



Missing Child Policy

Statement of intent

At Little Me, it is our intention to maintain children's safety as the highest priority at all times both on and off the premises.

Aim

We aim to ensure that 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.

Method

If a child goes missing from the setting:

- The person in charge will carry out a thorough search of the building and outside area.
- The register is checked to make sure no other child has also gone astray.
- Doors and gates are checked to see if there has been a breach of security whereby a child could wander out.
- The supervisor talks to staff to establish when and where the child was last seen and records this.
- If the child is not found the parent is contacted and the missing child is reported to the police.
- The supervisor contacts the manager and reports the incident.

If a child goes missing from an outing where parents are not attending and responsible for their own child:

- As soon as it is noticed that a child is missing, staff on the outing ask children to stand with their designated person and carry out a headcount to ensure that no other child has gone astray. One staff searches the immediate vicinity but does not search beyond that.
- The supervisor/manager is informed, if she is not on the outing, and makes her way to the venue to aid the search and be the point of contact for the police as well as support staff.
- The police are contacted and the child reported as missing.
- The person in charge of the outing contacts the child's parent who makes their way to Little Me Pre-school or outing venue as agreed with the person in charge.
- Staff take the remaining children back to Little Me Pre-school.

- 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.
- The person in charge contacts the management who comes down to Little Me Pre-school as soon as possible.

The investigation

- Staff keep calm and do not let the other children become anxious or worried.
- The manager/committee chairperson 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;
 - when the child was last seen in the group/outing;
 - what has taken place in the group/outing since then; and
 - the time it is estimated that the child went missing.
- 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 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.
- OFSTED is informed.
- The Insurance provider is informed.

Managing people

- Part of managing the incident is to try and keep everyone as calm as possible.
- Staff will feel worried about the child, especially the key person or 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. The supervisor needs to ensure that staff under investigation are not only treated fairly 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. When dealing with a distraught parent, there should always be two staff members. Aggression or threats against staff are not tolerated and the police should be called.
- The other children may too 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 outcome, staff may need counselling and support.
- Staff must not discuss any missing child incident with the press without taking advice.