

Joint Working Protocol for Children Not Collected from School / Activity

Children Social Care

REVIEW LOG			
Date	Version	Comments	Approved by
December 2024	1.0	<i>New policy</i>	

This system of recording review dates is designed to ensure staff at all times use the correct version of the up-to-date Policy. This system is used on all City of Wolverhampton Council – Children and Young People Policies and Procedures.

CONSULTATION

The following people have been consulted on this protocol:

- West Midlands Police
- Social Care MASH Headteachers (from a variety of settings across the City)
- Early Years Representation
- 5-18 Representation
- Children’s Social Care Services

PURPOSE

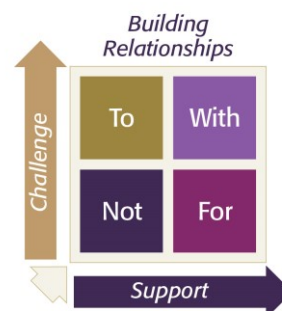
The purpose of this policy is to ensure we have appropriate measures in place when a child is not collected from School/Nursery.

KEYWORDS

School, organisation, parent, carer, activity

RESTORATIVE PRACTICE

This Policy is underpinned by relationship building and repairing harm, fundamental principles of restorative practice which weaves throughout our social work practice. Restorative Practice means strengthening relationships as well as strengthening social connections within communities. In Wolverhampton, we are committed to restorative core beliefs and principles, embedding restorative practice as a fundamental part of our work within social care. Part of this work should focus on building relationships with children, young people and their families and the society in which they live. It not only helps us to better understand their needs, but also establish positive and sustainable working relationships to improve outcomes.



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1. Introduction

At the end of a school day, or of an activity for children arranged by a school/setting, the children concerned will transfer back to the care of their parents or carers. Some older children will be of an age and ability to make their own way home, but parents will often need to make arrangements for the collection of their children due to their age, ability, the time or location of the activity. Most will be collected by a parent/carer, whilst some will be taken via school transport to their home for the transfer of responsibility to take place there.

These arrangements are well established and understood by parents and carers and generally work extremely well. However, there are occasions when events prevent parents or carers arriving on time to collect their child. In most of these cases the delay is minimal. In other cases, the parent will notify the school or organisation and agree new arrangements in accordance with the school's own policy.

This guidance is concerned with the cases where the arrangements to transfer responsibility fail, and contact with the parents cannot be made, or when parents cannot make arrangements within a reasonable period of time.

Within the Travel Assistant Handbook the process for uncollected children is as follows:

If the child/young person is dropped off at home, it is your responsibility to ensure that a responsible adult takes them from you at the door of the vehicle. If they alight from the vehicle themselves and go to the door of the house, you must ensure that a responsible adult has let them in.

- If a child/young person is allowed to let themselves into the house with no adult being there, you will be notified of this by the Travel Unit.
- If you do not see a responsible adult, you must keep the child/young person in your care and call the office for advice.

This guidance details the arrangements for dealing with children not collected from school/settings at the end of the day or from any school activity at the agreed time and for parental absence when children are transported home at the end of the school day or after an activity. Included in this process are those children who are not collected on time but where the parents **repeatedly** notify the school of a significant delay. This process has been endorsed by Directorate for People Children's Social Care, the Police and Wolverhampton Safeguarding Partnership Board.

The guidance is provided for use by (educational settings):

- Schools/Academies
- Nurseries
- After School Provisions – events/trips/

For this guidance to have best effect practitioners in schools and other organisations should be aware of it, and they should in turn inform parents/carers of children attending the school or activities.

2. Process

When a child is uncollected from school or from another activity, the safety and welfare of the child will be the paramount consideration in determining appropriate action.

Parents should be required to provide the school or organisation with their contact details - name(s), address(es), home & work mobile numbers. Parents should also provide the contact details, and methods to prove identity as required, of at least two other relatives/carers who can be called when the parent/carer cannot be contacted or in the event of an emergency. The school/organisation must keep this record up to date and ensure that key staff are informed of any changes.

The school/organisation must make clear to parents/carers in writing the normal finish times for the school/activity, the arrangements for children to be collected at the end of the school day/activity, or for their transport home. Any changes should also be notified to parents/carers in writing. This should include notification of any additional financial charge for the use of after school facilities.

The school/organisation must also make clear that if a child is not collected at the end of the school day/activity, they will notify Children's Social Care, and the period of time that the school/organisation is prepared to wait before involving them.

