

Missing Children

REGULATIONS AND STANDARDS

[The Protection of Children Standard](#)

[Regulation 12](#)

This chapter must be read in conjunction with the local Protocol for Children who have Run Away or are Missing from Home and Care.

SCOPE OF THIS CHAPTER

This chapter explains how staff should deal with children when they go missing. This chapter should be read in conjunction with the local Runaway and Missing from Home and Care Protocol from the local Safeguarding Children Partnership and the responsible authority's policy in relation to children going missing.

RELATED CHAPTERS

[Safeguarding Children and Young People from Sexual Exploitation Procedure](#)

[Safeguarding Children from Radicalisation and Extremism Procedure](#)

[Child Criminal Exploitation and County Lines Procedure](#)

AMENDMENT

This chapter was refreshed throughout in July 2022.

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1. Principles

The Home ensures that:

- All staff are fully aware of and know how to implement this Missing procedure, and know that this procedure must be implemented alongside the statutory guidance for children who are missing, the relevant local Runaway and Missing from Home and Care Protocol from the local Safeguarding Children Partnership and the responsible authority's policy in relation to children going missing. All staff are made aware of the care and support they should provide to children in their care to help to reduce missing episodes, and of the steps they should take if children in their care do go missing. Staff will look for children when they are missing;
- The care and support provided to children minimises the risk that they will go missing and reduces the risk of harm should the child go missing. Children are helped to understand the dangers and risks of leaving the Home without permission and are made aware of where they can access help if they consider running away;
- Children who do go missing from the Home are protected as far as possible and responded to positively on their return;
- Children who go missing experience well-coordinated responses that reduce the harm or risk of harm to them. Risks are well understood and minimised. There is a clear plan of urgent action in place to protect them and to reduce further harm or risk of harm;
- Staff are proactive in helping and protecting children, and they revise their ways of working if their approach is not working;
- Staff are aware of, and do not exceed, the measures they can take to prevent a child leaving without permission under current legislation and Government guidance. This Missing procedure is updated accordingly as that legislation and Government guidance changes. This procedure provides links to the relevant Statutory Guidance for ease of access for staff;
- The Home and staff take appropriate action to find children who are missing, including working alongside the police where appropriate, and to protect children who are absent from the Home without consent, but whose whereabouts are known;
- If a child is absent from the Home and their whereabouts are not known (i.e. the child is missing), staff will act in accordance with this Missing procedure and with the local Runaway and Missing from Home and Care (RMFHC) protocols and procedures applicable to the area where the Home is located;
- Where children placed out of authority go missing, the Home follows the local RMFHC protocol, and complies with, and makes staff aware of, any other processes required by the responsible authority, specified in the individual child's care plan and in the RMFHC protocol covering the authority responsible for the child's care;
- Where a child goes missing and there is concern for their welfare, or at the request of a child who has been missing, the Home arranges a meeting in private between the child and the responsible authority to consider the reasons for their going missing. The Home considers with the responsible authority and staff what action should be taken to prevent the child going missing in future. Any concerns arising about staff or the placement are addressed, as far as is possible, in conjunction with the responsible authority;
- The Home will liaise with and challenge the responsible local authority as appropriate (for example when an independent return home interview is not offered or arranged by the local authority) and will take appropriate steps to escalate concerns;
- Parents and carers are made aware of incidents where the child has been or is missing, where this is appropriate and relevant to the plans for that child's future care.

2. Definitions

There are various different terms which are used in relation to missing children:

[Statutory Guidance on Children Who Run Away or Go Missing From Home or Care \(January 2014\)](#) uses the following definitions:

- **Missing Child:**

A child reported as missing to the police by their family or carers;

- **Missing from Care:**

A looked after child who is not at their placement or the place they are expected to be (e.g. school) and their whereabouts are not known;

- **Away from Placement Without Authorisation:**

A looked after child whose whereabouts are known but who is not at their placement or the place they are expected to be and the carer has concerns or the incident has been notified to the local authority or the police;

- **Young Runaway:**

A child who has run away from their home or care placement, or feels they have been forced or lured to leave.

The police, as the lead agency for investigating and finding missing children, will respond to children and young people going Missing or being Absent based on on-going risk assessments in line with current guidance and the [College of Policing definition of missing and absent](#). The police will prioritise all incidents of missing children as medium or high risk.

The police definitions of 'Missing' and 'Absent' are:

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 is not at a place where they are expected or required to be (and there is no apparent risk)'.

