

Sutton & District Training Limited

**ABSCONDING AND UNAUTHORISED ABSENCE
POLICY AND PROCEDURE**

Date effective from:	01/08/2026
The Policy will next be reviewed:	01/08/2027
Policy approved by:	Julie Ingleton
Signed:	Xxxx
Date:	xxxx

Absconding and Unauthorised Absence

Policy and Procedure

A student can be classed as having 'absconded' if they leave any SDT centre, including off-site activities or trips, without approved authorisation*. This also includes failing to return from breaks including lunch. SDT's Duty of Care Policy must ensure that all its students, all of whom can be considered vulnerable, and who may struggle with emotional difficulties, are protected from behaviours or environments that put themselves or others at risk.

The purpose of this policy is to standardise the procedure for dealing with **all** students who abscond or whose absence is unauthorised, as defined above, and applies to all centres and locations connected to SDT.

Within College:

Staff must update attendance registers as each student arrives and, unless staff have been notified of a student's absence in advance, must call an appropriate adult within 15 minutes of their start time to ascertain their whereabouts and inform them that the student is not in attendance**.

In the case of students in care, with a care plan or under Youth Justice Service(s) ('YJS'), this should be an allocated social worker or YJS worker (in some cases this may be more than one). It is the responsibility of all staff to ensure that this process is followed should a student fail to return from a break including lunch.

Students who are categorised as 'high risk' should, where necessary, be always supervised, by their LSA when practicable. If a student is considered 'missing' a member of staff or LSA should try and contact the student immediately and inform a member of the Senior Management Team (SLT).

If appropriate, a search of the immediate vicinity should be conducted, and after fifteen minutes, if the student has not been located or returned, the nominated appropriate adult should be informed immediately that they have 'absconded' or have been classed as absent without authorisation.

In cases of extreme vulnerability*** it may be deemed necessary to inform the police that they have absconded. This should be determined by the response of the nominated appropriate adult or member of the SLT.

Where identified, any relevant guidance within a student's 'risk assessment' or provision map (EHCP - Education, Health, and Care Plan) should be followed.

All incidents of absconding, unapproved absence, and any contact with an appropriate adult must be logged on MIS as soon as is practicable, be as detailed as possible contain all the facts and avoid opinion or judgement.

If a Student Absconds:

If a student absconds and a search is deemed necessary and appropriate, where possible two members of staff should conduct this. Each staff member should be in possession of a handheld transceiver (radio).

A member of the SLT should be made aware that this course of action is taking place.

Each member of staff and a representative on site should be in radio contact throughout and to advise or ask for additional support as necessary for example calling the police, requesting medical support, or notifying an appropriate adult.

If the individual cannot be located within 15 minutes the process outlined above should be followed.

Clarification:

*Approved authorisation – when it has been confirmed by the student's parent, carer, or guardian that the individual is allowed to leave or that they will be late.

**Students may not be deemed as vulnerable because of age for example; however, the response to an unauthorised absence or for absconding should follow the same process to ensure they are safe.

***The action of calling the police must be determined by the students' developmental level (level of need), their emotional state and the risk they might pose to themselves or to others. The police should also have been informed earlier if the student has a higher level of risk such as being vulnerable to CCE (Child Criminal Exploitation) or grooming for example.