



ruskinmill
sunfield

Sunfield Children's Home Missing Child Without Authority

Date updated:	February 2018
Lead person(s):	Head of Care and Therapies Head of Education
Review date:	February 2019

Associated Policies/Procedures and forms:

Safeguarding and child protection Policy and procedures
Behaviour management policy
Risk assessment templates
Behaviour Watch incident report
Whistleblowing policy
Disciplinary policy

The Children Home's regulations 2015 & supplementing care standards

Standard: 7

Regulation: 12

Regulation: 21

Regulation: 40

MISSING CHILD WITHOUT AUTHORITY

Overview

It is important to remember that children and young people go missing for a whole variety of reasons, and being absent without leave can be indicative of unhappiness, distress and even abuse. Therefore, each missing child is an individual case and has to be handled in a way which is most beneficial to the child. It is essential that the young person missing is given the opportunity to speak to someone other than their primary carers e.g. an independent listener or social worker.

The following is a local procedure that staff at Sunfield Children's Home will follow, as agreed on behalf of West Mercia Police.

Key reference points to Running Away / Missing Priory Policy

Schools, colleges and Children's Homes: In Common Law, Children's Homes have a duty of care towards their young people. This duty of care requires that all reasonable steps are taken to ensure that young people are safe and remain within the care of the home at all times throughout the day and night.

A child or young person who goes missing places themselves and others at risk; every 'missing' episode requires immediate staff attention. When a young person goes missing the immediate response of staff should be to prevent harm and to recover the young person to safety as soon as possible.

In April 2013 the police revised their definition for 'missing' and 'absent' in relation to children and adults reported as missing:

- **Missing:** Anyone whose whereabouts cannot be established and where the circumstances are out of character, or the context suggests the person maybe subject of crime or at risk of harm to themselves or another
- **Absent:** A person not at a place where they are expected or required to be.

Basic Action cycle



1.0 Local procedure

1.1 PREVENTION AND RISK ASSESSMENT

1.2 Each child or young person requires a Risk Assessment to be completed. If there are concerns about running away or going missing these should be recorded in here. This should be reviewed annually, and after any incident of running away or going missing.

1.3 In addition to being aware of individual and environmental risks associated with children and young people and the local area, staff should be fully aware of the risks associated with running away and missing: Training in relation to safeguarding, child sexual exploitation and other forms of exploitation including the risks of extremism and radicalisation are provided to all staff

1.4 RESPONSE TO INCIDENTS OF RUNNING AWAY AND MISSING

1.5 Details should be kept of the child or young person's key contacts for example close family members together with locations where the child or young person is likely to go to.

1.6 This information can then be conveyed to the police in the event that notification is made.

1.7 As far as possible staff should also have a record of the child or young person's mobile telephone number as a means of maintaining contact with him/her. This is to be contacted with work telephones and work mobiles **only (not personal mobiles or phones)**.

1.8 Staff are expected to be **proactive** in searching for children or young people believed to have run away, or to be missing, shadowing and remaining in communication with the child/young person wherever suitable.

1.9 Upon suspecting a Young Person has gone missing from site, staff member will report immediately to the manager (if during office hours) or most senior member of staff available, in the absence of the manager; or, if out of office hours, the on call manager.

1.10 The Shift leader on duty (or delegated member of staff) is to begin the Running away or going missing - Event chronology (on an incident report)

1.11 Within 15 minutes, a full site search will be undertaken. This should be extensive and include 'hiding holes' and the immediate vicinity off site. It is very important this is done calmly and without fuss. Other Young People are not to be used in the on-site search.

1.12 Where possible, staff will be dispatched in a vehicle to check local roads and villages.

- 1.13 Searches should include Young Person's room for evidence of things taken / intentions.
- 1.14 Site search should be thorough; however, after 20 minutes (to one hour, dependent upon individual Risk Assessment and vulnerability of the young person based on the risk assessment) Police should be called by Shift leader on Shift, following consultation with the on-call Duty Manager and email notification to the Home manager and Head of Care.
- 1.15 The Shift leader will refer to the individual Risk Assessment sheets to determine the risk factors and vulnerabilities, sharing any information with the Police where appropriate.
- 1.16 Each young person will have a missing from care document that is done on West Mercia paperwork and this should be used to report the young person as missing.
- 1.17 The Shift leader on duty (or delegated member of staff) is to contact all key stakeholders to inform them of the current status and agree the timescales of updates. This is usually hourly (to be agreed with individual parties if different), unless there is contact by the young person is made or updates from the stakeholders is provided, which would then be systematically shared. The Running away or going missing Event chronology (incident report) should continue to be updated.
- 1.18 The Shift leader on duty is to notify the on-call manager of actions taken and support the completion of the required incident form.
- 1.19 If appropriate that Police require to attend site, this needs to be alerted to the on-call manager. Police must immediately be given the Young Person's missing from care information sheet together with full details of search carried out so far. (It is likely that the Police will want to complete a further site search themselves).
- 1.20 If the child or young person is located off-site by staff in a vehicle, and it is unsafe for them to travel in the vehicle, then staff should continue to follow and keep the Young Person in sight.
- 1.21 Options at this point include:-
 1. Continue to follow
 2. Continue to follow and try to persuade to return to vehicle
 3. Call Police for support /help in supporting the Young Person to return.
- 1.22 Staff are to alert the Shift leader on duty at the earliest and safest point. The Shift leader on duty (or delegated staff) will update the key stakeholders, including the on-call manager and the Running away or going missing Event chronology (incident report).
- 1.23 If the child is absent, but due to individual risk assessment and complexity of vulnerability, is deemed as missing, then the above protocol should apply.

