

Children Missing from Home and Places of Education

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Introduction

[The Children's Society](#) reports, 100,000 children go missing or run away each year, often falling into dangerous situations. Approximately 25 % of children who go missing are at risk of serious harm ([DfE 2014](#)). Where a key concern is the link between children who go missing and the risk of Child Exploitation (CE), including both criminal and sexual exploitation, (please see SP Jersey [Safeguarding Children from Child Exploitation](#)).

In Jersey, between 2024 and 2025, 111 children went missing and were offered support upon their return home, with 89 return home interviews completed within 72 hours. These children accounted for 745 missing reports. Collaborative efforts between safeguarding partners have contributed to a reduction in the number of missing reports, (2020 to 2022 - 2,144 missing reports).

All children are vulnerable to harm if they go missing or run away, and it is everyone's responsibility to safeguard them. There are various reasons why children go missing and this should not be seen in isolation as this may indicate underlying issues in their life (see [Push and Pull Factors](#)).

This document is for guidance only, it cannot anticipate every situation. Responses to missing children should be based on professional judgement, and on individual, child centred assessments of need, vulnerability and risk (see the [Continuum of Children's Needs](#)).

Practitioners and agencies are responsible for early intervention, adopting a consistent and restorative approach to support children and their families. Where efforts should focus on preventing children from going missing in the first place, reducing the likelihood of reoccurrences and helping children to establish stability and trust with supportive services. Jersey's Safeguarding Partnership (SP) [Child Protection Core Procedures](#) must be initiated whenever there are concerns that a child may have suffered significant harm. Parents/carers should be seen as partners in safeguarding, as they often know their children best and can determine whether their child is at risk or poses risk to others if they go missing.

Scope

This guidance addresses children missing from home or education in Jersey, taking into account local guidance [Keeping Children Safe in Education \(Gov.Je 2024\)](#), as under pinned by Statutory Guidance on [Children who run away or go missing from home or care, \(DfE 2014\)](#). The guidance does not cover children who have been abducted or forcibly removed from their place of residence, these are crimes which should be reported to the police.

For children missing from care please refer to the Jersey SP [Missing Children from Care Multi-Agency Practice Guidance](#).

This guidance is for all practitioners (paid or unpaid) who work with children (including the unborn child), and those who work with adults who are parents/carers and who therefore hold responsibility for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children. It is intended to be read alongside the [Children and Young People \(Jersey\) Law 2022](#), the commensurate [Statutory Guidance 2024](#) and the Jersey Children's First Framework (JCF). Practitioners must follow the Statutory Guidance on sharing information (which adheres to [Data Protection \(Jersey\) Law 2018](#)).

Definitions

Missing – “Anyone whose whereabouts cannot be established will be considered as missing until located, and their well-being or otherwise confirmed.” ([College of Policing 2023](#)).

(Note this definition would not include children who are not where they are expected to be but whose whereabouts are known, where actions to protect their welfare may still be required.)

Child – A person under the age of 18. This term is intentionally used in this chapter to emphasise that a child is at risk when missing and requires protection.

Parents/carers – The child's biological or adoptive parents, carers who may be relatives, friends and/or others who provide private fostering arrangements who look after the child at their current residence.

College - All post 16 education providers, including apprenticeships, specialist post 16 institutions and independent training providers, and relates to their responsibilities towards children under the age of 18.

School – Unless otherwise specified - all schools including; Government of Jersey Schools, Independent or Private Schools, (including those known as colleges), and Government of Jersey and Independent Nursery Schools.

Places of education - Any school, college, nursery or home setting (providing full or part-time education.)

Risks

The risks faced by all children when they go missing may be the same regardless of how often they have run away from home. The immediate risks associated with going missing include:

- No means of support or income.
- Inability to feed, clothe themselves.
- Exposure to the elements and dependent on time of year risk of neglect from cold, leading to ill health or fatality.
- Becoming victims of criminal activities and child exploitation (see SP Jersey [Safeguarding Children from Child Exploitation](#)).
- Problematic substance use (including alcohol)
- Deterioration of physical and mental health
- No access to education and training

- Inappropriate/manipulative/exploitive relationships

Longer term risks include:

- Long term physical and mental health problems
- Substance dependency
- Involvement in crime
- Involvement in child exploitation, leading into adulthood
- Homelessness

Risks increase for younger children, those with underlying mental health, disabilities, and neurodiversity when they go missing. As they may have communication difficulties, be more impulsive and have fewer opportunities to disclose their reasons for going missing.

Push and Pull Factors

Children who go missing usually experience a combination of push and pull factors.

Understanding push and pull factors, enables practitioners to identify the potential risks they may be vulnerable to (SP Jersey [Children who go Missing from Care.](#))

Push Factors – Things in their home or educational environment that cause significant stress and lead them to believe the only option to protect themselves is to leave.

Pull Factors – Things that entice a child to leave their home or education environment, usually believing that they can improve their lives in some way or meet an underlying need.

Push Factors	Pull Factors
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Mental Health (own, parents/carers)• Physical, emotional, sexual abuse and/or neglect• Being challenged at home• Bullying• Loneliness• Family Conflict• Parental Separation• Exposure to Domestic Abuse	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Somewhere they want to be• Somone they want to be with• Child Exploitation including Criminal and Sexual Exploitation• Coercion or Peer Pressure• Anti-Social Behaviour• Wishing to use substances (including alcohol)• Parties / gatherings

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Problematic parental substance use (including alcohol)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Radicalisation• Exploration, such as relationships, sexuality or gender
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When a child goes missing from Home

Parents/Carers Responsibility (see [Appendix 1 Parents/Carers Guidance](#))

While it is always appropriate for parents/carers to report a missing child to the police if concerned about their welfare, the circumstances around why the child has gone missing should always be considered.

