



ABSENCE OF A YOUNG PERSON WITHOUT CONSENT

Children and young people go missing for a range of issues while living in our care. The important message we must convey to them by our actions to find them and when they return, is that we care about them and that their safety is of paramount importance. The senior or manager should be made aware of the situation at the earliest opportunity. We also have reporting / safeguarding responsibilities that we must follow and these are detailed below. This policy and procedure incorporates the guidance in the National Missing Persons Framework for Scotland 2017.

Procedure	Responsibilities
<p>1. All adults should be aware of the various reasons why young people sometimes go missing from the house; and we must consider the potential vulnerabilities of young people when they are absent without consent. Adults must differentiate between a young person who is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Missing: when the young person is not at Cala or another place where they are expected to be; and they are not contactable. • Out without permission or absent: when the young person is not at Cala or place where they should be, but are in contact with adults from Cala, who are able to ascertain the young person's wellbeing and likelihood of safety. This is often the case when a young person is late to return, or takes leisure time when they don't have permission to do so. <p>1.1 The response to a missing young person, by all adults included in the team around the young person, should be consistent, and it is vital that all agencies involved in the care and support of the young people are included in created the agreed response to the young person. There must be a no blame approach that seeks to gain an understanding of the reasons why a young person has gone missing and explore using a solution focused response.</p> <p>1.2 In the event that any young person is late to return or is out without permission, adult should attempt to make contact with the young person, initially via mobile, to establish their possible whereabouts and their wellbeing</p> <p>2. The management team should promote agreed best practice for the house in responding to a missing young person and this practice includes guiding adults to:</p>	<p>Adults and management team throughout.</p>

- Search for a young person who has gone missing or who has not returned at the expected time and cannot be contacted. Adults are expected to go out into the local community to encourage the young person to return back to Cala; and at a minimum, to confirm the whereabouts of the young person. The lone working policy and risk assessment to be considered while undertaking these tasks, for example, 2 members of staff to go looking if this makes it safer or there are safety concerns that can be mitigated by 2 staff members going out.
- Physically going out to look for the young person may not be necessary for example, depending on the extent of contact that is made with them via mobile phone; or if it is agreed having risk assessed the situation that it is not safe to do so. Other factors that should be taken into consideration include the impact it would have on others if adult staffing levels were reduced; and risks to the adult in the event that the young person's risk assessment suggests they could react violently.
- Reporting to the police, parents, social worker and significant others, when this is the agreed course of action as per care plan and risk assessment. The protocol is specific to each individual young person, and so risk assessment and care plan must be referred to in relation to individual protocol.
- Action to obtain information about the whereabouts of a young person. This includes contacting known friends and addresses if safe to do so.
- Action to be taken to ensure the safety of a young person. This could for example, include staff being in the vicinity of the area where a young person is, to observe their wellbeing if they are refusing to return.
- Responding to the individual needs of the young person as agreed in their plan
- Inform and seek advice and guidance from Out of Hours Social Work if out of office hours; or the named social worker if during office hours.

2.1 In the event of a young person being **missing**, or communication ceasing in **out without permission / absent scenarios**, where adults are concerned about the safety and well-being of the young person, based on previous risk assessment, or triggers noted that day, then this missing person's protocol should be implemented. It may be that even with ongoing communication in **out without permission / absent scenarios**, adults are concerned about the safety and well-being in which case the protocol should be implemented.

The individual young person's risk assessments must be referred to in every situation, to re-evaluate risk within the presenting circumstances relating to the young person being absent. If it is known that the young person manages their behaviour by taking 'safe walks' and short periods of time out of the building, and it has been assessed by the team around

the child as being an appropriate response, this is not regarded as being absent.

2.2 Each individual young person must have a detailed risk assessment which must be referred to in conjunction with this policy. If a young person is absent, either with or without permission, and adults are concerned about their wellbeing, and if adults are not able to make contact with the young person (or if they do make contact but are concerned); then the young person will be reported missing to the police. Detailed reasons for reporting the Young Person missing must be recorded.

2.3 Some generic examples of a young person providing cause for concern would include the young person not having returned from leisure time by 11pm, which is the latest time for all young people living within Cala. At 11pm, if it cannot be ascertained that the young person is on their way back to Cala, then they should be reported missing. See *appendix for risk factor vulnerabilities which need to be considered*.

2.4 When a child or young person returns to the house, it is important that they are able to talk to someone about why they went missing. This must be done in a way that does not pre-judge the reasons and in certain circumstances this may need to be someone independent from Cala. For instance, the social worker for the young person, a family member or a teacher at school. Children and Young People can also contact the charity Missing People for support on their return. The contact information for this charity is in the quiet room of each house, so that young people can access it confidentially if they wish.

***See appendix for the return home questionnaire which needs to be considered.*

2.5 In light of the reasons why a young person went missing, the young person's care plan must be re-visited. The plan should be reflected upon and the approach adjusted accordingly.

2.6 Return Home Welfare Officers from Police Scotland in Aberdeen, receive information of any child or young person who has been reported missing and they offer support to the child or young person and adults at Cala, once the young person has returned.

3 Any child protection issues that come to light must be reported immediately in line with the guidance given in Child Protection Procedures.

4 A written record must be made of all incidents; circumstances and actions taken that involve young people who are missing. This should be recorded within the young person's personal record file, and where appropriate an incident form should be completed. See reporting incidents policy. All contact made with the young person

should be recorded with specific dates and times; along with the content of communication.

5 When a consequence is deemed the appropriate response to a young person being missing without consent, the consequence must be within the permitted measures available to adults and shared with the young person with a clear explanation of the reason(s). Any consequence must be appropriate and relative to the nature of the behaviour and should be based on supporting the young person to learn alternative ways to communicate and behave. Any consequence must be noted in the young person's casefile, on the sanctions record.

5.1 Adults must employ the principles of BSS throughout if it looks likely that a young person may abscond, to descale the situation. If it is safer to use an intervention with a young person than let them abscond then the intervention should be employed and further assistance sought if required and in line with the level of risk at that point in time. Any interventions suitable for use will be detailed in the young person's CRISP, risk assessments and care plan.

5.2 First and foremost, the paramount principle for all young people's wellbeing is to ensure that all young people are warmly welcomed back into the house after any incident of being out without permission or having been missing. No young person should ever be scared or feel uneasy about their return for fear of repercussions. Cala is their home, and they must feel safe and welcome here. Any responses to behaviour can be managed in line with BSS principles which support the learning of alternative responses for behaviours that cause concern, but the primary and paramount response for the immediacy is to ensure the young person is warmly welcomed, and for staff to ensure that the young person has not come to any harm whilst they have been out.

Police contact number: 101 (999 in the event of an emergency)

Out of Hours Social Work: 0345 756 656

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