Information Access Unit
Information Management and Data Directorate

Date: 23/10/2026
Our ref: 01/FOI/26/017550/U

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUEST REFERENCE NO: 01/FOI/26/017550/U

I write in connection with your request for information dated 01/09/2026, received by Greater Manchester Police (GMP) for the following information:

Under the Freedom of Information Act 2000, please provide:

1. *For the last 2 years, the number of children under 18 who were reported as missing from care.*

2. *Please provide the recorded information held by GMP concerning any system, database, electronic record, flag, marker, alert, warning or other process used to identify that a child in custody:*
    a. *is a looked-after child / child in care; and/or*
    b. *is subject to a Child Protection Plan.*

    If a specific system is used, please provide the relevant policy, procedure or guidance describing how it operates.

3. *Please explain what system, database, flag, marker or other process is used to identify that a child in custody is in care or subject to a CPP*

4. *Please confirm whether the custody sergeant is automatically alerted to the child's care status /subject to a CPP or whether this has to be established through a manual check or contact with Children's Social Care.*

5. *Please provide copies of all current GMP policies, procedures, guidance, briefing documents, operational instructions or other guidance issued to frontline police officers concerning children who go missing from care.*

    This should include, where held, guidance concerning; looked-after children in the care of a authority not based in Greater Manchester children subject to Child Protection

Plans; the Philomena Protocol; Trigger plans or equivalent risk information; and information-sharing with Children's Social Care or care providers.

6. *Please provide copies of current GMP training materials, training packages, course content, guidance or other recorded information concerning the policing of children in care / looked-after children.*

   Please also provide, if held:
   a) *the title/name of the relevant training;*
   b) *whether it is mandatory or voluntary;*
   c) *which ranks/roles receive it;*

7. *Please confirm whether Greater Manchester Police currently has a dedicated team, unit or function responsible for dealing specifically with missing children.*
   If so, please provide:
   the name of the team/unit/function;
   its role and responsibilities;
   the areas of GMP it covers;
   its operating hours;
   its staffing establishment, if held;

Result of Searches

Following receipt of your request searches were conducted within Greater Manchester Police (GMP) to locate information relevant to your request. I can confirm that the information you have requested is held by GMP. However, I am not obliged to supply you with the information as an exemption applies.

Section 17 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 requires Greater Manchester Police, when refusing to provide such information (because this information is exempt) to provide you, the applicant, with a notice which: (a) states that fact, (b) specifies the exemption in question and (c) states (if that would not otherwise be apparent) why the exemption applies. Where redactions occur in the attached Missing Person Policy and Procedure, that is because the information is exempt from disclosure by virtue of **Section 31(1)(a)(b) – Law Enforcement** and **Section 40(2) – Personal Information.**

Section 31 is a qualified and prejudice-based exemption and as such, subject to a harm and public interest test.

S31(1) - Evidence of Harm

A Freedom of Information Act request is not a private transaction. Both the request itself and any information disclosed, are considered suitable for open publication. This is because under the Act, any information disclosed is released into the wider public domain, effectively to the world, not just to an individual.

Whilst not questioning the motives of the applicant, providing any further information relating to specific departments and functions within Greater Manchester Police would reveal our operational capability, which would be of intelligence value to criminals.

Disclosure of resources at the police's disposal, including resources used for locating people, will mean that those members of the public who are committing crimes and pose a risk to the public, would be able to formulate ways to circumvent or overwhelm the systems in place. If disclosed, the tactics used by GMP will become less effective and will mean that the police are not able to detect and prevent crime, apprehend, or prosecute offenders or to administer justice for the wider community. Although the location of missing persons is not a law enforcement function as defined by S31(1)(a)(b) of the Freedom of Information Act, the tools and tactics used by police to locate missing persons are also used to locate fugitives.

There is always a duty of care to the general public, and the Police Service has a clear responsibility to ensure the prevention or detection of crime, and the apprehension or prosecution of offenders is always delivered. There are several tactics available to the Police Service to ensure the effective delivery of operational law enforcement. In this case, specialist policing activity is required to undertake fair investigations where it may be necessary to progress a range of reasonable lines of enquiry.

As such, the disclosure of any further information which would hinder the forces law enforcement functions cannot be in the public interest.

Public Interest Test

Factors favouring disclosure for S31 - Where public funds are being spent, there is a public interest in accountability and justifying the use of public money. Disclosure of the requested information would enable the public to assess whether the force has appropriately taken steps to help reduce and detect crime by such means apprehending criminals in a timely manner. Release would enhance public debate as to whether the force is appropriately and effectively engaging with the threat posed by criminals.

Factors against disclosure for S31 - Disclosure that reveals our operational capabilities would compromise law enforcement tactics. Criminals could use the information to target areas of perceived weakness in the belief that their activities are less likely to be detected. It may be used by criminals who are intent on pursuing their criminal activity, to identify and exploit the limitations of these resources.

To release information relating to operational capacity and capability utilised for locating people would have a detrimental effect on our policing capabilities. Therefore, to mitigate any risks, disclosure of this information needs to be protected, to ensure that those with intent to do so cannot manipulate it or undermine its purpose in any way.

Any disclosure of information which would compromise law enforcement tactics and thus lead to more crime being committed by reducing the opportunity for the prevention and detection of crime, would therefore increase the risk to public safety, which is not in the public interest.

Balancing Test

Law enforcement is of paramount importance, and the Police service will not disclose information if to do so would undermine its purpose and place the safety of individuals at risk. Whilst there is a public interest in the transparency of using public money in policing appropriately and effectively engaging with the threat posed by criminals, there is a very strong public interest in safeguarding the integrity of police investigations and operations in this area.

As much as there is public interest in knowing that policing activity is appropriate and balanced in matters of law enforcement, this will only be overridden in exceptional circumstances. Any disclosure which hinders our capability and assists criminals cannot be in the public interest.

It is for these reasons that I have determined that the balance test favours non-disclosure of the requested information.

Section 40(2) represents information that identifies a living individual, to disclose this information would breach the principles of the Data Protection Act 2018. Personal data is defined by Section 1 of the Data Protection Act 2018 and means data that relates to an individual who can be identified directly or indirectly from that data.

Section 40 is an absolute exemption and there is no requirement to conduct a public interest test for such data.

1. Between Oct 24 and 21 Sep 26 GMP dealt with 8,754 missing reports relating to children / young people (aged under 18) who were reported missing from care.

2. No information is held by GMP. No such system is used.

3. If a child is a LAC or subject of a Protection Plan, then such information will be recorded on a 'Care Plan'(CAP). These CAPs are most commonly accessed by district staff, in particular District Safeguarding Teams. Custody staff do not scrutinise CAPs in order to establish whether a detainee is a LAC or on a Protection Plan, and generally the only time a member of custody would access a CAP, would be to update the CAP with details of any Safeguarding Occurrence involving a child detainee in custody.

4. A custody Sgt is not automatically alerted to the child's care status, it would have to be established through a manual check. Custody staff would generally only become aware of the status of a child if it was specifically raised by the OIC, interviewing officer, child, their appropriate adult or someone else acting on their behalf in custody

5. Please see the attached Missing Person Policy and Procedure.

6. In response to your request for information regarding training relating to the policing of children in care and looked-after children:

The subject matter is covered within the Custody Training Programme delivered to staff and officers undertaking custody roles. There is no standalone training package specifically dedicated to children in care or looked-after children.
Training focuses on the management, safeguarding and welfare of all children and young persons under the age of 18 who come into police custody. Relevant content is incorporated throughout the custody training curriculum.
Topics covered include:
Searching children and young persons.
Recovery of forensic evidence from children.
Observation and detention monitoring requirements.
Liaison and Diversion services.
Risk assessment and vulnerability considerations.
Safeguarding responsibilities and best practice when dealing with children in custody.
Use of Appropriate Adults.
The relevant training is delivered as part of the following courses:

a) Title of training
Custody Detention Officer Course.
Custody Sergeant Course.
b) Mandatory or voluntary
Mandatory for officers and staff undertaking custody roles.
c) Roles receiving the training
Custody Detention Officers.
Custody Sergeants.
Successful completion of the relevant custody training is a requirement for personnel working within a custody environment. Assessment standards apply, with delegates required to achieve the prescribed pass mark for the relevant assessment components.

