

Missing Child and Young Person Policy

Version	2.0	Reviewed by	HOO - AP
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Policy Scope

This Policy applies to Safe and Sound Homes (SASH) Staff and Young People.

SASH believes that children and young people have the right to live a life free from harm, exploitation, intimidation or fear, and that they have the right to be safe. This policy is to be followed at all times when a concern is raised regarding a child's location and welfare. This applies to all Trustees, employees, volunteers and students, (the term 'staff' will be used for any person operating as part of the organisation including hosts, for the purposes of this document).

Related Legislation, Policies and Procedures

- Children Act 1989
- Children and Young Persons Act 2008
- Joint Protocol Children Who Go Missing From Home and Care North Yorkshire and York April 2015 v7
- Safeguarding Children, Young People and Adults at Risk Policy

1.0 Procedural Guidance

1.1 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:

1.2 Missing Child - A child reported as missing to the police by their family or carers.

1.3 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.

1.4 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.

1.5 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 Interim Guidance on the Management, Recording and Investigation of Missing Persons (2013) categorise children as either Missing or Absent:

1.6 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.

1.7 Absent - A person is not at a place where they are expected or required to be.

1.8 The police classification of a person as 'Missing' or 'Absent' will be based on an on-going risk assessment. Note that 'absent' within the police definition would not include those defined as Away from Placement Without Authorisation above: a young person whose whereabouts are known would not be treated as either 'Missing' or 'Absent' under the police definitions. Police may not be sent to cases where young people are defined as being 'absent'.

1.9 Instead the onus will be on SASH staff, partner agencies and hosts to take steps to locate the young person, with monitoring by the police and escalation to 'missing' if there is a change to the circumstances that has increased the level of risk. It is expected that all reasonable steps should be taken by care providers to locate the young person prior to making a report to the police. Where they remain absent, and SASH staff believe that they may be at risk of harm, then a report should be made to the police.

1.10 Police will attend reports of 'missing' young people.

2.0 Steps to be taken to prevent Children and Young People from going missing:

2.1 All children and young people must have a Risk Management and Support Plan which takes account of any likely risk of the young person becoming Absconding, becoming Missing or Absent without Consent.

2.2 If there are known/likely risks this must also have been identified on the impact/matching assessment and background information at the point of referral.

2.3 The Risk Management Plan for being the child / young person being Missing with should incorporate measures to reduce or prevent the child / young person becoming absent or missing on future occurrences.

2.4 The Risk Management Plan should be accompanied by a protocol which gives clear guidance on what to do in this situation and information that would help facilitate the location of the young person should they go missing.

2.5 These plans should be read in conjunctions with other plans that may have been developed and are relevant, for example Criminal Exploitation or Sexual Exploitation. Where there are child protection concerns relating to a young person and/or where the young person has gone missing from the placement or from any previous placement, the Support Plan and Risk Management Plans must be shared between the local authority and SASH about the day-to-day arrangements put in place to keep the young person safe.

3.0 Actions to notify of a missing / absent child or young person

3.1 Establish the correct categorisation to report as missing or absent as outlined above. *Please refer to: [Joint Protocol for Children Who Go Missing From Home and Care North Yorkshire and York April 2015 v7](#) point 3.1 onwards for responsibilities of the reporting individual.*

3.2 Contact Police on 999 (emergency) or 101 (non-emergency) based on the level of concern associated with the absence.

3.2 When notifying/informing the Police (in the area where they have become absent e.g., Social Worker or others e.g. Youth Offending Worker/Team, it is vital to provide information about the circumstances and risk factors that led to the notification.

3.3 It is also important to discuss possible strategies for finding and recovering the young person safely. Agreement should also be reached about others who may need to know the child is Absent or Missing e.g. parents or members of the professional network.

3.4 The Risk Management Plan and Support Plan should be reviewed within 24 hours in light of new information associated to the requirement to notify the Police of a period of being absent / missing.

3.5 The case notes on Salesforce should be fully updated with the circumstances of the child / young person being identified as absent / missing within the same working day.

3.5 The SASH Project Manager for the relevant contract area should be notified the same working day of any notifications to Police associated to a missing child or young person.

3.6 The SASH Designated Safeguarding Lead should be informed the same working day of any notifications to Police associated to a missing child or young person.

4.0 Return of a Child / Young Person who has been reported absent /missing


4.1 Where a child / young person has been absent or missing they should have the opportunity to talk, before they return to their host placement, to a person who is independent of their placement (Placement Co-ordinator or Project Manager) about the reasons they went missing. The child / young person should be offered the option of speaking to somebody independent or that they feel comfortable to talk with.

4.2 The Police, Social Worker, YOT Worker and others in the professional network notified of the absence must be informed when the young person returns.

4.3 A SASH debrief with the child / young person must be completed within 3 days of the conclusion of the absence / missing episode. This should be conducted by the Placement Co-Ordinator and information uploaded to Salesforce for review by the Project Manager. Consideration must be given to providing a comfortable environment for the debrief and how it should be conducted. The staff member who carries out the debrief must ensure that they look at prevention strategies, and coping mechanisms to prevent it from reoccurring.

4.4 The Police may wish to carry out a 'Safe and Well' check, to check for any indications that the young person has suffered harm; where and with whom they have been; and to give them an opportunity to disclose any offending by, or against, them. However, where the young person goes missing frequently, the Police may review a requirement to see them every time they return.

However, should a decision be made not to complete a safe and well check this should be clearly recorded on Salesforce and any decision-making rationale that was shared by the Police.

Policy Sign Off	 Philippa Robson
Position	Chief Executive
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