

Low Farm Therapy Centre

LOST or UNCOLLECTED CHILDREN POLICY

Written by Ruth Lo October 2015

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Lost Children

This policy outlines the procedures that should be followed should the whereabouts of a child attending Low Farm Therapy Centre (hereafter known as 'the Centre') become unknown. Whilst this is highly unlikely given the high levels of supervision in the Centre, it is important that all staff know how to respond should such an event occur. Whilst the Centre is a therapeutic rather than educational provision, the Centre believes that staff have similar roles in their duty of care to the children, particularly when acting *in loco parentis*, and therefore provide similar guidelines to that of an educational environment.

A senior staff member is to search the premises inside thoroughly, keeping a calm manner at all times. Other staff should remain with any other children onsite. All access doors should be checked, and secured if these are found open.

If the child's parents (throughout this document 'parents' will be used to refer to all parents and carers) are onsite they should be informed.

The senior staff member should then search the outside premises thoroughly which should include;

The area beyond any point of access found open

The outside play area (including all external gates, these should be secured if found open)

The paddock areas closest to the building.

Ensuring that the remaining children are adequately supported, other staff will then be allocated an area to search for 15 minutes. They should have a mobile phone with them. This search will need to include:

The fields to the left of the front door.

The swimming pool area.

The garages and offices by the house.

The gardens behind the house.

The inside of the house.

The barns and stables and the area between these and the Centre.

The front fields.

Old Orchard cottages

In the event of not finding the child after searching the surrounding area staff need to call the centre and then continue their search. The police and the child's parents (if they are offsite) will then be phoned.

Staff will continue to search the area whilst awaiting the police, widening the search further by delegating local areas to be searched by different members of staff.

The child will be comforted and reassured when found. An Incident Form must be completed and signed by parents and Head of Centre.

If a child becomes 'lost' for a period of time, resulting in the police being called, Low Farm Therapy Centre recognises that it must contact the following within 24 hours:

- LADOCentral@suffolk.gcsx.gov.uk or telephone number 0300 123 2044
- The Police and the Health & Safety Executive (if the incident calls into question any indication of negligence, poor practice or breach of legislation)

Any relevant photos of the area where the incident occurred should be taken where appropriate. Low Farm Therapy Centre must not investigate the incident. Everyone involved should provide a written account which they should sign as a true and accurate record. This should be in the person's own words and there should be no collaboration amongst those present prior to writing their accounts.

The Head of Centre should also write an overview detailing what happened, with a timescale, details of children and staff involved and the action taken to date. These will need to be made available should there be an investigation by the police, HSE, or the local authority.

Where it is clear that the accident or incident was the direct result of one particular person, arrangements will need to be made to safeguard children through the Designated Safeguarding Lead.

Low Farm Therapy Centre should ensure that any relevant records are kept (e.g. attendance registers, child records, staff records, accident records, medication records, incident records, training records, relevant policies or procedures etc.)

Low Farm Therapy Centre will wait for decisions to be made by the organisations contacted as to what will happen next, and will comply with any instructions given or decisions that are made.

Uncollected Children

For individual therapy sessions it is expected that in most cases the parents will remain onsite. However, should they choose to leave, or in the case of our Therapy Groups where parents are not with the children, and do not return to collect their child at the allocated time, the following procedures should be followed.

Staff are aware that sometimes parents are delayed when due to collect their children. Parents are asked to telephone the setting as soon as possible if they are going to be late. Parents are made aware that any lateness in collecting their child impacts on staff, and prevents them from carrying out their further duties.

On admission to our Therapy Groups parents are asked to provide in writing authorised people who may collect their child. Parents are asked to ensure that any changes to this are communicated directly to a member of staff. If they wish their child to be collected by an adult whom the staff have not yet met, they are asked to either provide an introduction, or to provide staff with a name and ask the adult to bring ID to confirm this. A photograph and a shared password would also be helpful.

A child collected by an adult not known to the staff:

If the above procedures have not been followed, and an unknown adult arrives to collect the child, staff will not release the child into their care until they have spoken directly to a parent or guardian and been given verbal permission. If they cannot reach a parent or guardian the uncollected child procedure below will be followed.

A child not collected at the expected time:

Discretion should be used with the outlined procedures in exceptional circumstances such as major disasters or unexpected early closures.

The child will remain in the Centre with a familiar adult. An additional member of staff will need to remain on the premises.

The parent will be contacted 15 minutes after the end of the session. The child will be reassured.

If contact cannot be made with parents, emergency contact numbers will be tried.

If the staff are unable to make contact with parents or emergency contacts, they will wait a further 45 minutes, and continue to try to make contact.

If the child is still uncollected, the Children's Social Care Team will be contacted on **Customer First on 0808 800 4005.**

The social care worker will then decide the next course of action and decide whether other partner agencies should be involved in helping trace the parent. Should the parent not be contacted, the social care worker can make appropriate arrangements for the child to be safely cared for until their safe return to parents.