



## **Lost Child Procedure (Outings)**

### **Aim**

The purpose of this procedure is to give all practitioners, helpers and parents a clear and concise guide to managing this critical incident whilst on a Ladybird Playgroup and Pre-school outing.

### **Methods**

Throughout a Ladybird Playgroup outing, regular headcounts will be carried out. In the unlikely event of a child/ children going missing, whilst on an outing, then the following will be implemented immediately:

- As soon as it is noticed that a child is missing, staff on the outing ask children to 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.
- This will be followed by a search of the surrounding area ensuring that all other children remain supervised throughout.
- The Playgroup leader/Deputy is contacted immediately (if not on the outing) and the incident is recorded.
- If appropriate, on-site security will also be informed and an accurate description of the missing child/children given.
- In the event of the missing child/children not being found, the Ladybird Playgroup Leader/Deputy in charge will immediately inform the police.
- The Playgroup Leader/Deputy in charge will inform the parents/carers of the missing child/children, giving details of what has happened. The contact numbers for parents are found in the register, which is taken on all Ladybird Playgroup outings.
- During this period, the playgroup staff will continue to search for the missing child, whilst other staff maintain as near normal routine as possible for the remaining children, assisting in the safe return to the Ladybird Playgroup.
- At least one member of staff will remain at the scene where the missing child/children were last seen, whilst the others return to the Ladybird Playgroup with the children if appropriate. This member of staff will continue to search for the missing child/children.
- The member of staff who has remained at the scene will then meet the police and parents/carers when they arrive at a designated point and await instructions from the police.
- The Playgroup Leader also contacts the Chairperson to report the incident. The chairperson, with the Ladybird Playgroup Committee, will carry out an investigation and may come to the setting.
- Ofsted must be contacted and informed of any such incidents.



### ***The Investigation***

- Staff keep calm and do not let the other children become anxious or worried.
- The Playgroup leader together with the Chairperson speaks to the parents.
- The Chairperson 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
  - What 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; 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 and 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. The Playgroup Leader and Chairperson 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 Playgroup Leader. When dealing with a distraught and angry parent, there should always be two members of staff, one of whom is the Playgroup Leader and the other should be the Chairperson. No matter how understandable the parent's anger may be, aggression or threats against staff are not tolerated and the police should be called.



**Ladybird Playgroup Thriplow (CIO 1162435) – Lost Child Procedure (Outings)**

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- 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 question 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 will use their discretion to decide what action to take.
- Staff and Committee Members must not discuss any missing child incident with the press without taking advice or getting agreement from the Committee as a whole.

This policy was adopted at a meeting of the Ladybird Playgroup	
Held on (date)	
Signed on behalf of the Ladybird Playgroup Committee	
Role of signatory (e.g. chairperson etc.)	
Signed by Playgroup Leader/Deputy	
Name of Playgroup Leader/Deputy	