



RESPONDING TO CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE WHO GO MISSING FROM PLACEMENT

This Guidance is an abridged version of the Joint Protocol regarding Children and Young People who go Missing from Home or Care (April 2015) between North Yorkshire Police, North Yorkshire County Council and City of York Council. A copy of the full Protocol is available from the Forms Library.

Step 1: Attempt by Carer to Locate the Young Person before Notifying Police

Where a young person is not at a place where they are expected to be or the young person's 'whereabouts cannot be established and where the circumstances are out of character, or the context suggests that they may be subject of crime or at risk of harm to themselves or another', the carer should make proactive attempts to locate the young person, including:

- 1) Physical checks of the residence, including the young person's bedroom and any other location the young person may be hiding within the house / building.
- 2) Physical checks of any garden, garage, sheds, grounds and surrounding area(s).
- 3) Attempt to contact the young person directly, via mobile phone, text, or social networking sites (i.e. twitter / Facebook / whatsapp etc).
- 4) If appropriate (with reference to the Placement Plan contact arrangements), contact the young person's wider family and friends to ascertain if the young person is there or has made contact with them.

Step 2: Report by the Carer of a Missing Young Person

(a) When placed within the City of York or the County of North Yorkshire

Where carer enquiries do not establish the whereabouts of the young person, the carer should report the incident to North Yorkshire Police. This should be done through **101** unless the carer is concerned that there is a serious concern or risk of immediate harm which would require a **999** response.

When North Yorkshire Police are informed of an incident, they will take details by asking a standard set of questions which informs their risk assessment. All reports of missing people sit within a continuum of risk from "no apparent risk" to "high risk". The reporting person will be advised of the risk level given to the incident. The outcome of the risk assessment will be the guide for the police response and the level of enquiries undertaken. The police investigation will be carried out in accordance with the North Yorkshire Police Missing Persons Policy. The NYP investigation will be in line with the NYP risk assessment framework as detailed below.

If the Notifying Carer disagrees with the classification of the level of risk by NYP, they can ask to speak to a Force Incident Manager, who is on duty 24 hours a day within the Force Control Room. The Force Incident Manager will then review the case and feed back a final decision.

(b) When placed outside of the County of North Yorkshire

Where carer enquiries do not establish the whereabouts of a young person, the carer should report the incident to the Police Force local to the placement. This should be done through **101** unless the carer is concerned that there is a serious concern or risk of immediate harm which would require a **999** response.

Police Forces are follow national guidance when responding to reports of missing children and young people, even when the young person is not from the local area and is placed there by another Local Authority. They are also required to have a local Protocol around how they respond to Missing episodes.

Should the carer be dissatisfied with the response of the local Police Force, the carer should seek to escalate their concerns for the safety and wellbeing of the young person with the local Police Force to ensure that an appropriate response is forthcoming.

Step 3: Notification of a Missing Episode by Police or Carer

(a) When placed within the City of York or the County of North Yorkshire

Where North Yorkshire Police are notified of a missing episode of a Child Looked After by City of York Council and placed within North Yorkshire, they will notify City of York Council directly about the episode and the carer does not need to do so.

(b) When placed outside of the County of North Yorkshire

Where a young person is placed by City of York Council outside of North Yorkshire, the carer has responsibility to notify City of York Council of the missing episode. This is because there is no arrangement between the local Police Force and the City of York Council to do so.

The carer must contact the local Police Force first so that appropriate local action is taken to locate and return the young person. The Police should confirm with the carer the outcome of their risk assessment of the episode.

Having contacted the local Police Force to commence action to locate and return the young person, the carer must then contact City of York Council as 'Corporate Parent' for the young person. The Carer should not contact the allocated Social Worker or Fostering Officer to notify them of a missing young person – there is a single point of contact arrangement to ensure a prompt response and management of reported episodes. The contact point is as follows:

safeguardingnotifications.admin@york.gov.uk

The carer should provide the following details by email to ensure an effective and timely response by City of York Children's Social Care:

Full Name of Young Person
Placement Address of Young Person
Date Young Person went Missing
Time Young Person went Missing
Circumstances of Episode
Any known reasons for Episode

Step 4: Actions when a young person is located and/or returns to placement

Where a young person who has been Missing returns to the placement or is located and returned other than by the Police, the Police should be notified as soon as possible by the carer that the episode is over. At the point of reporting a return, Carers will be asked if there is anything the Police need to know or act on, in terms of the young person’s behaviour or welfare. It is important that the Carer is clear about whether there are any concerns for the welfare of the young person. Where a young person was dealt with as a Missing Young Person the Police will arrange to visit the young person (known as a ‘Safe & Well Check’)

If a young person is located by the Police, unless there are exceptional circumstances, the Police are likely to require the carer to collect and return the young person to the placement. Where the logistics of collecting and returning the young person make it difficult or impossible for a carer to do so, Children’s Social Care (or Emergency Duty Team provision if out of hours) must be contacted to assist in collecting and returning the young person. Where the collection and return of a young person may present a risk to the carer or to the young person, they may agree to assist in the return of the young person to the placement or place of safety.

Step 5: Notification of the location and/or return to placement of a young person

(a) When placed within the City of York or the County of North Yorkshire

Where North Yorkshire Police locate and return or are notified that a missing young person has been located and returned to a placement within North Yorkshire, they will notify City of York Council directly and the carer does not need to do so.

(b) When placed outside of the County of North Yorkshire

Where a young person is placed by City of York Council outside of North Yorkshire, the carer has responsibility to notify City of York Council that the young person has been located and/or returned to placement. This is because there is no arrangement between the local Police Force and the City of York Council to do so.

The carer must contact City of York Council as ‘Corporate Parent’ for the young person. The carer must use the single point of contact arrangement to ensure a prompt response and management of reported episodes. The contact point is as follows:

safeguardingnotifications.admin@york.gov.uk

The carer should provide the following details by email to ensure an effective and timely response by City of York Children's Social Care:

Full Name of Young Person
Placement Address of Young Person
Date Young Person returned to Placement
Time Young Person returned to Placement
Circumstances of Episode
Any known reasons for Episode

Step 6: The Offer of a Return Interview to a young person

Whenever a young person is located and returned following a Missing episode, City of York Council will offer the young person a choice of either a return interview by a social worker or an independent volunteer. (A Leaflet about an Independent Return Interview is available for young people upon request – it is called 'Running Away?'). It is important that carers promote the take-up of this offer. Return Interviews provide an opportunity to uncover information that can help protect young people from the risk of going missing again, from risks they may have been exposed to while missing or from risk factors in their placement.

If City of York Council receives notification of a missing episode, the young person will be contacted directly and offered a Return Interview. This will occur wherever the young person is placed. If a carer does not think that an Interview has been offered or there appears to be delay, please contact:

safeguardingnotifications.admin@york.gov.uk

Step 7: Prevention of future Missing Episodes

The Return Interview offered to young people is intended to identify vulnerabilities and in particular, any push factors (away from placement) and pull factors (to the place the young person was located). The allocated Social Worker, Fostering Officer, North Yorkshire Police, Looked After Health professionals, the Virtual Head Teacher and Senior Managers including the Designated Manager for Missing Young People are all informed of missing episodes to enable an effective response.