



Hilldrop Area Community Association Missing Child Policy & Procedure

May 2021

Policy No. 12	This policy was adopted by HACA in June 2018 and will be reviewed at least every 2 years.	Date of Review: May 2021
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Hilldrop Area Community Association (HACA) takes the safety of children and young people and those with learning difficulties or EHC plan very seriously. We take every precaution necessary to ensure that the children in our care do not leave a session unaccompanied.

The chances of finding a missing child safe are greatest if the child’s absence is soon discovered. In the unlikely event that a child is noted to be missing from the premises or during an outing, HACA puts into practice agreed procedures. These ensure the most effective resolution of this potentially distressing situation.

If, in the event of a member of staff not being able to account for a child’s whereabouts, the following action will be taken:

Stage One - Search systematically

- All available staff to immediately check toilets, shared areas, rooms, the garden, and car park to ensure the child is not hiding or locked in anywhere. If on an outing, half the staff are to search the immediate area while the remaining staff stay in one place with the other children.
- One member of staff to immediately inform the Play Project Manager and/or the Head of Centre.
- One member of staff to gather class and call the register to confirm that one named child is missing.
- Staff will ensure that all other pupils are kept safe and closely supervised throughout the incident.

Stage Two

- After stage one is completed without resolution (no more than 10 minutes), a nominated member of staff will contact the police on 999 and another the parent/carer.
- At this point HACA will support the police who will now lead the response to this incident. The Play Project Manager and/or the Head of Centre will liaise with emergency services and parents/carers.

Stage Three

- The Head of Centre will communicate the incident to the appropriate Local Authority Office and the Chair of Trustees.
- A written record of the incident and any action taken should be made as soon after the incident as practical and placed in the pupil's confidential record, carry out risk assessment and remedy problem.
- The Senior Management Team should conduct an internal investigation to establish how the situation occurred, how effective was the response and whether action could be taken to ensure it does not happen again

We will ensure that

- We make termly checks to ensure that if an incident of this sort does happen, we have all the necessary phone numbers at hand – correct, up to date and kept together.
- If the police are called, then the Islington Children's Services Contact Team will be informed (020 7527 7400) followed by Ofsted (0300 123 1231).
- If the Head of Centre and/or Chair of Trustees is not on the premises, she/he will be informed as soon as possible.
- We will provide the following information to Ofsted and the Islington Children's Services Contact Team:
 - What happened?
 - What systems are in place for preventing such occurrences?
 - What we did, at what time and in what order.
 - Who we informed and when.
 - We will cooperate fully in any investigation.
 - We will start to build a record as soon as is possible in the incident log, this will include:
 - The last definite sighting of the child.
 - Any unusual behaviour of the missing child or other children.
 - How many children were on the premises?
 - How many adults were on the premises and who?
 - What steps have been taken and when, by whom.

Dealing with people's reactions

We accept that the child's parents will be frightened, distressed and angry. If the centre shares all policies with parents/carers, the situation will be easier for all because there will be an understanding of working within a framework of mutual trust and understanding.

We accept that in such circumstances powerful emotions are involved and people's behaviour can be unpredictable. Those who may seem quite calm about the incident at the time can later become angry, threaten legal action or approach the local press.

We will be clear about the circumstances surrounding the incident and will respond sympathetically to questions without implications or admission of responsibility.

Responses could include:

- How sorry you are that the incident has happened.
- That a full investigation is in hand.

- That the LSCB/Ofsted has been informed and will be investigating.

Dealing with the media

Distressed parents may contact the local press, or reporters may hear about the incident if the police are involved. It is sensible for one person, usually the Head of Centre or Chair of Trustees to be the one who speaks for the organisation. All adults will be asked to refer all enquiries to the agreed spokesperson.

When the child is found

We recognise that during the time a child is missing, however briefly, all involved, parents and others suffer great fear, guilt and distress. It is not always easy to control all these emotions when the child is found. We will accept that it is important to remember:

- That the child also might have been afraid and distressed and might now be in need of comfort.
- Remain calm, reassure the child and acknowledge it is not the child's fault.
- Ensure the child is not hurt.
- That the incident provides a good opportunity to talk to all the children to ensure that they understand that they must not leave the premises, and why.

After the Incident

We will review our current procedure and we will evaluate processes and make necessary adjustments to ensure future effectiveness.