WEST MIDLANDS POLICE
Force Policy Document

POLICY TITLE: MISSING PERSONS
POLICY REFERENCE NO: FCID/06

Executive Summary

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that cases of missing persons are investigated effectively, and are supported by appropriate management structures.

When a person is reported missing the police’s primary responsibility is to safeguard the missing person.

West Midlands Police is committed to ensuring that officers and staff take appropriate and proportionate action to deal with people who are reported missing.

**Any enquiries in relation to this policy should be made directly with the policy contact / department shown below.

Intended Policy Audience.

All members of West Midlands Police who may have contact with missing persons or their families.

<table>
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<th>Current Version And Effective Date.</th>
<th>V3.1</th>
<th>October 2018</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Business Area Owner</td>
<td>FCID</td>
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<tr>
<td>Policy Initial Implementation Date</td>
<td>October 2018</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Review Date</td>
<td>October 2020</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protective Marking</td>
<td>Official</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suitable For Publication – Freedom Of Information</td>
<td>Suitable for FOI Publication (No Restrictions)</td>
<td>Accompanying Appendices are NOT suitable for FOI Publication</td>
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Approved Professional Practice:

This policy has been checked against APP. West Midlands Police has adopted the APP provisions, with supplementary information contained herein, which reflects local practice and the needs of the communities served by West Midlands Police.

Those provisions are shown in the links below and can be accessed via the home page of the APP website: https://www.app.college.police.uk/app-content/major-investigation-and-public-protection/missing-persons/

Supporting Documents:

- Appendix A - The Missing Persons Process Chart
- Appendix B - Initial Investigating Officer Checklist for actions to be taken
- Appendix C - Missing Person Transfer Protocol
- Appendix D – Missing Person Enquiry Transfer Request Form

Evidence Based Research

Full supporting documentation and evidence of consultation in relation to this policy including that of any version changes for implementation and review, are held with the Force Policy Co-ordinator including that of the authorised original Command Team papers.

Please Note. PRINTED VERSIONS SHOULD NOT BE RELIED UPON. THE MOST UPTO DATE VERSION OF ANY POLICY OR DIRECTIVE CAN BE FOUND ON THE EQUIP DATABASE ON THE INTRANET.
Force Vision

Preventing crime, protecting the public and helping those in need.

Force Diversity Vision Statement and Values

“Maximise the potential of people from all backgrounds through a culture of fairness and inclusion to deliver the best service for our communities”

“All members of the public and communities we serve, all police officers, special constables and police staff members shall receive equal and fair treatment regardless of, age, disability, sex, race, gender reassignment, religion/belief, sexual orientation, marriage/civil partnership and pregnancy/maternity. If you consider this policy could be improved for any of these groups please raise with the author of the policy without delay.

Code of Ethics

West Midlands Police is committed to ensuring that the Code of Ethics is not simply another piece of paper, poster or laminate, but is at the heart of every policy, procedure, decision and action in policing.

The Code of Ethics is about self-awareness, ensuring that everyone in policing feels able to always do the right thing and is confident to challenge colleagues irrespective of their rank, role or position.

Every single person working in West Midlands Police is expected to adopt and adhere to the principles and standards set out in the Code.

The main purpose of the Code of Ethics is to be a guide to "good" policing, not something to punish "poor" policing.

The Code describes nine principles and ten standards of behaviour that sets and defines the exemplary standards expected of everyone who works in policing.


The policy contained in this document seeks to build upon the overarching principles within the Code to further support people in the organisation to do the right thing.
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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. The purpose of this policy is to ensure that cases of missing persons are investigated effectively and are supported by appropriate management structures.

1.2. When a person is reported missing the police’s primary responsibility is to safeguard the missing person.

1.3. West Midlands Police is committed to ensuring that officers and staff take appropriate and proportionate action to deal with people who are reported missing.

1.4. The safeguarding of vulnerable people is paramount and a missing person report should be recognised as an opportunity to identify and address risks. Going missing should be treated as an indicator that the individual may be at risk of harm. Police actions and resources should be directed in the most effective way that makes people safe and prevents crime. This means prioritising activity so that the most intensive work addresses the needs of those missing people who are assessed as being at the greatest risk.

1.5. The reasons for a person deciding to go missing may be complex and linked to a variety of social or family issues.

Three key factors should be considered in a missing person investigation:

- protecting those at risk of harm
- minimising distress and ensuring high quality of service to the families and carers of missing persons
- reducing the risk, to include prosecuting, of those who perpetrate harm or pose a risk of harm when this is appropriate and supported by evidence.

1.6. The West Midlands Police response is focused on multi-agency working and preventing people from going missing. It is important to understand the reasons why individuals go missing. A greater understanding will enable more effective prevention strategies to be implemented.

1.7. There are four categories of risk in respect of missing persons; No apparent risk (absent), low risk, medium risk and high risk. The table within the APP should be used as a guide to an appropriate level of police response based on initial and on-going risk assessment in each case: The Risk Assessment Table

1.8. Risk assessment should be guided by the College of Policing Risk principles, the National Decision Model and Police Code of Ethics. West Midlands Police uses THRIVE+ as a risk assessment tool. This should be applied in respect of all reports of missing persons.
2. **The Missing Person Process**

The Missing Persons Process Chart has been agreed by Force Contact and the Locate team to assist staff in understanding procedures. Please refer to Appendix A.