The College of Policing states “the police are entitled to expect parents and carers.... To accept normal parenting responsibilities and undertake reasonable actions to try and establish the whereabouts of the individual.”

Unless there are grounds to consider the child is at genuine and immediate risk of harm or there is risk to others, parents/carers are asked to take reasonable actions to find the child prior to contacting the Police (see [Reasonable Actions to Locate a Child](#)). The police may not record a child as missing until parents/carers have taken reasonable actions to locate the child, unless there is risk of harm to the child or others which justifies their intervention ([Appendix 1 – Parents/Carers Guidance](#).)

Children Missing from places of Education

All places of education must have systems in place, to support children, parents/carers, to meet the needs of those children who are persistently “absent without authorisation” or missing from school ([Keeping Children Safe in Education 2024](#), [DofE 2014](#)).

With actions taken by places of education to: -

- Offer (with parental consent), Early Help and Wellbeing Assessment (EHWA) with a Team around the Child (TAC) Plan of care focusing on reducing the child’s risks from going missing.
- Keep up to date chronologies which understand outcomes (see [JCF](#)).

- Take action to meet children's health and development needs and to safeguarding their welfare by placing enquiries to the [Children and Families HUB](#) where required.

Where there is the need to inform the police a child is missing. The police will ask practitioners working in places of education along with their parents and carers to take reasonable actions to find the child unless there is genuine and immediate risk of harm to themselves or others which justifies police intervention, (see Immediate Action When a Child is Missing from Places of Education below).

Action for Places of Education

The parent/carer should be contacted and requested to take reasonable actions to find their child. When they have found them they should be asked to report back to the place of education, (please follow the guidance in [Jersey School attendance and absence](#) and the [Jersey School Attendance Policy 2019](#)).

Practitioners should make all attempts to contact immediate family and family members if known, with a record kept of their attempts (the Children Missing from Education Template can be obtained from the Education Welfare Officer Team Manager.)

If all attempts have been made and the child is not located, the case must be referred to the Education Welfare Team Manager.

Where attempts by parents and practitioners fail to find the child, after all reasonable actions have been taken, the parent/carer should be advised to report their child as missing to the police.

Practitioner action should be to discuss the child's circumstances with the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL), an enquiry should be sent to the [Children and Families Hub](#), and the DSL should discuss the case with the police protection unit (PPU).

If the child has an allocated children's social worker (CSW), the CSW should be informed of missing episode, and where there is risk of significant harm the allocated social worker and their senior practitioner take steps to protect the child from the risk of harm (see SP Jersey Article 42 Enquiries).

There may be cases where children have left the island and parents have not notified school, the child must remain on the school's register until all avenues have been exhausted to locate them ([School Attendance Policy 2019](#)).

Reasonable Actions to Locate a Child

Prematurely reporting children as missing to the police, can lead to unnecessary contact between the child and the police that may not be in the child's best interests. Unless there is genuine or immediate risk of harm to the child or to others, parents/carers are therefore asked to make active attempts to locate their child, taking steps which include:

- Physical checks of their home, and any other location the child may be hiding within the house (including their bedroom.)
- Physical checks of any garden, garage, sheds, grounds and surrounding area(s).
- Attempting to contact them directly, via mobile phone, text, or social networking sites (e.g. Twitter/ Facebook/WhatsApp etc.).
- Contacting the missing child's wider family and friends to ascertain if the child or young person is with them or has made contact.

Where such enquiries do not find the child, there should be a report made by parents/carers to the Police at the point where the concern for their child develops.

When reporting a missing child to the police, parents/carers are asked to also:

- Share any information they have on already documented risk assessments, care plans, and/or any other documents which refer to the needs of the child and in particular, those documents that detail risk management should the child go missing.

Concern for Welfare

Where a child is not where they were expected to be but their location is known, they should not be reported as missing to the police. Parents/carers and where applicable practitioners will be asked to take steps to encourage the child to return home.

Where the child's location places them at risk of harm to self or others, practitioners should forward an enquiry to the [Children and Families HUB](#) where it may be appropriate to report the child to the police as being "at immediate risk of harm," where the police will act in the

best interests of the child. In partnership with the police, the reporting person has a responsibility to continue their attempts (where safe to do so) to remove the child from their harmful location and return them home.

Preventative and Protective Steps for Parents/Carers and Practitioners

- It is reliant on parental choice as there is no legal age where a child can play outside alone, stay over with friends or travel home alone; the NSPCC give helpful tips on how to keep children safe when they are away from home [see [here](#)]. Practitioners should take opportunities to encourage parents/carers to take these supportive protective steps with their children as they gain independence and spend time away from home.
- Parents/carers should be encouraged to have open conversations with their children, letting them know how they will respond if they are not where expected to be, at the expected time. There is reasonable expectation that parents/carers will set parental boundaries and that they will have an understanding of where their child is, who they are with and that they are where they were expected to be as a matter of course.
- Helping children problem-solve and create their own safety plans - helps to give them responsibility and helps them understand concerns, and potential actions if they go missing. This should involve conversations on what they will do and who they will tell (without fear of punishment) if for example they are not home on time, are late for school or get held up but are on their way home. As this can prevent unnecessary missing person reports being made to the police.
- Where there is a history of going missing or there are risks associated with the likelihood they will go missing - a safety plan should be part of their Early Help Wellbeing Assessment (EHWA) and Early Help Plan (JCF Framework) and must be part of Health and Development Plans (CiN Plan) or Child Protection Plan (see Levels of Need in Statutory Guidance [here](#)).
- Philomena Protocol ([Appendix 2](#)) – is a national scheme that encourages agencies, parents/carers, family and guardians to record vital information which can be used in the event a vulnerable child goes missing. The information recorded, includes a

physical description, who their friends are, a recent photograph and whether they have gone missing before.