3. Risk Assessment

The police classification of a person as 'Missing' or 'Absent' will be based on on-going risk assessment. A child whose whereabouts are known would not be treated as either 'Missing' or 'Absent' under the police definitions.

It is important to note that carers or others reporting a child missing to the police should not make the judgement themselves as to whether a child is missing or absent – this decision will be made by the police on the basis of the information provided. A child who is Absent may be at risk for example of child sexual or criminal exploitation, involvement in drugs, gangs, criminal activity, trafficking, forced marriage, female genital mutilation or radicalisation, and Police Risk Assessments should take account of those situations and may need to change the category to Missing.

Where a child is recorded by police as being Absent, the details will be recorded by the police, who will also agree review times and any on-going actions with the Home or other person reporting the absence. All persons recorded by police as Absent are monitored on the police system. Monitoring is ongoing and subject to regular reviews to ensure risk levels do not change. Where information comes to light which introduces any risk to that person, then the case may be re-categorised as 'Missing' and a police investigation started.

One of the overriding principles of 'Absent' is that police are able to focus resources more effectively, in accordance with the police risk assessments of 'Absent' and 'Missing' incidents. A child who is Absent may still be at risk for example of child sexual or criminal exploitation, involvement in drugs, gangs, criminal activity, trafficking, forced marriage, female genital mutilation or radicalisation, and the police risk assessment should reflect this.

The police will prioritise all incidents of Missing children as medium or high risk.

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
- The risk posed is immediate and there are substantial grounds for believing that the public is in danger.

The high risk category requires the immediate deployment of police resources. Police guidance makes clear that a member of the senior management team or similar command level must be involved in the examination of initial enquiry lines and approval of appropriate staffing levels. Such cases should lead to the appointment of an Investigating Officer and possibly a Senior Investigating Officer and a Police Search Advisor. There should be a media strategy and / or close contact with outside agencies. Family support should be put in place. The [UK Missing Persons Bureau](#) should be notified of the case immediately and local authority children's services should also be notified.

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.

Section 17 of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 provides police with powers to enter and search a premises in certain circumstances, notably, with regard to this guidance, for the purposes of saving life and limb or to arrest without warrant a person who has committed an indictable offence or certain other listed offences under the section.

The police can use the powers under Section 46(1) of the Children Act 1989 to remove a child into police protection, for up to 72 hours, if they are likely to suffer significant harm.

Early and effective sharing of information between professionals and local agencies is essential for the identification of patterns of risky behaviour. This may be used to identify areas of concern for an individual child, or to identify 'hotspots' of activity in a local area.

4. Planning and Prevention

All children must have a Placement Plan which takes account of any likely risk of the child going missing. The Placement Plan should incorporate measures to reduce or prevent the child becoming absent, and information that would help facilitate the location of the child should they go missing. As part of the referral, placement and ongoing planning process, consideration must be given to the risk of the child becoming missing. If there is a risk, a plan must be drawn up to reduce or prevent it. See also [Section 5, Specific Risks](#). If there is a risk that a child may run away or go missing, staff should do their best to help them understand the risks and dangers involved and make them aware of how to seek help if they do run away. The Care Plan and the Placement Plan should include details of the arrangements that will need to be in place to keep the child safe and minimise the risk of the child going missing from the Home.

- The Care Plan – should include strategies to avoid unauthorised absences and/or a child going missing. It should also include strategies to reduce the duration and risks associated if the child does have unauthorised absences/go missing;
- The Placement Plan – should include strategies for preventing the child from taking unauthorised absences/going missing;
- A pre-incident risk assessment should be completed for all children for whom there is concern that they may run away. Distance from home, family and friends should be considered as a risk factor. The risk assessment should be updated after any missing incident and should be regularly reviewed. The risk assessment should detail possible places or persons associated with episodes of going missing and should be referred to whenever a child goes missing or runs away;
- The child should be provided with advice about access to an independent Advocate and the child's views taken into account;
- Statutory reviews should consider any absences and revise strategies to prevent repeat absences and/or missing incidents and the Care Plan should be revised accordingly.

Where a child already has an established pattern of running away, the Care Plan should include a strategy to keep the child safe and minimising the likelihood of the child running away in the future. This should be discussed and agreed as far as possible with the child and with the Home.

