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# GUIDANCE ON THE MANAGEMENT RECORDING AND INVESTIGATION OF MISSING PERSONS

## 2005

Produced on behalf of the  
Association of Chief Police Officers  
by the National Centre for Policing Excellence



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## GUIDANCE ON THE MANAGEMENT, RECORDING AND INVESTIGATION OF MISSING PERSONS

This document has been produced by the National Centre for Policing Excellence (NCPE) on behalf of the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO).

The NCPE was established by the Police Reform Act 2002. As part of its remit the NCPE is required to develop policing doctrine including guidance in consultation with ACPO, the Home Office and the Police Service. Guidance produced by the NCPE should be used by chief officers to shape police responses to ensure that missing persons, those close to them and the general public experience consistent levels of service. The implementation of all guidance will require operational choices to be made at a local level in order to achieve the appropriate police response.

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# PREFACE

The majority of persons reported missing return soon after their disappearance without suffering any harm. A small percentage, however, will have come to harm or have been the victim of crime and it must not be overlooked that the missing person report could be the start of a major crime enquiry. The manner in which the investigation is conducted must cater for the preservation of evidence and the rules of disclosure.

One of the most important considerations for the police when investigating missing persons is providing support to the immediate family and close friends. In some cases the trauma associated with such an event will place the family and friends of the missing person under severe personal pressure, particularly if the investigation or the media make heavy demands on them.

The purpose of this document is to provide guidance on the levels of service required from the police when dealing with reports of missing persons.

This guidance replaces and develops the original version of the ACPO Manual of Guidance for the Management of Missing Persons 2002.

The priorities of the police service in responding to reports of missing persons can be summarised as follows:

- To ensure that every report of a missing person is risk assessed so that missing persons who may be vulnerable or represent high risk are immediately identified;
- To investigate reports of missing persons;
- To have clear policies in place which describe organisational roles and responses to reports of missing persons;
- To adopt a proactive multi-agency approach in dealing with missing persons;
- To support the needs of the family, those close to the missing person and the community;
- To ensure that staff are adequately trained to investigate missing persons' cases;
- To preserve evidence where a crime has been committed.

The legal obligations which underpin these responsibilities include the duties within the Human Rights Act 1998 and the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) to protect life and to persons from inhuman and degrading treatment.

Both the Convention and other legislation such as the Race Relations Act 1976 (as amended) places a clear responsibility on public authorities to fulfil these obligations without discriminating on any grounds. Those reported as missing should receive an appropriate quality of service and investigation according to individual need.

Chief officers should establish and implement policies which ensure that the police response to missing persons fully supports and achieves these priorities. Police staff should maintain public confidence by delivering these priorities to a professional standard. Successful partnership working with other statutory and voluntary sector services is key to this.



This guidance identifies a number of strategic recommendations which should be addressed by chief officers. These are as follows:

- Implementing a comprehensive force policy which reflects this guidance and developing systems which support information sharing within the police service and other agencies;
- Ensuring that every report of a missing person is risk assessed, effectively resourced, investigated and supervised;
- Ensuring that the training needs of staff are met;
- Ensuring the effective management of all aspects of missing person investigation.

These guidelines will be underpinned by protocols relating to:

- The National Missing Persons Helpline;
- Other relevant agencies with the responsibility for young people in local authority care;
- Where Child Rescue Alert and [missingkids.com](http://missingkids.com) are adopted, the national protocols relating to their use are complied with.

# Section 1

## REPORTING AND REFERRALS

**T**his section defines missing persons and outlines the way in which reports of missing persons might come to the attention of the police. It includes information about potential associated investigations and gives guidance on diversity issues where they may impact on a missing person enquiry.

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## 1.1 MISSING PERSON DEFINITION

The ACPO definition of a **missing person** is:

*'anyone whose whereabouts is unknown whatever the circumstances of disappearance. They will be considered missing until located and their well-being or otherwise established.'*

There will be circumstances where a person is missing but police involvement may not be required, ie, tracing a long lost relative. Appropriate action may be a referral to other relevant agencies that may provide assistance.

## 1.2 GENERAL ISSUES

The investigation into a missing person begins at the point of first notification to the police.

A prompt and thorough enquiry into missing persons can provide a positive contribution to community confidence. Cultural diversity and language difficulties must always be taken into consideration. Where problems are encountered, every effort must be made to explain the duty of the police service and its role. Language difficulties need to be addressed at an early stage by using an interpreter.

All reports of missing persons must be recorded by the police area receiving the report. The investigation into missing persons begins at the point of first notification to the police where as much detail as possible must be established. Every report should be assessed to identify the level of risk. This requires that officers and police staff ask relevant questions that identify any potential risk to the missing person so that an appropriate response can be made. Risk assessment must be the subject of continuous review to ensure that the information that is currently available is properly considered.

Taking the above steps combined with due consideration for the potential for any criminal activity will ensure that the foundations are laid should a criminal investigation follow.

Supervision of these investigations is dealt with in [section 5 Working with Other Agencies](#).

## 1.3 PROBLEM SOLVING APPROACH

The police should adopt a problem solving approach when dealing with missing persons reports as this can reduce the number of cases that are reported to the police. The following measures not only relate to the investigation but also to prevention and intervention. This will mean that fewer people will be exposed to harm, and police officers can concentrate on high risk investigations. Measures which will contribute to sound problem solving are:

- An effective multi-agency approach, with all partners undertaking their respective duty of care.
- Having named persons within organisations working together to address problems, including taking positive action to deal with repeat missing from homes and locations with a high incidence of cases;
- Management of the return of missing persons, gathering intelligence about their activities and associates, with appropriate intervention. (This is proven to reduce the incidence of missing and offending behaviour).

## 1.4 NATIONAL REPORTING FORM

A National Missing Person Reporting Form has been developed. An example is provided at [Appendix 5 National Reporting Form – Missing Person Investigation](#). The form sets out the information to be recorded for all missing person investigations. The form will be adopted by all police forces with the exception of those with existing IT systems which comply with the national data standards.

## 1.5 POTENTIAL LINKS TO SERIOUS OFFENCES

The majority of missing persons enquiries are quickly resolved. In a few cases, however, the report of a missing person is the first step in a major crime case. Therefore the initial stages of any missing person enquiry should commence on the basis that the case may escalate into a serious crime enquiry. It is always easier to rein back from the early stages of a major enquiry than it is to recover missed opportunities resulting from miscalculating in the early stages.

Some examples of missing person related crime are given below. Critical incidents are described at [section 3.18 Critical Incidents](#).

### Homicide

One of the fundamental facts to be determined in a missing person investigation is the reason why the subject has disappeared. In cases where the circumstances are suspicious or are unexplained, use the maxim:

### IF IN DOUBT, THINK MURDER

Failure to apply such thinking in past cases has led to the loss of valuable investigative opportunities and could ultimately result in failure to trace the missing person or to establish sufficient evidence to convict a perpetrator.

The status of the relationship between the missing person and the person making the initial report can also be important. Experience suggests that it would be wrong for investigators to always assume such relationships are stable. There have been numerous cases where the person reporting the crime and/or the missing person has been found to be the perpetrator of the crime.

For further information see the [ACPO Murder Investigation Manual](#).

### Abduction

Police officers conducting investigations into missing persons should always consider the possibility of abduction. In cases where there appears to be an immediate threat of harm to a young person, consideration should be given to implementing Child Rescue Alert see [section 5.4 Child Rescue Alert](#). The offence of abduction is usually a serious one and will manifest itself in one of three contexts. These are:

- A sexual predator – this is the most difficult to recognise and becomes more likely an option as others diminish;
- As retribution – to silence witnesses (or otherwise) connected to criminal enterprise;
- As a result of custody or access disputes – these cases typically involve the wrongful removal or retention of a child by a parent in derogation of the other parents rights. They may also involve removals or retentions by parents or other family members in violation of custody rights exercised by a custodial parent or an institution. In these cases, the police should investigate the circumstances and consider using relevant powers.

In the case of international child abduction, immediate action should be taken. Consideration should be given to issuing an All Ports Warning. This can only be done on the authority of a superintendent.

Where a child has been taken abroad legitimately and not subsequently returned, the UK police should refer to the Child Abduction Unit (contactable on 020 7911 7047 during office hours) which has primary responsibility for these matters. If the whereabouts of a child is not known, the police should ask for assistance from Special Branch and Interpol.

It is a criminal offence for a person to take or send a child (under the age of 16) out of the United Kingdom without the appropriate consent. It must also be remembered that a parent can commit an offence by abducting their own child.

See also *A Practical Guide for Police Officers, published by the National Ports Office, HO Circular 21/1986*.

Details of organisations that can assist in these cases are contained within [sections 5.5 The Child Abduction Unit – 5.9 Other Non-Governmental Organisations](#).

### **Child abuse**

Young persons reported missing may have been exposed to physical or moral danger and may have run away to avoid abuse. Enquiries should be made to discover the reasons for the young person going missing and by speaking to them on their return. Background enquiries, particularly with caring agencies and checks against police records, may assist in confirming or reducing suspicions. Where there is any suspicion of abuse the case should be referred to The Child Abuse Investigation Unit in the relevant police area.

Refer to the *ACPO Child Abuse Investigation Guidance*.

### **Sexual exploitation**

It is sometimes the case that missing persons, particularly young persons, may have been the victims of sexual exploitation.

This should be established or discovered when speaking to missing persons on their return in order to obtain intelligence and evidence to assist future investigations. Intelligence obtained during missing person investigations may show patterns of behaviour indicating visits to the same locations or persons while missing. An example of this is young people in the care of the local authority who are regularly found at the same address or with the same person. In these cases the circumstances and nature of the situation and those involved should be considered.

### **Domestic violence**

There is a potential link between missing persons and domestic violence. The person reporting an individual missing may either not know of, or not disclose, domestic violence issues. Identifying that the missing person is a victim of domestic violence or child abuse, or is an offender, will determine the type and level of investigation to be undertaken. The missing person could be the victim of a domestic homicide. It is also possible that the person making the report could be attempting to locate the victim who has escaped from a violent situation or has killed the person and is trying to look innocent.

Police staff should, therefore, be alert to the possibility that the missing person is either a victim of domestic violence or an abuser. Specialist domestic violence officers should be informed when a domestic violence victim or suspect/offender is missing. Previous domestic violence records and intelligence should be used to assist in the investigation. Established links with domestic violence service providers such as local refuges and outreach services should be used where appropriate, as they may be able to assist with the investigation. Such contact should respect the confidentiality process of the service provider and should not presume that information will be made available.

See *ACPO Policing Domestic Violence Guidance* for further information.

### Human trafficking

Police officers should be mindful of information gathered from a missing person investigation which may indicate involvement in trafficking. This trade is often under the control of criminal networks and organised criminal gangs that will use extreme violence to ensure compliance. Substantial payments made by migrants often have to be paid off in kind on arrival in the UK. If the debt is defaulted on, violence is frequently used towards the migrant or their family in their home country. They may also be forced into prostitution or domestic slavery to pay off the debt.

Advice can be sought from the *NCIS Kidnap and Extortion Desk* (tel. 020 7238 8418 – 24 hours) and the *Metropolitan Police Service SO7 Kidnap Unit* (tel. 020 7230 2061).

### Forced marriage

This is where a person is forced into marriage against their will as opposed to an arranged marriage which normally has the consent of both parties. Abuse may be used to force the victim into marriage. The abuse can be perpetrated by any female or male family member and may include the other party to the forced marriage. The marriage can occur in this country or abroad.

For further information, see the *Home Office, Foreign and Commonwealth Office/ACPO Dealing with Cases of Forced Marriage: Guidelines for Police (May 2002)*.

### Asylum seekers and refugees

Asylum seekers and refugees are not missing persons per se. There are cases, however, where individuals have entered the UK and are subsequently reported missing. Children are particularly vulnerable in such circumstances. The *ACPO Guide for Asylum Seekers and Refugees* provides advice on the management of such cases.

Assistance may be obtained from the *Immigration Strategic Intelligence Team (INDIS)*.

### Major crime links to missing persons

When a serious crime has been committed, the manner in which it is reported to the police will depend on the prevailing circumstances as known to that person at the time. This means that some offences, eg, abduction or murder, will initially be reported as missing persons and appropriate escalation is important. Similarly, some cases which may have been reported as missing persons, in other circumstances, skip that stage and are reported as a serious crime. In the latter case, it should be an investigative consideration to open a missing person report and follow the initial investigative and reporting procedures recommended in this guidance. This is intended to ensure that investigative opportunities are not missed, eg, a filed missing person report may be of great value if the person was later reported missing, or notification to NMPH and PNMPB could reveal information relevant to the enquiry.

#### MANAGEMENT ISSUES:

- Linking policies relating to missing persons to homicide investigations, child protection, domestic violence, forced marriage, sexual exploitation, trafficking in people, abductions, asylum seekers and illegal immigration.
- Providing police staff that investigate missing persons with adequate training and knowledge to fulfil their roles. Training should emphasise the links between missing persons and other potentially associated investigations to ensure that staff ask the relevant questions at the reporting stage and during the investigation.



# Section 2

## DEPLOYMENT

**T**his section provides guidance for police staff working in police communications rooms or for those staff who otherwise take the first report of a missing person. Supervisors and front desk staff may also find it useful. This section outlines information to be recorded by report takers, who should also fulfil the role of initial investigators. It also provides guidance on risk assessment, prioritisation and the subsequent deployment of police officers to deal with reports.

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## 2.1 INITIAL REPORTING

Detailed and accurate information must be recorded about the circumstances of the disappearance and the reasons for making the report. This information should also include the status of the person making the report, eg, boyfriend, parent, friend, third party. This is particularly relevant where allegations of a serious crime follow, as the information given, and the circumstances of it being given, and by whom, may be important to that investigation. For example, there have been a number of murders where the perpetrator has reported the victim to the police as a missing person. In such cases it is possible that witness statements will be required at a later stage.

## 2.2 INFORMATION REQUIRED AT THE TIME OF THE INITIAL REPORT

The role of the call taker is not just that of recording details. At the time of reporting, all steps must be taken to assess the level of risk and determine the appropriate course of action. It is acknowledged that missing person reports will need to be resourced in light of priority and competing demands. No assumptions, however, should be made about the priority of police action until all the facts are ascertained and detailed and accurate information has been obtained from the person reporting.

The priority of police action should be assessed on the identification of risk from that information. Definitions of risk and assessment processes are contained within [Section 3 Fast Track Action and Early Investigation](#).

### Minimum information to be gathered when taking the initial report:

Name:

Age:

Description of person:

Description of clothing:

Home address:

Location missing from:

Circumstances of going missing:

Is this behaviour out of character?

Details of any vehicle or other transport used:

Assessment of the person reporting:

Name, address and telephone number of person reporting:

Use of the risk identification factors at [2.4 Risk Identification – Initial Report to the Police](#) will also assist in making an appropriate assessment.

### 2.3 PRIORITY ASSESSMENT

A large number of missing person reports are made to the police annually, therefore they must be given an order of priority. In particular, high risk cases must be identified as soon as possible and drawn to the attention of a supervisor. If child abduction is suspected, consideration should be given to implementing Child Rescue Alert, see [section 5.4 Child Rescue Alert](#). This risk identification should determine the speed and scale of the initial police response.

### 2.4 RISK IDENTIFICATION – INITIAL REPORT TO THE POLICE

The questions listed below are intended to act as a guide to decision making when determining the level of response that is required for each missing person. If the answer to any of the questions is yes, the identification of risk may be HIGH and the advice of a supervisor should be sought.

- Is there any information that the person is likely to cause self-harm or attempt suicide?
- Is the person suspected to be victim of a crime in progress, eg, abduction?
- Is the person vulnerable due to age, infirmity, or any other factor?
- Are there inclement weather conditions which would seriously increase risk to health, particularly where the missing person is a child or elderly person?
- Does the missing person need essential medication or treatment not readily available to them?
- Does the missing person have any physical illness, disability or mental health problems?
- Is it believed that the person may not have the ability to interact safely with others or in an unknown environment?
- Has the person been involved in a violent, homophobic and/or racist incident or confrontation immediately prior to disappearance?
- Has the person been the subject of bullying?
- Has the person previously disappeared AND suffered or was exposed to harm?
- Is the behaviour out of character and likely to be an indicator of their being exposed to harm?

A suggested format for this initial priority assessment is included at [Appendix 3 Risk Identification – Initial Report to the Police](#).

#### MANAGEMENT ISSUES:

- Ensure that all missing persons reports are properly risk assessed.
- Monitor the accuracy of call grading according local call grading policies.
- Monitor to ensure that missing persons incidents are flagged appropriately at the call handling stage.
- Provide training to police staff taking missing persons reports.
- Appoint an investigating officer at the earliest opportunity.



# Section 3

## FAST TRACK ACTION AND EARLY INVESTIGATION

**T**his section gives advice to officers attending as a first response to a report of a missing person. It also contains guidance on the information to be obtained by first response police officers including a detailed risk assessment, initial actions to be taken and guidance on searching. The section also outlines the investigative issues that may need to be considered at an early stage.

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### 3.1 DUTY OF POSITIVE ACTION

The Human Rights Act 1998 places a positive obligation on police officers to take reasonable action within their powers, to safeguard the rights of individuals who may be at risk. Those rights that may be relevant to missing persons are: the right to life (Article 2. European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR)); the right not to be subjected to torture or to inhuman or degrading treatment (Article 3 ECHR); the right to prohibition of slavery and forced labour (Article 4 ECHR); the right to private and family life (Article 8 ECHR) and, the right to freedom of expression, including freedom to receive information (Article 10 ECHR). Failure to thoroughly investigate a report of a missing person may leave an individual at risk and the police service vulnerable to a legal challenge under the Human Rights Act or the law relating to negligence.

Where a missing person has been identified as being high or medium risk, positive action becomes an obligation at every stage of a missing person investigation.

### 3.2 FIRST OFFICER TO ATTEND

The first officer to attend a report of a missing person has to make judgements that will have a significant effect on the progress of the investigation. That officer must understand that they are conducting an investigation not merely taking details for a report. Consideration must be given to the nature of the report being taken, bearing in mind that this might be the first report of a serious crime or indication of a person being at significant risk of harm. The involvement of a supervisory officer should be considered a priority, see [section 3.3\(iv\) for supervisory response](#).

Although most missing person enquiries do not lead to a major crime investigation, where they do, early identification is vital to the investigation. The first few hours after the report is made to police can determine the outcome. Risk assessment not only places a priority on the efforts to locate the missing person but includes a judgement about the likely reason for their being missing. In cases where there is no obvious reason for the person going missing suspicion may be aroused. If immediate enquiries do not satisfy those concerns, they should be passed on to supervisors.

### 3.3 RESPONSIBILITIES OF FIRST OFFICER ATTENDING REPORT OF A MISSING PERSON

The responsibilities of the first officer attending a report of a missing person are listed below:

- i. Establish the facts and keep accurate records of what was said and by whom.
- ii. Make an assessment of the circumstances of the disappearance in order to make a judgement regarding the risks to which that person or the community are likely to be exposed. The decision, the evidence supporting it and where the information came from should be recorded on the appropriate form.
- iii. Gather sufficient information about the missing person to enable an effective and thorough investigation to be conducted. The depth of that information will vary according to the assessment of risk. Very detailed information and a lifestyle profile will be needed in high risk cases.
- iv. Notify a supervisor immediately in high risk cases. In the case of medium risk without undue delay and in all other cases by the end of the tour of duty.
- v. Conduct a search of the premises and its environs in accordance with [section 3.10 Search and Evidence Gathering – 3.17 Sightings](#).
- vi. Make all immediate relevant enquiries in order to locate the missing person.
- vii. Circulate the person reported missing on PNC.
- viii. Circulate the person on local information systems.

- ix. Consider obtaining any physical evidence of identity such as recent photographs, fingerprints, DNA samples.
- x. Identify the person who is the point of contact for the police and assess levels of support required for the family.

Following the initial risk assessment, the ownership and supervision of the investigation should be clear. The case must not be left for long periods of time without active investigation taking place.

### 3.4 RISK ASSESSMENT

Having determined the initial response to the report of a missing person, a full assessment of risk must be undertaken by the officer attending that report.

When making such an assessment, the information that leads to the determination of the level of risk must be recorded. The origins of this information must also be recorded and researched including if the person giving the information may have other motives or is not in full possession of the facts. As with all investigations an appropriate assessment of the report must be made.

Persons who are missing may be at risk of physical harm because they are vulnerable, eg, inability to cope with weather conditions, or because of abduction, or a risk relating to longer-term moral endangerment.

### 3.5 CLASSIFICATION OF RISK AND RESPONSE

The table below sets out the definition of each category and what each category means in terms of operational response:

TABLE 1 Classification of risk and response

HIGH RISK	
The risk posed is immediate and there are substantial grounds for believing that the subject is in danger through their own vulnerability; or 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.	This category requires the immediate deployment of police resources and a member of the BCU 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 SIO. There should be a press/media strategy and/or close contact with outside agencies.
MEDIUM RISK	
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.
LOW RISK	
There is no apparent threat of danger to either the subject or the public.	In addition to recording the information on the PNC, the police will advise the person reporting the disappearance that following basic enquiries and unless circumstances change, further active enquiries will not be carried out by police. The missing person's details will be passed to National Missing Persons Helpline (NMPH) in line with the national protocol. Low risk missing persons, however, must be kept under review as risk can increase with the passage of time.

The risk assessment process should be in writing and transparent. It should result in:

- a) Clear information being provided to those with an interest in the enquiry and on how they can update it and be updated;
- b) An appropriate classification with the grounds and reasoning for this;
- c) An indication of the police level of response and point of contact;
- d) The identification of interested parties – family, friends, work and other agencies, eg, social services, schools.

Risk assessment is a critical initial appraisal and as the enquiry continues it must be revisited. It provides the basis for both priority and lines of enquiry.

### 3.6 DECISION MAKING GUIDE

The ACPO Manual of Guidance for the Management of Missing Persons 2002 established as a matter of principle that numerical scoring was not a safe method of identifying risk due to variations in scoring and lack of reliability.

Senior management have a responsibility to ensure that risk assessments and prompt appropriate investigative actions are regularly overseen. High risk cases must be dealt with as a matter of urgency.

The importance and relevance of risk factors will depend on the circumstances of each case and will need investigation to determine if they are a cause for concern. This concern will increase with the number of risk factors that apply. The approach should not be regarded as a mechanical one and police officers must be mindful that the risk assessment is an objective judgement, and that one factor alone may be considered so important as to prompt an urgent response.

Risk may be associated with immediate and present danger, such as, a lost and vulnerable child, a possible abduction, or a longer term possibility of moral risk, eg, frequent absences affecting the development of young people. This must be assessed on a continuing basis. There may also be benefits from making an assessment in conjunction with other agencies, particularly in relation to children in the care of the local authority.

Using the factors listed below as the basis of a questionnaire will provide officers with a decision making guide to assist them in making a professional judgement of the risk level. These are, however, only a guide and other grounds for suspicion, even if intuitive, can be registered by the investigator.

The format at [Appendix 4 The Investigating Officers Guide to Risk](#) is appropriate for officers to follow. The factors are:

- Is the person vulnerable due to age or infirmity or any other factor?
- Behaviour that is out character is often a strong indicator of risk; are the circumstances of going missing different from normal behaviour patterns?
- Is the person suspected to be the victim of a significant crime in progress, eg, abduction?
- Is there any indication that the person is likely to commit suicide?
- Is there a reason for the person to go missing?
- Are there any indications that preparations have been made for their absence?
- What was the person intending to do when last seen, eg, going to the shops or catching a bus and did they fail to complete their intentions?
- Are there family and/or relationship problems or recent history of family conflict including abuse?
- Are they the victim or perpetrator of domestic violence?
- Does the missing person have any physical illness, disability or mental health problems?

- Are they on the Child Protection Register?
- Do they need essential medication that is not likely to be available to them?
- Is there a belief that the person may not have the physical ability to interact safely with others or an unknown environment.
- Ongoing bullying or harassment, eg, racial, sexual, homophobic or local community concerns and/or cultural issues?
- Were they involved in a violent and/or racist incident immediately prior to disappearance?
- Previously disappeared and suffered or was exposed to harm?
- School, college, university, employment or financial problems?
- Drug or alcohol dependency?
- Other unlisted factors which the officer or supervisor considers would influence risk assessment?

### 3.7 REVIEW OF RISK

The management of risk requires that a supervisor reviews the risk assessment at the earliest opportunity. The initial information gathering should also be reviewed and, if necessary, further enquiries instigated to validate the initial assessment. Risk assessment is a dynamic process with further assessments being made as the investigation progresses and as new information and evidence comes to light.

The assessment of risk should be reconsidered and challenged at every point of hand over and discussion, for example at the beginning and end of a tour of duty or at tactical tasking meetings. In all cases risk assessment must be reviewed as the passage of time and changing circumstances can significantly alter the initial judgement. Information in support of the decision on which the level of risk must be recorded so that the rationale behind the decision can be understood and reviewed.

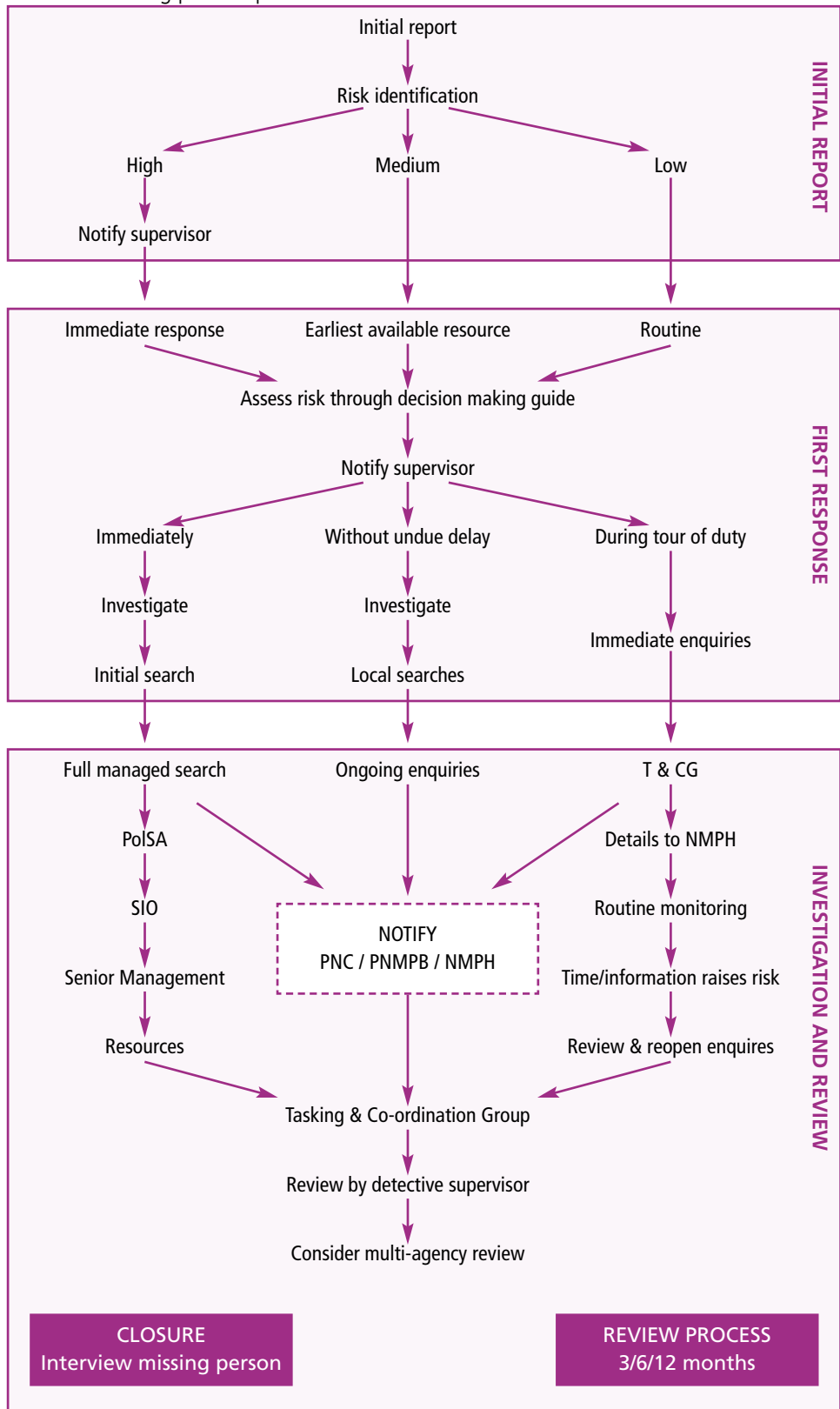
Any decision to reduce the level of risk should be endorsed by a supervisor.



