



## MISSING FROM CARE OR ABSENT POLICY

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## Introduction

1.1. This policy deals with what to do when an individual in our care goes missing without permission. You may at some time be involved in such an incident and it is important that you know the procedures which must be followed.

1.2. **It affects all staff.**

Make sure that you are familiar with the details and what is expected of you under the policy.

## Monitoring and Review

The Proprietor will undertake a formal review of this policy for the purpose of monitoring and of the efficiency with which the related duties have been discharged, by no later than one year from the date of approval shown above or earlier if significant changes to the systems and arrangements take place, or if legislation, regulatory requirements or best practice guidelines are required. The local content of this document will be subject to continuous monitoring, refinement and audit by the Head of Service.

Signed:

Heather Morley & Eunice Asante-Obumneme

## 3.Terminology

3.1. Our aim is to use consistent terminology throughout this policy and all supporting documentation as follows:

'Establishment' or 'Location'	This is a generic term which means "the Children's Residential /school/college. Melrose Residential Care is a school and Residential.
Individual	Means any child or young person under the age of 18 or young adult between the ages of 18 and 25. At Melrose Residential Care we have children and young people attending and/or residing between the ages of 7 – 19.
Service Head / Head of Service	This is the senior person with overall responsibility for the Location. At Melrose Residential Care this, the responsible officer is Heather Morley. The Registered Manager is Eunice Asante-Obumneme.
Key Worker	Members of staff that have special responsibility for Individuals residing at or attending the Establishment.
Parent, Carer, Guardian	means parent or person with Parental Responsibility
Regulatory Authority	Regulatory Authority is the generic term used in this policy to describe the independent regulatory body responsible for inspecting and regulating services. At Melrose Residential Care this is Ofsted.
Social Worker	This means the worker allocated to the child/family. If there is no allocated worker, the Duty Social Worker or Team Manager is responsible.
Placing Authority	Placing Authority means the local authority/agency responsible for placing the child or commissioning the service

Staff	Means full or part-time employees of Melrose Residential care, agency workers, bank workers, contract workers and volunteers.
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## 1. Definitions

### Police definitions

Since April 2013 police forces have been rolling out new definitions of 'missing' and 'absent' in relation to children and adults reported as missing to the police.

These 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 not at a place where they are expected or required to be.

#### 1. Legislation

#### 2. Purpose

- 6.1. To ensure that Melrose Residential Care Group complies with all the relevant current legislation and other National Standards which govern this area of our work.
- 6.2. To assist in ensuring the welfare and safety of individuals in our care in all Group Establishments.
- 6.3. To give clear guidance for staff in dealing with incidents in which individuals in our care are absent without authority.

#### 3. Policy

- 7.1. Each establishment should ensure that all staff are aware of the guidance and procedures as set out in

Section 8 which must be followed in the event of an individual in our care missing without authority.

- 7.2. In following the guidance and procedures it is essential that a log of events must be kept using the Individual in our care Missing from Site Form

- 7.3. Head/Registered Managers shall ensure that a final report is made on the Individual Missing from Site Form when dealing with an individual missing without authority.

- 7.4. Heads/Registered Managers are responsible for ensuring that the relevant agencies are informed within the timescales set out in the local RMFHC protocol (appendix I)

- the local police.
- the authority responsible for the Individual's placement – if they have not already been notified prior to the police being informed; and
- parents and any other person with parental responsibility,

## 4.Procedures

### Risk Assessment

8.1. At the beginning of each placement the issue of missing from care must be considered and preventative/incident management strategies agreed. The preventative strategy should include consideration of:

