



Missing child policy – CM Sports

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Policy Statement

CM Sports is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of every child attending its activities, sessions, clubs, camps, trips and events.

CM Sports recognises that a child who cannot be located may be at immediate risk of harm. All missing-child incidents must therefore be treated seriously and responded to promptly.

The safety and **best interests of the child** will be the primary consideration throughout any missing-child response.

This policy establishes clear procedures for preventing, responding to and recording incidents where a child is believed to be missing.

2. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to:

- minimise the risk of children going missing;
- provide clear procedures for staff to follow when a child cannot be located;
- ensure immediate action is taken;
- ensure appropriate safeguarding escalation;
- provide clear responsibilities for staff;
- ensure parents/carers and relevant agencies are contacted appropriately;
- ensure accurate records are maintained; and
- ensure lessons are learned following an incident.

3. Scope

This policy applies to all CM Sports activities, including:

- sports sessions;
- after-school clubs;
- holiday camps;
- school-based activities;

- community activities;
- indoor and outdoor activities;
- trips and visits;
- competitions;
- events; and
- any other activity organised or delivered by CM Sports.

It applies to all employees, coaches, casual workers, volunteers and other adults working on behalf of CM Sports.

4. What Is a Missing Child?

For the purposes of this policy, a child may be considered missing where:

- staff cannot locate a child who should be present;
- a child leaves an activity or designated area without authorisation;
- a child separates from the group during an activity or trip;
- a child fails to return from an authorised activity;
- a child cannot be accounted for during a headcount;
- a child is unexpectedly absent from an activity;
- a child leaves the premises without permission; or
- there is any reasonable concern that a child may be at risk because their whereabouts are unknown.

Staff must **not delay action simply because they are unsure whether the child should formally be classified as "missing"**.

If there is a concern about the child's whereabouts, staff should act.

5. Preventing Children Going Missing

CM Sports will take reasonable steps to reduce the risk of children going missing.

These may include:

- accurate registration and attendance records;
- regular headcounts;
- appropriate staff-to-child ratios;
- clear activity boundaries;
- clear instructions to children;
- appropriate supervision;
- secure and clearly defined activity areas;
- appropriate signing-in and signing-out arrangements;
- appropriate collection procedures;

- awareness of individual children's needs and vulnerabilities; and
 - appropriate risk assessments for activities and trips.
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6. Registration and Headcounts

Staff must maintain an accurate record of children attending each activity.

Headcounts should be undertaken:

- at the beginning of sessions;
- when children move between areas;
- before leaving a venue;
- after arriving at a new location;
- during trips and activities where appropriate;
- following breaks;
- before returning to the venue; and
- whenever staff have a reasonable concern about a child's whereabouts.

Where practicable, staff should also check the attendance list against the number of children physically present.

7. Immediate Response

If a child is believed to be missing, staff must act **immediately**.

The member of staff who identifies the concern should:

1. remain calm;
2. inform the session/activity leader or responsible manager immediately;
3. confirm the child's name and last known location;
4. establish when and where the child was last seen;
5. conduct an immediate check of the known activity area;
6. ensure other children remain safely supervised;
7. alert the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) or Deputy DSL;
8. begin the appropriate search procedure; and
9. escalate to emergency services where necessary.

Staff must not simply assume that the child has gone home or been collected.

8. Search Procedure

The search should be organised promptly and proportionately.

Where appropriate, staff should check:

- the activity area;
- toilets;
- changing areas;
- classrooms or rooms used by CM Sports;
- sports halls;
- storage areas;
- playgrounds;
- outdoor areas;
- entrances and exits;
- car parks;
- nearby areas; and
- any location where the child may reasonably have gone.

The search must take account of the child's:

- age;
- understanding;
- additional needs;
- disability;
- communication needs;
- emotional or behavioural needs;
- known vulnerabilities;
- previous behaviour;
- familiarity with the venue; and
- any information provided by friends or other children.

9. Maintaining Supervision of Other Children

The search for a missing child must not result in other children being left unsupervised.

The responsible person should allocate staff appropriately so that:

- the missing-child search can take place; and
- the remaining children continue to receive appropriate supervision.

Where staffing levels do not allow a safe search, additional assistance should be sought immediately.

10. When to Contact the Police

CM Sports will contact the police where:

- there is an immediate concern for the child's safety;
- the child may have left the premises;
- the child is particularly vulnerable;
- the child is very young;
- the child has additional needs that increase the risk;
- there are concerns about possible abduction;
- there is evidence that the child may have come to harm;
- the child cannot be located promptly; or
- the responsible person considers police assistance necessary.

Where there is an immediate danger to the child, staff should call **999 without delay**.

Staff must not wait for a fixed amount of time before contacting the police where circumstances indicate that urgent action is necessary.

11. Contacting Parents/Carers

Parents/carers should be informed as soon as appropriate.

The responsible person should provide factual information about:

- when the child was last seen;
- where they were last seen;
- what actions have been taken;
- whether the police or other agencies have been contacted; and
- any other relevant information.

Staff should avoid speculation or providing unconfirmed information.

12. Safeguarding Escalation

All missing-child incidents must be considered from a safeguarding perspective.

The DSL or Deputy DSL should consider whether the circumstances indicate:

- neglect;
- inadequate supervision;
- exploitation;
- child criminal exploitation;
- child sexual exploitation;
- abduction;
- domestic abuse;

- bullying;
- peer-on-peer abuse;
- online risks;
- mental health concerns;
- a child deliberately attempting to avoid an unsafe situation; or
- another safeguarding concern.