- For children with known vulnerabilities related to missing episodes, an EHWP or an allocated Children's Social Worker, a Missing Person's Incident form ([access Jersey Protocol for Missing Person Incident \(Philomena Protocol\)](#)) should be completed. Where children already have an allocated children's social worker - the responsibility for completing this form should be agreed between the child's social worker and parents/carers.
- It is important Missing Person's Incident Forms and safety plans provide clarity around expectations, roles and agency responsibilities, to ensure practitioners and parents/carers respond appropriately to safeguard them whilst reducing unnecessary police contact with children, which can negatively impact them.
- Missing Risk Assessments, plans, and Missing Person Incident forms should be reviewed regularly in TAC meetings, involving CSC, police, parents/carers, education and any relevant health professionals.

Responding to Missing Occurrences

Responding effectively to children who go missing requires a partnership approach, with parents/carers, police, children's social work and safeguarding partner agencies, working to ensure the child's wellbeing and safety.

Any missing episodes should be guided by professional judgement and up to date multi agency Assessments, (see SP Jersey [Assessment](#)). To ensure appropriate responses, hear the child's voice and safeguarded them.

The Level of Intervention when a child is missing should be proportionate to the concerns as well as the child's vulnerability and risk. All parties involved in responding should recognise that the assessed risk and the situation can change quickly requiring parents/carers and agencies to adapt their actions accordingly.

Parents/carers hold initial responsibility to take reasonable steps to locate their child to ensure their safety, and where possible return them home, as outlined in the Risk Assessments and Levels of Intervention Model (see below).

If the child has an allocated Children's Social Worker (CSW), and they goes missing out of regular hours, parents/carers should also notify Children's Services Out of Hours Duty Team via hospital switchboard 01534 442000 and where relevant also inform them on the child's return.

Reporting a Child as Missing to the Police

If parents/carers are concerned about the length of time their child has been missing, and the increasing risk to the child's safety, they should report the child as missing to the police.

The information required by the police to assist them will be:

- The child's name/s; date of birth; status; parish and address
- Where and when they went missing;
- Who, if anyone, they went missing with;
- What the child was wearing plus any belongings they had with them such as bags, phone etc;
- Description and recent photo;
- Medical history, if relevant;
- Time and location last seen;
- Circumstances or events around going missing
- Details of family, friends and associates
- All enquiries parents / carer has made to locate the child
- Recent photo of the child or young person

Once a missing person report is made, the reporting person, parents/carers are expected to continue efforts to contact and locate the child.

When reporting missing child, if the child has a CSW, the CSW should share a copy of any up to date Missing Persons Incident Form ([Philomena Protocol](#)) with the police.

Once the police have recorded the report, they will: -

- Liaise with the parents/carers
- Locate the child as safely and as quickly as possible

- Complete a risk assessment so that every child at high risk of harm is immediately identified and to guide their response.
- Adopt a pro-active multi-agency approach in dealing with missing persons, for example contact the CSW or Children's Services out of hours duty team, (if applicable) to assess the child's risks and vulnerabilities.
- Record an immediate action plan.
- Agree on the process for parents/carers/CSW to share any increased concerns directly with the responding Police Officer.
- Establish joint actions and pathways for information sharing and maintaining contact.
- Set a time to review the Police Risk Assessment and actions, or sooner if new information suggest an increased risk to the child.
- Support the needs of the family, those close to the missing person, and the community

Risk Assessment

The police classification of a person as "missing" will be based on the risk assessment at that time.

Very Low Risk	
There is a very low risk of harm to either the subject or the public	Actions to locate the subject and/or gather further information should be agreed with the informant and a latest review time set to reassess the risk.
Low Risk	
The risk of harm to the child or the public is assessed as possible but minimal.	Proportionate enquiries carried out to ensure that the child has not come to harm.
Medium Risk	
The risk of harm to the child or the public is assessed as likely but not serious.	This category requires an active and measured response by the police and other agencies in order to trace the missing person and support the person reporting.

<p>High Risk</p> <p>The risk of serious harm to the child or the public is assessed as very likely.</p>	<p>This category almost always requires the immediate deployment of police resources.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • action may be delayed in exceptional circumstances, such as searching water or forested areas during hours of darkness. • A member of the senior management team must be involved in the examination of initial lines of enquiry and approval of appropriate staffing levels. • Such cases should lead to the appointment of an investigating officer (IO) and possibly a Senior Investigation Officer (SIO), and a police search adviser (PoISA). • There should be a press/media strategy and/or close contact with outside agencies. • Family support should be put in place where appropriate. • Children's services must also be notified immediately where the child is under 18.
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See College of Policing - Missing Persons [here](#)

A missing child will ordinarily be assessed as being at MEDIUM risk of harm or above. A child may be assessed as being at LOW risk following a review by an Inspector or above but only after a thorough [National Decision Model](#) (NDM) risk assessment has been conducted and detailed rationale recorded. The level of risk the missing child is likely to be exposed to will determine whether it is appropriate to intervene and if so the appropriate level of intervention.

Where a child is categorised at high risk Police guidance makes clear that a member of the 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 Investigating Officer and possibly a Senior Investigating Officer. There should be a media strategy and / or close contact with outside agencies. Family support should be put in place and children's services should be notified ([College of Policing](#)).

Where a child is categorised as at medium risk police guidance makes clear 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. This will involve a proactive investigation and search in accordance with the circumstances to locate the missing child as soon as possible ([College of Policing](#)).

Levels of Intervention

When a child is missing they are exposed to a certain level of risk.

The concept of “no apparent risk” has limited applications as there is nearly always some level of risk: -

- Sometimes the level of risk is acceptable
- Sometimes the level of risk is not acceptable to the parent or carer so does not justify police intervention,
- Sometimes the level of risk is unacceptable to both the parent and carer and the police and justifies immediate police intervention.

