



Missing Persons - Management, Recording & Investigation (Policy)

OFFICIAL

Publication Scheme Y/N	Policy section can be published Procedures should be withheld
Department of Origin	Prevention
Policy Holder	Supt Prevention
Author	Inspector, Missing Persons Unit
Related Information	College of Policing Approved Professional Practice Missing persons College of Policing Child Sexual Exploitation Policy Child Abduction Warning Notices (CAWN) Child Abuse and Neglect Policy Child Rescue Alert (TBC) Critical Incident Management Procedure Honour Based Abuse and Forced Marriage Policy. Human Rights Act 1998 Mental Ill Health Policy Care of Unaccompanied and Trafficked Children Pan Merseyside Missing Protocol.
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Policy

Statement

The majority of persons reported missing return soon after their disappearance without suffering any harm. A small percentage, however, will come to harm or become a victim of a crime. In these cases the missing person report could be the start of a major crime enquiry. The manner in which the investigation is conducted must cater for the preservation of evidence and the rules of disclosure. It is important that we provide support at the outset and throughout the enquiry to the immediate family and close friends when investigating a missing person. The legal obligations, which underpin these responsibilities, include the duties within the [Human Rights Act 1998](#) and the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) to protect life and persons from inhuman and degrading treatment.

Aims

The main aim is to provide a consistent and efficient response to reports of missing persons. The policy is designed to ensure that a clinical assessment of risk is applied to all missing reports which enables police actions and resources to be directed in the most effective way that makes people safe and prevents crime. This means prioritising activity so that the most intensive work addresses the needs of those missing people who are assessed as being at the greatest risk.

The policy is underpinned by procedures designed to provide clear direction for all those involved.

Objectives

A broad objective is to safeguard vulnerable missing persons and provide proper support to prevent the likelihood of further episodes associated with some individuals.

Specific associated objectives are to:

- a) Ensure that a clinical assessment of risk is applied to every report of a missing person so that missing persons who may be vulnerable or are considered high risk are immediately identified.
- b) Conduct a proportionate level of investigation into the circumstances of the person going missing.
- c) Conduct a thorough search of the home address and the location the missing person was last seen.
- d) Adopt a multi-agency approach in dealing with missing persons.
- e) Support the needs of the family, those close to the missing person and the community.
- f) Ensure that staff are adequately trained to investigate reports of missing persons.
- g) Preserve evidence where a crime has or is suspected to have been committed.

Application and Scope

All police officers and police staff, including the extended police family and those working voluntarily or under contract to Merseyside Police must be aware of, and are required to comply with, all relevant policy and associated procedures.

The Chief Officer lead for this policy is the Assistant Chief Constable (Prevention).

This policy document sets out principles to help guide decision making and is in some parts quite prescriptive. However, it is vital that officers and staff have the freedom to innovate, exercise

discretion and take risk-based decisions centred on the needs of the individual and the merits of each case. There may be occasions when a member of staff is considered to have acted outside of policy but if they have done so with honesty, integrity, and professionalism, to make the best decision for the community we serve, they will be trusted and supported. On occasions when this is the case, the rationale for it must be properly recorded.

Outcome Evaluation

Progress against specific objectives should be measured on a routine basis. The Head of Prevention will determine responsibilities and activities involved in measurement.

In general terms, success will mean that appropriate risk assessments are completed, quality investigations are conducted, preventative engagement has increased, and partner agencies have been consulted in all relevant cases within timescales. Progress can be evaluated by establishing a reduction of repeat missing episodes.