We don't have any specific lesson / power point / material concerning the policing of children in care / looked-after children, but they are discussed in general throughout Specialist Child Abuse Investigation Development Programme (SCAIDP), specifically during the case study and Child Sexual Exploitation / Child Criminal Exploitation input.

7. No, GMP does not have a team/function dedicated purely to the management of missing children.

GREATER MANCHESTER POLICE

Missing Persons

Policy & Procedure

July 2025

DATE THIS VERSION OF IMPLEMENTED: 2/7/25

DATE NEXT REVIEW IS DUE: September 2025

CHIEF OFFICER SPONSOR: Assistant Chief Constable, Protecting Vulnerable People

OWNER: [redacted], Force Lead for Child Protection & Missing

AUTHOR: [redacted], Missing Person Safeguarding Manager

APPROVED BY: [redacted], Head of Public Protection

GOVERNMENT SECURITY CLASSIFICATION: Official

IS THE POLICY & PROCEDURE NEW OR REVISED: Revised

VERSION NO	DATE	SUMMARY OF CHANGES	AUTHOR(S)	PUBLISHED ON CCOs
Refer to version 3.8 for earlier version history.				
3.1	Jan 2021	Final review and consultation.	PPSCD SLT [redacted]	-
3.2	June 2021	Review.	PPSCD SLT [redacted]	-
3.3	Nov 2021	Review, final consultation including action from HMIC Regulation 28 findings.		-
3.4	Nov 2023	Minor amendments to reflect introduction of the Forcer Protocol	[redacted]	2023/45
3.5	June 2024	Minor amendments to reflect changes to APP and learning from HMIC inspections, editing and streamlining content.	[redacted]	2024/26 1 July
3.6	July 2024	Section 3.7 updated (inspector or above must authorise any change to the risk assessment).	[redacted]	2024/29 22 July
3.7	Sept 2024	Reviewed and updated to include Right Care Right Person.	[redacted]	2024/39 30 Sept
3.8	Jan 2025	Section 5.1 updated (closing codes), section 5.12 (press office) updated, section 5.15 updated – contact with BTP and Network Rail information.	[redacted]	2025/05 3 Feb
3.9	July 2025	Section 5.12 updated (missing person authorisation levels).	[redacted]	-

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1. Policy Statement

Greater Manchester Police (GMP) will investigate all reports of missing individuals based on their individual risk assessment. A case will not be closed until the individual's whereabouts and wellbeing, or otherwise, is known.

When persons are reported as missing, GMP will ensure that:

- Reports are responded to promptly, sympathetically and investigated to an appropriate level based on the circumstances.
- The needs of the missing person's family and friends are taken into account, wherever possible.
- Risk assessments are conducted to determine the level of response required.
- Any dangers posed to the wider community are considered and safeguards put in place.
- The Police National Computer (PNC) is updated within six hours of the report being taken.
- Cross border cases are dealt with in accordance with Authorised Professional Practice (APP) on cross border cases and missing persons.
- Police prevention interviews are conducted.
- Records are updated with the circumstances of the missing person's return before a case is closed.
- The UK Missing Persons Unit is notified of all outstanding missing persons.
- Dormant cases are managed by Public Protection Division (PPD).

2. Scope

This policy and procedure applies to all officers and staff involved in missing persons investigations.

3. Roles & Responsibilities

The police have a statutory duty to investigate reports of missing people, regardless of whether such reports are confirmed by an informant or not. Where circumstances suggest a person meets the definition of a missing person, a report should be generated. Our key responsibilities are to:

- Safeguard the missing person by using the full range of investigative techniques to locate them at the earliest opportunity
- Identify and, where possible, cater for the needs of the family and friends of the missing person.
- Safeguard the wider community from any dangers or risks.

3.1 Missing persons strategic lead

Provides direction to the force on missing person policy issues and local development of regional and national initiatives.

3.2 Missing person safeguarding unit (MPSU)

Missing person safeguarding officers (MPSO) operate across GMP with specific responsibility for district clusters. They focus on high and medium risk cases, providing guidance to senior investigating officers (SIO) and districts on all aspects of an investigation including repeat incident generators (individuals and locations) and a specialist knowledge bank.

MPSOs are available during office hours, with limited cover arrangements out of hours. Click here for contact details. The Missing Person Safeguarding Manager can be contacted on mobile [redacted], 07:00-15.00 hours.

The MPSO role should not be confused with responsibilities given to district officers focused on missing persons investigations.

3.3 Criminal records unit

- Create, circulate and cancel all missing persons on PNC.
- Circulate missing person information on PNC, including descriptive details, addresses, marks, scars, tattoos and any relevant warning signals.

3.4 Force contact, crime and operations (FCCO) branch

- Make careful enquiries to ensure that an incident is correctly classified as a missing person.
- Complete the child information sharing process, if applicable (Appendix G).
- Conduct an initial assessment whilst the investigating officer is enroute to the incident.
- Circulate the missing person on iOPS promptly.
- Notify a district supervisor about the missing person.
- Conduct enhanced checks, ensuring warning signals are identified and potential lines of enquiry are completed.
- Review data from Herbert or Philomena protocols (Appendix C), if appropriate, to provide staff with information about vulnerable adults and children as soon as possible.
- If the missing person is a serving member or veteran of the armed forces, inform the Force Operations Centre (FOC).
- If a missing person is known to be using or have access to a vehicle which has not been secured by police and the registration number is known[1], add the vehicle to PNC [redacted]. Do this immediately for every missing person using or with access to a vehicle.
- If the missing person has indicated suicide or has SU markers, switch the log to X1R to update [redacted].
- [redacted]

[1] Call handler set questions - Q13.
[2] The X1R log is only for missing persons at risk of suicide and should be updated as soon as possible. Note that this log should not be used for any other circulation and normal PNC policies apply.

3.5 Force operations centre

- Support high risk missing person investigations
- For a missing person who is a serving member or veteran of the armed forces, access the safe and found online database to identify if a Forcer or Herbert has been stored. Download a copy, attach to the MSP event documents page and notify the initial investigating officer.
- If there is no Forcer protocol, inform the initial investigating officer, advising them that the missing person is a serving or veteran member of the armed forces.

The FOC operates 24/7 and consists of the force duty officer, force duty supervisor, force critical incident manager and support staff. To request support, email Force Operations Centre.

3.6 District lead

Districts are responsible for missing person investigations until the individual has been located and their wellbeing or otherwise confirmed. The only exceptions to this are cases reclassified as dormant. The district lead is responsible for:

- Managing district missing from home (MFH) teams where appropriate.
- Governance and oversight of risk related to all ongoing missing persons events.
- Liaising with the force strategic lead and partner agencies.
- Ensuring compliance with policy and minimum standards of investigation (Appendix A).

3.7 District inspector

- The Bronze duty inspector owns all missing persons investigations on the district and decides if a high risk missing person should be categorised as high risk (refer to critical incident APP).
- An inspector or above must authorise any changes to the risk assessment, ensuring that a clear rationale is recorded, including information about mitigating factors resulting in a downgrade or enhanced factors resulting in an upgraded risk assessment. This information must be recorded on the MPS event log (not the action review document or ARD).
- Ensure that missing persons is a standing agenda item at the daily management meeting.
- Oversee all missing person investigations on the district, considering any critical issues, golden hour tasks and help options.
- Allocate an investigating officer to every missing person investigation and ensure that ownership is clear on the event log.
- Conduct regular reviews, assess risk levels and ensure actions are completed and recorded on the event log.
- Ensure that all relevant flags and markers are added expeditiously.
- Support staff and ensure they have time to complete thorough enquiries.
- Ensure an SIO is appointed for all high risk missing investigations.
- Review all requests for specialist support (e.g. PolSA or CyComms), use of PACE Section 17 and police protection powers where necessary, and ensure details are recorded on the event log.
- Consider need for a Gold Silver Bronze (GSB) meeting structure.
- Ensure risk has been set, CAPs created and intelligence submitted.
- Ensure that a family contact plan is agreed, considering who will be the main point of contact, preferred frequency/method of contact and level of information required. Be

mindful of disclosure under management of police information. Once agreed, record a copy of the plan on the event log.
- Update SLT, liaise with CID and specialist support teams.
- Ensure complex safeguarding teams have been consulted for any issues relating to honour based abuse, child sexual exploitation and child criminal exploitation.
- Ensure compliance with minimum standards of investigation (Appendix A), this policy and refer the investigating officer to missings persons guidance on the intranet.
- Finalise and close all missing events.