3. **Minimum Actions**

3.1. The minimum actions to be taken in all cases are:

- Create an incident log on the OASIS command and control system, and a Compact record.
- Complete a risk assessment and use this to inform what actions will be taken and when (if risk levels change the response should be reviewed).
- Interrogate Police information systems to ascertain relevant information in respect of the missing person.
- Create and record a plan of immediate actions, which may include checking friends/relatives. It should be agreed and documented if these actions will be undertaken by police or the reporting person, depending on the circumstances of the incident.
- Set the latest time to review the risk assessment and activity, based on the circumstances of the report. The reasoning for this time frame should be clearly documented and the informant advised. The review may take place before the latest time if new information comes to light.
- Circulate the person as missing on PNC and check to determine if the person may be in custody.
- If the missing person is aged under 18, local children’s services must be notified (as soon practicable if deemed to be high risk).

4. **National Specialist Support Services**

4.1. The agencies able to advise and support during a missing person investigation can be found here: [Missing Persons Bureau and Charitable Organisations](#).

5. **Referrals to Social Care**

5.1. An individual should be referred to social care when there is concern that the person requires extra help from social services, beyond those services routinely available to the general public, for example:

- the individual is a ‘repeat missing person’, (reported as missing three times in a rolling 90 day period)
- the individual has experienced, or is likely to experience significant harm
for children, the parent or carer appears unable or unwilling to work to support and meet the needs of a child that has gone missing, or there is cause for concern for that or any other child

6. Prevention and Intervention Strategies

6.1. Child Abduction Warning Notices (CAWNs) can be an effective disruption strategy to sever contact between children and individuals who may wish to exploit them. It is vital that careful consideration is given to the issuing of a Child Abduction Warning Notice. For example, a CAWN must never be issued where prosecution is a more appropriate course of action. Often a CAWN will be one of a number of actions to safeguard a child.

6.2. Trigger plans: Where it is assessed that the individual is at risk of going missing again, the department with the most knowledge of, and involvement with, the individual should ensure that information gathered is used to create a plan outlining key actions to be taken if the person is subsequently reported missing. Briefing systems and missing databases will be utilised so that staff are aware of any information necessary to assist in the risk assessment and safeguarding requirements of missing people. Trigger plans should be reviewed following the conclusion of any subsequent missing incidents, and should be shared with other police forces if the individual moves to another area.

7. Information Sharing

7.1. Information sharing is critical to effective safeguarding. The information being shared should be relevant and proportionate, but data protection concerns should not be used as an excuse to withhold information where there is a justified reason for sharing it.

7.2. Sharing of personal information may be considered legally proportionate if the processing is necessary to protect the vital interests of:

- the individual (in a case where the individual's consent cannot be given or reasonably obtained),
- or another person (in a case where the individual's consent has been unreasonably withheld).

7.3. Police National Database - Consideration should be given to creating intelligence reports in relation to repeat and vulnerable missing individuals, using information from return interviews where available, in order to make this intelligence available to other forces directly via the PND. As it is not currently possible to upload missing person information directly to the PND, an intelligence report should be specifically created where a child or adult has been identified as being exploited.
8. **Gathering Information**

8.1. At first contact, the call handler must gather as much relevant information as possible as this will determine the initial police response, and the decision making in respect of the THRIVE risk assessment: They will also ensure that the following questions are asked:

- Is this significantly out of character, have they done this before? If yes, when was the last time?
- Have you been in contact with person, do you know their whereabouts and is there a time you expect them
- Do you know their intended actions when last seen and have you done anything to locate them?
- Do you know who they are with?
- Is this person a danger to themselves or others?
- Does the person have any specific medical needs; do you have a list of their medication? Is there a Care Plan in place?
- Is this person likely to self-harm or attempt suicide?
- Is this person likely to be subject to harm or a crime?
- Is this person a victim of abuse and/or at risk of sexual exploitation?
- Is this person being looked after or supported by any Children’s or Adult Services?
- Prior to this report was the person displaying any behaviours or actions you consider out of the ordinary or cause for concern? E.g. Increased use of technology, unexplained gifts/money?
- Are there any other specific concerns or can you offer any other significant information at all?

9. **Concern for Welfare or Safe and Well**

9.1. Logs are frequently created for ‘safe and well’ checks. There have been several cases where the police service has been criticised for misusing this category when the correct one was missing person.

9.2. Call handlers should make careful enquiries of callers and seek advice from their supervisors to ensure that, as far as possible, incidents are correctly classified as ‘missing person’ if the information from the caller, when probed, indicates that this is the correct classification. If the initial classification is correctly assessed to be ‘safe and well’ but subsequently turns out to be a missing person, the process for a missing person should be followed.

9.3. It is unacceptable to use the ‘concern for welfare’ categorisation to avoid a full missing person investigation. Any such action may leave a vulnerable missing person at risk of harm.
10. **Parent and Carer Responsibilities**

10.1. It is expected that parents and care providers take reasonable steps to locate the missing person prior to making a report to the police. This could include:

- attempts to contact the child or adult
- calling friends or family
- visiting areas that the child or adult is known to frequent
- visiting the place where the child or adult was known to be attending, for example, a friend’s house or party
- checking to see if any items are missing from the home.

10.2. Once the relevant information has been obtained, an incident will be created and graded in accordance with THRIVE+.

