

09.3 Attendance and absence

We take steps to ensure that children are kept safe, that their wellbeing is promoted, and they do not miss their entitlements and opportunities. At the very least, good attendance promotes good outcomes for children. In a small minority of cases, good attendance may also lead to early identification of more serious concerns for a child or family.

There are several reasons why a child may be absent from a setting. In most cases it is reasonable to expect that parents/carers alert the setting as soon as possible, or in the case of appointments and holidays give adequate notice. The attendance and absence policy are shared with parents and carers, and they are advised that they must contact the setting within one hour of the time the child would have been expected to advise of their absence and inform staff of the reason (e.g. sickness).

If a child does not arrive and no notification has been made, parents/carers will be contacted that day.

First Day Calling – If a child fails to attend and the parents/carers have not contacted your setting with a reason for the absence, or if the child is absent for a prolonged period of time the key person (where possible, or other room member where not), takes immediate action to contact them to seek an explanation for the absence and be assured that the child is safe and well.

Attempts to contact the child's parents/carers or other named carers continue throughout the day on the first day of absence. The key person will keep the DSL up dated.

Parents will be asked for the expected date of return to nursery and asked to phone if that changes.

Remember - If contact is made with the family, record the details of absence on the register and find out the date when the child will return.

Consecutive Sessions Missed – If a child misses 3 consecutive sessions, or has been missing for 1 week with no contact with the family despite making specific attempts, the setting should follow the Sheffield Children Safeguarding Partnership (SCSP) guidance; Children Missing from Pre-School Services: <https://www.safeguardingsheffieldchildren.org> and contact the child's Health Visitor to share this concern. In the event that the child has a named Social Worker, the Social Worker should be contacted as a matter of urgency.

It may be that following discussion with the Social Worker or Health Visitor, a referral to MAST would be appropriate.

NB If at any stage of a child being absent, there is serious cause for concern, or the risk of the child suffering significant harm, you must contact the Children's Safeguarding Advisory Service immediately on 0114 2053535.

• **Two weeks' absence** – If two weeks elapse without the child attending but contact has been made with the family, the provider can request attendance support via the Early Years Partnership Process. This should be made via an Early Help Part 1 form or if the family has more complex needs a referral can be made via a Family CAF: <https://www.sheffield.gov.uk/home/social-care/fcaf-resources>

After four weeks of unauthorised absence the place will not be funded unless the Local Authority has given written authorisation.

All absences are recorded on the nursery management software with the reason given for the absence, the expected duration and any follow up action taken or required with timescales. Any conversation with a parent regarding improving attendance is recorded on the parent communication record sheet and added to the individual child record.

Absence records will be monitored to identify patterns and trends in children's attendance. This is done on an ongoing basis using the management system and monthly to update the log. An understanding of the child's and family's individual circumstances will inform the setting's judgement in determining what constitutes a 'prolonged period of absence'.

Absence records are retained for at least three years, or until the next Ofsted inspection following a cohort of children moving on to school.

If at any time further information becomes known that gives cause for concern, procedure 06.1 Responding to safeguarding or child protection concerns is immediately followed.

Safeguarding vulnerable children

- The designated safeguarding lead or key person attempts to contact the parents/carers to establish why the child is absent. If contact is made and a valid reason given, the information is recorded in the child's file.
- Any relevant professionals involved with the child are informed, e.g. social worker/family support worker.
- If contact is made and the designated safeguarding lead is concerned that the child is at risk, the relevant professionals are contacted immediately. The events, conversation and follow-up actions are recorded. If contact cannot be made, the designated person contacts the relevant professionals and informs them of the situation.
- If the child has current involvement with social care, the social worker is notified on the day of the unexplained absence.
- If at any time information becomes known that gives cause for concern, 06 Safeguarding children, young people and vulnerable adults procedures are followed immediately.

Safeguarding

- If a child misses three consecutive sessions and it has not been possible to make contact, the designated person calls Social Care and makes a referral if advised. Contact with Social Care may be made sooner if there are concerns for a child's wellbeing or welfare
- If there is any cause for concern i.e. the child has a child protection plan in place or there have been previous safeguarding and welfare concerns, the designated person attempts to contact the child's parent/carer immediately. If no contact is made, the child's absence is logged on 06.1b Safeguarding

incident reporting form, and Social Care are contacted immediately, and safeguarding procedures are followed.

Poor/irregular attendance

Whilst attendance at an early years setting is not mandatory, regular poor attendance may be indicative of safeguarding and welfare concerns that should be followed up.

- In the first instance the child's key person will discuss a child's attendance with their parents/carers to ascertain any potential barriers i.e. transport, working patterns etc and should work with the parents/carers to offer support where possible.
- If poor attendance continues and strategies to support are not having an impact, the setting manager must review the situation and decide what further steps are needed and whether a referral to a multi-agency team is appropriate.
- Where there are already safeguarding and welfare concerns about a child or a child protection plan is in place, poor/irregular attendance at the setting is reported to the Social Care worker without delay.

Absences and Funding

Poor Punctuality

We will manage any poor punctuality by establishing the reasons for example the need for flexibility in their working pattern and this will be recorded on a parent communication record and kept on the individual child's record.

Absence due to illness

Absences due to illness of up to two weeks based on a child's usual attendance pattern will still have the funding paid and do not need to be reported to the Local Authority. Any absence due to illness lasting longer than two weeks must be reported to Early Years Funding Team (eyfundingteam@sheffield.gov.uk). Each occurrence will then be assessed based on the individual circumstances of the illness.

Absence due to holidays

Funding will be paid for holidays taken during government funded weeks for up to four weeks in a funding year. However, a firm return date must be provided by the parent. If the child does not return on the agreed date, they should be treated as a leaver and we should enter the agreed return date as the leaving date for the child when submitting this information on the headcount task.