Missing Learner Absence and Welfare Check Procedure

Policy owner: Director / Designated Safeguarding Lead

Operational lead: Programme Lead

Version: 3

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1 Purpose and scope

Compass Learning & Education will respond promptly and proportionately when a learner fails to attend, cannot be located, leaves an agreed session unexpectedly or presents a welfare concern. Every learner absence, whether explained or unexplained, must be reported to the named commissioner within 30 minutes of the scheduled session start.

This procedure covers tuition, mentoring, therapeutic support and other Compass provision delivered in homes, schools, libraries, community venues, hired premises, work placements and online. It applies to learners of all ages, including school-commissioned, local-authority-commissioned and parent-funded placements.

All employees, self-employed tutors, mentors, therapists, contractors and other authorised staff must follow this procedure.

The response will reflect the learner's age, SEND, communication needs, medical needs, mental health, safeguarding history, travel arrangements and individual risk assessment. For learners aged 18 or over, adult safeguarding arrangements will be used where applicable. An EHCP does not extend childhood beyond the age of 17.

A placement with Compass does not, by itself, create dual registration at two schools. The learner's educational status and commissioning arrangements must be recorded accurately.

2 Core principles

An unexplained absence is not automatically a missing-person incident, but it must be followed up. Repeated absence, concerning communications or uncertainty about a learner's whereabouts may require a safeguarding response.

Routine reporting deadlines are maximum timescales, not instructions to wait. Staff must act immediately where there is an immediate danger, a learner goes missing during a session or circumstances indicate heightened risk.

Commissioners retain their relevant responsibilities for learners placed with Compass. Compass also retains responsibility for acting on concerns arising through its work. Notifying a commissioner does not automatically resolve a concern or remove the need for further protective action.

Staff must distinguish between:

- **Attendance enquiries:** establishing why a learner has not attended.
- **Safeguarding welfare enquiries:** responding to concerns about a learner's safety.
- **Attendance and re-engagement visits:** planned Compass visits to understand barriers and support a return to provision.

Staff must use professional curiosity, record facts accurately and avoid assumptions that a familiar absence pattern or known anxiety explains every missed session.

3 Responsibilities

Director / Designated Safeguarding Lead

The DSL oversees safeguarding decisions, referrals and escalation; ensures appropriate cover is available; and reviews significant incidents and recurring concerns.

Where the DSL is unavailable, staff must contact the nominated safeguarding cover. Necessary contact with emergency services or social care must not be delayed while trying to obtain internal permission.

Programme Lead

The Programme Lead or nominated cover coordinates attendance follow-up, contacts parents/carers or adult learners as appropriate, reports every absence to the named commissioner within 30 minutes of the scheduled session start, and records the resulting actions. Parent/carer contact or confirmation of the reason must not delay commissioner reporting.

The Programme Lead also arranges and conducts attendance and re-engagement visits, reviews emerging absence patterns and ensures unresolved concerns have a named person responsible for the next action.

Nominated monitoring person

A nominated person will monitor CPOMS notifications throughout every Compass session. Compass does not operate evening sessions.

Where the usual monitoring person is unavailable, cover must be allocated before sessions begin. Relevant attendance alerts must be acknowledged and passed to the Programme Lead or nominated cover for action.

Tutors, mentors and therapists

Delivery staff must check attendance at the scheduled start, record and report every absence on CPOMS immediately and alert the nominated monitoring person so that commissioner notification is completed within 30 minutes of the scheduled start. Staff must use direct telephone contact if acknowledgement or action is delayed, or urgent action is needed.

Staff must follow the placement plan, maintain agreed supervision, provide accurate information and avoid unsafe searches, unapproved visits or informal transport arrangements.

4 Arrangements before a placement begins

Each placement plan must identify:

- Scheduled attendance days, session times, locations and delivery arrangements.
- The commissioner and named absence-reporting contact: the commissioning school or local authority, or the parent/carer or adult learner funding a parent-funded placement.

- Parent/carer or adult learner contact details and appropriate emergency contacts.
- Relevant safeguarding, medical, SEND and communication information.
- Known risks associated with absence, travel, leaving supervision or missed contact.
- Arrival, collection, handover and transport arrangements.
- The responsible adult required during an under-18 home session.
- Any agreed independent travel arrangements.
- The applicable attendance, safeguarding and out-of-hours reporting routes.

