

## PURPOSE

The purpose of this guidance is to ensure there is an agreed procedure for any practitioner, manager or leader in children's social care where there is a significant concern about a child's safety who is missing.

This guidance should be considered alongside other procedures such as:

- [Children and Families that go Missing \(Including Unborn Children\)](#)

Whilst this is a procedure for children's social care it should also align with other agencies procedure, such as the police and health.

## INTRODUCTION

National missing alerts are created for children (including unborn babies) and young people who are known to a service within children's social care. This is not limited to children who are supported with a child protection plan or who have an allocated social worker.

The national alerts notification process should be managed within the **Northumberland Adolescent Service (NAS)** for consistency.

## TO BE CONSIDERED

**Before making a national alert notification the following should be considered:**

- How do you know the child, young person or family is missing?
- Could they be temporarily absent from their address?
- Could they family be staying with family and friends or are they on holiday?
- What do people in the network say? Do they think the child, young person or the family are missing?
- Could a parent or carer be in police custody?
- How long have they been missing for?
- What was the outcome of discussions with the Northumberland Adolescent Service to notifying them about the missing episode? What additional information do they hold on the missing daily log?
- What discussions have taken place with other agencies like education, police and health to gather information? What information do other agencies have about where the child, young person or the family?
- What discussions have taken place with people that have parental responsibility for the child about the concern, unless to do so would place the child or young person at risk of harm?

If a child or young person is known to be in a different local authority but their address is not known, this does not mean a national alert is needed.

The national alert system should NOT be used as a missing person alerts process for vulnerable adults, unaccompanied asylum seekers or cared for children who go missing.

**Until there is evidence reasonable attempts to locate the family have been made a national alert should not be made.**

There are exceptional circumstances when it is appropriate to make a national alert notification. Examples could include:

- ❑ Children who have disappeared from Northumberland immediately before, during or immediately after a child protection investigation about a *serious allegation of significant harm*.
- ❑ Children who have a *Care Order* who are thought to be in danger because they have been abducted by an individual who poses a significant risk of harm to the child and whose whereabouts are not known.
- ❑ Children who have been accommodated by the local authority following *significant child protection concerns* who are deemed to be in danger because they have been removed from Northumberland without notice from a parent or an individual who poses a significant risk of harm to the child and whose whereabouts are not known.

## HOW TO CREATE A NATIONAL ALERT

1. A national alert should be considered as part of a multi-agency discussion with all the other professionals that know the family. For example, within the team around the family, the child's care team or core group. This should not be a decision for a single agency.
2. If there is agreement to create a national alert social care, health and the police are responsible for following their own national alert procedures. The social care practitioner should notify the Northumberland Adolescent Service duty manager<sup>1</sup> of this decision so they can update the missing daily log.
3. The social care practitioner who knows the child or their family the best should complete the notification of a missing child or young person form on behalf of children's social care (Appendix A). This will include sufficient information about the child and their situation so a decision can be reached about progressing with the national alert process. Once the notification form is completed, they should email it to the relevant manager/senior manager for their team.
4. The relevant senior manager will quality assure the form to check the information is up to date and make sure the next steps are clearly identified.
5. As part of the senior manager quality assuring the request, they will consider if it is necessary.
  - a. If they decline the notification, they will provide a rationale for their decision to the relevant practitioner and their manager.
  - b. If they agree with the notification, they will email the form to the relevant Head of Service with their rationale.
6. The Head of Service will be responsible for authorising or declining the notification on behalf of children's social care.
  - a. If they decline the notification request, they will provide a rationale for their decision to the relevant senior manager, manager and practitioner.

---

<sup>1</sup> [nasduty@northumberland.gov.uk](mailto:nasduty@northumberland.gov.uk)

- b. If they authorise the notification, they will email the form to the Northumberland Adolescent Service duty manager to progress the national alert notification.
7. The Northumberland Adolescent Service duty manager will share the alert notification with the relevant regional or national contacts (appendix B). They will save all notifications in an alert folder and update the relevant practitioner, manager and senior manager once this is done.
8. The social care practitioner will update the child's children's social care record.
9. The child's situation will continue to be reviewed in their team around the family, care team, core group etc.
10. It will be the responsibility of the social care practitioner to update any information or changes to contact details once an alert has been made. This should be shared with the Northumberland Adolescent Service duty manager for circulation and so the missing daily log can be updated.
11. If a child is not found, a new notification should be created ever 3 months, from the date the child was first identified as missing from Northumberland. This will be the responsibility of the allocated social care practitioner for the child.
12. If the child has not been found after 12-months there should be a multi-agency discussion to consider the next steps. A decision might be made to end the alert or to continue with the 3 monthly update cycle. The Northumberland Adolescent Service duty manager should be made aware of this decision, who will update the missing daily log.

