



Appendix J: Children and Adults Missing from Education

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1. Purpose and content

The purpose of this appendix of the UCQ Safeguarding Policy is to provide a clear set of guidelines to staff regarding the actions they must take if a child stops attending UCQ during their course without a legitimate reason; or a vulnerable adult goes missing and the circumstances give cause for concern.

The UCQ Safeguarding Policy has been developed in line with statutory guidance and the locally agreed inter-agency procedures put in place by the Newcastle Safeguarding Children Board and the Newcastle Safeguarding Adults Board. The policy applies to all students and all staff (including agency and hourly paid staff) irrespective of anyone's position or role in UCQ, together with Governors and any workers who are at UCQ on a voluntary/placement/other professional basis.

Please note that the term 'UCQ' is used throughout this appendix, as a generic term that encompasses all organisations within the wider UCQ group. The term 'staff' is also used as a generic term that encompasses all groups of workers as outlined in the paragraph above.

2. Definitions

The key terms in this document are defined as:

- **Child:** Those under the age of eighteen
- **Vulnerable Adults:** For the purpose of safeguarding, and the UCQ duty of care, a vulnerable adult is defined as any adult considered to be at risk
- **Education and Health Care Plan (EHCP):** From September 2014 EHCPs began to replace Statements of special educational needs and Learning Difficulty Assessments from those under the age of 25. An EHCP outlines information about the person including how they communicate, what support they need and what they would like to achieve
- **CME:** Child missing education

3. Relevant external guidance

Department for Education (DfE; January 2015) guidance identifies that children missing education (CME) are at significant risk of underachieving, being victims of abuse, and becoming NEET (not in education, employment or training) later on in life.

Particular concerns are noted in the guidance regarding children who go missing or run away from home or care as they may be in serious danger and are vulnerable to crime, sexual exploitation or abduction. This could include travelling to conflict zones and forced marriage.

UCQ is committed to the protection of the most vulnerable and all staff must ensure action is taken when a student's attendance record is poor and urgent action must be taken if a student under the age of 18 or a student under the age of 25 who is in receipt of an EHCP stops attending UCQ during their course without a legitimate reason. Action must also be taken if a vulnerable adult goes missing and the circumstances give cause for concern.

The risks are significantly higher for children who go missing on repeat occasions and all staff must act to help identify the risk of abuse and neglect, including sexual exploitation, and to help prevent the risks of students going missing in the future.

4. Legitimate reasons for non-attendance

For the purpose of this guidance legitimate reasons include:

- Authorised absences where there are no reasons to suspect abuse or neglect may be a contributory factor; and the parent/carer and any professionals/schools involved with the student are fully aware of the absence
- Withdrawals due to:
 - Progression to employment; or alternative education or training provision
 - Moving out of the area or ill health where there are no reasons to suspect abuse or neglect may be a contributory factor; and the parent/carer and any professionals/schools involved with the student are fully aware of the withdrawal
 - Disciplinary issues dealt with under the UCQ Academic Misconduct Policy. The Designated Safeguarding Lead must be informed (and involved) for a student who is under the age of 16 at the start of the academic year and for a student under the age of 25 who is in receipt of an EHCP and/or in receipt of high needs funding so they can liaise with the local authority
 - The outcome of a safeguarding risk assessment panel
 - A custodial sentence where UCQ does not reasonably believe the student will return to UCQ at the end of the sentence

5. Actions to be taken in response to non-legitimate absences

- All curriculum staff must monitor attendance and address it at the earliest opportunity with the student, and their parent/carer or any professionals/schools involved, if it starts to decline
- Ongoing concerns about a student's attendance must be referred by curriculum staff to department managers. In addition, the Designated Safeguarding Lead must be informed if the student is under 18 or if the student is under the age of 25 and in receipt of an EHCP and/or high needs funding
- Managers must ensure significant concerns (e.g. unable to contact a student who is under the age of 18) are referred to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)
- The DSL will use all reasonable means to contact a student under the age of 18, and their parent carer or any professional/s involved, to determine the reason/s behind the lack of attendance and agree a plan of action to improve the student's attendance or to get a child missing education (CME) back into education. Means of contact will include home visits where appropriate or where other methods have failed

- The DSL will alert the appropriate authorities if they are unable to make contact and will also immediately refer any information that indicates the child is at significant risk of abuse or neglect, following the referral routes outlined in the Safeguarding Policy
- Significant concerns about vulnerable adults should be referred to the DSL. An urgent referral is required if there is any suspicion the absence is connected to radicalisation or terrorism