POLICY DOCUMENT

The Recharge Club™

Missing Child Policy and Procedure

Preventing, Responding to and Learning From a Child Going Missing at The Recharge Club

Document Owner:	Mrs Michaela Cmorej, Director and Designated Safeguarding Lead
Company Name:	NutriDive Ltd
Company Number:	16659858
Trading Name:	The Recharge Club™
Registered Office Address:	39 Coltsfoot Drive, Chorley, PR6 0JP
Designated Safeguarding Lead:	Mrs Michaela Cmorej, Director
Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead:	Mr Michal Cmorej, Deputy Director
Status:	Mandatory Policy — applicable to all staff, bank staff and volunteers
Date Adopted:	1st August 2026
Review Frequency:	Annually, and immediately following any missing child incident or change in statutory guidance
Next Review Due:	Twelve months from the date of adoption
Related Policy:	This policy is read alongside the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy and the Drop-Off, Collection and Late Collection Policy

1. Policy Statement

The Recharge Club™ takes every reasonable step to prevent a child or young person from going missing during a session, and maintains a clear, well-rehearsed procedure to follow in the rare event that a child cannot be accounted for, whether on the premises or during an off-site outing.

The Recharge Club™ recognises that many of the children and young people it supports may be at increased risk if they go missing, for example due to limited awareness of danger, a tendency to be drawn towards a particular interest or sensory experience, or reduced ability to seek help or communicate their location. This policy is written with that heightened vulnerability firmly in mind.

> ***If a child cannot be accounted for, staff act immediately and with urgency. A child with special educational needs and disabilities going missing is always treated as a serious safeguarding emergency, never as a minor administrative matter.***

2. Purpose and Scope

This policy applies to every child and young person attending The Recharge Club™, whether on the organisation's premises or during an off-site outing, and to every member of staff, bank worker and volunteer present during a session.

This policy should be read alongside the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy, the Drop-Off, Collection and Late Collection Policy, and the Health and Safety Policy.

3. Legal and Regulatory Framework

This policy has been written with regard to the following legislation and statutory guidance:

- The Children Act 1989 and the Children Act 2004
- Working Together to Safeguard Children, the statutory guidance on inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children
- Guidance issued by the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills for providers registered on the Voluntary Childcare Register, including its expectation that a significant event of this kind is notified without delay
- The Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974

4. Prevention

The great majority of the protection against a child going missing is built into how The Recharge Club™ runs every session, rather than relying on a search procedure after the fact.

- A register recording every child present is completed at arrival and kept up to date throughout the session
- A named key worker is responsible for maintaining awareness of each child's whereabouts throughout the session
- A headcount is carried out at every transition between activities, before and after use of the outdoor space, and before and after any meal or snack
- The secure outdoor space is checked at the start of every session to confirm boundary fencing and gates are secure and free of any defect
- Main entrance and exit doors are monitored, and any door providing access to the outside is fitted with an alarm or is otherwise secured against a child leaving unnoticed

- Any child whose Individual Support Plan identifies a known tendency to leave a space unexpectedly, sometimes described as absconding, has this specifically planned for, including heightened supervision, additional visual monitoring, or a personalised strategy agreed with the family
- Staff are briefed at the start of every session on which children present a higher risk in this respect, without this ever being discussed in front of other children or families

5. Immediate Action if a Child Cannot Be Accounted For

If a member of staff realises that a child cannot immediately be located, the following happens without delay:

- The member of staff alerts the Designated Safeguarding Lead, or in their absence the Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead, immediately, by the quickest means available
- An immediate headcount of all other children present is carried out, to confirm that only one child is unaccounted for and to ensure the remaining children continue to be safely supervised throughout
- The immediate vicinity, including the room the child was last seen in, adjoining rooms, and any area the child is known to particularly favour, such as the sensory room or a specific activity area, is checked first
- A member of staff remains with the other children at all times; no member of staff searches alone while leaving children unsupervised

6. Search Procedure

Where a child is not located within the first few minutes of the immediate check described above, the Designated Safeguarding Lead coordinates a systematic search of the entire premises, covering every room, the secure outdoor space, and any area outside the main supervised space, such as a corridor, toilet, or storage area.

