MISSING CHILD AND MISSING LEARNER PROCEDURE

Immediate safety, verified whereabouts and coordinated escalation

EFFECTIVE: SEPTEMBER 2026 | REVIEW: SEPTEMBER 2027 | IMPACT AP

1 | SCOPE AND PREVENTION

Applies to unexplained non-arrival, absence from sessions, loss of contact, unauthorised departure and missing learners during transport or visits. Include post-16 learners with proportionate safeguarding consideration. Staff must know expected attendance, approved collection arrangements, individual risks and who takes charge. Keep registers current at every transition.

2 | IMMEDIATE RESPONSE

Tell the DSL or senior responsible adult immediately and establish who was last with the learner, when and where. Check whether there is immediate danger and call 999 if required. Maintain safe supervision of the remaining group. Do not wait for an arbitrary elapsed period before seeking police advice or reporting serious risk.

3 | SAFE INITIAL CHECKS

Check the register, agreed timetable, known safe areas, transport and authorised handovers. Make prompt calls through approved contacts where safe. Staff check accessible areas without entering danger or leaving others unsupervised. Do not assume an absence is authorised because another adult may know the learner's location.

4 | INDIVIDUAL RISK AND COMMUNICATION

Consider age, disability, communication, medical needs, vulnerability, exploitation, self-harm risks and current circumstances. Record clothing, last known location and useful identifying information. Use trusted contact and accessible messages without threats. An adult learner's independence requires proportionate assessment and does not remove action on a credible welfare risk.

5 | POLICE AND STATUTORY ESCALATION

The DSL or lead contacts police promptly according to assessed risk, sharing relevant facts and following instructions. Use 999 for an emergency; use the appropriate non-emergency police route otherwise. Notify children's social care or adult safeguarding where indicated. Continue protection while agencies clarify jurisdiction; do not delay urgent help for managerial approval.

6 | FAMILIES AND COMMISSIONERS

Contact parents/carers and the commissioner promptly where appropriate and safe; record responses and who is undertaking each action. For adult learners consider consent, capacity and serious risk. Explain verified facts without speculation. Do not ask a family to conduct an unsafe search or assume notification transfers responsibility for a learner who went missing from Impact care.

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7 | VISITS AND TRANSPORT

Follow the visit or journey-specific missing-person plan, notify venue security as appropriate and keep the rest of the group supervised. Record headcounts, checkpoints, vehicles and handover information. Do not send learners to search. Brief emergency services on any water, traffic, crowd or other immediate hazard.

8 | RETURN AND MEDICAL NEEDS

Confirm the learner's identity and safety and inform agencies and contacts promptly when found. Obtain medical attention where needed. Provide calm reassurance and listen without punishment or leading questioning. Do not cancel a police report merely because someone sent an unverified message; confirm whereabouts and follow police instructions.

9 | RECORDING AND FOLLOW-UP

Maintain a timed chronology of absence, risk assessment, checks, contacts, decisions, advice and return. Preserve relevant access logs or CCTV lawfully. Refer any disclosure or evidence of exploitation through safeguarding procedures. Agree appropriate return discussion and professional follow-up with the commissioner; repeated missing episodes require renewed multi-agency risk review.

10 | LEARNING AND REVIEW

Identify contributing factors, supervision gaps and unmet needs. Update support, transport and visit plans and brief responsible staff. Governance reviews anonymised themes and completion of corrective action. Complaints and adult-conduct concerns follow their separate routes; staff must not conceal a missing incident to avoid scrutiny.

11 | POLICY CONTROL AND REVIEW

Policy owner: Kate Willis, Principal and Proprietor. Effective date: September 2026. Scheduled review: September 2027, or sooner after relevant changes, incidents or feedback. Record actual governance approval and implementation decisions and brief staff on their duties. These policy dates do not assert that approval, staff training or operational checks have already occurred. Use the Complaints or independent reporting route for concerns about implementation.

12 | SOURCES AND RELATED DOCUMENTS

Impact Safeguarding, Attendance, Transport and Trips policies; relevant police and local safeguarding procedures.

gov.uk/government/publications/keeping-children-safe-in-education--2

Check current versions and apply according to Impact's legal and commissioning status.