

Appendix D - Children Missing in Specific circumstances

Absconders

When a child who is subject to an order or requirement resulting from the criminal justice process (e.g. remands, curfews, tagging, conditions of residence, other bail conditions, PACE detention or Anti-Social Behaviour Injunctions) or a secure order made in either civil or criminal proceedings goes missing this must be reported to the Police without delay.

The Police will evaluate each case on an individual basis and respond appropriately, giving consideration both to the child's vulnerability, the risk to them and others, and the requirements of any criminal justice processes.

The Police will seek the views of the reporting person regarding the child's individual vulnerabilities and circumstances, and these will be taken into account when deciding whether or not to respond to the child as missing. The decision reached will be discussed with the person who reported the child as missing.

If the decision taken by the Police is to treat a child as 'wanted' rather than missing, a missing report will not be created.

Children in the care of hospitals and mental health units

Hospitals and mental health units are expected to conduct reasonable enquiries to locate children in their care, who are not where they are expected to be. Staff should attempt to contact the child and conduct a search of the premises (including the grounds) to try and establish the child's whereabouts and wellbeing before reporting them as missing to the Police.

Children Missing From School / Educational settings

All schools and colleges (maintained, non-maintained schools and independent schools, including academies, free schools and alternative provision academies, maintained nursery schools and pupil referral units and further education colleges, sixth-form colleges and institutions designated as being within the further education sector) must have in place procedures for children who go missing from education and for unauthorised absences, to help identify and respond to children at risk of exploitation, harm and neglect and to help prevent missing occurrences.

Where reasonably possible, schools and colleges should hold more than one emergency contact number for each pupil or student. This will help staff to make contact with a responsible adult when a child missing education. Education staff should undertake all reasonable enquiries to ascertain a child's whereabouts before reporting them as missing.

When a child aged 16 years or under, or a Child Looked after under 18 years, is missing from a school or educational facility (College / University), the parent/carer and /or the local authority must be informed.

It is the parent's / carer's responsibility to then notify the Police of the missing occurrence.

Exceptions to this may include:

- When educational staff make a professional judgment that circumstances indicate a significant risk to the child, and any delay must be avoided, for example for very young children or children with Special Educational Needs;
- When children are resident at the school;
- In circumstances where education staff are not able to make contact with the adult(s) who have parental responsibility for the child;
- Where education staff have concerns about a child's safety and welfare during or following a missing or absent occurrence, and / or believe the parents will not appropriately respond to the child's missing occurrence. In such circumstances education staff should follow their own safeguarding procedures and make a referral to Children Social Care.

In circumstances where the child is aged over 16 years, school or college staff can make the decision to report a child as missing directly to the Police. However this must be based on the child's individual circumstances and /or a previously agreed course of action.

Children 'subject to restrictions'

These include.

- Children who have proceeded through immigration control without obtaining leave to enter;
- Who have left the border control area / Border Force accommodation without permission;
- Children who have been granted temporary admission;
- Children who have been granted temporary release or bail;
- Children released on a restriction order;
- Children served with a 'notice of liability to deport';
- A child who is the dependant of a foreign national offender whose status in the UK is under consideration by criminal casework – these children could be British Citizens or have extant leave.

A missing person's referral must be made by Home Office staff to the Police, the UK Missing Person Bureau and Children's Social Care Services when;

- A child 'subject to restriction' is identified as having run away from their parents;
- Where the child is looked after and is missing from their placement;
- Where there is concern for a child's safety;

- Where a child is missing with their family.

In circumstances where Home Office staff believe that a child is being coerced to abscond or go missing, this must be reported to the local Police and Children's Social Care Services.

The local authority and the health authority are responsible for:

- Reporting any missing child who is in their care to the Police;
- Notifying the Home Office when a child is reported missing to the Police or is found.

The Police are responsible for:

- Investigating all children reported missing by the Home Office - following receipt of a missing person's notification;
- Undertaking joint investigations with the Home Office where necessary;
- Circulating a missing child subject to restrictions, on the Police National Computer (PNC).

The local authority must also notify the Home Office Evidence and Enquiry Unit when a Child Looked After subject to restrictions is missing, or when the child returns or is found.

When a child subject to restrictions is missing the Home Office must maintain regular weekly contact with the local authority and the Police until the child is found:

Found by the local authority or the Police

The Home Office Command and Control Unit is the single point of contact for the local Police to notify the Home Office that a child has been found.

The Evidence and Enquiry Unit Evidence is the single point of contact for local authorities to notify the Home Office that a child has been found.

Found by Home Office Staff

The local Police and local authority must be informed immediately when a child subject to restrictions is found.

Following which, in consultation with the local Police and Children's Social Care Services, a decision will be made as to where the child is to be taken, if they are not to be left at the address where they were located.

The Home Office must follow up enquires with the local Police and local authority Children's and Adult's services in order to identify if there are any safeguarding concerns for the child.