Where a child runs away persistently or engages in other risky behaviours, such as frequently being absent from the Home to meet with inappropriate adults, the registered person, in consultation with the child's placing authority, should convene a risk management meeting to develop a strategy for managing risks to the young person. The strategy should be agreed with the child's placing authority, the local authority where the Home is located and the local police.

Where the registered person considers that a child is at serious risk of harm as a result of being persistently missing from the Home, they must contact the local authority to request a review of the child's Care Plan. Local authorities must give serious consideration to such requests. Where a review does not take place, the Registered Person must escalate this concern under [Regulation 5 \(engaging with the wider system to ensure children's needs are met\)](#).

When a child is placed out of their local authority area, the responsible authority must make sure that the child has access to the services they need in advance of placement. Notification of the

placement must be made to the host authority and other specified services. All children subject of a pre-incident risk assessment should be notified to the local police service. A notification process for missing/absent episodes should be agreed between responsible and host local authorities as a part of the Care Plan and the Placement Plan.

Independent Reviewing Officers (IROs) should be informed by the responsible local authority about missing/absent episodes and they should address these in statutory reviews. The pre-incident risk assessment should be updated after missing incident and should be regularly reviewed.

Where there are Child Protection concerns relating to a child and/or where the child has gone missing from the placement or from any previous placement, the Placement Plan must include information agreed between the placing authority and the Home about the day-to-day arrangements put in place to keep the child safe.

The Home will be proactive in providing an environment which promotes a feeling of security that aims to minimise the likelihood of the child going missing. Staff will work with children to educate them about the risks of going missing, help them where possible to identify trigger points and give them other alternatives in these particular circumstances. The competence and support needs of staff in responding to missing from care issues should be considered as part of their regular appraisal and supervision.

Staff should know when to try to prevent a child or young person leaving the Home and should do so through dialogue, but they should not try to restrain the child should they be intent on leaving, or in any other circumstances, unless it is necessary to prevent injury to the child or others, or serious damage to property.

On a day to day basis, staff should be alert to signs or indications that a child may be likely to run away or become missing. If staff suspect that this may happen, they should take any actions already agreed with the child's social worker, or do what they reasonably and safely can to reduce or prevent the child from leaving - this includes circumstances where a child is refusing to return to the Home.

If there is a serious risk e.g. the child is behaving in a violent manner or threatening to damage property, the Home should contact the police.

5. Specific Risks

The planning process for each child, including the likelihood of them becoming missing, must take account of any specific risk factors for each child. These risk factors include, but are not limited to, the following:

Trafficking

Some looked after children may be unaccompanied asylum seeking children or other migrant children. Some children in this group may have been trafficked into the UK and may remain under the influence of their traffickers even while they are looked after. Trafficked children are at high risk of going missing, with most going missing within one week of becoming looked after and many within 48 hours. Unaccompanied migrant or asylum seeking children, who go missing immediately after becoming looked after, should be treated as children who may be victims of trafficking. Children who have been trafficked may be exploited for sexual purposes and the link to sexual exploitation should be addressed in conjunction with the [Safeguarding Children and Young People from Sexual Exploitation Procedure](#).

The assessment of need to inform the Care Plan will be particularly critical in these circumstances and should be done immediately as the window for intervention is very narrow. The assessment must seek to establish:

- Relevant details about the child's background before they came to the UK;
- An understanding of the reasons why the child came to the UK; and
- An analysis of the child's vulnerability to remaining under the influence of traffickers.

The location of the child should not be divulged to any enquirers until their identity and relationship with the child has been established, if necessary with the help of police and immigration services. In these situations the roles and responsibilities of care providers must be fully understood and recorded in the Placement Plan. Proportionate safety measures that keep the child safe should be put in place to safeguard the child from going missing from care or from being re-trafficked.

Grooming

Grooming is when someone builds an emotional connection with a child to gain their trust for the purposes of sexual abuse or exploitation. Children and young people can be groomed online or in the real world, by a stranger or by someone they know - for example a family member, friend or professional. Groomers may be male or female. They could be any age. Many children and young people don't understand that they have been groomed, or that what has happened is abuse.

Children can be groomed for the purpose of sexual abuse as well as other forms of exploitation including involvement in criminal and extremist activity. Children who are missing are more vulnerable to being groomed and may also go missing as a result of being groomed.

Protecting Children at Risk of Radicalisation

Children and young people can suffer harm when exposed to extremist ideology. This harm can range from a child adopting or complying with extreme views which limit their social interaction and full engagement with their education, to children being groomed for involvement in violent attacks.

