



Orchard Therapeutic

OUTREACH • BARN • FARM • POST 16

Absconding Policy

Policy Note

For the purposes of this policy, Orchard Therapeutic Farm (OTF), Orchard Therapeutic Outreach (OTO), Orchard Therapeutic Barn (OTB) and Orchard Therapeutic Active (OTA) will together be referred to as **“the Services”**

This policy applies to all employees, volunteers, trustees, and contractors of the Services, as well as anyone representing Orchard Therapeutic Farm, Orchard Therapeutic Outreach, Orchard Therapeutic Barn and Orchard Therapeutic Active in an official capacity.

Key Principles

Young Person’s Voice	How this applies to Absconding (what The Services will do)
I feel safe and respected even when I’m upset or want to leave.	Use calm, trauma-informed responses; avoid chasing if it increases risk; keep line-of-sight where safe; prioritise welfare for me and others.
I can help decide what supports me.	Co-create my Behaviour Support Plan/risk assessment and a personal “staying safe” plan; agree signals, safe spaces and trusted adults.

My individual needs are recognised.	Make reasonable adjustments (e.g. sensory breaks, transition plans, communication aids, literacy-friendly visuals).
Adults keep me and others safe without overreacting.	Use proportionate supervision; only use physical intervention to prevent immediate harm; avoid actions that escalate risk.
I can return and repair relationships after difficulties.	Plan a calm reintegration; hold a restorative conversation; focus on learning and re-engagement rather than punishment.
I learn ways to manage feelings and stay safe.	Teach regulation strategies and exit plans; rehearse safe choices; review what worked after any incident.
My voice helps improve what happens next time.	Include me in debriefs; update my plan from my feedback and staff learning; monitor patterns to prevent repeat incidents.
I'm supported on visits and in the community.	Apply the same approach off-site: clear roles for visit leaders, dynamic risk assessment at transitions, quick contact with SLT if I'm missing.
Records about me are accurate and private.	Complete incident forms promptly, link to safeguarding records, use plain language, store securely, and share only on a need-to-know basis.
I feel listened to and understood.	Notice triggers, use de-escalation, offer choices (space, trusted adult, activity change); narrate what adults are doing and why.
I know what to expect and what is expected of me.	Make routines, boundaries and site rules clear; explain how staff will respond if I go missing from supervision.

This policy should be read in conjunction with our:

- Environmental Sustainability & Green Procurement Policy
- Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy (including Children Missing Education)
- Attendance Policy
- Behaviour Policy and Behaviour Support Plans (BSP) & Individual Risk Assessments
- Restrictive Physical Intervention/Positive Handling Policy (where applicable)
- Health & Safety Policy (including Site Security, Lockdown and Lone Working)
- Educational Visits & Transport of Young People Policy
- Data Protection & Information Sharing Policy (UK GDPR & Data Protection Act 2018)
- ICT Acceptable Use, Mobile Phones & Radios Policy
- Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Policy (including Reasonable Adjustments under the Equality Act 2010)
- Whistleblowing Policy
- Complaints Policy

Policy Aims

This policy sets out aims for preventing absconding and for responding when a young person is missing from supervision.

- **Welfare first:** safeguarding and the young person's best interests are paramount and must guide all decisions and actions.
- **Prevention-led practice:** risk is reduced through positive relationships, engaging provision and clear, predictable routines.
- **Proportionality:** the least intrusive, safest response is used to manage risk.
- **Trauma-informed, respectful responses:** empathy is applied; escalation and blame are avoided.
- **Dynamic risk assessment:** judgements are reviewed continually as circumstances change.
- **Staff safety:** no member of staff is expected to place themselves—or others—at undue risk.

