

6 Skelmersdale Walk to 20-22 Wenlock Road, London N1 7GU

<b>Summary</b>	This Policy defines the measures to be taken when it is discovered that a young person / young person is missing, and their whereabouts are unknown: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Young person 16+ years, where their location is not verified.</li> </ul>
<b>Scope</b>	This policy applies to all staff, Care Coordinators, Families, Local Authority, NHS, Commissioners and Advocates
<b>Document Type</b>	<b>Policy &amp; Procedure</b>
<b>Verified By</b>	Care Quality Support
<b>Issued Date</b>	2023-03-10
<b>Review Date</b>	2024-03-10

## Policy Statement

### Introduction

Young people living in Supported Accommodation will generally have been assessed as capable of living in a semi-independent setting and as such, are able to, and are required to take a high degree of responsibility for themselves, as part of their transition to adulthood and preparing for independent living. Therefore, young people should be able to take a significant degree of self-responsibility with appropriate guidance.

**Care Quality Support** provides supported housing for Children / Young People who are Care Leavers, Young Parents or Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Minors. Our Accommodation consists of either 24 hour supervised (staff on site and CCTV cover), shared semi-independent, or self-contained standalone properties, and is staffed with a minimum of 2 hours Outreach support to a 24 hours Bespoke Support Package.

Young people, in principle are expected to live at the Supported Accommodation and reside overnight on a full time, seven day/night per week basis. However, if young people are staying away from their Supported Accommodation on an occasional basis, they should seek permission from the Home Manager, in advance of the required day and where appropriate via delegated authority or from their social worker and **Care Quality Support**.

Young people should provide an address and contact details in order that a risk assessment can be undertaken, and permission given. This is required to ensure all young people are safeguarded and their whereabouts are known.



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This Policy defines the measures to be taken when it is discovered that a child/ young person is missing, and their whereabouts are unknown:

- Young person 16+ years, where their location is not verified.
- Young person aged over 16 years whose behaviour pattern is out of character, or there is a suggestion that they or others may be subject to harm or criminal activity.

This policy aims to ensure that young people have freedom of choice and privacy, this includes the choice to leave the service, unless constrained by other legal restraints which specifically restrict their freedom.

**Care Quality Support** aims to ensure that all staff recognise their responsibility for safety and security of the young people they support.

This guidance complements Working Together to Safeguard Children and related statutory guidance (2018) and the Children Act (1989) guidance and regulation volumes in respect of care planning and review, and The Statutory Guidance on Children who run away from Home or Care (2014). This Policy and Procedure should be read in conjunction with the Local Safeguarding Children Board Inter Agency Safeguarding Procedures and Protocols.

### Multi-agency working

As documented in the Statutory Guidance on Children who Run Away or Go Missing from Home or Care and to ensure a high quality of integrated working and joint responses when children go missing, all agencies will:

1. Share information in a timely manner and in accordance with legislation.
2. Base decisions and actions on missing children risk assessments.
3. Make appropriate referrals to agencies for services for children, including child protection referrals where the child is at risk of significant harm.
4. Work jointly to share information and intelligence that enables the development of services for missing children in the **Local Authority**
5. Appoint a designated officer with lead responsibility for missing children and for the implementation of this Policy.
6. Ensure staff have the appropriate training and support to carry out their role under this Policy.

### Definitions and actions to be taken:

In line with the Department for Education (DfE) Statutory Guidance on children who run away or go missing from home or care, January 2014, **Local Authority** will adopt the following definitions in order to allow all professionals and carers to clarify whether a child is missing or absent.



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**Child:** anyone who has not yet reached their 18th birthday. 'Children' therefore means 'children and young people' throughout this guidance.

**Missing:** anyone whose whereabouts cannot be established and where the circumstances are out of character, or the context suggests the person may be subject of crime or at risk of harm to themselves or another; and

Children whose whereabouts are known and are considered to be at risk should also be reported as missing to the police.

