

## Children Missing from Care

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## Introduction

Children who are in care are often vulnerable, due to their life experiences, where they may have experienced significant trauma from abuse and neglect. The reasons why children go missing from care are often complex and they are more likely to be reported as missing than those children who are not in care. A child not being where they are expected to be and/or missing, can be an indication of a wide range of factors, described as push and pull factors. Some may simply wish to be with friends or not wish to come home as agreed, others may be linked to more concerning things such as mental health or child exploitation (see SP Jersey [Safeguarding Children from Exploitation](#)). All absences and/or missing occurrences warrant professional attention to help safeguard the child.

For some children, coming into care or moving residential home can be a positive experience, for others it may contribute to them going missing more often. Added combinations of factors such as having special educational needs, neurodiversity and/or a trauma informed history increases their vulnerability when missing.

To help reduce a child's likelihood of going missing, it is important to create stability. Carers should work towards building safe relationships and the development of pro-active individualised care plans. Partner agencies must work together, take a coordinated, consistent and restorative approach to working with children in care. It is important collaborative policies, procedures and missing risk assessments for children give clear expectations on practitioner and agency roles and responsibilities; to ensure everyone responds appropriately to safeguard the child and reduce their likelihood of going missing again.

A decision to report a child as missing, must always be undertaken with the best interests of the child in mind. Whilst a missing person's report to the police is always appropriate when there is concern for a child's or another person's welfare; carers and professionals involved with children in care should always consider the circumstances of a child not being where they are expected to be, and the need to make a missing person's report to the

police before doing so. Reporting a child as missing to the police can lead to children feeling punished, damage their relationships with professionals, and on occasion, result in children becoming unintentionally criminalised.

Reporting a child as missing to the police should be based on the risk of each individual circumstance, where there should be an agreed home safety plan for the child. This should allow a level of carer discretion, depending on the circumstance, as carers informed by knowledge of the child, the circumstances surrounding a missing occurrence, with robust care and safety planning are often in the best position to determine if a child, whose whereabouts is unknown, is at risk of harm or poses a risk to others.

## Scope

This guidance relates to all children under the age of 18 who are in care. It 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](#) 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](#)).

The overall aim of the guidance is to ensure all children in care receive an appropriate and timely response, when they are not where they are expected to be and/or are missing; and that everything possible is done by multi agency partners to reduce risk and harm, enable their safe return and where applicable prevent repeat missing occurrences.

This guidance cannot anticipate each situation or set of circumstances which surround every missing occurrence. Responding to children looked after who are not where they are expected to be and/or who are reported as missing, should be based on high quality individualised child centred needs-led assessments of vulnerability and risk, which inform and guide professional response. Where this guidance covers children who have been abducted or forcibly removed from their place of residence, these are crimes which must be reported to the police.

## Partnerships and Accountability

Effective partnership workings aim is for all practitioners and agencies to be aware of their roles and responsibilities in the prevention, planning, and response to children who go missing from care. Multi-agency learning and development opportunities are available to practitioners, who should feel confident in their responses to children who go missing, so they are able to understand and efficiently respond to: -

- Push and pull factors;
- Extra-familial risks of harm (also known as contextual safeguarding);
- Child exploitation;
- How best to prevent missing episodes;
- How to respond to missing children when they return home.

## Push and Pull Factors

Understanding push and pull factors and patterns related to a child's missing occurrences helps practitioners to identify needs, risks and harm. Missing occurrences must not be viewed in isolation as they may be indicators something is not right in the child's life.

**Push Factors** – Things in the home or education environment that cause significant stress for the child or young person and lead them to believe that the only option to protect themselves is to leave.

**Pull Factors** – Things that entice a child or young person 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"><li>• Issues with their care placement</li><li>• Mental Health Concerns</li><li>• Physical, Emotional or Sexual Abuse</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Somewhere they want to be</li><li>• Someone they want to be with</li><li>• Parties / Gatherings</li><li>• Coercion and Peer Pressure</li></ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Bullying</li><li>• Loneliness</li><li>• Family Conflict</li><li>• Parental Separation</li><li>• Domestic Abuse</li><li>• Neglect</li><li>• Problematic parental substance use (including alcohol)</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Anti-Social Behaviour</li><li>• Wishing to use substances including alcohol</li><li>• Visiting Family away from placement</li><li>• Child Exploitation including criminal and sexual exploitation</li><li>• Radicalisation</li><li>• Exploration such as relationships, sexuality or gender</li></ul>
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### Prevention and Planning

At the centre of safety and care planning is the child's voice. Effectively safeguarding children in care who go missing, requires carers to keep the child at the centre of their care planning, understand their wishes and feelings to meet their needs, as far as practicably possible (see SP Jersey [Respecting and Capturing the Voice of the Child](#)).

