

# Safeguarding: Missing Persons Policy

## Policy Statement

This policy sets out the values, principles and policies underpinning this Service approach to the discovery that a service user is missing.

Through its policy and procedures the service also seeks to comply with the requirements to report serious instances through the CQC’s notification procedures and the local Adults Safeguarding Board’s procedures and take the appropriate actions in the event of accidents or in the event of a service user going missing from their home.

It is common for at least some of the service users to be limited in their mobility. Some may also be confused or easily disoriented and therefore become easily lost. For these reasons a service user going “missing” would be an obvious cause for concern.

However, it is accepted that there will be many active service users who value their mobility and independence and spend time out in the local community without raising concern. Thus, service users’ need for close supervision must always be balanced against their rights to make their own decisions regarding their movements and whereabouts.

## Preventing Missing Persons Incidents

Staff must remain vigilant *at all times* and try to be aware of exactly where vulnerable service users are at any given time. Service users who are prone to wandering, or who may be at risk of getting lost by reason of their mental state, will have this identified during risk assessment and a suitable entry made in their care plan. Such service users are kept under observation as appropriate to the level of risk identified.

## Raising the Alarm

Staff should raise the alarm immediately they suspect that a service user may be missing by informing their manager. Staff should note that it is often difficult to ascertain whether or not an individual service user has gone missing until a service users is not seen on support days

Situations where a missing persons’ report should be made include the following:

* where a service user has not returned from an arranged outing, activity or walk
* where a service user cannot be found in their home or grounds and no arrangements have been made for support, an outing, activity or walk.

## Procedure in the Event of a Service User Being Reported as Missing in a Service user’s home

When it becomes clear that a service user is missing it is vital that all the members of staff work as a team and follow a clearly defined procedure. Upon receiving a missing persons report the manager should carry out the following procedure.

* + Alert all staff to the possibility of the service user being missing and ask for information/sightings during visits.
  + Check who last visited the service user and question them about the service user’s known plans and movements.
  + Carry out a thorough search in their home, ask neighbors, family and friends, checking that the service user has not become lost . Knowledge of the service user and their usual movements and habits should be employed (ie staff should search their favourite places and, if they are used to visiting relatives nearby, then relatives should be contacted) and staff may be dispatched to tour the vicinity.
* If no sign of the service user can be found, or if information is provided from either staff or other service users that raises concern that the service user may be at risk, then the local police should be alerted and their advice and assistance sought.
* Where the police are involved then the service’s responsible person should be informed, as should members of the missing service user’s family if they have not already been contacted.
* The manager should, at the earliest opportunity, fill out an incident form and make a suitable note of events in the service user’s notes. Times of actions and decisions should be noted as accurately as possible.
* Families should be requested to telephone the home if the service user contacts them and relatives should be kept informed at each stage of the search.
* Once the service user has been found, it is essential that all the parties who were advised of the emergency are contacted again and informed that the search has been concluded.

If at any stage the service manager is unsure of what to do then the responsible person should be contacted immediately for advice.

## Procedure to Follow after a Missing Persons Incident

Care staff must record any significant incident on the user’s care plan and the service’s accident/incident records (which should be available for CQC inspection if required). The recording should include the times the person went missing and was returned and the actions taken for the person to be returned. All incidents should be reviewed to learn the lessons from them and to prevent reoccurrence.

If the service user was injured or harmed or was seriously at risk of being harmed because of going missing, the management will notify the CQC and the relevant Local Authority Safeguarding Board (or MASH), which might wish to investigate further depending on the circumstances. If going missing results in a person’s tragic death, there will be a range of procedures to be followed, this could include a police investigation, a Serious Case Review.

If a complaint is made against a care staff member as a result of a service user going missing, the matter will be investigated through the complaints procedure. The investigation will include any possible misconduct by the care staff responsible as a result of the person going missing through its established disciplinary procedures.

All staff are made aware of the possible consequences of a service user whom they are supervising going missing.

## Training

All staff are trained in the missing persons procedure and to know their role in the event of a search.

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| Signed: | \_\_\_\_\_\_\_Kechi Anyanwu\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ |
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