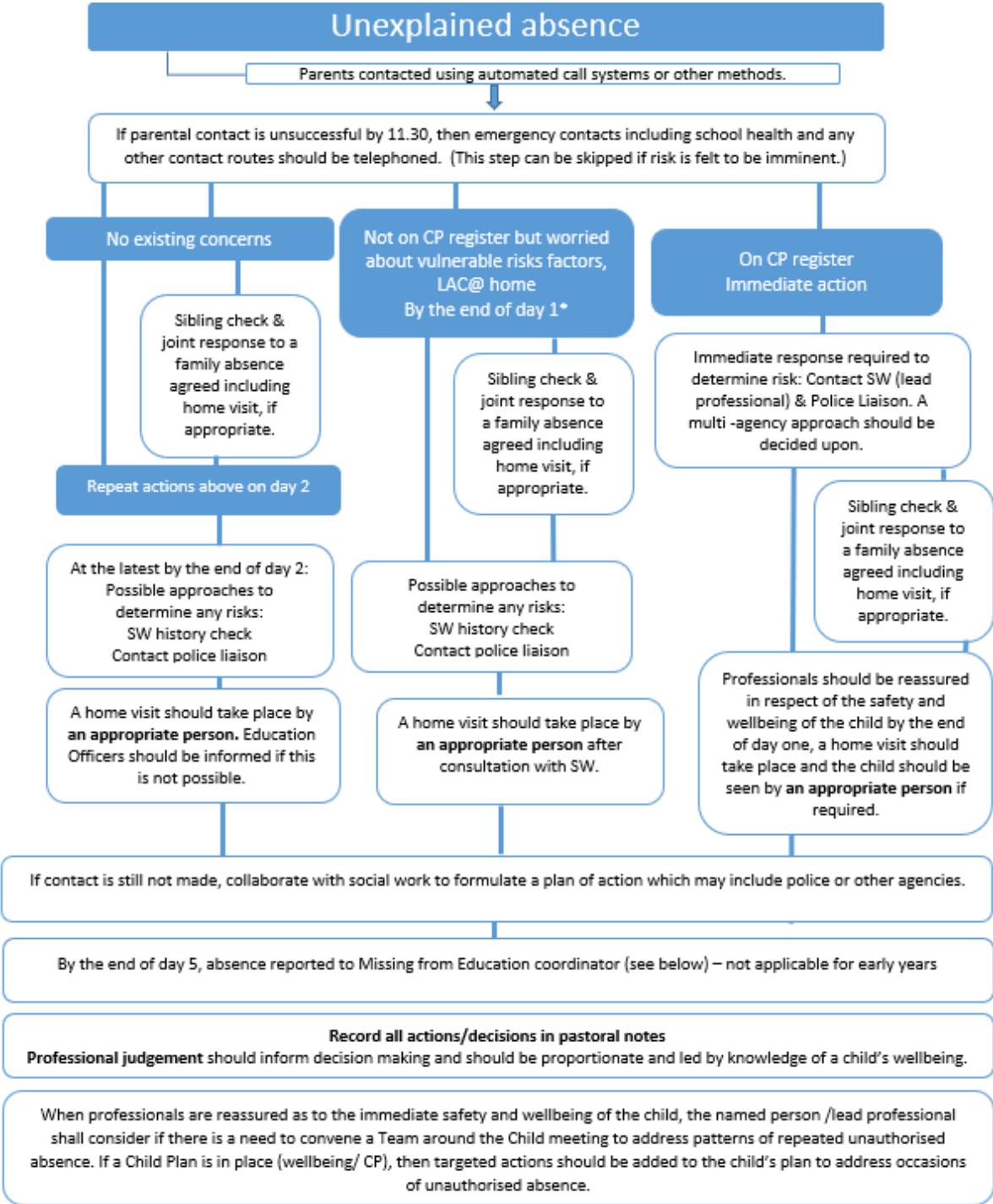


Decision Making Tree for Unexplained Absence

If a parent has not advised the school that the pupil will be absent then it must be assumed that the parents are unaware of the absence and that the child is missing or truanting. If the school has been unable to establish contact with the parents, action must be taken to satisfy the school and the education authority that the child or young person is safe and well. Included, engaged and involved 2019