- 1.24 All reasonable efforts should be made to find the child or young person, in liaison with key stakeholders, particularly the police, Social Worker (or EDT) and where appropriate, family. Information shared with the family needs to be clear, concise and sensitively delivered to minimise as anxieties as much as possible.
- 1.25 The return of the child must be handled with sensitivity. Food, drink and a shower/bath should be offered before the incident is investigated further.
- 1.26 Staff may feel it to be more appropriate if the child returns late at night for the investigation, and / or the reporting to be done the following morning.
- 1.27 There is no fixed sanction, although levels of independence, supervision and risk assessment will be reviewed and necessary updates recorded and shared. The nature of the return will depend on the individual and the circumstance of running away or missing.
- 1.28 All incidents of running away and missing should be fully recorded on an incident form and reported to the Safeguarding Board.
- 1.29 In any incident involving running away and missing, many actions and communications take place, often extending over several shifts. To ensure effective management of information, the chronology of events form is crucial for staff to use to keep a running record of the incident (saved on our behaviour management system, Behaviour Watch).
- 1.30 Handovers between shifts with Shift leaders, Care staff, Managers and on-call Managers should use the chronology and this should be then supported with either face-to-face or telephone contact.
- 1.31 An individual record of episodes of running away and missing should be maintained for each child who is involved in any episode of running away or missing.
- 1.32 **'SAFE AND WELL' CHECKS**
- 1.33 After returning from any episode of running away or going missing the child or young person should be offered a 'safe and well check' including seeing a health professional should they so wish. The **Debrief Record** should be used to record this.
- 1.34 A copy of this form should be retained in the child's case records. A copy should also be available to be uploaded to the central incident database where the incident has been recorded, or for sharing with key stakeholders where appropriate.
- 1.35 The Young Person's social worker (or local authority representative) should contact the Young Person as soon as possible to ascertain their feelings, thoughts and reasons regarding the absence and return to Sunfield Children's Home. If possible they should visit at the earliest opportunity. If a visit is not possible the reasons for this will be agreed with the placing authority's social worker and recorded. Sunfield also uses an independent advocacy service, Coram Voice which can be used for this purpose as well. Alternatively, a member of staff from another Ruskin Mill Trust provision can be used as well.

1.36 **LEARNING AND DEBRIEFS**

- 1.37 After returning from any episode of running away or going missing the child or young person should be encouraged and supported to participate in a 'Debrief Meeting'.
- 1.38 A basic template detailing areas to be covered and providing a recording framework is provided on the incident form. The approach to this meeting should be personalised to the individual child or young person.
- 1.39 Managers reviewing debrief reports are expected to ensure that any lessons learned and actions identified are disseminated and/or implemented in a timely manner. This includes notifying the relevant responsible authorities of any issues which may relate to possible offences and/or safeguarding. Managers should consult with Regional Managers for guidance.

1.40 **MISSING CHILD/YOUNG PERSON DETAINED BY POLICE**

- 1.41 If missing child/young person is found/detained by the Police, then a confidential preliminary discussion will take place between the most appropriate officer, at the appropriate place and the young person, the purpose of which will be to ascertain why they went missing.
- 1.42 Information should be shared with key stakeholders at this point to ascertain appropriate adult for support
- 1.43 If the child/young person indicates that they are being abused, then the duty inspector will inform the duty social worker and child protection procedures will commence in line with LSCB (Local Safeguarding Children Board) guidelines.
- 1.44 If there appears no cause for concern, the young person will be returned to their place of residence, in liaison with the Shift leader, on call manager, home manager or Head of Care.

1.45 **GOVERNANCE AND MONITORING**

- 1.46 The Senior Leadership team are responsible for monitoring incidents of running away and missing.
- 1.47 These incidents should be reviewed at Senior Leadership Team weekly meetings and through the site-based Multi-Disciplinary Team meetings, held on a weekly basis. This should identify trends, patterns and strategies.
- 1.48 This analysis of Running Away and Missing may require key stakeholder review meetings to support the review of risk management strategies.

2.0 **IF A CHILD FAILS TO ATTEND SCHOOL – PROCEDURE**

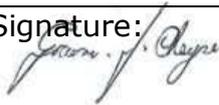
- 2.1** If a student does not show up for registration then the class teacher/Senior Teaching Assistant is to inform the Head of Education – the Head of Education will then make a phone call to parents and the transport service to determine the reason for absence.

1. If parents cannot be contacted, the child's allocated social worker will be informed of the absence and that there has been no contact with parents.
2. Parents are expected to phone the main Reception number and/or School Office to inform Sunfield of their child's absence from school, giving the reason for the absence.
3. Class teacher/Senior Teaching Assistant must take the attendance register on a daily basis (morning and afternoon sessions) and record any absence using the appropriate code.
4. Attendance is monitored and reported to Local Authorities on a weekly basis. Any attendance dropping below 85% will be formally addressed with parents or carers
5. Sunfield will inform the local authority of any pupil who fails to attend school regularly, or has been absent without the school's permission for a continuous period of 10 school days or more, in conjunction with the 'Keeping Children Safe in Education' legislation (2016).

**Reviewed by:
Graeme Cheyne (Principal) February 2018**

Agreed by		Signature:	Date:
Job Title			

Agreed by		Signature:	Date:
Job Title			

Agreed by	Graeme Cheyne	Signature: 	Date: 05/02/2018
Job Title	Principal		