

Enfield

Safeguarding

Children Board

...because safeguarding children
is everybody's business

Policy and Procedure for Primary Aged Children not collected from school at the end of the school day

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Executive Summary

This procedure has been developed by a group of primary school Head Teaching representatives, together with representatives from Education and Children's Social Services and the Police. It is in response to the increasing number of incidents reported by schools, where children have been left at school and not collected until long after the end of the school day.

There are demands on teachers, at all levels, to be involved with professional matters beyond the end of the school day that mean that supervision in these circumstances is problematic.

Such incidents cause distress to children.

Clear guidance is needed so that schools can deal with these instances confidently, not least through receiving support from other agencies. A consistent defined approach will also enable schools to give reassurance to the children involved. It is recognised that situations occur where children are not collected occasionally for reasons beyond their parents' control, such as a traffic accident. This guidance is intended to help children parents/carers and professionals in these situations.

It includes the following:

- School responsibilities and Action to be taken by school staff
- Children's Social Services procedure for children uncollected from school
- Action by Children's Social Services for children living in the borough of Enfield
- Action by Children's Social Services for children living in other Authorities
- Children uncollected from After School Clubs

The knowledge that a procedure exists for managing such problems should give reassurance to parents/carers that the welfare of their children is assured.

School Responsibilities

1. To ensure that parents/carers are notified periodically of the start and end time of the school day.
2. To instigate a system of regular updates of family/carer information, contact numbers and emergency contact numbers. This can be done by:
 - Sending out slips requesting confirmation or updating of contact information. e.g. annually
 - Attaching a slip to letters sent by school which require a response e.g. parents' evening invitations, which can be followed up during the consultation
 - Any other suitable system of communications already established by any particular school

Please be aware of the need to make adequate arrangements for parents, whose first language is not English.

- 3 To ensure that relevant parental contact numbers and home addresses are known and accessible to staff in the school, who might need them.
4. To ensure that all children, staff and parents know where children will wait if they are not collected on time.
5. To ensure the policy and procedures for children not collected at the end of the school day are known to the parents.

This can be done by:

- Including the information in the school prospectus/brochure
- Reminders in school newsletters to parents
- Information posted on the school website

This information should include advice to families that:

- They should contact school as soon as a delay is anticipated
- To ensure they make adequate alternative collection and supervision arrangements of their children if possible. (and inform school)
- That school will keep a record of children not collected and the reasons given for the delay. The collecting adult to sign the record on collection
- To inform them that procedures are in place to inform Children's Social Services and the Police, if parents persistently collect their children late without any reason having previously been given to the school. **This procedure may lead initially to a meeting with the Safer Schools Police Officer or a possible referral to Children's Social Care and involves parents collecting their children from Children's Social Services offices or possibly foster care.**

Action to be taken by school staff

Children, who are not collected at the end of the school day, will be taken, by their teacher to a designated area within the school. Individual schools will decide where this area should be.

Children should be signed in by the teacher and signed out by the collecting adult with the reason for the delay indicated.

If parents persistently collect their children late from school a letter will be sent to the parent explaining the concerns and copied to Children's Social Services and Safer Schools Police Officers (Appendix 1).

If the school has not been contacted within a reasonable time, (suggested 10 minutes after the end of the school day) a staff member must try to contact the parent and emergency contact numbers held by the school. These actions and their outcomes must be recorded. If school is unable to make contact with the parent or emergency contact and an hour has elapsed since the end of the school day, a referral to Children Services will be made. This referral should be made no later than 4.15pm. This contact will alert the service that a child may be in need of Local Authority Care due to not having been collected by their parent. When the telephone referral has been made a copy of the child's details including; full

name, DOB, home address, parent's full name/s, and all contact numbers, must be emailed or faxed securely to Children's Social Services immediately, this should be completed using the Early Help Form.

If children are taken into care, the school will make efforts to inform parents/carers of the action that has been taken, by delivering a letter to the home address (Appendix 3) and leaving a letter in a prominent place at the school (Appendix 2). These actions will be recorded on the child's file for future reference by Children's Social Services or School. The letter should inform of the action taken and give a number for the parents/carers to contact Children's Social Care.

Children's Social Services Procedure for Children Uncollected from School

This procedure covers actions by Children's Social Services and Schools in the event of children remaining uncollected at the end of the school day.

This situation is a regular occurrence, which schools have difficulty managing. In some situations children are uncollected as a result of unforeseen circumstances, for example a traffic accident. In such circumstances, it is the responsibility of parents to contact the school to inform them of the situation, when the child is likely to be collected and make other appropriate arrangements. In other situations children are uncollected from school as a result of parents not giving appropriate priority to arrangements for their children and not appreciating their children's needs for a reliable and secure routine. Children not collected are likely to feel neglected and unvalued, and fearful due to uncertainty about when they will be collected and uncertainty about why their parent is late. As such it is a child welfare issue, and in these circumstances this policy and procedure will be applied.