### 3.8 MISSING PERSONS PROCESS

Figure 1 illustrates the stages of a missing persons investigation after being reported to the police.

FIGURE 1 Missing persons process chart



### 3.9 INVESTIGATIVE ISSUES TO CONSIDER

The following issues should be considered when taking the initial report and throughout the life of the investigation. The conduct of the investigation and determining the level of risk are bound together and should be developed as such. Decisions should be recorded, if necessary in a policy log, showing what is being done and why with the risk assessment as a basis for doing it. The accuracy and means of recording can be crucial in any future crime investigation.

Missing persons can be categorised within one of the following groups:

TABLE 2 Categories of missing persons

Lost Person:	this is a person who is temporarily disorientated and would wish to be found, eg, someone who has gone walking and does not know where they are;
Missing Person who has voluntarily gone missing:	this is someone who has control over their actions and who has decided upon a course of action, eg, wishes to leave home or commit suicide;
Missing Person under the influence of a third party:	someone who has gone missing against their will, eg, abduction or murder victim.

Such factors will enable the investigating officer to establish the priority of lines of enquiry and determine the appropriate resources required.

If the subject's whereabouts is unknown issues like opportunity, age, ability, mental fitness, disability and previous conduct are highly relevant. Missing young children are more likely to be lost than abducted but equally their distress is likely to lead to early recovery. If they are not found quickly the odds change and concerns that they have become imperilled, eg, in water, trapped, or abducted increase. Potential suicides can be assessed against family and medical advice, previous missing behaviour, the presence or absence of medication, recent evidence of state of mind and so forth.

#### REMEMBER, IF IN DOUBT, THINK THE WORST UNTIL THE CONTRARY IS PROVED

Voluntary departure tends to be for reasons that should be readily identified. The most common is children in the care of local authorities, returning to locations from which they have been removed. Social services are usually well placed to provide a reasonable assessment and often those missing from care have an established record of absconding. Young children usually go missing for the following common reasons. These are: fear of chastisement; absconding after offending; following on from truancy and family discord; fear of abuse; pregnancy and rejection of persons they see as disrupting the family, eg, mother's new partner.

A number of factors can be identified that indicate risk to a person:

#### Is the disappearance out of character?

Behaviour out of character is obviously a risk factor which increases concern. That this disappearance is inconsistent with previous behaviour gives cause to consider other explanations. It should signal caution in accepting accounts being offered. The key to making this judgement is obtaining credible evidence of what represents normal behaviour. Any suspicion should lead to corroboration of normal behaviour from a third party.

### **What are the circumstances of the last sighting?**

The last sighting is always relevant. In the few cases that turn out to be homicides the last sighting is often related to the crime and is often the best evidence of demeanour, description and intention. Consider who made the sighting, when and in what circumstances and establish whether it can be corroborated by other means, eg, by CCTV.

### **Did the subject prepare for an absence from home?**

Careful interviewing and the search of the missing person's home and room should be designed to reveal any clothing and possessions they have taken. Not taking appropriate clothing, spectacles, money and means of obtaining welfare or support is obviously inconsistent with a voluntary departure (unless suicidal). Evidence of planning or preparation gives a different message. Often family members will be able to deduce, where they are unsure what clothing the person may be wearing from what is missing.

Care should be exercised in releasing descriptions of clothing to the press. It is sometimes a fine decision as to whether to release details where there is no certainty. It is usually wise to limit what is said by expressions such as probably wearing and to point out that clothing can always be changed. Very distinctive clothing, jewellery or footwear may, however, be of significant value to circulate.

### **Which other friends, neighbours and acquaintances have useful information?**

Even where the person reporting is a close relative of the person missing it cannot be assumed that they will know all the relevant contacts the missing person might have. This is particularly so with young persons where their peers may know of a wider range of contacts. Equally some relationships may be secret (for example illicit affairs) and tactful enquiries should be made with friends, other relatives and workmates. Enquiries with schools in respect of missing children are obviously significant. If bullying is a factor it may not be immediately obvious but the issue should always be examined.

### **In what place or circumstances was the person last found?**

If the person has been missing before it should be routine to research any previous missing person reports. Experience indicates that people who go missing regularly are likely to be traced to where they were last found.

### **Could they be in hospital, police custody or prison?**

The possibility may exist in that the missing person has been arrested or taken ill. If it is the former, the person may be seeking to disguise their identity. If they are known to the police checks against warrants and arrests should be made. If there is a possibility of sudden illness enquiries might be made with hospitals.

## **3.10 SEARCH AND EVIDENCE GATHERING**

The first officer attending the report of a missing person will be responsible for ensuring that a search is made of the persons address and any other relevant premises or locations. The objectives of the search are to discover:

- The missing person;
- Evidence relating to their disappearance;
- Intelligence that may lead to their discovery.

If the search involves hazardous areas then consideration must be given to the protection of those involved and the risk must be assessed.

Search is an obvious and routine element of investigating reports of missing persons. It should be considered in three phases:

1. Frequently a missing person, well or otherwise, is still within the curtilage of their home. The routine search should always be of their home and immediate area.

2. The second level of search is hasty but thorough. This involves making an assessment from what the initial enquiry has discovered as to the most likely circumstances of their disappearance and then searching with maximum coverage according to those circumstances using the public and untrained BCU staff.
3. The third level of search applies when the first two have failed and involves fully managed, scenario based, systematic searching of all likely locations to a high level of assurance using only search trained teams. See [section 3.12 General Principles of Searching](#).

An early search should be concentrated on rescue and recovery. Although every attempt must be made to be thorough, the need to achieve maximum coverage because of risk may well require recruiting the help of friends, family and neighbours. While difficult to manage it still may be the most effective option. At this early stage, it is usual to telephone relatives and places frequented by the missing person to warn occupants and to ask them to make immediate searches. It is essential that a record is kept so the ground can be researched systematically with trained searchers later if necessary.

An immediate search should examine any records which might reveal motives and lifestyle information. Missing persons may have problems they have concealed. Their intimate relationships may have been secret. It is possible that communications records will be revealing.

The following have been useful leads in previous cases:

- Handwriting samples;
- Diaries, notepads, correspondence;
- Computers and electronic devices for communication, ie, likely to reveal messaging, emails, contact addresses;
- Landline and mobile telephony and text messages;
- Rubbish;
- Any evidence of substance abuse or dependence, and/or any reliance on medication.

Other potential records might be CCTV systems and local transport, eg, taxi records.

Consideration should be given to searching the PNC for records marked information, unidentified and unknown, in order to find a possible match with the missing person.

If it is unlikely that the missing person will be found by an immediate search and there is evidence that the person is at risk of harm the officer will have to consider requesting specialist support.

The enquiry also has to consider capturing physical evidence which might assist in the identification of recovered bodies or future enquiries into homicide. This means obtaining identifying characteristics for reference from the objects left behind. This process is not simply collection. Investigative effort must be made and recorded to establish, as far as possible, the link between the recovery and the missing person. The most likely sources are.

1. DNA profiling – the object would be to retrieve articles likely to yield the DNA profile of the missing person. Guidance should be sought from scenes of crime officers and it may be a policy consideration for an SIO to submit the sample to the National DNA Database as a crime scene stain against elimination in the future. For this to be applicable, the missing person must be considered to be subject to or have committed a crime. It is also an option to determine natural parents and siblings from whom samples might be taken.
2. Blood grouping.
3. Fingerprints and palm prints – for which the advice of scenes of crime officers should be sought.
4. Dental charts and records.
5. Full details of all bank accounts and credit cards.

6. Details and the location of their passport.
7. Identification of the clothing worn by them, including labels.

In addition the following enquiries will need to be completed:

- Background enquiries, including those with friends, neighbours and acquaintances;
- Search patterns based on intelligence and research;
- Search patterns of open spaces based on research.

Further suggestions about lines of enquiry are contained within [Appendix 11 Lines of enquiry](#).

### 3.11 LEGAL POWERS FOR SEARCH

While the majority of searches of premises can only be done with consent, there are rarely any objections to searches by the occupiers of relevant premises but police officers should explain the nature of their duties and instructions. While objection may create suspicion, police officers must give due regard to ensuring that a search is legally conducted.

The investigating officer should consider the following:

- Is there lawful access to the property?
- Is a search warrant required?
- Does Section 17 PACE apply?

Records must be made of:

- The area searched and the level of intrusion;
- Identification of police officers conducting the search;
- Search techniques, equipment used and search duration;
- Record of significant evidence found at location.

All property received from searches should be handled appropriately, labelled and packaged. Where it is not possible to complete a search in one continuous period, consideration should be given to preserving and protecting the scene. All actions must be documented.

### 3.12 GENERAL PRINCIPLES OF SEARCHING

The method or methods to be used during the course of the search will depend on the primary objective of the search. The location and subject of the search will also feature in deciding upon the search method, for example, whether it is a premises, footpath, wooded area or moorland.

Any search must be carried out thoroughly. The minimum standard required for a search of premises is an 'open door search'. This means that all doors must be opened, including cupboards and wardrobes, the loft and cellar, to search to a standard that will discover a person that is not completely concealed and to achieve the purposes described above. Officers must also remember to consider concealment within a purpose built hide, eg, a child's den.

Evidence of previous investigations shows that persons are missed when deliberately or otherwise concealed, for example, under beds or behind furniture. While the search (at this stage) need not extend to dismantling the furniture, a thorough search must be conducted.

The search must include the environs of the property and any outbuildings. The extent of the search must be based upon intelligence and checked by a supervisor.

A search should be made of any residential premises where the person is missing from or which was occupied at the relevant time. If the last place seen was a large building used by many people, all places where people could secrete themselves must be fully searched.

All searches must be properly documented to show the extent of the search and to include any areas that were, for whatever reason, inaccessible. The time and duration of the search must also be recorded. In any subsequent review of the investigation, the person conducting the review should be able to gain a clear view of what has and has not been carried out, when and by whom. It should also include how many people were involved in the search and whether or not they were trained in search.

If the search is likely to become large scale or complex, the appointment of a search co-ordinator may be beneficial. The co-ordinator should have specialist knowledge of search techniques and be trained to the standard of the Police National Search Centre.

If the circumstances indicate that the search is now most likely to be for a body then the emphasis will shift to evidence preservation, caution and fully managed search. General principles in searching are as follows:

- i. Searches should work on a 3D basis, eg, looking up and down and side-to-side. Officers should identify and search voids and be conscious of space and proportion.
- ii. Open area searches are more complex. The principles of these types of searches can be summarised as follows:
  - **'Best asset use'** in order to achieve **'maximum effect'**. The use of air support, dogs, technical equipment and people all have costs, advantages and disadvantages and search advisers will often work on an escalating basis.
  - **'Minimum intrusion'** if something is discovered its forensic site value is at risk from high levels of intrusion. For example general line searches (shoulder-to-shoulder, large-scale lateral searches) are likely to destroy any forensic opportunities and are of low value.
  - In serious cases officers should be aware of aerial search options. Aerial search works on the basis of imagery, analysis and interpretation. It can trace probable routes taken across grassland, for example, and also areas of ground disturbance which then can be ground searched with caution.
  - **'False assurance'**. Police officers must be aware that some search methods, for example, general line searches particularly when involving the public, are of low value because experience indicates searchers lose concentration after 500 metres. Hasty searches do not give a high level of assurance that a thorough and effective search has taken place, even if it is appropriate to use at an early stage. Police officers must be mindful of maps shaded to show searches are complete when they are only in fact partial. Thermal imaging will identify actively decaying and warm (live) bodies but not recently dead bodies, and it will not work where there is tree canopy.
  - Preserve evidence. Searchers should either have appropriate gloves or mark the find for scenes of crime staff.
  - In missing persons enquiries and homicide cases there is valuable information to be gained from reference to the CATCHEM database remembering that the data applies to a limited group of people under 21 years of age.

### 3.13 SCENARIO BASED SEARCHING

Scenario based searching follows on from an assessment of the reasons for the person going missing and the capabilities and range of person. These considerations will affect the search strategy. Someone with freedom of movement may return once a location has been searched, therefore, consideration must be given to searching areas and premises more than once.

There is also a marked difference between the strategy used in the search for a missing person and a lost person ie, someone that is temporarily disorientated. A missing person is usually able to determine their actions and may set out to avoid discovery. In the case of lost persons, they usually will make some attempt to be discovered if they are able to do so, ie the lost person is unlikely to try to evade discovery.

### 3.14 FULL MANAGED SEARCH

This type of search is in depth and conducted under the direct supervision of a PoSA. The investigation will be managed by an IO or SIO who will work closely with the PoSA. In these cases the PoSA will undertake the management of the search on behalf of the SIO, who will have ultimate responsibility for decisions. The fully managed search should follow the principles of search detailed within this guidance.

The SIO and officer in charge of the search must work together to develop strategies that are coordinated and complementary. Evidence and intelligence arising from either the search or the investigation can have a significant bearing on the other.

As in the case of initial searches, the nature and extent of the search must be fully documented. PoSAs will have access to appropriate paperwork in order to record this information.

To make the most effective use of resources all searching should be intelligence led and not speculative. Specialist advice can be obtained from the National Centre for Policing Excellence (NCPE) Operations Helpdesk to help direct the search under particular circumstances and best asset use should be employed as discussed in [section 3.12 General Principles of Searching](#).

As a general principle, searching should take place throughout the day and night. This will be determined by the circumstances but in all cases where a full managed search is undertaken, there must be valid reasons why it is not continued throughout the full 24 hours. It may not be safe or practicable to conduct searches in certain types of terrain but consideration must be given to other types of search activity, eg, best asset use, that may lead to the discovery of the missing person. The decision to call off a search must be justified and recorded in a policy document.

Every search must be risk assessed to ensure of the safety of those undertaking the search and of any other persons who might be affected by it.

Reference to the CATCHEM database provides guidance as to how to plan and conduct the search for a concealed body.

In the case of a managed search, a fully documented search log must be kept by the person in charge of the search in order to document all decisions made. This log must be separate from, but in line with, that of the investigating officer.

### 3.15 VOLUNTEER SEARCH TEAMS

There are a number of volunteer search teams throughout the country. The most commonly known being mountain rescue teams under the auspice of the Mountain Rescue Council (MRC). There is an affiliated organisation known as the Association of Lowland Search and Rescue (ALSAR) who operate on similar principles. These teams are trained in 'lost' person searches only but provide a useful resource for missing person searching. The responsibility for the search, however, rests with the police service and thus will always retain primacy. Any other organisations that are involved in search operations will come under the control and supervision of the police. The skills of these searchers should be recognised and used in appropriate circumstances that befit their respective abilities but they must be under the direction of the police. The use of any organisation that is not affiliated to the MRC should be treated with caution and, if necessary, enquiries should be made first into their experience and effectiveness.

### 3.16 MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

In high profile cases, members of the public commonly come forward to volunteer their services to assist in a search. On occasions, the police may make appeals for this type of assistance. These situations must be managed carefully and consideration should be given to the following:

- a) Do not underestimate the need for public support and the public's need to feel involved in high risk missing person cases, particularly when young children are involved;
- b) Police will have responsibility for the persons health and safety. Consideration must be given to the suitability of their clothing and footwear;
- c) A large number of volunteers will be present the following issues:
  - scene preservation
  - feedback as to effectiveness of search
  - low standard of search achieved
  - potential disruption to investigation and search;
- d) There will also be the need for police officers to organise and control a large number of people and this can be a drain on resources available to the investigation;
- e) Welfare issues, especially with regard to the weather conditions and those relating to trauma, should a body be found;
- f) Taking the details of all persons assisting in the search, as this information may be required for intelligence purposes including the possibility of the perpetrator returning to the scene and taking part in the search.

Whenever possible appeals should be centred on persons searching and/or checking their own land or property in order to prevent large, unmanageable, groups forming.

### 3.17 SIGHTINGS

People will contact the police with sightings of missing persons. For various reasons, however, they are often mistaken and rarely, but occasionally, deliberately wish to mislead the investigators. This is an issue that frequently presents difficulties, particularly where there is a high level of media interest. Investigations in high profile cases may become overwhelmed by the volume of sightings. There is always difficulty in determining which sightings are valid and will subsequently progress the investigation, and those which will not. Officers must ascertain and record whether the witness knows or claims to know the missing person. This can be of significance in a serious crime investigation. Sightings must be handled efficiently as any undue delay can lead to recriminations. A process to assess, prioritise and manage reports of sightings is necessary.

It may be necessary to use a filter in such situations. For example, investigating officers can:

- Plot sightings geographically as this may provide some corroboration;
- Evaluate sightings against known factors relating to the missing person;
- Seek corroboration from other sources to validate the information;
- Establish the motive of the witness;
- Verify the quality of the witness's eyesight and their ability to recognise people in similar circumstances to those in which they allege they saw the missing person;
- Consider taking a statement or a video and/or audio recorded interview;
- Research the person giving the sighting to assess their credibility.



The reliability of identification evidence should always be tested, as unnecessary sightings can result in lengthy and wasted investigative effort. As a guide it is suggested that the recommendations of the R v Turnbull<sup>1</sup> ruling (1976) 3 All ER 549 may be usefully applied to validate any such sightings. These recommendations can be used as the following aide-memoire, ADVOKATE:

- A Amount of time under observation;
- D Distance from the suspect (include where the witness was standing, a map may assist);
- V Visibility;
- O Obstructions to the witnesses view;
- K Known or seen before including when and where;
- A Any special reason for remembering the suspect;
- T Time lapse, officers should note how long has passed since the witness saw the suspect;
- E Error or material discrepancies between the descriptions given by the witness in the first and subsequent accounts.

Empathy sightings are common in high profile cases. This is usually by people who know the missing person or who wish to give hope to the family. Scenario based searching should be used to refute them. See [section 3.13 Scenario Based Searching](#).

Information from psychics will also be received and can create pressures for searches to be made of those areas. Such information must be treated with extreme caution and evaluated against the prevailing situation.

It is not possible to respond immediately to all sightings and no promises should be given to families of missing persons that this will be done. In all cases, decisions about the type of police response which will be made must be considered alongside the existing investigation and search strategy.

### 3.18 CRITICAL INCIDENTS

Police forces frequently adopt the system of identifying critical incidents from which a system of effective police response evolves. A critical incident is defined by ACPO as:

*'any incident where the effectiveness of the police response is likely to have a significant impact on the confidence of the victim and/or the victim's family and/or the community'.*

General guidance is contained within the Murder Investigation Manual which can be usefully applied to the management of incidents which are either classed as critical or where forces do not practice critical incident management, the missing person report has been assessed as being high risk. For the purpose of this section the term critical incident will be used but it is synonymous with a high risk assessment.

Determining a critical incident is a decision normally made by command or through the force control room. This then causes the local Critical Incident Plan to be initiated and will usually result in the appointment of an SIO, the adoption of major incident room procedures to manage the enquiry and the oversight of command.

Invoking Critical Incident status has immediate consequences, but if there are sufficient associated risk factors involved it is better to take that step early on than to delay. While it is always a judgement call, the principles of review and escalation explicit in risk assessment should give supervisors confidence to make early decisions. The benefit of invoking critical incident status makes the deployment of other national assets available.

PolSA will always be called in as part of the Critical Incident plan. It is likely that a special coordinator position will be required and that PolSA posts will be divided between planning, managing and search.

Where the enquiry has high risk status, this should be managed within the critical incident plan or by the SIO at the time that the enquiry is urgent and active. In cases where the enquiry becomes long running or risks of physical harm are not considered high, the role may be undertaken by the unit or named person (at force or BCU level) having responsibility for the oversight of vulnerable victims.

Such missing person investigations can impact on the local and wider community affecting relationships between them and the police. Such communities should, therefore, be the subject of a Community Impact Assessment in order that the potential effect on them is fully understood. This assessment should objectively analyse any factors that might impact on community tranquillity or create community discord.

For full information about Community Impact Assessments see the *Major Incident Standardised Administrative Procedures (MIRSAP) Manual*.

### 3.19 MEDIA STRATEGY

Should the police wish to use publicity through the media as part of the investigation, this should be done in consultation with the family of the missing person. Occasionally the family will object to this but their consent is not needed, provided that the decision is made in consideration of the Human Rights Act and is carried out proportionately and what is perceived to be in the best interest of the welfare of the missing person.

A media strategy must be developed in high profile cases. Its twin objectives will be to generate information and public awareness to assist the enquiry AND to control speculation.

Guidelines relating to media strategy for critical incidents and major crimes can be found in the *ACPO Murder Investigation Manual*. It must be considered, however, that a missing person critical incident is different from other incidents and will require additional considerations. This is because the dynamic nature of such an investigation will generate public interest and sympathy over a number of days. The search operation will be the primary focus for the media in the early stages, before the investigative process supersedes it.

Careful management of the media will help to ensure that they obtain newsworthy material but that any interference with the investigation is kept to a minimum.

#### **National Missing Persons Helpline**

In the past when widespread coverage has been given to this type of investigation, many people contact the NMPH with important and relevant information. It is important that communications links are established with the NMPH to ensure that this information is managed within the investigation.

### **Issues relating to the investigation**

There are three ways that information must be managed in relation to the investigation:

1. Police response to media requests for information.
2. Police use of the media, for appeals for information in relation to suspects, offenders and witnesses.
3. Police use of communication methods to gain information.

In the case of 1 and 2 above, it is important that accurate information must be given with regard to descriptions, clothing, vehicles, and last sightings. Any photographs must be recent or accompanied by supporting information to describe when it was taken.

A telephone number should be determined for the public to ring and this should be included in all media output. There must be adequate staff to respond to the volume of calls and a process in place to manage the information received.

When proactively using the media, consideration should be given to the following factors:

- Whether local, national or regional is most appropriate;
- The media most suited to the nature of the appeal, ie, radio, television or print;
- Using audience specific media, eg, specialist publications.

Other types of communication which can be used are:

- Posters;
- Internet;
- Crimestoppers;
- Appeals at events, eg, football matches.

The following points should also be given early consideration:

- SIOs and PoSAs should not be in front of the media response.
- Is there a need for mutual aid to supplement the police media team?

### **Issues relating to the search**

1. A police media representative should be appointed as part of the search management process.
2. Care must be taken over the location of the media centre as it must not be within the search area. The geographical police headquarters may be more appropriate.
3. Terms should be negotiated with the media to satisfy the needs of both parties as much as possible within the demands of the investigation.
4. The media will require a news feed on the search every day, therefore 20 minutes should be set aside every day for filming to take place
5. Filming live searches in high priority areas is problematic in that:
  - it may distract the searchers and lower the effectiveness of the search,
  - there is an increased risk of unsolicited inappropriate comments from the searchers if they are disturbed,
  - there is a risk of a significant find being made live on camera which would not be desirable.
6. Photo opportunities using different assets each time can satisfy all parties needs and avoid the need for interference with active searching.
7. Air Exclusion Zones from the Civil Air Authority (CAA) will prevent filming of scenes from helicopters or light aircraft.

8. Obtain the details of a contact in the local authority in case it is necessary to obtain emergency closures of footpaths in the event of a sensitive scene being found near to such a location.
9. Identify viewing areas for the press if an important scene is discovered so that they do not obtain inappropriate pictures.
10. There are deadlines to be met for news broadcasts and failure to adhere to agreed times for media briefings will potentially cause difficulties.

The high level of coverage that will be given to this type of incident in the media will generate a large number of sightings and information reports. It is essential that there are adequate resources to deal with this. The volume of calls and resultant enquiries can seriously disrupt the progress of the investigation. Sightings must be treated with caution and the guidance in [section 3.16 Members of the Public](#), should be consulted.

### 3.20 FAMILY LIAISON AND SUPPORT

One of the most important considerations the police may have to address during a missing person investigation is how to provide support to the family and friends of the missing person. This may be necessary at an early stage to:

- Support and clarify ongoing enquiry;
- Elicit extra information about the missing person;
- Ensure that the police are informed when the person returns.

The trauma associated with some missing persons investigations may place families under immense pressure. This is at a time when the needs of the investigation are making heavy demands on them for detailed information. In some cases the public interest generated by the event will mean that the media will also make further demands on the family. In such circumstances it may be necessary to appoint a Family Liaison Officer (FLO) to work closely with and support the immediate family of the missing person.

For a detailed description of the role of the FLO see [ACPO Family Liaison Strategy Manual](#).

In all other cases arrangements should be made to ensure the family or other appropriate parties are provided with a contact point, eg, a named officer or role, which must be capable of providing a response.

### 3.21 INTERVIEW ON RETURN FROM MISSING

While the return of a missing person will generally be greeted with relief, the investigation is not concluded until the missing person has been finally interviewed. The objects of the interviews are:

- a) to determine the reason why the person went missing and, in particular, if they have been subject to violence, abuse or bullying;
- b) to establish whether they have been a victim of crime before or while missing;
- c) to establish if they have been committing crime while missing;
- d) to discover where and by whom they have been harboured;
- e) to obtain information which may lead to their early discovery should they disappear again;
- f) to put in place any support and preventative measures to avoid such a recurrence.

Any interviews should be conducted in accordance with the PEACE model as stipulated within the [ACPO Investigative Interview Strategy](#).

Where young people have been missing and in particular, if they are in care, there should be proper liaison with the local authority. If they have absconded from a placement they should be interviewed by a social worker independently of the placement staff. Active schemes involving police, social services and other organisations in the review and interview of young persons missing and in care have reduced the frequency of such incidents by a considerable margin. Examples of these include Connexions, Safe in the City, ASTRA and Restorative Justice.

Local policies emphasising proper interview and post risk assessment review will better manage the problem. Those who are frequently reported as missing should be subject to multi-agency discussions.

Police officers must be mindful that when an adult missing person is located, their whereabouts must not be disclosed if this is against their wishes. They should inform the person reporting them missing that they have been located and reassure them about their well-being. History has shown that some people are reported missing to the police in order that their whereabouts can be found, for a variety of reasons.

#### **MANAGEMENT ISSUES:**

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- Developing policies to ensure an effective response to missing persons reports;
- Appropriate escalation of response linked to risk assessment;
- Ensuring policies that respond to major searches and investigations are linked to specialist support;
- Ensuring appropriate management of the return of missing persons.

# Section 4

## PERSONS IN CARE

**T**his section looks at issues relating to persons in care who absent themselves and may be regarded as missing persons. The procedures outlined in it are aimed at young people in care who may run away but there is reference to others who are looked after and who may require a response from the police.

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## 4.1 GENERAL ISSUES

Young people in care and other persons, for example, older people, people with mental health problems or people with learning difficulties, are likely to be vulnerable when missing from their residential settings. A missing person report of this type must be given serious consideration. As this section applies equally to all persons missing from residential settings, it may be appropriate to negotiate protocols with services providing care for vulnerable adults.