3.8 District sergeant

- Responsible for a missing person investigation once notified by FCCO.
- Take ownership of the enquiry, develop the investigation and record details on the event log.
- Consider all golden hour tasks and other help options for high risk missing cases and all other cases where appropriate.
- Allocate an investigating officer to every missing person investigation, ensuring that ownership is clear on the event log and this meets audit requirements.
- Conduct regular reviews, assess risk levels and ensure actions are completed and recorded on the event log.
- Ensure that all relevant flags and markers are added expeditiously.
- Agree a family contact plan with family members, considering who will be the main point of contact, preferred frequency/method of contact and level of information required. Be mindful of disclosure under management of police information. Once agreed, record a copy of the plan on the event log.
- Support staff and ensure they have time to complete thorough enquiries.
- Review each missing person investigation at least once during a tour of duty and escalate any concerns to district Bronze immediately.
- Confirm or amend the risk (including a rationale) on the event log.
- [redacted].
- Ensure CID reviews are conducted early, and in any event after 48 hours for high risk missings. CID will consider the need to review other cases.
- Ensure police prevention interviews have been completed and findings recorded correctly.
- Create and/or check CAP submissions for all children and vulnerable adults.
- Check intelligence submissions and flags, ensuring that any action flags or markers [redacted] are removed when no longer required.
- Finalise and close all missing events.

3.9 Investigating officer

- Take ownership of a missing person investigation, adopting an open mind and conducting enquiries fully with the aim of locating the person in a safe and timely manner.
- Conduct a formal risk assessment and update the MSP event log risk assessment tab.
- Record all actions on MSP event log.
- Review what is already known on the event log.
- Ensure that all enquiries and actions are proportionate to the risk set and are recorded on the event log in sufficient detail.

- Seek advice and support from supervisors at all times to support the investigation and any decisions (use the NDM).
- Before retiring from duty, conduct a handover and ensure all information is recorded on the event log (1-15).
- Inform CID if the missing person is high risk, or for advice.

3.10 CID

- Review current information and research conducted on the missing person and their family.
- For medium and low risk cases, complete a rationale outlining why CID review is not required on the MSP event log.
- Check the following has been undertaken:
  - if high risk, SIO appointed
  - correct risk setting. Consider HBA, history of mental illness, effects of not taking medication, recent suicide attempts/ideation, stalking, modern day slavery victim
  - 1-15 update completed by the initial investigating officer
  - golden hour tasks and any reviews
  - house to house enquiries
  - CCTV opportunities progressed
  - [redacted]
  - financial enquiries e.g. transactions identified and investigated
  - family contact plan in place
  - missing person family tree
  - whether anyone has telephoned the missing person, including phone billing, and checked their social media accounts?
- Research history of contact with GMP. Consider any recent domestic abuse, care plans, domestic abuse events (DAB), intelligence, complex safeguarding concerns, stalking or previous missing episodes. If applicable, contact colleagues with prior involvement.
- Other CID review considerations:
  - is information missing from supervisory reviews?
  - have tasks set on the task page been completed?
  - does the event log summary reflect tasks set and completed?
  - have assumptions been made leading to investigatory bias? (e.g. more emphasis being placed on a missing person reporting that they needed time away rather than referring to low mood, or any note or personal effects left for family and friends)
  - **searches:** is there a detailed account of searches conducted and are these recorded on the searches page? Have searches been overlooked or are inadequate? Are searches detailed on the searches page? review search parameters based on new information
  - if the missing person has access to a vehicle, [redacted]?
  - who was the last person to see the missing person, and what hat information can they provide? Do we have proof of life?
  - is the missing person on police bail or under investigation for offence which could heighten suicide risk (indecent images of children and sexual offences)
  - is the missing person known to other services such as probation, social care or mental health?
  - has their place of work been searched and colleagues spoken to?

4. Terms and Definitions

4.1 Missing person

'Anyone whose whereabouts cannot be established will be considered as missing until located and their wellbeing or otherwise established' (College of Policing).

This is a broad definition, intended to ensure that all cases of people suspected of being missing who are reported to the police are considered for a policing response.

If a person is not where they should be this does not necessarily mean that they are missing. If it is believed that a person is at a known address or location, the informant should check before contacting the police. Authorised Professional Practice (APP) on missing persons states that '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'.

A person will not therefore be recorded as missing by GMP until the reporting person (or another on their behalf) has undertaken reasonable actions to establish the whereabouts of the absent person unless there is a real and immediate risk of serious harm that justifies immediate police intervention.

The police have a duty to investigate reports of missing persons. However, this does not absolve parents, families, local authorities with parental responsibility, care providers and/or guardians and health professionals from their overall responsibility to the individual concerned. It is for the police to decide whether the individual should be recorded and managed as a missing person based on the circumstances presented.

The police can request those wishing to report a missing person, both professionals and members of the public, to undertake reasonable actions to establish the person's whereabouts before accepting a report. The definition of reasonable actions depends on the individual circumstances and is not for the police to identify otherwise they could be considered to be taking ownership of the matter. However, there needs to be a degree of flexibility as one enquiry may identify an associated enquiry which may also be reasonable for the informant to carry out.

Expecting reasonable enquiries from the informant before contacting the police (except in high risk cases) can assist in ensuring that they continue to work with the police in any subsequent investigation relating to the missing person.

4.2 Wanted person

Sometimes people reported as missing may also be wanted in relation to their suspected involvement in a criminal investigation, outstanding warrant or having absconded from lawful custody or entered the country without appropriate authority. Consider cases on an individual basis and respond appropriately. The guiding principle is to adopt an approach that will bring both matters to the safest conclusion.

Avoid duplicating the investigation and record keeping where possible. The investigating or supervisory officer will need to decide on the most appropriate response based on an assessment of risk and assessment and the National Decision Model (NDM).

Missing person reports must not be closed when an individual is identified as both missing and wanted.

Refer to section 5.3 for further information.

4.3 Concern or fear for welfare

On occasions, an incident will be categorised as concern for welfare but subsequently becomes a missing person. In these circumstances, follow the process for dealing with a missing person.

Do not use the term 'concern for welfare' in the context of missing persons as this can cause confusion and may leave a vulnerable missing person at risk of serious harm.

4.4 Risk

For further information, refer to APP risk principles.

- The FCCO will make an initial assessment of risk. The initial investigating officer should complete a full assessment.
- However, this does not prevent the risk level being set at the outset when it is clear that an individual is high risk.
- In all cases, review the risk assessment regularly as circumstances can change the initial judgement. Any change to a risk setting must be authorised by a supervisor, with the rationale recorded on the MSP event log.

