



Practice note

Keeping children safe:
supporting trips and
outings in early
learning and childcare
(ELC)



Children benefit from enjoying positive learning and play experiences in a wide variety of settings. Trips and outings provide opportunities for children to connect with their local community, build on their learning, develop new interests, promote health and wellbeing, and grow an appreciation for nature and their environment.

Through our scrutiny work and notifications of incidents, we know that children have sometimes left a group and their responsible adult when on an outing. This presents a serious risk to their safety and wellbeing. A strongly connected relationship and knowledge of the individual child are key, without them, a child's safety and wellbeing are at risk.

Sometimes children are not familiar with the environment, are curious about something they see, or are looking for something they need and leave the group. As a result, children have crossed roads, made their way home, and have been found by members of the public. Children who are unsupervised are at risk of coming to serious harm.

As ELC staff, it is your responsibility under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child ([UNCRC 1989](#)) to ensure children's rights to life, survival and development (Article 6), protection from violence, abuse and neglect (Article 19) and to leisure, play and culture (Article 31) are promoted.



As a social service worker, I must protect and promote the rights and interests of people who use services and carers.”

([Codes of Practice for Social Service Workers and Employers](#), Scottish Social Service Council)

This practice note will provide a prompt for reflecting on and developing approaches to keeping children safe on trips and outings while ensuring they still have opportunities to be curious and develop their learning.



Listen to children's words, actions, and emotions. What are they telling you?



We want to share our learning so you can be confident that you provide safe, nurturing, and supportive care.

Respond, Reflect and Remember

The three R's (**Respond**, **Reflect**, and **Remember**) can help you to keep children safe.

Respond to children

It is important to take account of children's voices in matters that affect them. Each child will experience the care you provide differently.

- Make sure you know me, where I am and who is responsible for me.
- Speak to my family about my experiences to help you plan outings.
- Take account of my interests and learning needs to ensure outings are meaningful to me.
- I need a familiar adult nearby.

- Be patient with me, I might not have experience of being out in the community.
- Help me feel safe and reduce my anxiety in new places.
- Communicate with me in a way that I understand.
- Give me freedom to explore within safe boundaries
- Include me, especially if I need extra help.
- Notice me and know when to encourage my risky play and when to offer me support.

Reflect on practice

These questions are designed to help staff in the process of reflection.

Assessing the environment

- How do you know that the location of the outing meets children's learning and development needs?
- How do you assess the environment where trips and outings take place?
- How does this inform your risk assessment?
- How familiar are you and the children with the location and potential risks?
- How do you know the address of your location to alert emergency services if need be?
- How do you know that there is a mobile phone signal in the location of the outing?

Staff/adult roles and responsibilities

- How do you ensure you understand your roles and responsibilities?
- How do leaders know that procedures are clearly understood by all staff?
- How do you create a culture where staff feel comfortable reporting concerns about children's safety?
- What procedures would you follow if a child was identified as missing?

Staff communication

- How do you ensure that children are always accounted for?
- How do you ensure effective communication with each other?
- How would you get extra help from a colleague if needed?
- How do you monitor children and communicate about where they are?

Family engagement

- How do you engage families to support safe planning of trips and outings?
- What do you need to know about each child before going out of the setting?
- How do you use the information that parents provide you with?

Knowing and understanding the children in your care

- How do you know that children will benefit from the outing?
- How do you empower children to keep themselves safe?
- How do you know that children understand messages about safety when out of the setting?

Time to Reflect

Scenario 1

A childminder and her two minded children arranged to meet another childminder and her three minded children at local woods.

After 15 minutes of playing together, one of the children fell and cut themselves on a branch. While both childminders responded to the injured child, another child walked to a park at the entrance to the woods. The child regularly visited this park with their parents and loved playing there. A member of the public noticed the child playing alone and called the police because of their young age.

Discuss this scenario:

- What should the childminder have considered when planning this outing?
- What action do you consider was needed to prevent this?
- What do you consider were the thoughts of the child?
- To prevent this happening to a child in your service, how could you develop your practice on outings?



Scenario 2

A group of 10 children aged four was going on an outing to a park a few miles away from the ELC setting.

Staff had assessed that the safest way to travel was by public transport. The bus was very busy and this meant that the children were unable to sit together. Staff helped the children to find a seat and then found themselves a seat close by.

When they arrived at the destination, staff verbally encouraged children to exit the bus. Two children from the group were sitting at the back of the bus and did not hear staff instruct them to leave. After the bus had pulled away staff realised that two children were missing. After 10 minutes a member of public noticed that the children were alone. They notified the bus driver who called the police.

Discuss the scenario:

- How might the children have felt?
- What are your procedures when going on an outing?
- What are your reflections and what would you do to prevent this from happening?





Remember
... SIMOA

S

Safety

Be alert to all potential risks in your setting.

I

Inspect

Look around and inspect the environment to make sure a child can't leave an area without staff or their parent/carer.

M

Monitor

Regularly check that all children are accounted for, particularly when they are outside, on outings or using transport.

O

Observe

Observe children and think about their feelings and emotional security – 'use these observations to support children to feel loved and secure

A

Act

Assess and take action to keep children safe.

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