


<b>Missing Persons</b>	
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### **1. Purpose**

The home takes preventative measures to reduce the number of missing incidents and help children and young people to become increasingly safe. Staff respond appropriately if a child goes missing.

### **2. Immediate actions**

In cases where a child or young person goes missing from the home, staff must check the individual missing protocol/risk assessment for individual children and young people. The individual protocol will detail the actions to be taken for the individual young person. The protocol will include details of any known prohibited contacts and addresses, any known high-risk contacts or offenders, any recent known places or areas that the young person might have visited. It will also contain details of any actions to be followed in respect of the local authorities' individual missing protocol.

- Before contacting the police:
- Clarify if the young person is missing or absent (see 9)
- Check the young person's bedroom and any other place where the young person might be within the house or building.
- Check the garden, garage, sheds, grounds and surrounding areas.
- Check with the young person's friends, school, work, neighbours, relatives or anyone else who may know the young person's whereabouts. Ask them to tell you immediately if they hear from the young person.
- Try to contact the young person directly via mobile phone, text, or social networking sites (such as WhatsApp, Twitter, Facebook etc.)
- If you know where the young person is but are concerned for their safety (for example, they are with a known prohibited contact, sex offender or at a house where criminal activities are taking place) contact the police to carry out a welfare check on that house or location.
- Ensure you have the young person's most recent protocol and take the action as outlined. The protocol may contain information you will likely be asked by the police.

Before you call the police compile the basic information, they are likely to ask, such as

- Name?
- Address?
- Date of birth?
- Where were they last seen? By who? What time?
- What are their current risks?



- What were they wearing?
- Any known address where they might be?
- Known Associates?
- Do they have money, bank cards etc.?
- What is their mobile phone number?
- Have they taken anything with them?
- Any specific circumstances they need to know about? Such as, CSE risks or potential vulnerabilities.
- If there is a specific form, you complete with a recent photo that you normally send to the police ensure this is prepared and sent. Your Police authority may have their own protocol and requirements for reporting ensure you know what this is for the Police who you will be reporting to.

The young person will be classified by the police as either MISSING or ABSENT and the call taker will explain the next steps. This is likely to include officers attending to make a detailed report.

Ensure you ask the call taker for a crime reference number. When an officer attends the home record their name, badge number and contact details. Ask who will follow up the investigation.

### 3. Next steps

- You will need to open an incident log and ensure every contact made and action taken is recorded.
- Continue to try and contact the young person by call or text at regular intervals to try and ascertain their whereabouts.
- Consider with the person in charge of the home whether it is safe to search for the child yourself.
- Ensure Registered Manager or on-call is contacted if not already done so.
- Ensure contacts on the missing protocol are contacted this usually includes the social worker, Independent reviewing officer (IRO) and family members.
- Record contacts made and actions taken throughout the period the young person is missing.

### 4. When the young person returns

- Make the young person feel welcome and reassured that you are happy they are safe and well.
- If the young person was not returned by the police contact them to confirm the return and ask them to attend for a safe and well check.



- Contact the social worker, duty-team, on-call and family members to let them know the young person has returned.
- Does the young person need any medical help on return if so, make the necessary arrangements?
- Ensure the local authority or return interview provider is contacted. It is a statutory requirement that they hold a return interview within 72 hours of the young person's return.
- Often young people will not want to talk immediately on their return, but follow-up discussions must take place. Discuss how you can work together to prevent the young person from leaving again. Explore the reasons for their absence. What could be done differently? Acknowledge any concerns they raise ensuring them you are concerned for their safety and well-being.

## **5. Role of the Registered Manager**

- The Registered Manager must ensure the missing records are available and up to date.
- Arrangements are made as quickly as possible to convene any meetings necessary to ensure the safeguarding of the young person, to discuss and agree any additional safeguarding measures, new emerging risks or next steps in relation to the young person's placement.
- Notifications are made to relevant agencies such as safeguarding where it has come to light that the young person was subject to significant risk, has made an allegation or disclosure, or has been subject to or involved in a crime when missing from the home.
- The Registered Manager must ensure return interviews are carried out and where this has not happened the reasons why are well documented, and the local authority suitably challenged to meet its duty in this respect.
- The manager to ensure a key work session has taken place with the young person to explore the reasons for going missing and any actions or work that can be undertaken with the young person to prevent or reduce incidences of missing. Where necessary this may involve consultation with education, care and therapy.
- The Registered Manager must evaluate the missing incident. Are there any lessons to be learned? Actions the home could take to further reduce incidents? Are current strategies effective at reducing incidents if not how will these be reviewed and evaluated going forward?
- Registered Manager to ensure any risk assessments and protocols are updated with the most recent information available. Any new information that has come to light will be included and shared with connected persons.

- The need for safe and reliable care may be particularly significant for a child who faces pressure to run away from their placement as a result of circumstances beyond the control of their carers. In these circumstances, it will be even more important that the child's care and placement plans are kept up-to-date and include a strategy to reduce the pressure on the child to run away.

## 6. Preventing young people from going missing

- The homes within the Moncur Group are not a secure environment and often young people are placed who present as high risk from going missing. We will do everything we can to support young people in dealing with the issues that cause them to go missing through the therapeutic programmes of the home, careful and consistent planning and robust daily structures including education, health, social, emotional and psychological programmes. We will work with them to develop secure attachments where they feel safe and secure enough to build trust and work with the team toward alternative and safe responses.
- Each young person will have an individual missing protocol which forms a risk assessment. The protocol will outline the steps taken and to be taken in supporting the young person to reduce incidents of going missing.

