



# **Children Missing Policy**

## **Unauthorised Absences**

### **Methods of Care & Control**

***Date Written: September 2019***

***Timescale of Review: Annually***

***Next Review Due: May 2023***

### **OUTCOME:**

***'that all children remain safe, are cared for and are kept free from harm and risk and are reported, as and when necessary if they have a 'missing' episode & cared for upon their return'***

### **SCOPE**

Due to the children's deprivation and emotional difficulties, they will often lack the resources to enable them to manage and contain their emotions, feelings and behaviour.

Their fears and anxieties will therefore inevitably be acted out through difficult, disruptive and dangerous behaviours. Their views of themselves and experiences of the world will often be fractured and fragmented. Alongside this they may have distorted views of adult care and little belief that adults can provide safe, consistent and predictable boundaries and limits. This adds to the sense of inhabiting a frightening world where they may regularly feel unmanageable, uncontainable and uncontrollable.

A vital part of the care of the children will therefore consist of providing firm and consistent boundaries thus providing experiences, over time, of adults who can appropriately manage children. For this to stand any chance of being genuinely accepted by the children and not appearing merely arbitrary or persecutory it must be carried out in a culture where it can be openly thought about with them.

The entire structures and practices of Amicus will be based around providing for the children, both formally and informally, the spaces and opportunities to think about their feelings, experiences, relationships and interactions. At the same time, due to their young age, vulnerability and emotional impairment it is obvious that the children will not always be able to take up these opportunities and may even attack them. The adults will therefore often have to hold the thinking for the children while continuing to maintain their firm management of them. The hope is that this thinking can be passed onto the children over time as they become more able to accept it.

To genuinely maintain thoughtful consideration of the children's management, staff meetings, supervision and consultation with the children concerned and adults involved in their care also become essential. It is here where it can be regularly thought about, discussed and monitored. Without this, the children's management can easily become unthinking or merely reactive and therefore cease to be of benefit to the children.

See also Policy's regarding:

- Permissible Sanctions
- Use of Restraint
- Dealing with Violence and Aggression
- Safeguarding Children Against CSE
- Child Protection & Safeguarding Policy
- DOLS Policy
- Monitoring & Surveillance

## **CHILDREN GOING MISSING – UNAUTHORISED ABSENCES**

Due to the young emotional age and vulnerability of the children cared for by The Amicus Community any period when they are missing without permission from Home or School (unauthorised absence) is considered to be extremely serious, with particular risks for abuse, Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) or other criminal activity, increasing the risk the child may be at.

The following actions will be taken to promote reduction of such risks.

1. Upon arrival to The Amicus Community, as standard practice, the Sussex Police 'MARS Child Information' (General Information – Appendix 1) record will be completed within the FIRST week. This will need input from the Social Worker to be fully completed. This form needs to remain 'live' and be checked and updated on a monthly basis for every child. The updated record must also be shared with the Police.

Should any child be 'missing', we will take the following actions:

1. An immediate search of the house / school / grounds
2. A search of the local area – and specific locations that we know the children/young people are drawn to (this information will be noted in the Child Information MARS Form and the child's Individual Risk Assessments
3. The Police will be contacted after an hour (unless identified that they need to be contacted sooner) and in consultation with the child's Local authority). At this stage, the Sussex Police's MARS Missing Report (Appendix 1) should be completed, especially the 'Prior to Being Reported Missing to the Police' section. All actions / checks in this section MUST have been completed before reporting missing to the

Police. If a child is showing signs / or talking about going missing / absconding, this form must be started at this point.

