

Missing Child and Uncollected Child Policy

Purpose

PMACTIVE is committed to ensuring the safety and wellbeing of all children and young people attending our activities.

This policy sets out the procedures to be followed if:

- A child or young person is unexpectedly missing during a PMACTIVE activity.
- A child or young person becomes separated from the group.
- A child or young person leaves a session or agreed location without authorisation.
- A child or young person is not collected as expected.
- A parent, carer or authorised collector cannot be contacted.

The safety and welfare of the child or young person will remain the priority throughout any incident. This policy should be read alongside PMACTIVE's Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy, Drop Off and Collection Policy, Lone Working Policy, Health and Safety Policy and relevant risk assessments.

Scope

This policy applies to all PMACTIVE staff, volunteers and sessional workers responsible for children and young people during PMACTIVE activities.

The procedures apply across all locations used by PMACTIVE, including community venues, schools, public spaces, sports facilities, children's homes and other settings.

As PMACTIVE operates across different venues, staff must also follow the emergency and safeguarding procedures of the venue or organisation being used where these apply.

Prevention and Planning

PMACTIVE will take reasonable steps to reduce the likelihood of a child or young person becoming missing or uncollected.

Staff will:

- Maintain an accurate register of children and young people attending each session.
- Record arrivals and departures where required.
- Ensure staff understand who is responsible for supervising each child or group.
- Be aware of individual risk assessments and relevant information about children with identified vulnerabilities.
- Consider additional risks for children who may be prone to wandering, absconding, becoming disorientated or leaving an activity without warning.
- Ensure relevant emergency contact information is accessible.
- Follow agreed drop-off and collection arrangements.
- Ensure children are appropriately supervised throughout activities.
- Follow venue-specific procedures where applicable.

Where a child has an individual risk assessment identifying a risk of leaving or becoming separated from staff, appropriate control measures will be followed.

When a Child is Missing

A child is considered missing when staff cannot account for their whereabouts and they are not where they are expected to be. If a child or young person is found to be missing, staff must act immediately.

Immediate Actions

The member of staff discovering that a child is missing should:

1. Remain calm and inform the session leader or PMActive Management immediately.
2. Check the immediate area and any obvious or agreed locations where the child may have gone.
3. Check toilets, changing areas, activity spaces, entrances, exits and other appropriate nearby areas.
4. Confirm the child's last known location and time they were seen.
5. Check the register and establish which children remain safely supervised.
6. Ensure the rest of the group continues to be safely supervised.
7. Contact PMActive Management without delay.
8. Follow the venue's missing-person or emergency procedures where applicable.

Staff must not leave other children unsupervised while searching for a missing child.

Searching for a Missing Child

The response will depend on the child's age, individual needs, known risks, location and circumstances. Where it is safe and appropriate, staff may conduct an immediate search of the surrounding area.

The search should consider:

- The child's last known location.
- Toilets and changing areas.
- Entrances and exits.
- Car parks.
- Roads and nearby traffic.
- Parks, open spaces or bodies of water.
- Areas the child is known to be attracted to or familiar with.
- Any location identified within the child's individual risk assessment.

Staff must not put themselves or other children at unreasonable risk while searching.

Where the circumstances indicate that the child may be at significant or immediate risk of harm, the police should be contacted without delay by calling 999. This may be appropriate where:

- The child is very young or particularly vulnerable.
- The child has significant additional needs or communication difficulties.

- There is a known risk of wandering or absconding.
- The child may have entered a dangerous environment.
- The child is believed to have entered traffic, water or another hazardous area.
- There are concerns about abduction, exploitation or other criminal activity.
- The child cannot be located after an immediate search.
- Staff reasonably believe the child is at immediate risk of harm.

Staff should not delay contacting the police simply because they are concerned that doing so may be premature.