Missing information that affects safe delivery must be resolved before the placement starts.

Parents and carers will receive clear instructions in the admissions pack, at the point of placement, explaining how to report their child's absence, which Compass contact details to use and what information to provide. Absence should be reported before the scheduled session wherever possible.

Equivalent reporting instructions will be provided directly to adult learners, with accessible communication or agreed support where needed.

Reporting an absence in advance or providing an explanation does not remove the requirement to report that absence to the commissioner within 30 minutes of the scheduled session start, or the need for further welfare enquiries where concerns remain.

5 Attendance recording and routine non-attendance

Staff must establish attendance at the beginning of every scheduled session and accurately record late arrival, partial attendance, early departure and non-attendance.

Records must distinguish learner absence from parent cancellation, transport failure, staff absence, Compass cancellation and a session stopped for safety reasons. Only provision actually delivered may be recorded as delivered.

Timing or circumstance	Required action
At the scheduled start	Check whether the learner is present or connected online, review known absence information and consider the placement plan and any immediate risks.
Immediately after absence is identified	The tutor, mentor or therapist must log every absence on CPOMS within 15 minutes of the session start time, and alert the nominated monitoring person immediately, including absences reported in advance and explained absences.
Immediately on receipt of the CPOMS alert	The nominated person must acknowledge and pass the alert to the Programme Lead or nominated cover immediately. If acknowledgement or action is delayed, delivery staff must telephone the Programme Lead or cover.

Timing or circumstance	Required action
Within 30 minutes of the scheduled session start	**The Programme Lead or nominated cover must report every learner absence to the named commissioner within 30 minutes of the scheduled session start**, whether explained or unexplained and including absences reported in advance. Report before the scheduled end for sessions shorter than 30 minutes. Contact the parent/carer or adult learner promptly, but do not delay commissioner notification while awaiting a response or confirming the reason or whereabouts. Share the information available, state what remains unconfirmed, and provide an update when further information is obtained.
Where contact fails or information raises concern	Refer promptly to the DSL or safeguarding cover for a risk-based response. Do not wait until the end of the day.
Before the matter is closed or handed over	Record the information obtained, actions taken, outstanding concerns, named action owner and next review or contact time.

A CPOMS notification is not proof that someone has read or acted on the report, and does not replace commissioner notification. If CPOMS is unavailable, staff must telephone the agreed contact immediately and enter the written record as soon as access is restored. The Programme Lead or cover must still report every absence to the commissioner within 30 minutes of the scheduled session start.

A parent's account must be recorded as reported information. Staff must not describe a learner's welfare as directly verified unless that is what occurred.

6 Circumstances requiring immediate action

Staff must act sooner than the routine 15-minute deadline where, for example:

- A learner leaves a session unexpectedly or cannot be located.
- A learner is expected after travelling independently and does not arrive.
- A parent or transport provider reports that the learner has already set off or been dropped off, but their whereabouts are unknown.
- There are threats of self-harm, concerning messages, suspected exploitation or other immediate risks.
- The individual placement plan requires an earlier response.

Call **999** where there is immediate danger or an emergency. Use the appropriate police non-emergency reporting route for other missing-person concerns and children's or adult social care where safeguarding enquiries are required.

Staff must contact the Programme Lead or DSL directly and record the incident on CPOMS when safe. They must not rely solely on an electronic notification or wait for the commissioner's agreement before taking necessary protective action.

7 Home-based sessions

For learners under 18, an agreed responsible adult named in the placement plan must be present during home-based sessions. Any change to that arrangement must be approved and recorded before the session proceeds.

For adult learners, adult-presence and support arrangements will be decided individually.

If nobody answers, the required adult is absent or the learner is reportedly at home but unavailable, staff must inform Compass and follow the attendance and risk arrangements. They must record what they observed separately from what another person reported. If the child is home, but the agreed adult is not, the Compass member of staff must not enter the property and must contact the Programme Lead immediately to inform them that they cannot complete the session.

Staff must not force entry, search a home or demand access to a bedroom. They must not simply leave an unresolved welfare concern recorded as a routine cancellation.