4. When reporting a child missing, using the Police number 101, The Police must be given as much information and details as possible, including any 'lead up' behaviours / actions. You must also inform the Police of the child's age and vulnerability and presenting behaviours – at the latest point, by 1 hour after being missing. As part of the call, staff will make clear to the Police:
  - Why we are worried about the child young person
  - What has been done so far to trace them
  - attempts to contact the child
  - calling friends or family
  - visiting areas that the child is known to frequent
  - visiting the place where the child was known to be attending, e.g. a friend's house or party
  - checking to see if any items are missing from the home
5. Once reported to the Police, The Home On-Call & Senior Manager Consultancy On Call, the child's Social Worker or Out of Hours / Emergency Duty Team and parents (if appropriate) are all informed. The Consultancy On-Call Senior Manager for Amicus must inform the Responsible Individual of Amicus of any unauthorised absence.
6. Regular communication and updates are maintained during the child's absence, with the staff at Amicus, the child's local authority and also the Police
7. All the above parties are notified on the child's return
8. Records of all unauthorised absences are recorded in a central file on the computers on the company's OneDrive which are backed up by to the cloud and individually on case files as a Record of Absconding
9. After any child or young person returns to the Home or School, after a period of being 'missing' without authorisation in advance, there will be a specific time when they will be asked about what happened while they were away and the Sussex Police 'Missing Report – Return' (Appendix 1) form must be completed. This may be carried out by internal staff, Police colleagues, or a specially identified organisation whose role is to complete this.

10. A record will be made of any information which arises about where they had been and with whom. This should be added to the Sussex Police 'Child's Information' and the updated copy shared with the Police. Particular note will be taken indicating any additional risk factors identified during this interview, and if any concerns of criminal activity including Child Sexual Exploitation arise, they will be passed to the Police and Social Care for further action.

When a child is placed at Amicus a Risk Assessment will be completed covering the child's vulnerability outside the home and / or school in the case of an unauthorised absence. The Risk Assessment will include:

1. How soon the Police should be contacted
2. How regularly the child absconds (known from historical placements or history)
3. Whether the child should be reported as a missing person or unauthorised absence
4. Likely places the child may abscond to and the general risks at the stated locations

This information will be readily available to the police in the case of an unauthorised absence and updated on a regular basis – using the Police MARS Child Information form. This form is to be reviewed on a monthly basis, and all parties updated of new information. It can be reviewed more frequently should there be further incidents.

Whilst 'unauthorised absence' is not condoned, it is important that the reasons for the behaviours and associated feelings for the absence are established as it is recognised that the children and young people are particularly vulnerable to being further abused, involved in Child Sexual Exploitation, or other criminal activity.

At Amicus, children will rarely leave the home without permission if their physical and emotional needs are being met and the environment is one that facilitates their needs; although it must also be taken into account that the vulnerable and traumatised group we are working with at the Community will often try to reject good care and this can also result in their running away (going Missing), although this is a rarity. Often external factors unknown to the staff team may disrupt the thinking of the child and act as a trigger to run away, therefore it is important to know what has happened while they have been away from Amicus.

If a child leaves the home or school without permission, the staff team will make efforts to identify the cause of the child's anxieties and if necessary, liaise with the Social Worker and parents (if appropriate). It may be necessary to provide additional supervision and at the same time to attempt to understand and try to resolve some of the underlying anxieties of the child which contributed to their need to leave the home – this work is on-going and gradual.

When appropriate, attempts will be made to discuss the detail of the child's whereabouts during their absence and any significant incident that may have occurred. Staff will be welcoming when the child returning to the home and offer them something to eat and ensure that they are warm and dry. Staff will sensitively but sternly explain the risks to the child of their unauthorised absence and help them to reflect upon what led them to leave the home unauthorised. It is imperative that the Sussex Police 'Missing Report – Return' form (Appendix 1) is completed with an adult (where appropriate) or talked through with an adult to help understand why the child left the home unauthorised. When a child goes 'missing', they will have an independent 'return home' interview, this will be held by the child's placing authority who will refer to a Missing People charity to conduct this, where this is not the case, the child's social worker or another trusted adult may conduct the interview.

Where a child has a history of unauthorised absences or that this behaviour increases or that there is a level of concern as to what or where they are whilst away from the home unauthorised, then the Home Manager will openly discuss this with other agencies involved, including inviting the Police, with the child and may call a review of the child's Care / Therapeutic Placement Plan. The child's care plan will be revised to consider how any frequent unauthorised absences are being managed and monitored and risk assessments around the child will also be reviewed.

The recording of going 'Missing' (unauthorised absences) will be monitored at least weekly, often as they happen, and records checked and signed off by the Home Manager/ Deputy Home Manager weekly. Unauthorised absences are also monitored in the monthly Regulation 44 and 45 reports and any trends noted and discussed.