Levels of Intervention		
Assessed Level of Risk	Intervention	Actions and Outcomes
No immediate police intervention required – level of risk is acceptable and is tolerable for parents, carers or the reporting person.	The parent/carers decide to wait for them to return of their own accord.	Actions (a) Parents/carers wait to see if the child returns of their own accord. Outcomes (a) The child returns.

		<p>(b) The child contacts their parent/carer and agrees to return home or be collected.</p> <p>(c) The child contacts the carer and what the child says raises the level of concern to parent or police intervention (where the child's whereabouts are known they may no longer be missing but there may be concerns for their welfare).</p> <p>(d) Parents/carers receive information that raises the level of concern to either parent or police intervention.</p> <p>e) The child does not return home within reasonable time, so the level of concern raises to carer or police intervention.</p>
<p>Parents/Carers Intervention</p> <p>The carer has some concerns about the child and their whereabouts, the carer does not have immediate concerns about their safety or the safety of</p>	<p>Parents/carers accept responsibility for searching for the child in order to bring them home.</p>	<p>Actions</p> <p>(a) Parents/carers consider if there has been any precursor behaviour or trigger that warrants the child being immediately</p>

<p>others. The level of risk is not acceptable to parents/carers but does not justify immediate police intervention.</p>		<p>reported to the police as missing.</p> <p>(b) The parent/carer tries to contact the child by phone, text, and social media. Where the Child has an allocated Children's Social Worker (CSW) then CSW will be informed to support parents/carers.</p> <p>(c) Parents/carers search their home and surrounding areas.</p> <p>(d) Parents/carers search the place the child was expected to be and the place the child was last seen. Where parents/carers are unable to do this then where the child has a CSW they may support parents in this search.</p> <p>(e) Parents/carers/CSW (where applicable) contacts family and friends.</p> <p>(f) If possible and safe parents/carers/CSW (where applicable) visit locations and addresses where the child may be.</p>
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		<p>(g) Parents/carers/CSW (where applicable) continue to liaise with police until the child is found or returns home.</p> <p>Outcomes</p> <p>(a) The child returns home.</p> <p>(b) The child contacts parents/carers/CSW (where applicable) and agrees to return home. be picked up or brought home.</p> <p>(c) Contact is made and what the child says raises the level of concern to police intervention, where the child is reported as missing to the police.</p> <p>(g) Parents/carers/CSW (where applicable) receive information that raises the level of concern to police intervention, so the child is reported as missing to the police.</p> <p>(h) The child is located but to ensure their safe return / the safety of others, police support is required to return them home.</p>
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		<p>(i) Parents/carers/CSW (where applicable) conduct reasonable actions to locate the child and allowed the child a reasonable time to return of their own accord, but the child cannot be found, so, the level of concern is raised to police intervention and the child is reported as missing.</p>
<p>Police Intervention – Level of risk is unacceptable to both the parents, carer, reporting person and the police. This level or risk justifies immediate police intervention. There are serious concerns the person will suffer significant harm themselves or cause harm to another.. the police have a duty to assist parents/carers or reporting person to locate them. Based on the information parents/carers have about the child and the circumstances of the missing occurrence; they</p>	<p>Parents/carers report the child as missing to the police.</p>	<p>Actions</p> <p>(a) Parents/carers/CSW (where applicable) share their concerns with the police.</p> <p>(b) Where applicable Parents/Carers/CSW shares the child's Missing Assessment / Plan /Incident form with the police.</p> <p>(c) The police complete a risk assessment and record the child as missing.</p> <p>(d) The police record the child as missing; police deployment is instigated and they conduct enquiries to locate the child.</p>

are worried about the child's immediate safety.		<p>(e) Parents/carers /CSW (where applicable) continue to try and locate /contact the child.</p> <p>(g) Police, parents/ carers/CSW (where applicable) continue to liaise until the child is found /returns.</p> <p>(h) When the child has returned or has been located, a Safe and Well Check and Independent Return Interview will be offered (see below)</p>
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Actions when a Child has been Found in relation to Assessment of Need

When a Child is Found or Returns Home

From the moment a child is missing, those responsible for their welfare should begin with planning for their return.

On return children should be warmly welcomed and their immediate physical needs addressed.

If a missing child returns without the police being notified, the police must be informed immediately.

If there is assessed risk, a team around the child approach involving police, CSW and relevant safeguarding partners, should determine the need for a safeguarding response.

Where a child is found but does not return voluntarily, it should be clear who will then be responsible for their safe return, this may be parents/carers/CSW or police.

Children can be victims of criminal exploitation, even if they appear to be perpetrators. If the child may have been the victim of a crime, parents/carers should notify the police immediately where they can then be given guidance on preserving physical evidence.

Safe and Well Checks

The police have a responsibility to ensure safe and well checks are undertaken when a child who was reported as missing, is located, or returns. The purpose being: -

- To identify any ongoing vulnerability or risk factors which contributed to the child going missing and could contribute to repeat occurrences.
- To establish if the child has suffered any harm whilst they were missing.
- To establish information that may assist in locating the child if they go missing again.
- More widely gather information to inform strategic activity, and disruption activity against perpetrators.

Safe and Well Checks will normally be carried out in person by the police as soon as practicably possible. A record of the interview should document the child's emotional and physical presentation, where the child went, who they spent time with, any safeguarding concerns to inform the child's care and safeguarding plan; and any information which may be relevant to the investigation of a crime.

On some occasions it may not be practical for the police to carry out prevention interviews, this may be due to the child's expressed wishes or views, it may not be in their best interests, it may be counterproductive as it exposes the child to avoidable interaction with the police. On these occasions it may be more appropriate for their parent/carer or a named trusted adult to conduct a prevention interview. Whoever the person conducting the interview is, this should be agreed as part of multi-agency collaborative work where a documented report is captured in the child's words.