3. Procedure

Whenever a parent fails to collect a child from school or an activity at the expected time, or a parent/carer is not at home to receive the child from school transport services:

1. This will be brought to the attention of the Head Teacher or a Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL). A nominated member of the school staff will then make every effort to contact the parent/carer or the named alternative carers (including where known, other settings that siblings attend to see if they are experiencing the same problem. This includes, phone calls, visits to the family home and alternative carers provided).
2. The DSL will maintain a record of incidents where parents do not collect a child from school or other activities and if they are absent when the child is transported home. Any child welfare concerns arising out of such an incident(s) will be dealt with in accordance with the child safeguarding procedures of the school/organisation.
3. The school should organise a rota to allow that at least 2 staff should stay until responsibility for the child is handed over.
4. If the school offers after-school clubs or commission's childcare arrangements placing the child into these facilities whilst waiting may be considered. However, consideration should be given to information sharing and minimum staffing levels. If these after-school facilities are normally charged for, parents should be charged for use at a daily rate charge.

5. If the child has not been collected/received, and it has not been possible to contact a parent or named carer, 90 minutes after the agreed finish time for the school day or 30 minutes after the agreed finish time for an after school activity, a phone call should be made to the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) on 01902 555-392. MASH will act in a coordinating role in the first instance and will need the following information:

- i. Brief circumstances of incident, and arrangements in place. Child's details
 - ii. Name(s)
 - iii. Date of birth
 - iv. Address
 - v. Gender
 - vi. Ethnicity
 - vii. Religion
 - viii. Language spoken
 - ix. Special dietary needs
 - x. SEN / behavioural difficulties / medical needs
- Parent/Carer Contact Details
 - i. Parent / carer / alternative carer details
 - ii. Name(s)
 - iii. Address(es)
 - iv. Home/work/mobile telephone number(s)
 - Any current or previous child protection concerns*
 - Any previous incidents of not being collected from school
 - Details of GP/Health Visitor (optional).

**If the child has an allocated social worker or Family Help Lead Practitioner, the school will contact the lead practitioner or the allocated manager during working hours and MASH24 if there is no allocated worker or it's out of hours..*

6. Where a child has been placed in after school provision or has not been picked up such provision timescales and contact numbers need to reflect the time the 'non-collection' will occur. In this circumstance:

6.1 If the child has not been collected/received, and it has not been possible to contact a parent or named carer, **30 minutes** after the agreed finish time for the after school club.

6.2 A phone call should be made to MASH 24 on 01902-552-999 or 01902-555-392.

7. MASH will give advice and may carry out appropriate checks and make further attempts to contact the parent/carers. If there are any concerns about the welfare of the **parent/carers**, MASH will, on a case-by-case basis ask the local police to visit the home address.

8. If an appropriate relative or carer is located, he/she will be asked to ensure that the child is collected / received from the school/organisation. If there is a genuine reason for the relative or carer being unable to do this, MASH will liaise with

school/organisation about possible arrangements for the child to be taken to the address though this will occur only under exceptional circumstances.

9. In making decisions, Social Care Services and the school/organisation will prioritise interim care arrangements that best meet the child's personal and emotional needs.
10. If the combined attempts to contact a parent or appropriate carer by the School or MASH remain unsuccessful police will need to be contacted in order to support Social Care Services to assume care of the child and arrange for them to be taken to a place of safety.
 - For children with health care requirements it is expected that the health care plan will include a risk assessment and plan to meet the needs of a child not picked up or dropped off at home by home-to-school transport.
11. Plans for transporting the child will take into account staff availability out of hours, the need for adequate insurance cover, appropriate gender balance, in car safety, and any information about special needs or behavioural difficulties etc. provided by the school/organisation. Where possible, two adults should be present. If there is a shortage of staff, or inadequate arrangements a mini cab could be used with a suitable escort.
12. The school/organisation will send a letter to the parent/carer notifying them of the incident and of the arrangements that were made to care for the child. (An example of this letter can be found at Appendix A).

4. Concerns About the Child's Welfare

- The Head Teacher/Senior member of the Leadership Team should meet with the parent on the next working day and outline the actions that the school had to take and why. This will include informing the parent of any arising financial issues and agreeing a payment plan
- Where more than one incident occurs, repeated episodes on late collection with notification or where there are reasons for concern regarding the ability of parent(s)/carer(s) to collect/receive their child, the Head Teacher will:
 1. Initiate a discussion between the school/organisation and the parent will identify a strategy for addressing these concerns.
 2. Where agreement cannot be reached with parents or in cases where there are child protection concerns, a referral to MASH will be completed and Social Care Services will be invited to contribute to identifying the strategy for addressing the concerns and safeguarding the child.

Insert School logo

APPENDIX A – Letter to parents

Dear Parent/Carer's name

Re:

On.....(day). Your Child(ren)name(s)

were not collected / received at the end of the school day, and we were unable to contact you or your named carer(s). As a result, in order to safeguard and promote the welfare of your child / children, we implemented the 'procedure for dealing with children not collected / received at the end of the school day'.

This procedure, which has been agreed by our school, Children's Social Care Services, the Police and the Wolverhampton Safeguarding Partnership Board, involved us contacting Social Care Services in order that arrangements could be made to ensure your child was safe.

I hope that the reasons for your child not being collected are not serious. It is important that this situation does not arise again. Therefore, please could you come to the school on:

Date:

Time:

To meet with:

Yours sincerely,

Name