To keep children safe, carers, supported by their agencies, need to be proactive and help prevent missing episodes. Reporting a child as missing to the police does not resolve the reasons why a child has gone missing, nor does it reduce the recurrence.

Children in care have said they need, actions from their carers which include: -

- Adults noticing when things are troubling them
- Being able to understand what is happening; to be heard and understood; and to have that understanding acted upon
- Being able to develop ongoing stable relationship of trust with those helping them.
- Being treated with respect.
- Being informed about and involved in procedures, decisions, concerns, and plans

- Having explanations and information on the outcome of assessments, decisions and reasons when their views have not met with a positive response
- Being support in their own right, as well as a member of their family
- The provision of advocacy to assist them in putting forward their views
- Being protected against all forms of abuse and discrimination and the right to special protection and help.
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Children should be given accurate information when they come into care, and be given support from the outset, acknowledging they need time to settle and given multiple opportunities to develop trust with their carers. Agency investment in building and maintaining trusting relationships enables effective and meaningful professional response to children according to their individual needs and circumstances and helps children feel safe and cared for; thereby reducing the likelihood of missing occurrences.

Carers working with children who go missing should have regular, open conversations with them about what is going on for them in their lives and around their friendships, capturing their thoughts, hopes, wishes and fears. The risks of their safety online and of exploitation outside of their homes, discussed in the same as for example their use of alcohol or substances.

### **Care and Safety Planning**

Care and safety planning should include consideration of the likelihood that a child may go missing and the actions which will be taken to prevent and protect them if they do.

Children should be given clear explanations and told how their carers will respond if their whereabouts become unknown. Where appropriate and possible, planning with children should put in place strategies to help avoid them being unnecessarily reported to the police.

Where missing episodes are a known vulnerability a Missing Person's Incident Form ([Philomena Protocol](#)) should be completed. Reducing risks and care planning should include a multi-agency of professionals, the child's carers and where appropriate, the child. Missing Person's Incidents Forms, and Risk Assessments should be shared prior to a planned move, or as soon as practicable following emergency moves. When going missing is a known vulnerability for a child who becomes looked after or moves to a new home, the Missing Person's Incident form ([Philomena Protocol](#)) should be completed and shared with the child's carer(s) and the police.

Missing assessments should clarify if there is a pattern to previous missing occurrences, known trigger events, places or people the child should not visit or have contact with, together with known risk and vulnerability factors, such as child exploitation, problematic substance use (including alcohol), offending behaviour, peer groups, and locations of concern.

Where previous forms have been completed, these should inform and update the new documentation. Where relevant, Missing Risk Assessments, Management Plans, information gained from Return Homes Interviews and Missing Person's Incident forms should be used to inform agreements to outline expectations, and roles and responsibilities in the event that a child goes missing.

Missing risk management planning should capture prevention planning and actions required to be undertaken if a child's whereabouts is unknown. It should also make certain that appropriate resources are available to respond to children to ensure their safety and return.

For children with an identified risk of missing, the child's social worker should provide carer(s) with relevant up to date information to ensure a Missing Person's Incident form ([Philomena Protocol](#)) is completed accurately and if required, relevant information can be shared with the police. The responsibility for the completion of the documentation should

be agreed between the child's social worker and carer(s) during the initial care and safety planning meeting.

Missing assessments, plans, and incident forms ([Philomena Protocol](#)) should be reviewed regularly in multi-agency meetings, involving Children's Social Care, the police, the child's carer(s), and a health professional. They should also be reviewed in the child's Looked After Review meetings, by the child's Independent Reviewing Officer, and always after any missing occurrence.

Where appropriate children should be actively involved in producing their missing assessments and planning so that they can have input in their own planning and are fully aware of the expectations of them, what professionals are worried about and what actions may be taken by agencies if they are not where they are expected to be, and /or they are reported as missing.