HIGH RISK Risk of serious harm to the subject or the public is assessed as very likely **SERIOUS HARM** A risk which is life threatening and/or traumatic, and from which recovery, whether physical or psychological, can be expected to be difficult or impossible	• Default risk setting for: - all children aged 13 or under - all children identified as being at risk of child sexual exploitation/child criminal exploitation - all Operation Messina missing nominals • Risk factors are likely to be significant • Immediate action is required, including senior officer involvement, press or media liaison and close contact with outside agencies • Appoint an SIO and consider MPSO support • Consider all golden hour tasks and other 'help' options immediately • Review the case regularly • Note that there is no time period relating to the definition of serious harm
MEDIUM RISK Risk of harm to the subject or the public is assessed as likely but not serious	• Consider and prioritise all missing person help options including golden hour tasks • Take positive action to trace the missing person and to assist/support the informant (but not to the exclusion of all other tasks) • (Supervisor) review the case and risk assessments regularly as time passes

LOW RISK Risk of harm to the subject or the public is assessed as possible but minimal	• Children under 18 should not be categorised as low risk • Some risk factors may exist, but taken in consideration with other factors an adverse outcome is unlikely • Record and circulate (nationally and locally) details of the missing person and conduct those enquiries most likely to resolve the case. Ask friends and family to assist with enquiries as specified in the family contact plan • (Supervisor) review the case periodically • Notify the UK Missing Person Unit. The longer the case remains unresolved, the more likely that the risk assessment will need to be reviewed, particularly in the absence of information which suggests the missing person is safe and well
NO APPARENT RISK A person not at a place they are expected or required to be, and there is no apparent risk.	• For dormant cases only and should not be used for investigations owned or managed on districts. This category is not for day to day use • Refer to section 5.8 for information on dormant cases

Linked risk assessments
If a child is reported missing with a parent/carer or other associated person who is also categorised as missing, risk assess each subject. The higher of the two takes precedence and the associated person's risk will be categorised at the same risk. For example:

- If a medium risk child is missing in the company of their parent, who would otherwise be considered as low risk, the child's medium risk status will be given to the parent, thus both parties will be considered medium risk.
- For groups of more than two missing persons (such as a family) the highest identified risk category amongst the family members would be used for the whole group. This ensures that a heightened risk nominal within a group is not overlooked by concentrating on a lower risk nominal, such as a parent with child.

Skeleton care action plan
Create a CAP with minimum information.

4.5 Critical incidents

Any incident where the police response is likely to have a significant impact on the confidence of the subject, their family and/or the community should be designated as a critical incident. For further information refer to APP critical incident management.

If, during the investigation, it develops into a major enquiry, consider transferring the incident to the relevant case management system (e.g. HOLMES). Refer to APP major investigation and public protection.

4.6 Acronyms

ANPR	Automated Number Plate Recognition camera system
APP	Authorised Professional Practice
BTP	British Transport Police
CAP	Care action plan
FCCO	Force Contact Crime Operations Branch
FOC	Force Operations Centre

HBA	Honour based abuse
iOPS	Integrated Operational Policing System
MASH	Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub
MFH	Missing from home
MPSO	Missing person safeguarding officer
MPSU	Missing Person Safeguarding Unit
MSP	iOPS abbreviation for missing person event
PNC	Police National Computer
PoISA	Police search advisor
PPGU	Public Protection Governance Unit
PPSCD	Public Protection and Serious Crime Division
PPP	Police Protection Powers
PW	PoliceWorks (iOPS)
SIO	Senior investigating officer
SLT	Senior leadership team
UKMPU	United Kingdom Missing Person Unit
VSU	Vulnerability Support Unit

5. Procedure

For detailed help and guidance on all aspects of missing person enquiries, refer to the child protection hub.

This includes information on golden hour tasks; specialist advice including accessing specialist support; information on missing persons profiles (e.g. asylum seekers, children, people with learning and mental health disabilities); and further enquiries (e.g. medical services, work and school, press and publicity etc.)

For information and guidance on using communications data in a missing person investigation, click here.

5.1 Initial call

Refer to the missing person flowcharts for adults (Appendix E) and children (Appendix F).

Conduct an initial THRIVE assessment to grade the call. Ask the following questions[3]:

1.	Surname, forename and gender of the individual
2.	Date of birth
3.	Have they been missing before?
4.	Physical description, including clothing
5.	Time/place last seen and by whom
6.	a) what is your specific concern? e.g. victim of abuse, honour based abuse, child sexual exploitation, criminal exploitation or a serious ongoing crime, medical conditions, any medication required b) if the missing person is a child/young person, has a Philomena protocol been completed? If yes, email the form to [redacted] including the incident number in the subject title c) does the missing person suffer from dementia? If yes, has a Herbert protocol been completed?

[3] Source: Sherlock

7.	Is there a relevant order, care plan or legal status for the missing person? If the person is on a care plan, is the informant calling within the timeframe specified on the plan?
8.	Circumstances leading up to reporting the missing person
9.	Is the missing person with someone else, and has that person been reported missing as well?
10.	Risk of self-harm or suicide? If yes, how recent/serious was this? Have/are they receiving any medical treatment, counselling or been part of a programme?
11.	Is there any suspicion that this person may have been radicalised?
12.	What enquiries has the parent/carer made? Has the informant contacted anyone who is likely to be with the missing person? If not, ask them to do this and call back with the results using the incident given at the end of the call
13.	Is the missing person a serving member or veteran of the armed forces (army, navy, air force)? If yes, inform FOC
14.	Any other information? Are next of kin details available? Record any mobile telephone numbers and vehicle registration numbers for the missing person

For people regularly reported missing, each individual report should be considered and assessed for risk:

- Low and medium risk missing incidents on ControlWorks can be closed when the iOPS MSP event action board is created.
- High risk missing incidents on ControlWorks can be kept open at the request of the SIO whilst initial enquires are completed.

iOPS MSP event must be the main source of information about the investigation.

If the missing person is identified by the FCCO as a serving member or veteran of the armed forces, the FOC must check the safe and found online database to identify if a Forcer or Herbert has been stored; download a copy, attach to the MSP event documents page and notify the initial investigating officer. If there is no Forcer protocol, inform the initial investigating officer, advising them that the missing person is a serving or veteran member of the armed forces.

Use code G60 missing persons – do not use any other closing codes. However, qualifying codes indicating levels of vulnerability, such as L16 (youth related), G17 (mental health) and G77 (child sexual exploitation) must be added.

5.2 Reports of missing children

When a child is reported missing, the incident log must remain open until the child is found or a missing person report is taken.

In some cases it may be appropriate for the police response to be delayed to allow the caller to complete reasonable enquiries to locate the child or to allow the child a reasonable opportunity to return. However, the incident log should be delayed or closed to ensure that a review takes place after an appropriate period.

If the child is not located by the caller and does not return within a reasonable time as anticipated, then a missing person report should be taken.

At point of initial call, the call handler will agree a suitable review time with the caller, considering the circumstances of the incident and the reasonable enquiries required of the caller.

The caller should be instructed to call back:

- if the child is located or returns
- once their enquires have been completed

- if they believe that the risk has changed or increased
- at or before the agreed review time.

The maximum overall time period for any delayed police response is eight hours. However, a review must be conducted within four hours.

If the caller fails to re-contact police as agreed, the incident must be reviewed by a supervisor either at the time when they were due to call back or no longer than four hours after the previous contact. Refer to missing child flowchart (Appendix F).

Report made by a statutory partner

If a report of a missing child is made by a statutory partner (Appendix G) resulting in a delayed police response and the child is subsequently found or returns before a police officer is deployed, then the responsibility for any safeguarding measures (including but not limited to appropriate referrals) sits with the reporting agency. Informing GMP of the concern does not absolve the originating agency of their safeguarding responsibilities.

Report made by non-statutory partner or member of public

When a child is reported missing by a non-statutory partner or member of the public resulting in a delayed police response and the child is subsequently found or returns before a police officer is deployed, all information relating to the incident must be sent to the district multi agency safeguarding hub (MASH).

MASH officers will review the information and complete a skeleton CAP ensuring that all relevant information is attached and linked to the incident. The MASH must ensure that the skeleton CAP created by FCCO is complete, with all relevant information and is linked to the incident. The CAP will be shared with the local authority to ensure they are aware of any concerns.

Working Together to Safeguard Children provides the statutory basis to share or request information for safeguarding children. Where the purpose is for the identification of need, assessment and service provision to keep children safe and enable them to achieve the best outcomes, this is not limited to those in need as defined under the Children Act 2004 Section 17 and at risk of significant harm under the Children Act 1989 Section 47 but permits the sharing of information about a child and family for the purposes of assessing their needs, including early identification or help. Refer to Appendix G (missing child: information sharing).