Most schools end their days between 3.00 and 3.30 pm, however, some operate after school clubs, which would generally end by 4.30 pm. Schools do not have a responsibility to make arrangements to care for children after these times. When children are not collected, staff must be drawn from other activities to supervise them.

Schools experience that some parents are "persistent offenders" regarding the collection of their children late.

Preliminary Action by Schools

Following adoption of the policy, schools will write to all parents to inform them clearly of action which will be taken if their children are uncollected from school, stating that contact may be made with Children's Social Services.

When parents have persistently failed to collect their children from school, on time, but not to the extent of warranting immediate action by Children's Social Services, a letter will be sent to them. This will highlight the problem to parents and demonstrate how this impacts on the children's emotional well-being. It will also outline future consequences, should the lateness continue. A copy of this letter will be sent to Children's Social Services. The letter will be uploaded to the Children' Social Services database as a contact, but no further action taken at this stage.

Schools have a responsibility to maintain up to date lists of contact details for parents and carers. When children are uncollected, schools will make every effort to contact carers using this information.

If the child/ren remain uncollected and no contact can be made with parents/carers, schools will need to take further action to resolve the situation. If children remain uncollected by 4.15pm, schools may contact Children's Social Services. If the child/ren are an open and allocated case to a social worker, the school should try to contact this worker direct.

Action by Children's Social Services

Children will only be accommodated in Local Authority care, as a last resort, after it has been demonstrated that this is in the best interest of the child and that no other alternative family members or friends have been identified who can safely care for the children as an interim measure. Children's Social Services will need to satisfy themselves that the conditions for them providing accommodation under Section 20 of the Children Act 1989 are met.

On receipt of a telephone referral from school, details of the child's emergency contact numbers will be faxed or emailed over immediately with the completed Early Help Form. If the school do not have a form to hand, they should telephone the Children's Social Services duty to discuss the case and at the same time request the duty SW email over a blank form.

The social worker will liaise with the school, and information known about the child/ren and family will be shared.

The social worker will alert the Fostering Team or Emergency Duty Service that an emergency foster placement may be needed. The timing of any move to a foster placement will depend on the resources available at the school to continue to care for the child/ren. The immediate basic needs of the child/ren for food, rest and domestic facilities must be met, and consideration given to the likelihood of the children being collected imminently. It will always be in the child's best interest, where possible, to remain with familiar adults in a familiar surrounding.

The social worker will make arrangements with the school for the child/ren to be taken to the emergency foster carer. If possible, a familiar member of school staff should be involved in taking the child/ren to the placement to give them reassurance and help to manage their distress. The social worker will be present during the placement.

If child/ren are taken into care, the school will make efforts to inform parents/carers of the action that has been taken, by delivering a letter to the home address and leaving a letter in a prominent place at the school. These actions will be recorded on the child's file for future reference by Children's Social Services and School. The letter should give details of the action taken and give a number for the parents/carers to contact.

If it is necessary for children to be looked after by Children's Social Services due to being uncollected from school, this is under the legal status of section 20, of the Children Act 1989, on the grounds that the child/ren has been abandoned or their usual carer is temporarily or permanently unable at that moment to provide them with suitable care and accommodation.

Before the child/ren are left at the foster carers, the appropriate legal forms for accommodation of children will be completed by the social worker. The school staff may be helpful in supplying relevant information about the child/ren.

When contact is made with the parent/carers, (either by school staff or out of hours) the social worker will make a brief assessment of the circumstances leading to the child/ren being accommodated, and whether the current home circumstances are appropriate and safe for the child/ren to be discharged. This assessment will be made in person, and the information assessed in conjunction with information already held by Children Services and other agencies.

The social worker will be present when the children are discharged from accommodation to the care of parents/carers, to deal with any unforeseen circumstances at the time of discharge, complete discharge paperwork and inform parents/carers of further action by Children Services.

A social worker will visit the family at home within 1 working day following discharge from care to further assess the circumstances resulting in the child/ren being uncollected, and discuss with parents/carers the seriousness of children being uncollected and any likely consequences. This is a statutory function under the Children Act 1989. Serious situations may result in child protection procedures being initiated.

The social worker will liaise with the school, as soon as possible, to update the school regarding the resolution of the incident and discuss any further welfare issues concerning the child/ren.

Children Living in Other Authorities

The above procedure should be operated for children resident in other boroughs. At the point of referral by the school, the Referral & Assessment Team should make contact with the Children Services Department of the other authority, to notify them of the situation and seek any information the other authority may hold on the child/ren. If the child has an allocated social worker in another authority, the school should make contact with that worker in the first instance as they may wish to assume a role, for instance if they have a legal responsibility towards the child.