## HOW TO END A NATIONAL ALERT

1. When a child is found, a national "found" notification should be received by Northumberland Adolescent Service duty manager. This should be shared with the allocated practitioner and their manager.
2. The child's record will be updated by the child's social care practitioner.
3. The social care practitioner/manager will share the outcome with the relevant Senior Manager and Head of Service.
4. If a child has been found abroad, consideration will be given to using the support of the Children and Families Across Borders (CFAB) service.<sup>2</sup> This will require the authorisation of a Head of Service.
  - a. If they decline the referral request, they will provide a rationale for their decision to the relevant senior manager, manager, and practitioner.
  - b. If they authorise the referral request, the practitioner will complete the CFAB alert referral form. The Alert will be emailed to the Northumberland Adolescent Service duty manager to progress, and they will update the missing daily log.

---

<sup>2</sup> **Website:** [www.cfab.org.uk](http://www.cfab.org.uk), **Advice Line:** 020 7735 8941 (Mon-Fri 10am-3.30pm), **Email enquiries:** [info@cfab.org.uk](mailto:info@cfab.org.uk)

5. If there is agreement that the national alert needs to be ended, the Head of Service will email Northumberland Adolescent Service duty manager who will request the national missing alert is ended from other locality authority systems.
6. The social care practitioner will update the child's record.

## GOVERNANCE

- The duty manager in the Northumberland Adolescent Service will maintain the details of all missing episodes, including national alerts through the daily missing log.
- The missing daily log has scrutiny from a senior manager and there is an agreed escalation process to a Head of Service or the Director of Childrens Services if required.
- This guidance should be reviewed at least every 12 months by the Northumberland Adolescent Service and agreed by the quality of practice activity group (QPAG).

## APPENDIX A- National alert notification template

### CHILD/YOUNG PERSON'S DETAILS

Full name	Known by other names	Date of birth or expected due date	Gender

Last known address	
--------------------	--

Postcode		Contact number	
----------	--	----------------	--

<p><b>Pen picture</b></p> <p><i>This should help anybody reading the alert know all the important things about the child or young person. You should think about who they are (name, age etc), what they look like and any communication needs they have. This will help people be more prepared if they must respond to the child.</i></p>
---

<p><b>What are you worried about?</b></p> <p><i>This should identify any known risks and complicating factors to the child, a parent/carer or a worker. The information should be up to date, accurate and succinct. It should explain when the child was last seen, who with and where and what the impact of being missing is on the child.</i></p>
---

<p><b>What needs to happen when the child is found?</b></p> <p><i>This will explain the actions that need to be taken and by who to increase the child's safety.</i></p>
--

**If the child is found, please contact Northumberland Children's Social Care.**

**Monday to Thursday between 08:30 and 17:00 and Friday between 08:30 and 16:30**

Name of person or team to contact.	
------------------------------------	--

Contact details (telephone number and email address)	
--	--

**Monday to Thursday between 17:00- 08:30 and Friday from 16:30 until Monday until 08:30**

Name of person or team to contact.	
------------------------------------	--

Contact details (telephone number and email address).	
---	--

Name and role of person completing the national alert notification.	
---	--

Date completed.	
-----------------	--

Name of senior manager quality assuring the alert notification, the decision and rationale.	
---	--

Date of quality assurance.	
----------------------------	--

Name of Head of Service, the decision and rationale.	
--	--

Date of decision.	
-------------------	--

**THIS FORM SHOULD BE UPLOADED ON THE CHILDS CHILDRENS SOCIAL CARE RECORD.**

## APPENDIX B- generic contacts for other local authorities and agencies

### **Points of contact**

Police- Detective Inspector Phil Hamlani ( [philip.hamlani@northumbria.police.uk](mailto:philip.hamlani@northumbria.police.uk)

Health- Designated Named Nurse Alison Johnson ([alisonjohnson1@nhs.net](mailto:alisonjohnson1@nhs.net))

### **Links to partner processes**

Health: [ICB Management of Regional Safeguarding Alerts Unborn Babies and Children](#)

Police: [International Investigations - Missing Persons](#) / [Flowchart](#)