5.3 Initial incident management and investigation (once accepted as a missing person by GMP)

Initial investigating officer

- Take time to listen to the concerns of the informant, family and friends. Do not make assumptions and do not take anything for granted (when is it a repeat missing?)
- Search the last seen location including place of residence, outbuildings and the local area to locate the missing person or to obtain further information to help locate them.
- Establish the circumstances surrounding the missing episode.
- Conduct a formal risk assessment and grading. Discuss and agree the risk category with a supervisor before recording on MSP event and amend the initial FCCO risk if required.
- Check with the informant if any Herbert, Philomena or Forcer protocols are available.
- If notified by the FOC that the subject is a member or veteran of the armed forces, but no Forcer protocol exists, ask appropriate questions (e.g. details of military service, membership of any veterans' groups).

- Obtain identification sources e.g. photographs, DNA, fingerprints.
- Conduct initial actions, subject to the risk level, including:
  - check the person's home address and/or any other locations including outbuildings, attics/cellars, land, gardens etc.
  - try to contact the individual directly
  - try to contact the individual's family and friends
  - search the local area
  - check any intelligence for the individual
  - identify any medication taken by the individual and consequences of not doing so
  - check if they are known to partner services, such as mental health
  - check CCTV for possible sightings
- Updated the missing record for completed and outstanding enquiries.
- Consider the missing person's social media footprint.
- Agree a family contact plan (manage expectations and avoid over-promising)
- Record details of any third party parent/carer/professional reports of crime relating to the missing person.
- Refer to the aide memoire (Appendix A).
- Ensure that the event log/ARD is updated with the 1-15 information below before going off duty.

MSP event log - updates required	
1.	Missing person details - correct name, date of birth, ethnicity, home address, circumstances of the disappearance
2.	details of searches and house to house enquiries. Complete thorough physical searches of home address/place last seen, outbuildings, garages, outside areas and immediate local area
3.	Informants - details including name, Relationship to missing person, contact details, concerns, actions completed
4.	Family contact plan - primary point of contact, means of communication, frequency of contact (all details to be agreed with family/informant)
5.	Risk assessment and rationale
6.	Background research (hospitals, custody, prison)
7.	Mobile Phone - number/network, rapid text sent, Text Safe considered (contact MPSO)
8.	Financial details - cash on hand/bank accounts etc.
9.	Access to vehicles – make, model, colour, ANPR/ACT markers
10.	Social media footprint
11.	Known medical conditions causing concern and effect of lack of medication
12.	Details of associations and places of interest
13.	Actions undertaken and completed
14.	Outstanding actions yet to be tasked or completed
15.	Any other relevant concerns, issues, details

Reviews and other requirements

- District supervisor: must review the MSP event at least once during their tour of duty and where necessary thereafter.
- CRU: must submit a skeleton missing report on PNC within one hour.
- Inform CID of all high risk missing persons immediately and identify any concerns for medium risk missing persons as identified at daily management meetings.
- Chief inspector: review after 72 hours.
- Superintendent: review after seven days (SI review no. 1).
- MPSO: consider notifying the UK Missing Persons Unit (UKMPU) after seven days.
- Chief inspector: review after 28 days, and every 28 days thereafter.

- Superintendent: to review after six months (SI review no. 2)
- After six months and all lines of enquiry completed, consider for dormant status.

In exceptional circumstances, when a decision has been made by the district SLT to manage the investigation on a separate case management system (e.g. HOLMES), continue adding regular and detailed updates to the MPS event log to assist staff who do not have access the case management system.

None-standard reports of missing persons

- Do not complete initial reports over the telephone at a public enquiry counter or by police community support officers (PCSO) on patrol.
- However, if initial contact takes places at a public enquiry counter, inform FCCO so that an incident can be created, including a MSP event log.
- A police officer must attend and search the address or last known location to identify any risks and make a formal risk assessment (PACE Section 17 powers of entry).
- For out of force missing person reports, contact the relevant force to conduct these enquiries.
- Update the MSP event based on all information received (do not rely solely on any initial information provided at a public enquiry counter).

Other considerations

- Missing children who may be at risk of child sexual exploitation and child criminal exploitation. Refer to the Child Protection Policy and Procedure.
- Identifying if a missing person is a victim or offender of domestic abuse or child abuse may have an important influence on the missing person investigation. Refer to the Domestic Abuse Policy and Procedure.
- Honour Based Abuse Policy and Procedure (section 5.5. focuses specifically on missing people).

5.4 Missing or wanted category

People reported as missing may also be wanted due to their suspected involvement in a criminal investigation; an outstanding warrant issued by a court; having absconded from lawful custody, care or being absent without leave (AWOL), or having entered the country without appropriate authority.

Consider on a case-by-case basis: for example, if a person is wanted for a minor matter but the risk assessment indicates high risk, it may be appropriate to deal with the case as a missing person's enquiry. Similarly, a low risk missing person wanted for murder may be more appropriately dealt with as a wanted person.

The guiding principle is to adopt an approach that will bring both matters to the safest, most efficient conclusion.

Avoid duplication in the investigation and record keeping. The investigating or supervisory officer will need to decide which response and investigative approach to take based on a risk assessment (consider the NDM).

Risk assessment – wanted individuals

- Consider risk, threat and vulnerability of the missing person and the public, alongside any requirement to locate and detain them for criminal justice reasons.
- Consider the views of the reporting person and discuss with them the rationale for treating the person as missing.
- Be mindful of the risks associated with children and vulnerable adults.
- For wanted individuals, a missing person report must be created and be endorsed by a senior officer to indicate that the missing person investigation is inactive until such time as the person is located or wanted or is no longer consider wanted. At this point, the missing person investigation must be reviewed and endorsed to include the following:
  - rationale for keeping the missing investigation open but inactive (consider NDM)
  - rationale for the continued ownership of both investigations
  - clear consideration and communication between officers managing the 'wanted' and 'missing investigations.
- Ensure there is a contact agreement between teams managing the wanted and missing investigations to ensure that the informant or the missing person's family receive appropriate and timely updates.

Missing person reports must not be closed when an individual is identified as both missing and wanted.

5.5 Individual located

- The person or organisation who reported the individual as missing, or has responsibility for them, must organise their transportation to the appropriate setting (e.g. educational, medical or care setting).
- Apart from instances where the police have an identified power and/or legal obligation, they can seek assistance to return a missing person to a specific location in exceptional circumstances only.
- If the subject is located as a result of early enquiries by the informant, they should not be reported as missing and all efforts should be made by the original informant to return the person to the appropriate setting as soon as possible.
- If the subject is reluctant to return to a particular location, ownership remains with the informant or the most appropriate organisation to return the subject.
- There are very few scenarios in which a legal obligation exists for police to return a subject to the place from which they were reported missing and it may be appropriate for a subject to be left at the location where they were found once a safe and well interview has been completed.
- Note that the police do not have any power to assist the informant and must not be used simply to return a missing person. A subject must not be reported as missing simply to engage the support of the police.
- A lack of resources or capacity to collect or return a missing person should not become a police matter. The informant or original agency remains responsible.
- Police may decide to support a missing person's return, depending on the individual circumstances.
- Where the located individual is subject to the Mental Health Act or Mental Capacity Act, undertake transportation in accordance with force policy. The presence of police officers is not always appropriate or suitable, and the preferred option for transportation is an ambulance.

For further information, refer to the North West regional Mental Capacity Act joint protocol and regional policy and guidance for transporting mental health patients.

For AWOL patients, refer to the Mental Ill Health, Mental Incapacity & Learning Difficulties Policy and Procedure.

5.6 Police prevention interviews

A missing person investigation will not be closed until the location and/or wellbeing of the missing person are known.

Refer to the process map on police prevention interviews and report closure procedures (Appendix B).