**Absent:** a person not at a place where they are expected or required to be but are known where they are.

**Examples of absence include children/youngpeople** who do not come home when expected but their whereabouts are known or are quickly established through contact with family or friends. Unless there are concerns about the place where the child is, these children and young people would not normally fall within the definition of missing since if a child/young person's whereabouts are known then they cannot be missing. Sometimes children and young people stay out longer than agreed as a boundary testing activity but come home shortly after their curfew. This is within the range of normal teenage behaviour and would not normally come within the definition of missing. Absences must be carefully monitored as the child/young person may still be putting themselves at risk

This policy compliments:

- Working Together to Safeguard Children and related statutory guidance (2018);

and the Children Act (1989)

- the Missing Children and Adults Strategy (2011);
- Safeguarding Children and Young People from Sexual Exploitation (2009);
- The Tackling Child Sexual Exploitation Action Plan (2011); and
- The Children Act 1989 guidance and regulations volumes on care planning and review.
- The Statutory Guidance on Children who run away from Home or Care (2014).

**Responsibility**

It is the responsibility of all Management and Staff on shift with **Care Quality Support**, to ensure that when a Young Person has gone Missing or taken Unauthorised Absence, that **Care Quality Support** Policy and Procedures are followed, and all the relevant agencies are informed. For the purpose of this Policy **Care Quality Support** as the Provider will notify the Placing Local Authority and where applicable also notify the Host Borough where Address of placement is located. The Police will act on any report of a Child Missing on the understanding that a Risk Assessment has been completed by **Care Quality Support**. Every Missing Child who returns will be interviewed by the Service Manager

**Risk Assessment, Planning, Prevention Strategy and Outcomes**

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As part of the referral, placement and ongoing planning process, consideration must be given to the risk of the Young Person becoming missing. If there is a risk it must be assessed, recorded and a plan must be drawn up to reduce or prevent it.

**Care Quality Support** will make all efforts in trying to prevent a Young Person leaving the home / placement and should do so through getting to know the Young Person and building up a positive relationship with him/her.

The strength of this relationship will be a key factor in helping prevent the desire to run off or to strengthen their ability to resist negative influences from others.

Where a Young Person is clearly intent on leaving the house after hours (11:00pm) without permission the Keyworker and / or staff on shift should attempt to address their concerns through calm, purposeful dialogue. They should not try to restrain the Young Person should they be intent on leaving, nor in any other circumstances, unless it is necessary to prevent injury to the Child or others, or serious damage to property.

On a day-to-day basis, Keyworkers and / or staff should be alert to signs or indications that a Young Person may be likely to 'run away' or become missing. If the Keyworker suspects that this may happen, they should take any actions already agreed with the Service Manager and the child's social worker or do what they reasonably and safely can to reduce or prevent the Young Person from leaving - this includes circumstances where a Child /Young Person is refusing to return to the Placement.

There must be a risk assessment and agreed outcomes in place. The outcomes should:

1. Have an agreement that the young person can maintain their safety while away from the service- A copy of this risk assessment must be part of the care plan.

**Risk indicators include:**

- The age of the young person.
- A previous history of child protection concerns.
- Repeat pattern of running away over a short period of time.
- It has been identified that a young person has been harmed or been involved in significant risk-taking behaviour (including sexual exploitation)
- Alcohol or substance misuse.
- Young person has a disability or learning disability.
- History of mental health issues involving CAMHs.
- Significant parental vulnerability such as mental illness, learning disability, alcohol or substance misuse or domestic abuse.



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2. Have an agreement that the young person is not able to maintain their own safety while away from the service, except with support from someone who will be able to maintain that safety. A copy of this risk assessment must be part of the care plan.
3. Have an agreement that the young person is unable to maintain any safety at all at any given time. A copy of this risk assessment must be part of the care plan.

All young people will have been made aware of the risks and dangers of running away, and the measures in place at the Home if they go missing. This will have been explained to the young person and family / significant other when the young person is admitted to the Home.

2. A form of relevant information will be completed for every new young person / young person at the Home:

2.1 For a young person with no previous history of going missing – ref. Form No: A Missing Young Person Information Record.

2.2 For a young person with a history of going missing – ref. Form No: B - Previous Missing Young Person Event Record.

These documents will be reviewed and updated to reflect any changes of relevant information. Staff will report to the Manager if they have cause for concern.

