

Lost or missing child policy

Approved: 27 February 2019
Reviewed: 1 September 2024
Review due: 1 September 2025

Purpose

This policy outlines the procedure and actions that must be taken by YMCA staff when a child or young person gets lost or goes missing whilst in the care of YMCA East Surrey.

Responsibilities and monitoring

Monitor: Head of Children & Young People
Approve: Board of Management
Endorse: Children & Young People Advisory Group
Propose: CEO
Draft and review: Head of Children & Young People

Policy and procedure

The aims of this policy are to:

- Provide a clear procedure which is understood and effectively implemented by staff
- Enable the missing child or young person to be located as quickly as possible and given the appropriate level of safety and security commensurate with the child's age and emotional/behaviour maturity
- For young person missing from housing please see 'Children and Young people missing from the Supported Housing' Policy and follow Surrey Police's Philomena protocol

Staff need to be mindful that a child or young person can go missing at any time of the day. These times and examples of the occasions provide opportunities for a child or young person to go missing are:

- a. From an indoor session, for example, when a child or young person is allowed to leave the main room unaccompanied to go to the toilet
- b. From an outdoor session for example during an outdoor activity
- c. On a trip to an external venue
- e. At the start or end of the day when parent / carers are collecting and dropping off children / young people

During trips to external venues Senior Manager should work with Managers, Coordinators and Leaders to decide what appropriate measures should be taken to ensure children's safety possibly including:

>YMCA bibs

>Wristbands

Before taking children / young people on a trip, completed and up to date venue, service and individual (care plans) risk assessments and an Off-site Proposal Form must have been conducted or reviewed. There must be appropriate staffing levels for the needs / ages of the children and young people involved.

YMCA venues are regularly risk assessed and checked on a daily basis to ensure the security of the site both internally and externally with particular attention played to exits, fire doors, and perimeter fencing. There must be appropriate staffing levels for the needs / ages of the children and young people involved.

What to do if a child or young person is missing:

During the delivery of YMCA CYP Services provision whether on or off site, as soon as a child / young person is thought to be missing:

- The Co-ordinator/Leader in charge will be informed immediately, without delay
- A timer will be started immediately
- An immediate search will be started within the vicinity of where the child / young person went missing
- Gather all children / young people on the trip/at the setting into one place and check the register against those present
- All members of staff will be made aware of the situation, as redeployment of staff will be necessary to allow staff to search, but also to make sure the children / young people at the setting are safe and ratios are maintained
- Check all exterior doors and gates are secure if in an indoor setting

If the child / young person cannot be located after five minutes:

If the child / young person is not located within **five minutes** of the last sighting, then:

- ▶ the setting Coordinator/leader will contact the police, using 999
- ▶ then the senior/competent staff member will contact the parent/carers
- ▶ the Head of Children & Young People will be informed

The police will want to know:

- ▶ Where you are (address of setting/venue).
- ▶ The next of kin of the child / young person
- ▶ A detailed description of the child / young person, including age, sex, working down from head to toe including as much clothing description as possible
- ▶ Any disabilities or additional needs the child or young person has
- ▶ The circumstances of the incident, including anything that may have triggered the disappearance, how long have they been missing, where were they last seen, was there an argument (older child)
- ▶ Who is looking for the child / young person, where are they, do they have a mobile with them, what is the number?
- ▶ Your details

If the child or young person is located

If the child or young person is located, staff will check if the child or young person is injured (and act appropriately). If the child or young person is unwilling to return to the setting, staff will try to establish why. Staff who are searching will be called back to resume their duties.

Actions to be taken post incident

The timeframe in which the Head of CYP will be informed a should be proportionate to the severity level of the incident.

The incident will be documented on MyConcern and the Head of Children and Young People notified. They will inform Ofsted and make a referral to the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) concerning the staff involved within 48 hours of the incident occurring, if the child or young person was missing for longer than five minutes or particular staff negligence was involved.

Individual risk assessments for the child or young person will be reviewed and updated after they go missing. Site and service risk assessments will also be reviewed and updated. This will be done by the setting Co-ordinator/manager before the start of the next day / session. Staff will be informed of the actions required from the risk assessment through email, team notice board and incident debrief. Staff should be given time to reflect and encouraged to log thoughts and feelings during their work hours and the Lesson Learnt tab completed on MyConcern.

