

Missing Student Procedure (and Concern for Welfare)

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Purpose of the Policy

The purpose of this policy is to provide staff with a framework on when to call the Police and the information they need to pass to the Police so that they will deal with the safeguarding concerns of the student.

Introduction

In September 2014, Devon & Cornwall Police changed the way they deal with missing persons.

They now use the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) guidance "Interim Guidance on the Management, Recording and Investigation of Missing Persons 2013".

Under this guidance a missing person is "anyone whose whereabouts cannot be established and where the circumstances are out of character OR the context suggest the person may be subject of crime OR at risk of harm to themselves OR another".

This guidance also introduced a new category - ABSENT. The guidance states absent is "a person not at a place where they are expected OR required to be".

The difference between missing and absent means that the Police will deal with a missing student incident, but if they think the student is absent they will monitor the situation only to see if the student turns up. If the student doesn't turn up, then they will change the report to missing.

Devon & Cornwall Police categorise missing persons as high, medium, low risk (and now absent). If a child under 18 is categorised as missing, they will be high or medium risk depending on the circumstances.

Before calling the Police about a student leaving academy premises, staff must evaluate the circumstances to ascertain whether the student has gone missing OR is it a concern for welfare.

Missing Student

If a student goes missing and staff are unable to locate him/her on academy premises, or staff have seen them leave the premises and there are safeguarding concerns for that student, the Police should be contacted (see below "concern for welfare").

When calling the Police on the non-emergency number 101, the call will be answered by the Police call centre. The call centre operator will normally ask the caller a series of questions to determine if this call is a missing person or an absent person. Under the ACPO guidelines the questions will be similar to the questions below:

1. What is the specific concern in this instance?
2. What has been done so far to trace this individual?
3. Is this significantly out of character?
4. Are there any specific medical needs?
5. Are they likely to be subjected to crime?
6. Are they likely to be the victim of crime?
7. Are they currently at risk of sexual exploitation?

8. Are they likely to attempt suicide?
9. Do they pose a danger to other people?
10. Is there any other information relevant to their absence?

Devon & Cornwall Police may ask additional questions.

It is very important that when asked "Is there any other information relevant to their absence" that other relevant information, such as care orders and their content is shared with the Police. The more information that is passed on about the safeguarding concerns for the student, the more likely it is that the Police will treat the call as a missing person.

Once the missing person call is logged by the call centre, you should be given a Police log number. Please retain this log number. After logging all of the information, the call centre will send the report to the Police control room where it is triaged by the Police Control Room Supervisor (who will be a Police Officer). They may call back for further information, or to try to revert the report into absent instead of missing.

If staff get a call back from the Police, they must ensure that they give them all the relevant information regarding the safeguarding concerns for the student who has gone missing.

Concern for Welfare

When a concern for welfare has been logged, Police attendance is usually fairly quick. A concern for welfare can be raised when a student leaves academy premises, refuses to come back into the academy and staff have reason to believe that by being off the premises that they are at risk of harm due to their current state and the location of the academy premises.

An example of this would be that the student leaves the academy site but staff can still see them, however the student is near a busy road and the staff feel that the student may be harmed due to his current state. In such a situation, the Police should be called.

The student may be missing from our academy site, but they are not missing under the police ACPO guidance. Reporting them as a "concern for welfare" should initiate a quick response from the Police.

Policy Review

This Policy will be reviewed every two years.