- The search is systematic and covers every area of the premises without assumption, rather than repeatedly checking the same likely locations
- The child's known interests, sensory preferences, and any area of particular attraction or danger, such as water, roads, or a specific fixation recorded in their Individual Support Plan, are given specific attention during the search
- Given the potential vulnerability of the children The Recharge Club™ supports, the police are contacted without waiting for an extended search to be exhausted; as a guide, if the child is not located within a very few minutes of the search beginning, the police are contacted immediately rather than the search continuing indefinitely on its own

7. Contacting the Police and the Family

The police are contacted on 999, and the child's family is contacted at the same time, in parallel, rather than one after the other. When contacting the police, staff provide:

- The child's name, age, and a clear physical description, including clothing worn that day
- Any relevant communication need, for example that the child is non-verbal, uses a specific communication method, or may not respond to their name being called
- Any relevant behavioural information, such as a known attraction to water, roads, animals, or a specific interest, or a tendency to seek an enclosed or hidden space
- Any relevant medical information, such as epilepsy or a severe allergy, that a first responder would need to know
- The time the child was last seen, and the area already searched

This information is kept readily accessible for every child, for example in an emergency information sheet held with the daily register, so that it can be given to the police accurately and without delay under pressure.

8. Roles During a Missing Child Incident

Designated Safeguarding Lead or Deputy	Coordinates the search, makes the decision to contact the police, contacts the family, and remains the single point of contact for both throughout the incident.
Staff Remaining with the Group	Maintain full supervision and a calm environment for all other children, without alarming them, while the search and contact with the emergency services takes place.
Staff Conducting the Search	Search systematically in line with this policy, reporting back to the Designated Safeguarding Lead at agreed short intervals, rather than continuing to search independently without reporting in.

9. After the Child Is Found

Once the child has been found or safely returned, they are checked for any injury or distress, reassured calmly, and supported to rejoin the session at their own pace. The family is informed immediately if this has not already happened, and, where the police were involved, staff confirm with them that the incident can be formally closed. The child is never questioned about the incident in a way that feels like an interrogation, and staff avoid conveying blame or anger towards the child, recognising that going missing is very rarely a deliberate or wilful act for the children The Recharge Club™ supports.

10. Recording and Notification

A full written record of the incident is completed on the same day, including the time the child was found to be missing, the time they were found or returned, the areas searched, who was contacted and when, and the outcome.

- The incident is reviewed by the Designated Safeguarding Lead as a matter of priority, to understand exactly how the child came to go missing and what allowed it to happen
- As a significant event affecting the safety of a child in its care, the incident is notified to the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills without delay, in line with the organisation's ongoing notification obligations as a provider on the Voluntary Childcare Register
- The organisation's insurer is informed where relevant
- The child's Individual Support Plan and risk assessment are reviewed and updated in light of what happened, and any necessary change to staffing, supervision, or the premises is made before the child next attends

11. Missing Child Procedure During an Off-Site Outing

The same principles apply during an off-site outing, adapted to the setting. A headcount is carried out at regular, defined intervals throughout the outing and always before leaving any location. If a child cannot be accounted for during an outing:

- The remaining children are gathered together immediately in a single, safe, defined location, supervised by at least one member of staff at all times
- A second member of staff searches the immediate area systematically, remaining within sight or contact of the group wherever possible
- The Designated Safeguarding Lead is contacted immediately by telephone, and the police are contacted without delay if the child is not quickly found, applying the same urgency as set out in section six

- The family is contacted at the same time as the police, not afterwards

12. Preventing Recurrence

Following any missing child incident, the Designated Safeguarding Lead considers whether a wider change is needed, beyond the individual child's risk assessment, such as additional physical security measures, a change to staff positioning or ratios during particular activities, or a change to how transitions between areas are managed. Any change identified is implemented before the next session and communicated clearly to all staff.

13. Training

All staff and bank staff are briefed on this policy and procedure as part of their induction, and the procedure is rehearsed through a practice drill at least every six months, in a manner that does not alarm children. Any learning identified through a drill or a real incident is used to update this policy and staff training without delay.

14. Roles and Responsibilities

Designated Safeguarding Lead	Mrs Michaela Cmorej, Director. Leads the response to any missing child incident, makes the decision to contact the police, notifies the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills, and reviews every incident and practice drill.
Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead	Mr Michal Cmorej, Deputy Director. Deputises fully for the Designated Safeguarding Lead in their absence.
All Staff and Bank Staff	Maintain awareness of every child's whereabouts at all times, complete headcounts at every transition, and follow this procedure immediately and without hesitation if a child cannot be accounted for.

15. Monitoring, Review and Related Policies

This policy is reviewed at least annually, and immediately following any missing child incident, practice drill, or change in statutory guidance. This policy should be read alongside the following related policies and documents:

- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- Drop-Off, Collection and Late Collection Policy
- Health and Safety Policy
- Individual Support Plan template and guidance

This policy has been approved by the Director of The Recharge Club™ and forms part of the organisation's statutory compliance framework.