Signed by Director: 

**Rebecca Newton**

**Date: May 2022 Reviewed**

## Policy Reviews

Date of Review	Information on Updates	Reviewed By
3.4.20	Police Update with new forms – added to policy	RN & NY
26.6.21	Review of Policy – added DOLS & Surveillance Policy references	NY
19/08/21	General Review - No changes made	RN
03/05/2022	Terminology changed for ‘disturbed’ to ‘vulnerable and traumatised’ to describe the child’s group presentation.  Updating where documents stored to OneDrive and backed up by Cloud rather than the Server	RN



## ***Appendix 1***

# ***Sussex Police M.A.R.S. Protocol***

***1. Child Information***

***2. Missing Report***

***3. Missing Report Return***

*All below forms are saved in*

*Amicus Shared - Standard Documents – Children Missing*

## **MARS (Missing After Reasonable Steps) PROTOCOL 1. CHILD INFORMATION**

## Official (when complete)

This form is interactive and must be completed electronically. Upon completion, please store electronically and update regularly. When completed/updated, please send copies to the relevant social worker and Sussex Police at [ws.missingpersonteam@sussex.pnn.police.uk](mailto:ws.missingpersonteam@sussex.pnn.police.uk), along with a recent photo of the child.  
This form should not be printed unless to provide to a representative of Sussex Police.

Part 1 – to be completed on child’s entry to service (keyworking session of placement planning meeting) and updated regularly		
Full name:		RECENT PHOTO
Preferred name:		
Date of birth:		
Age:		
Ethnicity:		
Gender identity:		
Current address: As of when?:		
<b>Placement type</b>	<b>CHILDREN’S HOME</b>	
Postcode:		

Child Protection information			
Details of care order:			
Social worker name & contact details:			
EDT contact details:			
Other Professionals working with child (Barnardos, YOS etc) and contact details:			
Why is the child open to care services:			
Do the placement consider the child at risk of exploitation? If so, which: (Sexual, criminal, financial etc)			
Evidence and date of relevant incidents to support this risk rating:			
General description			
Height:		Weight:	
		Build:	

Hair colour/style:	
Eye colour, do they wear glasses:	
Clothing style:	
Usual accessories (handbag, scarf etc):	
Jewellery:	
General appearance:	
Accent:	
Any distinguishing features <i>(think tattoos, birth marks, piercings and their locations)</i>	

Previous home addresses:	1.	
	2.	
	3.	
School or educational establishments:	1.	
	2.	
	3.	

<b>Health</b>	
GP name and address:	
Health conditions:	
Medication required and frequency:	

<b>Finances</b>			
Has the person got any money?:		If so, how much?	
Have they got a bank account?:		Can you access this account?	

Name of bank:		Sort code:		-		-	
Account number:		Do you have the password for this account?:					

Has the Person Got a Mobile Phone?			
Number:		Network:	
Make:		Model:	
IMEI number:		Who pays the bill?:	

Does the Person Use Social Media?		
Social media site	Username	Password
Facebook:		
Twitter:		
Instagram:		
Snapchat:		
TikTok:		
Other:		
Other:		
Other:		

Access to Any Vehicles?			
Bus pass:		Details e.g. number and issuer:	
Access to a vehicle?:		Details e.g. registration number, driver etc:	

Missing Episode History:	
Missing episode history:	
Previous locations found:	
All recent information:	
Any significant dates (birthdates of parents, deaths etc):	
Significant places of interest:	
Hobbies:	

Other:	
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<b>What recent multi-agency discussions have taken place to prevent the young person going missing and are those agencies aware of the need to assist to look for the young person in the event of a missing episode?</b>	
<b>What actions have you agreed with the young person to try &amp; prevent missing episodes?</b> <i>E.G. ½ hourly welfare calls, selfie at claimed location, approved addresses etc</i>	
<b>What enquiries will be conducted to locate and retrieve the missing child?</b> <i>E.G calling the child, their NOK and associates. Checking local hospitals, visiting locations &amp; addresses you think they may be at, visiting areas the child is claiming to be at</i>	
<b>Is the use of taxis approved for this child?</b>	

It is reasonable to expect the staff of a children’s home to conduct internal and outside enquiries including calling the child and their associates, searching the local area, and attending local addresses.