11. **Missing Person Investigations**

11.1. Where the THRIVE assessment is such that a member of staff will not be required to attend the report, the details will be recorded on COMPACT and the Contact Centre Supervisor will determine the missing person risk level. The missing person will also be recorded on the PNC. It is likely that there will be a requirement for an officer to attend if the missing person is subsequently assessed as low risk or above:

- The first officer to attend - The initial investigating officer (IIO) should begin the investigation, conduct appropriate searches and assess the level of risk. Judgements made at this point may have an impact on the effectiveness of the investigation.

11.2. The primary consideration for the IIO, and every other person managing the investigation, is the safety of the missing person. For the Initial Investigating Officer Checklist for actions to be taken, please refer to Appendix B.

11.3. The IIO will be responsible for recording the details on compact and circulating the person as wanted on the PNC.

11.4. The missing person risk assessment will be confirmed by the officer’s Supervisor:

- Supervisory Responsibilities - All missing person reports must be subject to active and proportionate investigation with intrusive direction and control by a supervisory/managerial officer, both within the Contact Centre and from Force Response.
11.5. The initial supervision should be by Sergeants and Inspectors. Their responsibilities are as follows:

- The officer’s assessment of risk should be checked, verified and recorded on the appropriate form. In high-risk cases, supervision should be immediate, in all other cases this should be done as soon as practicable.
- Supervisors must ensure that the appropriate actions are taken to locate the missing person without delay.
- Consider the need for an early media release where appropriate and advise corporate communications departments. If the missing person is under 18 years of age and potentially at significant risk of harm, consider the use of Child Rescue Alert.
- Consideration should be given to involving a detective, police search adviser, senior management team and child-specific services. This is particularly important where serious crime or terrorism is suspected.
- Consideration must be given to the allocation of sufficient resources to pursue an effective investigation.
- Consider the need for a multi-agency response involving partner organisations in the investigation.

11.6. Once the Missing Person Risk level has been determined and all initial actions possible have been completed, the LOCATE team will take responsibility for the longer-term investigation plan.

12. Ownership

12.1. The appropriate level of ownership of the investigation should be considered in all cases.

12.2. If a case is risk assessed and there is ‘no apparent risk’ ownership may remain within the control room or contact centre until the missing person has returned or until the risk assessment changes.

12.3. The LOCATE team will own investigation of all cases assessed as low, medium or high risk on completion of all initial actions, and the case review procedures for every risk.

12.4. A supervisor on the LOCATE team will ensure the case is reviewed and the risk reassessed at regular intervals, taking account of any new information. The time that has passed since the previous review should also be taken into account within each risk assessment.

13. Missing Person Case Review Process

13.1. Cases should be reviewed at the Locate Tasking and Review Meeting (TRM). High risk and exceptional cases will, where appropriate, be discussed at Force Criminal Investigation Department (FCID) TRM and in turn Force TRM.
13.2. Low or No apparent Risk – No action to be taken (once primary investigation has been completed).

- 28 days (Administrative task) – contact informant/text ‘text safe’ message
- consider inactive status – Detective Inspector (DI), LOCATE

13.3. Medium Risk – Locate DI to review Investigation plan and risk, as soon as practicable and ideally within the first 24 hours. They should also indicate the requirement for subsequent Inspector’s reviews. Where there is a decision to delay this, the rational should be recorded. Thereafter the Locate Sergeant to review the progress of the investigation at pre-determined intervals specific to each case. A 28 day independent review should be conducted by an officer who is independent from the investigation and is trained or accredited under the Detective Inspector Development Programme (DIDP) or the SIO Development Programme (SIODP), or any officer deemed suitably qualified by WMP, where there is an identified need.

13.4. High Risk - 24-hour reviews will be conducted by a Locate DI Monday to Friday. The review conducted on a Friday will cover the period of the weekend. During the weekend, the Duty DI (FCID) will be required to conduct a review if deemed necessary by the Locate DI, based on the risk and circumstances of the investigation. A review should be conducted by an independent DI when it is believed that a peer review of the investigation could be of benefit to the investigation by the LOCATE DI. The Locate DI will also request a review by a Detective Superintendent if it is believed that it would be of benefit, subject to the circumstances and risk of each case, and then where required on a case by case basis thereafter.

14. Critical Incidents

14.1. Any incident in which the effectiveness of the police response is likely to have a significant impact on the confidence of the subject, their family and/or the community should be designated as a Critical incident. A report of a missing person may be a critical incident.

14.2. For further information on the management of critical incidents see Critical incident management APP.

15. Upgrade/Downgrade of Risk Assessment

15.1. At every review, the risk should be considered and reassessed. Any officer can make a decision to increase the grade. However, any decision to lower the risk assessment from high to medium should be made in consultation with the LOCATE DI. Any decision to lower from medium to low or no apparent risk can be made by the Locate DS. Likewise, from low to no apparent risk.

15.2. The decision maker will record all rationale for increasing/reducing the risk level on Compact.
16. Investigation

16.1. Please see the APP for Missing Persons for detailed information in respect of further investigation.

16.2. Police actions in relation to support for families:

16.3. The trauma associated with a missing person investigation may place families under immense pressure and stress. Investigators are likely to require them to provide detailed information and there may also be public and media interest.

