

# EMPOWERING FUTURES ALTERNATIVE PROVISION

## MISSING CHILD & MISSING LEARNER POLICY

**Issue Date:** December 2025

**Next Review:** December 2026

**Approved by:** Director, Empowering Futures Alternative Provision

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## 1. POLICY STATEMENT

Empowering Futures Alternative Provision (EFAP) is committed to safeguarding the welfare, safety and wellbeing of all children, young people and adult learners in our care.

We recognise that learners accessing Alternative Provision often have:

- SEND
- SEMH needs
- Histories of disengagement
- Vulnerabilities linked to exploitation, criminality, or going missing
- Risks related to emotional dysregulation
- Complex home circumstances

This policy outlines the actions EFAP must take when a learner is:

- Not present when expected
- Leaves the premises without permission
- Fails to return from a break
- Goes missing during off-site activities
- Does not join an online session where risk is known

All incidents where a child or learner cannot be located are treated as **potential safeguarding emergencies**.

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## 2. LEGAL FRAMEWORK

- Children Act 1989 & 2004
- Education Act 1996
- KCSIE 2024/25
- Working Together 2023
- DfE Alternative Provision Guidance
- Local Authority Missing Child Procedures
- Ofsted Education Inspection Framework
- Multi-agency safeguarding protocols
- Prevent Duty (where contextual risk exists)

Adult learners (18+) are also safeguarded under:

- Care Act 2014
- Mental Capacity Act 2005

This policy aligns with LA commissioning requirements and awarding-body safeguarding expectations.

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## 3. SCOPE

This policy applies to:

- All children and young people (11–18)
- Adult learners (18+)
- All staff, tutors, mentors, assessors and contractors
- All premises used by EFAP
- Off-site activities and community-based delivery
- Online and hybrid learning

It covers learners who are:

- On roll full-time
  - Part-time
  - On short courses
  - Referred through LAs, schools and partners
  - Attending evening/weekend provision
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## 4. DEFINITIONS

### **Missing Child / Missing Learner**

A learner is considered missing when:

- Their whereabouts cannot be established
- They are not on site and staff are unaware of their location
- They leave without permission
- They do not return at an agreed time during breaks
- They do not arrive for the day and risk factors indicate concern
- They disappear during off-site learning
- They drop out of an online session unexpectedly

## **Unauthorised Absence vs Missing**

An unauthorised absence becomes a **missing person incident** when:

- There is a safeguarding concern
- The learner is vulnerable
- Circumstances are unusual or out of character
- The learner could be at risk of harm
- The learner is known to go missing from home or school
- Contact with parent/carer cannot be made
- The learner is under 16 and unaccounted for
- An adult learner with vulnerabilities does not arrive and cannot be contacted

Staff must err on the side of caution.

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# **5. ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES**

## **Director / DSL**

- Leads emergency response
- Liaises with Police and LA
- Approves decision to contact emergency services
- Ensures safeguarding documentation is complete
- Coordinates post-incident review

## **Deputy DSL / Manager**

- Leads search procedures and communication
- Ensures missing protocols are followed
- Contacts parent/carer/LA
- Records chronology of actions

## **All Staff**

- Supervise learners appropriately
- Immediately report unexplained absence

- Follow missing learner search procedure
- Document all actions taken

### **Parents/Carers**

- Provide accurate contact information
- Report concerns about a child's patterns of going missing

### **Adult Learners**

- Must notify staff if running late or absent
  - May be subject to welfare checks depending on vulnerability assessment
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## **6. PREVENTATIVE MEASURES**

To reduce risk of learners going missing, EFAP:

- Completes individual learner risk assessments
  - Monitors entry/exit points
  - Conducts supervision during transitions
  - Implements behaviour plans and safe spaces
  - Works closely with LAs and families
  - Keeps accurate registers
  - Provides regular safeguarding training to staff
  - Ensures clear communication with taxis/transport providers
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## **7. MISSING CHILD PROCEDURE (ON SITE)**

### **Step 1: Immediate Response**

When a learner cannot be located:

1. Notify DSL or Deputy DSL immediately
2. Check the learning room, toilets, communal areas
3. Conduct a quick sweep of the building

4. Check CCTV (if applicable)
5. Speak to peers/staff for last known sighting
6. Verify timetable in case of room change

Time is critical.

This stage should take **no longer than 10 minutes**.