**Action to take in the event of a missing person**

A Young Person residing in 24-hour Placements are expected to return by 11.00pm. If a Young Person wish to return later than this time they should inform staff what time they will return.

If a Young Person are delayed and will return after 11.00pm they should contact Keyworker and inform them of their anticipated return time.

A Young Person residing with **Care Quality Support**, must always let staff know when leaving and entering the placement. The official log (communication book) is kept in the staff office.

The signing in & out log will be monitored by Keyworker and Service Manager.

Incidents of Missing children/young people must always be reported to the police, when any member of staff discovers that a young person is missing the Service Manager will be immediately informed and the following action will be taken to try and locate the young person:

1. **A full search of the buildings** / grounds / vehicles will be immediately organised, causing minimum disruption to the other resident young people in the Home.
2. **Search personal space** for important leads (e.g., mobile phones, diaries, letters, notes, emails, and website activity) for information that may assist in locating the young person.
3. **Check to see if any personal** or significant items are missing from the Home.
4. **Contact all known friends** and relatives where a young person may be.
5. **Speak to other young people** in the Home to obtain any relevant information

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6. **Call or text any mobile phone** held by the young person and leave a message asking them to make contact.
7. Contact the young person's school/college or school/college friend
8. In addition, the first member of staff on shift will check the CCTV system to identify if the Young Person returned between the hours of 11.00pm and 8.00am
9. If the Young Person is not accounted for by 9.00am, Keyworker will knock on the Young Person s' room to check if they are present and if there is no response Keyworker will enter (where appropriate with two members of staff; in circumstances where there is only one member of staff on duty, a Manager should be informed prior to the search taking place) their room to check that the Young Person is safe. In addition, the Keyworker will also continue to telephone the Young Person , inform the allocated Social Worker or Duty Worker within the Placing Authority and update Service Manager.
10. If the Young Person is not accounted for by 12.00 noon, the Keyworker will telephone the Young Person , send a text message and telephone all of the primary contacts on their referral form / contact sheet, and inform allocated Social Worker and / or Placing Local Authority (including Emergency Duty Team EDT)
11. If the Young Person is not accounted for by 2.00pm, Keyworker will complete **Care Quality Support** Missing & Unauthorised absence form with attached risk assessment, and forward the completed form to Service Manager, Allocated Social worker and / or placing Local Authority, with the view to inform the Police and relevant authorities that Young Person is missing.
12. **Check locations that the young person is known to frequent** or was known to be attending.

**When a young person fails to return to the Placement during the day:**

Where the Young Person have failed to return to Placement during the daytime, contacting them via their phone and subsequently handover any task / communication with in-coming staff on duty in Handover and communication book.

Incoming staff on shift must call missing Young Person every 3 hours while on shift and make a record in communication book, unless instructed otherwise by **Care Quality Support** management.

Prior to formally reporting the Young Person as missing every effort should be made to contact the Young Person via known contacts such as workers and professionals, friends, family, school/college or work where appropriate and Placement Manager should be informed.

**Once it has been established that a young person is missing, this is the action to take:**

Once it has been established that a child/ young person is missing, the police should be contacted immediately. **Care Quality Support** should provide the following as a minimum when contacting the police to report a child missing:

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1. Child/young person's name and date of birth.
2. Where, when and who they went missing with, if known.
3. Description of child/young person and clothing.
4. Recent photograph.
5. Medical history.
6. Time and location last seen.
7. Any previously identified risks or additional vulnerabilities.
8. Details of efforts to locate the child/young person.

**Note:** If the missing child/young person is a Looked After Child, then the incident should also be reported to the allocated Social Worker or, if out of hours, the Emergency Duty Team (EDT) within the borough that has placed the child.

**Note:** Where the absence relates to a Looked After Child, this should be



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reported in  
the first  
instance to  
the allocated  
Social  
Worker for  
the  
child/young  
person  
concerned,  
or if the  
absence  
occurs out of  
hours, it  
should be  
reported to  
the EDT.  
The absence  
should be  
risk  
assessed by  
the allocated  
Social  
Worker or  
EDT and if  
at any point  
there are  
concerns for  
the  
safeguarding  
of the  
child/young  
person, the  
risk should  
be escalated  
to the police

In the event of a young person missing, this policy should be adhered to.