16.4. The information required by families and carers of those reported missing will depend on the circumstances of the case, however police officers or staff with responsibility for investigating a missing person report are able to support their needs by:

- providing a single point of contact (that is realistic for them to make contact with) and provide regular updates
- informing them of support services—this information may be provided as a leaflet or similar that includes details of the role of the Missing People charity
- listening and responding to any concerns that they may have about the investigation (recognising the importance of the incident and investigation to them)
- managing their expectations by giving realistic updates on what is being done and how an investigation is being conducted, (including any limitations that may be placed on it)
- ensuring that they are made aware of any media releases/press conferences (before they take place)
- maintaining contact in long-term cases and informing them of reviews
- providing a family liaison officer (in appropriate cases).

17. Debrief Interviews

17.1. It is good practice to conduct Debrief interviews (which are referred to as prevention interviews in the APP). The Local Authority also have a statutory obligation to complete interviews with children reported missing. They can provide an important opportunity to identify ongoing risk factors that may affect the likelihood of the individual going missing again, and should not be treated as simply administrative procedures to close a missing incident.

17.2. Either Response or the LOCATE team will take responsibility for conducting debriefs where adults are deemed to be vulnerable and/or at risk of harm, dependent upon which team has control of the investigation at the time of the requirement. Agreements should be reached between supervisors in each case to avoid confusion or delay. The purpose of the debrief is to:
• identify and deal with any harm they have experienced, including harm that might not have already been disclosed (any medical conditions should be discussed and any need for medical attention assessed).
• understand and try to address the reasons for the disappearance
• try to prevent it happening again.

17.3. The information gathered from the interview helps professionals to understand the reasons why the person went missing and to take action to prevent future missing episodes. It is important that a process exists to share information gathered from these interviews with partners.

17.4. Either Response or the LOCATE team will take responsibility for conducting debrief interviews with children that have been missing, dependent upon which team has control of the investigation at the time of the requirement. Agreements should be reached between supervisors in each case to avoid confusion or delay. However, the responsibility sits with local authorities to conduct formal prevention interviews.

17.5. The police have a responsibility to ensure that the returning person is safe and well. The purpose of the de-brief is to identify any ongoing risk or factors which may contribute to the person going missing again. Debriefs should therefore be carried out in all high risk cases, but should also be considered for no apparent risk (absent), low and medium cases. The interview provides a valuable opportunity to find out useful information that may indicate harm suffered by the returning person. It can also identify details that may help trace the person in the event of a future missing episode.

17.6. It may not be necessary to carry out debriefs for low and no apparent risk (absent) cases. To apply this discretion, however, an assessment of the circumstances of the case must be carried out to determine the value in contacting the returning person. This assessment requires an understanding of the circumstances in which the person went missing and anything known about what happened to the person while they were missing. There is also a need to consider the potential to gather information that might be of use in the event of a future missing episode. It may be considered practicable to conduct the interviews over the phone.

17.7. They should be checked for any indications that the person has suffered harm, where and with whom they have been, and be given an opportunity to disclose any offending against or by them.

17.8. It is important to identify the right person with the right skills to complete this debrief, in order to gather as much information as possible to inform any prevention work required. If information is disclosed indicating that the person has been harmed or is at risk of harm, appropriate action should be taken. This will usually be an officer from the LOCATE team.

17.9. Professional experience suggests that missing persons, especially children, may be unwilling to engage in this process. If this is the case, it is important to record their
demeanor, physical state, clothing and any other factors that may be relevant to any ongoing investigation of a crime, their care and safeguarding plans.

17.10. Further investigation may be needed in order to identify and address risks. Where it is identified that the person is likely to go missing again, a ‘trigger plan’ should be created in order to inform action should they be reported missing again.

18. Frequency of Checks

18.1. Every effort should be made to contact young people on every occasion that they have been missing from home. Where a person goes missing frequently, particularly from a care setting, it may not be practicable to see them every time they return. An example of this may be where they go missing on several occasions each day and it would be more effective to see them just once in each day at a convenient time. Young people missing from care are likely to have other people responsible for their welfare, predominantly the Local Authority. Checks should be taken to ensure that a child is not going missing to avoid something that may be happening in their care setting. The purpose of a prevention interview, which is the responsibility of the Local Authority, is to identify relevant factors to the missing episodes.

19. Indication of Exploitations or Harm

19.1. Any indicators that the individual has come to harm or may be the victim of crime should be noted and escalated for further investigation as relevant.

19.2. Where evidence is identified that the person may have been exploited, radicalised or otherwise harmed by a third party, referrals should be made to the appropriate specialist team for investigation and pursuit of suspects.

20. Additional Concerns

20.1. The following guidance has been developed to support investigators in cases where it is suspected that a child may at risk of abuse, neglect, exploitation, abduction, forced marriage or radicalisation.

- Indicators of concern for a child
- Risk identification
- Action in urgent or serious cases
- Child sexual exploitation APP (Definition of CSE, Risk factors, Warning signs)
- Forced marriage and honour based violence APP
- Kidnap and extortion APP (GPMS Restricted).

20.2. Please refer to APP for further details in respect of the above.
21. **Care Planning on Return**

21.1. For looked-after children and some vulnerable adults, reviewing their care plan is an important element of managing their return from a missing episode. Although this is not the responsibility of the police, it is important for police officers to share any information with partners which may influence the care plan.

21.2. Care planning involves a comprehensive assessment of the individual’s needs and takes into account their wishes, feelings and aspirations for their future. The care plan should be used to decide which placement (eg, foster care or residential home) will be most appropriate.