Where the environment is unsafe, staff must not enter or continue the session. They must move to safety, contact Compass and arrange appropriate safeguarding or emergency action. Where they have already assumed supervision, they must ensure a safe handover or emergency response rather than abandon the learner.

8 Online sessions

Online non-attendance must follow the same immediate CPOMS alert and commissioner-reporting process: every absence must be reported to the named commissioner within 15 minutes of the scheduled session start, whether explained or unexplained. The placement plan must provide an agreed means of contacting the learner and, where appropriate, a responsible adult.

Staff must have sufficient location and contact information to obtain help if an emergency arises during remote delivery.

For an unexpected disconnection, staff should attempt contact through approved channels and consider whether the circumstances suggest a technical problem or a welfare concern. Concerning sounds, behaviour, disclosures or sudden disconnection during a crisis require immediate escalation.

A camera being off does not, by itself, establish that a learner is absent or unsafe.

9 Learner missing during a session or community activity

Staff must raise the alarm immediately and contact the Programme Lead or DSL. Emergency services must be contacted without delay where the circumstances require.

An immediate check of the agreed teaching area, relevant toilets, routes and nearby safe locations may be undertaken where safe. Staff must use the actual venue and individual risk assessments.

A lone staff member must not undertake an unsafe or extended search. Staff responsible for other learners must not leave them unsupervised. Venue staff may assist where appropriate, but their presence does not automatically transfer Compass's supervision responsibility.

Staff must not pursue a learner into danger, improvise unsafe restraint or use force simply to compel attendance. Any protective intervention must follow Compass's restrictive-intervention arrangements and have a lawful basis.

Provide police with relevant information, including the learner's description, last known location, time last seen, direction of travel, known risks and likely destinations.

Parents/carers and commissioners must be informed promptly unless doing so could increase risk or conflict with statutory-agency advice.

10 Travel collection and handover

Travel arrangements must be agreed at commissioning and recorded in the placement plan.

Children under 11 must not travel independently to or from Compass sessions. For learners aged 11–17, independent travel requires recorded parental consent and an individual assessment of the route, maturity, SEND, communication needs and relevant risks. Age alone does not establish suitability.

Adult learners' arrangements will reflect their individual needs and wishes.

The plan must identify where supervision begins and ends, who may collect the learner and how failed transport, delayed collection or an incomplete handover will be managed.

Staff must not leave a learner requiring supervision solely because the session has ended. They must contact the Programme Lead and arrange a safe, documented handover or appropriate emergency response.

Personal vehicles may only be used under Compass's approved transport arrangements. Informal lifts must not be used to resolve collection difficulties.

11 Commissioner liaison and safeguarding welfare enquiries

For school-commissioned placements, the Programme Lead or nominated cover must report every absence to the named commissioning school contact within 30 minutes of the scheduled session start, including explained absences and those reported in advance. Where welfare concerns remain, agree who will undertake further welfare enquiries or any safeguarding welfare visit.

For local-authority-commissioned placements, the Programme Lead or nominated cover must report every absence to the named local authority contact within 30 minutes of the scheduled session start on the same basis. Reporting routes and welfare responsibilities must be agreed at commissioning. Where another agency or school is involved, responsibilities must be explicit.

Compass must communicate relevant risk information and establish who is taking the next action. An unanswered email does not constitute an effective safeguarding handover.

Where a response is unavailable or does not address continuing risk, the DSL must escalate through the appropriate agency arrangements. Compass staff may contact police or social care directly where necessary.

Commissioning schools remain responsible for their statutory attendance registers and coding decisions. Compass will provide accurate attendance information promptly and will not assume that a scheduled placement establishes attendance.

12 Attendance and re-engagement visits

Following **three unexplained absences across three consecutive scheduled attendance days**, the Programme Lead will conduct an attendance and re-engagement visit **within 48 hours of the third absence**.

Several missed lessons on one day count as one attendance day for this trigger. Reported and satisfactorily explained absences do not automatically count, although patterns or other concerns may justify earlier review.

The visit aims to understand barriers, hear the learner's and family's views and agree practical steps towards re-engagement. It does not replace immediate safeguarding enquiries or statutory-agency action.

