Emergency Procedures when a child is not collected.

Responding when parents are not present to receive their children from school or an activity at the expected time.

Published: 01/04/16

Introduction

At the end of a school day, or of an activity for children arranged by a school/setting, the children concerned will transfer back to the care of their parents or carers. Some older children will be of an age and ability to make their own way home, but parents will often need to make arrangements for the collection of their children due to their age, ability, the time or location of the activity. Most will be collected by a parent/carer, whilst some will be transported to their home for the transfer of responsibility to take place there.

These arrangements are well established and understood by parents and carers and generally work extremely well. However there are occasions when events prevent parents or carers arriving on time to collect their child. In most of these cases the delay is minimal. In other cases the parent will notify the school or organisation and agree new arrangements.

This guidance is concerned with the cases where the arrangements to hand back responsibility fail, and contact with the parents cannot be made, or when parents cannot make arrangements within a reasonable period of time.

This guidance details the arrangements for dealing with children not collected from school/settings at the end of the day or from any activity at the agreed time and for parental absence when children are transported home at the end of the school day or after an activity. Included in this process are those children who are not collected on time but where the parents repeatedly notify the school of a significant delay. This process has been endorsed by Directorate for People Children's Social Care, the Police and Birmingham Safeguarding Children Board.

The guidance is provided for use by:-

- Schools/Academies;
- Nurseries;
- After School Provisions;
- Children's Centres;
- Residential Settings;
- Youth Groups;
- Sports Groups; and
- Any other organisation or setting providing a service for children or young people where there is an expectation for the child to be collected at the end of a session.

For this guidance to have best effect practitioners in schools and other organisations should be aware of it, and they should in turn inform parents/carers of children attending the school or activities.

Process

- When a child is uncollected from school or from another activity, the safety and welfare of the child will be the paramount consideration in determining appropriate action.

- Parents should be required to provide the school or organisation with their contact details - names(s), address (es), home, work and mobile telephone numbers. Parents should also provide the contact details, and methods to prove identity as required, of at least two other relatives/carers who can be called when the parent/carer cannot be contacted or in the event of an emergency. The school/organisation must keep this record up to date, and ensure that key staff are informed of any changes.

- Only one parent/carer (who has personal responsibility for a child) should be authorised to make changes to the contact details. The school/organisation should note this clearly on the child's record.

- The school/organisation must make clear to parents/carers in writing the normal finish times for the school/activity, the arrangements for children to be collected at the end of the school day/activity, or for their transport home. Any changes should also be notified to parents/carers in writing. This should include notification of any additional financial charge for the use of after school facilities.

- The school/organisation must also make clear that if a child is not collected at the end of the school day/activity, they will notify Children's Social Care, and the period of time that the school/organisation is prepared to wait before involving them.

Procedure

Whenever a parent fails to collect a child from school or an activity at the expected time, or a parent/carer is not at home to receive the child from school transport services:

1. This will be brought to the attention of the Head Teacher or a Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL). A nominated member of the school staff will then make every effort to contact the parent/carer or the named alternative carers (including where known, other settings that siblings attend to see if they are experiencing the same problem).

2. The DSL will maintain a record of incidents where parents do not collect a child from school or other activities, or are absent when the child is transported home.

Any child welfare concerns arising out of such an incident(s) will be dealt with in accordance with the child safeguarding procedures of the school/organisation.

3. The school should organise a rota to allow that at least two staff should stay until responsibility for the child is handed over.

   3.1 School Transport will maintain an office rota to cover 'drop off' times to ensure a contact point to ensure that all children have been successfully transferred back to parents care

4. If the school offers after-school clubs or commission's childcare arrangements placing the child into these facilities whilst waiting may be considered. However, consideration should be given to information sharing requirements and minimum staffing levels. If these after-school facilities are normally charged for parents should be charged for use at a daily rate charge.