## 4.2 CHILDREN MISSING FROM CARE

Children in care who go missing from their care placements account for the greatest proportion of the missing person reports received by police. It should not, however, be assumed that risk diminishes because of frequency of absence. Young people enter care because they have been abused or neglected or because they have been rejected by their families; they are vulnerable each time they go missing. Being 'streetwise' can make them particularly vulnerable because of the types of areas they are likely to frequent and also because their judgement about the levels of risk are likely to be poor. In these cases the nature of the risk may be different. These missing children may not be in immediate danger, but can be vulnerable to longer term risk.

Effective management of missing persons from care does not simply revolve around the investigation of missing episodes. There are a number of measures that need to be considered by agencies involved in the care of young people:

- Risk assessment;
- Categorisation of absence;
- Management of the return;
- Prevention and intervention;
- Inter-agency protocols;
- Use of intelligence.

Although many care homes may be well run, there are well documented cases of institutional abuse. See for example *'Lost in Care – The Report of the Tribunal of inquiry into the abuse of children in care in the former county councils of Gwynedd and Clwyd since 1974 (HMSO 2001)*. Because of this a profile of individual residents and the home should be established especially in cases where concerns of this nature have been identified.

Multi-agency partnerships between the police and organisations that run care homes should be established and based on a problem solving approach as regards the collection and analysis of information. Staff within these homes must keep fully updated records to assist officers in their attempts to trace the missing person, including photographs and/or video footage.

## 4.3 CHILDREN REMANDED TO LOCAL AUTHORITY ACCOMMODATION

A small number of young people enter care after they have been remanded to local authority accommodation (RLAA) by a Youth Court. A child who absconds from local authority accommodation when RLAA is unlawfully at large and has, in legal terms, escaped from custody. If a child who has been RLAA goes missing from a children's home or a foster placement, then the established procedures relating to escape from custody should be followed. The investigating officer will need to liaise with an appropriate officer in the areas' Youth Offending Team.

## 4.4 CHILDREN PLACED IN SECURE ACCOMMODATION ON WELFARE GROUNDS

In some cases young people are placed in secure accommodation on welfare grounds under Section 25 of the Children Act 1989. Once in a secure setting these young people are unlikely to abscond. Should they do so, the usual missing persons procedures would apply.

## 4.5 PROTOCOLS

The roles played by the various agencies involved with those in care must be structured to enable them to respond effectively to issues concerning missing persons. The structure should take the form of a protocol that describes the responsibilities of those agencies. It should be supported by members of staff having suitable training so that they are familiar with their responsibilities should a child in their care go missing. Joint training sessions should be considered to encourage a better understanding of the relevant issues affecting everyone concerned.

Where there is a possibility that children may go missing from their care placement, the professionals responsible for their care should assess this risk. Formats for risk assessments might be agreed between the police, the area social services department and the providers of children's homes within that area. They might include a categorisation of absence to guide classification of the risk in any particular set of circumstances. This should enable agencies to make effective use of their time and avoid police officers having to take unnecessary action in recording and responding to missing person reports. See for example, *Children Missing from Care and Home (DH 2002) – Action Points 12 and 13*.

## 4.6 CATEGORIES OF ABSENCE

While the general categories of missing, ie, high, medium and low risk still apply, see [section 3.5 Classification of Risk and Response](#) for definitions, it is useful to recognise a further category namely, unauthorised absence. Such cases must still undergo risk assessment, but where there are grounds to believe the absence is careless or deliberate with no apparent risk, this category should be considered.

To cover those situations where the person is absent or out beyond an agreed time, a category of unauthorised absence should be used, but justified in writing and reviewed the same as other categories of missing persons. An assessment of their circumstances should be carried out so that consideration is given to determine what risk factors may be present and the timing of reporting them missing to the police. The person's absence must be kept under review and if he or she has not returned within six hours, serious consideration must be given to then reporting them as missing. The responsibility for managing this type of absence lies with the staff of the care home or the foster carer.

Examples of situations where unauthorised absence will apply are:

- Running away after a dispute with a member of staff;
- Failing to return on time;
- Staying at a known location with a friend.

Children's homes and foster carers are required to provide a high standard of care for the children they look after. They are expected to act like a reasonable parent. Where a child may be missing they should follow the established procedure for the home or fostering service. Depending on the vulnerability of the child, this might include making reasonable enquiries to establish the child's whereabouts before making a missing person report to the police.

The National Minimum Standards for Children's Homes and Fostering Services require that all homes and fostering services have clearly defined procedures to follow when children in their care may be missing or absent. These standards apply whether homes and fostering services are provided by local authorities or by independent sector organisations. Independent sector homes and fostering services should be aware of, and follow, the missing persons protocols established between their local police force and the authority in which they are located.



Where police forces have concerns that independent sector homes and/or fostering services are not following agreed good practice, they should raise this concern with the regional office of the Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI). This is the independent national agency which has the responsibility for regulating and inspecting children's homes and fostering services.

When drawing up protocols, they should be written as working documents that will provide a source of practical guidance to those charged with the care of others. An example of a recommended protocol is attached at [Appendix 8 Specimen Protocol between Police and Social Services](#).

#### 4.7 ABSCONDERS FROM HOSPITAL (COMPULSORY PATIENTS ABSENT WITHOUT LEAVE)

The compulsory detention in hospital of patients for the purposes of assessment or treatment is provided for under various sections of the Mental Health Act 1983. Any report of an absence in breach of these powers must be recorded as a missing person.

A risk assessment must be carried out and appropriate action taken to safeguard the well being of the individual and the public at large.

#### MANAGEMENT ISSUES:

- Developing a protocol for joint working with partner agencies.

# Section 5

## WORKING WITH OTHER AGENCIES

**T**his section gives guidance on partner organisations that can be of assistance to missing persons investigations. It describes their roles and indicates how a partnership approach will benefit the missing person.

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## 5.1 PARTNERSHIP

Missing persons cannot be managed effectively by the police service alone. There are a number of statutory and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) that play a role in the prevention and management of missing persons cases. The police are the primary investigators and the coordinators of the response from these other agencies. It should not, however, always be left to the police to take the initiative. A résumé of those NGOs is provided at [Appendix 6 NGOs Involved in Missing Persons Issues](#).

There are a number of other organisations that exist in this country and throughout the world (a search of the internet revealed over 4,000 in the UK alone) who purport to be able assist in various aspects of missing persons investigations. The list at [Appendix 6 NGOs Involved in Missing Persons Issues](#) only covers those that have been used on a regular basis and have been found to be reliable.

Protocols must be established with other agencies and they should describe the roles and responsibilities of all parties. This subject is dealt with in depth in other sections.

## 5.2 THE NATIONAL MISSING PERSONS HELPLINE (NMPH)

The NMPH Helpline 0500 700 700 is a charity dedicated to helping missing people, their families and those who care for them. The principal objective of the NMPH is to provide ongoing support for those who require it, performing this task on behalf of the whole family in a caring and compassionate manner. The NMPH attempts to make contact with missing people of all ages, including looked after children, assuring others of their safety, and reuniting them where appropriate. They also offer to act as an intermediary where required.

Wherever possible in the UK, EU or internationally, the NMPH will endeavour to raise awareness and knowledge of the issues of missing person and work in an innovative way to help missing people, their families and those who care for them.

The 24-hour Freephone confidential Helpline takes calls from families and police reporting missing person. The Helpline makes enquiries and publicity appeals and takes sighting reports from the public. There are information sharing agreements between them, the police and social services.

### **Message home Helpline:**

Message Home Helpline 0800 700 740 is a national 24 hour freefone Helpline for anyone aged 18 or over who is away from home. Confidential advice is given and the Helpline can pass a message home. The Message Home Helpline can also make referrals to other agencies where appropriate.

### **Runaway Helpline:**

The Runaway Helpline 0808 800 70 70 is a national 24 hour freefone Helpline for anyone aged 17 or under who has run away or been forced to leave home. Confidential advice is given, referrals made to other organisations and it can help a child or young person get to a place of safety. Messages can be passed on to enable children and young people to get in touch with their family or carers.

### **Other services provided**

These are:

- Case management
- Press and publicity
- Police liaison
- Social services liaison
- Missing from care department
- Preventative education
- Identification and reconstruction
- External enquiries and after care
- Street network.

**Case management**

Trained and experienced case managers provide ongoing support and advice for families of missing people. Missing person cases are registered on the NMPH's comprehensive database. In support of the family, the NMPH tries to lend an sympathetic ear and adopts an approach of common sense and optimism with the family. The NMPH also offers practical help, eg, making detailed enquiries, and getting a letter forwarded on the families' behalf. In higher risk cases The NMPH liaises with the police, organises publicity, passes on details of sightings and follows up, where appropriate.

**Press and publicity**

A substantial range of publicity networks include regular TV and national newspaper slots, milk cartons, HGV lorries, Teletext and posters. Website <http://www.missingpersons.org/>

**Police liaison**

The NMPH has dedicated police liaison officers in every force in the UK and the Republic of Ireland, and has been working alongside the police for many years. A national police protocol for sharing information on missing persons is currently under development.

**Social services liaison**

A national protocol for sharing information on looked after children is being implemented throughout the United Kingdom including liaison with social services in 209 local authorities.

**Missing from care department**

This confidential service offers a full range of the NMPH's services. It has been recognised by the Association of Directors of Social Services as fully compliant with data protection and child protection guidelines for looked after children.

The NMPH has recently completed a successful project on looked after children. This involved recording the incidence and circumstances of missing children from care as part of a pilot study in six local authority areas. Following the success of the project, a national protocol has been developed between the Association of Directors of Social Services and the NMPH to include England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. It also provides a valuable source of information about behaviour generically and individually.

**Preventative education**

A new resource *Running Away: A Cry for Help* was launched in the autumn 2003 by the NMPH working in partnership with the Children and Youth Partnership Foundation (CYPF) in an effort to tackle this serious issue. It is a stand-alone extension to the *Make a Connection Life Skills Teacher's Manual*. The resource contains a selection of four lessons that support some of Key Stage 3 National Curriculum objectives of the PSHE. It also includes a short video featuring interviews with runaways.

A graphical computer game will be available on the NMPH web site due for release in 2004. Contact NMPH for further information.

Should a student go missing from school advice is now also featured on the DfES website: <http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/emergencies> .

**Identification and reconstruction**

In cases of unidentified persons, alive or deceased, the ID department can run an immediate search against the NMPH's national database of missing persons. This department also maintains a database of ID information on unidentified bodies and hospital patients, which is constantly checked. The department has achieved international recognition in forensic art and age progression. In December 2003, NMPH launched the UK's first database of unidentified persons:

Website <http://www.missingpersons.org/unidentified.html>

### External enquiries and after care

The team is able to bring some problematic cases to a satisfactory resolution particularly when the missing person is unable to read or write and so not able to respond to a letter. In these cases most missing persons react positively to personal contact.

### Street network

An established experienced number of contacts to help find missing people.

## 5.3 UK MISSING KIDS WEBSITE

The UK Missing Kids Website, <http://uk.missingkids.com/> helps the police to find missing and abducted children. The website enables the police to transmit photographs and information about a missing child to other forces around the UK and abroad.

To improve the likelihood of locating a missing person, police officers are advised to submit cases for entry onto the website, where all of the following criteria are met:

- a) The child was under 18 years when he or she went missing;
- b) There are descriptive details and photographs of the child, sufficient to enable identification by a visitor of the website;
- c) The SIO believes there will be no risk to the child through placement on the website or associated media campaigns;
- d) The parent or guardian of the child agrees to the child being featured, OR the SIO believes that it is in the child's best interests to be featured on the site against the parent or guardian's wishes.
- e) EITHER the child has just been reported missing and is at extremely high risk, OR the child has been missing for over 48 hours and may be at a lower risk.

### How to use the site

This is as follows:

- In the UK, the Missing Kids website is run by a network of hub forces, which input case information from their surrounding regions. Quality control and policy development is provided by the Police National Missing Persons Bureau. The charity PACT (Parents and Children Together) helps the police to promote this site in the UK;
- To place a case on the website, contact your local hub force see [Appendix 10 Missingkids.com hub forces](#). For further assistance on operational matters, contact the Police National Missing Persons Bureau. For enquiries relating to publicity, contact PACT, see [Appendix 6 NGOs Involved in Missing Persons Issues](#).

### Features of the website missingkids.com

They are as follows:

- Only trained police officers can input information on the site;
- It is extremely secure. Website content is fully protected from unauthorised interference by a complex security system;
- It allows posters to be quickly and easily distributed;
- It enables police forces to instantly transmit the photograph and details of a missing child to other forces around the UK and abroad;
- The website has now been introduced in 14 countries, with 10 more countries in development;
- The national sites are linked together with in-built translation technology, so that cases placed on the site in English can be read worldwide, and posters produced in the local language. This feature can be particularly useful in cases of international abduction;
- The technology also includes age progression techniques that have proven successful in identifying and retrieving children years after they went missing.

FIGURE 2 Active missing kids websites



#### 5.4 CHILD RESCUE ALERT

Child Rescue Alert is based on a system developed in the USA called 'Amber Alert'. It is intended as a means of alerting the public to child abductions where the following criteria apply:

1. The child is under 16 years old;
2. There is a reasonable belief that the child has been kidnapped or abducted;
3. There is a reasonable belief that the child is in imminent danger of serious harm or death, (a senior police officer, of at least the rank of superintendent, feels that serious harm OR death may occur to the child);
4. There is sufficient information available to enable the public to assist the police in locating the child (the case has sufficient descriptive details, or CCTV/photos of the victim or offender, to justify launching an alert).

It is a matter for individual forces to decide if they wish to develop a Child Rescue Alert scheme within their area. It must be stressed, however, that any expansion of this scheme must be implemented in a standardised manner to ensure that its value and credibility are maintained. See [Appendix 12 Child Rescue Alert – Implementation Guidance](#) for further details and information about implementing the scheme.

#### 5.5 THE CHILD ABDUCTION UNIT

International abductions are dealt with by the Child Abduction Unit which is part of the Department for Constitutional Affairs. They will give advice about these matters and can be contacted on 020 7911 7047 during office hours.

#### 5.6 NATIONAL PORTS OFFICE, HEATHROW

This is staffed by the Metropolitan Police and can offer assistance in cases where urgent action is required to prevent the persons leaving the country and can be contacted on 020 8759 3391.

## 5.7 NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATIONS RELEVANT TO CHILD ABDUCTION

Two organisations that specialise in the field are Parents and Children Together (PACT) and reunite, see [Appendix 6 NGOs Involved in Missing Persons Issues](#) for details.

## 5.8 INTERPOL

The Interpol Unit located at the National Criminal Intelligence Service (NCIS) is responsible for facilitating all matters involving enquiries abroad. The Interpol Unit will liaise with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office as appropriate. Interpol enquiry desk (24 hours) 020 7238 8115.

## 5.9 OTHER NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATIONS

A large number of organisations offer assistance in matters relating to missing persons. It is not possible to authenticate all that these organisations offer nor their ability to deliver a dependable service. It is advised that careful consideration should be given to using any unlisted organisation. There are, however, several organisations that are established in this field and their authenticity has been tested through their involvement in previous investigations. Information about these organisations can be found at [Appendix 6 NGOs Involved in Missing Persons Issues](#).

### MANAGEMENT ISSUES:

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- Partnerships with other agencies must be cultivated and efforts made to ensure that they deliver support to investigations.
- Reporting standards to the NMPH must be complied with.
- Child Rescue Alert is a valuable resource but it is essential that the standard operating principles are complied with.
- Missingkids.com is an underused facility which could assist in the recovery of missing children.

# Section 6

## SUPERVISION

**T**his section gives guidance on how missing persons investigations should be managed and supervised. It covers day-to-day issues, escalation of the investigation, ownership, and the review process. It also includes how to manage cases which cross police areas and force borders.

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## 6.1 SUPERVISION AND MANAGEMENT

Missing persons represent a real risk. The few cases which involve abduction or lead to abuse or other serious crimes generate high levels of concern. The difficulty is in separating what is routine but important from what might appear unimportant but may be calamitous. The process of risk assessment is designed to assist escalation and demonstrates the need for a management regime. Risk assessment requires a second opinion and a process for upgrading to levels from which sufficient resources can be obtained. A second opinion is also required because of the frequency of reports and the small number of cases which remain outstanding require ongoing review. There is also the need to secure inter-agency working arrangements which will require coordination.

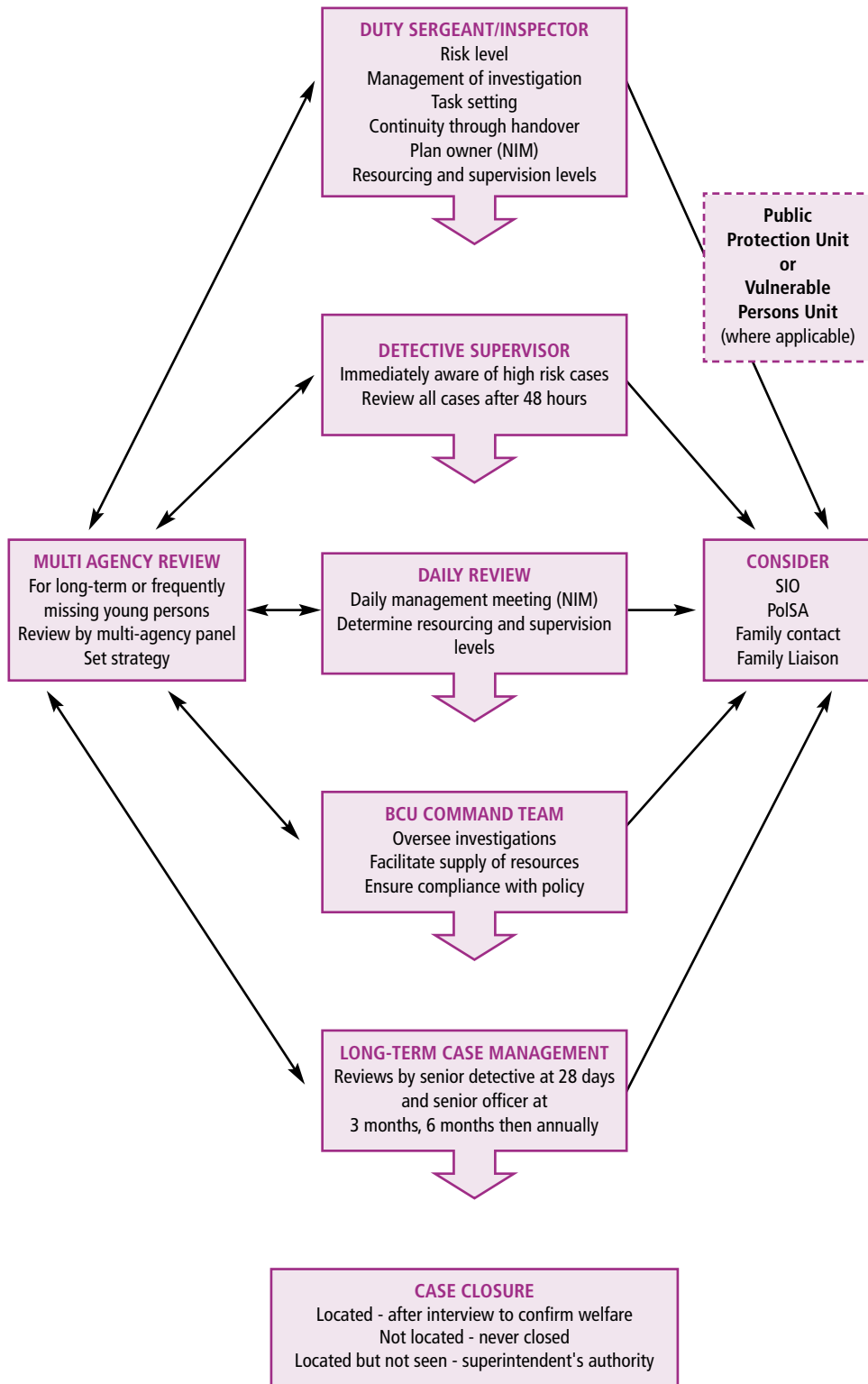
Force policies must ensure that there is an active supervision of all missing person investigations. Within the BCU there should be an officer of at least Inspector rank who is responsible for overseeing missing person reports. Where possible a specialist unit comprising of staff trained and organised to review outstanding cases should be used. These units also monitor risk assessment and liaison with other agencies, work with social services in dealing with repeatedly missing cared for children and assist officers in their enquiries. Where BCUs do not have a dedicated inspector and a specialist unit, commanders should ensure that rigorous management systems are in place to provide a 24 hour supervision of these cases.

This specialist tier is not designed to remove responsibility from general patrol duties or routine supervision. Initial report and enquiry will almost always lie with front line staff. The specialist unit should be there as a back up, to pursue more in depth enquiries and to work on solutions.

Where individual forces use Activity Based Costing (ABC), this should be employed to evaluate the cost of missing persons investigations.

**6.2 A SUGGESTED MODEL FOR THE SUPERVISION OF MISSING PERSONS CASES**

FIGURE 3 Model for the supervision of missing persons cases





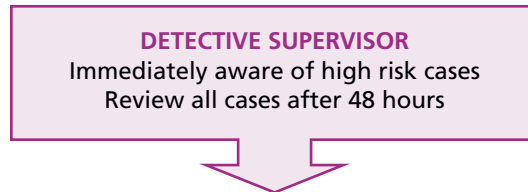
The initial supervision should be by sergeants and inspectors and their responsibilities are as follows:

- a) The officer's assessment of risk should be checked, verified and recorded on the appropriate form. This should be done as soon as possible. In high risk cases, supervision should be immediate.
- b) Supervisors must ensure that the appropriate levels of action are taken to locate the missing person. They should be aware of all medium risk cases without undue delay and give urgent supervision to such cases.
- c) An immediate and longer-term investigation plan must be set. Any such plan should cater for realistic staffing levels and must be recorded in the missing person report form. Such entries must be timed, dated, and signed by the supervisor.
- d) If the subject is under 16 years, the use of Child Rescue Alert, see [section 5.4 Child Rescue Alert](#), must be considered. The UK Missing Kids Website <http://uk.missingkids.com/> see [section 5.3 UK Missing Kids Website](#) is also appropriate, relative to risk.
- e) Consideration should be given to the need for the investigation to be referred immediately or at a later stage to:
  - i) Detective;
  - ii) Police search adviser;
  - iii) Senior management team.
- f) Consideration must be given to the level of resources needed to pursue an effective investigation.
- g) Judgements have to be made about the level of ownership of the investigation and in all cases there should be a nominated investigating officer (IO). This will be at one of three levels:
  - i. Officer allocated from patrol duties and handed over to subsequent shifts;
  - ii. More serious cases should be allocated an IO whose sole or primary role is to investigate this incident;
  - iii. The seriousness warrants the appointment of an SIO.

There must be an effective briefing of the next duty supervisor to ensure continuity of the investigation.

In line with the principals of the National Intelligence Model (NIM), it is recommended that there should be a plan owner, and this may be determined at the daily management meeting. The tasking and coordinating group will retain overall supervision of the investigation throughout its life, having responsibility for liaising with other supervisors and checking that it is progressing in an appropriate manner.

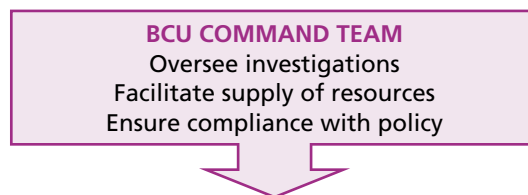
For any investigation to succeed, it must have strong continuous ownership and day-to-day supervision. It must be established where ownership lies within the remit of uniform shifts and, or reliefs, and the investigation should be handed over at the end of every tour of duty. Senior management must ensure that adequate arrangements exist to maintain the quality and progress of the investigation.



The value of employing the investigative expertise of a detective supervisor must be recognised and they should conduct case reviews. In high risk cases, this should be done as soon as possible. In all other cases this review must take place no later than 48 hours after the report is made to the police. It is suggested that the rank of the reviewing officer should be no less than that of a detective inspector.

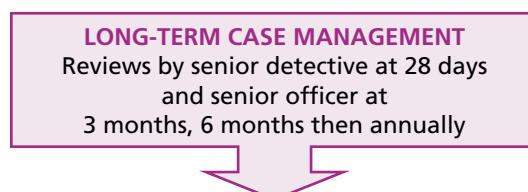


In accordance with the NIM, all cases should be reviewed at the daily management meeting. The responsibility for bringing this to the meeting will, depending on force structures, most likely be the duty inspector. This is an appropriate forum for determining the level of resources and supervision that the case requires. This process is described in more detail in [section 6.5 Integration with the National Intelligence Model \(NIM\)](#).



While the daily responsibility for the investigation will generally rest with other ranks, senior management have a responsibility to ensure that the following needs of the investigation are met.

- a) It is most important that an appropriate level of support is given, with sufficient resources made available to carry out the investigation. Research has shown that many missing persons investigations fail when they are not given appropriate recognition and are understaffed from the outset.
- b) They have a responsibility to ensure that policy is adhered to and the investigation is carried out thoroughly.



As a minimum requirement, long-term cases which give cause for concern, should be reviewed by a senior detective of at least the rank of chief inspector. Reviews should take place every 28 days for the first 3 months, then at 6 months and 12 months intervals, then annually thereafter. Consideration may also be given to cold case reviews of outstanding missing persons.

#### CASE CLOSURE

Located - after interview to confirm welfare  
Not located - never closed  
Located but not seen - superintendent's authority

Missing person cases should not be closed without the person FIRST being seen by a police officer. The officer will check on the health and welfare of the person and give them the opportunity to disclose any offending behaviour by or against them while, or as a cause of, being missing, see also [Section 3.20 Interviewing on Return From Missing](#).

In circumstances where the missing person has been located but it is impractical to see them due to their present circumstances, eg, gone abroad or deliberately making themselves unavailable to the police, the case can be closed provided that the authority of a superintendent is given.

Where the missing person has not been found, the case must remain open and the subject of review as deemed appropriate in line with the process outlined in this section, see [long term case management](#).

### 6.3 THE PURPOSE OF THE SUPERVISION AND REVIEW PROCESS

This is as follows:

- Review the level of risk;
- Check for any outstanding and incomplete actions;
- Quality assure actions already taken;
- Set new actions and enquiries in order to bring the investigation to a successful conclusion;
- Make recommendations about the management and ownership of the investigation;
- Set future review date(s) as appropriate.

All the above should be recorded as policy decisions within the report.

### 6.4 MULTI-AGENCY REVIEW

Agencies should be involved in the review process where appropriate in order to provide a comprehensive picture of the missing person's circumstances. The content of the meeting should be recorded in the minutes. The meeting may be attended by:

- A representative of the police;
- A representative of the local authority responsible for the person's care who is able to take authoritative decisions on the steps needed to locate and protect the person;
- The registered manager of the children's home or the manager of the fostering service, or other carer;
- The person who was missing;
- Where the person is not placed within the boundary of their responsible authority – a representative from the authority in which the person is currently living – perhaps from the local team responsible for child protection or other relevant agency;
- Other relevant agencies, eg, representatives from the Youth Offending Team and Drugs Action Team.

## 6.5 INTEGRATION WITH THE NATIONAL INTELLIGENCE MODEL (NIM)

Intelligence is relevant in missing persons enquiries and databases can be searched to provide information relevant to the background of any parties to the enquiry. Intelligence records may prove valuable in establishing locations and associates known to the missing person. Intelligence records may also indicate whether suspicion might attach to the reporting person or any other person featured in the enquiry.

The daily management meeting determining and prioritising the business of the day should have regard to outstanding missing persons.

Every BCU should have a single senior person available to manage missing persons enquiries. Many BCUs have a vulnerable victims unit which oversees child abuse, domestic violence and missing persons. There should be an intelligence function within such units or, where they do not exist, a person having responsibility for ensuring that patterns and trends within the data are examined and suitable enquiries initiated. If cared for children, for example, are frequently missing from the same location or particular individuals are frequently missing, some intervention should be organised.

