



# Focus on...

## Child absences

It is normal on occasion for children to be absent from settings, this may be due to sickness or holidays etc. But do you know when to be concerned and what to do?

Attendance at an early years setting is not mandatory however if you do have a child/children on roll who has been absent and you have any concerns you must do something! You have a duty of care as an early years practitioner to safeguard all children in your care. It is important that we are 'professionally curious', this means sometimes asking those uncomfortable questions but in a manner that doesn't seem too intrusive.

There have been cases where children have been absent for days or even weeks and nobody has raised any concerns, then children have been found severely malnourished or very sadly passed away due to neglect or abuse. Most of these cases could have been avoided if only someone had raised an alarm.

In the first instance if a child is late/absent from your setting a member of staff must contact the family within a certain period of time which will be set out in your policies and procedures. If contact is made and you are happy with the reason given and an expected return date, you should be asking the parent to contact the setting every day or a member of staff to contact them. If the child fails to return on the stated day, then this must be followed up by a member of staff. All contact must be recorded, for every child in every instance.

The importance of having an effective key person system in place would be highly beneficial in these cases to build up that relationship with families to enable these conversations to take place and notice when things might not be going so well at home.

If at any point you are not happy with the conversations you are having with the parent/carer then you must report this to the Childrens Social Care Services 0300 123 6720 or the out of hours emergency duty team 0300 123 6722. Or you can contact the Lancashire Early Years Safeguarding Officer for advice 07909 001430.

If children are persistently late or absent what do you do to support the family and safeguard the children? You may need to complete an early help assessment using the 'Working well with children and families in Lancashire' document for guidance [1.3 Working Well with Children and Families in Lancashire \(proceduresonline.com\)](#)

The Family Hubs have lots of support available, you could signpost families [Lancashire Family Hubs Network-Lancashire County Council](#)

