



Child or Young Person Absconding from APTCOO Guidance and Procedures

Context

A Place To Call Our Own (APTCOO) is an independent special APTCOO for young people aged 5 to 19. Our APTCOO offers a warm and welcoming environment where a positive education allows our young people to experience success. Our ethos is the belief that a positive, supportive, and nurturing culture is essential for creating a thriving APTCOO that meets the needs of the young people that it serves. We believe children and young people need an understanding environment in which to rediscover success, self-belief and re-engage with learning.

Prior to coming to APTCOO it has been identified that our young people have not been able to make progress in either mainstream or special APTCOOs and need the specialised nurturing environment that APTCOO provides. These are often young people at the highest level of need, who will have an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP) that identifies but is not limited to neurodiversity, social, emotional, and mental health needs and/or early life trauma.

Introduction (Neuroscience and Neurophysiology)

As a APTCOO we recognise that children and young people with Special Educational Needs and/or Social Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) difficulties experience a range of different physiological and psychological challenges within their daily life. Many of our children and young people have experienced significant early life trauma resulting in:

- Underdeveloped brain systems that can affect their capacity for attention, learning, concentration, and kindness.
- Less sophisticated neuronal networks significantly reduce their window of tolerance and increases their risks of fight or flight behaviours.

As a result, children and young people at A Place To Cal Our Own (APTCOO) will occasionally display flight behaviours as a response to a perceived threat. Children and young people are always supervised by members of staff throughout the APTCOO day.

A child or young person is considered to have 'absconded' if they intentionally / knowingly leave the APTCOO site or the immediate area of an off-site activity without permission. To

keep children and young people safe, staff should adhere to the following procedures: At all times a child or young person's age, state of mind and vulnerability should be considered.

First Response:

- If a child or young person is in the initial stages of crisis, staff should follow the child's self-regulation plan to help them feel safe
- If a child or young person absconds from APTCOO site, staff should immediately inform a key tutor, head teacher, and maintain sight of the child or young person until support arrives
- On arrival the key tutor will co-ordinate the recovery of the child or young person

Second Response

- If a child or young person absconds and cannot be seen by a member of staff, they are considered to be missing
- If a child or young person is missing, additional staff will be instructed to conduct an immediate search of the building
- If a child or young person is not on site, a vehicle will be used to support the search and cover the immediate area
- If the child or young person is not located and recovered on the first sweep, staff should move to the Third Response

Third Response

If a child or young person is not located during the First or Second response procedure and the time has extended beyond what is deemed suitable by a dynamic risk assessment (a maximum of 30 minutes), the Manager on Site will:

- Report high risk children and young people to parents and the police and continue to search the local area
- Report low risk children and young people to parents and maintain communication for an appropriate period reporting the child or young person to the police if they have not been located before the end of the APTCOO day

Offsite Learning

If a child or young person absconds whilst attending an offsite learning provision, then the following protocols should be followed.

First Response

- The visit leader should direct staff where possible and if it is safe to do so to follow the child or young person and attempt to re-engage them into the group/session
- If a child or young person is not in close enough proximity to re-engage, staff should maintain sight of the child or young person until further support/guidance is received

- If it is not possible to follow the absconded child or young person for any reason contact the APTCOO straight away who will contact parents and the police if appropriate.

Second Response

- If a child or young person absconds and cannot be seen by a member of staff, they are considered to be missing.
- If a child or young person is missing, the offsite visit leader should contact the Head Teacher/Senior Leader at APTCOO to inform them of the situation
- Parents to be informed by the Head Teacher or a member of the Senior Leadership Team
- If a child or young person is missing then staff to continue to search to locate the child or young person, using a vehicle if required
- The offsite visit leader is to complete a dynamic risk assessment to assess whether the remaining children and young people are successfully managing with the disruption to the visit and whether they need to return to APTCOO or change their location
- If a change of location is deemed necessary to safeguard the rest of the group, the offsite visit leader should leave a staff member searching for child or young person that has absconded and request further support from APTCOO.

Third Response

If a child or young person is not located during the First or Second response procedure and the time has extended beyond what is deemed suitable by a dynamic risk assessment (a maximum of 30 minutes), The group lead/Pastoral Support will:

- Report high risk children and young people to parents and the police and continue to search the local area
- Report low risk children and young people to parents and maintain communication for an appropriate period reporting the child or young person to the police if they have not been located before the end of the APTCOO day management at the location of the visit are given a mobile phone number so they can call the APTCOO team directly if a child or young person is spotted in the vicinity of their setting.

Staff will respond as a priority to any children and young people who have absconded onto the grounds of other community settings. If children and young people have absconded and are displaying unsafe or dangerous behaviour, then a dynamic risk assessment should be made to assess whether police intervention is required to keep the children and young people and members of the public safe. Staff are to always follow the offsite children risk assessment protocols.

Post Incident Review

Any incident of children and young people absconding should be reviewed by the staff working with the children and young people. Staff should update appropriate risk assessments and self-regulation plans with additional information and controls to prevent further incidents of absconding in future. Incidents of absconding should be followed up with restorative conversations with the children and young people and parents where appropriate to support their understanding of the risks and the impact of them absconding from APTCOO.

Reporting Incidents of absconding should be recorded by the Designated Safeguarding Lead on the APTCOO CPOMs platform. Parents and appropriate agencies should be informed verbally by phone and a record of these conversations should be recorded on CPOMs.

Monitoring, Evaluation and Review

The senior leadership team and specifically the Head Teacher will ensure that all staff take responsibility for implementing the guidance and procedures. Overall responsibility for this guidance and procedures rests with the Head Teacher. The guidance has been read by staff, governors, parents, and children and young people who are in agreement with the guidance and procedures outlined in this document.