Where a child goes missing frequently, it may not be practicable for the police to see them every time they return. In these cases, a reasonable decision should be taken in agreement between the police and the child's parent with regard to the frequency of such interviews bearing in mind the established link between frequent missing episodes and serious harm.

Return Home Interviews (RHI)

Jersey Children's First Model is the islands Framework for Assessment and Return Home Interviews (RHI) should follow this Framework.

All children who have been reported as missing to the police must be offered a RHI within 72 hours of a child's return.

RHI's in Jersey are carried out by Jersey Youth Services (JYS) and the purpose of the RHI is to support the child or young person in their safety and wellbeing. The police submit a Child Protection Notice (CPN) via the Children and Families Hub to notify Jersey Youth Service (JYS) where a return review is required. JYS contact the child as soon as practicably possible, time scales for return reviews from the time of the review being offered and provided is within 72 hours of the child returning home.

RHI's should provide the child with a safe space to talk about any worries or fears they have. Provide key opportunities, to support and safeguard a child, identify risk, and reduce the risk of future missing episodes.

Children often need to build trust with a known and safe practitioner before they will discuss reasons why they run away or go missing. RHI's should aim to capture the child's voice and understand these reasons, by engaging the child in a trauma informed way at their pace. They should be a child centred conversation which takes a supportive, active listening approach. Information gained from return reviews should inform a child's Missing Assessment and Management Plan.

It may be that JYS consider how best to complete return review interviews, in ways that meet the child's needs and their parents/carers needs for reassurance, support and advice.

Actions following Return Home Interviews include:

- Helping the child feel safe and give them options, address where possible those things that would help prevent repeat episodes.
- Capture the voice of the child and understand what the child would like to see happen next (short term and/or long term).
- Gather the parents or carers views of the circumstances, (if safe and appropriate).
- Provide the child with information on how to stay safe, give them information on what exploitation and grooming looks like including helpline numbers.

- Provide support in their safety and wellbeing.

Where RHI's identify risk of significant harm Jersey SP Child Protection procedures must be followed with enquiry to the [Children and Families HUB](#). Or shared with their existing children's social worker so plans can be made to address their safeguarding needs. This may include for JYS in making assessments in relation to Assessment of need in relation to: -

- Child Exploitation – with the completion of CE Risk Assessment Screening Tool, found [here.](#))
- Radicalisation – with the completion of the CE Risk Assessment Screening Tool (Found [here.](#))

With enquiries forwarded to the [Children and Families HUB](#) along with the CE Risk Assessment Screening Tool.

The team around the child (police, CSC, JYS, Health, Education etc) must work together,

- To build up a comprehensive picture of why the child went missing.
- What happened while they were missing.
- Who they were missing with and where they were found.
- What support they required upon returning home.

Children may initially be difficult to engage, practitioners and agency must work together and allocate the person with the best relationship with the child to progress this work. As children who are being abused, neglected and exploited are unable to prevent this.

Roles and Responsibilities

Joint responsibility of Safeguarding Partners

To keep children safe, safeguarding partners should be proactive with every effort taken to prevent a child from going missing in the first place. Front line practitioners, supported by their agencies should be enabled to build and maintain trusting relationships with vulnerable children. As this in turn is more likely to enable effective responses, to meet individual needs, help children feel safe and cared for; thereby reducing the likelihood of missing occurrences.

States of Jersey Police Force

- The SOJ Police act as the lead agency for investigating and finding missing children and will respond to children going missing with on-going risk assessment in line with their current guidance (as explained above.) Emergency Powers allow police, sometimes in collaboration with Children's Social Care, to take urgent action to locate a child or remove.
- Under Article 12 of the Police Procedures and Criminal Evidence (Jersey) Law 2003, police have general powers to take action to protect individuals at risk. This includes missing children, where officers can search premises or detain individuals if it is believed that a child is at risk or has gone missing.
- The Children's Law (Jersey) Law 2002 provides the legal framework for child protection. The law allows the police and children's social care to intervene if a child is believed to be in need of protection, including situations where the child is reported missing.
- Emergency Powers: In certain urgent situations where a child is at immediate risk, the police can enter premises without a warrant under powers of emergency action, especially if there is concern for the safety of the child.

Children's Social Care

In Jersey, Children's Social Care operates under several key pieces of legislation when dealing with missing children. The primary legal framework focuses on child protection, welfare, and the safety of children, especially in cases where a child goes missing. Below are the key laws and legal principles that guide Children's Social Care in relation to missing children:

- Article 4 of the law allows the States of Jersey Police and Children's Services to take action to protect a child if they are deemed to be at risk. This includes situations where a child goes missing and is believed to be in danger.
- The law also emphasizes the welfare of the child as a paramount concern, meaning that children's social care services will act to safeguard the child's well-being in the case of a missing child.
- The Family Division of the Royal Court (Jersey) has powers under the Children (Jersey) Law 2002 to make orders regarding a child's welfare. Including Protective Orders, if a child is missing and is at risk and Care Order if the child is deemed at

significant risk, enabling the police and CSC to take immediate action to protect a child.

Children's services should have a named senior manager responsible for monitoring policies and performance relation to children who go missing from home or care. The responsible manager should look beyond this guidance to understand the risks and issues facing children missing from home, education (or care) and to review best practice in dealing with this issue.

Children's Services must ensure that all incidents where children go missing are appropriately risk assessed and must record all incidents of looked after children who are missing.

Children's Service role and responsibility includes planning to prevent children who are known to them from going missing, and that they do everything possible to ensure their safe return where they do go missing.

Even with strong systems and services that minimise the likelihood of children going missing, some children will still go missing. In all circumstances SP Jersey Core Child Protection Procedures must be followed. If there is concern that the child may be at risk if returned home, where children's social care must assess their needs and make appropriate arrangements for their accommodation.