The Programme Lead will coordinate the visit with the family and commissioner where appropriate. Every visit must be risk assessed and follow Compass's home-visit and lone-working arrangements, including check-in/out, a working phone and additional staffing where required.

Staff must not force entry or undertake an unsafe visit to meet the deadline. If access is refused or the visit cannot safely be completed, record the attempted arrangements and reasons, notify the DSL and commissioner where applicable, and agree an alternative response without delay.

Any safeguarding concern identified before or during the visit must be acted on immediately.

13 Parent-funded placements

For parent-funded placements, including home-educated learners, the parent/carer or adult learner funding the placement is the commissioner. The Programme Lead or nominated cover must report or confirm every absence to that named person within 30 minutes of the scheduled session start, including absences they have reported in advance, and undertake initial absence enquiries as appropriate.

Where no commissioning school or local authority is involved, Compass will not assume that another education provider is carrying out welfare enquiries.

Unresolved welfare concerns must be referred to the DSL, who will determine the appropriate action, including contact with relevant statutory agencies. The three-day re-engagement visit arrangements also apply.

14 Repeated absence and support for attendance

Compass will respond sensitively to absence linked to SEND, illness, anxiety, emotionally based school non-attendance, family circumstances or barriers to access.

The Programme Lead will review emerging patterns promptly with the learner, family and commissioner where applicable. This may include reviewing reasonable adjustments, communication, transport, the learning environment and the agreed support plan.

Staff must not independently shorten, relocate or cancel provision. Changes must be authorised and communicated through the agreed placement arrangements.

Repeated absence must not be treated automatically as deliberate misconduct. Equally, known needs or previous explanations must not obscure new safeguarding concerns.

15 Return after a missing incident

On return, staff must check immediate welfare, arrange first aid or medical assistance where needed and inform the relevant people or agencies that the learner has been located.

The learner should be offered a calm, supportive discussion using communication appropriate to their needs. Staff must avoid punitive questioning or attempting their own investigation into suspected abuse.

The DSL will review the circumstances and any necessary changes to the placement, supervision, travel or safeguarding plan.

Where the missing-from-home-or-care arrangements apply, Compass will liaise with the responsible authority about the independent return interview. A Compass return discussion does not replace that process.

16 Records information sharing and closure

Attendance concerns, significant welfare information, decisions and actions must be recorded promptly on CPOMS. Urgent telephone or verbal reports must be followed by a written record.

Records must include:

- Expected attendance, scheduled session start time, the time absence or concern was identified, and the time every absence was reported to the commissioner.
- Known risks and the source of information received.
- Contact attempts, recipients, times and outcomes.
- Decisions, reasons, advice and referrals.
- The named person responsible for outstanding actions.
- The outcome and arrangements for further review.

Use approved Compass accounts and secure systems. Staff must not keep parallel safeguarding records in personal messaging accounts or private files.

Information must be shared lawfully, necessarily and proportionately. Confidentiality must not prevent necessary safeguarding action. Contact with parents or others may need to be withheld where it could increase risk.

An unresolved concern must not close because a session or working day has ended. The Programme Lead or DSL must ensure that ongoing responsibility and any out-of-hours handover are explicit and documented.

If the incident raises concerns about an adult's conduct, follow the allegations, low-level concerns or whistleblowing procedures as appropriate. The LADO is an allegations-management route, not the routine service for locating missing learners.

17 Monitoring training and review

All delivery staff must receive this procedure during induction and understand CPOMS reporting, telephone escalation, safeguarding cover and their placement-specific responsibilities.

The Programme Lead will review attendance concerns regularly and check that every absence was reported to the commissioner within 30 minutes of the scheduled session start. The DSL will review significant incidents, missed alerts, delayed reports or responses and ineffective handovers. Termly oversight will consider trends and required improvements.

This procedure will be reviewed annually and earlier following a significant incident, operational change or revised guidance.

18 Related documents and guidance

This procedure must be read alongside:

- Compass Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.
- Staff Code of Conduct.
- Whistleblowing Policy and Overview.
- Home-visit and lone-working arrangements.

- Individual learner, venue and activity risk assessments.
- Behaviour and restrictive-intervention procedures.
- Online safety and transport arrangements.
- Data Protection Policy and retention arrangements.
- Admissions pack and individual placement agreement.
- Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026.
- Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026.
- Working Together to Improve School Attendance.
- Applicable local safeguarding and missing-person procedures.

