

Child Absence Policy

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Purpose of the Policy

At Little Wildflowers Childminding, the safety, well-being, and accountability for every child in my care are of utmost importance. This policy sets out clear procedures to manage and respond to safeguarding concerns related to absences and non-collection.

These procedures are designed to ensure that absence-related concerns are identified and addressed promptly, and that appropriate agencies are contacted without delay, when necessary. The policy also supports transparent communication with parents, carers, and safeguarding authorities, and ensures compliance with regulatory requirements.

Notifying a Child Absence

If your child is unable to attend the setting, please notify me as soon as possible. During business hours, contact should be made by phone in the first instance. If you need to notify me outside of business hours, a text message is acceptable. Please be aware that I may not be able to respond to messages received outside of business hours until the setting reopens.

Procedures for Unnotified Absence of a Child

In the event a child has not arrived at the setting at the notified time, I will follow a structured procedure to ensure the child's safety and well-being.

- If a child has not arrived within 20 minutes of their agreed drop-off time, I will send a text message to the parent or guardian who is normally responsible for bringing the child to the setting.
- If no response is received within 5 minutes of the initial message, a second message will be sent to the other parent or legal guardian (if applicable).
- If 30 minutes have passed and I have not received any communication from a parent, guardian, or emergency contact, I will begin calling—rather than texting—all available contact numbers in the following order:
 - Parent(s) or legal guardian(s)
 - Emergency contact(s)
- If I am unable to reach any of the authorised individuals and there are continued concerns for the child's welfare, I will contact the Local Authority Duty Social Worker to report the unnotified absence and seek further advice.
- I will fully cooperate with the Local Authority and any other safeguarding agencies involved. They will take the lead in determining the appropriate course of action, which may include the involvement of the police or other emergency services if necessary.

Procedures for Uncollected Children

In the event a child is not collected at the appointed time, I will follow a structured procedure to ensure the child's safety and well-being:

- I will provide reassurance to the child to help them feel secure and cared for during the waiting period.
- I will never release a child from my care to someone who is not authorised to collect them, ensuring their safety and security.
- I will contact the emergency contact person/s identified within the child's records and arrange for them to collect the child if parents/carers cannot be reached.
- If all attempts to contact authorised persons fail, I will contact the Local Authority Duty Social Worker for further guidance and assistance.
- I will cooperate fully with the Local Duty Social Worker, who will take charge of the situation and determine the appropriate course of action, including involvement of the police if necessary.

Recording and Incident Logging

I will record the situation as an incident and ask parents/carers to sign and date to confirm their awareness of the content of the Incident Log, maintaining transparency and accountability.

Additional Charges for Extended Care

I may implement additional charges for the extra time the child spends in my care beyond the agreed upon pick-up time, ensuring fair compensation for the additional care provided.

Registration System and Record-Keeping

I maintain a registration system for the arrival and departure of children in my care. These records are kept clear, accurate, and up-to-date as required by regulatory standards.

Prolonged or Trends in Absence

While it is normal for children to occasionally be unwell, I will remain alert to patterns or trends in absences. Taking into account my understanding of the child's individual circumstances, I will use my professional judgement to assess whether an absence appears prolonged or raises safeguarding concerns.

Any concerns regarding absence will be reported without delay to the Multi-Agency Screening Team (MAST) on 01422 393336. I will not attempt to investigate or resolve these concerns myself; instead, I will follow safeguarding procedures and allow the appropriate authorities to determine the next steps.

If there is an immediate concern for a child's safety, I will contact the police on 999 to request a welfare check.

Additional Measures for Overnight Care

As I am not registered for overnight care provision, additional measures may be implemented to ensure the safety and security of children, including the Local Authority Duty Social Worker deciding to place the child in temporary care.