- Completing the initial risk screening forms, baseline assessment, and impact assessment report between Days 1-5 of the placement. Where placements are planned, these should be completed as part of the placement consideration and matching process and be accompanied by detailed risk management plans
- that are agreed by all stakeholders and known to all the staff working in the Residential prior to the young person being admitted into the Residential
- Where it is an emergency placement, the Residential s manager must complete the above within 24hours of the admission and agreed by all stakeholders by the 72 hours review meeting and copies of the agreed plan circulated
- An understanding of the likelihood of a young person going missing and their degree of vulnerability in such circumstances
- Information about the history of going missing including triggers, known associates or places where the young person usually goes
- The level of support and supervision to be given by carers
- The young person's views about going missing
- Parental views and advice about what action should be taken if the young person goes missing and when they wish to be informed
- The level of risk presented to both them and others if the young person goes missing
- Associated impact of young people being placed 'out of area'

8.2. An up to date Missing from Care protocol should be in place for everyone which hold key information relevant to a missing child; a copy of which is held in the individual's file as well as a central file in the location office to allow quick access to information about the individual should the Police or staff searching require this.

### When a young person goes missing

8.3. Instructions for senior members of staff on site/venue and subsequent action by the Head of Service in dealing with missing or absent Individuals are set out below:

8.3.1. Ensure that a log begins immediately news is brought to you, including when the person was first noticed missing and in what circumstances. Times of action are essential for the final report and the police, if they are involved.

8.3.2. Immediately inform the Head of Service or senior member of staff of staff on call.

8.3.3. Notify all houses and units and ask for staff assistance with the search. Instigate a thorough search.

8.3.4. If the individual is known to have gone off site then consult with staff from the appropriate house/unit as to the usefulness of a staff search off the site (is the direction taken known? Light levels, etc.). If it is believed that this is likely to be successful then deploy some staff in buses or cars to search.

8.3.5. Allow half an hour for a result (e.g. the individual returns or is located). Longer may be allowed

if it is expected that the individual is likely to return on his/her own and has done so before.

8.3.6. If the individual is not located within half an hour - call the police. Where it is expected that the individual is likely to return Residential on his/her own, this may be extended to an hour with the agreement of the senior member of staff involved.

8.3.7. If the senior member of staff considers, because of weather conditions, or the particular risk posed to the individual concerned, that the police should be called before half an hour has elapsed, then he/she should do so.

8.3.8. When the police have been informed a senior member of staff should tell the parents/carers of the individual concerned. Do not alarm them unnecessarily with conjecture and speculation.

Stick to the facts and inform the Head/Registered Manager if not on site. The Local Authority should

be informed.

8.3.9. When you call the police, you need to:

- have the running log ready to show the police
- refer to the individual Missing from Care Protocol
- have a photograph of the individual concerned
- have a description of what he/she is wearing
- have any medical details/concerns ready if these are relevant
- have ready any facts concerning the best way to approach him/her.
- Have date of birth and Residential address of individual ready

8.3.10. Once the police are involved you should remain as their link person, keep the log going and record anything to do with the search, telephone calls etc. Keep the parents informed and provide them with a telephone contact number.

8.3.11. Stay on site yourself.

8.3.12. An independent return interview should be offered when a missing looked after child is found. Where possible, the child should be given the opportunity to talk before they return to their placement.

8.3.13. Once the individual is found notify:

- police, if they did not find and return him/her
- parents
- placing authority
- Head/Registered Manager, or senior staff on call
- all houses/units
- anyone else involved in the search or informed that the individual was missing.
- CQC Regulated Locations only – complete a Reg 18 – Individual reported or investigated by the police

8.3.14. Once found or returned, make sure they are safe and well. Check if they need medical attention, comfort, calm, warm and feed the individual involved, as required. However, it is important to establish as soon as possible from the individual why he or she went missing. Any report from the individual that he or she went missing because of any form of abuse at the establishment must be referred immediately to the local Child/Adult Safeguarding Authority, in accordance with the procedures laid down Child and Adult Safeguarding, and the details shall also be recorded in the report on the Individual Missing from Site Form. The Head of Service is to state in their report what action is to be taken in light of the reasons given by the individual. In addition, appropriate action must be taken to protect the individual concerned and other individuals as necessary.

8.3.15. The Head of Service is to state in his/her report what action is to be taken in the light of the reasons given by the individual.