Not all risks to children are necessarily known and information required to inform decision making when responding to a child who is not where they are supposed to be is often contextual.

## **Child Exploitation**

Where a child who is going missing from care and is felt to be at risk of Child Exploitation, (including criminal, sexual exploitation and radicalisation) carers should complete a [CE Risk Assessment Screening Tool](#), [see SP Jersey [Safeguarding Children from Child Exploitation](#).] The completed CE Assessment Risk Screening Tool must be forwarded to the [Children and Families HUB](#).



Where steps will be taken following the CE Pathway for Children with an Allocated Social Worker to reduce their risks through multi-agency criminal exploitation safety planning meetings and strategic responses for children who are in care.

### Reasonable Actions to Locate a Child

Reasonable actions to locate a missing child 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 carers to the Police at the point where the concern for the child develops. Premature reporting can lead to unnecessary contact between the child and the police that is not in the child's best interests.

When reporting a missing child to the police, the reporting person should also:

- Make reference to any risk assessments, care plans, or any other planning documents that refer to the needs of the child and in particular, those documents that detail the risk management, should the child go missing.

## Risk Assessment

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

<b>Low Risk</b>	
The risk of harm to the child or the public is assessed as possible but minimal.	All reasonable steps should be taken by parents/carers to find the child and proportionate enquiries carried out to ensure that the child has not come to harm.
<b>Medium Risk</b>	
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.
<b>High Risk</b>	
The risk of serious harm to the child or the public is assessed as very likely.	<p>This category almost always requires the immediate deployment of police resources.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• action may be delayed in exceptional circumstances, such as searching water or forested areas during hours of darkness.</li> <li>• A member of the senior management team must be involved in the examination of initial lines of enquiry and approval of appropriate staffing levels.</li> <li>• Such cases should lead to the appointment of an investigating officer (IO)/ a Senior Investigation Officer (SIO) and police search adviser (Pol SA).</li> <li>• There should be a press/media strategy and/or close contact with outside agencies.</li> <li>• Family support should be put in place where appropriate.</li> <li>• Children’s services must also be notified immediately.</li> </ul>

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](#)).

### **Responding to Missing Occurrences**

When a child is unsupervised, is missing, late home, or 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 concern		Intervention	Actions and Outcomes
<b>No immediate police intervention required</b>	Level of risk is acceptable and is tolerable for carers and/or reporting person. The carer is not concerned for the child's safety, or the safety of others based on the information they have about the child and the circumstances of the missing occurrence	Based on the information known about the child and the circumstances of the missing occurrence, the carer makes an informed decision to wait some time, to see if the child returns of their own accord.	<p>Actions</p> <p>(a) The carer waits a reasonable time to see if the child returns of their own accord.</p> <p>Outcomes</p> <p>a) The child returns of their own accord.</p> <p>(b) The child contacts the carer (or another) and child agrees to either return home independently or be collected by the carer.</p> <p>(c) The child contacts the carer and what the child says raises the level of concern to either carer intervention or police intervention.</p> <p>(d) The carer receives information that raises the level of concern to either carer intervention or police intervention. (</p> <p>e) The child does not return within a reasonable time, so the level of concern raises to carer intervention.</p>
<b>Carer Intervention</b>	Level of risk is not acceptable to carers but does not justify immediate police intervention. The carer has some concerns about the child and their whereabouts, the carer does not have immediate	The carer takes responsibility for trying to locate the child and ensure their safe return.	<p><b>Action</b></p> <p>(a) The carer considers if there has been any precursor behaviour or trigger incident that warrants the child being immediately reported to the police as missing.</p> <p>(b) The carer/child's social worker continually tries to contact the child by phone, text, and social media.</p> <p>(c) The carer undertakes a search of the home and surrounding areas</p>

