



CHILDREN'S SAFEGUARDING AND SOCIAL WORK

PROCEDURES FOR CHILDREN UNCOLLECTED FROM SCHOOL

Introduction

This policy should be used whenever a child has not been collected from school at the end of the day and it has not been possible to contact their parents or carers. The majority of these cases will arise because there has been a misunderstanding between parents and carers about collection or an unexpected difficulty preventing parents and carers from reaching the school. Although these are time consuming for the school and upsetting for the child, they usually result in the child being collected late.

Where children are collected late from school on a regular basis, the school can make a referral to the Education Welfare Service and the matter will be followed up. However, there will be the occasions when parents and carers fail to collect a child due to an accident, illness or other emergency which will result in the child not being able to go home at the end of the day. On these occasions, it is important that these procedures are followed so that the child can be looked after in a safe and welcoming environment.

This policy has been developed in consultation with Camden Children's Safeguarding and Social Work (CSSW) and the Police Child Abuse Investigation Team. Camden Play Services have a separate policy relating to children who are uncollected from after-school clubs and holiday play schemes.

Policy

Camden works to the London Safeguarding Children Board child protection procedures which allow teachers to make alternative arrangements for the child's care. If there are no immediate child protection issues, teachers should:

- establish the child's understanding of the whereabouts of the parent or responsible person and of the arrangements made;

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- if the parent can be located, reunite parent and child and ensure adequate arrangements are in place in future;
- if the parent or responsible person seems likely to return shortly, wait with the child.

If the parent or responsible adult has not arrived within 30 minutes, the school should contact the child's emergency contact person and arrange for the child to go to them. If this is not possible, CSSW should be contacted by 4.30pm.

Procedures

1. If a child has not been collected, the school should make every possible attempt to contact the parents, carers or another family member. The child may be able to indicate if there is something out of the ordinary. On some occasions another parent may offer to take a child home with them. Schools should never release a child into the care of another adult who is not a family member or the child's emergency contact person without the consent of the parent or carer, and members of staff should not take children home with them.
2. If no contact has been made and no one has arrived to collect the child, then schools should contact the MASH team on 020 7974 3317 at 4.30 p.m.
3. It may be necessary for the child to be taken from the school to a CSSW office. Teachers should be advised not to transport children alone in their own cars and may wish to consider taking the child by taxi or mini cab.
4. There may be occasions when a school building is locked up whilst staff are waiting for someone to arrive to collect the child. A public building should be sought as a place to wait.
5. A child should never be sent to a play centre if the parents or carers have not arrived. It is the responsibility of the school to try to contact the parent or pass the matter on to CSSW. Play centres have their own procedures for uncollected children.
6. Once the child is in the care of CSSW, they will take the responsibility for tracing the parents or carers. The duty social worker will make arrangements for the child to be looked after until the parents or carers can be traced.

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Action by social workers

Social workers should make all efforts to contact parents and carers, such as putting a note through the door of the home address, leaving messages on answer-phones or with relatives and neighbours giving details of where to collect their child.

If parents do not arrive by 5.30, arrangements should be made to place the child with a family member or at an emergency placement with a Camden foster carer and a message left with parents to inform them of actions taken.

A referral should be made to the EDT explaining the situation so that in the event that parents come forward out of hours, the EDT worker can take any necessary action to re-unite the child with their parent or carer.

It is anticipated that these guidelines will be used infrequently. However, on the occasions when they are necessary, it is anticipated that they will enable a school to deal effectively with an uncollected child in co-operation with CSSW.