22. **Case Closure**

22.1. It will not usually be appropriate for missing person cases to be closed without the individual being seen by the police or a relevant professional. It is important that the appropriate closing code (for command and control systems) is used to identify the incident as a missing person.

22.2. In circumstances where the missing person has been located, but it is impractical to see them owing to their present circumstances, e.g., they are abroad or are deliberately making themselves unavailable to police, the case can be closed once reviewed by the LOCATE DI.

23. **Specific Investigations**

23.1. Missing Children: Safeguarding young and vulnerable people is a responsibility of the police service and partner agencies (see Children Act 2004). When the police are notified that a child is missing, there is a clear responsibility on them to prevent the child from coming to harm. A child abuse non crime should be obtained in addition to the recording on compact and a referral made to Social Services.

23.2. Child Rescue Alert (CRA) is a partnership between the police and the media which seeks public assistance when it is feared that a child may be at risk of serious harm. Assistance is sought via TV, radio, text messaging, social and digital media (including the internet) so that relevant information relating to the child, offender or any specified vehicle is passed on to the police.

23.3. Child Rescue Alert (CRA) focuses on the risk to the child, rather than whether or not an offence has taken place.

23.4. The criteria for launching an alert is:

- that the missing person is a child (under 18 years old), and
- there is a perception that the child is in imminent danger of serious harm or death, and
• there is sufficient information available to enable the public to assist police in locating the child.

23.5. **Child Rescue Alert Activation Protocol** (available via POLKA, which is an OFFICIAL online tool with access limited to registered PNN and GSi users).

23.6. The CRA has been expanded to enable alerts to be disseminated by the charity Missing People.

23.7. The system is managed by the National Crime Agency (NCA) and specialist advice is available 24/7 by contacting 0870 785 1033.

24. **Cross Border Cases**

24.1. Difficulties can arise when a person reported missing resides outside the area where the report is being made. The police area that receives the report must record it and carry out all necessary initial actions. If the responsibility for a case is subsequently transferred to another force area, the rationale for doing so must be recorded.

24.2. When deciding where ownership of the investigation lies, the principal issue is to consider where the majority of the enquiries are and who has the greatest opportunity of locating the missing person. It is probable that the place where the person was last seen would generate the majority of the initial enquiries.

24.3. Please refer to Appendix C for the Missing Person Transfer Protocol and Appendix D for the Missing Person enquiry Transfer Request Form.

25. **Immigration Cases**

25.1. When a person who is reported missing to the police, has entered or stayed in the country without the appropriate authority, the decision on which authority should deal with the report will depend on the circumstances of disappearance and level of risk.

25.2. Consideration should be given to whether:

- the individual is a victim of [modern slavery](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/modern-slavery-act) or is being [exploited](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/exploitation-of-human-beings)
- the person is intentionally missing and seeking to avoid immigration procedures or repatriation
- there are any suspicious circumstances surrounding their disappearance.

25.3. The assessment of risk is important when deciding the status of the person. Officers should consider the extent to which the individual is vulnerable, whether they have been able to exercise consent, and whether there is any reason to suspect any degree of coercion or deceit.
25.4. Children must always be considered as vulnerable and not being able to consent to their own exploitation. Safeguarding issues must take priority and this should be the responsibility of all agencies.

26. **International Investigations**

26.1. Where a report is received of a person missing overseas, a missing person report should be created in line with the guidance above. The details should then be forwarded via Force Intelligence to UKICB (Interpol). This report can then be assessed and transmitted to the overseas force responsible for the investigation. This ensures that the overseas force has the most useful information to conduct their enquiries.

26.2. Please see the APP for Missing Persons for more detailed information.

27. **Wanted/Missing**

27.1. There will be occasions when people may be reported as missing who are wanted in relation to:

- their suspected involvement in a criminal investigation
- an outstanding warrant issued by a court
- having absconded from lawful custody/care – being absent without leave (AWOL)
- having entered the country without appropriate authority (see immigration cases).

27.2. Police should evaluate each case on an individual basis and respond appropriately, according to the priority that should be given in that case. For example, if a person is wanted for a minor matter but the missing persons risk assessment indicates a high risk, then it may be appropriate to deal with the case as a missing persons enquiry. Conversely a low risk missing person wanted for murder may be more appropriately dealt with as a wanted person and the correct investigative approach applied. The guiding principle is to adopt an approach that will bring both matters to the safest, most efficient conclusion.

28. **EQUALITY ASSESSMENT (EA).**

28.1. The policy has been reviewed and drafted against all protected characteristics in accordance with the Public Sector Equality Duty embodied in the Equality Act 2010. The policy has therefore been Equality Impact Assessed to show how WMP has evidenced 'due regard' to the need to:

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment, and victimisation.
- Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
- Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
28.2. *Supporting documentation in the form of an Equality Assessment (EA) has been completed and is available for viewing in conjunction with this policy.*

29. **HUMAN RIGHTS.**

29.1. This policy has been implemented and reviewed in accordance with the European Convention and principles provided by the Human Rights Act 1998. The application of this policy has no differential impact on any of the articles within the Act. However, failure as to its implementation would impact on the core duties and values of WMP (and its partners), to uphold the law and serve/protect all members of its community (and beyond) from harm.