	<p>concerns about their safety or the safety of others.</p>		<p>(d) The carer undertakes a search of the place the child was expected to be and the place the child was last seen (or agrees with the child's social worker who will do this if they are unable to).</p> <p>(e) The carer/child's social worker contacts family and friends.</p> <p>(f) If possible and safe to do, the carer/ child's social worker visits locations and addresses where the child may be.</p> <p>(g) The carer and the child's social worker continue to liaise until the child is found or returns.</p> <p><b>Outcome</b></p> <p>(a) The child returns of their own accord. (b) The child contacts the carer (or another).</p> <p>(c) The carer contacts the child.</p> <p>(d) Contact is made and the child agrees to return home independently.</p> <p>(e) Contact is made and the child agrees to be collected. This is arranged by/between the carer and the child's social worker.</p> <p>(f) Contact is made and what the child says raises the level of concern to police intervention, so the child is reported as missing to the police.</p> <p>(g) The carer/ child's social worker receives 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 so the police are contacted.</p> <p>(i) The carer/ child's social worker has conducted reasonable actions to locate the child and allowed the child a reasonable time</p>
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			<p>to return of their own accord, but the child has not been located, so the level of concern raises to police intervention and the child is reported as missing to the police.</p> <p>(j) If the child is reported as missing to the police, the carer/ child's social worker shares the relevant missing documentation with the police</p> <p>(h) The police complete a risk assessment but question level of the level of risk lies within the level of police intervention, where they delay police intervention and carer/CSW are asked to continue with their action to find the child.</p> <p>(i) Where the police delay police deployment and the carer/ child's social worker hold concern with that decision, the police will act in the child's best interest. Children's Social Work will follow the Resolving Professional Differences/escalation policy, escalate the case to the Out of Hours Manager on duty who will liaise with the Police Duty officer, the child's needs kept at the centre of all actions.</p>
<b>Police Intervention</b>	Based on the information the carer has about the child and the circumstances of the missing occurrence; the carer is worried about the child's immediate safety.	The carer/child's social worker reports the child as missing to the police.	<p>Actions</p> <p>(a) The carer/child's social worker shares their concerns with the police.</p> <p>(b) Where applicable, the child/ child's social worker shares the child's Philomena Protocol with the police.</p> <p>(c) The police complete a risk assessment and record the child as missing</p> <p>(d) If the police have recorded the child as missing, the police conduct enquiries to locate the child.</p> <p>(e) The carer /the child's social worker continues to try and locate /contact the child.</p>

			<p>(g) The police, the carer and the child’s social worker 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 Return Home Interviews takes place.</p>
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Please see [Appendix 1](#) for a **Responding to Missing Occurrences Flowchart**

Responding effectively to a child missing from care requires a partnership approach in which the police, carers, Children's Social Care, and other partner agencies work together in the best interests of the child to ensure their wellbeing and safety.

“UNCRC Article 3 – The best interests of the child must be a top priority in all decisions and actions that affect children.”

Agency response to individual children and any missing occurrence should be informed by professional judgement and up to date multi-agency needs-led assessments, to ensure that missing children are responded to appropriately, their voices are heard, and that they are safeguarded from harm.

The level of intervention required when a child is not where they are expected to be should therefore be proportionate to the concerns held, together with the child's assessed vulnerability and the risk relating to the missing occurrence. It should be recognised by all involved in responding to a missing child that the assessed risk to a child and the situation can alter rapidly. Carers and agency actions and responses therefore need to adapt accordingly.

When a child is not where they are expected to be, their carer holds the initial responsibility to contact and locate the child to ensure their safety and wellbeing and where possible their return, as outlined in the above Levels of Intervention model. This includes undertaking an initial search of the child's home and any grounds; as well as attempting to contact the child's friends, family members and known associates (where appropriate) to establish the child's whereabouts. Carers making the enquires should keep a record of all the actions that they undertake, which should also include notifying the child's social worker as soon as possible after realising a child's whereabouts is unknown. Arrangements about contacting a child's family if the child's whereabouts is unknown to the carer should be outlined in the care and safety plan.

Where a carer due to practical reasons is unable to undertake physical searches, contingency planning regarding how and who should undertake these should have been agreed in the child's care and safety



Planning /Missing Assessment /Plan. Where prior agreement is not in place (i.e., a first missing occurrence) the carer should discuss how physical searches can be undertaken with the child's social worker.

When a child who is in care is not where they are expected to be, carers should always discuss with the manager support to help locate the child and to develop a plan for when the child returns. The child's social worker should be kept informed throughout the time a child's whereabouts is unknown/ they are missing.

