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# Bishop Challoner School



## WHAT TO DO IF YOU SUSPECT A CHILD IS RUNNING AWAY POLICY



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This policy has been prepared following guidance from:

- Statutory guidance on children who run away or go missing from home or care January 2014
- Working Together to Safeguard Children July 2018 (A guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children)
- BSCB Missing Children Protocol July 2017

It should be read in conjunction with the following policies:

Educational Visits Policy, Behaviour Management, Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.

### **What to do if you suspect a child is running away**

When a child goes missing or runs away they are at risk. Safeguarding children therefore includes protecting them from this risk. Local authorities are responsible for protecting children whether they go missing from their family home or from local authority care. Looked after children missing from their placements are particularly vulnerable.

#### **The normal child protection processes always apply.**

Discuss your concerns with your manager or safeguarding lead. Together you may decide on a range of actions including:

1. You or a member of your pastoral support staff speaking to the child or young person involved, always making sure that you inform them that you will have to share your concerns.
2. Sharing your concerns with their parents – unless they are running away because of issues such as forced marriage or sexual abuse.
3. Informing the police if the child is missing from school and hasn't been reported by their parents. Do check if they intend to inform social care.
4. Making a referral to children's services, according to policies in your organisation if the child is at risk of harm or in need. Always check your local area policies and apply these in working with the child and family. If you feel that a child should be receiving help from social services and is not, you should keep making referrals until your concerns are addressed.
5. Initiating an assessment of needs eg Early Help and CAF to help support the child and family if you feel they need additional services. This must be done with the express consent of the parent. If a parent refuses and you remain concerned, they should be referred to children's services as above.
6. Going to a specialist local service where they can ask for advice or refer a child or family, such as an education welfare officer, missing from home service, multi agency subgroup of local safeguarding children boards, police missing person co-ordinator, etc.

When receiving a missing person report in relation to Children in Care, the Police will tailor their response to the circumstances and the risk assessment of the child. Children living out of borough will be reported as missing to the police force in the locality of the placement. Police risk assess reports of missing children as follows:

- High Risk - The risk posed is immediate and there are substantial grounds for believing that the subject is in danger through their own vulnerability; or have been the victim of a serious crime; or the risk posed is immediate and there are substantial grounds for believing that the public is in danger
- Medium Risk - The risk posed is likely to place the subject in danger or they are a threat to themselves or others
- Low Risk - There is no apparent threat of danger to either the subject or the public

All missing child notifications will be screened and processed by the MASH.

#### How you can support a young person who has run away

- **Be understanding, calm and relaxed with us.** Don't automatically think they have done something wrong. Young people are more likely to open up and allow you to help if you treat them with respect and understanding.
- **Help them trust you and don't judge them.** They need a person that they can trust, that listens and doesn't judge - body language is important.
- **Be straightforward and honest with them.** Where you cannot legally keep information they have disclosed to you, explain this to them and involve them in the process of disclosure.
- **Listen to them and take them seriously.** Don't judge them and don't assume you know the facts about a situation until you do. Support a young person who comes to you with problems by listening to them and to the facts of a situation.
- **Explain things to them.** They need to understand the benefits of doing something rather than simply being threatened with the consequences of not doing it.

#### Common strategies to manage repeat missing episodes include:

- Disrupting the child's contact with adults suspected of being involved in grooming, abuse, coercion, trafficking, violence, use and supply of illegal substances, illegal activities and sexual exploitation
- Disrupting the child's relationship with other young people suspected of introducing them to adults involved in grooming, abuse, coercion, trafficking, violence, use and supply of illegal substances, illegal activities and sexual exploitation
- Gathering evidence to prosecute adults suspected of being involved in grooming, abuse, coercion, trafficking, violence, use and supply of illegal substances, illegal activities and sexual exploitation
- Listening and taking account of the child's wishes and feelings
- Promoting positive relationships with family, friends and carers
- Identifying ways of physically protecting the child
- Ensuring contact is maintained with a child whilst missing or absent
- Setting clear boundaries and developing contracts regarding expectations and responsibilities

- Motivating positive behaviour
  - Empowering the carer/ foster carer
  - Building the child's self-esteem, self-confidence and self-worth through the provision of positive activities
  - Raising awareness of the risks associated with running away or being missing
  - Meeting any physical, emotional, mental health needs the child might have
  - Working with the carers or parents to make the child's home a place where they want to be
  - Working with education & training providers to meet the child's needs
  - Providing specialist support through to multi-agency partnerships

**Where to go for more information or help :**

**The Children's Society**

<https://www.childrenssociety.org.uk/what-we-do/policy-and-lobbying/children-risk/runaways>

**Missing People**

[www.missingpeople.org.uk](http://www.missingpeople.org.uk)

24 hour confidential helpline: 116 000 or email: [116000@missingpeople.org.uk](mailto:116000@missingpeople.org.uk)

**NSPCC**

Helpline: 0808 800 5000

Email: [help@nspcc.org.uk](mailto:help@nspcc.org.uk)

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