



One Minute Guide: Children and Young People who are Missing from Home

What is the definition of Missing?

[Click Here for more detail](#)

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

Reporting:

Before reporting to the Police, expectation is that adult with PR/ delegated authority should make every effort to contact family and friends, and check locations the child is known to visit (where it is safe to do so), in order to attempt to locate or return the child home. **Some safety plans will mean an agreement to report a child as missing instantly.**

If child's whereabouts remain unknown or situation is assessed to be high risk – report missing via 101. Call handler will ask questions to assess whether low/medium/high risk. Police will continue to liaise with parent, carers, professionals and the child if possible until the child is located or returns to the place they are supposed to be. Information should be shared by the police with children's services for them to respond via EDT (out of hours)/ MASH

Return Home Interviews (RHIs)

These are an important part of safeguarding. Every child who is recorded as missing whether or not they are known to children's services should be offered an RHI face to face. These are done by our intervention workers.

The aim is to do these face to face and **standard is to be completed within 72 hours of the child returning home.** The aim of the RHI is to: - Give the child a safe space to discuss what happened before and during the missing episode;- Identify and respond to any harm including exploitation;- Explore the reasons for going missing, including any issues with living arrangements or placement needs; - Reduce the likelihood of future missing episodes and- identifying whether the child, family or carers require additional support and ensuring this is put in place. **Any concerns arising from the RHI must be shared asap with the allocated worker or referred through the front door.**

Responses to children and young people going missing

Based on what we know about the incident of a child going missing we need to consider whether a **strategy meeting** is needed. This will be based on an assessment of risk of significant harm which should include **(THIS IS NOT A CHECK LIST)**

- The information collated by the police during and following the missing incident (where the child was, who with and what they were doing)
- Any known risks which will be amplified by the child going missing (e.g. self-harm/ mental health/ exploitation)
- Whether a child has been missing more than 3 times in a month period (this is not a prerequisite for a strategy meeting)
- How long the child was missing for- missing overnight is a risk factor, but so can being missing during the day , **(24 hours a strategy meeting must be held, 72 hours the service director needs to have oversight and be involved in decision making, and for both situations there need to be subsequent timely strategy meetings until the child is found)**
- What you don't know – where the child was, who with.

Following the RHI

If there is a support need identified by the child/ parent/ carer related to missing then an intervention worked could be part of an overall plan aimed at prevention.

Communication, joined up working, a timely response and curiosity are key to addressing instances of children going missing and prevention.

Philomena Protocol:

[Download the the form here.](#)

This is a police led protocol and requires a document to be completed and kept up to date about a child who has been missing, it serves to assist in a child being found and risk assessments.

This document is not just reserved for children in out care and can be used by parents.