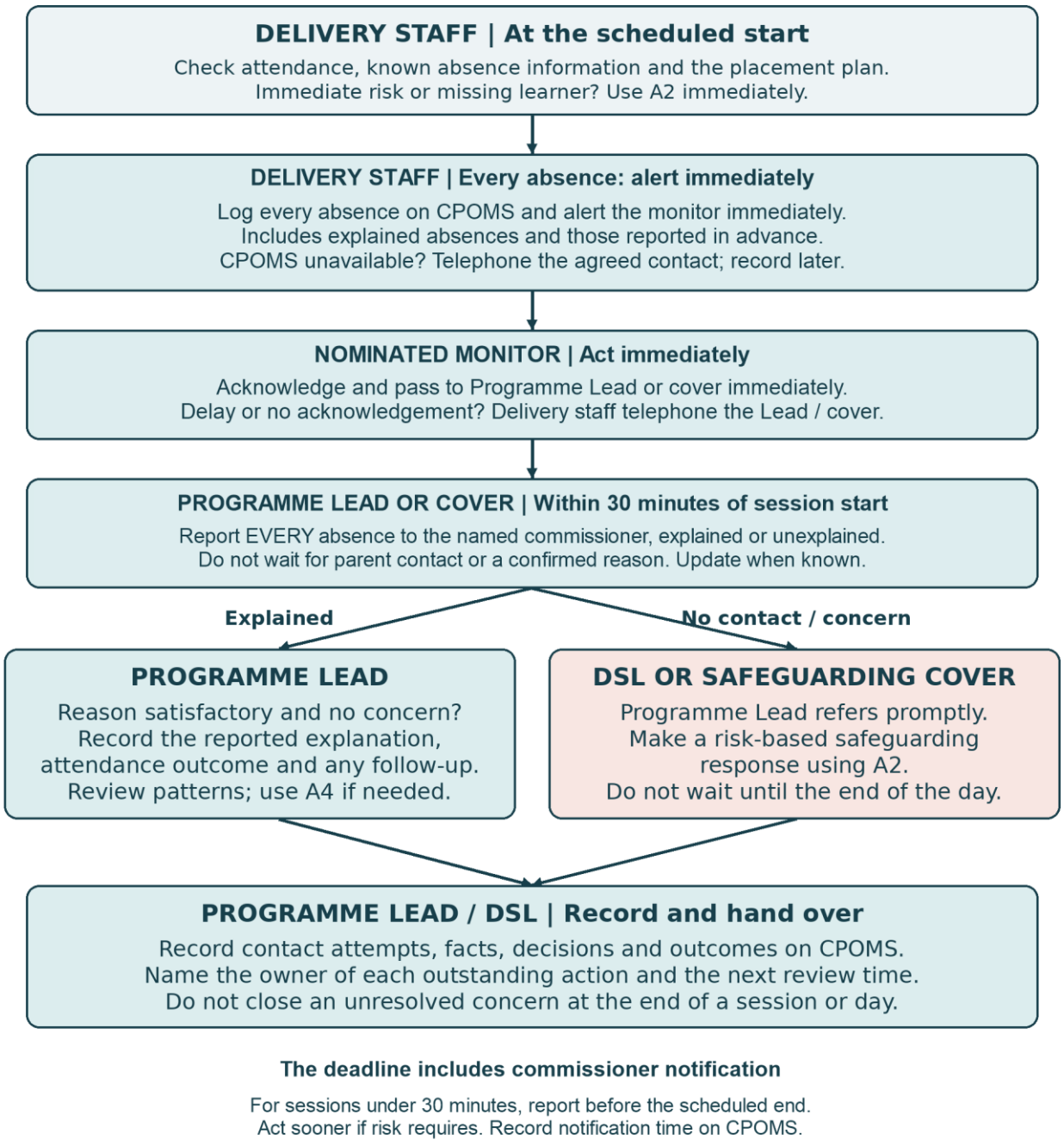
Approved by: Rosie Aylward - DSL

Date: 01.10.26

Appendix A Staff action flowcharts

A1 Non-attendance at the start of a session

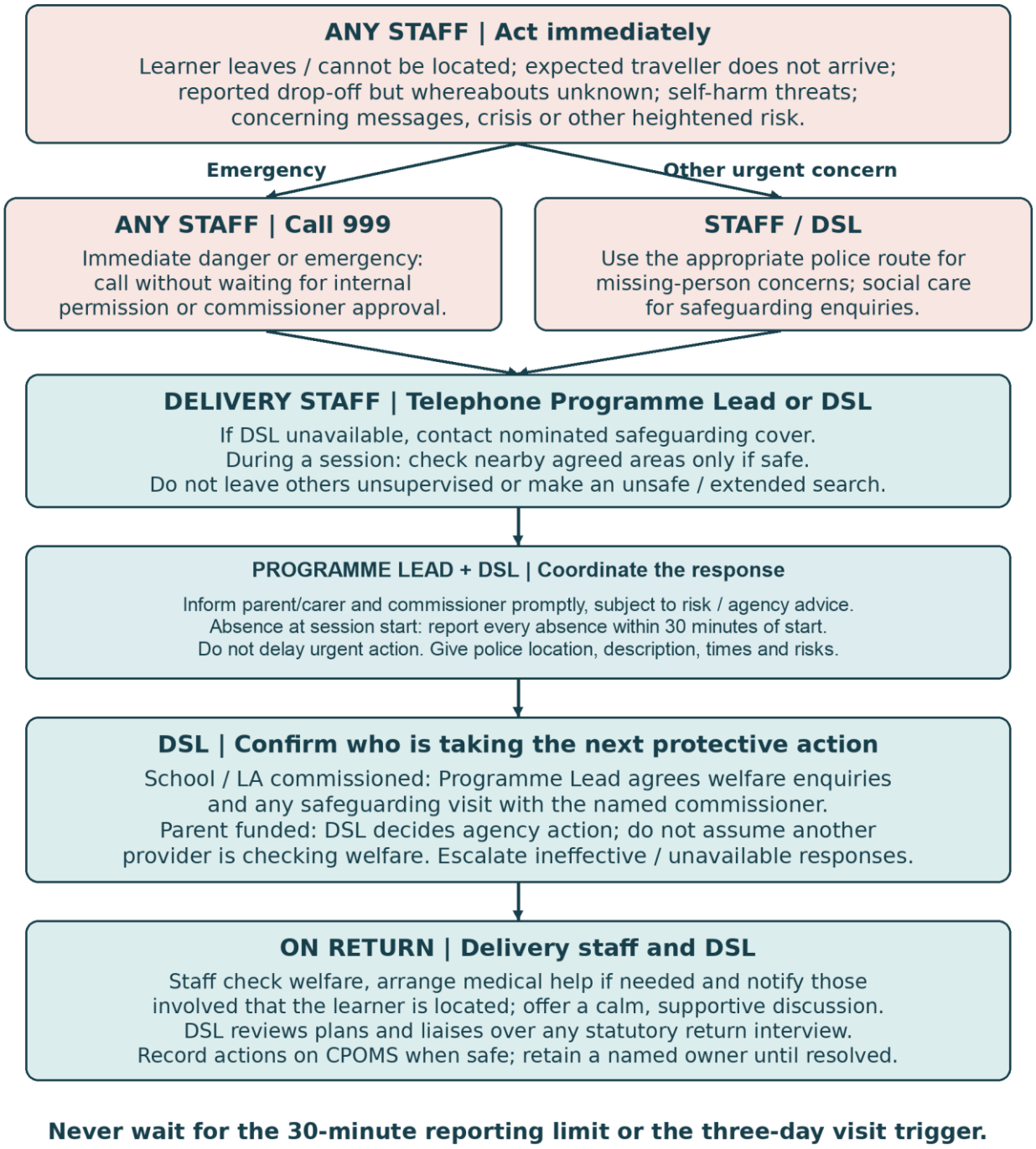
Follow the placement plan and full procedure. DSL means Designated Safeguarding Lead. Delivery staff includes tutors, mentors and therapists.



Quick reference to sections 5–16. Urgent protective action must never wait for routine deadlines.

