition arrangements?
- Are there sufficient staff to maintain ratios with backup plan?
- Do you research trips prior to them taking place? Are risk assessments completed? Do these assessments include: facilities, suitability for age? Are children assigned to staff prior to the outing taking place?

In the event that a child does go missing here are some points that will need to be considered in the development of your policy

- You must inform parents and carers of your procedure to be followed in the event of a child going missing.
- What will you do if a child goes missing from an outing where parents are not attending and responsible for their own child?
- How will you know if a child is missing (regular roll call register/headcounts etc.)?
- As soon as a child is thought to be missing who will you tell immediately? Consider how you will tell staff without causing panic.
- You must start searching immediately. Consider how you will do this and where you will search? Do all members of staff how you will keep in contact while the searching is taking place? Think about redeployment of staff to allow staff to search, but also making sure that the children at the setting are safe. This may involve arranging the regrouping of children and staff
- How long will the search continue before you call for police assistance?
- If the child is not found immediately – you will need to call the police on 999. Who will do this and from where?
- Parents are also to be informed of the situation. Who will do this and from where?
- The police will want to know:
 - Where you are (address of setting).
 - The next of kin of the child.
 - A detailed description of the child, including age, sex and as much information about their clothing as possible working down from head to toe.
 - The circumstances of the incident, including anything that may have triggered the disappearance, how long the child has been missing, where they were last seen, if there was an argument (older child).

- Who is looking for the child, where are they, do they have a mobile with them, what is the number?
- What was the exact time the child was last seen and where?
- Staff should continue to search (until advised otherwise by the police). Always consider Ofsted and the welfare requirement ratios for the children still at the setting
- You will need to document the incident so far, (including actions taken, times and any conversations and advice from the police. Who will do this and where will this be recorded? Who will continue to document the incident?
- The child's parents will need to be contacted using the contact details you hold. You will need to continue calling until contact is made. Who will do this?
- Who else needs to be told at this point? Consider management structure, governing body, committees, Ofsted.
- If the child is found, what procedure will you follow? Consider if the child is injured or unwilling to return to the setting how this will be managed? How will you document the incident and who will you report it to (parents, Ofsted Safeguarding in Education)?
- You must tell Ofsted of the incident, and its outcome, in writing. If the incident results in a serious accident, illness or injury, or death of, any child whilst in your care, the provider must notify Ofsted, please see [EYFS Statutory Framework 3.73](#).
- You will need to review your risk assessments after a child goes missing. Who will do this? When will you do this? How will you inform the rest of the staff of the actions arising from the updated risk assessment?

INVESTIGATION

- Who will conduct the investigation and talk to staff to establish what happened? Including taking written statements from all the staff present at the time of the incident? Will this be the Ofsted registered person of the setting the manager or responsible person/s i.e chair of committee?
- Who will liaise with the safeguarding team to ensure oversight of the incident?

The incident report should detail

- the date and time of the report.
- what staff/ children were in the group/outing.
- when the child was last seen in the group/outing.
- what has taken place in the group/outing since then.
- the time it is estimated that the child went missing.

- What is your process for drawing a conclusion as to how the breach of security happened?
- Are you aware that all staff must co-operate fully if the incident warrants a police investigation?
- Do you understand that the incident must be reported under RIDDOR arrangements and recorded in the incident book as the local authority health and safety officer may want to investigate and will decide if there is a case for prosecution?
- Are you aware that your insurance company must also be informed?

Useful information and websites

- HSE Health & Safety Executive: www.hse.gov.uk, info line: 0845 345 0055 and advisory line 0300 003 1747
- Report or find a missing person <https://www.gov.uk/report-missing-person>
- A brief guide to controlling risks in the workplace and a risk assessment and policy template are available to download from www.hse.gov.uk/risk/controlling-risks.htm
- Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (ROSPA): www.rospa.com/