

Missing Young Person Procedures



Venturer Camp 2023

In this document, a “child” or “young person”, is anyone aged under 18, which includes a limited number of volunteers.

Background

Woodcraft Folk takes the safety of young people very seriously and will take every precaution necessary to ensure that individuals in their care do not leave an activity unaccompanied. The chances of finding a missing individual safe are greatest if the individual’s absence is soon discovered.

This document outlines the steps to be followed in the event of a young person (under the age of 18) going missing or leaving a Woodcraft Folk activity.

Scope & Purpose

These procedures apply to Woodcraft Folk’s Venturer Camp 2023, and will be followed by all staff and volunteers at the event.

Prevention

Volunteers and staff will take reasonable steps to prevent young people from going missing or leaving the event:

- Undertaking risk assessment of the site and activities
- Maintaining a register of young people present
- Providing an engaging and age-appropriate programme
- Ensuring adequate supervision, and where appropriate providing a named individual responsible for overseeing the engagement of groups of young people
- Arranging check-ins, sign-ins or headcounts regularly as appropriate
- Setting clear expectations for young people about their level of autonomy and supervision from adult volunteers, which will vary based on their age and other factors
- Defining clear boundaries for individual camping villages and the site as a whole
- Briefing young people on staying safe during the event, e.g. signing in/out arrangements, where to go and who to approach for help should they need it

Responding to a Missing Child

Immediately on discovering a child is missing, or has not returned from being off-site by the specified time:

- Review the group register to confirm who is missing and how many individuals are missing
- Ring the individual's mobile if they have one
- Alert stewards and/or Camp Office to mobilise support for a search of the site and immediate surrounding area
- Create and share a description of the missing individual (name, age, appearance, clothing)
- Reassure other group members

If an immediate search is unsuccessful, the Duty Safeguarding Officer will work with the volunteers responsible for the missing child(ren) to:

- Contact parent/carer to inform them of the situation
- Engage with the Police
- Mobilise additional support to searchCollate contact details for all individuals searching

When the individual is found it is important to recognise that during the time an individual is missing, however briefly, all involved can suffer fear, guilt and distress. It is not always easy to control all these emotions when the child is found. Staff and volunteers should ensure they remember that the individual also might have been afraid and distressed and might now be in need of comfort - remain calm, reassure the individual and avoid apportioning blame.

The Duty Safeguarding Officer will also ensure:

- The individual is offered medical and/or pastoral support as required
- Parents/carers, Police and other search parties are updated with news of the individual's safety
- Villages remind all young people of boundaries and the importance of adhering to them
- An incident report is completed and filed
- Relevant practice is reviewed and updated to reduce future risk, both for the remainder of Venturer Camp 2023 and at future large scale events