Appendix A Staff action flowcharts continued

A2 Immediate risk and missing learners

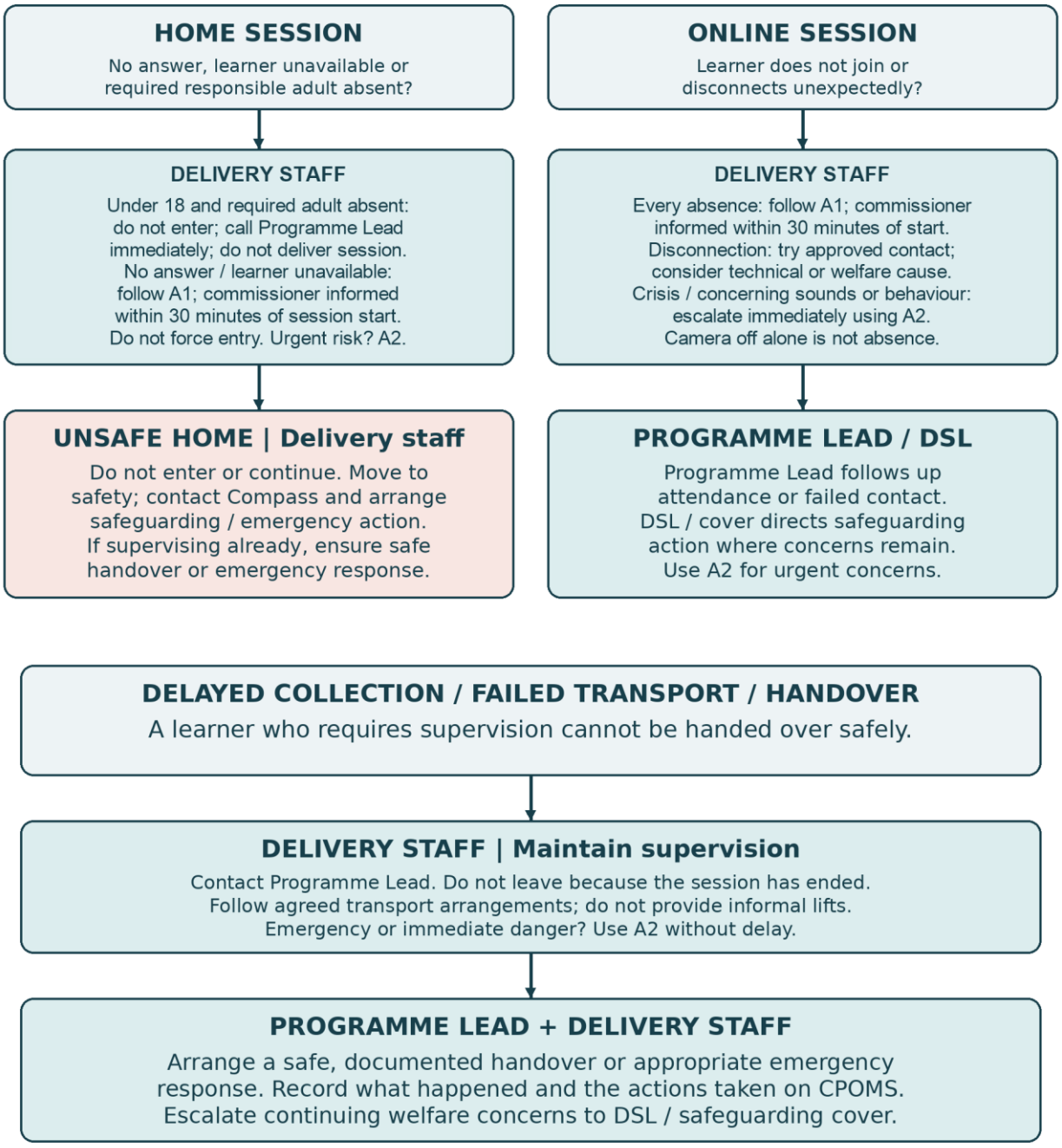


Never wait for the 30-minute reporting limit or the three-day visit trigger.

Quick reference to sections 5–16. Urgent protective action must never wait for routine deadlines.

