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4. Children Missing Education and Non-Attendance Procedure

4.1 Purpose

Unmask Your Potential Ltd recognises that children and young people who are missing from education, missing from sessions or absent without explanation may be at increased risk of harm, exploitation, neglect, mental health crisis or disengagement from support.

This procedure sets out how Unmask Your Potential Ltd will respond when a young person does not attend agreed provision, goes missing during a session, or is believed to be missing education.

4.2 Definition of Children Missing Education

Children Missing Education are children of compulsory school age who are not registered pupils at a school and are not receiving suitable education otherwise than at school.

A child may also be a safeguarding concern where they are registered at a school but are persistently absent, absent without explanation, not engaging with alternative provision, or whereabouts are unknown.

4.3 Attendance expectations

For commissioned provision, attendance expectations will be agreed with the commissioner, school, parent/carer and young person where appropriate.

Unmask Your Potential Ltd will maintain accurate attendance records for all planned sessions, including:

- Date and time of session
- Whether the young person attended
- Time of arrival and departure where appropriate
- Reason for absence where known
- Any action taken following absence

- Any safeguarding concerns linked to attendance

4.4 First-day calling / same-day response to unexplained absence

If a young person does not attend an agreed session and no reason has been provided, Unmask Your Potential Ltd will take same-day action.

This may include:

1. Attempting to contact the young person where this is part of the agreed plan and safe to do so
2. Contacting the parent/carer where appropriate
3. Contacting the commissioning school, local authority or professional
4. Recording all contact attempts and responses
5. Informing the DSL if there are safeguarding concerns or repeated absences
6. Escalating to safeguarding services or police if there is immediate concern for the young person's safety

The specific calling order will be agreed in advance as part of the referral or individual support plan.

4.5 If a young person goes missing during a session

If a young person leaves a session unexpectedly or cannot be located, staff must:

- Assess immediate risk
- Attempt to locate the young person if safe and appropriate
- Contact the DSL immediately
- Contact the parent/carer, commissioner or school in line with the agreed plan
- Contact police if there is immediate risk or the young person's whereabouts are unknown and concern is significant
- Record the incident, actions taken and outcome
- Review the risk assessment before any further sessions

Staff must not place themselves or others at risk while attempting to locate a young person.

4.6 Safeguarding response to repeated absence or non-engagement

Repeated absence, unexplained absence or non-engagement may indicate safeguarding risk. The DSL will consider:

- Whether the young person is at risk of exploitation, abuse or neglect
- Whether there are mental health or self-harm concerns
- Whether there are family or placement difficulties
- Whether the young person is missing from education
- Whether the commissioning school or local authority is aware
- Whether a referral to safeguarding services is required

- Whether the provision remains safe and appropriate

Concerns will be recorded and escalated appropriately.

4.7 Reporting children missing education

Where Unmask Your Potential Ltd becomes aware that a child of compulsory school age may not be registered at a school and may not be receiving suitable education, the DSL will inform the relevant local authority Children Missing Education team.

Where the child is connected to Suffolk, the Suffolk Children Missing Education route will be followed. If a child has been out of education for 10 days or more, or there is reason to believe they may be missing education, the concern will be reported to the local authority in line with local procedures.

Where the child is on roll at a school but not attending, the commissioning school retains statutory attendance responsibilities. Unmask Your Potential Ltd will share attendance information promptly with the commissioner and will escalate safeguarding concerns where needed.

4.8 Reintegration and planning

Where appropriate, Unmask Your Potential Ltd will support commissioners, schools and families with information to support reintegration, transition planning or further support. This may include attendance summaries, engagement observations, strengths-based progress information and identified barriers to engagement.

4.9 Record keeping

Attendance, absence, contact attempts, safeguarding concerns and actions taken will be recorded securely. Records will be shared with commissioners and safeguarding agencies where appropriate.

4.10 Review

This policy will be reviewed annually, or sooner if there are changes to legislation, statutory guidance, Suffolk safeguarding procedures or organisational practice.

This policy will be reviewed annually or sooner if:

- Statutory guidance changes
- Suffolk safeguarding procedures change
- There is a safeguarding incident or serious concern
- Provision changes significantly
- Commissioning requirements change

Approved by: Helen Kent

Role: Director

Signature: 
Date: 01/09/2025