Missing or Absconding Policy (Alternative Provision)

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Date of next review:	Sept 2027	**Owner:**	The Managing Director
Version:	V1.0	**Approval:**	The Directors

Introduction

This policy is written to guide staff and associate staff in the event of a student going missing or having absconded whilst they are working 1-1 with them.

Staff and associates are reminded to read the following company policies and practice guidelines in conjunction with this policy:

- Health and Safety Policy
- Relationships and Restorative Behaviour Policy
- Positive Handling Policy
- Individual Risk Assessments

It is important that all adults working with children and young people remain as calm and collected as possible and that our response and approach is measured and in line with de-escalation principles and all company policies and procedures at all times.

Locational Considerations

Childhood Matters Consulting Ltd's AP operates at various locations, including within the child or young person's home, on site at educational establishments and out in the wider community and so a contextually appropriate response will be needed if a child or young person goes missing or absconds, in line with policies and procedures that may be in place at the various settings. Dynamic risk assessment and decision making will be required in order to support, minimize and contain any situations arising.

Missing and Absconding Students

A student is deemed 'missing' if their whereabouts are unknown. A student is considered to have 'absconded' if they intentionally/knowingly leave the site where they are working with their mentor 1-1, without permission.

If a student is deemed missing or absconds, the following procedure should be followed unless the child or young person is in their own home, where the parent will be in attendance and will be responsible and accountable for their child:

- 1-1 mentor working with the student to coordinate an immediate search of the building and grounds of the setting. This search should not exceed five minutes. If the student is known to hide or go missing/abscond this will have been recorded in their individual risk assessment, together with any known patterns or place preferences for that student.

- 1-1 mentor working with the student to then extend the search to the wider site and surrounding areas where appropriate and alert the organization or setting staff to activate their support systems. This should not exceed a further ten minutes. Staff and associates must take potential dangers into account and not put themselves or others at risk at any time.
- Following the wider search (15 mins in total) 1-1 mentor working with the student to notify parent/carer of the student to see if they are able to locate or communicate with their child or young person. The 1-1 mentor working with the student will then make a 999 call to the police to report the student missing. They will give a clear description of the student and highlight vulnerabilities.
- At all times throughout the incident, de-escalation and support for the student is central to all decisions and actions.
- During police involvement in the search, the 1-1 mentor working with the student will support with information as requested.
- Following the incident, there will be a thorough de-brief between a Director and the 1-1 mentor concerned to ensure the incident is recorded appropriately, all parties are notified appropriately and the student's individual RA is updated.
- Following the incident, the student may be visited by a police officer who will carry out a "Safe and Well Check".

INFORMATION FOR STUDENTS

What happens if you go missing? What is meant by "missing"?
You will be considered missing if your 1-1 mentor or parents/carers do not know where you are.

What is meant by "absconding"?
You have absconded if you deliberately go away from where you should be without telling your 1-1 mentor without them giving you permission.

What will happen if you go missing?
The people looking after you have a responsibility to know where you are and to make sure you are safe. If you are 'missing' they will speak to your friends, teachers and family to see if they can help. If there is concern for your safety then the people looking after you will need to search for clues as to where you are. The police may be informed that you are missing and they may then look for you.

What happens if you can't be found?
A meeting will be held between the people looking after you and the police to plan how to search for you. Your name, description and a photograph will be given to the police in order to help them with their search.

What happens when you are found?
You will be returned to a safe place and will be asked about the reasons for you going missing. This is to try and find out if anything is troubling you and to see if anyone can help. You do not have to run away to talk to someone. If you want to talk to someone outside of your family, your school or your social circle, this can be arranged.
You may also be visited by a police officer who will check that you are back. This is called a "Safe and Well Check". You will be able to speak to the police officer without any other adults present if you wish to do so.

Will anything else happen?
Your 1-1 mentor will want to talk to you about going missing to see if there is support they can help you with. If you have deliberately run away (absconded) then the people responsible for your safety will meet to discuss ways in which such incidents can be prevented by looking at the reasons for your actions.