

Guidance – young people who go missing

This document seeks to provide concise guidance to parents & staff in residential homes, care and education settings, for occasions where young people in our care absent themselves from their homes/schools.

In an attempt to control the spread of Covid-19, the government has provided guidance to us all, which seeks to reduce unnecessary interaction between individuals and unnecessary travel.

There is an on-going responsibility for parents and staff to safeguard the young people who are in our care. There is nothing in government guidance relating to the responses to Covid-19, which changes those professional, safeguarding responsibilities.

As was the case prior to the current crisis, police should not be called upon for behaviour management. In respect of 'Missing', police nationally continue to have the following expectations-

“The police are entitled to expect parents and carers, including staff acting in a parenting role in care homes, to accept normal parenting responsibilities and undertake reasonable actions to try and establish the whereabouts of the individual. Children who are breaching parental discipline should not be dealt with by police unless there are other risks. Once those enquiries have been completed, it may be appropriate to record the child as missing and take actions set out in national police guidance.”

There continues to be an expectation that if a young person absents herself/himself, staff and parents will take reasonable steps to follow the young person and to search for them appropriately, whilst avoiding unnecessary contact with others. The expectations for parents and staff actions around 'missing' continue as was the case prior to the Covid-19 outbreak.

It isn't appropriate to call the police, simply because a young person has failed to follow guidance to remain at the home/school. The normal approaches to 'Missing' should be applied.

Please bear in mind that front-line police officers are likely to come into contact with a wide range of people during a tour of duty. Limiting the occasions when police are asked to attend our homes unnecessarily will also reduce the likelihood of cross-infection.

D/Supt Ben Deer Force Lead Missing People 09/04/20