



## ANDERIDA ADOLESCENT CARE

### MISSING PERSON PROCEDURE

Running away can be symptomatic of wider problems in a child or young person's life, but whatever the reason, one thing is very clear; children who decide to run away are unhappy, vulnerable and in danger. Anderida will always endeavour to work with young people, their wider support network and outside agencies to decrease the instances of absconding and ensure that relevant parties are proactive in looking for the young people in their care and helping them to return to a place of safety. Anderida guidance is written in line with Runaway and Missing from Home and Care (RMFHC) protocols, and East Sussex Missing Person's Policy.

Changes to policy are done in consultation with all relevant stakeholders of the organisation to include: all LA, Guardians, when the LA does not hold parental responsibility, Police for all Authorities that are not East Sussex to ensure that the Policy is in line with their Missing Persons protocol, policy is amended to reflect the views of all.

When a child or young person is a persistent absconder the home should, in line with individual support plans and risk assessments, ensure that:

- Alarm systems are fully utilised, serviced and maintained.
- Where CCTV is available, ensure that it is fully operational.
- Mentors are aware of the child or young person's whereabouts - This means knowing what is happening in the home and where the young person may be if they are not with them.
- The care team have regular conversations with child or young person exploring the risks and dangers involved in running away, and how to seek help whilst missing or vulnerable.

**When a young person is showing signs or voicing that they may be about to abscond from their home, the mentors on duty must follow the steps below to minimise the chances of absconding and to try and discourage the child or young person from putting themselves at risk:**

- Be aware of the young person's state of mind for that day - this means that you can be prepared and try to manage intervention work earlier to prevent them from leaving rather than waiting for it to happen.
- Be prepared at all times – make sure that you have keys, money, shoes and mobile phone and contact details for the young person on you. This will save time if you must leave abruptly and means that you are well prepared to follow the young person if need be.
- Be present – make sure that young person knows that you are there to either support them or so that they know should they choose to abscond from the home that you are going to follow and try to prevent this from happening to keep them safe.
- Name it with the young person – explain that you think that they may be thinking of leaving the home without permission, so they can then make a better choice and you have the chance to

talk through their possible actions, risks, consequences allowing them to make an informed decision.

- Sensors/alarms on young person's doors and windows to be activated during the day and the evening.
- Sensors/alarms to be checked daily to make sure they have not been tampered with.
- CCTV Monitors/screens to always remain on.
- Mentors to be positioned around the home to avoid all being in one place at any given time e.g., placed in one room such as the office (Covid procedures in place should be creating a natural divide).

**Mentors must know where the young person is and make sure that they know if the young person is in their bedroom by checking in with them.**

- Mentors are to make sure they check in with the young people throughout the day, this to include knocking the young people from 9am school days and 10am weekend and then hourly if they are in their bedrooms.
- If the young person does not respond, after knocking on their bedroom door every 10 minutes, you must make sure they are in their room after 30 minutes, you must give them a warning that you will enter their room if they do not verbally answer you.
- If getting no response mentors need to make sure the young person is in their bedroom by 10am.
- Any movement of a YP during the night noticed by a mentor; mentor to check in e.g., "heard you were up just wanted to check in".

**If a young person is missing from the home or absent without permission, the following procedure must be followed:**

- Record immediately what they were wearing and anything they may have had in their possession as this may be very helpful information in finding/identifying them or defining how at risk they are and the intended length of absence. Try to contact the young person and probe for details as to their whereabouts and safety.
- There should already be an agreed level of vulnerability defined between Anderida and the responsible local authority and this information will be relayed in each young person's risk assessment and support plan. This will help inform you if the young person is missing or absent without permission the knowledge you have of the young person's whereabouts and what lead up to their absence will also be an important factor to consider. If you are unsure, consult your manager or the on-call manager.

