



MISSING CHILD POLICY

1. Missing Definition

- 1.1 When a child's whereabouts cannot be established and where the circumstances are out of character or the context suggests the child may be the subject of a crime or at risk of harm to themselves or another.
- 1.2 This policy has been written in reference to the Children Missing Education (2016) which is statutory guidance that sets out key principles to enable local authorities in England to implement their legal duty under section 436A of the Education Act 1996 to make arrangements to identify, as far as it is possible to do so, children missing education (CME).

2. Is the Child at Significant Risk?

2.1 A child missing from their Host Family or social activity would be prioritised as 'significant risk' where:

- The risk posed is immediate and there are substantial grounds for believing that the child is in danger through their own vulnerability. Vulnerability characteristics may include;
 - Children on a plan (Early Help, Child in Need, Looked After or Child Protection Plan);
 - A disability and/or special educational needs;
 - Substance misuse;
 - Education health care plan.
- The risk posed is immediate and there are substantial grounds for believing that the public is in danger;
- There are indications that the child has already come to harm (CSE, grooming, radicalisation etc.).

2.1 Other contributory factors should be taken into consideration when determining if the child is at significant risk, for example:

2.2 Have there been past concerns about this child and family which together with the sudden disappearance are worrying?

- Is there any known history of drug or alcohol dependency within the family?
- Is there any known history of domestic violence?
- Is there concern about the parent/carer's ability to protect the child from harm?
- Is this very sudden and unexpected behaviour?
- Have there been any past concerns about the child associating with significantly older young people or adults?
- Was there any significant incident prior to the child's unexplained absence?
- Has the child been a victim of bullying?

- Are there health reasons to believe that the child is at risk? e.g. does the child need essential medication or health care?
- Was the child noted to be depressed prior to the child's unexplained absence?
- Are there religious or cultural reasons to believe that the child is at risk? e.g. rites of passage, female genital mutilation or forced marriage planned for the child?

3. Prevention

3.1 Ensure that Homestays are secure and to prevent access by unknown persons entering into the home

3.2 Ensure the child knows to stay close to the staff member or Host Family when on a social activity, assessing the child's stage of development to ensure the level of supervision that is needed.

3.4 Ensure the child has read and understood the Pupil Handbook and knows how to be safe and the procedure to take should in the unlikely event they become separated from the staff member or host family.

3.5 To remind the child the dangers of wandering off, the cultural differences within their Host Family and their surrounding area.

3.6 Encourage the child to walk with staff or their Host Family and not at a distance.

3.7 Advise the child of what to do in the event they find themselves lost.

3.8 Each child to have a Berkeley Guardian lanyard with an up-to-date photograph of themselves.

3.9 Recognise the child's age and stage of development to identify a meeting point on arrival on a social activity should they become separated.

4. Procedure

4.1 Immediately make a search of the surrounding area or home.

4.2 Request help from people around you.

4.3 If in a public building, to alert the staff of the situation and ask for assistance in searching for the missing child.

4.4 If in a place where it is possible to seal of exits and access CCTV, then request that this is done immediately.

4.5 Provide people involved in the search a description of the child and what the child is wearing.

4.6 Reassure the other children in your care, as this could become a distressing situation for them.

4.7 If the child is lost when with a staff member of Berkeley Guardians, the staff member will contact the Host Family and also try to contact the child via their mobile telephone if known.

4.8 If the child is lost when in the care of a Host Family, then the Host Family are instructed to call Berkeley Guardians during working hours and then the emergency phone outside office hours.

4.9 Should Berkeley Guardians become aware that a student in their care is missing from education, they will notify the school or college that the student attends immediately.

4.10 After trying to locate the child for no longer than 20 minutes and the child is identified as missing by either a member of Berkeley Guardians staff or Host Family, the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) must be informed. Details:-

DSL is Karen Pickles, a Berkeley Guardians Director. Karen can be contacted in office hours on 07565493818 or outside office hours via the **emergency phone: 07565493818**. Her email is karen@berkeleyguardians.com

4.11 Designated Safeguarding Lead should, together with staff and/or Host Family, assess the child's vulnerability and inherent risks to their safety and wellbeing.

4.12 If at 20 minutes' since identifying the child is missing and still unable to establish the whereabouts of the child, then the Police must be informed.

4.13 When the Police are informed then the DSL must contact the parents/carer immediately to inform them that the child is missing with details of what procedures have taken place to find the child and what actions will follow until the child is found. The DSL must keep the parent/carer regularly updated during the search process for the missing child and as soon as the child is found the parent/carer must be notified immediately.

5. Notifying the Police

5.1 The information required by the Police to assist in locating and returning the child to a safe environment is as follows:

- The child's name/s; date of birth; status (for example looked after child); responsible authority;
- Where and when they went missing;
- Previous missing episodes and where they went;
- Who, if anyone, they went missing with;
- What the child was wearing plus any belongings they had with them such as bags, phone etc.; include mobile number;
- Description and recent photo;
- Medical history, if relevant;
- Time and location last seen;

- Circumstances or events around going missing with relevant safeguarding information;
- Details of family, friends and associates;
- Contact details of Berkeley Guardians safeguarding lead.

5.2 Whilst the search is ongoing, Berkeley Guardians will continue to liaise with the Police and act in accordance with Police instructions.

5.3 Scenarios

- **Option 1** – if the child returns before the Police have arrived then the Police must be informed and Berkeley Guardians DSL will have reference to the safeguarding policy for the appropriate course of action.
- **Option 2** - if the child returns once the Police have started their investigation procedures, they must be informed and Berkeley Guardians DSL will have reference to the safeguarding policy for the appropriate course of action.
- **Option 3** - if the Police locate the child and bring them back to the care of Berkeley Guardians the Police will conduct the safe and well interview and the Berkeley Guardians DSL will have reference to the safeguarding policy for the appropriate course of action.

6. Reporting / Risk Assessment

6.1 Where a child has a known risk of being missing, a risk assessment for the child will be written and put into place.

6.2 Advise the School of what happened and parents/carer as soon as reasonably practicable to do so.

6.3 If a child has been classed as missing this will be a ‘significant event’ and therefore Berkeley Guardians will review the policy and procedure to establish what went wrong and how it can be avoided in future.

6.4 A Missing Child Incident Form must be completed found in **Appendix 1** and given to the DSL.

Further information can be found below:

- [Keeping Children Safe in Education 2019assets.publishing.service.gov.uk > uploads >attachment data > file](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/uploads/attachment_data/file/779401/Keeping_Children_Safe_in_Education_2019assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/uploads/attachment_data/file/779401/Working_Together_to_Safeguard-Children.pdf)
- Working Together to Safeguard Children – A guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children July 2018https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/779401/Working_Together_to_Safeguard-Children.pdf
- [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/550416/Children_Missing_Education - statutory guidance.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/550416/Children_Missing_Education_-_statutory_guidance.pdf)