



## Childcare practice procedures

### Absence

We take steps to ensure that children are kept safe, that their wellbeing is promoted, and they do not miss out on their entitlements and opportunities. At the very least, good attendance promotes good outcomes for children. In a small minority of cases, good attendance may also lead to early identification of more serious concerns for a child or family.

There are several reasons why a child may be absent from a setting. In most cases it is reasonable to expect that parents/carers alert the setting as soon as possible, or in the case of appointments and holidays give adequate notice. In the case of emergency or sickness absence, parents are advised that they should contact the setting no later than one hour following the time the child would have been expected to attend. Designated persons must also adhere to Local Safeguarding Partners (LSP) requirements, procedures and contact protocols for children who are absent or missing from childcare.

### Unexplained Absence

If a child who normally attends fails to arrive and no contact has been received from their parents, the designated person will:

- take immediate action to try to contact their parents or carers to seek an explanation for the absence and be assured that the child is safe and well; and
- if initial contact attempt is unsuccessful, continue to try to contact the child's parents or other named carers throughout the day on the first day of absence.

If no contact is made with the parents and there is no means to verify the reason for the child's absence i.e. through a named contact on the child's registration form, this is recorded as an unexplained absence and is followed up by the leader each day until contact is made.

If contact has not been made within three working days, children's services will be contacted for advice about making a referral. Other relevant services maybe contacted as per LSP procedures.

All absences are recorded with the reason given for the absence, the expected duration and any follow up action taken or required with timescales.

Absence records are retained for at least three years, or until the next Ofsted inspection following a cohort of children moving on to school.

If at any time further information comes to light that gives cause for concern, procedure Responding to safeguarding or child protection concerns is immediately followed.

## **Safeguarding of absent vulnerable children**

- The designated person or key person attempts to contact the parents to establish why the child is absent. If contact is made and a valid reason given, the information is recorded in the child's file.
- Any relevant professionals involved with the child are informed, e.g. social worker/family support worker.
- If contact is made and the designated person is concerned that the child is at risk, the relevant professionals are contacted immediately. The events, conversation and follow-up actions are recorded. If contact cannot be made, the designated person contacts the relevant professionals and informs them of the situation.
- If the child has current involvement with social care, the social worker is notified on the day of the unexplained absence.
- If at any time information comes to light that gives cause for concern, Safeguarding children, young people and vulnerable adults procedures are followed immediately.

## **Safeguarding**

- If a child misses three consecutive sessions and it has not been possible to make contact, the designated person calls Social Care and makes a referral if advised.
- If there is any cause for concern i.e. the child has a child protection plan in place or there have been previous safeguarding and welfare concerns, the designated person attempts to contact the child's parent/carer immediately. If no contact is made, the child's absence is logged on Safeguarding incident reporting form, and Social Care are contacted immediately, and safeguarding procedures are followed.

## **Poor/irregular attendance**

Whilst attendance at an early years setting is not mandatory, regular poor attendance may be indicative of safeguarding and welfare concerns that should be followed up.

- In the first instance the setting leader should discuss a child's attendance with their parents to ascertain any potential barriers i.e. transport, working patterns etc and should work with the parent/s to offer support where possible.
- If poor attendance continues and strategies to support are not having an impact, the setting leader must review the situation and decide if a referral to a multi-agency team is appropriate.
- Where there are already safeguarding and welfare concerns about a child or a child protection plan is in place, poor/irregular attendance at the setting is reported to the Social Care worker without delay.

In the case of funded children the local authority may use their discretion, where absence is recurring or for extended periods, taking into account the reason for the absence and impact on the setting. The setting leader is aware of the local authority policy on reclaiming refunds when a child is absent from a setting.