### The police define missing and absent as:

- **Missing:** *Anyone whose whereabouts cannot be established and where the circumstances are out of character or the context suggests the person may be the subject of crime or at risk of harm to themselves or another.*
- **Absent:** *A person not at a place where they are expected or required to be.*
- Phone the police on the non-emergency number and inform them if the young person is missing or absent without permission. You may also upgrade a young person from absent without permission to a missing person.
- If the police do not agree with Anderida's assessment of the situation e.g. 'missing person' please speak to the manager or the on-call manager for advice on the young person's status. Then, if necessary, liaise with the local authority for further guidance.

### You should expect the following from the police:

*Persons reporting an 'absent' or 'missing' person should be informed of the risk classification, the justification for it and the police action that can be expected as a result. The method and frequency of contact for updates should be agreed and the informant must be provided with the STORM serial number.*

*Even on occasions where there is little progress to report, regular updates are a key element of managing expectations and providing reassurance. Where appropriate a nominated point of contact should be considered.*

- Phone the young person's social worker and let them know that the young person is missing and the subsequent action you have taken. After 17.00pm ring the Local Authority's OOH and leave a message for the social worker. Phone the young person's significant others (if their involvement with the young person is appropriate) and inform them.
- Ensure that all the calls are logged, fill in an incident form in the care plan and cross reference this paperwork to all daily recordings. Staff must record important details in the incident form, such as what the young person was wearing, if they took a bag, if they had cash, their demeanour, behaviour out of character, signs of coercion, internet activity prior to leaving, and all questions about the circumstances around their absence covered in the police risk assessment document attached.
- If the young person going missing is of serious concern it must be considered whether a notification to Ofsted needs to be completed. There is a section for this on the incident form. Please consult with your manager if you believe this to be the case.
- Anderida staff should do a room search of the young person's room and fill out the appropriate paperwork. Ideally two staff should do this together but if you are working 1-1 it may be necessary to undertake this alone. This should be done before the police arrive. Staff are looking for any information which can help in finding the young person. Inform the police when they arrive that you have done a room search and what, if anything, you found.

- The police will arrive at some point to fill in a missing persons report. You will need the young person's file and the incident report to give them all the information they need. The police will also search the young person's room for any information which may be helpful.
- Anderida staff should also be pro-active in looking for young people where practicable. They will do this by phoning known associates, looking in areas and going to addresses that the young person frequents and recording all activities/outcomes on an incident log. This should enable the care team to gather valuable information that can be passed on to the police. Where a young person is missing in their home area staff should use the support of family, significant others to look for the missing child as they will know the area better than them.
- Staff to befriend any known friends and associates, also to go to known 'hangouts' introducing themselves to young people i.e., skate parks etc. leaving contact details for the home. (see Tailing Policy)

**Anderida staff should also encourage the young person's return by:**

- Communicating verbally and electronically regularly. These communications should include warm messages about our concerns for the young person and desire for them to return. These messages can also be communicated through others the young person may be in touch with. Staff can also help communicate the concern of others who the young people have attachments to, e.g. parents, siblings, friends.
- Young people have an NVR supporters' group in place, mentors to instigate campaign messages through the email/whatsapp 'round robin' systems in place.
- Staff should make it clear that they are always prepared to listen to the young person.
- Arranging to meet the young person even if they are not prepared to return to the home, this can be for a coffee or bite to eat – in these instances though you must be honest with the young person and we will be updating the police around the contact.

**When a young person returns from a period of being missing, staff must:**

- Always welcome the young person home in the first instance. Attempt to ascertain where the young person has been and how they are feeling. The young person may be upset and in need of support, they could also be in need of care (food, warmth, etc.) or medical attention. Mentors should also ask the young person if they have come to any harm whilst missing.
- Inform the police,
- Inform social worker or out of hours if this is out of office times
- Significant others who are actively involved in the young person care e.g. family.
- The police will then arrange to visit and conduct a 'return welfare interview'. It is important that this interview is carried out. If this interview does not take place, please phone the police and remind them that they need to visit the young person to do this interview.