Police prevention interviews, formally known as safe and well checks, must be conducted for all missing people, including:

- All missing adults (other than adults returning to a mental health establishment and NHS staff do not need police attendance).
- All children formally reported as missing. There are established types of missing children, included those categorised as missing from a parental/family home, social care setting/unit, hospital, foster placement, educational setting and any other place of safety for the child.
- Police prevention interviews must be completed in person, unless there are exceptional circumstances, and not by telephone or video link unless the missing person is overseas (and confirmation of their identity is provided).
- Examples of exceptional circumstances include a mental health patient returning to the ward and professionals have verified the person's health and wellbeing; missing person contact overseas, and a missing person located by another force and that force has conducted a police prevention interview.

Conducting a police prevention interview

- A police officer must conduct a police prevention interview within 24 hours of being informed that the missing person has returned or their location has been identified. Consider timing, especially for children.
- Conduct the police prevention interview in person, considering the location and discussion of any sensitive issues (such as forced marriage or honour based abuse (HBA)[4]), person(s) present and check that the missing person is comfortable with these arrangements.
- Share the result of the police prevention interview with parents/staff unless disclosure would put the child or another at risk.
- Update the incident log, MSP event and iOPS subject located tab with details of the police prevention interview before retiring from duty.
- It the missing person is uncooperative and refuses to engage, note their behaviour and record on the subject located tab under 'OIC observations'.
- If a police prevention interview cannot be conducted, record the rationale on the MSP event log (subject located tab) including details of the supervisor authorising non completion.
- Officers should be aware that until the MSP Event (subject located tab) is completed in full, all tasks have been closed, and the event closed by district supervision, the individual will remain categorised and circulated as missing on the PNC.
- Be aware that any information recorded in the OICs observations field may be shared with the local authority and children's social care via the 501 daily local authority report as part of statutory obligation to share data on missing children.

[4] Honour based abuse (HBA) is the umbrella term for a number of practices including forced marriage, female genital mutilation, hymenoplasty, virginity testing and many more types of abuse

- Record a crime disclosed or identified by the missing person.
- When recording details of the police prevention interview on police systems, use appropriate language (i.e. avoid victim blaming).
- Submit a care plan for the following:
  - all missing children
  - all adults with vulnerabilities (e.g. abuse, mental health issues, self-harm, suicide ideation, recent suicide attempts, at risk of HBA)
  - all armed forces veterans via the Veterans' Gateway.
- Submit any intelligence, where appropriate.

Supervisor responsibilities

- Check the following actions have been completed before finalising and closing all missing events:
  - subject located tab has been completed in sufficient detail
  - CRU have received an automated action to cancel the PNC wanted/missing report
  - flags, markers and [redacted] are no longer required
  - intelligence has been submitted and a CAP completed
  - any crime disclosed or identified to or by the missing person has been recorded.
- Mark all uncompleted tasks as completed or not required due to the missing person being located.

5.7 Case closure

Reports will not be closed until the missing person's whereabouts and wellbeing, or otherwise, is known and confirmed.

In circumstances where an individual has been reported missing by another agency in relation to their immigration status, it is unlikely that a PNC entry will be made by Immigration Services. Where such entries are in place, it is unlikely that active investigations by other agencies will be conducted. Once all possible missing person enquiries have been exhausted, early applications for dormant status may be considered.

5.8 Cross border procedures (district and police force)

- It is essential that district or force receiving the report creates a missing person incident.
- Consider where the majority of enquiries are likely to be conducted and discuss any issues regarding ownership of the incident with a district (Bronze) inspector. If an agreement cannot be reached, refer to the district SLT, PPD or the force duty officer.
- The missing person's welfare is the primary concern and a missing person report must be taken. Once the report has been created, ownership and transfer can be discussed if necessary.
- For information about transferring cases, refer to the child protection hub and supervisors aide memoire (Appendix A).

Missing outside GMP

A missing person report must not be declined simply because the person is not a Greater Manchester resident. The missing person report should be treated like any other until the missing person has been circulated on PNC. At this stage, transfer of the case to another force can be negotiated by an inspector or above.

5.9 Dormant cases

Dormant cases are those where there has been a full investigation but the location and wellbeing of the person has not been established. Cases remain open but are categorised as dormant and should be reviewed regularly by district SLTs.

Dormancy criteria

- Cases that are at least six months old and have been reviewed at least twice by a superintendent, have no outstanding enquiries and are not subject to review by another agency or GMP unit (such as major investigation team) can be made 'dormant' and ownership transferred to the missing person section.
- The informant or next of kin (NOK) must be notified by the authorising Superintendent.
- PPD may refuse to accept cases which do not meet the dormant criteria.

Dormant updates and reviews

- Officers with new information about a dormant case must inform their local MPSO or missing persons section and update the MSP event log or ARD.
- As a result of this new information, PPD may transfer ownership back to the original owner or, as is more likely, sent a request to the chief inspector operations for further enquires.
- District superintendents must review all dormant cases on their district once a year. An MPSO will notify districts when annual reviews are required.
- Dormant cases relating to immigration cases and individuals known to be overseas will not be fully reviewed but the MPSU will check PNC.
- Dormant cases previously investigated by the major incident team/cold case review will be referred back to those units for annual review.

Early dormancy

- When details of a missing person have been provided to GMP from another statutory body, such as immigration via an IS294 (Refused Immigration Status in the UK) or from social services and relate to a person who is subject to immigration rulings, early consideration of dormant status is recommended.
- Missing persons who are known to be outside the UK may be granted early dormant status if all necessary actions have been completed and, where appropriate, Interpol notices have been served/issued.
- Similarly, foreign nationals who have been reported missing after being in the UK for a short period of time may be considered for early dormant status, if they are not subject to immigration investigations or likely to be the subject of human trafficking investigations
- For enquiries about dormant cases, contact the MPSU.

5.10 Financial investigations and data protection

- If a financial investigation is required as part of a missing person investigation, contact the district financial advisor.
- To request information from the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), use DWP Form 1000. The form must be authorised by an inspector or above, submitted to the DWP mailbox for checking and then final submission to FIB.
- Use Force Form 819B to request disclosure of personal information. Refer to the form notes for information on completion and submission.

5.11 Searches

Police search advisor (PolSA) or search manager (missing persons)

- District supervisors should consider making contacting the duty PolSA or search manager at an early stage of the enquiry as they may be able to help focus the search area.
- Search managers provide 24 hour cover across the force. Contact through the force duty officer.
- For detailed information and guidance, refer to practice advice on search management and procedures.
- PolSA/search managers must ensure that any guidance or advice they provide is recorded on the ControlWorks or PoliceWorks log so that it is accessible to anyone viewing the missing person report. If IT access is unavailable, record the information in an officer's day book and email a copy to a supervisor for inclusion on the MSP event log.

Entry and search without a warrant

- Consider and use powers under PACE Section 17 (1) (e). For further information, refer o APP search powers.
- The legislation states that a constable may enter and search any premises for the purposes of saving life or limb or preventing serious damage to property. This power is relevant in missing persons enquiries where officers are required to check properties as part of their enquiries.
- It has been noted in coronial investigations involving missing persons that opportunities to use Section 17 were missed.
- When deciding whether to use these powers, consider the circumstances and NDM.

Missing person search

- Conduct searches in accordance with guidance and principles set out in mandatory training.
- Consider initial searches from the location where the missing person was last seen, depending on circumstances and information known. Subsequent searches will be undertaken at the discretion of the district supervisor and/or PolSA guidance.
- Record all decisions relating to searches and outcomes on the MSP event log/ADR.

Underwater search and rescue and mountain rescue search teams

The North West Police Underwater Search & Marine Unit and the North West Mountain Rescue Team, alongside other search teams, can provide additional resources and support. Seek assistance through the force duty officer.

PolSA and a missing persons search manager must be consulted before any external search experts are deployed.

5.12 Press and publicity

- If publicity is being considered to trace a missing person, complete a high risk missing appeal form (Appendix H). Email the form and a high resolution image of the missing person to the media office. For further information, contact the press office on extension [redacted].
- The press office only deal with high risk missing persons. Always consider if a media appeal is appropriate. An appeal is generally used after initial enquiries have been unsuccessful or in high risk cases such as a very young child.