Contacting Parents or Carers

Parents or carers should be informed as soon as reasonably practicable once PMActive Management has assessed the situation and appropriate immediate action has been taken. Information provided should be factual and should include:

- When the child was last seen.
- Where they were last seen.
- What actions have been taken.
- Whether emergency services have been contacted.
- Any relevant information that may assist in locating the child.

Where the police or safeguarding authorities are involved, staff will follow their advice regarding communication with parents or carers.

When a Missing Child is Found

When the child is located:

- Their immediate safety and wellbeing will be assessed.
- Any injuries or medical concerns will be addressed.
- Parents or carers will be informed where appropriate.
- The circumstances will be recorded.
- The incident will be reviewed by PMActive Management.
- The child's individual risk assessment will be reviewed where relevant.
- Safeguarding concerns will be referred to the DSL where necessary.

The child should be spoken to calmly and sensitively. Staff should avoid blaming, shaming or unnecessarily questioning the child. Where the circumstances indicate that the child may have been exposed to harm, exploitation, abuse or neglect, the matter will be managed under PMActive's safeguarding procedures.

Unauthorised Departure

If a child or young person leaves a PMActive activity or agreed location without permission, staff must treat this as a safeguarding concern and respond according to the circumstances.

Staff should:

- Establish when and where the child left.
- Establish the child's likely destination where known.

- Inform PMAActive Management immediately.
- Maintain appropriate supervision of the remaining children.
- Follow the child's individual risk assessment, if applicable.
- Contact parents or carers where appropriate.
- Contact the police where the child is at immediate or significant risk of harm.

Staff must not pursue a child into a dangerous environment or place themselves at risk.

Uncollected Children

Parents and carers are responsible for collecting children at the agreed time unless an alternative arrangement has been agreed in advance.

If a child has not been collected at the expected time, staff will:

1. Ensure the child remains safely supervised.
2. Check whether an alternative collection arrangement has been communicated.
3. Contact the parent or carer using the contact details held by PMAActive.
4. Contact other authorised emergency contacts where appropriate.
5. Inform PMAActive Management.
6. Continue to supervise and reassure the child.
7. Record the circumstances and actions taken.

The child must not be left alone or sent home without appropriate authorisation.

Delayed Parents or Carers

Where a parent or carer contacts PMAActive to explain that they are delayed, staff will obtain an expected collection time where possible.

If the delay is reasonable and the parent or carer remains in communication, PMAActive will continue to supervise the child until collection.

Where delays become prolonged, repeated or cause concern, PMAActive Management will determine whether further action is required.

Unable to Contact Parents or Carers

If a child remains uncollected and PMAActive is unable to contact the parent, carer or authorised emergency contacts, PMAActive Management will consider the circumstances and the child's age, needs and vulnerability.

Where appropriate, PMAActive will seek advice from the relevant children's social care service or other safeguarding authority.

If there is an immediate concern for the child's safety or welfare, emergency services will be contacted.

Staff must not transport an uncollected child home or to another location unless this has been specifically authorised by PMAActive Management and is necessary and appropriate to safeguard the child.

Children Who Are Permitted to Leave Independently

Some children and young people may be permitted to leave PMActive activities independently where this has been agreed in advance.

This will normally require an appropriate Walk Home Alone / Independent Departure consent form and consideration of the child's age, maturity, needs and circumstances.

Where independent departure has been authorised, staff should record the child's departure in accordance with PMActive's registration and collection procedures.

If a child who is normally permitted to leave independently does not leave as expected, or staff have concerns about their whereabouts, this should be treated as a potential missing-child concern and managed in accordance with this policy.

Safeguarding Concerns

A missing or uncollected child may be an indicator of a wider safeguarding concern.

Staff should consider whether there are concerns relating to:

- Neglect.
- Abuse.
- Domestic abuse.
- Exploitation.
- Criminal or sexual exploitation.
- Mental health or emotional wellbeing.
- Family circumstances.
- Unsafe collection arrangements.
- A child deliberately avoiding a particular person or location.