5. If the child has not been collected/received, and it has not been possible to contact a parent or named carer, 1 hour after the agreed finish time for the school day/activity, a phone call should be made to the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) on 0121 303 1888. MASH will act in a coordinating role in the first instance and will need the following information:
   - Brief circumstances of incident, and arrangements in place mapped against the 'Right Services Right Time' threshold model.
     i. Child's details
     ii. Name(s)
     iii. Date of birth
     iv. Address
     v. Gender
     vi. Ethnicity
     vii. Religion
     viii. Language spoken
     ix. Special dietary needs
     x. SEN/behavioural difficulties/medical needs/
   - Parent/Carer Contact Details
     i. Parent/carer/alternative carer details
     ii. Name(s)
     iii. Address(es)
     iv. Home/work/mobile telephone number(s)
   - Any current or previous child protection concerns*
   - Any previous incidents of not being collected from school
   - Details of GP/Health Visitor (optional).

   *If the child has an allocated social worker, the school will contact the social worker, or the allocated team manager via Children's Information and Advice Service (CIAS) (303 1888 option 2) instead of contacting the MASH.

6. Where a child has been placed in after school provision, or has not been pick up such provision timescales and contact numbers need to reflect the time the 'non-collection' will occur. In this circumstance:
   6.1 If the child has not been collected / received, and it has not been possible to contact a parent or named carer, 30 minutes after the agreed finish time for the after school club
   6.2 A phone call should be made to the Emergency Duty Team (EDT) on 0121 464 9001

7. Note that the CIAS switchboards close at 5.15 p.m. (4.15 Friday) after which the Emergency Duty Team must be contacted. The contact details for CIAS and the Emergency Duty Team are as follows:

   Children's Information and Advice Service- Tel No 0121 303 1888
   Emergency Duty Team- Tel No 0121 464 9001

8. MASH will give advice and may carry out appropriate checks and make further attempts to contact the parent/carer. If there are any concerns about the welfare of the parent/carer, MASH will, on a case by case basis ask the local police to visit the home address.

9. If an appropriate relative or carer is located, he/she will be asked to ensure that the child is collected / received from the school/organisation. If there is a genuine reason for the relative or carer being unable to do this, MASH will liaise with school/organisation about possible arrangements for the child to be taken to the address though this will occur only under exceptional circumstances.

10. In making decisions, Social Care Services and the school/organisation will prioritise interim care arrangements that best meet the child's personal and emotional needs.

11. If the combined attempts to contact a parent or appropriate carer by the School or MASH remain unsuccessful 1½ hours (by 17.00hrs) after the normal end of the school day/activity, Social Care Services will normally make a decision to assume care of the child and arrange for him/her to be taken to a place of safety.
    1. For children with health care requirements it is expected that the health care plan will include a risk assessment and plan to meet the needs of a child not picked up or dropped off at home by home-to-school transport.

12. By 17.15hrs MASH will confirm the arrangements with the school/organisation and with those caring for the child at that time, before the MASH closes and also hand this information over to the EDT team. The Emergency Duty Team will continue to liaise with the school/setting as appropriate until an appropriate placement is identified.

13. Plans for transporting the child will take into account staff availability out of hours, the need for adequate insurance cover, appropriate gender balance, in

car safety, and any information about special needs or behavioural difficulties etc. provided by the school/organisation. Where possible, two adults should be present. If there is a shortage of staff, or adequate arrangements a mini cab could be used with a suitable escort.

14. The school/organisation will send a letter to the parent/carer notifying them of the incident and of the arrangements that were made to care for the child. (*An example of this letter can be found at Appendix A).*

Children Transported Home from School/Activity

Children transported from school generally have special educational needs the contact with Children's Social Care should be made to the Children with Disabilities Team via CIAS.

15. Where arrangements are in place for a child to be transported home from school or an activity, the school/organisation must ensure that the driver/guide has an emergency telephone number for making contact in the event of problems.

16. The school should also provide a brief précis of the child's health and emotional needs. These should be stored in a sealed envelope and only opened if the child is placed as part of an interim arrangement.

17. If there is no response at the home address, the guide or driver will immediately inform the school/organisation (if still available), who will agree the initial action to be taken. The school must also inform the Education Transport Service (if the school is no longer available the guide must inform the Education Transport Service).

18. The guide or driver will leave a proforma *(see Appendix B)* at the child's address with the school's contact details.

19. If there are other children in the same vehicle that need to be taken home then this child will remain in the vehicle whilst this is done.