- Media office opening hours: 06:30-19:00 Monday to Friday, 08:00-16:00 Saturday and Sunday. Out of hours, contact the force duty officer who will provide contact details for the on call duty press officer.
- Provide the following information about the missing person:
  - name, age and gender identity (if known)
  - when (date and time) they were reported missing and when they were last seen (this is important if these dates/times are different)
  - location where they were last seen (i.e. street or premises) – consider whether giving exact details would increase vulnerability and provide a general area if there are concerns
  - appearance, including clothing worn when they went missing if known
  - police log number and direct contact telephone number for people to contact with information (i.e. not 101).
- Note that only the first name(s) will be used in an appeal. Surname/family names will not usually be included in accordance with national guidance to protect their privacy. Any decision to include a surname should be considered on a case by case basis.

Reappeals

- A reappeal will be considered if new information comes to light such as a sighting, clothing or CCTV image. If someone has been missing for a long time, a reappeal may be appropriate even without new information.
- A reappeal may involve sharing information more widely, such as beyond local channels, to reach a larger audience.
- The media office will provide advice on whether or not a reappeal is appropriate. If the officer in the case decides to issue an appeal against press office advice, this decision should be recorded.
- For further information, refer to College of Policing media guidance.

Missing person appeals authorisation levels

Missing person	Authorisation
child under 10	Superintendent and notify duty gold of any press release
child aged 10-15	superintendent
child 16-17	chief inspector
child at risk of CCE/CCE	superintendent
no next of kin or equivalent adult available	district supervisor or senior investigating officer (record on MSP action log)
significant welfare concerns	inspector
any other appeal where the missing person is an adult and there are no known mitigating factors	any – usually the person leading the search investigation or a member of their team

Wanted and missing

- When someone is recorded as wanted and is also missing, consider each element separately and adopt an approach which will bring both matters to a safe conclusion.
- Typically, when someone is wanted for a crime and is also reported missing, wanted status takes priority. The media office may recommend a wanted appeal if the person poses a risk to the public.
- However, if the missing risk assessment is high risk (such as the presence of self-harm markers) and the wanted crime is for a minor ,matter without any significant public risk, then a missing appeal may be appropriate.

- For children under 18, a missing appeal is most appropriate. However, this would not apply if the child is wanted for rape or murder.
- An inspector must decide which appeal is most appropriate in wanted and missing cases. Record all decisions on the action log.

Photos
- Provide a high quality image which reflects the person's current appearance and age.
- Do not use images taken from phone screens or images with high filtering (such as snapchat) .
- A custody photograph or other image held on GMP systems must only be used in exceptional circumstances (appeals using custody photos are less effective).

5.13 Missing people and links to terrorism

[redacted]

5.14 Missing people involved in mass disasters

- The recognition of the right of individuals to retain their identity after death is described in INTERPOL Resolution AGN/65/Res13 (1996). For further information, refer to APP disaster victim identification.
- In England, the Coroner has overall responsibility for identification of the deceased following a disaster. The individual dealing with the case must be consulted throughout the identification process.
- Where there is difficulty in identifying large numbers of people in a disaster, an identification commission under the chair of the coroner will be established.
- A senior detective will be nominated to deal with all aspects of the identification. PPD may assist in the process of identifying individuals reported missing as a direct result of a disaster.

5.15 British Transport Police and Network Rail

British Transport Police

- British Transport Police (BTP) undertakes a valuable role in supporting some investigations. Although responsibility for missing persons investigations sits with the relevant police force, notify BTP if:
  - there is **specific** information that the missing person is likely to visit or use the railway network (specific information refers to locations or times so that police resources can be deployed)
  - there is a risk of real and significant harm to the missing person or a threat to life **and** they are on, going to visit, or near to the railway system.
  - BTP has placed a suicide related information marker on PNC
  - there is a risk of suicide (particularly if the missing person lives, visits or was last seen near a railway line)
- Engage with BTP as part of the investigation strategy, including lines of enquiry and search strategy. Where there is risk of suicide or other serious harm is likely, contact BTP immediately for intelligence checks, CCTV, ticketing enquiries and other railway related matters.

- FCCO or a district supervisor must contact BTP via the control room, [redacted].
- On receipt of the initial report, BTP will assess the case, fast track any actions and make arrangement to liaise directly with the force and officers managing the investigation.

Location and return of a missing person by BTP

- A BTP officer will engage with the missing person, in a police prevention interview format, to establish their wellbeing and any further action required.
- BTP will check with the police force responsible whether the missing person can be returned safely to their home address and any mitigations necessary to reduce risk.
- The investigating police force retains responsibility for the police prevention interview and will arrange completion once the missing person has returned to their home address unless it is impracticable to do so, or it has been agreed that BTP to return the person.

Network Rail

- Network Rail is responsible for the railway infrastructure in England, Scotland and Wales.
- Where there is information which suggests that a missing person may be on or near to railway infrastructure and their presence may pose a danger to life or a risk of imminent injury, contact the Network Rail Route Control Manager immediately, [redacted]. Do this before contacting BTP.
- Share all available information so that the can assess the situation and decide on the most appropriate safety measures required (this includes caution, stop, switching off the electricity supply). Update them of any change in circumstances.
- Continue with the missing person investigation, which may include a search of the railway infrastructure with or without assistance from BTP.
- If the missing person is safely located or otherwise, and safety measures are no longer required, contact Network Rail to update them.
- For further information, refer to rail incidents guidance (Appendix I).

5.16 Repeat missing from care

Many children and young people who regularly go missing are considered by some to be ‘streetwise’ and able to look after themselves; in fact, these children are even more likely to be exposed to danger, having been abused, neglected or rejected by their families in many cases. This can put them at risk of further behaviours, such as substance misuse, committing crime and being exploited by adults.

Children who go missing repeatedly, whether from home or care, **must not** automatically be considered to be at reduced risk.

Strategy meetings

Ongoing investigations

- When an ongoing missing person investigation reaches a time related threshold for a strategy meeting with children's social care (i.e. over 72 hours), the officer with responsibility for the investigation should attend.
- Strategy meetings can take place before the 72 hour threshold, depending on risk and vulnerability factors.

- If the missing person is known to a specialist team such as the child protection investigation unit (CPIU) or complex safeguarding team (CST, they may take ownership and attend.
- If the missing person lives in a children's home, an [redacted] trained officer may be best placed to attend.
- For high risk individuals, a MPSO may also attend.

Closed investigations

- If a child is missing three or more times in a 28-day period, or is missing for more than 72 hours, a strategy meeting must be called.
- The meeting aims to identify factors which need addressing alongside developing a joint action plan (or reviewing an existing plan) and identifying any supports for additional support.
- A social care team manager will chair the meeting, with representatives from all agencies involved with the child attending.
- GMP attendance will be reviewed on a case by cases basis, depending on the concerns raised. Where possible, the district will send a representative from a neighbourhood team ([redacted]) or specialist team (CPIU or CST).
- Any information must be shared via secure email or telephone.

5.17 Absconders

A person can only be described as an absconder from care or a mental health unit or psychiatric hospital if a court has made an order compelling them to stay at the home or hospital. There is no power to arrest a person who absconds from a mental health unit or psychiatric hospital unless they are compelled to reside there by a court order.

The expiry date of the court or hospital order must be added to the MSP event log/ARD. If the date is not shown or is not known at the time of circulation, CRU Data will only circulate the person as missing to prevent an unlawful arrest.

5.18 Committed to care or hospital

Care

When a child or young person is remanded or committed by a court to the care of the local authority, having been charged or convicted of an offence, there is a power of arrest if they go missing under the Children and Young Persons Act 1969 Section 32 (1A, 1B).

The child or young person must be taken to a place of safety, local authority accommodation, or a place chosen by the local authority.

There is a power of entry to arrest under PACE Section 17 (1) (ca).

Where a child is in care, subject of an emergency protection order, or in police protection, a person is guilty of an offence if knowingly and without lawful authority or reasonable excuse they take the child away from the responsible person; keep such a child away from the responsible person; or induce, assist or incite such a child to run away from the responsible person (Children Act 1989 Section 49).

