

The Millennium Farm Trust

GN7 POLICY AND PROCEDURE FOR MISSING PERSONS V03

Next review date: March 2026



Version Control

Version number	Date of changes	Who	Review summary
02	28/04/2021	T Freathy	Scheduled review
02	April 2024	T Freathy	Scheduled review no changes
03	Sept 2025	T Freathy	Additional section covering school age children added.

Section1 Adults

1.1 Policy Statement

Millennium Farm Trust is committed to a person-centred approach to service delivery, and recognises that many people who use our services are able to go about their daily lives very independently while others may need varying levels of support and/or supervision. In accordance with this, each person will be afforded dignity and respect by recognising their individuality, their personal abilities and their support and supervision requirements within the day or residential service and the wider community. The risk of an individual going missing is considered on an individual basis as part of the person's support planning process.

1.2 Policy Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to set out the procedure to be taken if someone is suspected and/or confirmed to be missing or absent without explanation while being supported by Millennium Farm Trust at Depden Care Farm. The policy does not address supervision levels or prevention strategies as these are decided on an individual basis in response to the person's needs and wishes and as part of their individual support plan.

1.3 Policy Scope

This policy applies to all staff employed by Millennium Farm Trust, including those

contracted for services, sessional workers, volunteers, visitors, the people who use our supports and their families/carers.

1.4 Core principle underpinning the Policy

1.4.1 The balancing of rights and risk

- Each person's right to independence and freedom of movement both within and outside of the day or residential service and the wider community is respected.
- Unnecessary restrictions are not placed on a person's right to freedom of movement.
- Staff are responsible for promoting an active and flexible approach to managing potential dangers in order to minimise restrictions and promote independence.
- Staff should support people to be as independent as possible based on their individual support and supervision requirements and personal wishes
- An assessment of risk should be carried out if it is suspected that a person is at risk of going missing (Please see Personal Risk Assessment and Risk Management Plan).
- Staff should develop strategies to reduce the impact of any identified risk and complete a risk management plan (Please see 'Positive Risk Assessment – Appendix 1).
- If a person is subject to a restriction based on the level of risk being unacceptable, the reason must be documented, including any assessment used to determine the use of restrictive options.
- Staff must act in accordance with Millennium Farm Trust's 'Policy and Guidelines on Challenging behaviours and the Prevention of or use of Restrictive Interventions'
- Documentation of the restriction must include evidence of all strategies considered and tried in attempting to reduce or manage the risks
- All necessary documentation should be kept on file and submitted to Director and/or Trustees as part of the usual risk policy and practice review procedures.

1.5 Definition of a 'Missing Person'

A person is considered missing when they are absent from the place where they ought to be and their whereabouts is unknown.

2.0 Procedure

2.1 Confirming if a person is missing

Staff must take the following steps to confirm whether the person is missing

2.1.1 A person goes missing from our service

- Check the person's support plan, office diary or other relevant sources to see if the person is at a prearranged meeting or appointment.
- Ask other people at the farm whether the person has told anyone where they were going.
- If there is no record of this information inform the Director or their deputy, who then becomes the coordinator of the search.
- Inform all persons in the immediate vicinity.
- Send a staff member to cover the main exit and the rear gate from the farm.
- A full search of the buildings and grounds should be organised immediately

2.1.2 A person goes missing on an outing

- Search the immediate area.
- Seek assistance from bystanders and police if the person is at risk if on their own
- Notify Director and staff at the farm and their parents/guardian/next of kin

2.1.3 A Person does not arrive to the farm

- Contact the person's place of residence to enquire as to their whereabouts
- If no response, contact their usual mode of transport (if known) to find out if the person was picked up or dropped off

2.1.4 A Person does not return to their residential service at the expected time

- All farm helpers must be picked up by a known person or organisation. If a driver is new to staff, staff must satisfy themselves by questioning, that the transport is bona fide. (Do they know the person's name they are collecting; do they know where they are going to?)
- If necessary, contact their usual mode of transport to find out who is picking the person up.

If the person was picked up from Depden Care Farm but failed to be returned to their residence and the missed person is not found and no explanation is forthcoming then the person is confirmed as 'missing'.

NB: The length of time between a person 'being missed' and being confirmed as a 'missing person' should be decided on an individual basis. For example if the missed person is known to be at increased risk of harm if unsupervised then they should be confirmed as missing immediately. Staff should seek guidance from their manager with respect to this and if in doubt should always confirm the person as missing sooner rather than later.

