



## MISSING CHILD POLICY

This policy was reviewed on:	2 <sup>nd</sup> November 2021
Date to be reviewed:	2 <sup>nd</sup> November 2023
Signature of person responsible:	M. Wittenberg
Name of signatory:	Michelle Wittenberg
Role of signatory:	Manager



### **POLICY STATEMENT**

The safety of the children and young adults in KEF KIDS care is maintained as the highest priority at all times, both on and off premises.

Every attempt is made to ensure the security of children is maintained at all times. To ensure the safety of participants, every participant is risk-assessed to determine the level of care needed.

For many users this would be their own full-time carer, and some participants will also be assigned two full-time carers. Users who are categorised as higher functioning will be grouped in small groups of up to four other users with similar abilities, and assigned a joint carer to support them. Children are reminded to stay with their assigned carers and are helped to understand the dangers and risks of leaving a KEF KIDS programme without permission – and are told how to look for help if they get lost – or indeed run away.

Before each residential programme, the local police force will be contacted for their specific procedure requirements and to log a record of the planned stay.

In the unlikely event of a child going missing, the responsible staff member must ensure our missing child procedure is followed to the letter.

### **PROCEDURES FOR A CHILD GOING MISSING/RUNNING AWAY**

#### **CHILD GOING MISSING ON THE PREMISES**

- As soon as it is noticed that a child or young adult is missing the carer alerts his/her division head, who in turn alerts the head of programmes at once. KEF KIDS provides instant walkie-talkie communication to ensure that this policy is continued and maintained thoroughly
- The head of programmes and on-site security will carry out a thorough search of the building and premises together with all available staff.
- The head of programmes calls the police and reports the child/young adult as missing and then calls the parent, informing them of the current situation, giving them the name of a staff contact and regularly keeping them up to date.
- Register is taken to ensure no other child is missing
- Doors and gates are checked to see if there has been a breach of security whereby a child/young adult could wander out.
- The head of programmes talks to the staff to find out when and where the child was last seen, and records this.
- A description of the child's appearance, clothing and medical condition are prepared for the authorities, including prescription medication and any possible behaviour expectations
- The head of programmes contacts the Manager and reports the incident. The Manager begins a thorough investigation.

#### **CHILD GOING MISSING ON AN EXCURSION**

- As soon as it is noticed that a child is missing, staff on the outing ensure that children stand with their designated carer 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 /enclosed venue, the staff contact the venue's security who will handle the search and contact the police if the child is not found.
- The head of programmes or manager is contacted immediately (if not on the outing) and the incident recorded.
- The head of programmes coordinates with venue security and police.
- The head of programmes contacts the parent.
- The head of programmes contacts the manager and reports the incident. The manager immediately actions an investigation, with the management committee where applicable.
- The head of programmes or a member of staff may be advised by the police to stay at the venue until they arrive.

### **THE INVESTIGATION**

- Staff keep calm and do not let the other participants become anxious or worried.
- The head of programmes together with the manager coordinate with the parent(s).
- The manager carries out a full investigation taking written statements from all the staff in the room or who were on the outing.
- The key person/staff member writes an incident report detailing:
  - The date and time of the report.
  - Which staff/children were in the group/outing and the name of the staff designated responsible for the missing child.
  - When the child was last seen in the group/outing.
  - What has taken place in the group or outing since the child went missing.
  - 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 (<http://www.hse.gov.uk/riddor/report.htm>); 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 very worrying for all 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 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. Setting leaders need to ensure that staff under investigation are not only fairly treated 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; they may direct their anger at the setting leader. When dealing with a distraught and angry parent, there should always be two members of staff, one of whom is the head of programmes and the other should be the manager. No matter how understandable the parent's anger may be, aggression or threats against staff are not tolerated, and the police should be called.
- 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 children's questions honestly but also reassure them.
- In accordance with 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 chairperson or proprietor will use their discretion to decide what action to take.
- Staff must not discuss any missing child incident with the press without taking advice and receiving written permission from the Trustees or their Manager

### **STAFF DEVELOPMENT**

All staff will be inducted into the contents of this Policy.