Hospital

Adults committed to hospital under the Mental Health Act must be returned to the location from which they are reported missing contrary the provisions of the Act under which they

have been committed. For further information, refer to the Mental Ill Health, Mental Incapacity & Learning Difficulties Policy and Procedure.

5.19 Walkouts from healthcare establishments

'Walkout from Healthcare' refers to adults who walk out of acute hospitals, hospital emergency departments, GP surgeries, medical clinics and mental health establishments, as well as any NHS facility where a patient may have attended for treatment, medical or psychological.

Refer to the Right Care, Right Person Policy and Procedure for further information about walkouts from healthcare.

5.20 Police protection powers

- When a child or young person is in the care of the local authority, whether voluntary or under a care order, there is no power to arrest the child or young person if they are absent from care.
- If an officer has reasonable cause to believe that a child would otherwise be likely to suffer significant harm, they may take the child into police protection (Children Act Section 46).
- Police protection powers (PPPs) have a time limitation (72 hours). Therefore, give early consideration to actions required when emergency protection ends, such as Emergency Protection Orders or other measures available to the local authority and children's social care (e.g. recovery orders).
- Create a CAP for every PPP incident. When police have exercised their powers for missing children under Section 46, this should prompt a strategy discussion to consider risks and take action to mitigate the risk of repeat missing incidents.
- When applying for a PPP, consider whether any other children at the addresses, or involved in the circumstances of the case, need similar protection.

5.21 Corporate responsibilities for care and health professionals

When an individual is missing from a care (e.g. care home) or health (e.g. mental health unit) establishment, professionals at these establishments have a duty of care to their residents. There is a reasonable expectation that they will complete a number of actions before reporting the missing individual to the police. This includes:

- Attempting to contact the individual directly to confirm their location and wellbeing.
- Attempting to contact the individual's family and friends to find the individual.
- Searching the premises (e.g. other bedrooms/wards etc.) and any outbuildings, land, gardens etc.
- Searching the local area.
- Checking the individual's care plan to confirm when the individual is classified as 'unauthorised absent' and only contacting the police at this point (individual classified classed as 'missing from care only').
- Checking the patient's notes for medication and the consequences of not taking it.
- Identifying if they are a sectioned or voluntary patient.
- Establishing that there is no other person or service able to facilitate the return or ongoing management of the patient (i.e. general practitioner, social worker, community psychiatric nurse or relative).
- If voluntary, what action will be taken when the individual is located?

- If a sectioned patient, identify the circumstances of them going missing. For example, are they on Mental Health Act Section 17 leave unescorted from the ward? Are they permitted temporary absence from the unit? Can this period of leave be extended?

Individual located
If the individual is found as a result of these early enquiries, they should not be reported as a missing person, and all local efforts should be made for their return to a safe location, care or health establishment as soon as possible.

If the individual is reluctant to return to the location, the police may be requested to assist in their safe return. However, the individual must not be reported as missing simply to facilitate police involvement in their return or as a behavioural tool.

Where the located individual is subject to the Mental Health Act, arrange transportation in accordance with guidance. Police transportation is not suitable.

5.22 Asylum seekers, refugees and Operation Innerste

Although not necessarily missing persons, there have been cases where individuals have entered the country as asylum seekers or refugees and then have been reported as missing. Children are particularly vulnerable in such circumstances and may be victims of trafficking.

Unaccompanied asylum seeking children are likely to be placed in the care of the local authority. If they go missing, they must be treated as missing persons, and not failed asylum seekers or undocumented migrants. Children and young people under 18 years must not be circulated as wanted on PNC by the Home Office or Immigration Services.

Asylum seekers aged over 18 years who are reported missing should initially be dealt with as missing persons.

Operation Innerste outlines the role of the police in the initial safeguarding of unaccompanied child migrants.

For further information, refer to:

- NPCC Advice to Police Forces on Adult Asylum Seekers, Undocumented Migrants and Visa Applicants who Abscond and when they should be Recorded as Missing and Flow Charts
- Guidance to Police Forces on Missing Migrant Children

6. Associated Documents

- Authorised Professional Practice Missing Persons
- Child Abduction Warning Notice Procedure
- Child Protection Policy and Procedure
- Dealing with Persons in Crisis (JESIP guidance)
- Domestic Abuse Policy and Procedure
- GMP child protection hub – missing persons (intranet)
- Honour Based Abuse Policy and Procedure
- National Vulnerability Action Plan
- North West Regional Mental Capacity Act Joint Protocol

- North West Regional Policy and Guidance for Transporting Mental Health Patients
- Media and Social Media Communications Policy and Procedure
- National Vulnerability Action Plan
- Right Care Right Person Policy and Procedure
- Sudden Unexpected Death in Childhood Protocol
- Working Together to Safeguard Children statutory guidance

7. Statutory Compliance & Consultation

7.1 Statutory Compliance

7.1.1 Equality Act (2010)

Click here to view the equality impact assessment.

Date that Decision Maker reviewed the EIA	18/6/24
Summary of Decision Maker's discussions/considerations	The evidence considered is set out in the corresponding EIA and this policy.

Outcome	EIA recommended	Decision maker
Approve – no changes. The policy is robust and the evidence shows no potential for discrimination. All appropriate opportunities to advance equality and foster good relations between groups have been taken.	✓	[redacted]
Approve – subject to amends. Changes are required to remove barriers, better advance equality or mitigate potential effects. This should be done before the policy is implemented.		
Approve – continue with policy. Despite any adverse effect or missed opportunities to advance equality, provided that it does not unlawfully discriminate. The objective justification must be recorded.		
Reject – stop the policy. If there are adverse effects that are not justified and cannot be mitigated, or any unlawful discrimination.		

7.1.2 The UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR) and Data Protection Act (2018)

The Freedom of Information Act 2000 grants a general right of access to all types of recorded information held by public authorities.

This document is classified as 'Official', and parts of the procedure are not disclosable under the Freedom of Information Act 2000. Requests for access to this type of data are assessed carefully by the ICRMU, where they consider the harm of disclosure and release into the public domain with consultation with the Policy Owner. For advice and assistance in respect of this, please contact the Freedom of Information team by email freedomofinformation@gmp.police.uk

7.1.3 Freedom of Information Act (2000)

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7.2 Consultation

Note: Formal consultation outlined below relates specifically to Right Care, Right Person.

Consulted	Date	Feedback
Unions:		
Police Federation	13/2/24	Reviewed. Minor comments made and accepted. *Response: actioned.*
GMB	13/2/24	Consulted, no comments.
UNISON	13/2/24	Consulted, no comments.
Staff Associations:		
AWP	13/2/24	Nil response.
BAPA	13/2/24	Nil response.
Catholic Police Guild	13/2/24	Nil response.
Christian Police Network	13/2/24	Nil response.
Disability Support Network	13/2/24	Nil response.
dDeaf & Hard of Hearing Support Network	13/2/24	Nil response.
GMP Pride Network	13/2/24	Nil response.
Jewish Police Association	13/2/24	Nil response.
Muslim Police Association	13/2/24	Nil response.
Sikh Police Association	13/2/24	Nil response.
Superintendents' Association	13/2/24	Nil response.
Branches:		
Force Contact, Crime and Operations Branch	13/2/24	Nil response.
Force Crime & Incident Registrar	13/2/24	Reviewed, no comments.
Health & Safety	13/2/24	Nil response.
Human Resources	13/2/24	Nil response.
Information Compliance	13/2/24	Reviewed for compliance. Section 7.1.2 and 7.1.3 updated.
Legal Services	13/2/24	Nil response.
Organisational Learning Hub	13/2/24	Nil response.

8. Appendices

Appendix A	Minimum standards of investigation aide memoire (process map)
Appendix B	Police prevention interviews and report closure procedures (process map)
Appendix C	Philomena, Herbert and Forcer protocols
Appendix D	National and third sector contacts and support
Appendix E	Missing person flowchart: adult
Appendix F	Missing person flowchart: child
Appendix G	Missing child: information sharing
Appendix H	High risk missing appeal form
Appendix I	Rail incident guidance