- **Individualised approach:** age, needs and SEND are considered, with reasonable adjustments made in line with the Equality Act 2010.
- **Effective communication:** a single coordinating lead (SLT) directs the response and manages information flow.
- **Lawful, timely information sharing:** only information that is necessary and proportionate is shared, in line with UK GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018.
- **Partnership working** parents/carers and relevant professionals are kept informed and appropriately involved.
- **Swift, consistent response:** missing-from-supervision incidents are addressed promptly and safely, with senior staff, parents/carers and the Police notified where appropriate, following agreed pathways.
- **Recording and learning:** all incidents are recorded accurately; patterns are analysed and learning is implemented to reduce future risk.

Legal/Statutory Framework

This policy is informed by relevant UK legislation and statutory guidance including: Children Act 1989 & 2004; Education Act 2002; Working Together to Safeguard Children; Keeping Children Safe in Education (latest version); Data Protection Act 2018 & UK GDPR; Equality Act 2010; and local safeguarding partnership procedures.

Absconding - Definition

Leaving the premises or care of staff without permission. This may include leaving a building but remaining within the grounds or leaving the grounds entirely.

Premises/Grounds

The Services' sites are fenced and subject to regular checks by the Health and Safety Lead as part of routine safeguarding audits.

Roles and Responsibilities

All Staff

- Remain calm; prioritise the safety of the young person and others.
- Keep the young person in sight where safe; do not give chase if this increases risk.
- Carry a charged work mobile/radio when leaving the premises as part of a response; never leave the site alone.
- Record actions promptly and accurately.

Senior Leadership Team (SLT)

- Coordinate the response and make dynamic risk-based decisions, including any search beyond the grounds.
- Decide on Police contact and allocation of roles; ensure timely contact with parents/carers.
- Oversee recording, debrief and updates to plans or risk assessments.

Office/Administration

- Log and record all calls; contact parents/carers and the Police as directed by SLT.
- Maintain a chronology of events and communications.

Visit Leaders / Drivers (off-site)

- Follow Educational Visits procedures; call SLT immediately if a young person is missing from supervision.
- Remain with the group; deploy additional adults to search safely as directed by SLT.

Decision Matrix (Summary)

Scenario	Lead	Parents/Carers	Police	Notes
Absent on site (not located)	SLT	Inform once search initiated	Consider if risk elevates	Repeat site sweep; dynamic risk
Within grounds (in sight)	SLT	Inform if prolonged/heightened risk	Not usually required	Do not chase; de-escalate
Leaves grounds / whereabouts unknown	SLT	Inform immediately	Contact 999 if immediate risk; otherwise 101	Allocate trusted adult to support
Off-site visit	SLT + Visit Leader	Inform immediately	As above	Follow EVC procedures

Procedures

1) Absent young person (marked present but not located)

1. Inform a member of SLT and the office immediately and report as 'Code rouge'.
2. SLT organises a coordinated search of the buildings and grounds.
3. If not found, repeat the search swiftly and thoroughly with additional staff.
4. Office attempts to contact parents/carers and the Police as directed by SLT; record all attempts.
5. SLT decides if the search should extend beyond the grounds, informed by staff knowledge of the young person.
6. Any staff who leave the grounds must take a work mobile/radio, remain in pairs, and avoid unsafe situations.
7. Once found, staff use professional judgement to de-escalate and support (refer to BSP/Risk Assessment).
8. Complete the "Absconding Form" and log the incident; SLT updates parents/carers and, where appropriate, the Police.
9. Hold a restorative conversation when the young person is calm; review plans and reasonable adjustments.
10. Share reports with relevant professionals/agencies to ensure wrap-around support.

2) Young person absconds but remains within the grounds

1. Do not pursue or attempt to force the young person back. Keep line of sight at a safe distance.
2. Only intervene physically if there is an immediate risk of harm to the young person or others.
3. Consider age, vulnerability and demeanour when making decisions.
4. Maintain clear communication via radio and coordinate a calm reintegration plan.
5. Log the incident and complete the Absconding Form as required.