Vulnerable Children and Young Person Risk factors (**not an exhaustive list**):

- Child or young person (YP) is vulnerable to physical/sexual/emotional harm or exploitation/abuse by others The child or young person may injure themselves if not found quickly The child or young person may act recklessly and place themselves and or others at risk
- The child or YP is likely to commit a serious offence
- The age/maturity/development of the child mean they are unlikely to be able to care adequately for themselves or have adequate regard for their own safety
- The child or YP is not likely to be with a known friend or family member.
- There are concerns regarding the child or YP home circumstances
- History of exclusion or truancy
- There are medical concerns
- There are concerns about a child or YP whose parents live separately

Examples of appropriate persons (not exhaustive list)

In deciding who is the appropriate person, schools should base this decision on the individual child.

- Wellbeing officer
- Social Work
- ICOS/LAC/corporate learning team (if appropriate)
- Homelink
- Police
- Barnardos/CLD
- School nurse/health visitor

Missing from education procedures for children and young people who are registered in a school (not applicable for early years establishments):

After 5 days of no contact, 'Missing from Education' procedures should be activated by contacting [Carolann Blane](#). A CHRONOLOGY OF STEPS/ACTIONS TAKEN BY THE SCHOOL TO ATTEMPT TO LOCATE THE PUPIL will be required. Housing and wider social work enquiries will be made locally and if required a national search initiated through contact the Children Missing from Education (Scotland) service. Carolann will at this point assume responsibility and provide the school with regular updates. A pupil would only be identified as 'missing from education' when LA enquires have been exhausted.

What is professional judgement?

"Judgement is based on as much information as can be lawfully and proportionately obtained about the child, his or her family and relevant context, including observation"

Professional judgement about risk of significant harm (from the National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland 2021)

3.12 Professional judgement is needed about the severity and immediacy of the risk of harm. This will be reviewed as relevant information is shared. There is no statutory definition or uniform defining criteria for significant harm. Significant harm refers to serious interruption, change or damage to a child's physical, emotional, intellectual or behavioural health and development.

3.13 To understand and identify significant harm, it is necessary to consider:

- the child's experience, needs and feelings as far as they are known. When a child talks about maltreatment, this may prompt a request for IRD. The child's disclosure is not a pre-requisite

- the child's development in context, including additional needs such as a medical condition, communication impairment or disability, that may affect the child's health, wellbeing, vulnerability and care needs
- what has happened, meaning the nature and degree of the actual or likely harm, in terms of abuse or failures to provide care and protection
- parental or carer responses to concern as far as they are known
- past occurrence, frequency or patterns in the occurrence of harm
- immediate risk of harm and cause of this risk
- impact/potential impact on the child's health and development
- degree of professional confidence in the information that either the abuse has occurred and is likely to be repeated, or that the child is at risk of harm
- capacity of the parents or carers to protect and care for the child
- the context of risk within the child's culture, family network and wider world
- interaction between known risks and known strengths, complicating or protective factors in the child's world
- the presence of premeditation, threat, coercion or sadism
- the probability of recurrence or persistence of harm or risk of harm

References

Included, engaged and involved part 1: promoting and managing school attendance

“Schools cannot be complacent about children's safety. If the school has been unable to establish contact with the parents or carers, action must be taken to satisfy the school and the education authority that the child is safe and well. This means that a service provider, wherever the child is found (e.g. a member of staff from any of the children's services or the police), has seen the child to be assured that he/she is safe.”

[Children & Young People \(Scotland\) Act, 2014](#)

“Part 1 defines the duties of Ministers and of public authorities in relation to the fulfilment of rights of children, and in furthering the effect of the UNCRC in Scotland. Part 3 (Children’s Services Planning) requires local authorities and health boards to take a strategic approach to the design and delivery of a wider view of services used by children and families than those previously set out in the Children (Scotland) Act 1995. Section 8 requires every local authority and its relevant health board to jointly prepare a Children’s Services Plan for the area of the local authority, in respect of each three-year period.”

[National Guidance for Child Protection \(2014\)](#)

[National guidance for child protection in Scotland](#)

[Schools: Children missing from education](#)

[National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland 2021 \(updated 2023\)](#)