Any safeguarding concern must be reported to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) and managed in accordance with PMActive's Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy.

Children with Additional Needs

PMActive recognises that some children and young people may have additional needs that affect their ability to communicate, understand risk, remain with a group or respond to unfamiliar situations.

Where relevant, staff will consider:

- Communication needs.
- SEND.
- Sensory needs.
- Mobility needs.
- Medical conditions.
- Behavioural or emotional needs.
- Known risks of wandering or absconding.
- Familiarity with the environment.

Specific risks and control measures for children receiving 1:2:1 support will be documented within their individual risk assessment where required.

Staff and Volunteer Responsibilities

All staff and volunteers are responsible for:

- Maintaining appropriate supervision.
- Following this policy and relevant risk assessments.
- Knowing which children they are responsible for during activities.
- Reporting missing or uncollected children immediately.
- Maintaining the safety of the remaining children.
- Following venue-specific emergency procedures where applicable.
- Maintaining professional and calm communication with children and families.
- Recording incidents accurately and promptly.
- Reporting safeguarding concerns to the DSL.
- Seeking management guidance whenever they are unsure how to respond.

Volunteers must not independently decide to contact external safeguarding agencies or emergency services unless there is an immediate emergency requiring such action. They should contact PMActive Management or the DSL without delay where practicable.

Management Responsibilities

PMActive Management is responsible for:

- Ensuring appropriate procedures are in place.
- Ensuring staff and volunteers understand their responsibilities.
- Ensuring relevant risk assessments are completed and reviewed.
- Supporting staff during missing or uncollected child incidents.
- Ensuring appropriate external agencies are contacted where necessary.
- Reviewing significant incidents.
- Identifying learning and improvements.
- Ensuring safeguarding concerns are appropriately referred.

Recording and Incident Reporting

All missing child incidents, unauthorised departures and significant uncollected child incidents must be recorded using PMActive's appropriate incident reporting process.

Records should include:

- Child's name.
- Date and time.
- Location.
- Last known whereabouts.
- Time the child was identified as missing or uncollected.
- Actions taken.
- People contacted.
- Whether parents or carers were contacted.
- Whether emergency services or safeguarding agencies were contacted.
- Time the child was located or collected.
- Any injuries or safeguarding concerns.
- Follow-up actions.

- Name of the person completing the record.

Where more than one member of staff or volunteer was involved, PMActive Management may require more than one account of the incident.

Review and Learning

Following a significant incident, PMActive Management will review:

- What happened.
- Whether supervision arrangements were appropriate.
- Whether existing risk assessments were effective.
- Whether staff and volunteers followed procedures.
- Whether additional controls are required.
- Whether the child's individual risk assessment needs updating.
- Whether safeguarding referrals or further action are required.

Learning from incidents will be used to improve PMActive's procedures and reduce the likelihood of recurrence.

Confidentiality and Information Sharing

Information relating to missing and uncollected children will be handled sensitively and securely. Records will be managed in accordance with PMActive's Data Protection and Confidentiality Policy.

Information may be shared with parents, carers, safeguarding agencies, police or other relevant professionals where there is a lawful and appropriate reason to do so, particularly where necessary to protect a child from harm.

Related Policies

This policy should be read alongside:

- Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy.
- Safeguarding Adults Policy, where relevant.
- Drop Off and Collection Policy.
- Lone Working Policy.
- Risk Assessment Policy.
- Health and Safety Policy.
- Accident, Injury and First Aid Policy.
- Positive Behaviour and Relationships Policy.
- Data Protection and Confidentiality Policy.
- Emergency Procedures and Safeguarding Flowcharts.

Review

PMActive will review this policy regularly and following any significant incident to ensure that it remains effective, reflects current safeguarding guidance and is appropriate for the different venues and activities in which PMActive operates.

Policy Reviews:

Policy Written: September 2026