## 6.6 LOCAL POLICE LEAD FOR MISSING PERSONS

In 2002 the Social Exclusion Unit (SEU) published its report *Young Runaways*. One of the report's recommendations concerned police action to respond to young people who run away from home or from care. This recommended that in each BCU there should be a clear local police lead for young missing persons and has since been endorsed by ACPO. See *Young Runaways (SEU 2002) Recommendation 13*. This does not have to be a full-time role and can be combined with other activities, or it may fall within the remit of a specialist unit.

The Department of Health published '*Children Missing from Care and Home – a guide to good practice*', alongside the above SEU report in 2002. This report requires that every council with social services responsibility should have a designated senior manager with responsibility for monitoring the effectiveness of its protocols and procedures concerning children missing from public care. There should also be a similar role monitoring the authority's policy and performance relating to children missing from home. See *Children Missing from Care and Home (DH 2002) – Action points 11 and 22*. The above arrangements should be extended to deal with all vulnerable persons in this context.

## 6.7 PUBLIC PROTECTION UNIT / VULNERABLE PERSONS UNIT

Already adopted by many forces, these units have responsibility for various policing issues that, in many cases will have relevance and links to missing persons. Forces may, if adequately resourced, find it appropriate for such units to play an active part in missing persons investigations. This will more readily enable the links to be identified between these investigations and, for example, those into domestic violence and child abuse. Alternatively, the officer having responsibility for missing persons on the BCU, should recognise which cases should be referred to such units. The decision as to whether to use these units in relation to missing persons is at the discretion of each police force.

## 6.8 CROSS BORDER CASES

Difficulties can arise when a person reported missing resides elsewhere. The principle that the police area which receives the report must record it is particularly important in these cases. The details of the report should be transferred to another police area for investigation, eg, a student in temporary accommodation or a day trip visitor. In this type of situation consideration must be given to the circumstances of the disappearance before determining where the investigation should be based. It is not always appropriate to refer the enquiry to the place where they usually live.

As missing persons are usually found through investigation and search, consideration should be given to where the bulk of these enquiries are to be conducted. It is probable that the place where the missing person was last seen would generate the majority of the fast time enquiries.

In cases of dispute, where the locus is not clear, the matter should be referred to a senior supervisor within each force to determine who should own the investigation. In extreme situations where it cannot be resolved at this level, it should be referred to an ACPO officer who will discuss the matter with an ACPO representative of the other force. If the dispute is within one force in relation to internal boundary issues, it should be referred to the ACC who has territorial responsibility.

Where a person has been abducted in one force area and abandoned in another, particularly following homicide, then unless there are cogent reasons to the contrary, the force in whose area the abduction took place should be in command of the investigation see *ACPO Cross Border Murder and Abduction Investigations – Oct 1992*.

## 6.9 RETENTION OF OUTSTANDING REPORTS

While a missing person enquiry remains open, all records and stored data must be retained. The enquiry will only be closed when a police officer has carried out the appropriate physical checks to establish that the person is safe and well. This will allow for the analysis of all information and the identification of any trends or patterns that will assist future investigations. When linked to the compatible information technology available this will allow officers to access previously stored information, which may also assist in the enquiries.

## 6.10 WEEDING POLICY

Each force should include clear guidelines within their policies to address the issue of retention of missing person records and their ultimate destruction. All unresolved cases should be retained indefinitely. In cases where missing persons have been traced, policies should dictate retention periods having regard for issues such as the need to be able to identify locations where missing persons have been to and who they associated with. This can assist in future criminal investigations.

Following the Bichard Inquiry published in 2004, a code of practice is being developed that will provide definitive guidance on these areas.

### MANAGEMENT ISSUES:

- Develop policies that indicate how frequently supervisors should monitor missing persons related reports.
- Active supervision of cases will ensure an appropriate response.
- Senior management have a responsibility to give support and allocate suitable resources.
- Missing persons investigations must be accorded sufficient importance within other policing priorities.
- Ensure that cases that cross forces borders are given proper ownership.
- Ensure that issues relating to European Commission on Human Rights, Human Rights Act, anti-discrimination legislation and legislation on freedom of information and privacy are complied with, see also [section 3.1 Duty of Positive Action](#).
- Proper use of intelligence to understand the issues surrounding missing person behaviour.

# Section 7

## SUPPORT FOR MISSING PERSONS INVESTIGATIONS

**T**his section gives information on the roles that support the primary investigation. It includes reporting and notification roles that must be adhered to and which can positively support investigations. The Schengen agreement brings a European perspective that has not existed before. It also covers the use of information technology and data standards.

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## 7.1 BRITISH TRANSPORT POLICE

The British Transport Police (BTP) are the national police service for the railways. Although BTP do not have a primary role in recording or investigating reports of missing persons, they can have a role in supporting police forces with missing person investigations.

Members of the public will not differentiate between BTP and other police officers. They will expect to make a report of a missing person to any police force, including the BTP. The BTP will record details of missing persons in accordance with this guidance and undertake any relevant enquiries within their jurisdiction, before passing full details to the police force where the missing person was last seen. A risk assessment should be carried out to determine the priority of any response.

As far as reasonably practicable, the BTP will make necessary searches of railway specific premises, including CCTV footage in support of any missing person search and investigation.

BTP control room supervisors will ensure that upon their directly receiving a report of a missing person that all reasonable assistance will be provided in support of the investigating force, particularly where specialist contact with the railway industry becomes necessary.

The BTP have trained search capabilities with particular skills in their working environment. PSU search teams, dogs and PoISA trained officers are available for specialist searches on railway premises, as part of any missing person enquiry. Initial contact to determine availability should be made with the relevant area control room, or alternatively the BTP FHQ Operations Department.

Searches on railway lines are dangerous. All officers must work under the direction of the ACPO/BTP/Network Rail protocol for officers on or about railway premises (particularly lineside locations) when undertaking any searches of railway premises. Advice should be sought, where practicable, from the BTP before undertaking such searches.

The BTP participate in the NMPH information dissemination process and can arrange for missing person information to be displayed at railway stations, in order to widen the appeal and gather information about missing person investigations.

Missing persons may come to the notice of BTP officers where they have become involved in incidents on the railway, or simply through routine stops. The BTP intelligence system may provide useful information to investigating forces including useful sightings of missing persons. Enquiries regarding intelligence searches should be directed to the BTP Force Intelligence Bureau (FIB).

## 7.2 INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

Where possible the use of an interactive and compatible software programme is recommended. This will allow forces to effectively record and store information on missing persons and to communicate this to other forces and organisations. This technology should also have links with existing information systems including the PNC and the PNMPB.

Where forces have adopted appropriate IT systems, some advantages have become apparent. These include:

- Improving the efficiency of information storing;
- Better communications between forces on a regional basis;
- Improved management of missing persons enquiries;
- Easier access to information and intelligence for all involved in the investigation;
- A better understanding of, and therefore a greater tendency to comply with policies and procedures;
- The ability to search for information should make missing persons investigations more effective and efficient.

### 7.3 INFORMATION RECORDING AND DATA STANDARDS

All missing person reports will contain information that complies with the data standards as set by PITO. This will be done by way of an IT or a paper-based system. If paper-based, the format must comply with the national form as contained within the guidance.

Information gathered by all officers involved in the investigation should be compatible with the computerised format as detailed in [section 7.2 Information Technology](#).

The paperwork involved should be comprehensive and accurately gather the data required. To assist in this process it is important that other organisations involved, ie, care homes can access up to date information on all persons in their care. Recent photographs and lists of friends and family that are accurate and current, should also be kept for use in the event of the person being reported missing.

### 7.4 POLICE NATIONAL COMPUTER (PNC)

Although individual police forces may have their own procedures, details of all missing persons should be recorded on the PNC as soon as possible and at least within 48 hours of their disappearance. Police forces must ensure cancellation of a missing person being found.

The PNC has an enhanced search capability known as QUEST (Query Using Enhanced Search Techniques), as well as an off-line descriptive search facility available through the PNCU at Hendon. These tools enable details of a found person or body to be searched and checked against the database. The requirements to carry out the search may be obtained from force PNC liaison officers.

Reporting forces should ensure that all details of unidentified persons and bodies are entered under the wanted/missing category of the PNC as a found report using 'information/' as the surname. Descriptive information should also be entered, eg, sex, marks, scars, jewellery.

In the case of persons who have absconded who are subject to a Mental Health Act Order, forces should ensure that arrangements are made to record these cases as missing persons on the expiry of the power to detain them under the Mental Health Act. If this is not done, the PNC will automatically delete the entry.

Missing Persons records are automatically weeded from the PNC after 10 weeks, unless the record is extended. It is essential that all missing person cases are extended to last for one year's duration at the time that the report is placed on the PNC. This will help to ensure that circulations are not lost. Unsolved cases should also be further extended after the first year.

Consideration should be given to using the #TE check which may reveal information about the persons movements prior to their circulation on PNC.

All forces PNC broadcasts can assist the enquiry although they should not be used in all cases. Where they should be used is:

- Where it is suspected that the person may be an unidentified body;
- Where a number of geographical regions are relevant to an investigation;
- In exceptional cases.

Details of identified persons and/or bodies should be recorded on the PNC, eg, unconscious accident/illness victims, and people with amnesia, where the next of kin have not been informed. This can be particularly helpful if they are reported missing, especially if in another area.

## 7.5 SCHENGEN INFORMATION SYSTEM (SIS)

The implementation date for this system is March 2005.

This initiative adds a new perspective to policing in that PNC circulations will now be sent to Member States of the European Union and Norway and Iceland. Their circulations will also be available in this country. Each member country has a Sirene Bureau, which is the administrative arm of the system. The Sirene UK Bureau is based at NCIS with 24/7 availability, email address: [sireneuk@ncis.x.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:sireneuk@ncis.x.gsi.gov.uk) The SIS holds alerts on wanted and missing people, requests for information reports and lost and stolen property. 'Hits' on the system request officers to seize property, submit a report or make an arrest subject to the laws of the country in which he or she is based. Contact with the Sirene UK Bureau will provide supplementary information. The Sirene UK Bureau will contact a force when one of their missing persons has been located abroad. If the person is vulnerable in some way, eg, in need of medication, the Sirene UK Bureau may seek this detail from the original missing person report in order to pass the detail to the overseas authorities.

The creation of missing person alerts on the system will happen automatically when a PNC circulation is made, but the officer notifying the PNC will have to classify the missing person under one of the following groups.

- a) Juvenile in need of protection or who poses a threat – all juvenile missing persons,
- b) Adult in need of protection or who poses threat – all those assessed as being high and medium risk,
- c) Adult not in need of protection and not posing a threat – all other missing persons.

a) and b) Cover those people in the UK and within the Member States where action is requested, within national legislation to protect the individual either in their own interests or in order to protect others.

c) Covers humanitarian issues. Where a person disappears but is not considered to be in need of protection or posing a threat the requested action is to relay the fact that the person has been found. Their current address is also requested but may only be given if the missing person consents to it being divulged to the country issuing the alert.

National law applies in such situations and law enforcement officers locating missing persons abroad must use their national law when determining appropriate action, eg, ages for juveniles may vary across the Schengen area.

**Recovery of missing persons**

In the case of vulnerable persons being found abroad there is likely to be a need to repatriate them to this country. This is not the responsibility of the police and a protocol has been signed with the directors of Social Services for England and Wales, and equivalents in Northern Ireland and Scotland. This sets out the responsibilities for repatriation. Should these issues arise, advice can be obtained by contacting the Sirene UK Bureau. Where there is a crime linked to the missing persons case, the IO may travel out to pursue that investigation. Liaison with the relevant caring agencies or person will clarify that the police role is investigation. Repatriation is not within the police remit.

There is likely to be an impact on the police, Immigration Service and Social Services with responsibility for areas with international ports and airports by the identification of a larger number of missing persons.

If a person is assessed as being high risk and thought to have travelled outside the Schengen/EU area, consideration should be given to an Interpol circulation. Police officers should contact their International Liaison officer for details.

## 7.6 ROLE OF THE POLICE NATIONAL MISSING PERSONS BUREAU (PNMPB)

The role of the PNMPB is currently under review – this section details its current role

The PNMPB complements rather than replaces the current missing person application on the PNC. It is located at New Scotland Yard and functions as the central clearing house for information on missing persons. The PNMPB serves UK police forces and overseas agencies. It does not have responsibility for conducting any missing person enquiries.

The PNMPB offers advice in relation to information available from government and non-government agencies which may be of assistance in missing person or unidentified body enquiries. The PNMPB has contacts with most government departments and also the primary non-government organisations and charities that deal with missing persons and families tracing.

**Notifying the PNMPB**

Notification of all outstanding missing persons must be sent to the PNMPB within fourteen days. Most missing persons are found locally within this period. Police forces should forward information to the PNMPB in a shorter time if a particular case appears to warrant more urgent attention.

Where the person reported missing is a foreign national, the PNMPB should be advised immediately. The PNMPB should also be notified at once where a missing UK resident is believed to have travelled abroad.

Details of unidentified persons or bodies found must be reported within 48 hours of being found. Under existing arrangements it is not unusual for forces to circulate details of unidentified bodies or persons to other forces during the early stages of an enquiry. Notification to the PNMPB should not interfere with this practice.

**Submitting a report**

Notifications of missing persons should be made to the PNMPB by means of fax, telex or email. Copies of individual force missing person forms are acceptable.

Photographs and dental records, where available, should be forwarded to the PNMPB as soon as possible after notification.

Additional information that comes to light after notification should also be forwarded to the PNMPB. Forces should ensure there is an appropriate reference on the cover sheet.

Consideration should also be given to obtaining a sample of the missing person's DNA. If this action is taken, this fact should be included in the notification to the PNMPB and the PNC, email, [nationalmissingpersons@met.pnn.police.uk](mailto:nationalmissingpersons@met.pnn.police.uk) (tel: 020 7230 4029/4745).

#### **Notifications of possible matches**

PNMPB staff will advise the originating force by telephone of any possible identification coming to light when a report is searched against the PNMPB's database. This will be confirmed later by hard copy or email.

#### **Cancellation and deletion of reports**

Originating forces will be sent 6 monthly reminders from the PNMPB for the first two years for which a report of a missing and/or unidentified person is outstanding. Reminders will be issued annually thereafter. Reports will not be deleted from the PNMPB's records without the consent of the originating force.

To ensure the integrity of the database, the PNMPB must be informed without delay when a missing person is traced.

#### **Statistics**

Statistics will be prepared by the PNMPB and made available through a quarterly report or on request from an individual police force. These will include the following:

- Males/females under 14 years of age;
- Males/females aged 14 – 17 years;
- Males/females aged 18 years and over.

The following categories of missing persons will be included:

- Missing persons (Mispers);
- Absconders from care (Abscares);
- Absconders from care for those with mental issues (Mentabs);
- Unidentified bodies male/female (Unidents).

#### **Come to notice index**

The PNMPB will also maintain an index of adults who have come to the notice of the police and who do not wish to identify themselves. The index will note aliases, unusual behaviour and distinguishing features, all of which may assist with their identification.

## 7.7 SPECIALIST SUPPORT

In addition to those mentioned elsewhere in this guidance, there are a number of sources of specialist support that are available to assist in the investigation of missing persons. These are:

### Police National Search Centre (PNSC)

Formerly the Counter Terrorist Wing. This is a central service establishment with staff from both military and police instructors. Their remit is to train PolSAs and Police Search Teams (PST) from all mainland force areas. It is acknowledged by ACPO Terrorism and Associated Matters (TAM) as the authority on all search related matters, whether counter terrorist or not. The centre is available for advice on all search matters.

### NCPE operations helpdesk

This is available 24 hours a day and has access to specialist support for investigations. This includes:

- Serious Crime Analysis Section (SCAS). Access to geographic profilers, comparative case analysis, database analysis, serial offending and a good practice knowledge database;
- National Injuries database;
- National Search Advisor;
- Specialist support, eg, forensics, equipment.

Contact telephone number 01256 602443.

### CATCHEM Database

A database of all child murders committed in England, Wales and Scotland, from 1 January 1960 to the present date. This includes females under the age of 21 years and males under the age of 17 years at the time of death.

Information from the database can be used to assist in relation to search and enquiries (contact via the NCPE help desk).

### MANAGEMENT ISSUES:

- An awareness of the specialist support that is available to assist with investigations.
- Recognition of the benefits of having an IT system for the management of missing persons should be recognised and consideration given to implementing such systems in all forces.
- Reporting standards to PNC and PNMPB must be adhered to.



# Section 8

## ASSOCIATED INVESTIGATION

**T**his section examines other circumstances under which people are reported as missing persons and provides information about how those investigations should be undertaken.

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## 8.1 PERSONS LOST AT SEA

This procedure applies to all persons reported lost at sea from a vessel travelling to or from ports within the UK, or a where a vessel is passing close to the UK and the incident is reported to UK coastguards. It also includes cases of persons missing from offshore installations and those lost from areas of the UK coastline.

All reports must be acted on and should be dealt with by the relevant UK police force. In cross border cases if there is any doubt as to which force has ownership see section 6.8 [Cross Border Cases](#). A missing persons form will be completed and an investigation undertaken.

If the missing person is not from the UK, the force to whom the initial report is made should retain ownership of the enquiry and be responsible for all subsequent enquiries (including the transfer of the report overseas if deemed appropriate). Any transfer of ownership of the missing person file should only be made after consultation between senior officers in each force.

At the earliest opportunity after the initial report, the matter should be reviewed by an SIO to assess if, on the information available, there is any possibility that the missing person is the victim of a crime.

Where a person has been reported lost at sea from a vessel travelling to or from a port within the UK a missing person report will be completed. The incident location will be the area of the UK coastline which is nearest at that time. Where there is doubt, the location for the port of destination should be used.

If the person is a Foreign or Commonwealth Citizen the relevant Embassy or High Commission should be immediately informed. A report should also be forwarded to Interpol for notification to be sent to the appropriate country and for any relevant background information to be gathered.

Where the vessel from which the person is reported missing is travelling to or from another UK port, officers must ensure that the details of the missing person are passed to the Home Office police forces responsible for the ports concerned.

Any UK national reported missing from any vessel outside UK waters and reported to the UK (usually through Interpol channels) will be dealt with by the home force of the missing person or the closest relative of the missing person.

The police service is recognised as the authority which co-ordinates the response to an incident on land, although many other organisations may become involved as the situation develops.

The Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA) has responsibility for the initiation and coordination of civil maritime search and rescue within the United Kingdom and will assist the Police upon request.

The Aeronautical Rescue Co-ordination Centre (ARCC) for the UK and territorial waters is based at RAF Kinloss and controls helicopters and other aircraft from a number of RAF stations. They are usually called by the MCA for assistance in sea based incidents but are also available for land based life saving operations.

## 8.2 INTERNATIONAL INVESTIGATION

UK residents who are reported missing while abroad sometimes become an issue for UK police forces. This type of investigation has its own difficulties and this section is intended to act as a guide to the appropriate procedures that should be followed.

Interpol is the single point of contact for making requests for enquiries to be made abroad. All enquiries should be routed through this agency. Enquiries can be made in the first instance by telephone followed up with a report by email, fax or post. The Interpol Bureau in London is staffed 24/7 and they have a call out list for specialist officers where required, see also the *Interpol Manual of Guidance*.

Any reports of missing persons overseas will, in the first instance, be investigated by the relevant agency within the country where they went missing. If the matter is reported to the UK, a UK police force may decide to commence their own enquiries and/or investigation. Should it be necessary for the UK investigators to liaise directly with their overseas counterparts, or if there is a need to visit the country conducting the enquiries is identified, the first approach should be made through the Interpol Bureau in London. Interpol will then advise on the most appropriate approach to be made and through which channels.

UK officers have no authority or rights to visit another country or carry out enquiries or investigations in another country without the appropriate authorities first being obtained through Interpol channels as laid out in the Home Office guidelines.

If evidence is to be gathered then a Commission Rogatoire is required by the Overseas Authority. The requesting UK force is responsible for obtaining the letter of request from the CPS. In these cases a criminal offence must be identified or reasonable grounds for suspecting that an offence has been committed; although this does not apply to those who are simply reported missing.

A Home Office Circular circulated in 2001 encourages forces to develop JITs (Joint Investigation Teams) with foreign agencies but the structure is intended to cater for the investigation of human trafficking, drug supply and other serious crime. It is not intended for missing person enquiries but in serious cases, could be considered. It takes time to plan and set up such a team.

The SIO or his or her representative may consider requesting and attending a professionals meeting (meeting of investigators) abroad. The purpose of the meeting would be to brief the foreign police force on the circumstances and risk assessment leading to the investigator's conclusion that the incident is critical.

Interpol should be involved in setting up the professionals' meeting and the flow of information. Interpol will have appointed an officer responsible for the overseas aspects of the case. A strategy should be jointly developed with the foreign police force to deal with:

- Case ownership;
- Family liaison;
- Lines of enquiry;
- Evidence gathering;
- Media;
- Identification eg, DNA development and storage on local database, fingerprints, dental records, descriptions, clothing;
- Local Consular assistance abroad can also be identified;
- Flow and sharing of information and methods of communication. This should be through the Interpol channel, including for security of material and ease of translation where required. The direct flow of information should be developed between the two police forces, particularly if the UK force has an MIR (Major Incident Room) running.

Interpol operates a notices system with regard to categories of persons of interest to the police. The Yellow Notice relates to missing persons and the Black Notice to found bodies.

### 8.3 DEATH ABROAD AND DEATH IN CONFLICT

If assisting an enquiry at the request of the coroner into the cause of a death occurring abroad, and where this is not being treated as a criminal investigation, requests for information should be passed to the:

Deputy Head of International Matters Unit, Room G99/100, Consular Division,  
FCO, Old Admiralty Building, London, SW1A 2AF

There is ordinarily no reason to involve police in this process.

If conducting enquiries as part of a criminal investigation, the route for conducting criminal enquiries in other countries:

UK Central Authority (UKCA), Judicial Cooperation Unit,  
Home Office, 50 Queen Anne's Gate, London, SW1H 9AT  
Contact point: 020 7273 2437

In cases of deaths of servicemen abroad, the individual casualty branch of the respective service which has responsibility for next of kin, witnesses, repatriation of bodies and liaison with coroners. These are:

Army: PS4(A) CAS/COMP  
Trenchard Lane, UPAVON, Pewsey, Wiltshire, SN9 6BE  
Contact point: 01980 615550

Navy: NP SEC (P+P) 2G  
Victory Building (Room 125), HM Naval Base, Portsmouth, Hampshire, PO1 3LS  
Contact point: 023 9272 7328

RAF: PMA (CS) CASUALTY (RAF)  
Building 248, RAF Innsworth, Gloucestershire, GL3 1EZ  
Contact point: 01452 712612 (Ext. 7495)

For further information see the following:

*Death Abroad: An ACPO (Advisory) reference guide for Police Investigating Officers into legislation, procedures and protocols* (ACPO Homicide Working Group, April 2001);  
<http://www.acpo.police.uk/policies/index.html> for link.

Home Office Circular 79/1983: *Deaths occurring outside England and Wales*:  
<http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/> (choose circulars from index and follow links).

NB: An amendment has been made to this procedure and copies of police reports on deaths occurring in foreign countries, if required, should no longer be requested through Interpol, but through the Consular Division of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Coroners' Newsletter no 25 item 11).

### 8.4 MASS DISASTERS AND MISSING PERSONS

The recognition of the right of individuals to retain their identity after death is described in Interpol Resolution AGN/65/Res13 (1996). This can present considerable problems, for example, after a mass disaster involving violence to the person(s), various techniques, some simple, some complex, can be used to establish identity. These include photographs, clothing, jewellery, marks, scars, tattoos and piercings and also more objective methods such as fingerprints, odontology and DNA profiling. DNA profiling is also a particularly effective tool in reuniting human remains.

Interpol have recently revised their *Disaster Victim Identification Guide*. This can be accessed at <http://www.interpol.int/Public/DisasterVictim/guide/default.asp>. One of the main aims of this guide is to contribute to the efficiency and effectiveness of the identification process and to encourage compatibility across international borders. Use of the victim identification forms, yellow (ante mortem) for a missing person and pink (post mortem) for a dead body, are the basis for international compatibility and must be used for this purpose.

In England and Wales, the coroner has overall responsibility for the identification of the deceased following a disaster and must be consulted throughout the identification process.

Where there is difficulty in the identification of large numbers of people in a disaster it is policy to set up an Identification Commission under the chair of the coroner. The Identification Commission will develop post mortem details in respect of recovered remains and ante mortem details in respect of missing persons. The commission operates to reconcile the two. This will normally consist of the coroner, senior police officer responsible for identification (Senior Identification Officer), pathologist, police family liaison officer, identification experts eg, odontologist, fingerprint, and an FSS representative together with administrative support.

It has been agreed by ACPO that a senior detective (preferably one who has received appropriate training and is of the rank of superintendent) will be nominated by the police gold commander to deal with all aspects of the identification. This officer will work closely with the SIO and the coroner in assuming overall responsibility for:

- The recovery of victims and human remains from the site;
- Police mortuary teams;
- Police casualty bureau;
- Police family liaison teams.

For further information contact the ACPO Emergency Procedures Working Group.

## 8.5 UNIDENTIFIED BODIES

Full descriptive details of any unidentified bodies or body parts must be entered into the PNC as soon as practicable. Details must also be sent to the PNMPB within 48 hours. Intelligence officers in the PNMPB compare details received on unidentified bodies with records on the PNMPB database to search for possible matches. Particularly useful for aiding identification are:

- Photographs;
- Marks, scars and tattoos;
- Jewellery and piercings;
- Clothing.

If necessary, confirmation may be achieved by dental records, fingerprint comparison if an original set exists on record and/or DNA profiling.

The coroner should be informed when bodies or parts of bodies are found.

The NMPH should also be informed of an unidentified body within 48 hours as their database includes missing persons who are not reported to the police. NMPH is able to cross-reference its databases for possible matches within 24 hours.

If no identification is made in the UK, consideration should be given to circulating the details abroad via Interpol. In this case, the force holding the body completes an Interpol Black Notice and passes it to the International Desk at NCIS for onward transmission.

Details relating to unidentified living persons may be circulated via Interpol through use of the Interpol Yellow Forms. These forms are also used for circulating details of missing persons via Interpol.