30. **FREEDOM OF INFORMATION (FOI).**

30.1. Public disclosure of this policy document is determined by the Force Policy Co-ordinator on agreement with its owner. Version 3 of this policy has been GPMS marked as Suitable for FOI Publication (No Restrictions), however the accompanying appendices are NOT suitable for FOI Publication

30.2. Public disclosure **does not** automatically apply to supporting Force policies, directives and associated guidance documents, and in all cases the necessary advice should be sought prior to disclosure to any one of these associated documents.

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<tr>
<th>Which exemptions apply and to which section of the document?</th>
<th>Whole document</th>
<th>Section number</th>
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31. **TRAINING**

31.1. Awareness for the wider Force will be via Newsbeat, Team Talk, Noticeboard Messages and a bespoke internal communications plan by Corporate Communications.

32. **PROMOTION / DISTRIBUTION & MARKETING.**

32.1. The following methods will be adopted to ensure full knowledge of the Policy:

- Publication of policy on force policy portal, issuance of MOTD notice regarding new policy
- Bespoke training for Force Contact
- Newsbeat articles
- Team Talk
- Bespoke internal communications plan by Corporate Communications
33. **REVIEW.**

33.1. The policy business owner FCID maintain outright ownership of the policy and any other associated documents and in-turn delegate responsibility to the department/unit responsible for its continued monitoring.

33.2. The policy should be considered a ‘living document’ and subject to regular review to reflect upon any Force, Home Office/ACPO, legislative changes, good practice (learning the lessons) both locally and nationally, etc.

33.3. A formal review of the policy document, including that of any other potential impacts i.e. EQIA, will be conducted by the date shown as indicated on the first page.

33.4. Any amendments to the policy will be conducted and evidenced through the Force Policy Co-ordinator and set out within the version control template.

33.5. Feedback is always welcomed by the author/owner and/or Force Policy Co-ordinator as to the content and layout of the policy document and any potential improvements.

CHIEF CONSTABLE

34. **VERSION HISTORY.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Version</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Reason for Change</th>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>1st June 2013</td>
<td>Introduction of Absent Category</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>7th July 2015</td>
<td>Introduce lessons learned, updates re Absent definition, graded response, travel for purposes of terrorist activities, update terminology following STT</td>
<td>Sgt 5366 Michelle Allen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>11/09/2015</td>
<td>Policy approved 22/07/2015 awaiting FOI confirmation – received and policy published</td>
<td>56408 Couchman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>November 2018</td>
<td>Amended in line with APP – Absent category has been removed and replaced with missing no risk</td>
<td>Ch Insp Sean Phillips</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>January 2019</td>
<td>Changed policy reference to a FCID reference as it had a PPU reference</td>
<td>Sharanjit Dhillon</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Initial Investigating Officer Check List

The primary consideration for the first officer to attend is the safety of the missing person. Judgments made at this early stage may have a significant impact on the outcome of the investigation.

The initial investigating officer (IIO) must:

- begin the investigation – identify places where the person might be; check information and assumptions; corroborate what they have been told; review the risk assessment; seek and secure evidence
- conduct appropriate searches – places where the missing person might be such as hospital, custody, friends and/or relatives
- conduct appropriate intelligence checks – PNC, force intelligence systems, VISOR, PND
- continually reassess the level of risk using the risk principles
- assess the level of support required for the missing person’s family, residential worker or foster carer as appropriate.

If it is suspected a serious crime has occurred or the individual is at significant risk of harm, the IIO should inform a supervising officer immediately.

There are a number of actions that should be carried out by the IIO to ensure that sufficient information is gathered:

- consider seizing electronic devices, computers, and other documentation, e.g., diaries, financial records and notes and obtain details of usernames and passwords
- obtain photos of the missing person. These should ideally be current likeness of the missing person and obtained in a digital format
- obtain details of the individual’s mobile phone and if they have it with them. If they do, arrange for a TextSafe® to be sent by the Missing People charity
- obtain details of any vehicles to which the missing person may have access
- confirm if the person has taken their passport; consider prompt circulation if it is deemed likely the individual may leave the country (This is particularly important where there are concerns that an individual has been radicalised and is intending to travel abroad, see National Ports Office – Heathrow.)
- upload the missing person report and place markers on relevant vehicles on the PNC without delay
• circulate details of the missing person on local information systems and to relevant local partners, for example hospitals, ambulance service, taxi and bus firms
• consider obtaining any physical evidence of identity such as fingerprints or DNA samples (in accordance with Code of Practice (2009) Collection of Missing Persons Data.)
• consider whether specialist officers or resources are required.
APPENDIX C

West Midlands Police
Missing Person Transfer Protocol

1.0 Background

1.1. This protocol outlines the procedure to be followed by West Midlands Police (WMP) in relation to the transfer of Missing Persons to and from other police forces.

1.2. Missing persons can be some of the most vulnerable individuals within society and police forces should have due regard to this risk.

1.3. This protocol has been developed in response to a Report to Prevent Further Deaths issued to WMP under Regulation 28 and 29 of the Coroners (Investigations) Regulations 2013 by HM Senior Coroner for Birmingham and Solihull.

1.4. This protocol contains the details and implementation of improved practice by WMP in response to cross border missing persons.

2. College of Policing Authorised Professional Practice

2.1. The Authorised Professional Practice (APP) is authorised by the College of Policing as the official source of professional practice on policing. Police officers and staff are expected to have regard to APP in discharging their responsibilities. There may, however, be circumstances when it is perfectly legitimate to deviate from APP, provided there is clear rationale for doing so.

