



1.5 Missing child policy

Policy Statement

At Little Gillies, Safety is maintained as the highest priority at all times both on and off the premises. Every attempt is made through carrying out the outings procedure and the exit/entrance procedure to ensure the safety of children is maintained at all times.

We take the safety of the children in our care very seriously; the chance of finding a missing child safe is greatest if the child's absence is soon discovered. Staff will undertake periodic headcounts and in addition the registration procedure. This policy contains the procedures to follow, if in the event of a member of staff not being able to account for a child's whereabouts.

Little Gillies teaches the children about keeping themselves safe through everyday occurrences and conversations and planned activities.

Where this policy refers to the 'chair of trustees, the responsibility goes to the next senior member of staff/board of directors, in their absence.

Procedures

IF A CHILD GOES MISSING ON THE PREMISES THE FOLLOWING PROCEDURE MUST BE FOLLOWED:

- As soon as it is noticed that a child is missing, the key person/staff alerts the manager and ask the remaining children, without alarming them, if they have seen the missing child
- The manager will carry out a thorough search of the building, outside area and garden.
- The room leader, to which room the child has gone missing from, ensures all adults are aware of the situation and takes the register to make sure no other child, has also gone astray
- Doors and gate 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/carer is contacted and the missing child is reported to the police



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- The manager talks to the staff to find out when and where the child was last seen and records this
- The manager contacts the managing director and reports the incident. The managing director, with the board of directors, carries out an investigation and if at all possible comes to the setting immediately.

IF A CHILD GOES MISSING ON AN OUTING, THE FOLLOWING PROCEDURES MUST BE FOLLOWED:

When staff have taken a small group of children on an outing, leaving the manager and/or other staff back at the setting.

- 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 member searches the immediate vicinity but does not search beyond that
- In an indoor venue, the staff contact the venue's security/staff who will handle the search and contact the police if the child is not found
- The manager is contacted immediately and the incident is reported
- The manager contacts the police and reports the child as missing
- The manager contacts the parent/carer, who makes their way to the setting, or outing venue as agreed with the manager/police. Little Gillies is advised as the best place, as by the time the Parent/carer arrives, the child may have been returned to the setting
- On advice by the police, staff may take the remaining children back to Little Gillies
- The manager may be advised by the police to stay at the venue until they arrive. If this happens, then ratios of adult : child (see the outings policy) can be adjusted only after an agreement with the manager and a further risk assessment carried out. If the manager feels that the ratios cannot be compromised then they will make arrangements for someone to meet the group, at the outing venue, so ratios can be maintained.



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- The manager contacts the managing director and reports the incident. The managing director, with the board of directors, carries out an investigation and if at all possible, comes to Little Gillies immediately.

When all staff, including the manager, has taken all the children on a whole setting outing, leaving no members of staff back at the setting.

- The manager must be supernumerary on all outings
- 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 member searches the immediate vicinity but does not search beyond that
- The manager is told immediately and the incident reported
- The manager contacts the police and reports the child missing
- The manager contacts the parent/carer, and agree with them the best course of action to take, depending on the circumstances
- Staff take the remaining children back to Little Gillies
- The manager may be advised by the police to stay at the venue until they arrive. If this happens, then ratios of adult : child (see the outings policy) can be adjusted only after an agreement with the manager and a further risk assessment carried out. If the manager feels that the ratios cannot be compromised then they will make arrangements for someone to meet the group, at the outing venue, so ratios can be maintained.
- In an indoor venue, the staff contact the venue's security/staff who will handle the search and contact the police if the child is not found
- The manager contacts the managing director and reports the incident. The managing director, with the board of directors, carries out an investigation and if at all possible, comes to the setting immediately

When a child is accompanied by their parent/carer or other responsible adult, it is agreed that they are responsible for their own children at all times.

Formation of a crisis team



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Once the police are informed of the missing child, it would be expected for the police to then take the lead role in co-ordinating the search. However, Little Gillies will form a 'crisis team' consisting of a minimum of the manager and the managing director.

The manager and the managing director will contact anyone else they believe should be involved in the crisis team e.g. other board of directors, the child's key person. During the whole time the child is missing, the manager and managing director will be in constant contact.