Working Together - SOJ Police and Children's Social Care

The SOJ Police and Children's Social Care work collaboratively, making decisions regarding what action should be taken to share information about a missing child. This should include an assessment of whether to release information to the media. Or whether they should notify other local authorities (where necessary) according to the degree of concern. Consideration should be given to whether the child or their family has links to other areas in the world.

On receipt of a notification from another local authority a marker should be added to electronic record system for children's social care and consideration given to notifying health and other relevant partners.

Education

As discussed already in this document it is essential that staff working in places of education understand their responsibility to respond to concerns around a child's absence from school. Places of education are tasked with mandatory recording of pupils' attendance and the follow up of all absence and lateness. The Education Department has a School Attendance Policy which gives guidance in response to absence, lateness and welfare concerns, (See School Attendance Policy 2019 [here](#))

Healthcare Professionals

Healthcare professionals have a key role in identifying and reporting children who may be missing from home and places of education.

Missing children access a number of services provided by a range of health providers, for example:

- Emergency Department
- Genito-Urinary Medicine (GUM) Clinics
- Community Sexual Health Services
- Pharmacy Services
- GPs.

Health professionals should have an understanding of the vulnerabilities and risks associated with children that go missing. Staff working in health settings must be aware of their professional responsibilities, where they must work with the multi-agency services to meet the health and development needs and to safeguard the welfare of children.

There are increased risks for children who go missing in relation to child exploitation, sexual abuse, modern slavery and child trafficking, forced marriage and female genital mutilation, radicalisation.

Health practitioners should be suitably trained to identify risk, knowing how to identify, report and respond to a child who the identify as having gone missing, or at risk of going missing, (also see SP Jersey [Missing Children from Care Multi-Agency practice guidance.](#))

Health designated and named professionals hold a responsibility with regards to safeguarding in the local health community and must be included in the information sharing and management processes being put in place for children deemed to be at high risk.

Organisations should also consider the 'hidden missing,' who are children who have not been reported missing to the police but have come to an agency's attention after accessing other services.

Following SP Jersey Child Protection Procedures, placing Child and Family Enquiries for support and notifying Children's Social Care of any children known to their services (which may involve out of hours contact with on call Children's Social Work Services).

Resolving Professional Difference/Escalation

- Partnership working depends on resolving professional difference and conflict as soon as possible. Where staff experience professional differences, they must follow the SPB Jersey [Resolving Professional Difference/Escalation Policy](#).
- If a child is reported missing and the police question the reports appropriateness, they should engage with the reporting person to clarify and discuss alternative actions which can be taken around their raised concerns.
- Professional Differences whether the police should record a child or missing or not, should not prevent actions taken in the child's best interests, and full consideration of parents/carers and/or CSW (where applicable) concerns, nor should it delay efforts to locate the child and ensure their safety.
- If a child has a CSW and professional disagreement cannot be resolved, the child's social worker should escalate the issue to their Out of Hours manager, who will liaise with the Police Duty officer.
- In cases where there is professional differences, and/or when parents/carers are unable to act, the police should act in the child's best interests.
- Once professionals confirm the child's wellbeing, the police and any reporting agency should arrange a follow up discussion to address the issues that led to professional disagreement where learning can inform future practice.

Specific Risks

Homeless 16 – 17 year olds

When a 16 or 17 year old goes missing they are no less vulnerable than younger children and are equally at risk, particularly of child exploitation or involvement with risks of harm outside of their home.

When a 16 -17 year old presents as homeless, CSC must assess their needs as for any other child. The accommodation provided must be suitable, risk assessed and meet the full range of the child's needs. The sustainability of the placement must be considered. Children who have run away and are at risk of homelessness may be placed in supported accommodation, with the provision of specialist support. It is important that emergency accommodation can be accessed directly at any time of the day or night. Bed and breakfast (B&B) accommodation is not an appropriate place for any child under the age of 18 and should only be used in exceptional circumstances.

Grooming

Under the Sexual Offences (Jersey) Law 2018 Grooming is considered an offence. Grooming is when someone builds an emotional connection with a child to gain their trust for the purposes of sexual abuse or exploitation. Children and young people can be groomed online or in the real world, by a stranger or by someone they know - for example a family member, friend or professional. Groomers may be male or female. They could be any age. Many children and young people don't understand that they have been groomed, or that what has happened is abuse.

Children can be groomed for the purpose of sexual abuse as well as other forms of exploitation including involvement in criminal and extremist activity. Children who are missing are more vulnerable to being groomed and may also go missing as a result of being groomed.

Risk of Radicalisation

Children and young people can suffer harm when exposed to extremist ideology. This harm can range from a child adopting or complying with extreme views which limit their social interaction and full engagement with their education, to children being groomed for involvement in violent attacks.

Children can be exposed to harmful, extremist ideology in the immediate or extended family, or relatives/family friends who live outside the family home but have influence over the child's life. Older children or young people might self-radicalise over the internet or through the influence of their peer network – in this instance their parents might not know about this or feel powerless to stop their child's radicalisation.

Going missing is a risk factor in relation to radicalisation where a child:

- May go missing because they have already been radicalised;
- May be at risk of being radicalised because they are spending time with people who may seek to involve them in radical/extreme activities. Where risks are heightened whilst they are missing.

As part of risk assessment practitioners should assess whether a child who has gone missing is at risk of radicalisation using the CE Risk Assessment Screening Tool found [here](#).

Child Exploitation – CE

CE involves exploitative situations, contexts and relationships where the young person (or third person/s) receive 'something' (e.g. status, love and belonging, food, accommodation, drugs, alcohol, cigarettes, affection, gifts, money) where in return they provide a service, which may involve selling drugs or in return for sex. Children cannot prevent their own exploitation, where there will always be a power imbalance and violence, coercion and intimidation are common factors (see SP Jersey Safeguarding Children at risk of CE [here](#)).