- The 'return interview' should be considered a key part of the police response in all cases, and especially in relation to vulnerable adults and children. It should not be viewed or conducted as merely a routine administrative task. During the return interview process, it is crucial that officers consider the wider safeguarding issues that may be present, not only during the missing episode but in relation to the environment that the missing person is returning or being returned to. This is relevant to all missing people but particularly relevant to children and vulnerable adults. If mentors have any concerns that the interview has not been conducted in line with the above, they should record this in the incident report, and it can then be passed onto the Missing Person's Team.
- It is a legal requirement for a return from missing interview to happen. Where the social worker is not able to undertake this interview, this can be carried out by Catherine Nightingale who acts on behalf of the Local Authorities as an independent visitor to undertake return from missing interviews. All staff are able to refer to Catherine.
- Consideration should be given as to whether the missing episode is a potential indicator of abuse or neglect which may be occurring at the place from which the missing person removed themselves. It is each officer's responsibility to ensure that they are satisfied the place to which a missing person is being returned is both appropriate to their individual needs and poses no risk of significant harm. If an officer has concerns which require an immediate response (either singularly or within the multi-agency framework) they should seek advice from their Child Protection Team
- Mentors should let the police know if they have any additional concerns about the young person's safety or whereabouts whilst missing, prior to the police doing a debrief/return interview as this will enable the police to probe around areas of concern.
- If the young person is repeatedly running away or missing for a sustained period an urgent strategy meeting between the police, Anderida, the local authority and appropriate significant others should be organised. Anderida should be instrumental in consulting with the local authority to convene this.
- This would involve the Police Missing Person's Coordinator, whose role it is to gather intelligence and identify preventative measures, rather than to undertake investigation, and will encompass:
  - The use of intelligence to identify those at most risk of harm.
  - The sharing of information with partner agencies to protect the most vulnerable.
  - Providing a link between missing person investigations and other investigations, such as child/domestic abuse and sexual offences
  - All actions following the young person's return should also be noted in the incident form.
- Young people who regularly 'go missing from care' should have robust support plan and risk assessment around this area and all strategies should be regularly reviewed with the young person in addition to being reviewed at professional multi-disciplinary meetings/strategy meetings.

- If Anderida is aware a young person is a persistent absconder prior to the young person being placed in the home, then a meeting will be held between Anderida and the missing person co-ordinator to see what preventative measures can be put in place to minimise the chances of the young person continuing this behaviour. Consideration should also be given as to what can be done if the young person does continue absconding.
- For young people who are missing from home it is important that mentors regularly discuss and help the young person to recognise the risks they place themselves at whilst missing.
- It is very important that you read the following as these are the questions that the police will ask you when you report a young person as missing or absent without permission.

### **POLICE MISSING PERSON'S RISK ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS**

1. Is there any information that the person is likely to cause self-harm or attempt suicide?
2. Is the person suspected to be subject of a crime in progress e.g., abduction?
3. Is the person under 16 or, if aged between 16 and 18, vulnerable due to other factors, or an elderly or infirm person?
4. Are there inclement weather conditions that would seriously increase the risk to health, especially where the missing person is a child or elderly person?
5. Does the missing person need essential medication or treatment not readily available to them?
6. Is the person suffering from any mental or physical illness or psychological disorder?
7. Do you believe that the person may not have the physical ability to interact safely with others or in an unknown environment e.g., visually impaired, downs syndrome?
8. Has the person been involved in a violent, homophobic and/or racist incident or confrontation immediately prior to disappearance?
9. Has the person been the subject of bullying?
10. Has the person previously disappeared and suffered or was exposed to harm?
11. Is the behaviour out of character and likely to be an indicator of their being exposed to harm?
12. Is the person in a care environment e.g., foster care or children's home and if so, what are the reasons they are placed in care?