3) Young person absconds from the grounds

1. Inform SLT and the office immediately and inform the office of 'code rouge' incident. Remain calm.
2. 1 SLT to stay in main office and one SLT to follow the YP from a safe distance using the company vehicle.
3. Avoid active pursuit that may escalate risk; maintain visual contact at a safe distance where possible.
4. SLT based in office and SLT on safe pursuit to remain in contact with each other using their company mobiles.
5. Identify a staff member with a trusted relationship to provide support if appropriate.
6. Manager or SLT contacts parents/carers and the Police; record all attempts and outcomes.
7. When located or on return, de-escalate and support; complete the Absconding Form and log the incident.
8. SLT updates parents/carers and the Police as necessary, and coordinates the post-incident review.
9. Upon his/her return to OTF, and when calm enough to do so, the pupil will meet with a member of SLT, so that reasons for the absconding can be understood. A support plan for the individual may need to be considered along with sanctions appropriate for the pupil's needs.
10. If the pupil returns to OTF of their own volition, parents and police to be phoned by the office.

4) Off-site activities and transport

1. Follow Educational Visits procedures; maintain supervision ratios and headcounts at transitions.
2. If a young person is missing, the Visit Leader notifies SLT immediately and follows this policy.
3. If risk is immediate, call 999 and provide location details; otherwise consult SLT and use 101.
4. Ensure the rest of the group is safe and supervised.

Parents will always be informed if their child absconds from the provision

Recording, Debrief & Review

- All incidents are recorded on the Absconding Form and linked to safeguarding records.
- A debrief is held with involved staff and, where appropriate, the young person to identify learning.
- Risk assessments, BSPs and supervision plans are reviewed and updated promptly (usually within 48 hours).
- A termly analysis of incidents is reported to SLT and forms part of safeguarding monitoring.

Training and Awareness

All staff receive training in safeguarding, de-escalation and incident response, including local procedures for absconding. Induction includes this policy; refresher training and practice drills occur in line with organisational requirements.

Equality, Diversity & Inclusion

The Services will make reasonable adjustments for young people with SEND and consider cultural and linguistic needs. Action must be proportionate, non-discriminatory and in line with the Equality Act 2010.

Monitoring and Review

The Line Manager will check this policy is working properly and they will review it at least once a year. We will make improvements to the policy wherever we can.

Employees are invited to suggest ways the policy can be improved.

This policy does not form part of any employee's contract of employment, and it may be amended at any time.

After reading this Policy, you should be able to:

- Understand what Absconding Policy is and how the Absconding Policy operates;
- Understand how Absconding Policy operates at The Services and have an awareness of the actions we take in preventing, identifying and reporting concerns;
- Understand the role you play in Absconding Policy.

If you have not understood any of these points, please ask your Line Manager or trainer for further help.

Policy Review

A CEO will review this policy at least once a year to make any updates needed.

Authorisation and Signature

This Policy is the authorised version agreed by the CEO of The Services.

All employees are expected to follow this policy and failure to do so could result in disciplinary action.



Ludivine Parmentier

Chief Executive Officer

Appendix 1

Absconding Form

For internal use by The Services

A. Young person details

Pupil/Young person		Date of birth	
Age		UPN / ID (if used)	
Key adult / Mentor		Lead adult (for this incident)	
EHCP / SEND needs (if relevant)		Primary need (if recorded)	

B. Incident summary

Date of incident		Day of week	
Time left supervision		Location left from	
Last seen (time/place)		Direction of travel / transport	
Dress / appearance & distinguishing marks			
Known triggers / recent context (if any)			
Likely destination(s) / contacts			

C. Immediate actions & notifications

SLT notified (name/time)		On-site search started (time)	
Second site sweep (time)		Area(s) searched	
Risk level at time	<input type="checkbox"/> Low <input type="checkbox"/> Medium <input type="checkbox"/> High	Physical intervention used?	<input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Yes (details below)
Parents/Carers contacted	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes (time/person)	Outcome of contact	
Police contacted	<input type="checkbox"/> 999 <input type="checkbox"/> 101 <input type="checkbox"/> No	Time / Officer / Ref	
Other professionals contacted	<input type="checkbox"/> DSL <input type="checkbox"/> Social worker <input type="checkbox"/> Placing LA/Commissioner <input type="checkbox"/> School <input type="checkbox"/> Other	Name/time	
First aid required?	<input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Yes (details)	Injury/body map attached?	<input type="checkbox"/> N/A <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
CCTV reviewed/saved?	<input type="checkbox"/> N/A <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	Notes	