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- 5: National Reporting Form – Missing Person Investigation  
(Recording and Investigating Missing Persons)
- 6: Non-Governmental Organisations (Involved in Missing Persons Issues)
- 7: NMPH National Protocol (Missing Persons: An Agreement for Co-operation in the  
Provision of Services by Police and National Missing Persons Helpline)
- 8: Specimen Protocol Between Police and Social Services  
(in Relation to Young Persons in Care)
- 9: Legal Powers
- 10: missingkids.com – Hub Forces
- 11: Lines of Enquiry
- 12: Child Rescue Alert – Implementation Guide



## APPENDIX 1: ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

<b>ABC</b> . . . . .	Activity Based Costing
<b>ACC</b> . . . . .	Assistant Chief Constable
<b>ACPO</b> . . . . .	Association of Chief Police Officers
<b>ALSAR</b> . . . . .	Association of Lowland Search and Rescue
<b>ARCC</b> . . . . .	Aeronautical Rescue Co-ordination Centre
<b>ASTRA</b> . . . . .	Alternative Solutions to Running Away
<b>BCU</b> . . . . .	Basic Command Unit
<b>BTP</b> . . . . .	British Transport Police
<b>CAA</b> . . . . .	Civil Air Authority
<b>CATCHEM</b> . . . . .	Centralised Analytical Team Collating Homicide Expertise and Management
<b>CCTV</b> . . . . .	Closed Circuit Television
<b>CSCI</b> . . . . .	Commission for Social Care Inspection
<b>CYPF</b> . . . . .	Children and Youth Partnership Foundation
<b>DNA</b> . . . . .	Deoxyribonucleic acid. DNA molecules carry genetic information
<b>ECHR</b> . . . . .	European Commission for Human Rights
<b>EU</b> . . . . .	European Union
<b>FIB</b> . . . . .	Force Intelligence Bureau
<b>FHQ</b> . . . . .	Force Headquarters
<b>FLO</b> . . . . .	Family Liaison Officer
<b>FSS</b> . . . . .	Forensic Science service
<b>INDIS</b> . . . . .	Immigration Strategic Intelligence Team
<b>IO</b> . . . . .	Investigating Officer
<b>IT</b> . . . . .	Information Technology
<b>JIT</b> . . . . .	Joint Investigation Teams
<b>MCA</b> . . . . .	Maritime and Coastguard Agency
<b>MIR</b> . . . . .	Major Incident Room
<b>MIRSAP</b> . . . . .	Major Incident Room Standardised Administrative Procedures
<b>MRC</b> . . . . .	Mountain Rescue Council
<b>NCIS</b> . . . . .	National Crime Intelligence Service
<b>NCPE</b> . . . . .	National Centre for Policing Excellence
<b>NGO</b> . . . . .	Non-Governmental Organisation
<b>NIM</b> . . . . .	National Intelligence Model
<b>NMPH</b> . . . . .	National Missing Persons Helpline
<b>PACE</b> . . . . .	Police and Criminal Evidence Act
<b>PACT</b> . . . . .	Parents and Children Together
<b>PEACE</b> . . . . .	Police Interview Training Model mnemonic P-Preparation/Planning; E-Engage; A-Account; C-Close; E-Evaluation
<b>PNMPB</b> . . . . .	Police National Missing Persons Bureau
<b>PNC</b> . . . . .	Police National Computer
<b>PNSC</b> . . . . .	Police National Search Centre
<b>PoISA</b> . . . . .	Police Search Advisor
<b>PST</b> . . . . .	Police Search Team
<b>RIPA</b> . . . . .	Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000
<b>RLAA</b> . . . . .	Remanded to Local Authority Accommodation
<b>SCAS</b> . . . . .	Serious Crime Analysis Section
<b>SIO</b> . . . . .	Senior Investigating Officer
<b>UK</b> . . . . .	United Kingdom



## APPENDIX 2: REFERENCES

ACPO (due 2005) *Child Protection Guidance*

ACPO (2003) *Family Liaison Strategy Manual*

ACPO (1996) *Investigative Interviewing Guidance*

ACPO (2002) *Manual of Guidance for the Management of Missing Persons*

ACPO (1998) *Murder Investigation Manual*

ACPO (2004) *Policing Domestic Violence*

ACPO (Advisory) (2001) *Reference guide for Police Investigating Officers into Legislation, Procedures and Protocols*

ACPO/ACPOS/HM Customs & Excise (2003) *Manual of Standards for Accessing Communications Data*

Department of Health (2002) *Children Missing from Care and Home*

Department of Health (1999) *Working Together to Safeguard Children*  
(London: Stationery Office)

Home Office (1983) *Deaths Occurring outside England and Wales*

Home Office (1986) *A Practical guide for Police Officers, National Ports Office*

Home Office, Foreign and Commonwealth Office and the Association of Chief Police Officers (2002) *Dealing with Cases of Forced Marriage: Guidelines for police*

HMSO (2001) *Lost in Care – The Report of the Tribunal of inquiry into the abuse of children in care in the former county councils of Gwynedd and Clwyd since 1974*

Social Exclusion Unit (2002) *Young Runaways*

### APPENDIX 3: RISK IDENTIFICATION – INITIAL REPORT TO POLICE

This checklist is intended to act as a guide to decision making when determining the level of response that is required for each missing person. If the answer to any of the questions is yes, the initial risk identification may be HIGH and advice of a supervisor should be sought to determine if an immediate response is required.

FACTOR	YES	NO
1. Is there any information that the person is likely to cause self-harm or attempt suicide?		
2. Is the person suspected to be subject of a crime in progress, eg abduction?		
3. Is the vulnerable due to age, infirmity or any other factor?		
4. Are there inclement weather conditions that would seriously increase risk to health, especially where the missing person is a child or elderly person?		
5. Does the missing person need essential medication or treatment not readily available to them?		
6. Does the missing person have any physical illness, disability or mental health problems?		
7. Do you believe that the person may not have the ability to interact safely with others or in an unknown environment?		
8. Has the person been involved in a violent, homophobic and/or racist incident or confrontation immediately prior to disappearance?		
9. Has the person been the subject of bullying?		
10. Previously disappeared AND suffered or was exposed to harm?		
11. Is the behaviour out of character and likely to be an indicator of their being exposed to harm?		

**RISK ASSESSMENT / DECISION MAKING GUIDE**

**Consider all of the questions below in order to structure enquiries and to assist in determining the level of risk.**

<b>Investigative consideration</b>	<b>Details and circumstances</b>	<b>Person giving the information</b>
Is the person vulnerable due to age or infirmity or any other similar factor?		
Behaviour that is out character is often a strong indicator of risk; are the circumstances of going missing different from normal behaviour patterns?		
Is the person suspected to be subject of a significant crime in progress eg abduction?		
Is there any indication that the person is likely to commit suicide?		
Is there a reason for the person to go missing?		
Are there any indications that preparations have been made for absence?		
What was the person intending to do when last seen eg going to the shops or catching a bus and did they fail to complete their intentions?		
Are there family or relationship problems or recent history of family conflict and/or abuse?		
Are they the victim or perpetrator of domestic violence?		
Does the missing person have any physical illness or mental health problem?		
Are they on the Child Protection Register?		
Previously disappeared and suffered or was exposed to harm?		
Belief that the person may not have the ability to interact safely with others or an unknown environment.		
Do they need essential medication that is not likely to be available to them?		

Investigative consideration	Details and circumstances	Person giving the information
Ongoing bullying or harassment, eg, racial, sexual, homophobic or local community concerns or cultural issues?		
Were they involved in a violent and/or racist incident immediately prior to disappearance?		
School / college / university / employment or financial problems?		
Drug or alcohol dependency?		
Other unlisted factors which the officer or supervisor considers should influence risk assessment?		

In consideration of the above factors, their likelihood and seriousness, what level of risk do you consider to be adequate?

LOW RISK     MEDIUM RISK     HIGH RISK

**Give reasons to substantiate this level of risk** .....

.....

.....

**Officer completing**

Signed: ..... Rank..... Number: .....

Last name: ..... Date: ..... Time: .....

**SUPERVISING OFFICER**

What level of risk is considered appropriate by the supervising officer?

LOW RISK     MEDIUM RISK     HIGH RISK

**Give reasons to substantiate this level of risk** .....

.....

.....

.....

**Officer completing**

Signed: ..... Rank:..... Number: .....

Last name: ..... Date: ..... Time: .....

APPENDIX 5: NATIONAL REPORTING FORM - MISSING PERSON INVESTIGATION

Recording and Investigating Missing Persons

Missing Person Ref No: \_\_\_\_\_ Last Name \_\_\_\_\_

Force Incident No: \_\_\_\_\_ Forename(s) \_\_\_\_\_

**Missing Person Investigation**

*Police/Constabulary*

**To be completed in conjunction with the ACPO/ACPOS Manual of Guidance for the Management of Missing Persons.**

**Risk Factor**

To be completed **only** after completion of Risk Factor Decision Making Guide

High Risk                       Medium Risk                       Low Risk

**1. MISSING STATUS**

- Missing Child/Youth (under 18 years) cared for by Local Authority
- Missing Child/Youth under 18 yrs
- Absconder from hospital
- Missing Adult

**2. PERSONAL DETAILS OF MISSING PERSON**

Date/Time of initial report .....

Title ..... Last name .....

Forename(s).....Sex .....

Other names used (eg nickname, preferred name, previous name, maiden name)  
.....

Nationality ..... Religion .....

Age ..... Date of birth ..... Place of birth ..... Height .....

Home Address .....

.....

Post code.....

Telephone number.....

Location missing from .....

Telephone number .....

Mobile number ..... Network Provider.....

Marital status of missing person (include date of latest status change)

Single                       Separated                       Not known

Married                       Divorced                       Widowed

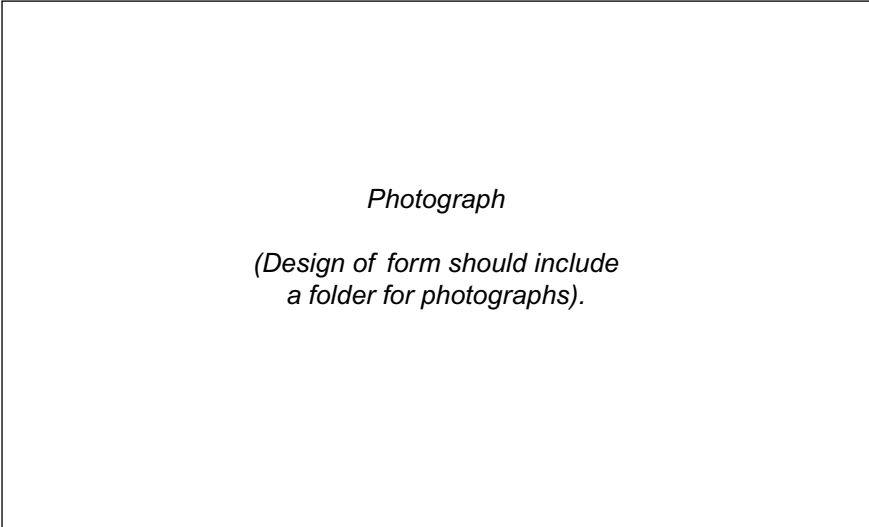
**3. PNC ETHNIC ORIGIN CATEGORIES**

<b>Colour</b>	W <input type="checkbox"/> White	<b>Ethnic</b>	1 <input type="checkbox"/> White European	5 <input type="checkbox"/> Oriental
	N <input type="checkbox"/> Non white	<b>Appearance</b>	2 <input type="checkbox"/> Dark European	6 <input type="checkbox"/> Arab
	U <input type="checkbox"/> Unknown		3 <input type="checkbox"/> African Caribbean	0 <input type="checkbox"/> Unknown
			4 <input type="checkbox"/> Asian	

Missing Person Ref No: \_\_\_\_\_  
Force Incident No: \_\_\_\_\_  
Last Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Forename(s) \_\_\_\_\_

**NOTE:**

*Writing on the reverse of a photograph can create an impression on the front making future copying more difficult. It is suggested that details are appended on note paper and then stuck to the reverse side.*



*Photograph  
(Design of form should include a folder for photographs).*

*Attach recent missing person's photograph here.  
(Remove photographs from card frame)*

**Does photograph need to be returned?**      **Yes**       **No**

**4. INITIAL INFORMANT DETAILS**

Title .....	Last name .....
Forename(s) .....	Sex ..... Date of birth ..... Age .....
Home address .....	Telephone number .....
.....Post code .....	Mobile number .....
.....	Other contact numbers .....
Place of work .....	Occupation .....
.....	.....
Temporary address .....	.....
.....	.....
.....	.....
Relationship of informant to missing person .....	

**5. CIRCUMSTANCES LEADING TO DISAPPEARANCE**

**6. PLACE LAST SEEN** .....

**Last Apparent Sighting by** (all sightings to be recorded in the Investigation Log - use Source/Intelligence Evaluation Criteria):

Title ..... Last name .....

Forename(s) ..... Sex ..... Date of birth ..... Age .....

Home address ..... Telephone number .....

..... Mobile number .....

..... Other contact numbers.....

Occupation ..... Place of work .....

Temporary address.....

Relationship to missing person .....

**7. DETAILS OF ANY CORROBORATION (use Source/Intelligence Evaluation Criteria)**

**8. MISSING PREVIOUSLY - where and when found**

Dates missing	Where found	Circumstances (Misper ref no.)

### 9. RISK ASSESSMENT / DECISION MAKING GUIDE

Consider all of the questions below in order to structure enquiries and to assist in determining the level of risk.

Investigative consideration	Details and circumstances	Person giving the information
Is the person vulnerable due to age or infirmity or any other similar factor?		
Behaviour that is out character is often a strong indicator of risk; are the circumstances of going missing different from normal behaviour patterns?		
Is the person suspected to be subject of a significant crime in progress eg abduction?		
Is there any indication that the person is likely to commit suicide?		
Is there a reason for the person to go missing?		
Are there any indications that preparations have been made for absence?		
What was the person intending to do when last seen eg going to the shops or catching a bus and did they fail to complete their intentions?		
Are there family or relationship problems or recent history of family conflict and/or abuse?		
Are they the victim or perpetrator of domestic violence?		
Does the missing person have any physical illness or mental health problem?		
Are they on the Child Protection Register?		
Previously disappeared and suffered or was exposed to harm?		
Belief that the person may not have the ability to interact safely with others or an unknown environment.		
Do they need essential medication that is not likely to be available to them?		



Investigative consideration	Details and circumstances	Person giving the information
Ongoing bullying or harassment eg racial, sexual, homophobic or local community concerns or cultural issues?		
Were they involved in a violent and/or racist incident immediately prior to disappearance?		
School / college / university / employment or financial problems?		
Drug or alcohol dependency?		
Other unlisted factors which the officer or supervisor considers should influence risk assessment?		

In consideration of the above factors, their likelihood and seriousness, what level of risk do you consider to be adequate?

LOW RISK     MEDIUM RISK     HIGH RISK

**Give reasons to substantiate this level of risk** .....

.....

.....

**Officer completing**

Signed: ..... Rank..... Number: .....

Last name:..... Date: ..... Time: .....

**SUPERVISING OFFICER**

What level of risk is considered appropriate by the supervising officer?

LOW RISK     MEDIUM RISK     HIGH RISK

**Give reasons to substantiate this level of risk** .....

.....

.....

.....

**Officer completing**

Signed: ..... Rank..... Number: .....

Last name:..... Date: ..... Time: .....

## 10. SIRENE UK

**Completion of this section is compulsory in all cases.**

With relation to the missing person complete one of the boxes below.

The missing person is:

**A juvenile (Juvenile at risk)**

This is a request for law enforcement officers to commence protection if they are empowered to do so.

**An adult in need of protection or who poses a threat to others (Adult at risk)**

This is a request for law enforcement officers to commence protection if they are empowered to do so.

**An adult not in need of protection or not posing threats to others (Adult not at risk)**

This is a request for law enforcement officers to report back that they have located the person and provide a current address (provision of address only with the person's consent).

### Identification Category

Indicate which category is appropriate:

- IC**      **ID known and confirmed** and by fingerprints, DNA or photograph
- IN**      **ID known but not confirmed**
- IM**      **ID Misused**

Creation of any missing person report on PNC automatically creates a missing person report on the Schengen Information System (SIS) at the same time. If the case is unusual eg an abduction, consider drawing the case to the attention of the Sirene UK Bureau at NCIS and provide supplementary information as they request.

If the missing person is high risk and you have grounds to believe that they may be outside the European Union/Schengen member states area consider issuing an Interpol notice (contact your force Interpol Liaison Officer).

## 11. CHILD RESCUE ALERT (where adopted by police force)

If high risk, consider if implementation of a Child Rescue Alert is relevant in accordance with all the following criteria:

1. The child is under 16 years old;
2. There is a reasonable belief that the child has been kidnapped or abducted;
3. There is a reasonable belief that the child is in imminent danger of serious harm or death, and;
4. There is sufficient information available to enable the public to assist the police in locating the child.

## 12. DESCRIPTION OF MISSING PERSON

### Ethnic Origin

Description	Code	Description	Code
Asian or Asian British	A <input type="checkbox"/>	Indian	1 <input type="checkbox"/>
		Pakistani	2 <input type="checkbox"/>
		Bangladeshi	3 <input type="checkbox"/>
		Any other Asian background	9 <input type="checkbox"/>
Black or Black British	B <input type="checkbox"/>	Caribbean	1 <input type="checkbox"/>
		African	2 <input type="checkbox"/>
		Any other Black background	9 <input type="checkbox"/>
Chinese or Other Ethnic Group	O <input type="checkbox"/>	Chinese	1 <input type="checkbox"/>
		Any other Ethnic group	9 <input type="checkbox"/>
Mixed	M <input type="checkbox"/>	White and Black Caribbean	1 <input type="checkbox"/>
		White and Black African	2 <input type="checkbox"/>
		White and Asian	3 <input type="checkbox"/>
		Any other Mixed background	9 <input type="checkbox"/>
White	W <input type="checkbox"/>	British	1 <input type="checkbox"/>
		Irish	2 <input type="checkbox"/>
		Any other White background	9 <input type="checkbox"/>

### 13. LANGUAGES SPOKEN

### ACCENT

.....

.....

### 14. MARKS, SCARS, TATTOOS AND DISTINGUISHING FEATURES

Tattoo Mark Lacking Scarred Pierced Peculiar	Right Left Centre Upper Lower	Scalp	Arms	Chest	Nose	Toes	Tongue
		Eyes	Legs	Genitals	Chin	Breast	
		Lips	Brow	Hand	Abdomen	Gait	
		Neck	Ears	Feet	Buttocks	Hips	
		Back	Teeth	Face	Finger(s)	Speech	

Description of marks, scars, tattoos etc



.....	.....	.....	.....
.....	.....	.....	.....
.....	.....	.....	.....
.....	.....	.....	.....
.....	.....	.....	.....

**15. HAIR**

Type	Natural colour	Artificial colour	Features	
<input type="checkbox"/> Bald	<input type="checkbox"/> Black	<input type="checkbox"/> Black	<input type="checkbox"/> Afro	<input type="checkbox"/> Dreadlocks
<input type="checkbox"/> Receding	<input type="checkbox"/> Dark Brown	<input type="checkbox"/> Dark Brown	<input type="checkbox"/> Beehive	<input type="checkbox"/> Spiked
<input type="checkbox"/> Cropped	<input type="checkbox"/> Brown	<input type="checkbox"/> Brown	<input type="checkbox"/> Mohican	<input type="checkbox"/> Wavy
<input type="checkbox"/> Short	<input type="checkbox"/> Light Brown	<input type="checkbox"/> Light Brown	<input type="checkbox"/> Ponytail	
<input type="checkbox"/> Collar length	<input type="checkbox"/> Fair	<input type="checkbox"/> Fair	<input type="checkbox"/> Plaited	
<input type="checkbox"/> Shoulder length	<input type="checkbox"/> White	<input type="checkbox"/> White	<input type="checkbox"/> Bushy	
<input type="checkbox"/> Very long	<input type="checkbox"/> Blond(e)	<input type="checkbox"/> Blond(e)	<input type="checkbox"/> Rasta	
<input type="checkbox"/> Clean shaven	<input type="checkbox"/> Grey	<input type="checkbox"/> Ginger	<input type="checkbox"/> Shaven	
	<input type="checkbox"/> Ginger	<input type="checkbox"/> Red	<input type="checkbox"/> Skinhead	
	<input type="checkbox"/> Auburn	<input type="checkbox"/> Sandy	<input type="checkbox"/> Dirty	
	<input type="checkbox"/> Sandy	<input type="checkbox"/> Blue	<input type="checkbox"/> Curly	
	<input type="checkbox"/> Mousey	<input type="checkbox"/> Green	<input type="checkbox"/> Greasy	
		<input type="checkbox"/> Orange	<input type="checkbox"/> Streaked	
	Dyed/greying	<input type="checkbox"/> Purple	<input type="checkbox"/> Thinning	
	<input type="checkbox"/> Dyed	<input type="checkbox"/> Yellow	<input type="checkbox"/> Wig	
	<input type="checkbox"/> Greying	<input type="checkbox"/> Pink	<input type="checkbox"/> Straight	
		<input type="checkbox"/> Multi	<input type="checkbox"/> Untidy	
		<input type="checkbox"/> Grey	<input type="checkbox"/> High-lighted	

**FACIAL HAIR** (Use only those values as above where appropriate)

Type	<input type="checkbox"/> Moustache	<input type="checkbox"/> Beard	<input type="checkbox"/> Long sideburns	<input type="checkbox"/> Clean shaven
Type	.....	.....	.....	.....
Natural colour	.....	.....	.....	.....
Dyed/greying	.....	.....	.....	.....
Artificial colour	.....	.....	.....	.....
Features	.....	.....	.....	.....

**DENTURES**     Yes                       No

Details: .....

**16. BUILD**

Fat     Stocky     Medium     Slim     Thin

**SHOE SIZE** eg E41 - Metric/European size 41 or B7.5 British size 7 .....

**17. EYE COLOUR**

- Blue       Brown       Green       Grey       Hazel       Pink       Unknown
- Spectacles       Contact lenses

**18. SEXUALITY**

- Gay       Transgender       Transsexual       Heterosexual

**19. COMPLEXION**

- Fresh       Ruddy       Fair       Pale       Tanned
- Spotted       Freckled       Sallow       Swarthy       Wrinkled

**20. CLOTHING** include designer label/brands and colours if known

- Shirt/Sweater .....
- Trousers/skirt .....
- Outer wear .....
- Underwear .....
- Head wear .....
- Gloves .....
- Other clothing .....
- Footwear .....
- Sample available       Yes       No      Where? .....
- Other information .....
- .....

**JEWELLERY** include distinguishing features, eg, engravings

- Ear ring(s) .....
- Watch(es) .....
- Bracelet(s) .....
- Ring(s) .....
- Necklace(s) .....
- Other .....

**OTHER PERSONAL POSSESSIONS**

*Full details of other items believed to be in possession of missing person*

**21. MEANS OF TRANSPORT - Vehicle**

Consider using PNC Vehicle Online Descriptive Search (VODS) if required to identify vehicle used

Make ..... Model.....

Colour ..... Registration number .....

Owner ..... Registered keeper .....

Distinctive features .....

.....

Location now .....

.....

Force Vehicle Intelligence      Date created .....      Date updated .....

PNC      Date checked .....      Date updated .....

Information report added      Confirmed     Yes     No      Date/Time .....

Other Information .....

.....

.....

.....

**Body Group Description**

- |                                      |                                  |  |  |
|--------------------------------------|----------------------------------|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Saloon      | <input type="checkbox"/> Van     | <input type="checkbox"/> 3 wheeler     | <input type="checkbox"/> Combination       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Estate      | <input type="checkbox"/> Pick-up | <input type="checkbox"/> Motor caravan | <input type="checkbox"/> Non-standard      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sports      | <input type="checkbox"/> Scooter | <input type="checkbox"/> Lorry         | <input type="checkbox"/> Light 4x4 Utility |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Convertible | <input type="checkbox"/> Moped   | <input type="checkbox"/> Motorcycle    | <input type="checkbox"/> MPV               |

**Means of Transport - Other (Give full details)**

.....

.....

.....

**Can they drive a motor vehicle?**     Yes     No

**Full driving licence?**     Yes     No

**22. NEXT OF KIN**

Title ..... Last name .....  
Forename(s) ..... Sex ..... Date of birth ..... Age.....  
Home address ..... Telephone number .....  
..... Mobile number .....  
..... Other contact numbers .....  
Place of work ..... Occupation .....  
Temporary address .....

Relationship to missing person

- Parent                       Nephew                       Spouse
- Brother                       Niece                       Partner
- Sister                       Cousin                       Other (give details) .....
- Uncle                       Son                       Aunt                       Daughter

**23. CONSENT FORM**

Consent should be requested for the various options listed below.

1. Enquiries with medical practitioners / hospitals / dentists / educational establishments / workplaces / financial or other agencies or their representatives and to examine, take, copy and retain any material considered relevant to the enquiry into the disappearance of the person named in this report (*delete options as necessary*).
2. Information being passed to the media.
3. Details being passed to the National Missing Persons Helpline, who will make enquiries and offer support in relation to this investigation.
4. Information and a photograph being placed on the [ukmissingkids.com](http://ukmissingkids.com) website.
5. Search of premises or part of premises occupied by missing person.

I consent/do not consent to ..... Police/Constabulary actions being taken in respect of items number 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 (*delete as necessary*) above.

Date/Time ..... Name .....

Signature ..... Relationship to missing person .....

**24. STATUTORY ORDERS (eg, Care Orders, Mental Health Act)**

Details - including relevant dates and Power of Arrest if applicable

.....  
.....

Contact person .....

Address .....  
.....

Telephone number ..... Mobile number .....

Details .....

**25. RELATIVES, FRIENDS AND ASSOCIATES**

1. Name .....  
 Address.....  
 .....  
 Telephone numbers .....  
 .....  
 Relationship .....

2. Name .....  
 Address.....  
 .....  
 Telephone numbers .....  
 .....  
 Relationship .....

3. Name .....  
 Address.....  
 .....  
 Telephone numbers .....  
 .....  
 Relationship .....

4. Name .....  
 Address.....  
 .....  
 Telephone numbers .....  
 .....  
 Relationship .....

5. Name .....  
 Address.....  
 .....  
 Telephone numbers .....  
 .....  
 Relationship .....

6. Name .....  
 Address.....  
 .....  
 Telephone numbers .....  
 .....  
 Relationship .....

7. Name .....  
 Address.....  
 .....  
 Telephone numbers .....  
 .....  
 Relationship .....

8. Name .....  
 Address.....  
 .....  
 Telephone numbers .....  
 .....  
 Relationship .....

9. Name .....  
 Address.....  
 .....  
 Telephone numbers .....  
 .....  
 Relationship .....

10. Name .....  
 Address.....  
 .....  
 Telephone numbers .....  
 .....  
 Relationship .....

11. Name .....  
 Address.....  
 .....  
 Telephone numbers .....  
 .....  
 Relationship .....

12. Name .....  
 Address.....  
 .....  
 Telephone numbers .....  
 .....  
 Relationship .....

**Full details of each and every check to be entered into log.**  
 This section should be updated with details of all persons identified during the enquiry as potential contacts for information.



**26. FINANCIAL DETAILS**

**Bank/Building Society**

Name .....  
Branch .....  
Sort code .....  
Account number(s) .....

**Bank/Building Society**

Name .....  
Branch .....  
Sort code .....  
Account number(s) .....

**Credit card, cash and store card details**

Name on card .....  
Card provider .....  
Card no. ....

**Credit card, cash and store card details**

Name on card .....  
Card provider .....  
Card no. ....

**Bank/Building Society**

Name .....  
Branch .....  
Sort code .....  
Account number(s) .....

**Bank/Building Society**

Name .....  
Branch .....  
Sort code .....  
Account number(s) .....

**Credit card, cash and store card details**

Name on card .....  
Card provider .....  
Card no. ....

**Credit card, cash and store card details**

Name on card .....  
Card provider .....  
Card no. ....

*Amount of cash in possession of missing person:*

**27. PASSPORT DETAILS**

Valid passport  Yes  No  Not Known

Passport number..... Expiry date .....

Country of issue ..... Location of passport .....

**28. OTHER IDENTIFICATION CARRIED OTHER THAN BANKING CARDS**

Type and description .....  
.....  
.....

**29. POLICE DATABASE CHECKS/UPDATES (attach relevant information)**

*Endorse each individual entry with details of officer making check.*

Consider using PNC Query Using Enhanced Searching Techniques - QUEST

**PNC Check** PNCID .....

Warning signals .....  
.....

Driving licence no

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

Name ..... Rank ..... Number .....

Signature ..... Force/Station code ..... Date/Time .....

**30. DETAILS OF OTHER SYSTEMS AND RECORDS CHECKED**

System/Record .....

Name ..... Rank ..... Number .....

Signature ..... Force/Station code ..... Date/Time .....

System/Record .....

Name ..... Rank ..... Number .....