- Whilst the emphasis of this policy is on when a young person goes missing, it is fundamentally vitally that **Care Quality Support** does all that it can to reduce the chances of this risk happening in the first place without depriving the young people of their rights and freedom.





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- Up to date information about the young people must be kept at all times, this includes **latest photographs** and all admissions information, including detailed description of their appearance, hair colour, eye colour, any significant marks, body build, height, and estimated weight.
- Where walking about is a known behaviour, details of this behaviour must be shared by all concerned people and the young person must be engaged to understand the risk associated with walking about.

If the young person is still missing Care Coordinator / Key worker must complete Missing Persons Information Record (ref. Form No: A) and / or a Previous Missing Young Person Event Record (ref. Form No: B) will be passed to the Social Services Emergency Duty Team and the Police must be informed immediately on discovering the young person is missing.

**Additional responsibilities for Care Quality Support when a Young Person goes Missing**

**Care Quality Support** is required, as a condition of their registration, to have a procedure agreed with the local police for the management of missing incidents. In addition, local police have briefed and distributed to all care homes and semi-independent units in **[Name of Town/City]**, a Police Risk Assessment which they ask all homes/semi-independent units to complete when they are reporting a child/young person missing. **Care Quality Support** is also expected to contribute to any care plans designed to reduce the risk of the child/young person going missing and to carry out joint risk assessments with social workers of children missing from placement.

**Role of Social Services in a missing young person's case:**

The role of Social Services in a missing young person is included in this policy so that our staff team are aware and can know what to expect. It is not the intention of this

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**policy to  
monitor  
the  
regulatory  
functions  
of Social  
Services.**

The Social Services will usually undertake to inform the young person's family, though this may be done by the Manager of the Home if there is a good relationship between the Home and the family. The overall responsibility for this will be agreed with Social Services. Full records of the incident will be made in the Incident Log and the young person's Case Notes.

#### **Additional Actions by the Police**

**The role  
of Police  
in a  
missing  
young  
person is  
included  
in this  
policy so  
that our  
staff team  
are aware  
and can  
know  
what to  
expect. It  
is not the  
intention  
of this  
policy to  
monitor  
the  
regulatory  
functions  
of Police,  
our staff  
will  
always  
seek  
guidance  
and  
follow**



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what the  
police  
would  
have said,  
as part of  
the  
missing  
person's  
function.

It is the responsibility of the police to investigate allegations of crime and within the **Local Authority area**, the police have lead responsibility for children or young people who go missing from other local authorities. The police will act on missing person's reports in line with police procedures. **Care Quality Support-** will follow guidance given by the police and will not act on their own.

#### **PROCEDURE FOR UNAUTHORISED ABSENCES / ABSCONDING**

A Young Person residing in 24-hour Placements are expected to return back by 11.00pm. If a Young Person wish to return later than this time they should inform staff what time they will return.

If a Young Person are delayed and will return after 11.00pm they should contact Keyworker and inform them of their anticipated return time.

A Young Person residing with **Care Quality Support**, must always let staff know when leaving and entering the placement. The official log (communication book) is kept in the staff office.

If staff are unable to establish the whereabouts of the Young Person by 12 midnight, (1 hour after 11pm) In the event of a Young Person being absent without permission or absconds from the placement, the following procedures will apply:

Complete a **Care Quality Support** Missing & Unauthorised Absence form detailing the date, time, and description of the circumstances prior to the Young Person absconding, including a brief risk assessment.

Report the Unauthorised absence of a Child or Vulnerable Young Person to the local Police and note down the Crime reference or Incident Number.

Send the Completed Form along with Crime reference or incident number via email to the following Management and Professionals which will be known as The Missing Persons' Network, using **Care Quality Support** staff internal email to; Service Manager, On-Call Manager, Placing Local Authority Out of Hours Emergency Duty Team (EDT), allocated Social Worker for the Child or Young Persons Advisor, including any placement Officers' or managers as advised by Service Manager.