If the whereabouts of a missing child is known and there is a concern that they are at immediate risk of harm and/or may pose a risk to others, and/ or their location is assessed by the carer /child's social worker to pose a risk to professionals, the police should be contacted so that an agreement as how best to proceed can be reached. All agreements reached should take full account of the welfare and safety of the child and of others.

If a child is missing outside of office hours, the carer should notify the Children's Services Out of Hours duty team and if relevant, of their return.

It is important that shared responsibility is assumed for all children who go missing from care by partner agencies, and that appropriate information is shared in a timely manner and that this is continuous until the child's safe return.

### **Multi-agency meetings**

- If a child is missing on 3 or more occasions within 30 days a multi-agency strategy meeting will be triggered to understand what is going for the child and take forward any relevant actions to support them.
- A weekly multi-agency missing from care meeting takes place to understand the reasons for children who have been missing in the 7 days prior & to discuss actions to prevent further missing occasions.

## Reporting a child as missing to the Police

When a child looked after is not where they are expected to be, there is an expectation that their carers' will consider what action is required in accordance with the child's care plan, their knowledge of the child together with the individual circumstances of the missing occurrence. A significant number of children looked after are reported as missing from care to the police on repeated occasions. Carers and other practitioners are asked not to fall into a pattern of automatically reporting children in care as missing to the police, a multi-agency response should always be based on the current knowledge of the child, their assessed level of risk and vulnerability, their missing risk management plan, and the circumstances of the current missing occurrence, including any trigger events.

Unless there has been a trigger incident that creates critical concern for the child's or another person's welfare and safety and /or there is an agreed multi agency missing management plan which indicates due to a child's vulnerability the police should be contacted from the outset of a missing occurrence, there is an expectation that a child's carer undertakes all reasonable actions to contact, locate and where possible arrange for a child's return, as outlined in [Reasonable Actions to Locate A Child](#) and the Level of Intervention model (see [Appendix 2](#)).

In circumstances where a carer is concerned about the length of time a child's whereabouts has been unknown, and there is increasing concern for the child's safety, the carer, or the child's social worker should report the child as missing to the police.

If a child is reported as missing and the police question the appropriateness of the report, the police should engage with the reporting person to discuss actions taken and the concerns held, (see [Resolving Professional Difference/Escalation Policy](#)).

Children whose whereabouts are unknown by their carer will not always be automatically recorded and responded to as a missing child; the police will need to be satisfied that:

- robust enquires have been made by the carer to establish the child's whereabouts; or
- there is critical concern for the child's or another person's welfare and safety that warrants immediate police intervention

## Safeguarding Partnership Children Missing from Care 2025

Following a missing child report being made to the police, there remains an expectation that the carer/Children's Social Care will continue to try and make contact, locate, and ensure the safe return of the child.

When making a missing person's report to the police the carer / child's social worker should share a copy of an up-to-date Missing Person's Incident form ([Philomena Protocol](#)) to inform the police response.

Once the police have recorded a Missing Person's report, they will, as a minimum:

- liaise with the carer about what actions have been undertaken
- complete a risk assessment and use this to inform what actions will be taken
- contact the child's social worker / the Children's Services out of hours duty team, to ascertain the child's risk, vulnerability, and plan accordingly
- create and record a plan of immediate actions
- agree a way of ensuring the carer/child's social worker can share any increased concerns directly with the responding Police Officer/relevant Senior Officer
- agree joint actions and pathways for maintaining contact and information sharing
- set a time to review the Police Risk Assessment and activity (a review of the risk and circumstances may take place before this time if the police receive new information which suggests the risk of harm to the child or others has increased).

Please see [Appendix 2](#) for further information

### 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](#).

Professional differences regarding whether a police missing report is warranted, should not stop the concerns held by Carers and/or Children's Social Care being fully considered, nor should it lead to no

action being taken to locate the child to ensure their safety. Where all practitioners must continue to work together in the best interests of the child in the necessary timeframe to protect them.

If professional differences cannot be resolved the carer/ child's social worker should immediately escalate the matter to the out of Hours Children's Social Care Manager who will raise this concern to with the Police Duty officer.

On occasions where there is professional differences, or where the carer is unable to undertake action to locate the child, the police may need to act in the best interests of the child.

Once professionals are assured of a child's wellbeing, where required, the police and the reporting agency should arrange a follow up discussion/meeting to understand the basis of professional differences. If there are ongoing concerns regarding agency action or inaction, these should be escalated via the [Resolving Professional Differences/Escalation Policy](#).