Signature ..... Force/Station code ..... Date/Time .....

System/Record .....

Name ..... Rank ..... Number .....

Signature ..... Force/Station code ..... Date/Time .....

*Details of previous missing episodes to be recorded in Missing Previously - earlier section on this form.*

**The following is essential in high risk cases where there is obvious cause for concern (and after authority from crime manager, also consider in lower risk cases when missing prolonged period). Record details in investigation log together with location.**

- A Establish who are natural parents of missing person (DNA location)
- B Retrieval of missing person's DNA from home address:
  - ❖ Hairs - with root from comb or brush
  - ❖ Saliva from chewing gum or toothbrush
  - ❖ Semen/vaginal fluid from underwear
  - ❖ Clothing - DNA from collars and cuffs
- C Ascertain last meal consumed
- D Ascertain blood group/DNA (may be retrieved from hospital records)
- E Establish location of any dental charts/records and secure authority for their seizure
- F Collect fibres from bedroom
- G Seize samples of handwriting
- H Check if police hold fingerprints and/or seize property which may bear missing persons fingerprints.

**31. POLICE NATIONAL MISSING PERSONS BUREAU (PNMPB)**

Tel: 020 7230 4029/4745 Fax: 020 7230 2153

MUST be informed no later than 14 days after initial report. Earlier notification may be advisable depending on circumstances. This is an area command responsibility and must be recorded on this log. Cancellation must be prompt and similarly recorded.

Informed  Yes Date/Time .....

No Date/Time .....

Cancelled  Date/Time .....

The National Missing Persons Helpline (NMPH)

Tel: 020 8392 4545 Fax: 020 8878 7752

Informed  Yes Date/Time .....

No Date/Time .....

Cancelled  Date/Time .....

### 32. LOG OF ACTIONS

This is a standard set of actions that must be considered in every case but is not a definitive list. Record details on action log where necessary.

No	Action	Officer	Date completed	Details
1	Home address – thorough search to be made. Record details of extent of search and what was not searched Continue on action log if necessary			
2	Other premises – if missing from place other than 1 above, details of search to be recorded. Continue on action log if necessary			
3	Interview all witnesses to the disappearance			
4	Obtain lists of friends including telephone numbers			
5	Check local hospitals – record details in log			
6	Obtain photograph Present location?			
7	Check custody			
8	Place of work			
9	School/College (obtain details of friends/classmates and interview)			
10	Social Services			
11	PNC check			
12	PNC #TE check			
13	PNC – circulation			
14	Check local information systems			
15	Notify local Domestic Violence Officer			

**33. MANAGEMENT OF THE RETURN**

Time returned ..... Date returned ..... Found by .....  
 Location found .....

**CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE RETURN**

- |   |                                      |  |
|---|--------------------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Returned of own accord | <input type="checkbox"/> Murdered    | <input type="checkbox"/> Arrested        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Found by police        | <input type="checkbox"/> Abduction   | <input type="checkbox"/> Physical Injury |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Found by family        | <input type="checkbox"/> Sex Offence | <input type="checkbox"/> Suicide/Attempt |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Subject of crime       | <input type="checkbox"/> Not known   | <input type="checkbox"/> Other .....     |

**CIRCUMSTANCES WHILE AWAY**

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Stayed with friend                                      | <input type="checkbox"/> Went to location - no known connections |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Stayed with person met while missing                    | <input type="checkbox"/> Met up with other missing person        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Hotel/other commercial premises                         | <input type="checkbox"/> Involved in prostitution                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> With person/at location known from original information | <input type="checkbox"/> Slept rough                             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Went to place previously lived/frequented               | <input type="checkbox"/> Other                                   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Not known   |  |

**Reason for disappearance and details of circumstances while away**

**Referral to other agency for independent debrief**

Name of agency	Date referred
Officer completing	Time
	Date

Where was the person found?

Why did the person leave?

Places and people visited during absence

**OFFICER DEALING WITH THE RETURN**

Name	Rank	Number
Date/Time		

**CHECKED BY SUPERVISOR**

Name	Rank	Number
Date/Time		

## INVESTIGATIVE CONSIDERATIONS

*(Not exhaustive and may not be applicable in all cases).*

### **Remember a missing person notification can become a homicide enquiry.**

Consider statement taking as a record of an important event. At the very least they may well be required by HM Coroner.

#### SEARCHING

- Conduct full search of home address and outbuildings – Police Search Advisor advice (*PoISA via local arrangements*).
- If person at risk, consider using patrol car/air support with public address system.
- Consider house-to-house enquiries in vicinity of home address and the area missing person was last seen.
- Co-ordinated searches **MUST** be led by a Police Search Advisor (PoISA). Qualified Volunteer Search Teams should be considered for both rural and urban searches.
- Other considerations are air support, marine unit, dogs and horses. Also consider Special Constabulary.

It must be appreciated that a search for a living person is likely to be different than one for a body.

#### FRIENDS/RELATIVES AND ASSOCIATES OF MISSING PERSON

- Ensure details of all known relatives/friends/associates who are likely to come into contact with missing person are recorded. Consider background checks and searches of home addresses.
- If appropriate make enquiries at missing person's school, or place of work, liaise with head teacher or relevant manager first. Interview teachers and members of staff.
- Check lockers, desks and as similar these may hold clues.

#### CIRCULATION OF INFORMATION

- Inform a detective via supervision if there are circumstances which give cause for concern.
- Update Communications Centre with description and circumstances for early local circulation.
- Circulate missing person via PNC. Consider circulating any vehicle used or connected with subject which cannot be accounted for, check and update local intelligence records.
- Update person reporting as to proposed course of police action and impress on them the importance of informing the police of any contact from missing person (telephone calls, letters, sightings and of course their actual return).
- Pass description to CCTV control rooms.
- Consider media circulation via press office. Liaise with Crime Manager regarding publicity.
- Consult FIB when considering national police circulation, eg, Police Gazette, national bulletins.
- Consider fairgrounds, pop concert venues, sports grounds, shopping centres and such like.

#### SCHENGEN INFORMATION SYSTEM

- Creation of any missing person report on PNC automatically creates a missing person report on the Schengen Information System (SIS) at the same time. If the case is unusual, eg, an abduction, consider drawing the case to the attention of the Sirene UK Bureau at NCIS, provide any supplementary information as requested.

#### OTHER SOURCES OF INFORMATION

- Check the website [uk.missingkids.com](http://uk.missingkids.com)
- Check local force website for links to other organisations offering assistance.

**MISSING PERSON'S PROPERTY**

- Check for clues of disappearance. What property may have been taken, eg, money, clothing, travel documents, suitcase, passports, mobile telephone, pager (record numbers).
- Does the missing person have a diary or an electronic organiser? It may hold clues.
- Do the family own a computer with Internet access? Consider checking emails, sent and received. (*Exercise caution when checking computers, if in doubt seek specialist assistance*).

**MISSING PERSON'S TELEPHONE**

- Have telephone numbers, unknown to person reporting, appeared on telephone bill? Seize bill and consider subscribers check (*Inspectors authority*). Do not forget the 1471 facility.

**MISSING PERSON'S MEDICAL NEEDS**

- Record all medication prescribed to the missing person and whether it has been taken.
- Record details of illnesses.
- Consider contacting missing person's doctor.

**AT RISK/POSSIBLE ABDUCTION**

- If appropriate liaise with Child Abuse Investigation Unit and Social Services regarding the Child Protection Register.
- In cases where a child may have been taken by a parent/guardian, establish who has parental responsibility. Supervision must be informed immediately.
- If abduction abroad is suspected consideration must be given to INTERPOL involvement.

**RELIGIOUS/CULTURAL CONSIDERATIONS**

- Are there religious or cultural issues which should be considered?

**HOSPITAL CHECKS**

- Check hospitals and record enquiries on log. Remember to pass on description as missing person may have been unable to give details, or may have furnished false details.

**CCTV**

- Be aware of other CCTV systems, eg, local authority, transport and commercial factories, filling stations.

**MISSING PERSON'S FINANCES/BENEFITS**

- Check missing person's bank/building society. Have there been any withdrawals?
- Banks and building societies have CCTV systems fitted, as do some cash machines. Markers can be placed on accounts of interest to the police. This allows the missing person to be tracked via cash withdrawals.
- Obtain missing person's National Insurance number and contact DSS regarding recent transactions.

**MISSING PERSON'S FAMILY**

- Update family regularly with progress of enquiries.

**MISSING PERSON INVESTIGATION**  
*Police/Constabulary*

Missing person – advice notice                      Missing person ref no .....

Officer attending .....                      Force incident no .....                      Date.....

Police station.....                      Tel .....                      Ext.....

**Missing persons**

Experience shows that the vast majority of people who go missing are found safe and well within hours of their absence being reported to the police. We understand that this is a very worrying time for you and these notes are intended to provide you with a clear picture of what action we will take in response to your report as well as suggesting things which you and your family can do to help. We will do everything we can to locate the person you have reported missing.

**Police Procedures**

The investigating officer may want to contact friends, relatives, associates or colleagues of the missing person as well as conduct searches of your home, the local area and last place the missing person was last seen or frequents. Some of the questions asked may appear personal, but it will help our investigation if you are able to answer the questions in full.

**How You Can Help**

If, on reflection after making the initial report, you realise there is something which you forgot to mention, it is important that you contact us immediately. Even the smallest detail could turn out to be crucial to our enquiries. It is vitally important that you inform us at once if the person you have reported missing returns home without our knowledge. A great deal of police time is devoted to looking for missing persons. Please do not let us waste precious time searching for someone who has already returned.

**Other Agencies**

People can go missing for extended periods. The following agencies can assist with missing persons and can offer support to relatives in the event of a long absence. The advice they can give is free, friendly and confidential. Please do not hesitate to seek their help.

National Missing Person Helpline Tel: 0500 700 700 (freephone – public enquiries only)

Address: National Missing Person Helpline, Roebuck House, 284 Upper Richmond Road West, London SW14 7JE

The NMPH provides help and support for the families (and close friends in exceptional circumstances) of people who are missing. They can offer practical advice to reduce the stress and upset that the disappearance of a loved one can cause and provide additional support to the police.

They also provide a 'Message Home' service which allows runaways to record a message in confidence that is passed on to the person the caller has named. Tel: 0800 700 740 (freephone)

Reunite (International Child Abduction Centre) Advice Line Tel: 020 7375 3440

Business Line Tel: 020 7375 3441 Address: PO Box 24875, London E1 6FR

reunite assist in cases where a child may have been abducted and removed from the UK by an estranged parent.

The Salvation Army Tel: 020 7367 4747

Address – The Salvation Army Family Tracing Service, 101 Newington Causeway, London, SE1 6BN. The Salvation Army may be able to assist in cases where there has been a long term separation rather than a 'disappearance'.

We hope that this information will help you to understand the action that will be taken in response to your report but, should you have any queries about police procedures in respect of missing persons, our officers will be pleased to assist.

**The national police website, <http://www.police.uk/> has links to other organisations which may also offer assistance.**

## APPENDIX 6: NGOs INVOLVED IN MISSING PERSONS ISSUES

### Non-Governmental Organisations involved in missing persons issues

#### BAAF Adopting & Fostering

Skyline House, 200 Union Street, London, SE1 0LX  
 Tel: 0207 593 2000  
 Fax: 0207 593 2001  
 email: [mail@baaf.org.uk](mailto:mail@baaf.org.uk)

BAAF (British Association for Adoption and Fostering) is the leading UK wide membership organisation promoting the highest standards of child-centred policies and services for children separated from their families of origin. It is a registered charity which:

- Shapes the agenda by influencing policy makers and arguing for improvements to legislation
- Helps over 200 children each year to find new homes through its family-finding service
- Speaks out on behalf of looked after children and enables their voices to be heard
- Supports thousands of professionals as they seek to improve services locally for looked after children
- Supports the people who make the most difference to children's lives – the adoptive parents and foster carers themselves.

#### Barnardo's

Tanner's Lane, Barkingside, Ilford, Essex, IG6 1QG  
 Tel: 0208 550 8822  
 Fax: 0208 551 6870  
 Web: [www.barnardos.org.uk](http://www.barnardos.org.uk)

Barnardo's works with vulnerable children and young people, helping them transform their lives and fulfil their potential. They are the UK's largest children's charity, supporting 100,000 children and their families through more than 300 projects in England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales.

Barnardo's believe that the lives of all children should be free from poverty, abuse and discrimination. They use their expertise and knowledge to campaign for better care for children and to champion the rights of every child.

Barnardo's helps children, young people and their families on a long term basis to overcome severe disadvantages – such as abuse, homelessness and poverty – and to tackle the challenges of disability.

#### British Red Cross

9 Grosvenor Crescent, London, SW1X 7EJ  
 Tel: 0207 235 5454

The Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement has more than 100 million members across the globe and is the largest humanitarian network in the world. One of the most active members of this movement is the British Red Cross, a leading UK charity with 40,000 volunteers working in almost every community. Part of their work is the International Tracing and Messaging services. Working through their international network, they restore family links of anyone separated by war or disaster. On average they reunite two families a day.

#### Centrepoint

Centrepoint is a charity established to benefit young people and communities especially the most excluded, disadvantaged and marginalised in society, and does so by being a creative community of staff, volunteers, supporters, clients, donors and partners focused upon the value we create for them.



### **Child Find Canada**

National Office, 343 – 800 Portage Avenue, Winnipeg, Manitoba, R3G 0N4

Tel: (204) 339-5584

Fax: (204) 339-5587

<http://www.childfind.ca/>

Child Find Canada is located in Winnipeg, Manitoba, with Provincial offices in British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Ontario, New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island, Newfoundland/Labrador, Nova Scotia and has representation in Yukon Territory and Quebec. Funding is provided primarily from the corporate community and individuals. Child Find Canada receives no government funding for its services.

The aim of Child Find Canada is to work in partnership with its provincial members to:

1. Assist in the search for missing children.
2. Deliver education and prevention programs pertaining to children's safety. Child Find seeks to eliminate the problem of missing children through educational and awareness programs. Child Find Canada also offers Child Fingerprinting Clinics: 'All About Me I.D.'
3. To advocate for the rights of children.

### **ChildLine**

Tel: 0800 1111

ChildLine is the UK's free, 24-hour helpline for children in distress or danger. Trained volunteer counsellors comfort, advise and protect children and young people who may feel that they have nowhere else to turn.

Children call ChildLine about a wide range of problems, but the most common are abuse (both sexual and physical), bullying, serious family tensions, worries about friends' welfare and teenage pregnancy.

Since it was launched in 1986, ChildLine has saved children's lives, found refuges for children in danger on the streets, and given hope to thousands of children who believed no one else cared for them. ChildLine has now counselled over one million children and young people.

ChildLine campaigns on behalf of children by informing policymakers who can help change children's lives for the better.

ChildLine also provides an outreach service to schools and youth groups through its CHIPS programme.

ChildLine operates from ten counselling centres around the UK: Belfast, Glasgow, Leeds, London, Nottingham, Manchester, Swansea, Rhyl, Birmingham and Newton Abbot. A new centre will open in Aberdeen shortly. The London centre operates a 24-hour service, but during peak hours when the other centres are open, children's calls go through to the nearest centre.

### **Committee for Missing Children Europe**

PO Box 1252, 63502 Langenselbold, Germany

Tel: +49 6184 – 902322

Fax: +49 6184 – 902322

<http://www.kinder-nach-hause.de/>

<http://www.kinder-nach-hause.de/english/index.html>

The Committee for Missing Children is a non profit organization based in Lawrenceville, Georgia, USA. The CMC was formed in 1990 and became a non profit organization in 1995. This website is provided by the European branch which was opened in Langenselbold, Germany in 1998. The primary mission of the European branch will be the counselling of victim parents. The goal will be to help parents of missing and abducted children receive help and the services they need and to direct their requests, applications and questions to the appropriate agencies.

**Crimestoppers**

0800 555 111

<http://www.crimestoppers-uk.org>email: [cst@crimestoppers-uk.org](mailto:cst@crimestoppers-uk.org)

A telephone line for anyone to provide information with regard to crime and criminals. Anonymity is guaranteed to those who use it.

**Crisis**

64 Commercial Street, London, E1 6LT

Tel: 0870 011 3335

Fax: 0870 011 3336

email: [enquiries@crisis.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@crisis.org.uk)

Crisis is the national charity for solitary homeless people. Staff at Crisis work year-round to help vulnerable and marginalised people get through the crisis of homelessness, fulfil their potential and transform their lives.

**Missing Persons IRAQ**<http://iraqi4hope.tripod.com/>**Irish Missing Persons**<http://www.missing.ws/info.htm>

The website for missing persons in Ireland and should be looked at in conjunction with that of the **Garda Siochana** which has a section on missing persons.

In addition to the web address <http://www.missing.ws/> it can also be accessed with addresses [missingirishpeople.com](http://missingirishpeople.com) and [missinginireland.com](http://missinginireland.com)

**Aquinas Duffy**

42 Corke Abbey, Little Bray, Co Wicklow, Ireland

(Phone: mobile/text message 00-353-86-8370861)

<http://www.look4them.org.uk/>

This website is the joint initiative of nine UK organisations, set up to make it easier to find help and advice.

<http://www.missing-you.net/>

The Missing You website offers an instant on-line message-posting service designed to help enable you to locate missing persons including lost friends, relatives, workmates, forces pals, that are thought to be anywhere in the UK. Not a charitable organisation.

**The National Center for Missing & Exploited Children (NCMEC)**

The National Center for Missing & Exploited Children (NCMEC) was established in the United States of America in 1984 as a non-profit organisation to provide services nation-wide for families and professionals in the prevention of abducted, endangered, and sexually exploited children. Pursuant to its mission and its congressional mandates, The NCMEC:

- Serves as a clearinghouse of information about missing and exploited children
- Operates a CyberTipline that the public may use to report Internet-related child sexual exploitation
- Provides technical assistance to individuals and law-enforcement agencies in the prevention, investigation, prosecution and treatment of cases involving missing and exploited children
- Assists the US Department of State in certain cases of international child abduction in accordance with the Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction
  - i) Offers training programs to law-enforcement and social service professionals
  - ii) Distributes photographs and descriptions of missing children world-wide

- Co-ordinates child protection efforts with the private sector
- Networks with non-profit service providers and state clearing houses about missing persons' cases
- Provides information about effective state legislation to help ensure the protection of children.

### **The Nations Missing Children Organization & Center for Missing Adults (NMCO)**

<http://www.missingadults.org/>

2432 West Peoria Avenue, Suite 1283, Phoenix, Arizona 85029

1-800-690-FIND

[nmco@aol.com](mailto:nmco@aol.com)

The Nations Missing Children Organization, Inc. & Center for Missing Adults (NMCO) was founded in 1994 by Kym Pasqualini. As a child, Kym narrowly escaped being abducted by a knife-wielding stranger while walking home from school. Later, as an adult, Kym witnessed the aftermath and suffering of a missing child's family and was moved into action.

NMCO is a publicly supported non-profit organization founded to educate the public in an effort to prevent future abductions and to provide assistance to law enforcement agencies and the families of missing persons. NMCO works with cases of endangered missing persons, unsolved homicides and unidentified persons. NMCO concentrates efforts on those individuals who have been determined by law enforcement to be at risk due to diminished mental capacity, physical disability or illness or when circumstances are suspicious. NMCO concentrates on maintaining public awareness through distribution of photographs and information regarding missing persons and working with law enforcement agencies and other organizations nationwide.

The Nations Missing Children Organization is a tax exempt non-profit organization under IRS code #501(c) 3. Federal tax exempt No. 13-3759539

### **NORCAP**

112 Church Road, Wheatley, Oxfordshire, OX33 1LU

Tel: 01685 875000

email: [enquiries@norcap.org](mailto:enquiries@norcap.org)

NORCAP (National Organisation for Counselling Adoptees and Parents) is a charity which can offer its members the following:

- Help and support for:
  - i. Those who are adopted
  - ii. Birth relatives of adopted people
  - iii. Adoptive families
- The UK's largest Adoption Contact Register
- Specialist advice and a support group for adults abandoned as babies
- A Search Room containing records of births, deaths and marriages for 1904 to 2000, telephone directories and other sources of information. A researcher is also available on certain days
- Accredited researchers for those unable to undertake their own search
- A skilled experienced intermediary service for those seeking a reunion
- Trained volunteers throughout the country who can help and advise any member
- Training and consultancy services for Agency Members
- Tries to be an equal opportunity organisation.

NORCAP also endeavours to help people who during childhood lost all contact with their family through fostering or being brought up in care.

### **NSPCC (National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children)**

NSPCC Administrative Headquarters, Weston House, 42 Curtain Road, London, EC2A 3NH

The NSPCC is the UK's leading charity specialising in child protection and the prevention of cruelty to children. Founded in 1884 as the London SPCC by the Reverend Benjamin Waugh, the NSPCC is the only UK children's charity with statutory powers that enable it to take action to safeguard children at risk of abuse.

The NSPCC's mission is to end cruelty to children. Our vision is a society in which all children are loved, valued and able to fulfil their potential. In other words, a society that will not tolerate child abuse – whether sexual, physical, emotional, or neglect.

The NSPCC's core values are based on the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. They are:

- Children must be protected from all forms of violence and exploitation
- Everyone has a responsibility to support the care and protection of children
- We listen to children and young people, respect their views and respond to them directly
- Children should be encouraged and enabled to fulfil their potential
- We challenge inequalities for children and young people
- Every child must have someone to turn to.

The NSPCC employs 1,800 people in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. Their 180 child protection teams and projects work within five divisions: three in England, one in Wales and one covering Northern Ireland. Their work is funded by funds raised by a national network of 200 Community Appeals branches and by their central fundraising departments. They have 17,000 Community Appeals volunteers, who are vital to the success of their fundraising effort.

### **PACT (Parents & Abducted Children Together)**

Operational Address, UK:

P.O. Box 31389, London, SW11 4WY

Tel: 0207 627 3699

Fax: 0207 627 3699

email: [support@pact-online.org](mailto:support@pact-online.org)

Website: [www.pact-online.org](http://www.pact-online.org)

PACT's mission is to fight parental abduction across borders; and, in partnership with the police, to locate and retrieve missing children.

PACT is a private, international non profit making organisation registered in the US and the UK. The charity was founded by Lady Meyer, wife of the British Ambassador to the United States from 1997 to 2003. PACT's main focus is advocacy, policy and research.

Every year, many thousands of children around the world go missing or are abducted. Some of these children have been forcibly separated from one parent by the other; some are abused, exploited or murdered; others simply disappear never to be found. PACT was created to help ensure the protection of these children.

PACT works relentlessly with governments, legal authorities, the police, the media and other non-profit making organisations, not only to raise awareness of this growing problem, but also to find workable solutions to protect children.

### **reunite**

reunite International Child Abduction Centre, P.O. Box 7124, Leicester, LE1 7XX

Tel: 0116 2556 234 (Advice Line) / 0116 2555 345 (Office)

Fax: 0116 2556 370

email: [reunite@dircon.co.uk](mailto:reunite@dircon.co.uk)

Website: [www.reunite.org](http://www.reunite.org)

reunite is the leading UK charity specialising in international parental child abduction. reunite was formed in 1986 and registered as a charity in 1990. It provides advice, information and support to parents, family members and guardians who have had a child abducted or who fear child abduction. It also provides advice to parents who may have abducted their child as well as advising on international custody disputes.

reunite is part funded by the Department for Constitutional Affairs, the Foreign & Commonwealth Office and the Home Office. It also receives funding for specific projects from charities and trusts as well as raising independent funds.

reunite's philosophy is one that believes any child abduction, whether or not a criminal offence, is wrong. However, acting strictly within the law, reunite will do all it can to assist parents who may have abducted their child. Emphasis is placed on helping parents to come out of hiding and to regulate the child's position within the law. This often entails assisting the abducting parent, guardian or family member to come to terms with the fact that the child must be returned, and focusing all the time on the best interests of the child, help return take place with minimum disturbance and trauma.

### **Salvation Army**

Family Tracing Service, 101 Newington Causeway, London, SE1 6BN

Tel: 0845 634 4747

Fax: 0207 367 4723

email: [family.tracing@salvationarmy.org.uk](mailto:family.tracing@salvationarmy.org.uk)

Website: [www.salvationarmy.org.uk](http://www.salvationarmy.org.uk)

The mission of the Family Tracing Service is to restore (or to sustain) family relationships by tracing relatives with whom contact has been lost, either recently or in the distant past.

The Family Tracing service can be contacted Monday to Friday from 8.15am to 3.45pm and out of hours by email.

### **Shelter**

The National Campaign for Homeless People

88 Old Street, London, EC1V 9HU

Tel: 0207 505 2000

Fax: 0207 505 2030

email: [info@shelter.org.uk](mailto:info@shelter.org.uk)

Website: [www.shelter.org.uk](http://www.shelter.org.uk)

Shelter is a national organisation with local solutions working to improve the lives of homeless and badly housed people. They provide free, professional and independent advice to over 100,000 people each year throughout England and Scotland.

## APPENDIX 7: NMPH NATIONAL PROTOCOL

### A draft Agreement for Co-operation in the Provision of Services by Police and National Missing Persons Helpline

(Registered Charity No: 1020419)

Section 1: Introduction

Section 2: Human Rights and Data Protection

Section 3: Exchange of Data, Quality Standards and Confidentiality

Section 4: Responsibilities of Police

Section 5: Responsibilities of the Police National Missing Persons Bureau

Section 6: Responsibilities of National Missing Persons Helpline

Section 7: Working Arrangements

Section 8: Commencement and Amendment Procedure

Section 9: Signatories

Section 10: Annexes

Annex 1: ACPO/ACPOS Manual of Guidance for the Management, Recording and Investigation of Missing Persons

Annex 2: A framework for Risk Assessment (TBC)

Annex 3: Services Provided by NMPH

- Casework management
- Press and Publicity
- Identification and Reconstruction
- Missing from Care services
- Message Home and Runaway Helpline
- External Enquiries and After Care

Annex 4: Content of Information Passed to Police by NMPH (TBC)

Annex 5: Content of Information Exchange (TBC)

Annex 6: NMPH's Confidentiality Policy

Annex 7: NMPH's Child Protection Policy

Annex 8: Implementation Plan (TBC)

#### Section 1: Introduction

- 1.1 Only through the exchange of information between the police and National Missing Persons Helpline can a complete record of persons reported missing be compiled. This will enable:
  - scarce resources to be targeted to locating and ensuring the safety of those persons considered at greater risk of coming to harm or of causing harm to others;
  - the scope of the problem to be made visible leading to the development of appropriate prevention strategies;
  - greater understanding through research and analysis.
- 1.2 The purpose of this Agreement is to agree protocols between the Police Constabularies of England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland, herein referred to as the 'Police', the Police National Missing Persons Bureau (PNMPB) and National Missing Persons Helpline (NMPH) for the exchange of information, the handling of that information and the response to it.
- 1.3 Both Police and NMPH are committed to working together to ensure the welfare of the missing person and to address the anxieties of those left behind. The Police and NMPH partnership will increase public protection and enhance community safety.

- 1.4 Establishing the safety of missing persons, whilst recognising their right to confidentiality in not revealing their whereabouts, if that is their wish, is fundamental to the work of NMPH. (NMPH's confidentiality policy is set out in Annex 6.) Harnessing the expertise of NMPH in support of the primary role of Police in missing persons enquiries provides additional resources to tackle a problem that the Police alone cannot solve.
- 1.5 The parties to this Agreement are:
- the Association of Chief Police Officers in England, Wales and Northern Ireland (ACPO);
  - the Association of Chief Police Officers in Scotland ACPOS);
  - National Missing Persons Helpline (NMPH).
- 1.6 The objectives of this document are:
- to set out the responsibilities and obligations of both Police and NMPH in support of this Agreement;
  - to specify how the Agreement will be monitored, reviewed and any issues resolved.