If a child leaves the home and there are reasonable enquires to be completed to determine if the child is missing, and those enquires cannot be completed due to lone-working or other reasons, then it is reasonable for the placement to telephone the social worker to assist with enquires to establish the whereabouts of the child prior to reporting the child as missing. **There should not be a delay if the child is at risk of harm and no unreasonable delay if the social worker / out of hours team are not available.**

If there is a risk of harm to the child and their whereabouts cannot be established through reasonable enquires then police should be contacted with the relevant forms completed and reported as missing.

# MARS PROTOCOL ASSOCIATES & ADDRESSES



Please regularly update this form with any new associates and locations your young person has made or mentioned  
Please have this form available to attending officers in the event of a missing episode

Name of child:	Date of birth:	Current address:

	Name	Address	Association	Phone number	Associated risks
1					
2					
3					
4					
5					
6					
7					
8					
9					
10					

**Official (when complete)**

11					
12					
13					
14					
15					
16					
17					
18					
19					
20					

**It is the responsibility of the agency completing and the recipient to protect the information from theft and compromise  
This form and the information contained within it must be securely stored**

**Official (when complete)**



## 2. MISSING REPORT

### Official (when complete)

This form is interactive and must be completed electronically. Upon completion, please store electronically and update as required. When completed/updated, please send copies to the relevant social worker and Sussex Police at [ws.missingpersonteam@sussex.pnn.police.uk](mailto:ws.missingpersonteam@sussex.pnn.police.uk). This form should not be printed unless to provide to a representative of Sussex Police.

**This does not replace reporting a child missing via 101.**

**This is to be completed prior to the call to 101, unless in the case of an emergency.**

Part 2 – to be completed when child is suspected to be missing			
Child Name:		Date of Birth:	
Detailed description of what the child was last seen wearing, including colours, brands & logos:			
Top/shirt/jumper:			
Trousers/skirt:			
Outerwear e.g. coat:			
Other:			
Date last seen:			
Time last seen:			
Location last seen:			
Circumstances of missing:			
Any significant factors that are out of character / unique to this missing episode:			
Any suspected triggers (recent victim of crime / family contact etc):			
Do you consent to a media release?		Name of consenting manager:	
Persons informed of child missing (e.g. parent, EDT, social worker, other professionals):			
Any other information that may be of help to the Police:			

## Prior to Reporting Missing to the Police

It is reasonable to expect the staff of a children's home to conduct internal and outside enquiries including calling the child and their associates, searching the local area, and attending local addresses.

If a child leaves the home and there are reasonable enquires to be completed to determine if the child is missing, and those enquires cannot be completed due to lone-working or other reasons, then it is reasonable for the placement to telephone the social worker to assist with enquires to establish the whereabouts of the child prior to reporting the child as missing. **There should not be a delay if the child is at risk of harm and no unreasonable delay if the social worker / out of hours team are not available.**

If there is a risk of harm to the child and their whereabouts cannot be established through reasonable enquires then police should be contacted with the relevant forms completed and reported as missing.

**These forms are not intended for use in an emergency.**

Action	By Whom / Time and Date	Outcome
Room check <i>Any Items Missing?</i>		
Attempts to contact the child - <i>Calls / Whatsapp?</i>		
Contact with NOK		
Contact with associates <i>(as per Form 1)</i>		
Calling local hospitals		
Search of the property		
Search of the local area		
Visiting any addresses the child is known to frequent or is alleging to be at		
What enquiries will you continue to do while the young person is missing (please include how often you will complete these:		
How will you record this and notify the police that you have conducted these enquiries:		
What arrangements have been made to collect the young person when located: <i>Will staff or the social worker collect the child? Is taxi-use authorised for this child?</i>		
Completed by:		
Relationship to the person:		
Date:		

## **Appendix 2**

### **MARS PROTOCOL**

#### **Missing (After Reasonable Steps)**

#### **Placement Terms of Reference**

(Separate Document)