

Department for Education

Statutory guidance on children who run away or go missing from home or care

Flowchart showing roles and responsibilities when a child goes missing from care

The following chart shows the main steps that need to be taken when a child goes missing from local authority care, and where responsibility lies for those steps. It should be read alongside the full statutory guidance on children who run away or go missing from home or care, and is not intended to be a comprehensive list of actions.

Children's home or Local police **Responsible authority Host authority** foster carer **Planning and placement** Local authorities should agree with local police and other partners a runaway and missing from care and home (RMFCH) protocol. Carers, local authority and police staff should be aware of the protocol as appropriate. All partners should work together to assess risks and develop appropriate strategies to prevent children from going missing and respond when children do go missing. Staff should receive appropriate training. Children's homes should have Care planning should include explicit procedures in place both to assessment of appropriate prevent children running away or placement arrangements to protect going missing, and to locate, return the child from the risk of going and support a child who has run missing, and strategies for dealing away or is missing from their with any known risks of running placement. This procedure must away. have regard to local protocols of the host authority. When a child is placed out of area, the responsible authority must notify the host authority of the placement. Notification processes for missing episodes should be agreed between the responsible and host authorities. When a looked after child goes missing

The carer should take agreed actions to locate the child. If they can not be located, they should inform the police, the responsible authority and anyone else identified in the child's care plan (such as their parents).

Useful information to report to the police include:

- the child's' name, date of birth,
- description and a recent photograph - any details of where and when the child was last soon, who they were with, etc
- details of family, friends and associates
- details of the responsible authority.

The responsible authority should provide relevant information about the missing child to the police to enable all the risk factors to be considered. Police should perform a riskassessment which will form the basis for their operational response. The case will remain the subject of constant review, particularly in the light of new information and changes in circumstances.

The responsible authority should notify the host authority that a child in their area has gone missing.

Children's home or foster carer	Responsible authority	Host authority	Local police
	When a looked a	after child is found	
If the child returns to their placement, the responsible authority and police should be informed.	If the child is located but meaningful contact can not be established, the responsible authority and police should consider appropriate action.		A safe and well check should be carried out by the police as soon as possible after a child reported as missing has been found.
Carers should continue to offer warm and consistent care when a child returns, and running away should not be viewed as behaviour that needs to be punished.		independent review interview takes	
The responsible local authority should re remains appropriate. The decision shou child and carers where appropriate.			
	Care plans should include a strategy to minimise future risk of repeated missing episodes.		
	IROs should be informed about missing episodes and address these in statutory reviews.		
	Data an	d analysis	
Children's homes should be prepared to provide information on missing incidents to those conducting	Data on missing episodes, including intelligence from return interviews, should be analysed regularly by all relevant partners to map problems and patterns. Regular reports should be provided to council members and the LSCB.		
independent visits to monitor the effectiveness of the home.	Data for children missing or away from placement without authorisation should be reported to the Department for Education by the responsible authority through their		

children.



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