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## Step 2: Telephone Checks

If learner not found:

1. Call the learner's mobile (if permitted)
2. Call parent/carer
3. Contact taxi/provider if applicable
4. Check whether learner has attempted to go home

If parent states learner is NOT home → **high concern**.

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## Step 3: Decision to Contact Police

Police must be called **immediately** (999) if:

- The learner is under 16 and missing
- The learner is vulnerable (SEND/SEMH/medical)
- The learner is at risk of exploitation or self-harm
- There is known risk of criminal involvement
- The situation is out of character
- Staff believe immediate harm is possible

Police require:

- Learner details & photo
- Last known location
- Vulnerabilities
- Family and social worker information
- EHCP (if relevant)

Notify LA commissioning officer/Vulnerable Learners team.

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#### **Step 4: Continued Search (only if safe)**

- Staff must not put themselves at risk
  - Search immediate local surroundings only with DSL approval
  - Do NOT use personal vehicles
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#### **Step 5: Documentation**

- Complete Missing Child Form
  - Log chronology of actions
  - Add to safeguarding file
  - Notify social worker where appropriate
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## **8. MISSING LEARNER PROCEDURE (OFF SITE)**

#### **If a learner leaves or becomes separated from the group:**

1. Stop the activity immediately
2. Ensure remaining learners are supervised
3. Contact the learner by phone (if appropriate)
4. Search the immediate area
5. Call DSL for instructions
6. If not found within **5–10 minutes**, call Police
7. Notify parent/carer and LA

Off-site incidents escalate faster due to increased risks.

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## 9. MISSING ADULT LEARNER PROCEDURE

While adults have autonomy, EFAP still has safeguarding duties.

EFAP conducts welfare checks when:

- The adult is known to be vulnerable
- There are mental health concerns
- Risk assessments indicate need
- Learner leaves suddenly in distress
- Adult does not arrive for a high-risk practical session
- Adult disappears during an online session unexpectedly

Actions:

1. Attempt phone contact
  2. Attempt email/message contact
  3. For high-risk adults: contact emergency contact
  4. Notify Police if risk of harm is identified
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## 10. ONLINE LEARNING – MISSING DURING SESSION

A learner is treated as “missing” when:

- They leave mid-session unexpectedly
- They do not respond to contact
- Staff identify signs of distress before disappearance

Procedure:

1. Attempt to re-establish contact via chat or voice
2. Call learner (if contact details authorised)
3. Notify DSL immediately

4. Contact parent/carer (for under 18s)
  5. If safeguarding concern identified → call Police
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## **11. SUPPORT AFTER THE INCIDENT**

When a learner is found:

- Provide reassurance and support
- Offer medical check if needed
- DSL conducts a debrief
- Complete a return-to-provision conversation
- Update behaviour or risk plans
- Review any triggers (bullying, conflict, anxiety)
- Inform staff on a need-to-know basis

For persistent missing episodes:

- Multi-agency meeting arranged
  - Risk assessment updated
  - Additional support implemented
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## **12. RECORDING & REPORTING**

All missing incidents are:

- Recorded on EFAP safeguarding system
- Reported to the LA where required
- Documented in chronology order
- Reviewed in DSL meetings
- Sent to social workers where applicable
- Included in AP quality assurance reviews

Awarding bodies may request to see safeguarding processes during EQA.

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## **13. MULTI-AGENCY WORKING**



EFAP works with:

- Police
- Social Care
- Virtual School
- Missing Children Coordinators
- Youth Justice
- CAMHS
- LA commissioning teams
- Schools
- Parents/carers

Information is shared lawfully under safeguarding legislation and data protection policy.

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## 14. PREVENTION STRATEGIES

EFAP uses proactive strategies including:

- Trauma-informed practice
  - Sensory/regulation support
  - Key workers or mentors
  - Quiet rooms and safe spaces
  - Check-ins throughout the day
  - Structured transitions
  - Close supervision for high-risk learners
  - Taxi arrival/departure monitoring
  - Alternative timetabling where needed
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## 15. POLICY REVIEW

This policy will be reviewed:

- Annually
- After any missing incident
- After LA or Police recommendations
- When regulations change
- Following Ofsted inspection feedback

Approved by:

**Rhean White – Director & Designated Safeguarding Lead**  
Empowering Futures Alternative Provision

