



Safeguarding Young People in Education: Children Who Are Absent from Education Policy

Policy Statement

South West Association of Training Providers Ltd (Swatpro) is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of young people and vulnerable adults. This policy sets out procedures for managing risks associated with learners who are absent from education or training. It complies with Keeping Children Safe in Education (2025), Working Together to Safeguard Children (2023), Department for Education Children Missing Education Guidance, and Working Together to Improve School Attendance. Learners absent from education or training are at increased risk of harm, exploitation, radicalisation, and becoming Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET).

Definition

A young person absent from education is any learner of compulsory participation age (up to 18) who is not attending their agreed education, training, or employment programme.

What is Compulsory Participation Age?

Under current legislation, young people must remain in education, employment, or training until the age of 18. Options include:

- full-time education (e.g., college),
- apprenticeships or T-Level qualifications,
- or working/volunteering for 20+ hours per week while in part-time education or training.



Significant Risks Associated with Being Absent from Education

Children and young people who are absent from education are at significant risk of:

- Underachieving academically
- Becoming NEET (Not in Education, Employment, or Training)
- Exploitation, experiencing harm, abuse, neglect, or radicalisation
- Involvement in criminal or gang-related activity
- Online harms (including misinformation/disinformation).

It is crucial to identify and intervene early to mitigate these risks and safeguard vulnerable children and young people.

Who is most at risk?

Certain factors place children at higher risk of being absent from education. These include, but are not limited to:

- Young people with safeguarding concerns
- Care-experienced or in kinship care
- Gypsy, Roma, or Traveller (GRT) families
- Migrant backgrounds
- Young people of service personnel.
- Young people who go missing or run away from home or care
- Young people under the supervision of the Youth Justice System
- Young people of parents with mental health issues, substance misuse problems, or those with unstable home environments
- Young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) or mental health issues.

A higher proportion of young people may also be absent due to links with poverty, deprivation, or involvement with social services. Identifying these young people is crucial in supporting their continued education and safeguarding their welfare.

Roles and Responsibilities



Swatpro must maintain accurate attendance records, investigate unexplained absences promptly, notify the local authority if a 16–17-year-old is absent for **10 consecutive days without permission**, escalate safeguarding concerns immediately to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) and, where necessary, children's social care or police, and ensure subcontracted/alternative provision meets safeguarding standards and is regularly reviewed.

Employers must monitor attendance and report absences immediately and cooperate with Swatpro on investigations and safeguarding actions.

Parents/carers must ensure compliance with participation requirements.

Unauthorised Absence

Unauthorised absence refers to any period where a young person is not attending training, work, or reviews without prior agreement with their employer or Swatpro. This could include:

- Not attending apprenticeship training or a review without approval from the employer
- Not attending work or training without prior agreement or approval
- Swatpro will follow up promptly on any unauthorised absence and investigate the reasons behind it.

Response to Absence

Immediate enquiry into learner's whereabouts; DSL involvement for any safeguarding indicators; Referral to local authority and/or police if risk identified; Record actions and outcomes in safeguarding logs.

Response to Absences

Tutors and staff are trained to identify signs that a learner's absence could be linked to safeguarding concerns such as abuse, neglect, extremism, or radicalisation.



If a learner's absence raises any safeguarding concerns, Swatpro will:

- Make immediate enquiries into the learner's whereabouts
- DSL involvement for any safeguarding indicators
- Referral to local authority and/or police if risk identified
- Take further action based on the nature of the concern, in collaboration with the relevant authorities
- Record actions and outcomes in safeguarding logs (MyConcern)

In the case of a young person going missing, the following steps will be followed:

- **The Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)** is informed immediately of the circumstances.
- If the young person is deemed at risk, the **police** will be contacted, and parents or carers will be notified.
- The **police** will take the lead in investigating the situation, with Swatpro providing full cooperation as directed by the authorities.
- **OFSTED** may be notified if the situation warrants an investigation.

Swatpro will ensure that any lessons learned from the incident are incorporated into the safeguarding processes and shared with staff.

Local Authority Responsibilities

The local authority has a responsibility to:

- Identify children and young people in the area who are missing from suitable education
- Support the access to alternative education provisions where necessary
- Appoint a contact person for referrals related to absent learners
- Consider the underlying reasons for a young person's absence and work with Swatpro to promote their educational re-engagement
- Share information across agencies to ensure effective joint working
- Make referrals to children's social care or the police if concerns arise about a young person's welfare



Local Authority Liaison

Share information promptly under Children Missing Education guidance; Work jointly to re-engage learners in education/training.

Raising Awareness and Support for Apprentices

Swatpro regularly discusses safeguarding with apprentices throughout their training programmes, ensuring they know who to contact if they feel vulnerable. This includes providing contact details for:

- Safeguarding concerns
- Helplines and online safety resources for young people in crisis
- Employers will also receive training to recognise signs of safeguarding risks and know how to escalate concerns appropriately.

Review

This policy will be reviewed annually, or in response to the following:

- Changes in legislation or government guidance (including KCSIE or Working Together to Safeguard Children)
- Recommendations or requirements from the Local Safeguarding Children Board or other safeguarding agencies
- Significant changes in practice or following significant safeguarding incidents

Compliance with this Policy

Swatpro expects all staff to always adhere to this policy and its procedures. All staff, including apprentices and employers, should be familiar with their responsibilities under this policy and report any concerns promptly.

Monitoring

The policy will be monitored annually by the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) and reviewed in line with changes in legislation or guidance. Any issues regarding non-compliance will be addressed immediately to ensure the safety and wellbeing of young people in education.

Date of review	Date to be reviewed	By whom
September 2019	September 2020	SLT, led by DSL
September 2020	September 2021	DSL
November 2021	September 2022	DSL
September 2022	September 2023	DSL
October 2023	November 2023	DSL
November 2024	November 2025	DSL
November 2025	November 2026	DSL

SIGNED ON BEHALF OF THE COMPANY



Rodney Davis - Chief Executive

Dated: 17th November 2021

Annex 1

Statutory Duties for Attendance and Safeguarding

1. Investigate Unexplained Absences Promptly

- **Source:** *Education Act 2002, Section 175* and *KCSiE 2025*.
- **Action:** Schools and colleges must have systems to identify and follow up on unexplained absences immediately, as these may indicate safeguarding concerns.

2. Notify Local Authority for Extended Absence

- **Source:** *The School Attendance (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2024*.
- **Action:** If a pupil aged 16–17 is absent for **10 consecutive school days without permission**, notify the local authority. Applies to all registered pupils.

3. Escalate Safeguarding Concerns

- **Source:** *Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSiE)* and *Working Together to Safeguard Children*.
- **Action:** Any concerns identified through absence monitoring must be escalated:
 - **Immediately to the DSL.**
 - **To children's social care or police** if risk of harm is suspected.

4. Subcontracted / Alternative Provision

- **Source:** *Working Together to Improve School Attendance (2024)* and *KCSiE*.
- **Action:** Ensure:
 - Providers meet safeguarding standards.
 - Regular review and monitoring of compliance.
 - Clear contractual safeguarding clauses.