## **Section 2: Human Rights and Data Protection**

### **2.1 Human Rights Issues:**

This Agreement respects human rights and has been considered in relation to the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (ECHR), the Human Rights Act, 1998, which incorporates much of the ECHR, and the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union.

The rights and freedoms that may be relevant to this Agreement are:

#### Article 2 – Right to life

There is an obligation on the Police Service to respond effectively to all reports of missing persons to minimise the number of incidents that end in loss of life or harm to the missing person or others.

#### Article 3 – Prohibition of torture, inhuman or degrading treatment

#### Article 4 – Prohibition of slavery and forced labour

#### Article 5 – Right to liberty and security

#### Article 8 – Right to respect for private and family life

When investigating the circumstances of any disappearance, intrusion into the life of the missing person or his or her family will be taken into account. Such intrusion will be proportionate. It is particularly pertinent where an individual disappears deliberately: the right to do so will be respected, but it will be balanced with the rights of the family and the wider community.

### **2.2 Data Protection Issues:**

This sharing of information between Police and NMPH under this Agreement has also been considered in relation to the Data Protection Act, 1998.

Any disclosure of information by police must comply with the 1st Data Protection Principle as set out in the Data Protection Act, 1998.

*“Personal data shall be processed fairly and lawfully and, in particular shall not be processed unless:*

- *one of the conditions in Schedule 2 is met; and*
- *in the case of sensitive data, at least one of the conditions in Schedule 3 is also met.”*

#### **Schedule 2: Processing Personal Data**

Para 4: *“The processing is necessary in order to protect the vital interests of the data subject.”*

All reports of disappearances are subject to a risk assessment process designed to determine what level of risk, high, medium or low, to assign to the missing person. This assessment is based upon the information available at the time and is subject to both supervision, and review should the person remain 'missing'. However, since a person assessed as apparent low risk of a harmful outcome cannot be said to be at 'no risk': there have been instances where people thought not at risk have come to serious harm, including murder, then this requirement is relied upon to satisfy Schedule 2 in all cases.

Para 5: *"The processing is necessary for the exercise of any other function of a public nature exercised in the public interest."*

This requirement may also be said to apply as both government departments and the police have the responsibility to work with other government departments, local authorities and community groups to support families and to ensure public safety.

### **Schedule 3: Processing Sensitive Personal Data**

*(At least one of the extra conditions must be satisfied as well as at least one from Schedule 2 above.)*

Paragraph 1: The data subject has given his explicit consent for the processing of personal data.

This requirement must be fulfilled in order to pass on details of the person reporting the disappearance. It clearly cannot be fulfilled in respect of the person reported missing.

Para 3a: *"The processing is necessary in order to protect the vital interests of the data subject or another person*

- *in a case where the consent cannot be given by or on behalf of the data subject, or where*
- *the data controller cannot reasonably be expected to obtain the consent of the data subject."*

This paragraph is relied upon in all cases, including those cases where there is an apparent low risk of a harmful outcome to the disappearance. This is because, as already stated, apparent low risk does not mean no risk. Research shows that a significant number of persons whose initial assessment would be designated as apparent low risk have indeed come to serious harm whilst 'missing'.

## **2.3 Individual Rights to Access Information Exchanged (Subject Access):**

The rights of an individual to be informed of the processing of his/her personal data, the purpose for such processing and any recipients of such data are clearly set out in Part II of the Data Protection Act, 1998.

If any of the parties to this Agreement receive an application for subject access from an individual wishing to access information that has originated from another party to the Agreement, the Data Controller or Nominated Officer from the organisation providing the original information will be informed.

## **Section 3: Exchange of data, quality standards and confidentiality**

### **3.1 Exchange of data:**

The information to be exchanged between Police and NMPH is set out in Annex 4. The content of the data exchange will be subject to annual review.

### **3.2 Data retention policy:**

All parties will adhere to the same data retention policy for handling data on missing and unidentified persons. This is set out in Annex 5 (TBC)

- Records of persons remaining missing will remain on the databases.



### 3.3 Confidentiality:

- 3.3.1 Information obtained by the Police in relation to missing persons is classified as 'restricted' under HM Government's Protective Marking Scheme (GPMS). This is a framework for assessing the value of sensitive material and provides a set of rules for the handling of such material.
- 3.3.2 In accordance with the 'restricted' classification, the Police and NMPH undertake to abide by the conditions set out in the GPMS.
- 3.3.3 NMPH shall ensure the identity and bona fides of any person involved in the delivery of this Agreement through the use of the Criminal Records Bureau's Enhanced Disclosure procedure.
- 3.3.4 Information provided by the Police to NMPH will not be disclosed by NMPH to any person or organisation without the agreement of the relevant Police Constabulary, the PNMPB, Scottish Criminal Records Office or the Serious Crime Analysis Section (SCAS) at the National Centre for Policing Excellence (NCPE).
- 3.3.5 Conversely, information provided to the Police by NMPH will not be disclosed to any person or agency without the agreement of NMPH, other than for operational reasons. If such a situation arises, NMPH will be informed as soon as practicable.
- 3.3.6 This Agreement respects the policies and working practices of the Police and NMPH and is subject to the requirements of the Human Rights Act, 1998 and the Data Protection Act, 1998. All persons operating this Agreement must comply with these laws and any other relevant legislation.

### 3.4 Inspection and review:

- 3.4.1 Advisory Guidance on the Management, Recording and Investigation of Missing Persons by Police is set out in a document produced by the NCPE on behalf of the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO). This Guidance is designed to be used by Chief Officers to shape police responses to ensure that missing persons, those closest to them and the general public experience consistent, proportionate levels of service. It stresses the need for, and commitment to, partnership working with other statutory and voluntary services, including the requirement to comply with the content of this Agreement. This Guidance will form the basis for inspection and review by HM Inspectors of Constabulary.

## Section 4: Responsibilities of the police

- 4.1 The police response on receipt of a missing person report is set out in the Guidance to the Police Service produced by the NCPE. This gives the definition of a missing person as:  
*"A missing person is anyone whose whereabouts are unknown whatever the circumstances of the disappearance. The person will be considered missing until located and his/her well-being or otherwise established."*
- 4.2 The police response to a missing person report focuses on an assessment of the risks arising from the disappearance, based upon available information. It is designed primarily to identify those people likely to be at high risk of coming to harm or of inflicting harm on others. This risk assessment must be reviewed and revised both as further information comes to light and at planned time intervals. It dictates the basis of the police response.
- 4.3 The categories of risk are low, medium and high. These are defined in paragraph 6 of the ACPO Manual of Guidance for the Management of Missing Persons as:

**Low risk:** There is no apparent threat of danger to either the subject or the public;

**Medium risk:** The risk posed is likely to place the subject in danger or they are a threat to themselves or others;

**High risk:** The risk posed is immediate and there are substantial grounds for believing that the subject is in danger through their own vulnerability, or the risk posed is immediate and there are substantial grounds for believing that the public is in danger.

- 4.4 A framework for decision making for those in receipt of the initial missing person report is set out in Annex 2.
- 4.5 For all missing person reports notified to the Police, details will be placed on the Police National Computer (PNC) as soon as possible and in any case within 48 hours should the person remain missing.
- 4.6 Whenever a missing person report is received by the Police and the risk assessment, supported by a Supervising Officer, is assessed as either 'high' or 'medium', the Investigating Officer, or someone acting with his/her delegated authority, will notify NMPH as soon as practicable and before the information enters the public domain. Notification will include communication by use of an auditable method. NMPH will make a record of the disappearance, search their records and inform Police of any information held by them, likely to relate to the missing person and aid the investigation of the disappearance/ensure the safety of the subject.

Additionally, the Police will agree the appropriate level of assistance from the services provided by NMPH (as set out in Annex 3).

- 4.7 For disappearances assessed as low risk, in addition to recording the information on the PNC, the person reporting the disappearance will be advised that unless circumstances change, following basic enquiries normally associated with receipt of an apparent low risk missing person report, further active enquiries will not be carried out by Police, but the missing person's details will be passed to NMPH. The person reporting will be asked to give permission for his/her own details also to be given to NMPH who will then assist with enquiries and support, as requested and practicable. The report will be retained by Police and a copy forwarded to NMPH after 14 days, if the person is still missing, by electronic transfer where possible. The content of the electronic transfer is set out in Annex 5.
- 4.8 If it is known to the Police that a missing person has returned or has been found, then NMPH will be informed as soon as practicable by means of an auditable method.

#### **Section 5: Responsibilities of the PNMPB**

- 5.1 The PNMPB will inform NMPH within the next working day of any unidentified person, either alive or dead, who has been reported to the PNMPB to search NMPH's records for a possible match. These requests will be made to NMPH's Identification & Reconstruction Department.
- 5.2 The PNMPB will also inform NMPH of previously reported unidentified persons who have been identified also within the next working day.
- 5.3 Each month, upon receipt of an edited copy of the NMPH Casework Database, the PNMPB will match NMPH outstanding missing person reports with their own to identify any inconsistencies in data and liaise with NMPH in order to maintain accurate and timely records and so adhere to the Principles of Data Protection. NMPH will be notified of inconsistencies within five working days.

#### **Section 6: Responsibilities of NMPH**

- 6.1 On receiving a direct report of a missing person from within the United Kingdom, other than from the Police, NMPH will advise the person reporting the disappearance to also inform their local Police.
- 6.2 Where there is concern as at 6.1 above, based upon an assessment of risks, that the disappearance falls into the Police 'high' or 'medium' risk category, NMPH will inform the local Police immediately.

- 6.3 Following receipt of information on cases designated as low risk, if NMPH subsequently receives information requiring a reassessment of risk by Police to 'medium' or 'high', then NMPH will advise the relevant Police Constabulary immediately giving their reasons.
- 6.4 If a missing person returns or is found and this information is known to NMPH, then the relevant Police Constabulary will be informed immediately in order that the PNC entry may be cancelled.
- 6.5 The minimum response by NMPH to apparent low risk disappearances will be:
- Communication with family/carer by letter or email within 2 working days of receipt of report, offering services and support and inviting the family/carer to contact NMPH. Attempt to verify address and send a second letter in cases where no response received to original communication.
  - Allocation of the missing person report to a Case Team within 2 working days of the return of NMPH's completed form.
  - Creation of an internal file in respect of each case. This will detail all enquiries undertaken, including the nature, time and date of any service provided, such as contact with family, offers of support, additional advice and suitability for publicity.
  - Third party enquiries with other agencies, the object being to forward a letter to establish that the missing person is safe.
  - Act as an intermediary where appropriate.
  - Where appropriate, put forward for consideration by NMPH's Publicity Department for publicity via one of NMPH's media outlets and maintain a record thereof.

In all cases, NMPH will:

- Maintain records of resolution, including, where appropriate, details of identification;
  - Detail results of searches & levies incurred;
  - Regularly review cases.
- 6.6 NCPE Guidance sets out the requirement for planned reviews of long term missing persons to determine if their risk assessments should change. An open exchange of information between will facilitate this process and is recommended as good practice.
- 6.7 The services provided by NMPH are set out in Annex 3.
- 6.8 On the first working day of each month, NMPH will provide an edited electronic copy of their casework database to the PNMPB to identify any inconsistencies in data in order to adhere to the Principles of Data Protection.

### **Section 7: Working arrangements**

- 7.1 Day to day management of this Agreement will be between the relevant Force Liaison Officer, NMPH Police Liaison manager and the Head of the PNMPB.
- 7.2 Resolution of any issue arising from the implementation of this Agreement will be sought through cooperation and assistance at the working level. If the matter at issue is considered fundamental to the operation of this Agreement, then it will be brought directly to the attention of the ACPO/ACPOS Missing Persons portfolio holder and the Co-Founders of NMPH.
- 7.3 The impact of this Agreement will be monitored by means of a process of continued monitoring and evaluation.

### **Section 8: Commencement date and amendment procedure**

- 8.1 The implementation of this Agreement between Police and NMPH will be phased in to ensure an efficient and effective progression to the new arrangements. The Implementation Plan is set out in Annex 7 (in preparation).
- 8.2 The Agreement commences on (date to be inserted) initially for one year.

- 8.3 The parties shall review the effectiveness of the Agreement quarterly through the ACPO/ACPOS Missing Persons Coordination Group, chaired by the ACPO Missing Persons portfolio holder.
- 8.4 Monitoring of this Agreement shall be a standing item on the agenda of this Group.
- 8.5 Any amendments to this Agreement shall be agreed by the parties. These will be set down in writing with a scheduled amendment appended to this Agreement.
- 8.6 This Agreement shall be subject to review commencing three months prior to the expiry date.
- 8.7 This Agreement may be terminated upon written notification by any one party to the other with the consent of the Home Office.

**Section 9: Signatories**

Signed by the Chief Constable of XXX Constabulary (President of ACPO?) on behalf of the Association of Chief Police Officers in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, the Chief Constable of YYY Constabulary on behalf of the Chiefs of Police in Scotland and by the Co-Founders of National Missing Persons Helpline.

## APPENDIX 8: SPECIMEN PROTOCOL BETWEEN POLICE AND SOCIAL SERVICES

### Protocol between the police and social services in relation to young persons in care

#### 1. Introduction

- 1.1 This joint protocol refers to situations when children who are looked after by the local authority go missing from wherever they are placed:
  - a) defines the roles of police, social services staff and carers;
  - b) provides guidance to these staff and carers.
- 1.2. This should be read as guidance, which cannot anticipate every situation. Police, social services staff and foster carers should use their professional judgement to take any action they feel that is necessary to protect the safety of the child, based on an assessment of risk for each individual child.
- 1.3 All parties involved in the protocol should be clear about the definition of a missing person, and discourage the casual reporting of 'unauthorised absences' as missing persons.
- 1.4 Children who go missing from care may place themselves and others at risk. The reasons for their absence are often varied and complex and cannot be viewed in isolation from their home circumstances and their experiences of care. Every 'missing' episode should attract proper attention from the professionals involved with the missing person and they must collaborate to ensure a consistent and coherent response is given to the missing person on his/her return.
- 1.5 Channels of communication between the local authority and the relevant Police Area must be established and maintained in order to facilitate the partnership approach.
- 1.6 This protocol applies to all 'Looked after Children' missing from residential or foster care.
- 1.7 All references in this protocol to residential care or homes and staff include foster homes and foster carers.

#### 2. Definitions

- 2.1 Where this protocol refers to a 'child' or 'children', these terms include young people under the age of 18 years.
- 2.2 **Unauthorised absence**  
Clearly some children absent themselves for a short period and then return and their whereabouts are known. Sometimes children stay out longer than agreed, either on purpose or accidentally, and may be testing boundaries. This kind of boundary testing is within the range of normal teenage behaviour and not necessarily considered a risk.
- 2.3 **Missing**  
Where the child's location or reason for absence is unknown and/or there is cause for concern for the child because of their vulnerability or there is a potential danger to the public.

A child in this category must be reported to the police.

#### 3. Risk Assessment

- 3.1 In assessing the significance of a child's absence, all staff must apply the above definitions and take into consideration guidance already agreed on and incorporated into the child's care plan including:
  - The age of the child;
  - The legal status of the child;
  - Previous behaviour and history;
  - The emotional needs of the child, eg, whether there has been any variation in their mood or whether they have expressed any intention to harm themselves or others;
  - Behaviour of the child as influenced by peer groups or others;
  - Whether the child is perceived as running to / running from someone/something;
  - The risk of offending;
  - The risk that the child may be targeted for sexual exploitation.

- 3.2 Staff in all organisations concerned should avoid dismissing the potential significance of repeated running away. Often such children are immediately labelled as the problem and insufficient consideration is given to why they persistently abscond. Persistent running needs to be explored, particularly at the time of post return interviews.
- 3.3 A range of 'push' and 'pull' factors may be reasons for being absent:

**Push factors** – conflict with carers, feeling powerless, bullying, being unhappy in care, physical or sexual abuse.

**Pull factors** – wanting to be with family or friends, peer pressure re established behaviour, attractions of street life, attractions of people who may present a risk and exploit the child.

#### 4. Planning before the event

- 4.1 Where there is a likelihood that a child in care may go missing from their established placement their Placement Plan, completed by their social worker should include an assessment of the likelihood that the child might go missing and the risk they may face as a consequence. Children's home and fostering service staff should contribute to this assessment. All information should be included in the placement plan and in the child's care plan.
- 4.2 This assessment should include information on the following:
- The likelihood of the child going missing;
  - The child's view;
  - The level of supervision /support that care staff propose to provide for the child;
  - The views of parents/carers on their child needs and the action that needs to be taken if the child is absent;
  - The risk of harm to the child and his/her vulnerability if he/she is absent;
  - Consideration of any external influences which may result in a child's removal without consent;
  - The likelihood of the child being harboured.
- 4.3 The child should have this protocol explained to him/her and the potential dangers that they may encounter so that he/she understands the implications of running.

#### 5. Incidents of specific concern

If the running away/going missing of a child or young person is causing specific concern, eg, by its frequent repetition or indicators of particular risk such as contact with a Schedule One offender, there should be a meeting to discuss the combined response to such incident and concern. This meeting should be attended by:

- A representative of the police;
- A representative of the local authority responsible for the child's care of sufficient seniority to be able to take authoritative decisions about the steps needed to locate and protect the child;
- The registered manager of the children's home or the manager of the fostering service child or young person;
- **Where the child is not placed within the boundary of their responsible authority** – a representative from the authority in which the child is currently living – perhaps from the local team responsible for child protection;
- Other relevant agencies –, eg, representatives from the Youth Offending Team, Drugs Action Team and CAMHS service.

#### 6. Notification of absence

- 6.1 When a members of children's home staff or a foster carer realise that a child is missing from their care they should consider which definition the absence falls within.
- 6.2 Support and advice in making this decision will be available from the social services department responsible for the child, from the responsible out-of-hours service.

- 6.3 If the absence is considered to fall with the definition of missing, residential staff must without delay inform:
- The police;
  - The parents and those who have parental responsibility;
  - The social worker or the accountable team manager;
  - The emergency duty team if out of hours and the social worker and accountable team manager the next working day.
- 6.4 If the absence is not considered to fall within the definition of unauthorised absence, residential staff should review the consideration regularly and in any case, if the period of absence continues for six hours, further consideration should be given as to whether the absence should fall within this protocol. *Six hours should be regarded as the maximum period before reconsideration and in many cases, a shorter period would be more appropriate.*
- 6.5 Any case of an absent child which causes significant concern, or where circumstances give rise to suspicion of harm should be brought to the attention of the accountable team manager from the authority responsible for the child's carer and the duty inspector for the police area from which the child is missing as soon as possible.

### **7. Information to be made available**

When reporting to the police, the person taking the report will need the following information:

- A description of the child and their clothing;
- Details of when the child was last seen and with whom;
- A recent photograph (if available);
- Family addresses;
- Known associates and addresses frequented;
- Personal details of the child;
- Any previous history of absconding / absenteeism and circumstances of where found;
- The names and addresses of the child's GP and dentist;
- The circumstances under which the child is absent;
- Any factors which increase the risk to the child;
- Name of staff member who has completed search of home for the child (NB police reserve the right to conduct further searches).

### **8. Response**

- 8.1 Police will investigate all cases falling within this protocol and will respond in accordance with Police Missing Persons policy. Social services' staff will be expected to help the police in finding the child and to work cooperatively with police during any enquiry.
- 8.2 Even after reporting a child missing, staff should recognise that Social services' are responsible for children in their care at all times and this responsibility is not absolved when they have reported a child missing to the police.

### **9. Informing the media**

The police have responsibility for advising the media regarding children missing from local authority care, however decisions to publicise will always be made in consultation with social services who will consult the parents and/or carers.

### **10. Recording**

Throughout the process in this protocol, residential carers and social workers must keep a full record of all actions taken and messages received and given. Police will likewise keep a record on the appropriate missing person report.

## 11. Planning for return

If a child's absence is defined as 'missing', the appropriate social services senior manager in consultation with social workers, parents and police as appropriate, should start contingency planning for when the child is found. The manager must consider:

Arranging for an 'independent person' to talk to the child about the reasons that they went missing to inform the decision as to whether the child will return to the previous placement;

Arrangements to escort the child and support them to return;

Whether the police wish to interview the child before he/she is returned to their placement.

## 12. Police powers

12.1 Police powers are limited and difficulties can arise when missing children are found but do not want to return to their placement.

12.2 Under the Children Act 1989, where there is reasonable cause to believe that the child could suffer significant harm the police can take the child into police protection under the Children Act 1989, and remove to suitable accommodation which could include the home from which the child originally went missing. The police are not given the power to use force to take children into police protection. This is, however, a difficult area, with conflicting advice as to what the police can do in terms of using reasonable force to prevent children suffering significant harm.

12.3 There will be occasions when a child is found in a location that may be considered unsuitable, but where there would not be legal grounds for taking them into police protection. In such cases, police and the accountable manager from the responsible social services authority will need to liaise to discuss what steps may be necessary in order to safeguard the child's welfare.

12.4 Any child unlawfully at large from a secure unit or penal establishment may be liable to arrest and returned by police.

## 13. Child/Young person on remand

If the remand is without conditions they should be returned to the designated placement. If there are conditions attached, eg, curfew they can be detained and brought before a court.

## 14. Communication

Following a reported absence, residential staff may need to inform all other staff and children within the home. This stops distressing rumours and additional information regarding the child's whereabouts may be obtained. Staff should also notify the child's school in case they have any relevant information. Any information should be reported to the police without delay.

## 15. The return

15.1 The child should be given the opportunity to talk to someone independent of their placement about their absence. This independent person should have no line management with the home. In some instances this person could be a police officer. It may be however that the child would prefer to speak to a social worker or to an independent agency.

15.2 The accountable manager in the authority responsible for the child's care should ensure that an independent return interview is arranged. If there are concerns that the child ran away as a result of circumstances relating to their placement then this interview would need to take place prior to the child's return. Otherwise this should take place within 72 hours of his/her return from absence.

15.3 Where an allegation of physical or sexual abuse is made or becomes evident, child protection procedures must be implemented and contact made immediately with the police Child Abuse Investigation Team and the child protection service at the authority where the child is living.



- 15.4 If there is any suggestion that the child has been a victim or perpetrator of crime, consideration must be given to securing evidence by police including by forensic examination. This should also include securing clothing and delaying washing/bathing in relevant cases. It must be remembered that all necessary permissions are obtained from the child's parents and/or those with parental responsibility. The child cannot give consent to these procedures taking place. It is essential to recognise that the welfare of the child is paramount and careful consideration might be given to the potential effects of the procedures on the child.
- 15.5 Parents, police, social workers and any other persons informed of the child's absence, should be advised of the child's return without delay.
- 15.6 The social worker and line manager should decide in consultation with residential staff and the child whether they should convene a statutory review of the child's care plan.

#### **16. Missing during external activity of a residential home**

If a child becomes absent outside their area, the carer in charge of the external activity or holiday will:

- Arrange a search in the area where the child became absent;
- Notify the local police for that area;
- Notify the child's parents or guardian;
- Notify the child's social worker or the accountable team manager;
- Notify a senior manager at the home if relevant;
- Notify the Youth Offending Team if the Child or Young Person is on remand;
- Notify the emergency duty team if out of hours.

#### **17. Longer absences**

- 17.1 A meeting will be called to develop a strategy whenever a child is missing for a longer period, and within a maximum of 7 working days. This will be based on the assessment and will depend upon the child's individual circumstances.
- 17.2 This meeting will involve:
- The accountable team manager (SSD) from the authority responsible for the child's care;
  - The local police superintendent (or their nominee);
  - Other relevant staff representatives from the authority where the child is living;
  - The registered manager of the children's home or fostering service;
  - Parents/carers.
- 17.3 These senior officers will review the action taken up to this point, and satisfy themselves that all possible steps are being taken to locate and return the child.

#### **18. Monitoring the protocol**

- 18.1 The protocol will be initially monitored through a suitably convened working group. They will seek wider feedback from operational colleagues in advance of these meetings. The frequency of these monitoring meetings may initially be quarterly then subsequently varied.
- 18.2 The designated manager of the local authority with responsibility for children missing from care and the superintendent of police for the relevant area must be responsible for ensuring that the general principles of this protocol are followed.

## APPENDIX 9: LEGAL POWERS

Legal powers are limited in the area of missing persons investigations, often due to the inability to show that a serious arrestable offence has been committed. Clearly there are some investigations that do fall within this category but the majority do not, especially in the early stages. This section identifies some of the issues that are relevant but is not a definitive guide. Offences and powers of arrest can be sought in other publications or on the Police National Legal Database.

### Investigation

It is a duty of the police to investigate reports of people going missing to establish whether any criminal offences are contributory or consequential to the disappearance, and to establish the well being of the person concerned. At the time of taking the initial report it will not be known if this is a straight forward case of someone wishing to disappear or if it is the initial notification of a potential murder or abduction.

### Search

The search of any premises is usually done with the consent of the occupier and normally there is no power to require access to be granted. This consent may be given by a relevant party, ie parent of a child. In the case of the officer wishing to conduct a search but being confronted with a situation where access is denied, consideration must be given as to why this is happening and the circumstances surrounding the request to search. Should the officer consider that it is necessary to proceed with the search because a person may be at risk of harm, Section 17 PACE may be appropriate. Alternatively the officer should apply to a court for a search warrant.

There are two stated cases that appear to be relevant to a search when no consent has been given. They relate to police searching crime scenes which may appear to be relevant to missing persons cases.

### DPP-v-MORRISON (2003)

In this case it was confirmed that the police could act on implied consent. In this case Code B of the Codes of Practice was examined. The code applies to searches of premises *'undertaken for the purpose of an investigation into an alleged offence, with the occupier's consent, other than searches made in the following circumstances: – routine scenes of crime searches...'* The Code proceeds on the assumption that neither a search warrant nor actual consent is needed, because consent can properly be assumed. In MORRISON the court could find nothing that would cast doubt on the proposition that provided officers do not go beyond what is reasonable in the circumstances, routine scenes of crime searches may assume the owner's consent.

### R-v-SANGHERA (2000)

The apparent victim of this case subsequently became a suspect and it was argued that evidence obtained during the search should be excluded under S78 as written consent or any other lawful power was not used for the conducting of the search. However, it was held by the appeal judge that the original trial judge had been correct in allowing the evidence gained as it had not been gained unfairly accordingly to S78 of PACE, there was no question the police were acting bona fide.

It would seem to follow then that if you are acting with implied consent regarding searches then officers have implied consent regarding examining articles found to try to find the missing person as you are acting in their best interest.

### Access to confidential medical records

It may be necessary to gain access to confidential records such as doctor's notes or dental records. These are normally only accessible with the consent of the patient or with a court order. In the latter case, an officer must suspect that a serious arrestable offence has been committed.

Advice has been given by the General Medical Council and the Forensic Dentistry Organisation to those who hold confidential records.

**GMC:**

*'Police do not have any inherent right of access to confidential medical information. Only obliged to provide this if they have a court order or search warrant. However, if it is impossible to obtain patients consent then decision about disclosing information must be one they are prepared to justify. In general terms disclosure can be justified when it is in the public interest such that the benefits to an individual or to society outweigh maintaining confidentiality.'*

**Forensic Dentistry:**

*'Police have no statutory right to inspect or remove a patients records without their consent. However, law allows for special circumstances and it's reasonable to hand over an individual's record if it enables them to be identified or excluded. The consent of the nearest relative may be sought if required.'*

**Data Protection Act**

Similarly personal data held by other organisations that may be of use to the investigation are protected under the Data Protection Act, *'Personal Data shall be obtained only for specified and lawful purposes and shall not be further processed in any manner incompatible with those purposes.'* Legitimate disclosure would ordinarily be to assist in *'the prevention or detection of crime'* or *'the apprehension or prosecution of offenders'*.

