

Scottish autism

WHERE AUTISTIC PEOPLE
ARE VALUED

Absconding Policy

Director Responsible

Director of Autism Services

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2

Approved by

SLT

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DOCUMENT HISTORY

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Mar 2016	SLT	New Policy	1
Mar 2019	Lucy Chetty	Reviewed	2

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CONSULTATION AND RATIFICATION SCHEDULE

Name of Consultative Body	Date of Approval
Board	N/A
Senior Leadership Team	July 2019
Regional Managers Forum	N/A
School Leadership Team	N/A
Policy Group	March 2019

CROSS REFERENCE TO OTHER POLICIES / STRATEGIES

This policy should be read in conjunction with:	Detail
Policy 1	Corporate Risk Management Strategy Policy
Policy 2	Child Protection Policy
Policy 3	Adult Protection Policy
Policy 4	Wellbeing Policy
Policy 5	Incident Accident Policy

EQUALITY & PRIVACY IMPACT ASSESSMENTS

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1 INTRODUCTION

For the purpose of this policy statement, the term 'absconding' is used to cover incidents of autistic children or adults leaving school, place of residence or community activity unaccompanied and without the prior knowledge of staff.

All individuals supported by Scottish Autism have a diagnosis of an autism spectrum disorder and as such may be extremely vulnerable in terms of lack of understanding of their own safety and the significance of expectations relating to attending and absconding. As a direct result of this, Scottish Autism places high importance on awareness for staff regarding matters of safety, security and support for autistic people. We work with autistic people to raise their understanding of safe behaviours in support services, school/residences and in the community, and provide autistic person with purposeful educational and community experiences which are engaging, creative and suitable to their individual need, interest and ability. Where an autistic person is known to present a high risk of absconding and placing themselves or others in danger the school or support service must create an individual assessment of risk reflecting those needs and how to address these in a positive way. A profile of the young person at risk of absconding will be shared with the local Police.

In the event of an autistic person absconding from the school/place of residence or support service a member of the senior leadership team or Regional Manager becomes the lead person and takes responsibility for coordinating events.

2 STAFF AWARENESS

It is the responsibility of all staff to ensure they follow security and safety procedures to maintain the safest possible environment for supported individuals. They must familiarise themselves with the Wellbeing Policy and the individual strategies for support within Positive Behaviour Support Plans and Risk Assessments.

It is staff responsibility to be aware and know the whereabouts of the autistic person they are supporting at all times.

Staff also have a duty to inform other staff of their own whereabouts in accordance with the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974.

3 RISK ASSESSMENTS

The safety and welfare of the autistic person is paramount. In order to ensure the continued safety of all in our establishment. Individual, environmental and activity risk assessments are carried out and maintained as per the Corporate Risk Strategy.

4 STAFF GUIDANCE FOR CHILD / SERVICE USERS ABSCONDING

In the unlikely event that an autistic person absconds, either intentionally or unwittingly, staff must activate the following procedure:

- Alert a member of the School Leadership Team, manager or on call manager

- The responsible manager/Teacher will ~~teacher/ team leader~~ organise a search of buildings and known places the autistic person may go, including the place the person was last seen. Where other individuals are being supported, it is essential to ensure their safety, therefore appropriate supervision levels must be provided by staff whilst releasing others to participate in the search activity. Staff must ensure they have fully charged mobile phones to facilitate communicate with managers and others involved in the search.
- If the autistic person is not located within a reasonable timeframe as stated in individual risk assessments, the lead person must contact Police using 999 and advise an autistic person is missing, providing a full description, including the clothes they were wearing when last seen.
- The lead person will notify parents/carers/guardians and Local Authority of the situation.
- Lead person to co-ordinate information and keep all interested parties updated.
- Once the autistic person has been located the lead person will brief the police, local authority and parents as necessary.
- A full and detailed report of the incident must be completed; this must include times, date, significant decisions made, actions taken, when and by whom i.e. police contact, parents informed etc. A clear timeline of events should also be logged.

Where an autistic person attempts to or is seen to leave without notification or in accordance with their support plan/risk assessment the following procedures should be followed:

- Staff member should follow the autistic person try to persuade them to return.
- Where the member of staff is supporting other autistic people, it is recognised they cannot leave the environment in pursuit of the individual who has left the premises, therefore support must be sought immediately from Police, then On Call who will co-ordinate the response from Scottish Autism.
- If the autistic person is deemed to be of **high risk** to themselves or follow the individual Risk Assessment/ Positive Behaviour Support Plan and call for assistance immediately.
- At all times staff must be aware that active pursuit may encourage the autistic person to leave the vicinity or panic, placing themselves in further danger e.g. risk of running into a busy road
- If an autistic person has left the immediate vicinity the Manager/On Call/ School Reception must be contacted, whereupon the lead person will direct the course of action required.

- Staff should follow ~~the young person or pupil~~ at a safe distance keeping the autistic person in sight where possible.
- The lead person may direct additional staff to join the search in a vehicle, taking a mobile phone with them to ensure contact is maintained. .
- The lead person will contact parents/carers/Guardians and where applicable other agencies.
- If an autistic person has left the immediate vicinity and is no longer in sight then the lead person will make the decision on the next actions to be taken. They will take account of the autistic person's vulnerability, the weather conditions, the time of day/ night, what they are wearing etc.
- If the autistic person is not located within a reasonable time frame as stated in individual Risk Assessments/ Support Plan ~~Positive Behaviour Support Plan~~, the lead person must contact the police using 999 and advise that an autistic person is missing, the time they went missing, age, diagnosis, and any other significant information.
- If the autistic person returns of their own volition the lead member of staff will inform parents/carers, police and any other significant agencies involved.
- A full and detailed report of the incident must be completed; this should include date, times, significant decisions made, actions taken, when and by whom i.e. police contact, parents informed external agencies, etc. A clear timeline of events should also be logged.

5 PLANNED EXTERNAL ACTIVITIES

Prior to leaving the premises, support staff will ensure activity risk assessments are reviewed and understood. The risk assessment identifies any risk or issues relating to the activity the autistic person will be participating in.

All staff must ensure they are fully familiar with any Risk Assessments, Traffic Lights task descriptions and Positive Behaviour Support Plans before carrying out the activity.

Mobile phones must be used for all car/mini bus/external activities to ensure staff can establish contact with Managers when required.

Please note if an autistic person leaves the building unattended or absconds in the community and there is not an additional staff member available staff must phone 999 and then the on-call contact number while searching the area.

6 POLICY REVIEW STATEMENT

This policy will be reviewed every three years or sooner if operationally required.