All information should only be shared between the Local Authority, Police and **Care Quality Support** Management Team, which will be known as The Missing Persons' Network.

Note the time the young person returned and circumstances. Note any reasons the young person gave for being absent; update the form and send an updated form to The Missing Persons' Network



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The Service Manager will arrange to log this information for monitoring purposes. A copy of the Form will be retained on the Child's file and a copy forwarded to the Child's social worker.

It will be the responsibility of the Child's social worker or Local Authority EDT to inform the Child's parents where appropriate.

Once the Child has been reported missing, the police will interview the Keyworker to obtain relevant information including the Child's details, name, date of birth, hair/skin/eye colour, distinguishing features, any disabilities, clothing and jewellery believed to be worn as well as any known associates, groups/gangs and any history that may make them particularly vulnerable (e.g., sexual exploitation, self-harm). Information can be found in the Young Person's files locked in the staff office.

A recent photograph may be required. Staff should be aware that the police have the right to search their property and may do so to ascertain that the child is still missing and not just hiding.

**Action to take when young person is found safe**

When a young person is found safe and returned to the Home, staff will ensure that the young person is welcomed back to enable them to re-adjust and settle back into home life again. The young person should be interviewed by an appropriate adult who is supportive and non-judgemental, as soon as possible. The young person should be encouraged to speak openly in order to reveal the following information:

- Assess the Child's / Young Persons immediate wellbeing and needs i.e., how are they doing, offer something to eat, Is there any need for medical treatment?
- Why they went missing? and what can be done to minimise its recurrence, although the point at which the Young Person returns may or may not be the best time to try to discuss the reasons why they had gone missing.
- Where they went?
- Who they have been with?
- Any risks and dangers that they encountered?
- Inform all relevant professionals i.e., police (unless they returned the child), **Care Quality Support's** Managing Director, CC On-call Manager, Placement Manager, Placing Local Authority Out of Hours Emergency Duty Team (EDT), allocated Social Worker for the Child or Young Persons Advisor, including any placement Officers' or managers as advised by Placement Manager that the Young Person has returned.
- As soon as practicable after the child's return, The Police may wish to debrief the Young Person and an independent person from the Local Authority may interview the Young Person and conduct a Missing from Placement Interview depending on local authority guidelines. This will not be the responsibility of **Care Quality Support** or its Keyworkers.

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- Where the Young Person is absconding on a regular basis, a planning meeting should be arranged to look at the risk to Young Person, this meeting will be arranged with the Placing Local Authority, Management and or parent where appropriate.
- All Children / Young Persons that regularly abscond should be viewed as high risk and reported to appropriate authorities.
- Should there be any suspicion that the unauthorised absence is linked to an abusive incident; the CC Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy and Procedure should be invoked

A Missing Young Person's Return Report, ref. Form No: B must be completed on their return.

**Incident Review and notifications**

The Manager will carry out regular monitoring of all unauthorised absences of young persons from the Home to determine whether adverse trends are apparent. Review will try to establish why the young person went missing and put recommendations to prevent the incident arising again.

A review of the Local Authority's Safeguarding protocol will be done if applicable.

**This data is reviewed at the 6-monthly Quality Management Review Meetings.**

**Training:**

of **Care Quality Support** provides staff training on all aspects of missing persons in order to improve their knowledge and develop skills in working with service users their freedom, safety and choice

**Associated Documents and References**

- Incident Report Policy
- Incident & Action Log
- Previous Missing Event Record
- Missing Young Person's Report

**Other relevant**

**procedures include:-**

**THESE ARE LOCAL  
AUTHORITY POLICIES**

- Child sexual exploitation
- Gang and serious youth violence
- Trafficking

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- Female genital mutilation
- Forced marriage
- Radicalisation
- Honour-based violence
- Children from abroad

#### Getting Help

If you require any help with any matters relating to this policy and procedure, please speak to your This Service line manager or Senior manager.

**It is the responsibility of every member of staff to ensure that they are working within this policy and keep up to date with changes in policy that may affect their practice at work.**

#### Forms:

- Missing Persons Information Record (Form A)
- Missing Young Person's Return Report (Form B)



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