National Specialist support and services

The UK Missing Persons Unit ([UKMPU](#)) is the UK's national and international point of contact for all missing persons and unidentified remains cases. The UKMPU serves all of the UK police forces as well as international and overseas police agencies and is part of a wider network of partners including other UK government departments, non-governmental organisations (NGO's) and stakeholders. Jersey may consider a need to contact the UKMPU on a case by case basis and they can be contacted about any missing person enquiry on 08800 234 6034.

Other related SP Jersey Practice Guidance can be accessed [here](#) on: -

- Children living away from home
- Child Trafficking and Modern Slavery
- Children moving into and out of the island
- Safeguarding at risk of Child Exploitation
- Children at risk of Sexual Abuse in the Family Environment

Further Information

This guidance should also be read in the context of:

- [Education \(Jersey\) Law 1999](#)
- [Children \(Jersey\) Law 2002](#)
- [Education Welfare Leaflet for Parents](#)
- Department for Education Statutory Guidance on Roles and responsibilities when a child goes missing from care: organisational flowchart (2014) [Flowchart showing roles and responsibilities when a child goes missing from care](#) (publishing.service.gov.uk)

Amendments to this Chapter

This chapter was updated April 2025 to include the Jersey Children and Young People's Law 2022 and commensurate Statutory Guidance, Jersey Children's First as the island framework for Working Together and the use of the Continuum of Children's Needs to identify needs. This includes reference to updated practice guidance on Child Exploitation and the Children Missing from Care Practice Guidance. Specific risks have been updated to include link to updated practice guidance on SP Jersey Child Exploitation and contact details for the UKMPU. With the inclusion of links to the Philomena Protocol for Children who go Missing, and an added Appendix with Guidance for Parents/Carers whose Children go Missing. Updated with thanks to College of Policing 2023, South Yorkshire and London Safeguarding Partnership Boards.

Appendix 1 – Parent/Carers Guidance

Reporting a child as missing

It is important to have open conversations with children about how they will get home, who will pick them up and what to do if they find themselves late or held up. Older children should be given, where possible the tools to get home or problem solve if they are unable to do this themselves. Letting them know they are not in trouble if they are late and can call if they or their friends find themselves in a worrying situation and need help.

A child going missing can be a warning sign of a range of risks. Some children who go missing may come to harm. It is key that parents/carers know how and when to report a child as missing to the police. Just as important to get the balance right, so as not to report them as missing inappropriately. Careful thought should always be given to how and when a child needs to be reported as missing. Where decisions and actions taken should always be focussed on the child's best interests and what will best help to keep them safe, (see Levels of Intervention Model below).

Planning and prevention

Every effort should be made to prevent children from going missing in the first place. Good communication; trusting relationships; and effective planning are all vital to protect them.

Parents/carers should always feel supported. If your child has a history of going missing or there is a likelihood they may go missing a plan can be made with you and a team of professionals supporting you and your child. Missing plans should set out what needs to happen if your child's whereabouts are unknown: what actions should be taken, and when they should be reported to the police as missing. Missing plans should be reviewed regularly to take account of any changes in the child's circumstances, their vulnerability and any identified risks. Parents/carers and children encouraged to contribute to the plan and to feel confident in what is expected. A record should also be kept of any missing episodes and actions taken to resolve these, as patterns of missing can help to identify ongoing risks a child may be facing from example from child exploitation.

Potential triggers should be openly discussed with children (for example wanting to see other family members, friends, or unhappiness with routines, bedtimes etc) with genuine efforts made to negotiate and avoid the triggers causing the child to go missing. Conversations with children should be warm and supportive to enable them to share their views. They should be made aware that if they are reported as missing it would be because of concerns for their safety.

When your child is not where they are supposed to be

When a child is late returning home, or goes out without permission, any known risks to the child and the urgency of the situation should be fully considered, together with the information in the child's missing plan (where they already have one.)

Each missing incident seen separately, taking account of circumstances, trigger events and your child's recent behaviour any which may indicate increased cause for concern. If you are concerned that your child will come to serious harm, you may need to report them as missing to the police immediately. If not, it is likely there is time and reason to find them yourselves, where the police will hold reasonable expectation that you take steps to try and contact your child and check that they are okay yourself.

Keeping records of actions taken, is important because as if you do contact the police to report your child as missing, they will wish to understand what steps you have already taken to contact or find them. So that everyone involved in locating the child and ensuring their safe return is aware of what has been done by whom.

It is important that children feel cared for and know that you are concerned about them and making all reasonable efforts to find them. The police use a Levels of Intervention Model to assess risk (see below) and this provides guidance for parents and carers when responding to a child whose whereabouts are not known. The police may suggest other actions that you can take to find your child. Important to work in partnership with the police who will have your child's best interest at heart.

No child should fall through the gaps and all professionals involved should take a parents/carer concern around a missing child seriously. If you don't think your child is safe, feel the police are not taking your concerns seriously and are not accepting your child as missing, you should challenge this. It might be appropriate to ask to speak to a senior officer as well as contacting your child's social worker (if they have one) to let them know your concerns.

Levels of Intervention Model

The levels of Intervention Model is for guidance, it cannot predict every occurrence, situations can improve quickly but can also deteriorate where it is important to consider new and emerging information. The three categories outline expected intervention dependant on risk, where parents and carers should not be afraid to raise their concerns immediately to the need for police intervention where required.

No immediate police intervention

You are not concerned about your child's safety based on the information you know about them and the circumstances of this incident.

You decide to wait for your child to return of their own accord

Parents/Carers Intervention

You have some concerns and want to ensure that your child is okay but at this time you do not have any reason to believe they are going to come to harm. You take reasonable steps yourself to locate them and check they are safe. Although your child is not where they are expected to be, you take parental responsibility for contacting and/or searching for your child to ensure their safety and return home. You agree the circumstances, and level of concern do not justify police intervention at the time.