Children can be exposed to harmful, extremist ideology in the immediate or extended family, over the internet or through the influence of their peer network.

Going missing is a risk factor in relation to radicalisation:

- A child may go missing because they have already been radicalised;
- A child's risk of being radicalised might increase because they are missing and are spending time with people who may seek to involve them in radical/extreme activities. The risk is heightened whilst they are missing, because the protective factors of family or care are not available to them.

Professionals should always assess whether a child who has gone missing is at risk of radicalisation.

See [Safeguarding Children from Radicalisation and Extremism Procedure](#).

Children at Risk of Sexual Exploitation (CSE)

The sexual exploitation of children involves exploitative situations, contexts and relationships where the young person (or third person/s) receive 'something' (e.g. food, accommodation, drugs, alcohol, cigarettes, affection, gifts, money) as a result of them performing, and/or another or others performing on them, sexual activities. Violence, coercion and intimidation are common.

Involvement in exploitative relationships is characterised by the child's or young person's limited availability of choice as a result of their social, economic or emotional vulnerability.

A common feature of CSE is that the child or young person does not recognise the coercive nature of the relationship and does not see themselves as a victim of exploitation.

Going missing is a significant risk factor in relation to sexual exploitation:

- A child may go missing because they are being sexually exploited;
- A child's risk of being sexually exploited might increase because they are missing and are spending time with people who may seek to involve them in sexual exploitation. The risk is heightened whilst they are missing because the protective factors of family or care are not available to them.

Because there is such a strong link between children going missing and risk of sexual exploitation, professionals should always assess whether a child who has gone missing is being sexually exploited or at risk of being sexually exploited.

For more information see [Safeguarding Children and Young People from Sexual Exploitation Procedure](#)

Children at Risk of being Drawn into Offending Behaviour

Children and young people who go missing from care also need safeguarding against the risk of being drawn into offending behaviour by gangs or criminal groups.

For more information see [Child Criminal Exploitation and County Lines Procedure](#)

6. Action to be Taken if a Child is Missing

6.1 In All Cases

If a child is missing, if there is an immediate serious risk to the child or others, the police should be called first.

The manager/social worker should decide whether to notify the parent(s) and, if so, who should do so.

All notifications and consultations must be recorded.

When a child does go missing this may constitute a 'Notifiable Event' - see [Notification of Serious Events Procedure](#).

At no time should the Home pass any information to the press. All information should only be shared between the local authority, police and the Home.

6.2 Out of Area Placements

If children placed out of their local authority area runs away, this Missing protocol should be followed, in addition to complying with other processes that are specified in the Missing policy of the host local authority. It is possible that the child will return to the area of the responsible authority so it is essential that liaison between the police and professionals in both authorities is well managed and coordinated.

6.3 Children who are Away from Placement without Authorisation

Sometimes a child may be away from their placement without authorisation. While they are not missing, they may still be placing themselves at risk (e.g. they may be at the house of friends where there are concerns about risks of sexual exploitation). The Home or social worker should take reasonable steps to ascertain the wellbeing of the child including, when appropriate, visiting the location. However, if there is a concern the child may be at significant risk of harm to themselves or to others then police should also be notified in order that appropriate safeguarding measures can be taken. This should not be confused with reporting a child missing.

6.4 Actions when the Whereabouts of a Child are Not Known

Whenever the whereabouts of a child are not known, preliminary checks should be carried out to see if the child can be located. For example, if a child was supposed to have returned home from school but has not arrived within the normal journey time, checks could include finding out if there are transport delays, phone calls to the child, phone calls to the school to see if the child has been delayed etc. If these initial checks do not succeed in locating the child or there are still concerns that, despite contact being made with the child they are at risk, the individuals and agencies listed below should be informed.

It is clearly important that a deadline is set at the outset of these initial checks so that they don't continue beyond a reasonable timeframe. What timeframe is reasonable should be based on an assessment of the risks relating to the individual child. In some cases, there might be particular reasons to be worried for the child's safety immediately and the agencies detailed below should be contacted straight away – this in conjunction with on-going attempts to contact the child and find out why they aren't where they are supposed to be.

The individuals and agencies who should be contacted when a child is missing or they are away from placement without authorisation:

- The local police;
- The authority responsible for the child's placement – if they have not already been notified prior to the police being informed; and
- The parents and any other person with parental responsibility, unless it is not reasonably practicable or to do so, or would be inconsistent with the child's welfare;
- The Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO).