As a missing person report could well be the early indication of a crime and so the enquiry regarding personal data would arguably fall within *'the prevention or detection of crime'*.

**Access to communications data**

In missing persons investigations it may be necessary to gain access to data in relation to his or her mobile phone. This is provided for in section 22(2) of the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000. The purposes that are most likely to be relevant to missing persons are:

- Preventing or detecting crime;
- In the interests of public safety;
- In an emergency, for preventing death or injury or any damage to a person's physical or mental health, or of mitigating any injury or damage to a person's physical or mental health.

Notices and, where appropriate, authorisations for communications data should be channelled through single points of contact (SPOC). In normal office hours, all applications should be made through the SPOC.

**Oral application**

An application for communications data may only be made and approved orally, on an urgent basis, where it is necessary to obtain communications data for the purpose set out in section 22(2)(g) of the Act:

*'for the purpose, in an emergency, of preventing death or injury or any damage to a person's physical or mental health, or of mitigating any injury or damage to a person's physical or mental health'*.

In the case of vulnerable missing persons, where there is a concern for an individual's life or safety, officers should escalate the priority. In these situations, an oral application can be made to obtain the data.

Calling Communication Service Providers (CSPs) at weekends and during the night is only permitted (by ACPO agreement) where the applicant and Designated Person (DP) believe that life is at immediate risk if the required data is not obtained. A Designated Person under this part of the Act is the authorising officer. This is a judgement call, and Communication Service Providers may decline to supply the data or service requested if they believe the concern is not justified.

### Subscriber information

In a life at risk situation subscriber information can be obtained by the Force Control Room (FCR) Inspector, without the need to apply via the Single Point of Contact (SPOC) (or the rare occasion where there is no FCR inspector, another inspector). That inspector (the DP) will receive a verbal application from a member of his or her own Law Enforcement Agency (LEA). If the DP agrees that the application is justified and that the life at immediate risk criteria are met, then they may issue an Authorisation or Notice as applicable. In the case of a Notice, the FCR Inspector (DP) will contact the relevant CSP and verbally issue the Notice and obtain the subscriber information. If a negative result is obtained, they should consider consulting their SPOC, as the telephone number may have been 'ported' to another company, meaning that a trained SPOC officer may still be able to acquire subscriber details from another CSP.

Any oral Notice must be supported by a written one, which must be completed and sent to the CSP before the end of the DP's tour of duty.

All oral applications and Authorisations must be supported by written ones, which should be completed before the end of the tour of duty of the applicant and, or DP.

RIPA 2000 defines three forms of communications data:

- 21(4)(a) Traffic data. This is usually data generated by the CSP in the process of delivering a communication (Superintendents authority);
- 21(4)(b) The use made of the service by a person, such as itemised billing (Superintendents authority);
- 21(4)(c) Other data such as account and subscriber information held by the CSP (Inspectors authority).

All requests for traffic data, eg, cell site locations or calls made or received as they occur, or call data, eg, historic billing, must be applied for through the SPOC, including out of hours. These applications can also be made orally under s.22(g) of RIPA (out of hours only where life is at immediate risk) and must be followed by written documents in the same way as requests for subscriber information.

See *ACPO/ACPOS/HM Customs & Excise Manual of Standards for Accessing Communications Data* for further advice.

### Disclosure

In England and Wales the Criminal Procedures and Investigations Act 1996 (CPIA) places a duty upon Law Enforcement Agencies both in relation to disclosure in criminal proceedings and retention of material that could be relevant to pending or future criminal or civil proceedings. Failure to comply with the standards demanded by ECHR and/or RIPA 2000 may adversely affect the chances of a PII application succeeding.

### S.50 Recovery Order Children Act 1989

This allows a court to order the recovery of a child under the following circumstances:

- Where a care order, Emergency Protection Order or police protection is in force;
- Has been unlawfully taken away or is being unlawfully kept away from the responsible person;
- Has run away or is staying away from the responsible person;
- Is missing;
- The responsible person being his/her lawful guardian.

This gives powers to require persons to disclose information about the child's whereabouts to recover the child and, if necessary, enter premises using reasonable force.

## APPENDIX 10: MISSINGKIDS.COM HUB FORCES

Forces	Contact	Contact Details
City of London Metropolitan	Metropolitan Missing Persons Bureau	<a href="mailto:uk.missingkids@gtnet.gov.uk">uk.missingkids@gtnet.gov.uk</a> 0207 230 4029
Bedfordshire Cambridgeshire Essex Hampshire Hertfordshire Kent Norfolk Suffolk Surrey Sussex Thames Valley	Hertfordshire Community Safety	<a href="mailto:ukhc@icmec.org">ukhc@icmec.org</a> 01707 638061
Avon and Somerset Devon and Cornwall Dorset Gloucestershire Wiltshire	Avon and Somerset HQ CID	<a href="mailto:avonmp@icmec.org">avonmp@icmec.org</a> 01275 816468/816624
Cleveland Durham Humberside Northumbria North Yorkshire South Yorkshire West Yorkshire	South Yorkshire FIB	<a href="mailto:southyorksm@icmec.org">southyorksm@icmec.org</a> 0114 252 3341/19
Staffordshire Warwickshire West Mercia	Staffordshire FIB	<a href="mailto:staffmp@icmec.org">staffmp@icmec.org</a> 01785 232085
Dyfed-Powys Gwent South Wales North Wales	South Wales PNC Bureau	<a href="mailto:swalesmp@icmec.org">swalesmp@icmec.org</a> 01656 679515
Derbyshire Leicestershire Lincolnshire Northamptonshire Nottinghamshire	Northamptonshire PNC Bureau	<a href="mailto:nhantsmp@icmec.org">nhantsmp@icmec.org</a> 01604 703323
Cheshire Cumbria Lancashire Merseyside	Lancashire PNC Bureau	<a href="mailto:lancsm@icmec.org">lancsm@icmec.org</a> 01772 410574
Police Service of Northern Ireland	PSNI Force Press Office	<a href="mailto:rucni@ncmec.org">rucni@ncmec.org</a> 028 9070 0084 /5/6
West Midlands	West Midlands PNC Bureau	<a href="mailto:w.simpson@west-midlands.pnn.police.uk">w.simpson@west-midlands.pnn.police.uk</a> 0121 626 5860
Greater Manchester	GMP CRO (MFH Section)	<a href="mailto:John.barnes@gmp.police.uk">John.barnes@gmp.police.uk</a> 0161 856 2633

## APPENDIX 11: LINES OF ENQUIRY

**DNA profiling:**

The aim is to identify, retrieve and preserve articles likely to yield the DNA profile of the missing person. This will assist both in the identification of bodies and body parts and may provide intelligence links for police investigators through searching the National DNA Database (NDNAD). For this reason, the method of choice for DNA profiling is that used for the NDNAD, currently SGM +. It is particularly important to search the NDNAD for any match to profiles obtained from crime scenes (automatic search when new profile added). If no matches are found, the profile should remain on the database as a potential crime scene sample, but a clear reporting mechanism must also be set out in the event of a match being found. This is to ensure that the information is handled appropriately and that it reaches the police investigators as soon as possible.

4.4.4 The following guidelines should be considered and are vital in high risk cases:

- Establish natural parents and siblings of missing person for possible identification. Take samples and store.
- Retrieve articles from missing person's home address and any other relevant location, for DNA yielding material. The following are useful, but it is essential that the appropriate questions are asked to maximise confidence that the item can be linked to the missing person.
  - Hair, preferably with roots, from individual comb or brush.
  - Saliva and cells from mouth on toothbrush, chewing gum, stamps, envelopes, cigarettes discarded by the missing person, similarly any glasses, cups or drinks cans.
  - Underwear for seminal/vaginal material.
  - Clothing, especially collar and cuffs.
  - Any medical samples provided to hospitals or surgeries for blood tests or biopsies, taking care to establish authenticity.
  - Any hospital patient samples which are often retained by pathology laboratories long after the patient has been discharged. (A physical check of the storage facilities may be necessary as records can be ambiguous.)

It is advisable to obtain corroboration from more than one source to increase confidence that a profile of the actual person reported missing has been obtained.

**Blood grouping:**

Establish the missing person's blood group.

**Fingerprints and palmprints:**

4.4.5 Attempt to build up a composite set of finger (and palm) prints by identifying articles handled by the missing person. Potentially useful items include paper based articles, eg, written documents such as application forms, letters, personal records. Seize sufficient items to enable cross checking to increase confidence in the validity of the results.

**Dental charts & records:**

4.4.6 Establish location of any dental charts and records and obtain authority for their seizure.

4.4.7 Other types of physical evidence can be of assistance to officers investigating the disappearance and the following actions should be considered:

- Ascertain contents of last known meal taken by missing person.
- Establish any medication the person has been prescribed, the dosage and frequency of ingestion. Check whether medication is missing or left behind and match remaining doses against prescriptions.
- Ascertain whether the person is known or believed to abuse drugs or take illegal substances such as cannabis, amphetamines, ecstasy, cocaine, heroin, LSD. (This can also assist in providing potentially useful lines of enquiry.)
- Collect fibres from bedroom.
- Handwriting: obtain samples made by the missing person.
- Check any pads and notebooks for indented impressions for clues to thinking/possible actions.
- Seize diaries, organisers, personal digital assistants, laptop and desktop computers for information on friends, associates and contacts and any useful information which assists the investigation/assessment of risk of a harmful outcome.

- Check rubbish bins for discarded documents remembering the possibility of linking torn items to source by means of physical fits.
- Consider the full CCTV potential of the case.
- Maximise the information retrievable from the use of telephony, both landlines and mobiles.
- Check if the person had a gun licence or any suspected involvement with firearms; if the former, check if the weapon is missing.
- Examine uncollected mail, including newspapers and email, for information on the time when the person disappeared.
- Ensure checks are made against any unidentified persons, alive or dead, both on the Police National Computer and with the Police National Missing Persons Bureau Email:[nationalmissingpersons@met.pnn.police.uk](mailto:nationalmissingpersons@met.pnn.police.uk) Tel: 020 7230 4029

The following questions should be considered when taking the initial report and throughout the life of the investigation. Many of these questions also feature in the suggested risk assessment model at [Appendix 4 The Investigating Officers Guide to Risk](#). The conduct of the investigation and determination of the level of risk are bound together and should be developed in tandem.

#### **Is there a reason to go missing?**

When considering if there is a reason for the person to go missing officers should remember this could include committing a criminal offence, truancy, domestic discord, fear, disobedience or disagreement. In adolescent females, this could also involve pregnancy. In adult cases this could include domestic disputes over access to children or arguments regarding divorce settlements. If the criminal fraternity are involved it could include silencing a witness, retribution against an informant, or gang turf or drug battles. The subject may have discussed action with relatives or close friends, which could explain their disappearance. All these facts should be checked in each and every case but specific to each set of circumstances. The facts will then indicate the most probable reason why the person is missing.

#### **Is the disappearance out of character?**

When considering the out of character disappearance of a person, it is important to establish the background of the subject. Not only should their general character be assessed but also the individual's capacity to make rational judgements and decisions. In each case the degree of independence should be assessed taking account of the victim's life experience. Officers must then conclude as to whether or not the circumstances of the missing from home report are out of character to the specific individual.

#### **Circumstances of the last sighting?**

The actions and demeanor of the missing person at time of the last sighting may give an indication of what they were about to do or the circumstances of their disappearance. Alternatively this may provide the basis for further investigation, for example, were they intending to catch a bus or train, were they with another person or was there anything strange about the manner in which they were acting. It is also important to consider who is giving this information and whether they have any motive for giving false or misleading information.

#### **Who was the last person to see the missing person?**

Interview that person and establish the circumstances of the last sighting recording details of any conversation and the direction of travel. Take written statements where appropriate.

#### **Did the subject prepare for an absence from home?**

Clothing, possessions and the activity of the subject needs to be taken into account. An examination of any diaries found or correspondence for clues as to the subject's intentions. It may be that the person was dressed and equipped for a particular purpose, ie, light summer clothing or sporting wear would not indicate a conscious desire to stay away from home for any unnecessary length of time. In all cases the clothing that the missing person was wearing should be completely identified. The missing person's room should be checked to ascertain if anything is missing. Has the missing person taken with them any means of financial support, eg, chequebook, and cash cards, which could be used to finance a prolonged stay away from home.

Prior to releasing any details of descriptions to the press, officers should ensure that the description is completely accurate. There have been cases in the past where children have been identified as wearing a particular item of clothing, only to later discover that the item was in the child's home. This leads to confusing sightings and can take up valuable investigative time if care is not taken in the initial stages. It also assists any abductor particularly when there are sightings after the child was known to have died. The offence of child murder receives a great deal of media attention and there will always be a tremendous response and sympathy from the public. In such cases there will usually be a number of witnesses who will try to make a previous sighting of a child fit the description of the missing child just to give the family of the child some hope, be aware of this.

**Establish details of friends, neighbours and acquaintances.**

The person reporting the disappearance may not be in possession of all relevant information about the missing person. It is important to properly investigate the person's lifestyle and consider if there is anything that may be unknown to the person reporting. This lack of awareness could be because the missing person does not want others to be aware of their circumstances due to embarrassment, deceit or a simple lack of communication. It is, for example, possible that a parent does not know that their son or daughter is being bullied or a spouse does not know of their partner's infidelity.

**In what place or circumstances was the person last found?**

Missing persons will often return to a place where they were previously found, or have stayed at or frequented in the past. Officers must obtain information from previous reports regarding to this and make enquiries at those locations.

**Could they be in hospital, police custody or prison?**

These are enquiries that are often overlooked and can cause embarrassment if this is where the person is eventually found. Enquiries should be repeated throughout the life of the investigation.



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## The Process for Using Child Rescue Alert

### Introduction

This scheme originated in the United States of America in 1996 with the unsolved abduction and murder of 9 year old Amber Hagerman in Texas and was given the title of 'Amber Alert'. The scheme was seen to have value and introduced in a number of states.

In 2002, the scheme was introduced to the UK as a pilot in Sussex and given the title 'Child Rescue Alert'. It was subsequently implemented in Surrey, Hampshire and Leicestershire.

### Purpose

The scheme is intended to be used within a tightly defined set of criteria in relation to the abduction of a child and these criteria must be consistently adhered to wherever the scheme is introduced in the UK. Diverging from them will cause confusion and devalue the scheme. These criteria and their use are set out below. The scheme must also have a national identity and format that only varies with the identification of the force in whose area it is being used and any minor modifications that enable it to conform to individual force policies and procedures.

Child Rescue Alert is a fast response scheme designed to save a child from harm and should be used in the first few hours of a suspected abduction. Any arrests are secondary to this purpose but may result from these actions.

This scheme relies on a close partnership with the media who will broadcast the alert via radio and TV. Experience has shown that the policy that works best is to keep the scheme as *simple* as *possible*. It may be possible in the future, however, to employ more elaborate methods of disseminating the alerts.

### How the scheme works

When information is received by the police that indicates a child has been abducted the following procedures must be followed:

- Does the information fit the criteria for use (see below – CRITERIA for issuing an alert);
- Authorisation sought to implement an alert;
- Alert text written;
- Media informed in accordance with agreed protocols;
- Call handling procedures implemented for receipt of calls in response to the alert;
- Assessment of calls received;
- Response to calls;
- Update of alert where applicable;
- Cancellation of alert.

**Criteria for issuing an alert**

The criteria for issuing an alert have to be strict or there is a risk that the public and the media will become de-sensitised to them. If Child Rescue Alert is used in the wrong circumstances the public will cease to react to alerts and the scheme will become ineffective. There are four criteria, all of which must be met before a Child Rescue Alert is issued, these are;

1. The child is under 16 years old;
2. There is a reasonable belief that the child has been kidnapped or abducted;
3. There is a reasonable belief that the child is in imminent danger of serious harm or death;
4. There is sufficient information available to enable the public to assist the police in locating the child.

The alert will normally be in force for a maximum of four hours but this could be extended by up to two hours if the superintendent authorising the alert considers it to be essential to the enquiry.

Alerts must be cancelled at the conclusion of their use, as failure to do so will create difficulties with the media and the public.

The process chart within this document gives an overview of how the system works.

## Stages of the Process

- Initial response:** the decision to issue an alert must be made as quickly as possible after it has been established whether or not all the criteria have been met. This decision, where possible should be taken by a senior investigating officer (SIO).
- Alert message:** careful consideration must be given to the wording of the alert to ensure that sufficient information is made available and that there is no ambiguity.
- Issuing an alert:** the method of passing information to the media will be set out in a protocol. The format must comply with the national standard, carry the relevant logo and be delivered appropriately. Delivery is currently by email via a dedicated Child Rescue Alert Message Switch System. This should be backed up by telephone calls to ensure that the message has been received.
- Web site:** forces already using the scheme also use the Child Rescue Alert website and this must be updated with the details of any alert that is issued.
- Call handling:** issuing an alert will cause an increase in the number of calls received by the police. The force issuing the alert must ensure that its call handling process is adequate for this purpose and there should be a contingency plan to deal with the increased volume. The SIO should be mindful that neighbouring forces may also receive extra calls and there must be a process that allows them to be aware that such an alert has been issued. There should be protocols in place to cover these situations.
- Police response:** the initial response should be aimed at quickly verifying whether or not there are grounds for issuing an alert, which must then be passed to the duty detective superintendent for a decision. Consideration must also be given to ensuring that there are adequate resources to respond to any potential sightings and to interview witnesses.
- Alert update:** any new information that will change the context of the alert must be the subject of an update message as soon as possible.
- Cancellation:** this must be done to avoid any conflicting messages being broadcast, particularly bearing in mind the speed with which the media obtain information about live incidents.
- Maintenance:** it is highly unlikely that a police force will issue an alert except on rare occasions. It is important therefore that the system is regularly tested and that contact details are reviewed and updated. This requires coordination between adjacent forces to avoid the media overload.
- Training:** to ensure that all relevant personnel are conversant with the scheme, there should be a training programme that achieves this end. There is a video for this purpose, originally made for Surrey Police, which can be edited to suit other forces. Forces should consider collaborating on this and jointly fund a generic version to save cost.

Operating a scheme with the media has risks that will become apparent if any part of the police procedures fail. Such failure will be in a high visibility arena and could cause embarrassment for the force concerned. It is imperative therefore that the processes are managed properly and effectively.

#### **Other issues**

Force policy on missing persons should be updated to accommodate Child Rescue Alert.

Suitable IT must be in place to allow transmission of alerts (faxes are usually not acceptable to the media).

Identification of a number for the public to ring in response to an alert. As the scheme grows, it is essential that there is standardisation of one number. The 999 system may not be an appropriate number to use.

Appointment of a project manager and project team to manage the introduction of the scheme with some ongoing ownership to maintain its effectiveness.

Identification of an ACPO lead to support the scheme.

#### **Standard Logo**

In order to portray a uniform approach to this scheme, the standard logo must be used by all forces as follows:

FIGURE 4 Child Rescue Alert logo



## Roles and Responsibilities

### First officer attending

The first officer attending must invoke their force Police Missing Persons Policy. Early assessment will need to be made as to whether this begins to fit the criteria, set out on page 119 of this document for issuing a Child Rescue Alert. Witnesses must be interviewed to establish the provenance of any information known. If the criteria remain, a supervisor must be called.

## SPEED IS OF THE ESSENCE, EVERY MINUTE COUNTS

### Duty Supervisor (preferably an Inspector)

The whole concept of the Child Rescue Alert depends upon early recognition that the criteria have been met. The role of the duty supervisor is crucial in this regard.

Supervisors must ensure that any report of a missing child is investigated thoroughly and expeditiously, in compliance with the Missing Persons Policy.

In tandem with this, early questioning of family members and witnesses should establish whether the four criteria are met to launch a Child Rescue Alert.

As soon as a child abduction/kidnap becomes apparent, the supervisor needs to:

- 1) Contact the force control room inspector (or similar role) to consider launching the Child Rescue Alert.
- 2) Liaise with the duty detective inspector (or on call DI) with a view to commencing an investigation and search for the missing child.

### Force Control Room Inspector (or similar role)

As soon as an incident appears to be appropriate for a Child Rescue Alert, the procedure should be activated.

The duty detective superintendent should be consulted as a matter of urgency and an SIO appointed.

*Immediately after a launch of the Child Rescue Alert the future deployment strategy must be considered. Before a decision to deploy is made (in response to the receipt of any relevant intelligence) consultation with the detective superintendent and, or the SIO should be considered.*

A suitable role should be identified within force structures (which may be the force control room inspector) to have responsibility for ensuring that the child rescue alert message, any alert updates and alert cancellations are sent via the MSS.

### Detective Inspector

The detective inspector (DI) will liaise with the SIO regarding the investigation and will continue to manage the investigation until instructed otherwise.

The DI will also have responsibility for the creation of the alert message as directed, this should be done in liaison with the child rescue alert press officer.

Contact will be made with the relevant senior management team regarding any community implications.

### Detective Superintendent

The decision whether or not to launch an alert is the responsibility of the detective superintendent.

By definition, the launching of a Child Rescue Alert will become a Critical Incident.

The subjective decision needed by the detective superintendent is 'Can we meet the Four Criteria?' This may be a difficult decision which will involve an element of professional judgement.

Proportionality must be considered. It is important that the proposed action is the least intrusive possible, consistent with the privacy rights of any individual concerned.

A speedy investigation of information cannot be overstated. There will be occasions when the four criteria on the face of it, appear to be met, however, instinctively the detective superintendent may feel that further investigation is required. To launch an alert in the wrong circumstances will dilute the effect and damage its credibility. To hold back in a situation where hindsight proves it was valid is equally difficult to explain. All decisions should be recorded in a policy book.

#### **Senior Investigating Officer (SIO)**

An SIO will assume command of the investigation into the circumstances of the child going missing.

They are responsible for ensuring that the ongoing Child Rescue Alert does not clash with the investigation and search for the child. They must also describe the role of the CRA within the priorities of the investigation and establish that the appropriate links are in place.

#### **Child Rescue Alert Project Manager**

The project manager is responsible for ensuring that policy, practice and training are kept relevant and updated.

Following a launch, the project manager must carry out an audit to ensure compliance with the procedures.

#### **Child Rescue Alert Press Officer**

As soon as the detective superintendent considers whether to launch an alert, a force Press Officer must be deployed to communicate with the media regarding the Alert.

The role of this person is to:

- Agree the content of the alert message in liaison with the DI;
- Ensure that another Press Officer is called in to deal with the ongoing crime in action;
- Liaise with the detective superintendent;
- Contact each media organisation to ensure receipt of the alert message;
- Agree the content of any alert update message in liaison with the detective superintendent;
- Liaise with the Child Rescue Alert project manager when applicable;
- Update the Child Rescue bulletins with new information or photographs if applicable.
- Details of media organisations will be contained on the Intranet MSS system. The Press Officer, in liaison with the project manager, will have responsibility for keeping the list up to date.

#### **Motorway Control Room Supervisor (if applicable)**

As soon as an alert has been issued the motorway control room supervisor must ensure the monitoring of CCTV where applicable.

#### **Divisional Superintendent/Chief Superintendent Senior Management Team**

To be responsible for completing a community impact assessment, setting up a gold group and contact with relevant organisations where applicable.

#### **Chief Officers**

The duty chief officer will be notified of a Child Rescue Alert activation by the detective superintendent. Their role however is not one of authorisation but rather of ensuring that the whole of their police force provides full support and assistance to all those charged with the responsibility of managing and leading these types of appeals and investigations.

A chief officer should also be part of the gold group meeting structure.

## Child Rescue Alert – Media Strategy

### Aim

To obtain the commitment of ALL broadcast media in force areas that implement the Child Rescue Alert scheme that they will launch an Alert by interrupting television and radio programmes in the event of a suspected child kidnap, and provide as much positive publicity about the scheme as possible.

### Objectives

These are to:

- Fully brief the media about the protocols of Child Rescue Alert and gain their commitment to the scheme;
- Gain maximum positive publicity about Child Rescue Alert before, during, and after the official launch;
- Promote the partnership working between the police and the media, and the role that both will play in launching Child Rescue Alert;
- Promote police commitment to the safety of vulnerable people, in this case children;
- Put systems in place which enable the Press Office to be informed BEFORE a Child Rescue Alert is launched by Gold Command so that the force can respond to the news angle of a child kidnap.

### Tactics

#### Before the launch

The press officer should contact every radio and television station within the region to discuss with station managers and, or programme controllers, the principles of Child Rescue Alert. The aim will be to gain their support and discuss any issues that may arise.

A workshop should then be organised to which all broadcasters will be invited. This should involve presentations on all aspects of the scheme, how it works, and its aims and objectives. It will also be an opportunity for media representatives to provide information on how best to make the scheme work.

The police will not be seeking publicity for the scheme at this point. The aim of the workshop is to secure a commitment from the broadcast media to the principles of the scheme – publicity will come later. In the event that some broadcasters do publicise the initiative at this stage, however, then the police should respond to local/regional media. It is possible that some national media may seek to carry features and in-depth articles. This request should not be met at this time; the emphasis will be on the fact that this is a LOCAL scheme involving LOCAL broadcasters – the news story will come about on the day of the launch.

Following the workshop, invites will be prepared to send to all media at local, regional and national levels. It is suggested that these will be sent out two weeks before the launch with a view to getting as much pre-publicity for the scheme as possible.

A press release outlining the background, aims and objectives of Child Rescue Alert should be sent out about three days before the launch. This will again include an invitation to all the media.

#### Day of the launch

A schedule should be planned beforehand so that clear and concise information can be given about who is doing what interviews and when.

When the press release is issued (shortly before the launch), a Note To Editors will request that all bids for interviews are made BEFORE the day of the launch. This will allow for coordination on the day ensuring that there are no overlapping interviews involving the same people, and that every journalist attending – be it local, regional or national – is given the same opportunities to speak to key players.

ALL interview requests should be met where possible.

**After the launch**

A press release about the launch and photographs will be emailed to all media.

Any requests for input into documentaries will be considered. This should be done on an individual basis, depending on the intended message of the programme.

**Monitoring and evaluation**

Forces should:

- Monitor and log all media coverage;
- Monitor general feedback from other sources, for example letters from guests;
- Debrief the team immediately after the launch;
- Provide regular updates between the team to evaluate the on-going media interest.

**Liaise with the media****Alerts in neighbouring areas**

Radio and television stations in areas bordering those in which an Alert has been issued may, in consultation with the force issuing the Alert, issue it in their areas as well.



## Child Rescue Alert – A Guide for Police Staff

### About Child Rescue Alert

Child Rescue Alert was born from the launch in the USA in 1996 of a scheme called Amber Alert, which seeks the assistance of the public when a child has been abducted and it is feared the child will be seriously harmed.

The scheme relies on the help and involvement of the public and is a partnership between the police, local TV and radio.

TV and radio have agreed to interrupt programmes to issue the Alert message when requested to do so by the police. As many details as possible will be given in the message so that the public can immediately help to look for the child, offender or any vehicle involved.

### Intention

To recover the child unharmed by activating Child Rescue Alert.

### Key criteria

The Child Rescue Alert scheme has four criteria all of which must be fulfilled before it is launched. These are:

1. The child is under 16 years old;
2. There is a reasonable belief that the child has been kidnapped or abducted;
3. There is a reasonable belief that the child is in imminent danger of serious harm or death;
4. There is sufficient information available to enable the public to assist police in locating the child (for example, the vehicle's registration number is known).

A senior police officer (of at least the rank of detective superintendent) should judge whether these criteria have been met before authorising an alert.

### Further information

A procedural diagram showing how Child Rescue Alert is activated is shown at Figure 5. For further information, forces should include details of the relevant intranet site page.

FIGURE 5 Child Rescue Alert – Activation Chart