Police Intervention

You are worried about your child and have been unable to contact them and/or if you have contacted them you still don't know where they are and you don't think they are safe.

There are serious concerns about the child's safety. The police have a duty to assist.

Appendix 2 -

JERSEY PROTOCOL MISSING PERSON INCIDENT



There may be important pieces of information that you are able to provide the States of Police in the event that the person you are caring for has gone missing. Try and have several copies of recent, close-up photographs of the person, this may help your staff and the Police when searching for them.

This form is interactive and must be completed electronically. Upon completion, it must be stored as its own version electronically. It should be updated regularly electronically and part 2 fully completed following a missing report. This form should only ever be printed on the request of a representative of States of Jersey Police following the young person being reported missing.

Part 1 - (to be completed when it has been identified the individual is at risk of going missing)

Name: Full				<p>Please print off all recent photographs and attach to this document.</p>
Preferred name:				
Date of birth:		Age:		
Ethnicity:				
Gender/identifies as:				
Current address:				
Postcode:				
Child's first language: (Consider if a translator is required)				
Patent/Carer names and contact details:				
Details of Care Order:				
Social Worker name & contact Details:				

Safeguarding Partnership Child Missing from Home and Places of Education 2025

Professionals working with the child:	
GP name and address:	
Health condition(s):	
Medication required:	
Implications of not taking medication:	
Date of last Child Exploitation (CE) Toolkit completed:	
Evidence of Child Exploitation, Child Sexual Exploitation, County Lines, Modern Day Slavery, Radicalisation	
Any associated risks, i.e., Drugs, Alcohol, Mental Health, Self-Harm, Suicidal, Weapons, Violence: Please provide further details (i.e. dates and times)	

Previous home addresses:	1.	
	2.	
	3.	

School/Educational Establishment attended:	1.	
	2.	
	3.	

<u>Friendship/peer groups (names and addresses):</u>	
<u>Circumstances of missing episode inc any indication of planning. (Request of additional monies, become secretive, start changing plans last minute, changing clothing, applying makeup, becoming aggressive etc. Last time seen and who by, last time contacted and by what means and response.):</u> <u>See Push and Pull factors in Missing Children from Care Framework</u>	
<u>Any Curfew/conditions in place i.e., electronic tag, bails conditions.</u>	
Previous locations found: (Provide all recent information – List all locations)	
Any Significant dates – example birthdays of parents/deaths etc.	
General Appearance	
General description:	
Height:	
Weight:	
Build:	
Hair Colour:	
Eyes	
Jewellery	
Distinguishing features: (e.g., scars/tattoos)	

Distinguishing features – tattoos/ birth marks/ piercings broken down <i>Feature/what it is/and where it is (i.e., ear pierced/wears a gold stud/both ears OR Tattoo/dragon with heart/top of left leg)</i>	
Habits:	
Hobbies	
Part 2 - (to be completed when the person has been reported as missing)	
Description of what the person was last seen wearing. Include colour, designer labels/brands:	
Shirt/Sweater:	
Trousers/Skirt:	
Outerwear, e.g., coat, jacket:	
Headwear:	
Gloves:	
Scarf:	
Footwear:	
Jewellery, e.g., watch, rings:	
Other:	

Significant places where child may frequent:			
<u>Details of any Current Child Abductions Notes</u>			
Has the person got any money?		If so, how much?	
Is the money cash or bank card?			
Has the person Got a Bank Account:		Have you got access to this account? (If not, who has)	

Has the person got a mobile phone?	
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Safeguarding Partnership Child Missing from Home and Places of Education 2025

Number:		Network:	
Make		Model:	
IMEI Number:		Mac Address	

Has the child previously left or tried to leave Jersey? <i>Give details of when, how, relevant contacts and reason for leave/travel</i>			
How does the young person normally travel? (i.e. bus, foot, bike, electric scooter.)			
Does the person have photographic ID?			
Does the person have a bus pass/bike licence:		Provide details: e.g. Pass number and Issuer.	
Does the person have access to vehicle(s):		Provide details: e.g. Registration Number/ Driver etc.	

Does the person have a social Media Accounts (Provide Details):					
Social media site:		Username:		Do you have access to the password?	
Social media site:		Username:		Do you have access to the password?	
Social media site:		Username:		Do you have access to the password?	
Social media site:		Username:		Do you have access to the password?	
Social media site:		Username:		Do you have access to the password?	

Time, date and location last seen:	
Please provide evidence to support each of the above	

Safeguarding Partnership Child Missing from Home and Places of Education 2025

Does anyone pose a risk to YP (Please provide evidence):		
Does the YP pose risk to anyone (Please provide evidence):		

Media release?		On-call manager aware?	
Persons informed of child missing (example Parent/carers, Social Worker, Professionals involved etc):			
Details of other staff on duty at the time of missing report.			
Any other information that may be of help to the Police:			
This section should be completed in conjunction with the premises searched Form.			
Have you searched the address the young person is missing from?			
Have you completed and marked off the areas searched as per premises plan?			
Name and position of person searching:			
Signature of person searching and completing plan:			
Have you searched the young person's bedroom?			
Name and position of person searching:			
Signature of person searching:			
Please detail any information or items located:			

Please detail any information or items missing:

This should be completed in conjunction with the *Risk assessed locations & contacts to assist to locate a missing child form*.

What enquiries have already been completed to try and locate missing person prior to reporting to the police:

What enquiries will you continue to do whilst the young person is missing (include how often you will complete these):

How will you record this and notify the police that you have done these enquiries:

What arrangements have been made to collect the young person when located:

Completed by:

Relationship to the person:

Date:

It is the responsibility of the agency completing and the recipient to protect the information from theft and compromise. This form and the information contained in it must be securely stored.