8.3.16. Where an individual goes missing without authority and is at risk if not supervised, staff may take reasonable measures to prevent the individual leaving the establishment again. If such measures are not already agreed in the individual's care plan or Individual Behavior Risk Assessment the Head of Service must indicate in the report that such an agreement will be reached with the parents and placing authority as soon as possible.

8.4. In completing the Individual Missing from Site Form, ensure that all the points listed below are covered fully in the report before sending it to the Regional Lead:

8.4.1. Name of establishment

8.4.2. Name of individual(s) in our care

8.4.3. Date of incident

8.4.4. Name of member of staff writing this report

8.4.5. Time and location and weather conditions when individual in our care was first noticed as missing

8.4.6. Who reported the incident?

8.4.7. What action was taken to locate and return the individual?

8.4.8. Which staff were involved?

8.4.9. What means of transport was used?

8.4.10. Who was informed and when involved (Head/Registered Manager, police, parents, placing authority)?

8.4.11. When was the individual returned?

8.4.12. What reasons were given for going missing?

8.4.13. Was it necessary to inform child safeguarding authorities?

8.4.14. Were arrangements made for the individual to be seen by social worker or independent person/listener?

8.4.15. What was the time and date when the completed report was given to the Head/Registered Manager?

8.4.16. Any other details.

8.5. Heads of Service should also note that the unexplained absence of an individual from the Establishment or an organized activity off-site is a Notifiable Incident. Heads of Service will need to agree with the Managing Director whether the people /agencies concerned are also to receive a copy of the relevant report submitted to him on the Individual Missing from Site Form.

## 4. Standard Forms, Letters and Relevant Documents

This Policy

9.1. Missing From Care Risk Protocols

9.2. Missing from Site Form

Other Melrose Residential Care policy

9.3. Child and Adult Safeguarding

9.4. Child Sexual Exploitation

9.5. Police Liaison

## Further Reading and Guidance

9.6. Statutory guidance on children who run away and go missing from Residential or care, January 2014 – [click here](#)

9.7. NSPCC - Helping Children who have been abused – [click here](#)

9.8. Gov.uk - Missing Children and Adults strategy (2011) – [click here](#)

9.9. Safeguarding Children Who May Have Been Trafficked Guidance (2011) – [click here](#)

9.10. Ofsted Missing Children Report – February 2013 – [click here](#)

9.11. 8.13. NSPCC Child Trafficking Advice Centre (CTAC) – [click here](#)

## 6.Appendix I

### 12 Appendix II – Flowchart of responsibilities

The following chart shows the main steps that need to be taken when a child goes missing from local authority care, and where responsibility lies for those steps. It should be read alongside the full statutory guidance on children who run away or go missing from home or care, and is not intended to be a comprehensive list of actions.





**Children's home or foster carer**

**Responsible authority**

**Host authority**

**Local police**

**When a looked after child is found**

If the child returns to their placement, the responsible authority and police should be informed.

Carers should continue to offer warm and consistent care when a child returns, and running away should not be viewed as behaviour that needs to be punished.

The responsible local authority should review whether the child's placement remains appropriate. The decision should be informed by discussions with the child and carers where appropriate.

If the child is located but meaningful contact can not be established, the responsible authority and police should consider appropriate action.

An independent return interview should be offered and provided within 72 hours of the child's return. When a looked after child is placed in a host authority, the responsible authority should ensure the independent review interview takes place, working closely with the host authority.

Care plans should include a strategy to minimise future risk of repeated missing episodes.

IROs should be informed about missing episodes and address these in statutory reviews.

A safe and well check should be carried out by the police as soon as possible after a child reported as missing has been found.

**Data and analysis**

Children's homes should be prepared to provide information on missing incidents to those conducting independent visits to monitor the effectiveness of the home.

Data on missing episodes, including intelligence from return interviews, should be analysed regularly by all relevant partners to map problems and patterns. Regular reports should be provided to council members and the LSCB.

Data for children missing or away from placement without authorisation should be reported to the Department for Education by the responsible authority through their annual data returns on looked after children.

