ATTENDANCE & ABSENCE FOR CHILDREN POLICY

Statement

Stepping Stones takes steps to ensure that children are kept safe, their wellbeing is promoted, and they do not miss out on 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.

Aims

- To ensure all unexplained or unexpected absences are followed up to keep children / young people and their families safe
- To ensure accurate attendance records are maintained
- To ensure each child receives a full high-quality education

Scope of the Policy

This policy and associated procedures apply to all staff, agency staff, apprentices, students and volunteers, working in Stepping Stones.

This policy applies to children and young people as defined here:

- A child is anyone aged 0-18.
- A young person is defined as aged 16 to 19 and may work in the settings as a student or volunteer or be a parent / carer of a child.

At Stepping Stones we share information about our expectations for absence reporting through discussions when families begin using the service and when they move into new rooms.

How Stepping Stones support children who are absent

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.

Parents are advised that they should contact Stepping Stones with a minimum of one weeks' notice for holidays and appointments and within one hour prior to the time of the session starting for illness to advise of their absence. Designated safeguarding lead (DSL) must also

be adhering to Local Authority requirements, procedures and contact protocols for children who are absent or missing from childcare.

- If a child who normally attends fails to arrive and no contact has been received from their parents or carer Stepping Stones 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 or other named carers continue throughout the day on the first day of absence.
- If no contact is made with the parent/s/carer and there is no means to verify the reason for the child's absence i.e. through a named contact on the child's registration form, this is recorded as an unexplained absence on the register and is followed up by the DSL each day until contact is made. A note is also made on the safeguarding chronology of an unexplained absence.
- If contact has not been made within 3 working days, children's services will be contacted for advice about making a referral. Other relevant services maybe contacted as per LSP procedures.
- All absences are recorded with the reason given for the absence and absences are constantly reviewed in case of patterns forming or concerns.
- If at any time further information comes to light that gives cause for concern, then safeguarding procedures are immediately followed.

Safeguarding vulnerable children

- The DSL or key person attempts to contact the parents to establish why the child is absent. If contact is made and a valid reason given, the information is recorded.
- Any relevant professionals involved with the child are informed, e.g. social worker/family support worker.
- If contact is made and the designated person 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 DSL 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 comes to light that gives cause for concern, then safeguarding procedures are followed immediately.

Safeguarding

- If a child misses three consecutive sessions and it has not been possible to make contact, the DSL calls Social Care and makes a referral if advised.
- If there is any cause for concern i.e. the child has a CPP in place or there have been previous safeguarding and welfare concerns, the DSL attempts to contact the child's

parent/carer immediately. If no contact is made the child's absence is logged as a safeguarding concern and Social Care are contacted immediately, and safeguarding procedures are followed.

Poor/irregular attendance

Whilst attendance at Stepping Stones is not mandatory, regular poor attendance may be indicative of safeguarding and welfare concerns that should be followed up. In the first instance the key person should discuss a child's attendance with their parent/s/carers to ascertain any potential barriers i.e. transport, working patterns etc and should work with the parent/s to offer support where possible.

- If poor attendance continues and strategies to support are not having an impact, the DSL must review the situation and decide if a referral to a multi-agency team is appropriate
- Where there are already safeguarding and welfare concerns about a child or a CPP is in place, poor/irregular attendance at the setting is reported to the Social Care worker without delay.