If physical intervention used, give brief details (who/when/why) and any injuries:

D. Timeline of events (continue on a separate sheet if required)

Time	Event / action / by whom

E. Outcome / return

Time located / returned		Returned to	<input type="checkbox"/> The Services <input type="checkbox"/> Other (specify)
Condition on return	<input type="checkbox"/> Calm <input type="checkbox"/> Upset <input type="checkbox"/> Angry <input type="checkbox"/> Tired <input type="checkbox"/> Injured <input type="checkbox"/> Other	First aid given	<input type="checkbox"/> N/A <input type="checkbox"/> Yes (details)
Trusted adult involved		Reintegration plan implemented	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Proportionate consequences/support		Parents/Carers updated after return	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes (time)

Safeguarding record reference (e.g. CPOMS)		CCTV retained until (date)	
Other notes			

F. Post-incident learning & review

Restorative conversation held	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes (date/time/by whom)	Young person's views captured	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Behaviour Support Plan updated	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes (date/time)	Risk assessment updated	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes (date/time)
Reasonable adjustments identified		Actions for staff/site	
Professionals informed (if applicable)	<input type="checkbox"/> DSL <input type="checkbox"/> Social worker <input type="checkbox"/> CAMHS <input type="checkbox"/> Other	Date/time/by whom	
Further support required	<input type="checkbox"/> ELSA/regulation <input type="checkbox"/> Key work <input type="checkbox"/> Pastoral <input type="checkbox"/> Other	Target review date	
Summary of learning (for SLT overview)			

G. Sign-off

Completed by (name/role)		Date	
SLT/DSL review (name/role)		Date	

Entered on secure system by		Date	
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Privacy note: **This form contains personal data. Store securely and share on a need-to-know basis in line with UK GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018.**

Appendix 2

The Philomena Protocol (good practice)

The Philomena Protocol is a UK police scheme that encourages carers and professionals to pre-record key information about any child or young person at risk of going missing, so it can be shared quickly with police to help locate and safeguard them. It began in Durham and is now widely used by forces across the UK as a best-practice approach.

How it works (summary)

- Professionals working with young people complete and regularly update a Philomena form for each identified young person. The form typically holds a current photo, physical description, health/medication needs, known risks and triggers, usual routes and “safe places”, key contacts/associates, social media or device details, and any previous missing episodes. Many versions include a section agreed with the child (their voice, expectations, and how to avoid a “missing” report). [NPCCProcedures Onlinebeds.police.uk](https://www.npccproceduresonlinebeds.police.uk)

- If the young person cannot be found, call 101 and state that you have a Philomena Protocol form; if there is immediate risk, dial 999. Police will use the information to coordinate the response.

When to use

Primarily designed for children in care (residential/foster) or those with a pattern of going missing, but many forces it for any child at elevated risk.

Data protection & consent

Keep forms secure, up-to-date, and shared on a need-to-know basis in line with UK GDPR/DPA 2018. Where possible, agree the content and reporting thresholds with the child, and record their views (as per national guidance). [NPCC](#)

How The Services will use the Philomena Protocol

- The DSL/SLT will identify young people who meet the “at risk of going missing” threshold and ensure a Philomena form is created, reviewed at least termly or after any incident/placement change, and stored securely. [NPCC](#)
- Visit Leaders will carry access to the form (or know how to retrieve it securely) on off-site activities.
- When contacting police, staff will reference the Philomena Protocol and provide the form without delay (101/999 as above).



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Philomena-missing-p