If full responsibility continues to rest with Enfield, the above procedure should be followed up to the point when the child/ren are discharged from accommodation. Responsibility for children not resident in Enfield, will be assumed by the other Authority as soon as is practicable. Following discharge, the other Authority will be informed, and copies of all paperwork sent.

Children Uncollected from activities after 4.15pm

A number of after school facilities operate in Enfield, operated by a variety of organisations including private and voluntary organisations and private companies. The issues for children uncollected from these facilities are very similar to those for children uncollected from school. It is suggested that this procedure should also apply to children uncollected from after school clubs, who should also hold information pertaining to the child/ren's parents contact details. Children not collected from such activities should be referred to day time

Children's Social Services, or if after 5:00pm they should be referred to the Children's Social Services Emergency Duty Team, who can be contacted on 0208 379 1000.

Implementation Plan

1. Policy circulated to all Infant Junior and Primary Schools
2. Following receipt of the policy schools will inform parents/carers of the policy
2. School may implement as soon as parents/ carers have been informed

Policy Review Date October 2017

Circulation List:

Director of Children Services
Chief Executive of PCT, Acute Trusts (North Middlesex & Chase Farm Hospitals GOSH)
Director of Mental Health Trust
Police Borough Commander
Metropolitan Chief of Police
Enfield Safeguarding Children Board
Chair of Governors and Head Teachers of Infant Junior & Primary Schools

Appendix 1

Dear

I am writing to you to remind you of the school's policy for children not collected at the end of the school day which is stated in the school brochure.

Yesterday your child was not collected at the end of the school day for the second time in.....*weeks/months* without contact from you or an acceptable explanation for the delay. This was not only very distressing for..... but prevented my staff member *from performing other duties or returning to their own family*.

If is again left at the end of the school day without contact or an acceptable reason for the delay, I will be inviting you to a meeting with a member of the Police Safer Schools Section and myself to discuss how this matter may be resolved.

The length of time was left at school came very close to the point at which our policy suggests we should be seeking the assistance of social workers within Children's Services to assume responsibility for your child until he/she can be returned to you. In any event I would advise you that a copy of this letter is also being forwarded to London Borough of Enfield Social Care and Police Safer Schools section...

I would ask again that you make every effort to prevent further distress for by collecting ...her/him/them promptly at the end of the school day.

Yours sincerely

Appendix 2

(Please note do not change Dear Parent /Carer to specific names to maintain confidentiality. The parent/carer will know who they are.)

Dear Parent/Carer

As you did not collect your child within an acceptable time, and all attempts to contact you were unsuccessful the procedure laid out in our school brochure has been implemented.

Your child is now in the care of Children Services, so please contact their main switch board immediately on 0208 379 1000 and ask to be put through to the Duty Social Worker.

Yours sincerely,

Appendix 3

Dear

As your child was uncollected at the end of the school day and we were unable to make contact with you using the contact numbers you provided.

You have been informed in the school brochure/prospectus and reminded in our newsletters that it is the school policy to refer to Children and Families Service in such cases. Thereforeis now being looked after by the London Borough of Enfield's Children Service. In compliance with section 20 of the Children Act 1989 your child was determined to have been, either abandoned or the carer was deemed to have temporarily or permanently at that time unable to provide suitable care and accommodation.

Please contact their main switch board immediately on 0208 379 1000 and ask to be put through to the Duty Social Worker.

Yours sincerely

Head Teacher

Appendix 4

Dear Parent/Carer

Local Safeguarding Children Board policy and Procedures for Children not collected at the end of the school day

This school has now adopted the above named policy and procedure to safeguard children not collected at the end of the school day where no contact has been made with the school with an acceptable explanation for the delay. It is recognised that situations occur where children are not collected occasionally for reasons beyond their parents' control, such as a traffic accident. This procedure is intended to help parents and carers in these situations. The knowledge that a procedure exists for managing such problems should give reassurance that the welfare of their children is assured.

However, it is very distressing for children to be left at the end of the school day. Parents who persistently collect their children late will be contacted and invited to a meeting with a member of the Police Safer Schools Section and myself to discuss how this matter may be resolved. We take very seriously our duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of your children and trust the parents of children attending this school will make adequate arrangements for the timely collection of their children at the end of the school day.

Should your child/ren be left at school without contact from you and we are unable to contact you on any of the home or emergency numbers you have given, procedures are in place as follows: A referral will be made to the Children Services. Your child/ren will be looked after by social workers from this service until you contact them and arrangements can be made to return them to your care.

It is hoped that all children will be collected at the end of the day and that the above procedures will not have to be invoked.

A copy of the policy and procedures can be viewed at school.

Yours sincerely

Head Teacher