As a minimum requirement, all reports should include the following information:

- The child's name/s; date of birth; status; responsible authority;
- Where and when they went missing;
- Who, if anyone, they went missing with;
- What was the child wearing plus any belongings such as bags, phone etc.;

- Description and recent photo;
- Medical history, if relevant;
- Time and location last seen;
- Circumstances or events around going missing;
- Details of family, friends and associates;
- Updated risk assessment.

The Home/staff should take all reasonable steps, which a good parent would take, to secure the safe and speedy return of the child based on their own knowledge of the child and the information in the child's Placement Plan. If there is suspected risk of harm to the child the carer/s should liaise immediately with the police.

Following initial discussions between the allocated children's social care worker and the police, they should agree an **immediate strategy** for locating the child and an action plan. This to include a range of actions to locate and ensure the safe return of the child, including:

- Arrangements for attempts to be made to contact the child on a daily basis by, for example, calling their mobile phone or the phones of friends or relatives that they may be with;
- The Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) should also try and contact the child;
- Visiting their parents' address/es and of any friends or relatives with whom they may be staying;
- Police should consider requesting a trace on the child's mobile phone and/or any travel card.

Within 3 days, a missing from care meeting/ telephone discussion between relevant parties should take place and include the police, the child's social worker and the provider. The action plan and risk assessment should be reviewed and updated.

- Missing from care meetings/discussions should be held at least monthly to update the action plan and share information;
- Any publicity will be led by the police, the use of harbouring notices etc. will be agreed at the missing from care meeting. Recovery Orders may be used;
- During the investigation to find the missing/run away child, regular liaison and communication should take place between the police, the responsible local authority children's social care services and the host authority (if an out of area placement) and any other agencies involved;
- The authority responsible for the child should ensure that plans are in place to respond promptly once the child is found and for determining if the placement remains appropriate.

6.5 Once the Child Returns Home

The Home should take the following steps when a child returns after such an event:

- Assess the child's immediate needs i.e. offer something to eat, does the child need a shower/bath and a clean change of clothes? Is there any need for medical treatment?
- Explain to the child that they do not want them to go missing but they will be welcomed back to the household;

- Try to gain an insight into the young person's absence and what can be done to minimise its recurrence, although it is acknowledged that the point at which the child returns may or may not be the best time to try to discuss the reasons why the child has gone missing;
- Inform all relevant professionals i.e. police (unless they returned the child), the child's social worker and the independent reviewing officer that the child has returned.

Should there be any suspicion that the absent without consent episode is linked to an abusive incident, the Safeguarding Children and Young People and Referring Safeguarding Concerns Procedure should be invoked.

Arrangements should have been made for Safe and Well checks and Independent Return Review interviews:

Safe and Well Checks

Safe and well checks are carried out by the police as soon as possible after the child has returned. Their purpose is to check for any indications that the child has suffered harm, where and with whom they have been, and to give them an opportunity to disclose any offending by or against them.

Where a child goes missing frequently, it may not be practical for the police to see them every time they return. In these cases a reasonable decision should be taken in agreement between the police and the Home with regard to the frequency of such checks bearing in mind the established link between frequent missing episodes and serious harm, which could include gang involvement, forced marriage, maltreatment or abuse, bullying or sexual exploitation. The assessment of whether a child might run away again should be based on information about:

- Their individual circumstances;
- Family circumstances and background history;
- Their motivation for running away;
- Their potential destinations and associates;
- Their recent pattern of absences;
- The circumstances in which the child was found or returned; and
- Their individual characteristics and risk factors such as whether a child has learning difficulties, mental health issues, depression and other vulnerabilities.

Independent Return Review

On their return the child must be seen alone by an independent person usually independent of the Home and the placing authority.

An exception maybe where a child has a strong relationship with a member of staff or their social worker and has expressed a preference to talk to them, rather than an independent person, about the reasons they went missing and the Home must work with the placing authority (child's social worker) to create a strategy to keep the child safe in future.

The independent return review is an in-depth interview and should be carried out by an independent professional (e.g. a social worker, teacher, health professional or police officer, not involved in caring for the child and who is trained to carry out these interviews and is able). The child should be seen on their own unless they specifically request to have someone with them.

The child should be offered the option of speaking to an independent representative or advocate. The IRO should be informed.

