



## **Brigitte Trust**

### **Children Absconding (or Abducted) from the Care of a Brigitte Trust Employee or Volunteer Policy**

#### **1.0 Introduction**

As a consequence of supporting adult clients, carers and other family members our support may extend to supporting children within the family. Normally this should be with an adult member of the family. Exceptionally, when children are in our sole care, we have responsibility for their welfare.

The Trust takes every reasonable precaution to ensure the safety of children in its care.

#### **2.0 Aims of Policy**

To promote safety awareness and to:

- Alert employees and volunteers to the potential danger of children absconding
- Ensure employees and volunteers are aware of the action needed where children or young people abscond.

#### **3.0 Definition**

Absconding is defined as a child leaving the care of a worker contrary to rules or boundaries agreed with employees, volunteers, carers or those with parental responsibility e.g.:

- A child making their own way home from school when they have agreed/or it has been agreed for them to be collected by an employee or volunteer
- A child deciding to walk away from an employee or volunteer against instructions
- A child returning home when they are not allowed to be in the care of their parent.

Abduction is where a child has been removed from a carer, or from a setting by an individual who is not authorised to remove the child, or where no arrangements or agreement has been made with the individual who holds parental responsibility for the child for that individual to remove the child. The latter occurs commonly in marital dispute cases.

#### **4.0 Procedure**

In the event of a child absconding, or attempting to abscond:

- The employee or volunteer will warn the child loudly and clearly that they should not walk/run off
- The child must be warned that this action will result in the parent, carer and the Trust's Safeguarding Officer being informed of the incident



- The child must be warned that to take this course of action may restrict the support they will receive in the future
- The Safeguarding Officer or Charity Manager must be informed immediately of a child absconding
- If possible, the physical safety of the child should be ensured e.g. if the child has run off and injured themselves
- If the child has run away to be with an unauthorised person, the Police (999) are to be informed and the Safeguarding Officer and Charity Manager advised

In the event of a child being abducted:

- If when the volunteer arrives to collect the child they are informed that the child has left with another individual, the carer who holds parental responsibility must be contacted urgently in order to check that the situation is not one of a misunderstanding.
- If this is not the case the Trust Safeguarding Officer and Charity Manager must be contacted.
- If the whereabouts of the child are unknown or the child may have been abducted, the Police (999) must be contacted and the Safeguarding Officer and Charity Manager advised. This should be in liaison with the individual who holds parental responsibility.
- If the Trust is concerned that there are safeguarding issues then the Safeguarding Policy will be followed.

In all cases:

- The Safeguarding Officer will determine if they or the Service Co-ordinator (SCO) will be the nominated point of contact with the parent or carer
- If the child has absconded or been abducted, contact must be maintained with all relevant parties until the whereabouts of the child are ascertained
- A written account of the incident must be made and submitted to the Safeguarding Officer and Charity Manager for review of actions taken and outstanding
- After absconding, or in the case of abduction no child will normally be supported until authorised by the Safeguarding Officer and Charity Manager (see risk assessment below).
- In both scenarios, a risk assessment will be made by the Charity Manager and Safeguarding Officer to assess the risks of potential absconding/abduction in future
- Following the risk assessment, the Safeguarding Officer will determine appropriate measures mitigating the risk of future absconding/abduction and these will be recorded on file. The measures, where appropriate, will be discussed with and agreed with the parent or carer in writing.

The Charity Manager will deputise for the Safeguarding Officer in her absence and the Chair will deputise for the Charity Manager in her absence.



Ultimately, Brigitte Trust has the responsibility to ensure the safety of children, young people, employees and volunteers at all times service is being provided and will take all appropriate steps to achieve this.

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