



Bedfordshire Police

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'Philomena Protocol' for Missing Children

The 'Philomena Protocol' is in operation across Bedfordshire and includes all three Children Social Care authorities (Bedford Borough, Luton and Central Bedfordshire). The Philomena Protocol is a scheme that asks practitioners and carers to identify children and young people who are at risk of going missing, and to record vital information about them that can be used to help find them quickly and safely.

It is the duty of the person responsible for the care of the child or young person to fill in details about them on the Philomena Protocol form when they are concerned, they may go missing. It is also their responsibility to ensure the records are kept up to date and reviewed at least monthly. Once complete, the form is owned by the care provider and /or Local Authority.

The form should be stored securely on the carer's computer system, where they, or another carer can find it quickly day or night. Parts 5 & 6 of the form should only be completed if the child or young person is reported missing.

If a child or young person goes missing, the carer should take steps to find them, parts 5 & 6 of the form must be undertaken at this point. If they are not able to locate them following reasonable enquiries, carers are then advised to call 101 and tell the call handler, they have a Philomena Protocol form. If it's an emergency and the child or young person is in danger or at risk of immediate significant harm, they must phone 999 straight away.

A copy of the form should be provided to police when the child or young person is reported missing, the information in the form can then be utilised to assist in risk assessment and the setting of investigative actions to locate the missing child or young person. Police will only keep a copy of a completed form whilst there is an active missing investigation taking place, when the missing child or young person is located any copy of the form held by police will be securely disposed of. It must be remembered that this document contains sensitive personal data so should be stored securely at all times and disposed of when the missing episode is concluded by police; carers and Children's Services will securely hold the form on file to ensure all records of children or young people are available for them at a later date and to use for ongoing safeguarding and risk assessment purposes.

The governance of the Philomena Protocol is the responsibility of Police and Children's Services across the three local authorities, who will hold responsibility for ensuring appropriate training and that the guidelines are being adhered to in their agency and by their regulated placements.

The Philomena Protocol is used in many areas nationally, if a child or young person moves from a placement the previous carer must transfer the form to the new carer, who will be responsible for keeping it safe and up to date. Similarly, if a young person transfers into Bedfordshire from another area, carers must check whether they have an existing Philomena Protocol in place and would then take over responsibility, similarly if a child moves between local authorities in the Bedfordshire area.