Where a safeguarding concern is identified, CM Sports will follow its **Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy** and seek advice or make referrals to relevant agencies where appropriate.

13. Children with SEND or Additional Needs

CM Sports recognises that some children may be at increased risk if they go missing.

This may include children who:

- have communication difficulties;
- have learning disabilities;
- have sensory needs;
- have autism;
- have mobility difficulties;
- have medical conditions;
- are unable to understand danger;
- are particularly vulnerable to exploitation; or
- require additional supervision or support.

Risk assessments and individual arrangements should take account of these needs.

Where a child has an individual healthcare plan, risk assessment or other agreed support arrangement, relevant staff should follow it.

14. If a Child Is Found

When the child is located, staff should:

- ensure the child is safe;
- establish whether they are injured or unwell;
- provide reassurance;
- establish, where appropriate, what happened;
- consider whether the child has experienced or witnessed harm;
- inform the DSL;

- inform the parent/carer where appropriate; and
- complete the required incident and safeguarding records.

The child should not be blamed, punished or made to feel responsible for the incident.

If the child makes a disclosure or raises a safeguarding concern, staff must follow the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.

15. Medical Attention

If a missing child is found injured, unwell, distressed or otherwise in need of urgent assistance, appropriate first aid and medical support must be provided.

Where necessary, **999 must be called**.

Any injury or medical concern should be recorded in accordance with the Accident and Incident Policy.

16. Information Sharing

CM Sports recognises that effective safeguarding may require information to be shared with appropriate people and agencies.

Relevant information may need to be shared with:

- parents/carers;
- the child's school;
- children's social care;
- the police;
- health professionals;
- safeguarding partners; or
- other relevant agencies.

Information should be shared where necessary, proportionate and appropriate to protect the child.

Data protection must not be used as a reason to prevent appropriate safeguarding information sharing where a child may be at risk.

17. Recording the Incident

Every significant missing-child incident must be recorded.

The record should include, where applicable:

- child's name;
- date and time;
- activity or session;
- venue;

- time the child was last seen;
- location where the child was last seen;
- description of the child;
- circumstances leading to the child being identified as missing;
- staff present;
- headcounts undertaken;
- areas searched;
- staff involved in the search;
- time parents/carers were contacted;
- time the police or other agencies were contacted;
- advice received;
- when and where the child was found;
- condition of the child when found;
- actions taken;
- safeguarding concerns identified;
- decisions made and the reasons for those decisions; and
- any follow-up action required.

Records should be factual, accurate and completed as soon as reasonably practicable.

18. Safeguarding Records

Where a missing-child incident raises safeguarding concerns, the information must be recorded and managed in accordance with the CM Sports Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.

Safeguarding records should clearly demonstrate:

- the concern;
- action taken;
- decisions made;
- rationale for decisions;
- information shared;
- advice received; and
- outcomes or follow-up actions.

Records must be stored securely and only accessed by those who have a legitimate need to do so.

19. Allegations or Concerns About Staff

If a missing-child incident raises concerns about the actions or conduct of a member of staff, volunteer, contractor or other adult, the matter must be reported immediately through CM Sports safeguarding procedures.

This may include concerns that:

- appropriate supervision was not provided;
- a staff member failed to follow procedures;
- a child was deliberately left unsupervised;
- inappropriate conduct contributed to the incident; or
- there may have been deliberate or negligent action.

Staff should also refer to the **Whistleblowing Policy** where appropriate.

20. Online and Digital Considerations

Where appropriate, staff should consider whether online activity may be connected to a child going missing.

This may include:

- contact with unknown individuals;
- online exploitation;
- social media;
- cyberbullying;
- inappropriate online relationships;
- grooming;
- threats or coercion; or
- communication encouraging a child to leave.

Any such concerns must be reported under the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.

21. Trips and Off-Site Activities

Additional planning must be undertaken for activities away from the normal venue.

Risk assessments should consider:

- the location;
- travel arrangements;
- transport;
- meeting points;
- staff responsibilities;
- emergency contact arrangements;
- headcount procedures;

- boundaries;
- potential hazards;
- individual children's needs; and
- arrangements if a child becomes separated from the group.

Staff must ensure children are accounted for at appropriate points throughout the activity.

22. Learning From a Missing-Child Incident

Following a significant incident, CM Sports will review what happened and identify any lessons.

The review may consider:

- whether supervision was appropriate;
- whether staff numbers were sufficient;
- whether headcounts were effective;
- whether risk assessments were adequate;
- whether procedures were followed;
- whether communication was effective;
- whether safeguarding concerns were identified;
- whether information was shared appropriately; and
- whether changes are required to prevent recurrence.

Risk assessments and procedures will be updated where necessary.

23. Staff Training

Staff will be made aware of this policy and their responsibilities.

Relevant training and briefings may include:

- safeguarding;
- supervision;
- missing-child procedures;
- emergency procedures;
- risk assessment;
- first aid;
- recognising vulnerability; and
- information sharing.

Staff must understand that they should act promptly where a child cannot be accounted for.

24. Confidentiality

Information about a missing child must be treated sensitively.

Staff must not discuss incidents with people who do not have a legitimate need to know.

Information must not be shared on personal social media or through unauthorised communication channels.