The main responsibilities of the crisis team will be;

- To co-operate fully with the police
- To ensure the child's parents/carers are kept up to date with happenings
- To support staff member, especially the member of staff who was responsible for the child when they went missing
- To be the point of contact for everyone involved in the search/investigation, e.g. police, parents, ofsted, LADO, children's services

The crisis team will take advice from the police, during and after the search, in the best way to handle any situation that occurs while the child is missing and will follow their advice fully.

The member(s) of staff who were responsible for the child when they went missing will be fully supported at all times by the manager and managing director. They will not be left on their own at any time the child is missing. The manager and managing director will seek advice from the police and LADO of further support that can be given after the child is found.

The investigation

- Staff must keep calm and do not let the other children become anxious or worried
- The manager, together with the managing director speaks with the parents/carers
- The board of directors, carry out a full investigation taking written statements from all the staff in the room or who were on the outing



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- The key person/staff member writes an incident report detailing;
 1. The name of the missing child
 2. Date of birth of the missing child
 3. The name of the missing child's key person
 4. The date and time of the report
 5. What staff/children were in the group/outing and the name of the staff designated responsible for the missing child
 6. When the child was last seen in the group/outing
 7. What has taken place in the group or outing since the child went missing
 8. The time it is estimated that the child went missing
- This report is then signed by the key person/responsible adult, the manager and the managing director
- A consultation is drawn as to how the breach of security happened
- A post incident risk assessment will be carried out following any incident of this nature to ensure that every step has been taken to minimise the incident reoccurring
- If the incident warrants a police investigation, all staff must co-operate fully. In this case, the police will handle all aspects of the investigation which includes interviewing staff. Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) and Ofsted will be involved if it seems likely that there is a child protection issue to address.

Norfolk County Council Children's Services

LADO team

01603 404040

- The incident is reported under RIDDOR arrangements (see the reporting of accidents and incidents policy)

RIDDOR

www.hse.gov.uk/contact

For reporting fatal or major incident only contact : The incident contact centre



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0845 300 9923

- 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 insurance provider is informed

Managing people

- Missing child incidents are worrying for all those 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. 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 manager needs to ensure that staff under investigation are not only fairly treated but receive support whilst feeling vulnerable
- The parents/carers will feel angry and fraught. They may want to blame staff and may single out one staff member to the others; they may direct their anger at the manager. When dealing with a distraught and angry parent/carers, there should always be two members of staff, one of whom is the manager. No matter how understandable the parent/carers' anger may be, aggression or threats to staff are not tolerated, and the police will be called.
- When speaking with parents/carers, we will be clear about the circumstances surrounding the incident and will respond sympathetically to questions without implications or admission of responsibility.



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Responses could include;

1. A full investigation is in hand
2. That Ofsted and LADO have been informed and will be investigating
 - 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 the children's questions honestly but also reassure them
 - In accordance to 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 manager will use their discretion to decide what action to take
 - Staff must not discuss any missing child incident with the press without taking advice from the manager. In the meantime 'no comment' must be replied at all times.

Informing other parents

We recognise that other parents/carers will need to be given brief, accurate information as rapidly as possible. We will ensure this happens by:

- Talking to parents/carers when they arrive to collect or drop off their children
- Sending a letter home with each child, signed by the manager

When the child is found

We recognise that during the time a child is missing, however briefly, all involved, parents/carers and others; suffer great fear, guilt and distress. It is not always easy to control these emotions when a child is found. We will accept that it is important to remember:

- That the child also might have been afraid, distressed and might need comforting
- Remain calm and reassure the child
- Ensure the child is not hurt



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- Acknowledge that this is not the child's fault
- That the incident provides a good opportunity to talk to all the children to ensure that they understand that they must not leave the premises and why

All policies and procedures are implemented, reviewed and updated on an annual basis or in line with any changes to local and national guidance/legislation in conjunction with the registered person.

This policy was adopted at a meeting of Little Gillies

Held on.....

Date to reviewed

Signed on behalf of the provider.....

Name of signatory.....

Role of signatory.....

Reviewed by Sarah Beresford

Date June 2023