### **Abduction**

If it is suspected that a child has been abducted from care, States of Jersey Police would be the lead agency in the investigation and recovery, unless there are Parental Responsibility (PR) issues. In this case Children's service would then look at getting a recovery order through the court system.

This is supported in the [Children's \(Jersey\) Law 2002](#).

If it is suspected that a child has been abducted, it is important to consider the following:

- Holding a strategy meeting immediately to consider the information available & think about where the child may be taken;
- Partners should be very clear of the person(s) of concerns, who they may be with and the level of risk posed to the child from them.

### **When a Child is Found or Returns**

From the moment it is apparent that a child looked after is missing, all those responsible for their welfare and safety should liaise, to start planning for the child's return.

When a child is located, but does not return of their own accord, the responsibility for their safe return lies with the carer or Children's Social care. If there is a known or assessed risk associated with this, how to proceed should be discussed with the police, to determine if a safeguarding response is required.

On their return a child should always be warmly welcomed and any immediate physical needs they may have should be attended to. Children can be a victim of a crime, even if they also appear to be a perpetrator of a crime. Where it is suspected that a child may have been a victim of a crime, carers should seek to preserve any physical evidence and notify the police of their concerns.

Where a child who was reported to the police as missing returns, without the knowledge of the police, the police should be notified immediately.

Arrangements for a Return Home Interview should be confirmed between the child's social worker and carer, together with an agreement as to who will notify professionals and the child's family (where appropriate) of the child's return.

### Safe and Well Check

The police have a responsibility to ensure that a Safe and Well Check is undertaken when a child who was reported as missing, is located, or returns. The purpose of a Safe and Well Check in relation to individual children is to:

- Identify any ongoing vulnerability or risk factors which may have contributed to the child going missing and could contribute to repeat occurrences;
- To try and establish if the child has suffered any harm whilst missing;
- To establish information that may assist in locating the child if they go missing again.

More widely, the information gained can inform strategic activity, and disruption activity against perpetrators.

A Safe and Well Check should normally be carried out in person as soon as practicable. 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.

Although Safe and Well Checks will normally be carried out in person by the police, on some occasions this may not be practical. On other occasions it may not be in the best interests of the child as it may be counterproductive by exposing the child to avoidable interaction with the police. For many children it could be that it is assessed as appropriate for their carer or a named trusted adult in a child's life to conduct the Safe and Well Check and/or this is in line with the child's wishes. Who will conduct the interview should be agreed and documented on each report.

### **Return Home Interviews (RHI)**

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

RHI should be carried out by a trained professional not involved with care of the child. They should provide the child with a safe space in which they can talk about any worries or fears that they may have. The person carrying out the RHI should have some licence as to where they carry out the interview, the purpose is to meet the child's needs, so this should be in a safe and comfortable space for them. The purpose of the RHI is to support the child or young person in their safety and wellbeing. They also provide a key opportunity to learn about the reasons why a child went missing, to support and safeguard them, identify risk, and reduce the risk of future missing episodes. A RHI should be a child centred conversation which takes a supportive, active listening approach.

RHI's should explore how the child feels about their home and determine if the home is a 'push' factor with regards to the child going missing. Any information received which suggests it is a factor should always be shared with the child's social worker and Independent Reviewing Officer.

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Information gained from RHI's should inform a child's Missing Assessment and Management Plan, together with their care and safety planning, and it should be considered in the child's Looked After Reviews.

Information gained in RHI's that is relevant to safeguarding a child, or others, should be shared with the police by the child's social worker or independent provider.

This should include making assessment in relation to the risk of a child who goes missing may be exposed to from Child Exploitation, (see SP Jersey [Safeguarding Children from Child Exploitation](#) and supporting [Child Exploitation Risk Assessment Screening Tool](#)).

### Off Island Placements

If a child who resides in an out of jurisdiction placement the same principles & practice applies as on Island but with the police force of where the child resides being responsible.