20. In the meantime, the school/organisation or Transport Assist (the Education Transport Service) will contact MASH via CIAS or if after 5.15pm the Emergency Duty Team - See 7 -12 above. The school/organisation/Transport Assist will notify the guide/driver of action agreed with MASH.

Concerns about the child's welfare

21. The Head Teacher/Senior member of the Leadership Team should meet with the parent on the next working day and outline the actions that the school had to take and why. This will include informing the parent of any arising financial issues and agreeing a payment plan

22. Where more than one incident occurs, repeated episodes on late collection with notification or where there are reasons for concern regarding the ability of parent(s)/carer(s) to collect/receive their child, the Head Teacher will:
    1. Initiate a discussion between the school/organisation and the parent will identify a strategy for addressing these concerns.
    2. Where agreement cannot be reached with parents or in cases where there are child protection concerns, a referral to MASH will be completed and Social Care Services will be invited to contribute to identifying the strategy for addressing the concerns and safeguarding the child.

Insert School logo

APPENDIX A – Letter to parents

Dear .....Parent/Carer's name

Re:

On…..……(day). Your Child(ren) .....name(s)

were not collected/ received at the end of the school day, and we were unable to contact you or your named carer(s). As a result, in order to safeguard and promote the welfare of your child(ren), we implemented the 'procedure for dealing with children not collected/received at the end of the school day'.

This procedure, which has been agreed by our school, Children's Social Care Services, the Police and the Birmingham Safeguarding Children Board, involved us contacting Social Care Services in order that arrangements could be made to ensure your child was safe.

I hope that the reasons for your child not being collected are not serious. It is important that this situation does not arise again. Therefore please could you come to the school on:
Date:
Time:
To meet with:

If you wish to find out what action was taken by Children's Social care you can contact them on 0121 303 1888 for further information.

Yours sincerely

Appendix B - HOME TO SCHOOL TRANSPORT – EMERGENCY DROP OFF

Dear Parent/Carer

On / / at pm, there was no response when your

child(ren)..... was/were returned to their

address from school.

In this event we took the following action:

☐ Waited until.....for your return, after this we:

☐ Returned your child to school
☐ Have taken your child to the emergency address provided by you to school / Transport Assist.
☐ Referred the matter to Social Care and taken your child to…..…… on their advice.

Please note that in such cases, unless the school instructs otherwise, the driver/guide will take your child to a Social Care provision, and arrangements will then need to be made to ensure his/her ongoing care.

For further information please contact:

- Your child's School
- Transport Assist on 0121 303 4425 / 2450 / 4955
- Children's Information and Advice Service on 303 1888 (until 5.15pm or 4.15pm on Friday)
- The Emergency Duty Team on 0121 464 9001

Yours faithfully

Appendix C – Process card for Home-to-School guides/escorts

Emergency procedure to be followed when pupils cannot be dropped off at home

1. You must immediately contact the School / Transport Assist for advice. You must not under any circumstances leave a pupil without handing them over to a responsible adult authorised by school.

2. If neither the school nor the Transport Assist are aware as to why a parent/carer is not there and there are other children on the vehicle, this child should remain on the vehicle and you must take the other pupils home first.

3. You should then return to this child's address and if the parent/carer continues to be unobtainable you should contact School / Transport Assist for advice on where the pupil needs to be taken.

4. In some instances pupils may need to be returned to school. If this is not possible then the School / Transport Assist will contact the Children's Information and Advice Service or if after 5.15pm (4.15 Fridays) the Emergency Duty Team for advice on where the pupil needs to be taken.

5. If a member of Transport Assist staff cannot be contacted then the Pupil Guide/ Driver should contact the above-mentioned services who will advise the guide/driver where the pupil can be taken to a place of safety.

6. You will need to leave a copy of Appendix B at the house stating where the child has been taken.

Telephone Points of Contact

Transport Assist :	Tel: 0121 303 4425 / 2450 / 4955
Escort Liaison Service:	Tel: 0121 303 6595 / 3220
Children's Information and Advice Service:	Tel: 0121 303 1888
Emergency Duty Team:	Tel: 0121 464 9001