



# **Absconding Protocols**

**Jan 2025**

The Life Skills Project is committed to safeguarding all learners participating in its programs, whether in private tuition or group learning settings. This policy outlines the procedures to follow in the event of a learner absconding, emphasizing proactive risk assessment and immediate action to ensure the learner's safety.

By addressing the unique needs of individuals and fostering a culture of respect and understanding, the policy ensures that every child and young person, regardless of their background, circumstances, or however they experience the world, is valued, supported, and empowered to thrive.

**Status & Review Cycle:** Statutory Annual

**Next Review Date:** January 2026

### **The Life Skills Project Absconding Protocols Statement 2025**

At The Life Skills Project, we are committed to creating a safe, secure, and supportive learning environment, both online and in-person, where all learners feel valued, respected, and safeguarded. We prioritize the individual needs and wellbeing of each young person, ensuring that every learner feels empowered and confident that their safety is a top priority.

This statement provides staff and tutors with a clear framework for preventing and addressing incidents of absconding effectively. It highlights how The Life Skills Project works collaboratively with families, care givers, and other professionals to ensure that each learner's unique strengths and challenges are recognized and supported. Our goal is to foster an environment where all learners can thrive safely, with dignity, and without risk of harm.

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## Risk Assessments

### Venue Risk Assessments:

- A comprehensive Risk Assessment must be conducted for each venue used by The Life Skills Project, including an evaluation of potential absconding risks (e.g., ease of exiting the premises, surrounding hazards)
- Venue Risk Assessments (VRA) must be reviewed and updated regularly
- Families, care givers and other professionals should be familiar with the content of the Venue Risk Assessment (VRA) of the venue/s of which

their child or young person, or the child or young person within their care attends

- Staff should be familiar with the Venue Risk Assessment (VRA) of the venue/s of which they attend

## Individual Risk Assessments:

- Learners identified as known absconders or those with complex needs (e.g., low awareness of danger, heightened anxiety, or impulsivity) must have an Individual Risk Assessment (IRA) which are completed collaboratively by the Tutor and/or DSO, parents, care givers, and other professionals, led by the Tutor and/or DSO.
- Individual Risk Assessments (IRA) should include prevention strategies, known triggers, management techniques and post-incident strategies, as well as the level of risk
- Staff, parents, care givers and other professionals should be familiar with the content of each learner's Individual Risk Assessment (IRA)

## Prevention Measures

- Maintain adequate staffing ratios to monitor learners effectively
- Create a supportive and structured environment to reduce triggers that may lead to absconding
- Ensure all staff familiar with VRA and IRA documents, as well as de-escalation techniques and procedures for managing an absconding incident (**see below**)
- Use of suitable venues with secure boundaries where feasible

## Procedure for Managing an Absconding Incident

### Immediate Response:

- Assess whether the learner has left the venue:
  - If the learner remains visible on the premises, staff should use de-escalation strategies to encourage their safe return
  - If the learner exits the venue, proceed to ***Action When Learner Leaves the Venue***

### Reporting:

- Notify the designated lead staff member immediately
- Provide the following information:
  - Learner's name
  - Last known location
  - Time of departure
  - Description (clothing, physical features, and any distinguishing marks)

### Action When the Learner Leaves the Venue:

- Call the Police (999) immediately and provide all relevant details, including:
  - Learner's name and vulnerability (e.g., autism, lack of danger awareness)
  - Exact location and postcode of the venue
  - Time last seen
- Inform parents/care givers and/or other professionals as soon as the Police have been contacted

### Coordination & Communication:

- Ensure one staff member remains at the last seen location to assist emergency services
- Notify all team members and maintain communication using designated channels

### Post-Incident Actions:

- Conduct a wellbeing check for the learner
- Review and update the learner's Individual Risk Assessment (IRA)

- Debrief staff involved to identify improvements in handling such incidents
- Record the incident in The Life Skills Project's safeguarding records

## **Roles & Responsibilities**

- **Staff Members:**

- Monitor learners and intervene early to prevent absconding
- Follow the outlined procedure promptly and accurately
- Familiarisation with de-escalation techniques
- Read and understand all Venue Risk Assessment (VRA) and Individual Risk Assessment (IRA) documents relevant to the venue, children and young people they are attending and attending to and highlight any potential risks that may become apparent as a result. Suggesting any appropriate adjustments and amendments to the VRA and/or IRA in accordance to any newly recognized potential risks

- **Families, Care Givers & Other Professionals:**

- Inform The Life Skills Project of any known absconding risks related to the child or young person related to them, or within their care. Including prevention strategies, known triggers, management techniques and post-incident strategies, as well as the level of risk

- Discuss and overview in detail the above details within a dedicated consultation meeting which may include the Tutor, the Designated Safeguarding Officer (DSO), or both
  - Read and understand the Venue Risk Assessment (VRA) and highlight any potential risks that may become apparent as a result. Suggesting any appropriate adjustments and amendments to the VRA in accordance to any recognized potential risks
  - Collaborate in the completion of an Individual Risk Assessment (IRA) when required, appropriate and necessary
- **Designated Safeguarding Officer (DSO):**
    - Oversee incident management and ensure all steps are followed
    - Liaise with parents, carer givers, other professionals, staff and emergency services as needed
    - Ensure all venues have up-to-date VRA's
    - Ensure all children and young people have up-to-date IRA's when appropriate, required and necessary
    - Provide training to staff on managing absconding risks
    - Conduct regular policy reviews and update procedures as necessary

## **Monitoring & Review**

This policy will be reviewed regularly or after any significant absconding incident to ensure its effectiveness and compliance with safeguarding standards.



## Contact Information

For further information, please contact The Life Skills Project's Designated Safeguarding Officer (DSO):

**Designated Safeguarding Officer (DSO):** Liam Kelly

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