

# ASCH Guidance: How to respond when a person goes missing



## Introduction

It is important for all Adult Social Care and Health (ASCH) staff who may be in contact with people at risk of going missing, to ensure they know what is expected of them in terms of how to respond when someone goes missing. This guidance is to be read together with the Kent and Medway Safeguarding Adults Board Multi-agency Response for Adults Missing from Health and Care Settings [https://www.kmsab.org.uk/assets/1/multi-agency\\_protocol\\_for\\_adults\\_missing\\_from\\_health\\_and\\_care\\_settings.pdf](https://www.kmsab.org.uk/assets/1/multi-agency_protocol_for_adults_missing_from_health_and_care_settings.pdf)

Adults may go missing for a variety of reasons, or they may not mean to go missing at all but do so because of personal circumstance, living environment or confusion. Research shows there are strong links between missing people and a range of factors including: mental health issues; suicide and self-harm; periods of crisis in someone's life; dementia; homelessness; and many other harms.

## Missing from In-House Provision settings

For adults missing from an Adult Short Break and Community Service setting the Adult Short Break and Community Service Missing Person protocol and procedures (found on ASCH Tri.x pages- local resource) must be followed.

<https://proceduresonline.com/trixcms2/media/16565/adult-short-break-and-community-service-missing-person-protocol.pdf>

## Guidance

### Missing person concern raised with ASCH (non In-House provision)

When supporting a person in the community a practitioner may become concerned that the person is uncontactable and may be missing from their home address, or a member of the public, neighbour, friend or family may raise a concern that a person is missing.

#### 1. Assess the level of risk of harm

- Low risk: harm to the individual or the public is assessed as possible but minimal.
- Medium risk: harm to the individual or the public is assessed as likely but not serious.
- High risk: serious harm to the missing person or to the public is assessed as very likely (ie life threatening and/or traumatic, and from which recovery, whether physical or psychological can be expected to be difficult or impossible. Anyone under Deprivation of Liberty Safeguard authorisation is considered high risk).

#### 2. Initial response based on risk of harm

##### 1. High Risk

When there is critical concern for the safety of someone who has gone missing, or belief that they or others are at a high risk of injury or harm, this must be reported to the police

immediately. Reasons for concern should be thoroughly explained to ensure an appropriate level of response.

## 2. Medium risk

This category requires an active and measured response to trace the missing person which may involve police and other agencies. Initial actions should be undertaken to ascertain the person's whereabouts before contacting police.(see initial actions below)

## 3. Low risk

Proportionate enquiries should be carried out to ensure that the individual has not come to harm.

### 3. Initial Actions

- Check the person's care plan or other relevant information. Has the person previously advised they will be away for a time? Is the person receiving respite elsewhere? Have we been notified the person was admitted to hospital?
- Call the person's mobile phone as well as any other contact numbers ie where appropriate, the missing person's next of kin or other family members
- Check the person's home address if appropriate. Where that is not practicable in the circumstances request a police welfare check
- Contact the person's GP and other known agencies supporting the person to establish if any further information or recent contact made

### 4. Record actions taken

- Record in the person's Mosaic notes actions that have been taken, people who have been spoken to, and the rationale for any decisions about risk.
- Highlight to a line manager the concerns the person is missing, the assessed risk of harm and the actions that have so far been taken.

### 5. Reporting to the police

Where the decision is made to report the missing person to the police it will be necessary to provide the police with appropriate, proportionate and accurate information regarding the missing person.

Information that will assist the police includes:

- A recent photograph.
- A full description of the person and any unique characteristics.
- A full description of what the missing person was last seen wearing.
- Details of places that the person frequently likes to visit.
- Any known, relevant medical or mental health conditions.
- Information about medication the person is taking or needs.
- Recent significant life events that may impact on their wellbeing.

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- Behaviour patterns.
- Risk to self and others.
- Details of any substance dependencies.
- Any information which might inform how the police or search and rescue agencies approach the person when they are found.
- Information about any previous missing episodes.
- The missing person's contact information.

**NB:** It is vital to keep the police updated with any new information that might help lead to the person being found safe and well.

## 6. When someone is found or returns

The individual may be unwell, have experienced harm, or the reasons they originally went missing may still be present or even have worsened. It is essential when a person returns, that professional colleagues consider the individual's physical health and wellbeing in the first instance. For guidance on supporting the person refer to Kent and Medway Safeguarding Adults Board Multi-agency response for adults missing from health and care settings (see link above).