

## Running and Missing Adults Guidance

### **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 In the event of an adult being missing or absent from their home or without authorised leave from care, the most important factor is ensuring their safety and their safe return.
- 1.2 It is imperative all communication is clear, concise and well documented to ensure all parties involved receive accurate information in order for the appropriate action to be taken to facilitate the safe return of the missing adult.

### **2. Purpose**

- 2.2 The purpose of the guidance and procedure is to outline what action will be taken to ensure that effective safeguarding responses are in place when an adult goes missing from home or care. Willingness and good communication between all agencies is essential to promote the welfare of all adults.
- 2.3 The aim is to reduce and prevent the incidence of all adults going missing. Every “missing” episode should attract proper attention and actions should be taken to ensure a consistent and coherent response is given to the adult on their return.
- 2.4 When an adult does go missing the aim is to prevent the adult suffering harm and to recover the adult as safely and as soon as possible. This is to be done through information sharing with the relevant agencies, co-operation, problem-solving and performance management.

### **3. Objectives**

- 3.1 The objectives are:
  - Promote the prevention of adults running or missing from their home or care;
  - Ensure effective safeguarding of those adults who are running and missing from their home or care;
  - Support Cleveland Police to locate and return any adults who are running or missing from their home or care;
  - Outline the actions Hartlepool Borough Council (HBC), Cleveland Police and other Local Authorities will take when an adult is running or missing from their home or care and return; and
  - Promote the exchange of accurate and consistent data about adults running and missing from home and care between Cleveland Police and the four Tees Local Authorities.

### **4. Definitions**

- The Association of Chief of Police Officers definition of a missing person is:
- **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.”
- **Absent:** “a person not at a place where they are expected or required to be.” The ‘absent’ category should comprise of cases in which adults are not presently where they are

supposed to be and there is no apparent risk. 'Absent' cases should not be ignored and must be monitored over periods of time with consideration given to escalating to 'missing' if there is a change to the circumstances or information is received that has increased the level of risk. 'Absent' does not include those defined as 'away from placement without authorisation'. An adult whose whereabouts are known would not be treated as either 'missing' or 'absent' under the police definitions.

- **Away from placement without authorisation:** an adult in residential or nursing care whose whereabouts are known but who is not at the placement or place they are expected to be and their carer has concerns or the incident has been notified to the Police or HBC.
- **Absconded:** when a missing adult is subject to a court order, such as a curfew or bail conditions. Police must be made aware of the order and the expiry date in order for the adult to be classified as an absconder. If the expiry date of the order is not known, the adult will be classified as a 'missing person' not an absconder.

## 5. Importance

5.1 HBC have a responsibility to safeguard vulnerable adults. Running away or going missing from home or care is symptomatic of something being not quite right. It is often clear that an adult who decides to run away or go missing is unhappy, vulnerable or in danger. Incidents of running or missing adults can lead to exploitation, harm and fatality; therefore it is crucial that HBC comply with the Police and other Local Authorities to ensure risk is reduced as much as possible.

5.2 The following factors can often precede a running or missing incident:

- Arguments and conflict;
- Poor family relations;
- Physical and emotional abuse;
- Boundaries and control;
- Medical conditions; and
- Mental Health issues.

5.3 The immediate risks associated with going missing can include:

- No means of support or legitimate income, potentially leading to high risk activities;
- Involvement in criminal activities;
- Victim of abuse, including forced marriage or honour based violence;
- Victim of crime, for example sexual assault and exploitation;
- Alcohol/ substance misuse;
- Deterioration of physical and/ or mental health;
- Missing out on schooling and education; and
- Increased vulnerability.

5.4 Longer-term risks can include:

- Long-term drug dependency;
- Crime;

- Homelessness;
- Disengagement from education;
- Sexual exploitation/ abuse; and
- Poor physical and/ or mental health.

5.5 It is important, through the risk assessment process, to ensure that resources are targeted at locating those adults who are particularly vulnerable.

## **6. Process**

6.1 i. Information from the Police delivered to HBC twice a week; every Tuesday and Thursday.

ii. If the running/missing adult is already known to HBC add an observation to CareFirst, detailing all the relevant information provided by the Police.

iii. If the running/missing adult is not known to HBC add the adult to CareFirst, and once they have been added, add an observation, detailing all the relevant information provided by the Police.

iv. Once the running/missing adult has been found or returned the appropriate adult or Social Worker will visit the missing adult at their residence to check if they are safe and complete a return interview.

v. The appropriate adult will call ahead of the visit to arrange a date and time to visit. If the appropriate adult is unable to contact the running/missing adult via the telephone they will visit their known contact address anyway. After 2 unsuccessful visits a letter will be sent to the running/missing adult's known contact address.

vi. A response to the letter may lead to a further visit.

vii. A safeguarding referral will then be made if the running/missing adult is unsafe.

6.2 If the running/missing adult does not reside in Hartlepool they should not be added to CareFirst.

## **7. Recording**

7.1 A record of any actions taken throughout the process and any messages received/given by all parties/agencies involved with the running/missing adult should be kept in full.

7.2 Information required when adding an observation to CareFirst:

- OIC and Unit;
- Consecutive number;
- Adult/Child Consecutive numbers;
- Force station reference;
- Occurrence number;
- Month;
- Quarter;

- Forename and surname;
- Date of birth and age;
- NPIA age bracket;
- Gender;
- Ethnicity;
- Telephone number;
- Sexuality;
- Time and date went missing;
- Time and date reported;
- Time and date returned;
- Address missing from and home address, if different;
- Location found;
- Missing for:
  - Over 24 hours,
  - On more than 2 occasions.
- Known Mental Health issues;
- Known risk of sexual exploitation;
- Contact with persons posing risk to children;
- Return interview completed;
- Next of Kin:
  - Name,
  - Relationship to running/missing adult,
  - Address
  - Telephone number.
- Risk category;
- Circumstances;
- Date of referral;
- Referrals;
- Date of subsequent information sent;
- Disability;
- Categorisation; and
- Location missing from.

## **8. When an adult is found**

- 8.1 It is the responsibility of the agency, who become aware of when an adult is found or has returned first to alert the Police.
- 8.2 Once an adult has been found or returned HBC will send an appropriate adult or a Social Worker to the known residence of the adult to conduct a return interview. The interview will assess the risk the adult was exposed to while missing, the risk of the adult running or going missing again and the reason behind the first incident. If it is identified that there is a substantial risk to the adult a safeguarding referral may be considered. If there is evidence of a crime or it is suspected a crime has been committed against or by the adult the case should be referred to the Police.

- 8.3 When reporting the matter to the Police the following information should be made available:
- A description of the adult;
  - When the adult was last seen and with whom;
  - A recent photograph;
  - Known address and any family addresses;
  - Current and previous placement addresses;
  - Known acquaintances – names and addresses;
  - Any previous history of absconding; and
  - The name and address of the adult's GP and dentist.
- 8.4 Any circumstances which increase the risk to the adult or to the public should be drawn to the attention of the Police.
- 8.5 The return interview will also assess whether the adult requires any support or not and if they are willing to accept it.

**Running and Missing Adults Procedure**

