

## One Minute Guide

### ‘Children and Young People who are Missing’

March 2025

#### Reporting a Missing Child or Young Person

Before reporting the child/young person missing to the Police, the adult with parental responsibility for the child should make every effort to contact family and friends, and check locations the child is known to visit (where it is safe to do so), in order to attempt to locate or return the child home.

If the whereabouts of the child remain unknown, the adult should contact 101 to report a child missing and the call handler will ask a series of 12 questions to ascertain whether the risk of harm to the child is considered to be low, medium or high. All children 14 years or under are automatically deemed high risk.

Information regarding the child will then be passed to Children's Services where a missing episode will be recorded on the child's case file, if the child is not currently open to Children's Services a referral to MASH for assessment will be made.

Police will continue to liaise with parent, carers, professionals and the child if possible until the child is located or returns to the place they are supposed to be.



#### What is the definition of Missing?

**Missing child** - Any child/young person under the age of 18 and whose whereabouts cannot be established and not at a place where they are expected or required to be.

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

**Missing from Care:** A looked after child/young person who has been reported missing to the police because they are not at their placement or place they are expected to be (e.g. school) and their whereabouts are unknown;

**Looked After Child:** a child who is looked after by the Local Authority by reason of a Care Order S31 or S38 of the Children Act 1989 or accommodated under Section 20 of the Children Act 1989.

**Away from Placement without Authorisation:** Any looked after child whose whereabouts is known but is still not at their placement or the place they were expected to be. Local authority area.

## Return Home Interviews (RHI)

- It is vital following a missing episode that a child/young person is offered the opportunity to discuss with an independent interviewer the circumstances that lead them to go missing and what happened during the duration of their missing episode.
- The purpose of the independent RHI is to give the child/young person an opportunity to discuss the circumstances of the missing episode and to feel that they are being listened to. The process should address the following:
  - Identify and deal with any harm the child has incurred. Their medical condition should be discussed immediately and any need for medical attention assessed.
  - Identify if the child has been the victim of, or involved in, any criminal activity
  - Understand and address the reasons the child ran away. The child's living arrangements/placement might need to be reviewed
  - Try to avoid it happening again
  - Indicate whether child and their family or carers require additional support to meet the child's needs and prevent further episodes
- Inform the child that the findings from the return home interview will be referred to a Multi-Agency Screening Panel, where any additional support will be coordinated.
- It is vital that wherever possible the Return Home Interview is completed with the statutory 72-hour time frame and wherever possible within 24 hours of the missing episode to obtain the best memory of the child
- It is imperative that Children's Services professionals, e.g. Social Workers, Child & Family Workers, Youth Workers read the RHI and make reference to it with the child regarding progressing actions, and that safety plans, risk assessments and intervention plans all take account of missing episodes and RHI.

A multi-agency Missing Strategy meeting will be held if the below conditions are met:



Professionals invited to these meetings will depend upon the exact length or frequency of the missing episodes but will include the Social Worker currently working with the child or the Team Manager/Service Manager, the Locate team Police Officer/Sergeant, Residential worker/manager/Foster Carer/Parent/Carer, representative from school, the Missing Co-ordinator in Childrens Services, representative from Health and any other appropriate safeguarding professional or organisation.

For any queries about children who are missing, please contact

[missing@coventry.gov.uk](mailto:missing@coventry.gov.uk)

## Key Contacts and Further Information

[Coventry Safeguarding Children's Partnership](#)

[Horizon – Coventry](#)

[Fearless](#)

[St Giles](#)