

Revised Statutory Guidance on Children Who Run Away or Go Missing From Home or Care

Summary

The statutory guidance is for:

- Local Authorities;
- Local safeguarding children's board partners;
- Managers and practitioners working with children and young people;
- Police forces;
- Other professionals working with children and young people, who go missing or run away from home and care.

It sets out the steps which local authorities and their partners should take to:

- (i) Prevent children from going missing; and
- (ii) To protect them when they do go missing.

Local authorities must comply with this guidance unless local circumstances indicate exceptional reasons that justify a variation.

The guidance is accompanied by a flowchart showing the roles and responsibilities when a child goes missing from care.

This guidance replaces the statutory guidance issued in 2009, in line with changes in:

- Evidence;
- Policy;
- The statutory framework covering looked-after children.

The guidance should be read in conjunction with ACPO Interim Guidance on the Management, Recording and Investigation of Missing Persons (2013), and the Children's Homes and Looked after Children (Miscellaneous Amendments) (England) Regulations 2013 which also introduce new requirements in respect of missing children – see Policy Briefing #106.

New definitions are introduced in the guidance:

- Young runaway;
- Missing child;
- Missing from care;
- Away from placement without authorisation.

Local authorities should agree with local police and other partners a Local Protocol for dealing with children who run away or go missing in their area. Where appropriate, they should also have agreed protocols with neighbouring authorities or administrations. The Protocols should be agreed and reviewed regularly with all agencies and be scrutinised by the LSCB. Police force operational areas often cover more than a single local authority area. Protocols should therefore be agreed by agencies on a regional or sub-regional basis to ensure a consistent approach.

New requirements are introduced in relation to Independent Return Interviews. An Independent Return Interview should be offered when a missing Looked After child is found. The person conducting the interview should usually be independent of the child's placement and of the responsible local authority. Where possible, the child should be given the opportunity to talk before they return to their placement.

How can we help?

If you're one of our customers, we have you covered! We'll be collaborating with you to review this Guidance and to agree the necessary changes in your organisation or agency.

If you are not a customer, we'll be glad to help. We have a large team of child care and legal specialists who can help you to review your procedures, organisational and training requirements. We are cost effective and passionate about improving outcomes for children and families. To find out more, visit our website or contact us.

Contact Us

Kensington House, 50-52 Albany Road, Earlsdon, Coventry, CV5 6JU

www.trixonline.co.uk

T: 024 7667 8053

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