Public Events

During YMCA East Surrey public events, the below will have access to a mobile phone and radios, and be nominated as the Event Control and designated to coordinate responses to events of missing children:

- ▶ Head of CYP and Deputy CEO: Judith Brooks
- ▶ Deputy Head of CYP: Stuart Kingsley
- ▶ CEO: Ian Burks

Lost/found children - Lost Child Point

All lost/found children should be taken to the Lost Child Point, and the following steps should be taken:

- ▶ A Lost/Found Child Form should be completed (see Appendix 1), and the above Event Control contacts are to be informed
- ▶ Children under the age of 14 years will be kept at the Lost Child Point, and supported by a Lost Child Worker, until collected by a parent/responsible adult*
- ▶ Children over the age of 14 will be free to leave, or remain at the Point if they wish.
- ▶ The lost/found child form is to be completed in part by a Lost Child Worker, and part by the parent/guardian of the child once reunited – proof of identify should be requested if staff believe it necessary.
- ▶ Once a child has been reunited with their parents/responsible adult, the Lost Child Point personnel will notify all relevant personnel (i.e., Event Control)
- ▶ If a child is not collected by the time the event has finished, or after a significant period of time has passed, the Police will be contacted on 999.

(*a responsible adult is a person over the age of 18 years, whom the Lost Child Workers feel the child is comfortable with and is responsible enough to take care of the child.)

Children looking for their parent/responsible adult

If a child informs a YMCA staff member that they are lost, or someone brings a lost child to their attention, that member of staff must take responsibility, and take the following steps:

- ▶ Reassure the child that you will locate their parents/carers
- ▶ Immediately inform colleagues that you have a missing child in your care
- ▶ Make contact the Lost Child Point, where the incident will be logged and where information about the child will be relayed to Event Control contacts
- ▶ The child and staff member should remain in a safe place, close to the location where the child was found, for up to 5 minutes (own discretion) to allow for immediate recovery by parents/responsible adult. Ensure you make your position easily visible to aid parents/carers in finding their child.
- ▶ If the child is claimed by their parent/responsible adult within the five minutes, you should escort them both to the Lost Child Point, to fill out the appropriate forms
- ▶ In the event of a lost child being reluctant to be handed over to an adult, you should request support from the Lost Child Point
- ▶ If the parent/responsible adult is not willing to go to the Lost Child Point, you should inform Event Control of the situation and pass the child's details onto the Lost Child Point.

If the child is not picked up within five minutes, you, the child and the person who found the child, should all proceed to the Lost Child Point.

Parent/responsible adult looking for their child

If a parent/responsible adult informs a YMCA staff member that they have lost a child, that member of staff must take responsibility, and inform the Lost Child Point.

Furthermore, you must:

- ▶ Ask for a detailed description of the child
- ▶ Ask for where and when the child was last seen
- ▶ Inform staff in your vicinity to support a rapid search of the immediate area

If the child is not found immediately, instruct the parent/responsible person to go to and remain at the Lost Child Point.

Heighten risks

If an individual case presents with circumstance, which may lead to the child being a high-risk case (e.g. possible kidnapping) Event Control should be contacted immediately and the Police should be informed on 999. The Police will devise the appropriate search strategy.

All forms should be retained and given to the Event Manager after the event.

Useful information and websites

HSE Health & Safety Executive: www.hse.gov.uk, info line: 0845 345 0055
5 Step to Risk Assessment HSE Publications
A Guide to Risk Assessment Requirements HSE Publications
To order publications Tel: 01787 881165

Appendix One – Lost/Found Child Form

Lost/Missing Child

To be completed upon report of lost/missing child or for a child who has lost their parent/responsible person

Time lost:	Time event staff informed:
Child's Name:	Age of child:
Male or Female:	D.O.B.:
Time and place child last seen:	Clothing (colour & pattern):
Hair Colour:	Any other relevant information: Spectator/participant/other (please circle)
Eye Colour:	
Ethnicity:	
Has the child any special medical requirements?	Name of lead at Lost Child Point:
Parent/responsible person name:	Any other information:
Phone Number:	
Address:	
Action taken:	Time:
Event Control informed (time):	
Police informed (time):	
Other:	
Upon reuniting of lost/missing child with parent/responsible person	
Name of parent/responsible person collecting child:	ID document/s checked: Y or N
Relationship to child:	
Signature:	



Member of event staff handing over child: Signature:	Time child reunited:
---	----------------------

Found Child
To be completed upon report of a found child, missing their parent/responsible person

Time found:	Location found:
Child's name:	Age of child:
Male or Female:	D.O.B.:
Hair Colour:	Clothing (colour & pattern):
Eye Colour:	
Ethnicity:	
Spectator/participant/other:	
Any other relevant information:	Has the child any special medical requirements? (check for medical tags)
Details of adult handing the child over:	Name of lead at Lost Child Point:
Name:	
Tel:	
Role (if applicable):	
Action taken:	Any other information:
Event Control informed (time):	
Police informed (time):	
Other:	
Upon reuniting of found child with parent/responsible person	
Name of Parent/Carer collecting child:	Phone Number:
Relationship to child:	Address:
Signature:	ID document/s checked:
Member of event staff handing over child:	Time child reunited:
Signature:	