The responsible local authority should ensure the return review interview takes place, working closely with the host authority where appropriate. The independent return interview should take place within 72 hours of the child being located or returning from absence, it should preferably take place in a neutral place where they feel safe. Delays in return interviews may mean a loss of important information or evidence.

The interview and actions that follow from it should:

- Identify and deal with any harm the child has suffered – including harm that might not have already been disclosed as part of the 'Safe and Well check' – either before they ran away or whilst missing;
- Understand and try to address the reasons why the child ran away;
- Help the child feel 'safe'/understand that they have options, to prevent repeat instances of them running away;
- Understand what the child would like to see happen next whether short term and/or long term;
- Gather the parents' or carers' views of the circumstances, if appropriate;
- Provide the child with information on how to stay safe if they choose to run away again, including helpline numbers.

It is especially important that the independent Return Review interview takes place when a child:

- Has been reported missing on two or more occasions;
- Is frequently absent without authorisation;
- Has been hurt or harmed while they have been missing;
- Is at known or suspected risk of sexual exploitation or trafficking;
- Is at known or suspected risk of involvement in criminal activity or drugs;
- Has contact with persons posing risk to children; and/or
- Has been engaged (or is believed to have engaged) in criminal activities during their absence.

If an independent return home interview is not offered or arranged by the responsible local authority, the Home will challenge this and, if necessary, will take appropriate steps to escalate concerns.

Follow up

The local authority children's social care services, police, Home and other agencies involved with the child should work together to assess the child and:

- To build up a comprehensive picture of why the child went missing;
- What happened while they were missing;
- Who they were missing with and where they were found; and,
- What support they require upon returning home;

- Whether a statutory review of the care plan is required.

Where children refuse to engage with the interviewer, parents and/or carers should be offered the opportunity to provide any relevant information and intelligence they may be aware of. This should help to prevent further instances of the child running away and identify early the support needed for them.

Repeat Running Away

If a child continually runs away actions following earlier incidents need reviewing and alternative strategies should be considered.

To reduce repeat running away and improve the longer-term safety of children and young people, the agencies involved may want to provide:

- Better access and timely independent return interviews, particularly for the most vulnerable;
- Safety planning with the child for their missing;
- Better access to support whilst a young person is away, which may come from the voluntary sector.

There may be local organisations in the area that can provide repeat runaways with an opportunity to talk about their reasons for running away, and can link runaways with longer-term help if appropriate.

6.6 Children who are Foreign Nationals and go Missing

This section applies to children who are 'subject to restriction'. i.e. who have:

- Proceeded through immigration control without obtaining leave to enter; or
- Left the border control area Border Force accommodation without permission; or
- Been granted temporary admission; or
- Been granted temporary release or bail; or
- Released on a restriction order; or
- Served with a 'notice of liability to deport' or is the dependant of a foreign national offender whose status in the UK is under consideration by criminal casework – these dependants could be British Citizens or have extant leave.

Action and Responsibilities when the whereabouts of a Child 'subject to restrictions' is not known

The local 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 following receipt of a missing person's notification;

- Conducting joint investigations with the Home Office where necessary;
- Circulating a missing child on the Police National Computer (PNC).

The local authority will also notify the Home Office Evidence and Enquiry Unit when a child in their care goes missing or when a missing child returns or is found. The Home Office must maintain regular weekly contact with the local authority and the police until the child is found and record all contact with the police and local authority.

Action when the Child 'subject to restriction' is found Found by Home Office Staff

The local police and local authority must be informed immediately.

In consultation with the local police and local authority children's social care, 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 are encountered. The Home Office must follow up enquires with the local police and children/adult services in order to identify if there are any safeguarding issues.

Found by the police or local authority

[Contact the relevant Immigration Compliance and Enforcement Team.](#)

7. Recording

The Manager will arrange to log information on Missing episodes for monitoring purposes. A copy of the report will be retained on the child's file and a copy forwarded to the child's social worker. A copy of the report will also be sent to the Regulatory Authority if applicable (see [Notifications of Significant Events Procedure](#)).

The Home will keep records of absence and notify the placing authority. The record will include:

- Action by the Home;
- Circumstances of the child's return;
- Any reasons given by the child for the absence;
- Any action taken in light of those reasons.

These records will be shared with the placing authority (child's social worker) and where it is appropriate, the parents.

Further Information

[Statutory Guidance on Children who Run Away or Go Missing from Home or Care \(DfE, January 2014\)](#)

[College of Policing Guidance on Missing Persons](#)