2.2. The purpose of Missing persons APP is to ensure that cases of missing persons are investigated effectively, and are supported by appropriate management structures.

2.3. The APP highlights that difficulties can arise when a person reported missing resides outside the area where the report is being made, eg, a student in temporary accommodation or a day trip visitor.

2.4. The police area that receives the report must record it and carry out all necessary initial actions. If the responsibility for a case is subsequently transferred to another force area, the rationale for doing so must be recorded. Written acknowledgement from the receiving force should be obtained.

2.5. When deciding where ownership of the investigation lies, the principal issue is to consider where the majority of the enquiries are and who has the greatest opportunity of locating the missing person. It is probable that the place where the person was last seen would generate the majority of the initial enquiries (although this is not always the case).
3. Cross-border enquiries (APP)

3.1. In cross-border tasking and requests, details of the result of the risk assessment carried out by the investigating force, and other contextual information, should be passed to forces likely to become involved in the enquiry. This transfer of information allows colleagues to decide on the focus of their enquiries.

3.2. There is a responsibility on Force Contact staff and investigating officers to request this information. The officer in charge of the investigation in the initiating force should ensure that all relevant information, including the risk assessment, is passed to the force that will be managing subsequent enquiries. It is important that there is a seamless transfer of responsibility for the investigation so that no cases are missed.

3.3. The officer making the transfer should check that all materials have been received in the receiving force and that details of the person who received the information are noted. Developing a process that includes providing this additional information will reduce the risk to all involved.

3.4. All police forces should have email addresses that are available 24 hours a day so that investigation records can be shared and transferred where relevant.

4. Ownership and Responsibility for Cases (APP)

4.1. There must be clear and unambiguous ownership and responsibility for the investigation. In cases where the appropriate ownership is not clear, the matter should initially be agreed between supervisors within each relevant force to determine who should own the investigation. In the majority of cases it will be easily apparent which force should lead, for example where the majority of enquiries will be in one force area or where the enquiry is linked to other investigations in another force area.

4.2. Where agreement cannot be reached at this level it should be referred to a senior manager, who will discuss the matter with a senior manager of the other force. Where an agreement on primacy for an investigation has not been resolved, all necessary enquiries should continue with the originating force. If enquiries are requested in more than one force area, the originating force (or receiving force if primacy has been agreed) will act as coordinator to prevent duplication and to ensure that all information and intelligence is being considered by one force and the necessary decision-making is taking place.

4.3. Transferring cases should be done in a timely manner using an auditable process. An investigation should not be closed without clear confirmation that all information and intelligence has been transferred and received and the receiving force has taken ownership of the case.
5. West Midlands Police Missing Resources

5.1. There are a number of WMP resources that can be involved in the investigation of missing persons.

5.2. Force Contact receive incoming demand in relation to missing persons usually in the form of a 999 or 101 call but this can be via other channels including email, web form or command and control log transfer from another police force. Force Contact are responsible for the initial assessment of risk in relation to missing persons.

5.3. Force Response conduct a primary investigation in relation to missing persons and ensure recording on COMPACT, the WMP IT system for managing missing person investigations.

5.4. Locate are the investigation team who manage the secondary investigations into missing persons and have ownership of most cases once primary investigation has been completed. Locate are specialist investigators focussed on preventing and finding missing persons.

5.5. CTAC (Centre for Tasking and Co-Ordination) are a 24/7 intelligence function that manage incoming demand and ensure correct prioritisation.

5.6. The Mission Support Superintendent is the senior operational police officer on duty from 0700 to 2300 each day with responsibility for managing demand and threat, risk and harm across the force area.

5.7. The Force Incident Manager (FIM) is a chief inspector who is the senior responsible police officer on duty between 2300 and 0700 each day.

5.8. There is a Locate Inspector or Manager on duty from 0700 to 1600 each week day.

5.9. The Force CID Duty Inspector is the senior detective on duty from 1400 to 2300 on weekdays and from 0700-2300 on weekends.

5.10. Force CID have a Nights Detective Sergeant on duty each night from 2200-0700.

6. Core Principles

6.1. Ownership of missing persons remains the responsibility of the recording police force until a transfer has been agreed in writing by WMP.

6.2. WMP will not delay undertaking actions or enquiries in relation to missing persons whilst ownership is under discussion.

6.3. All requests should be made verbally and followed up in writing with a clear rationale.

6.4. Command and Control and COMPACT should be used to document investigations in respect of missing persons.

6.5. Locate are the main WMP resource for investigating missing persons.

7. Urgent Action Required On Other Police Force Area
7.1. Where ownership remains with WMP but there are urgent or fast track enquiries required on another force area the owner of the missing person investigation should make verbal contact with the other force and outline the requested enquiry without delay.

7.2. A record should be made on either the existing command and control log or COMPACT record of the requested enquiry.

7.3. The requesting officer should provide written details of the enquiry to the other force through a command and control log or email.

7.4. Where the other force refuses to carry out the enquiry or there is unnecessary delay the requesting officer should escalate as below:
   - Office Hours – Locate Inspector / Manager
   - Weekdays 1400-2300 & Weekends 0700-2300 – Force CID Duty Inspector
   - 2300-0700 – Force Incident Manager

7.5. Any further escalation should be via the Mission Support Superintendent who will discuss with a senior manager from the other police force.