Appendix A Staff action flowcharts continued

A3 Home online and handover circumstances

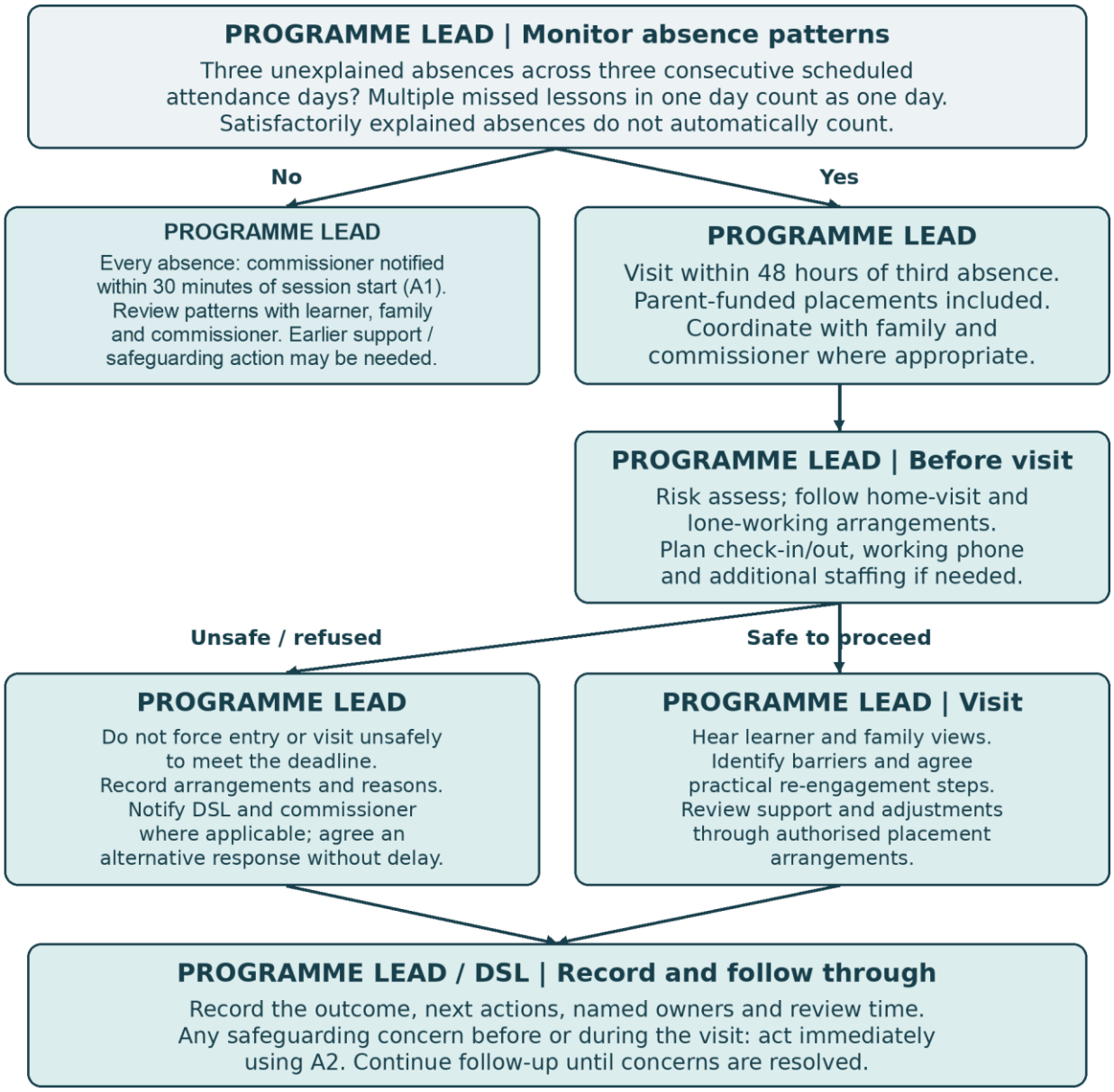


Record observed facts separately from information reported by another person.

Quick reference to sections 5–16. Urgent protective action must never wait for routine deadlines.

Appendix A Staff action flowcharts continued

A4 Repeated absence and re-engagement visits



This is an attendance and re-engagement visit. It does not replace immediate safeguarding enquiries or statutory-agency action.

Quick reference to sections 5–16. Urgent protective action must never wait for routine deadlines.