2.2 If a person is confirmed as missing

- The Director or Person in Charge of the day becomes the Search Coordinator
- The Search Coordinator calls all available staff and volunteers including those in other areas for inclusion in a search party.
- The Search Coordinator coordinates the members of the search party and designates areas to be searched.
- An extended search should take place.
- The Search Coordinator should stay behind at the farm and remain contactable by phone.
- Depending on individual circumstances the search party may require any or all of the following:
 - A fully charged flash light in the case of a person going missing after dark
 - Warm blanket or silver rescue sheet
 - Drinking water
 - First aid kit
 - The Search Coordinator should inform the local Police and fully cooperate with them.

2.3 Reporting and informing

- The Manager (Search Coordinator) must inform the missing person's family/guardian/next of kin and keep them updated.
- The staff member responsible for the person at the time they went missing must complete an incident report.
- Any unexplained absence of a person from the farm is a notifiable event and must be reported to the Chairman by phone as soon as possible and an incident report made to the next available Trustees meeting.

2.4 When the person is found

- The Search Coordinator should be informed immediately
- The Search Coordinator must then inform:
 - All members of the search party
 - The person's family/guardian/next of kin
 - The Police, if the person was not found by them
 - All relevant staff
- The person should be medically assessed by a medical practitioner if necessary.

- If further medical referral or transfer to hospital is indicated this should be arranged and the person's family/guardian/next of kin informed.
- An Incident report should be completed
- Debriefing involving all relevant staff, the person and their family if indicated should occur as soon as possible after the event
- A full review of the incident should be conducted in consultation with the person and their family if indicated.
- Any contributing factors should be addressed and the risk management plan developed.
- If the person is deemed to be at on-going risk of wandering or going missing an individualised response plan should also be developed and placed in the persons support plan.
- All persons involved in supporting the person must be familiar with their revised individualised

Section 2 Missing Children (School Age)

1. Policy Statement

Depden Care Farm recognises its duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of all children who attend its programmes, including those of statutory school age. A child who is absent or goes missing from education is potentially at risk of harm. We are committed to working closely with parents/carers, schools, and the Local Authority to ensure that every child in our care is safe, accounted for, and supported in their learning.

This section supplements our existing Missing Persons Policy, which applies to adults and young people, by providing specific procedures for children of statutory school age.

2. Definition: Child Missing Education (CME)

The Department for Education defines a *child missing education* as:

“Any child of compulsory school age who is not registered at a school and is not receiving suitable education otherwise than at a school (for example, at home or privately).”

Children can be at risk of missing education for a range of reasons, including but not limited to:

- Non-attendance or prolonged absence from school.
- Withdrawal from roll without notification.
- Unauthorised holiday or prolonged illness.
- Family circumstances, including exclusion, mobility, or safeguarding concerns.

3. Safeguarding Response to CME

Depden Care Farm recognises that children missing from education are at risk of neglect, abuse, exploitation, criminal activity, forced marriage, or other safeguarding concerns. Our safeguarding response will always prioritise the child's welfare and follow statutory guidance *Keeping Children Safe in Education (2023)* and Suffolk County Council's *Children Missing from Education Protocol*.

If a child is absent or their whereabouts cannot be confirmed:

1. **Immediate risk assessment** will be undertaken by the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) or deputy.
2. **Parents/carers will be contacted** on the first day of unexplained absence (First Day Calling).
3. **Relevant partner agencies** (e.g. school, social worker, or Early Help team) will be notified if concerns persist.
4. **Escalation to the Local Authority CME Officer** will occur if the child remains out of education for 10 days or more.

4. Procedures

4.1 First Day Calling

- If a child fails to attend Depden Care Farm without prior notice, staff will make contact with the parent/carer on the first day of absence.
- If no response is received, staff will escalate to alternative contacts and notify the child's school (where applicable).
- If the child's absence cannot be verified and concerns are raised about their welfare, the DSL will consider a referral to Suffolk's Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) or the equivalent host county's safeguarding hub, if referred from outside the county.

4.2 Recording Absence

- All absences will be recorded in attendance registers, noting the reason given and actions taken.
- Patterns of absence will be monitored and concerns escalated to the DSL.

4.3 Reporting to the Local Authority

- Where a child is absent for 10 consecutive school days or more without satisfactory explanation, this will be reported to Suffolk County Council's CME Officer in line with statutory requirements.
- Depden Care Farm will cooperate with the Local Authority to provide all information held to assist in locating the child and ensuring they are receiving suitable education.

5. Responsibilities

- **All staff** are responsible for recording attendance, raising concerns, and reporting missing children immediately to the DSL.

- **The DSL/Deputy DSL** is responsible for making safeguarding decisions, liaising with schools, parents/carers, and the Local Authority, and escalating concerns appropriately.
- **The Board of Trustees** is responsible for ensuring compliance with this policy and reviewing it annually.

6. Linked Policies and Guidance

- Depden Care Farm Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- Depden Care Farm Missing Persons (Adults) Policy
- *Children Missing from Education – Suffolk County Council Protocol*
- *Keeping Children Safe in Education (2023)*