7.6. All contact details are available through WMP Force Control Room.

8. Urgent Action Required On West Midlands Police Area

8.1. Urgent requests for enquiries on WMP force area by another force should be sent to the Force Control Room through normal channels or by email to missing@west-midlands.pnn.police.uk.

8.2. Where WMP receives a request for an urgent enquiry on its force area it should resource this request as soon as practicable.

8.3. The Force Control Room will determine the most appropriate resource to undertake this enquiry. However, the presumption should be that Locate staff undertake these enquiries unless unable to do so.

8.4. A command and control log should be created to accurately record the request and detail the outcome of the enquiry.

9. Request to Transfer Missing Person Enquiry Out of Force

9.1. The investigating officer should complete the WMP Missing Persons Enquiry Transfer Request Form. (Appendix A).

9.2. This form is based on the APP nationally recommended form.

9.3. All sections should be completed and the request to transfer be authorised by the Locate Inspector or equivalent manager.

9.4. The authorising officer should verbally contact the other force and notify them of the request to transfer ownership.

9.5. The Missing Persons Enquiry Transfer Request Form should be sent by email to the other force. This email address must be monitored 24/7.
9.6. The other force should acknowledge receipt of the transfer request and notify WMP in writing of their decision. This should be sent to missing@west-midlands.pnn.police.uk.

9.7. Any escalations should be made as paragraph 7.4

9.8. All transfer requests should be documented on the command and control log or COMPACT.

10. Request to Transfer Missing Person into West Midlands Police

10.1. All requests should be completed on the WMP Missing Persons Enquiry Transfer Request Form or other APP compliant documentation.

10.2. All requests should be sent to missing@west-midlands.pnn.police.uk

10.3. The email inbox will be monitored by a designated Locate supervisor between 0700 and 2300 and by CTAC from 2300 to 0700.

10.4. The written request should be supported with a verbal conversation confirming the details of the request.

10.5. A Locate Inspector / Manager must be involved in any discussion around transfer into WMP but where they are unavailable a Locate supervisor can offer practical advice and guidance.

10.6. This can often take place during office hours but there should be no delay if the enquiries are urgent in which case the guidance in paragraph 7.0 should be followed.
West Midlands Police have, in accordance with force policy and national guidance, recorded the following person as ‘missing’.

### MISPER DETAILS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name:</th>
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<tr>
<td>Date of Birth:</td>
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<td>Home Address:</td>
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<tr>
<td>Address from which person went missing:</td>
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<td>COMPACT ref number:</td>
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<td>Date Reported Missing:</td>
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<td>Date Last Seen:</td>
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### Brief Circumstances

As the recording force, all initial enquiries have been completed. These have led me to believe that the majority of enquiries relating to this investigation fall outside of West Midlands Police boundaries. It is also my belief that west Midlands Police do not have the best chance of locating this missing person.

The information that I have made this assessment on includes (detail relevant enquiries, risk assessments, Intel, etc. that has been considered):
NB: National guidance states that there should be credible evidence to suggest the person is no longer in the force where they have gone missing.

As such I now request that (insert name of appropriate force) assumes ownership of the investigation.

GUIDANCE ON THE MANAGEMENT, RECORDING AND INVESTIGATION OF MISSING PERSONS 2010 (NPIA)

4.13 Cross Border Cases

Difficulties can arise when a person reported missing normally resides outside the area where the report is being made, e.g., a student in temporary accommodation or a day trip visitor. The principle that the police area that receives the report must record it is particularly important in these cases. The force that records the details of the report should carry out all necessary initial actions and then the report can be transferred to another police area for investigation. Looked – after children who are placed out of area are a particular source of difficulty between police forces.

The key issue is to consider where the bulk of the enquiries are and where is the greatest opportunity of locating the missing person. It is probable that the place where the person was last seen would generate the majority of initial enquiries. There must be ownership and responsibility for the investigation. The focus should be on achieving a satisfactory outcome for the missing person and making this decision promptly. It is not appropriate to have ongoing arguments about who should own an investigation.

In cases of dispute, where the focus is not clear, the matter should initially be referred to a senior supervisor within each force to determine who should own the investigation. In extreme situations where it cannot be resolved at this level, it should be referred to an ACPO officer who will discuss the matter with an ACPO representative of the other force. If the dispute is within one force in relation to internal boundary issues, it should be referred to the Assistant Chief Constable (ACC) who has territorial responsibility.

I believe that it is appropriate that ownership of this investigation is passed to your force so that enquiries can be progressed as efficiently and expeditiously as possible, thus maximising the chances of facilitating the missing person’s safe return.

Signed: 

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If transfer of the investigation is accepted then West Midlands Police will undertake to provide any relevant information relating to the enquiry as may be appropriate. The force will also take responsibility for carrying out any reasonable enquiries relating to the investigation that fall within its geographical boundaries.

**To be completed by the decision maker representing force in receipt of this request.**

I do/do not (delete as appropriate) authorise the transfer of the above missing persons enquiry to (insert force name).

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<tr>
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**To be completed if declining transfer of the investigation**

I acknowledge the request to transfer ownership of the missing person investigation relating to (misper name) from West Midlands Police to (insert force name)

I note the national guidance in relation to cross border enquiries. At this time I disagree that (insert force name) has the bulk of enquiries or the greatest opportunity to locate the missing person. My rationale in making this decision is:

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Please respond back to this form as soon as reasonably practicable to:

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