



One minute guide

Absent, Missing and away from placement without authorisation

No. 10, April 2021

What does 'Absent', 'Missing' and 'away' from placement without authorisation mean?

Anyone whose whereabouts cannot be established will be considered as missing until located, and their well-being or otherwise confirmed. All reports of missing people sit within a continuum of risk from 'no apparent risk (absent)' through to high-risk cases that require immediate, intensive action.

A '**Missing**' child is a child under the age of 18 whose:

- whereabouts cannot be established and
- where the circumstances are out of character, or
- the context suggests the child may be subject of crime or at risk of harm to themselves or another.

And whose family or carers have reported them as missing to the police.

An '**Absent**' child is a child who is not at a place where they are expected or required to be and there are no apparent risks.

For children looked after there is another category which is '**away from placement without authorisation**'. This relates to Children Looked After by the local authority, whose whereabouts is known, but who is not at their placement or place they are expected to be (absent) but for who the carer has concerns or the incident has been notified to the local authority or the police.

Whose children and young people are we talking about?

This guide is about all children – those living at home with parents or family and those who are looked after by the Local Authority.

Some of the children and young people living at home with their parents are currently known to Children's Social Work Service and others are not.

What is the link to child exploitation?

Practitioners should be aware that when a young person repeatedly goes missing, this may be an indicator that they are at risk of child exploitation. In addition, children and young people who go missing are also more vulnerable to exploitation. Practitioners must make themselves aware of the indicators of child exploitation.

More information is available on the Child Sexual Exploitation web pages on the [Leeds Safeguarding Children's Partnership](#) website.

If a child is missing or absent what should be done?

Parents and carers should take all reasonable and practical steps to establish the whereabouts and well-being of a child in order to identify whether the child is missing. All details about the absence should be recorded including any steps taken to locate and return the child. Information should be shared with key people throughout the missing period such as the family/carer, the Police and the social worker (or Emergency Duty Team).

Anyone whose whereabouts cannot be established will be considered as missing until located, and their well-being or otherwise confirmed. All reports of missing people sit within a continuum of risk from 'no apparent risk (absent)' through to high-risk cases that require immediate, intensive action.

If there are concerns about a child being absent or away from placement, the child should be reported as missing to the police; the police should be provided with details of steps taken to locate and return the child; child's details including photo and physical description / clothes worn; where and when last seen; and if there are any other risk factors such as CSE or learning disability.

Where a child is absent or away from placement without authorisation the situation should be reviewed at least every eight hours. The absence should be escalated to missing if the level of risk increases and / or 72 hours has passed — unless the child's location is known and there are no concerns for their safety.

Where the child is absent or away from placement without authorisation and there are immediate risks identified, although the location is known, contact should be made with the police to discuss. More detailed information is available on the [children's social work online procedures](#).

What happens when the child returns?

On return, every child who has been reported as missing, should have a **Safe and Well check** carried out by the Police. Within 72 hours of a child's return a more in depth **Return Interview** arranged by the local authority should be undertaken and where a child is either looked after, subject to a child protection or a child in need plan, social workers should consider the need for missing vulnerability and risk management.

Where a child who has been missing does not currently have social work involvement, the police, family or other practitioners should consider whether a referral to Duty and Advice team is required.

Who are the key contacts and more information?

Duty and Advice tel: 0113 3760336 (practitioners) or 0113 2224403 (members of the public) or out of hours Emergency Duty Team Tel: 0113 5350600
Police Tel: 999 for emergencies, 101 for non-emergencies

More information is available on the [Joint Protocol for Children Missing from Home and Care](#) on the West Yorkshire Consortium Safeguarding Procedures and on the Department for Education [Statutory Guidance](#) and [Flowchart](#)