## 7. Missing protocol

Each young person admitted to the home will have an individual missing protocol. The protocol will outline their risks, affiliations and any known reason for absconding. The protocol must include details on how we will keep the young person safe, the steps taken and to be taken, to prevent the young person being absent without permission and any specific procedures, risks, roles and responsibilities in relation to the young person, who is, or has been missing or absent.

## 8. Police definitions and risk assessment

**missing:** anyone whose whereabouts cannot be established and where the circumstances are out of character, or the context suggests the person may be subject of crime or at risk of harm to themselves or another; and

**absent:** a person not at a place where they are expected or required to be The 'absent' category will comprise cases in which people are not presently where they are supposed to be and there is no apparent risk. 'Absent' cases will not be ignored and must be monitored over periods of time with consideration given to escalating to 'missing' if there is a change to the circumstances that has increased the level of risk.

## 9. Risk assessment

The police will prioritise incidents of children categorised as 'missing' from home or care as medium or high risk. Where a child is categorised as 'absent', the details will be recorded by the police, who

will also agree review times and any on-going actions with child's family, carer or responsible local authority. A missing child incident would be prioritised as 'high risk' where: the risk posed is immediate and there are substantial grounds for believing that the

- child is in danger through their own vulnerability; or the child may have been the victim of a serious crime; or
- risk posed is immediate and there are substantial grounds for believing that the public is in danger.

A missing child incident would be prioritised as 'medium risk' where the risk posed is likely to place the subject in danger or they are a threat to themselves or others.

This category requires an active and measured response by police and other agencies in order to trace the missing person and support the person reporting. This will involve a proactive investigation and search in accordance with the circumstances to locate the missing child as soon as possible.

The high-risk category requires the immediate deployment of police resources. Where a child is categorised as 'absent' within the police definition, the details will be recorded by the police. Review timings and any on-going actions will be agreed as set out in the RMFCH protocol. The case will remain the subject of constant review, particularly in the light of new information and changes in circumstances. This procedure details the guidance for staff to follow in the event of a child being absent without authority. Children must be responded to positively on return.

## **10. Absent without permission**

A child will be considered to be absent from home, without authorisation, when either of the following occurs:

- Failure to return within one hour of the agreed time, following visits to family or friends. Attempts must be made to contact them to establish if there is a genuine reason for the delay.
- Failure to return from school, clubs, etc., and a full search of the area covering all known haunts and hideouts, along with telephone calls, have failed to locate the child. Again, one hour is the maximum time that will lapse (any search must be made within this hour). Do not forget to maintain contact with the home, in case the child returns.
- Staff must be aware of young people's individual missing protocol as this may have specific timings for those young people categorised as high risk by virtue of their particular circumstances. If the child returns within the hour then it is important to ascertain whereabouts and record as an incident. In this way establishing if there are any child protection or safeguarding issues. If after one hour, the child remains absent, staff will notify the Registered Manager/on-call, the Police, the child's social worker, and the IRO.

## **11. Authorised temporary absence procedure**



- There are times that the child is allowed to take a short break from Home for such reasons as school trips or admission to hospital for a specific course of treatment.
- When a child is scheduled to be absent from Home for a period of time, the keyworker must obtain written permission from the Placing Authority.
- The child person must have adequate changes of clothing and supplies of toiletries to cover the period of absence from Home.
- The child must have an adequate supply of any medication to ensure the continuation of treatment programmes to cover the period of absence from Home.
- Transportation arrangements must be clear and responsibilities delegated to designated people, as appropriate, prior to the child's absence from Home.

## 12. Review

- The Registered Manager must review the child or young person's missing protocol after each episode of missing. The protocol must include how instances of going missing will be reduced and how the home will seek to keep the young person increasingly safe.
- This Policy is reviewed annually. If there are substantive changes, we seek the opinion of relevant persons before implementing the Policy. Furthermore, in reviewing this Policy, we take into account any relevant Local Authority or Police Protocols on missing children.

## 12. Philomena protocol

Working alongside partner agencies, the Registered Manager will follow the Philomena Protocol Flowchart and compile the information in Philomena Protocol Missing Person Incident Form and Philomena Protocol Risk Assessed Locations Form.

- Philomena Protocol Flowchart
- Philomena Protocol Missing Person Incident Form
- Philomena Protocol Risk Assessed Locations Form

## Legislative framework and guidance

- Regulation 34: Policies for the protection of children
- Working together to safeguard children 2018
- Missing Children and Adults - A Cross Government Strategy 2011



- Safeguarding children and young people from sexual exploitation: supplementary guidance 2009
- Tackling Child Sexual Exploitation Action Plan 2011
- The Children Act 1989 guidance and regulations – Volume 2: care planning, placement and case review 2015
- Statutory guidance on children who run away or go missing from home or care, 2014
- Statutory guidance on children who run away or go missing from home or care – Flowchart to accompany the statutory guidance, 2014
- Joint protocol: children’s homes - procedure for disclosing names and addresses 2013
- Interim Guidance on the Management, Recording and Investigation of Missing Persons, 2013