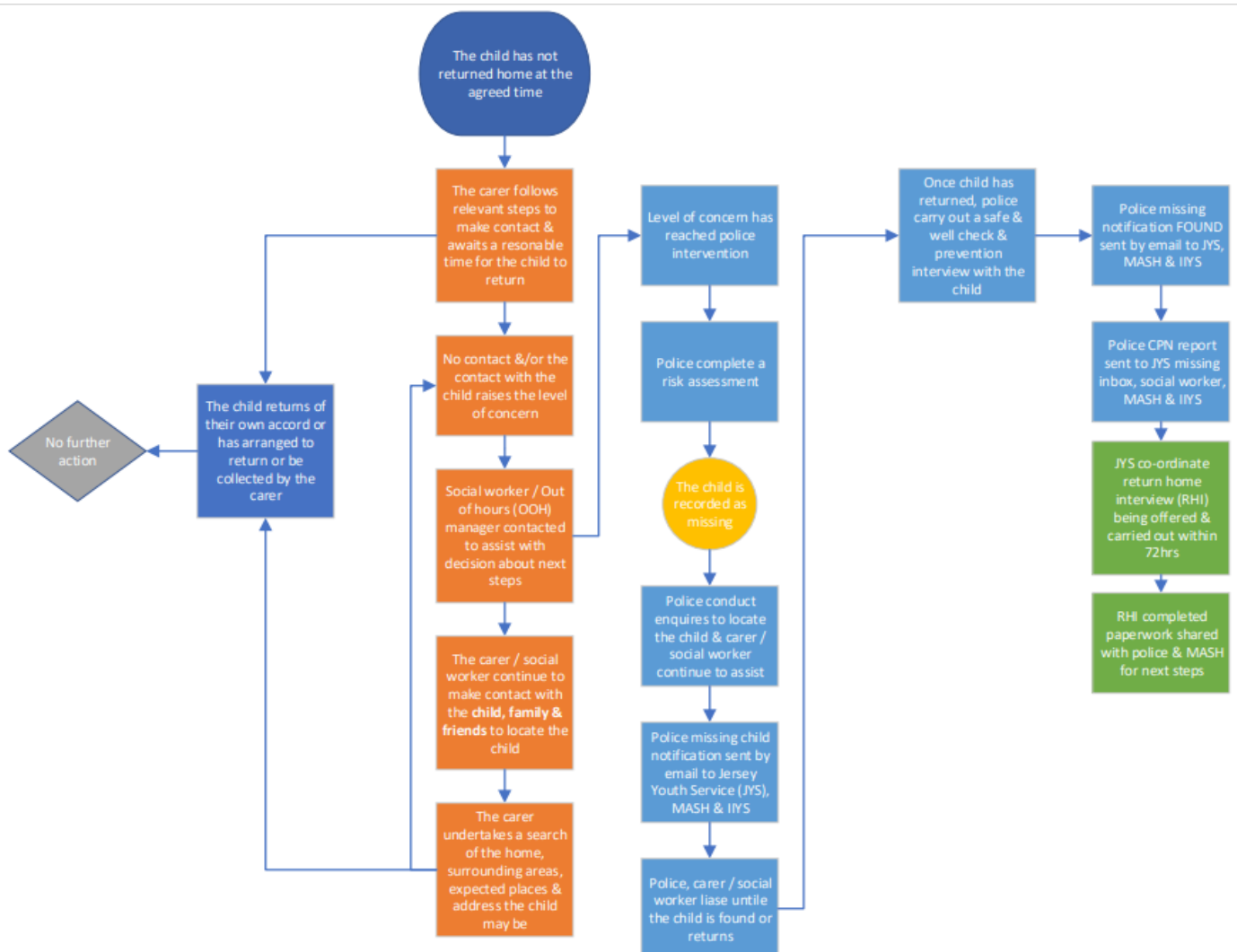
- The off Island placement will follow it's missing child procedure and will also notify the Jersey Out of Hours Social work service
- The off Island placement will inform Jersey Children Services of the child's return
- Arrangements will be made with the Local Authority for a RHI to be offered & carried out within 72hrs

### Further reading

[UN Convention on the Rights of the Child - UNICEF UK](#)

[College of Police \(UK\) Missing Persons](#)

## Appendix 1. Responding to Missing Occurrences





## Appendix 2–Carer Guidance

### Reporting a child in your care missing

A child going missing can be a warning sign of a range of serious risks. Some children who go missing may be harmed while away and patterns of missing episodes can help to identify ongoing risks they may be facing. It is therefore important that professionals and carers prioritise the response to missing and know how and when to report an incident to the police.

However, there are also risks with inappropriately reporting a child missing. Over-involving the police in a child's life by reporting them missing can unnecessarily damage the child's relationships with professionals and their carers and can bring them into unnecessary contact with the police.

Children in care are more likely than other children to be reported missing. Careful thought should always be given to how to prevent a child in your care from going missing, and, if they are not where they are supposed to be, whether and when they need to be reported as missing to the police. Decisions and actions taken should always be focussed on the child's best interests and what will best help to keep them safe.

### 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 prevention.

You should always feel supported in how you look after a child in your care, including when they are reported missing. A child's home plan should clearly set out what needs to happen if their whereabouts are unknown: what actions should be taken, and when they should be reported to the police as missing. This should be reviewed regularly to take account of any changes in the child's circumstances, their vulnerability and any identified risks. You should be encouraged to inform these plans and to feel confident in what is expected of you.

When the child moves in you should have a conversation with them to explain any expectations about times to return home and what may happen if they don't return as expected. Potential triggers should be openly discussed with them (for example wanting to see family or friends, or unhappiness with a curfew) and genuine efforts should be made to avoid these 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, not because they are in trouble.

### When a child in your care 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 home plan and your agency or home's guidance, policies, and procedures.

You should think about each individual missing incident separately, taking account of circumstances, trigger events and if child's recent behaviour indicates an increased cause for concern.

If you are concerned that the child will come to serious harm, you may need to report them as missing to the police immediately. If not, it is likely that in the first instance there will be an expectation that you take steps to try and contact the child and check that they are okay yourself.

You should keep a record of the actions that you take both before contacting the police (if required) and afterwards; so that everyone involved in locating the child and ensuring their safe return is aware of what has been done by whom.

Keeping records of actions, you have taken is important because if you do contact the police to report a child as missing it is likely that they will ask what steps have already been taken to try and contact or locate the child. They may also suggest other actions that you could take. It is important that children feel cared for and know that carers are concerned about them and taking all reasonable actions to find them. If a carer doesn't think a child is safe and feels that the police are not taking their concerns seriously and are not accepting that the child is missing, a carer can and should challenge this. It might be appropriate to ask to speak to a senior officer as well as contacting the child's social worker to let them know your concerns. No child should fall through the gaps and all professionals involved should take concerns seriously.

The Levels of Intervention model below provides guidance for carers when responding to a child whose whereabouts are unknown. The level of concern about a child and the action that needs to be taken may change quickly considering emerging information. The three categories outlined in this model are fluid and progression through them may not be linear, for example if a very serious risk is identified carers should jump to police intervention immediately.

### Levels of Intervention Model

#### **No immediate police intervention**

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

The carer decides to wait for the child to return of their own accord.

#### **Carer intervention**

You have some concerns and want to ensure that they are okay but at this time you do not have any reason to believe they are going to come to harm. You have considered information contained in the child's plan. You take steps yourself to locate them and check they are safe.

The child is not where they are expected to be. The carer accepts responsibility for contacting and/or searching for the child to ensure their safety and return. Carers/Children's Social Work agree the circumstances, and level of concern do not justify police intervention at the time.

#### **Police intervention**

You are worried about the child and have been unable to contact them or, if you have contacted them, don't think they are safe.

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

### Appendix 3. Jersey Philomena Protocol

## **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				
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:				

## Safeguarding Partnership Children Missing from Care 2025

Details of Care Order:	
Social Worker name & contact Details:	
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.	

	1.	
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## Safeguarding Partnership Children Missing from Care 2025

School/Educational Establishment attended:	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			
<b>Part 2 - (to be completed when the person has been reported as missing)</b>			
<b>Description of what the person was last seen wearing. Include colour, designer labels/brands:</b>			
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?			

## Safeguarding Partnership Children Missing from Care 2025

Has the person Got a Bank Account:		Have you got access to this account? (If not, who has)	
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Has the person got a mobile phone?			
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?	

## Safeguarding Partnership Children Missing from Care 2025

Time, date and location last seen:		
Please provide evidence to support each of the above		
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/carer, 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:			
<b>This section should be completed in conjunction with the premises searched Form.</b>			
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.**