



Hertfordshire County Council - Adult at Risk of Going Missing Guidance

PURPOSE

- **Families and communities need to be confident that when an adult with care and support needs goes missing everything will be done to ensure they do not go missing again, and that those responsible for finding them will work to reduce the likelihood that they will come to harm whilst away.**
- The aim of this document is to improve understanding of Health and Community Services' (HCS) organisational responsibilities to protect and safeguard adults with care and support needs at risk of going missing in Hertfordshire.
- The 'Adult at risk of going missing form' is intended to save the family and police time by ensuring the information required by the police is completed in advance and readily available in an emergency.
- A coordinated response will maximise the efficiency of all organisational resources when an individual is reported as missing. The focus is on inter-agency information sharing and working practices.
- The Adult at Risk of Going Missing form is aimed mainly at adults with mental ill health, learning disabilities and those with dementia who may be at heightened risk of going missing.

DEFINITIONS

- An 'Adult at Risk' is someone aged 18 years or over, who is, or may be in need of, community care services by reason of disability, age or illness; and as a result of those needs is unable to protect themselves against abuse or neglect or the risk of it.
- Hertfordshire Constabulary currently define a missing person as: "Anyone whose whereabouts cannot be established and where the circumstances are out of character or the context suggests the Person may be subject of crime or at risk of harm to themselves or another."

RESPONSIBILITIES

- The Adult at Risk of Going Missing form is intended to be a helpful resource to families and the police. It is the responsibility of the service user and their family or carer to complete and store it in a safe place.
- The police are entitled to expect family and carers, including staff acting in a parenting role in care homes, to undertake reasonable actions to try and establish the whereabouts of the individual before reporting.
- The police should be informed if it is believed there is immediate risk to the missing individual's safety and wellbeing. In such circumstances HCS will provide information to appropriate search agencies as required.
- It is important that the families and carers of the individual are provided with the appropriate level of support and information throughout the process, and signposted to relevant charity or voluntary organisations, such as the charity 'Missing People' www.missingpeople.org.uk

RECORDING

- People at risk of going missing and their families/carer can be encouraged to download and complete the 'Adult at Risk of Going Missing' form from the Hertfordshire.gov.uk safeguarding pages. This should be kept in a safe place in their own home. However, if HCS help to administer the form, HCS can offer to store it electronically in the service user's care record.
- Alternatively, the service user may want their information stored by the police, and in such cases HCS should advise them to contact Herts Constabulary Missing Person's Unit on 01707 354000

PROCEDURE

- If a call is received by HCS to report that an adult with care and support needs has gone missing:
- HCS will advise the caller to call the police. The police request all reasonable steps should be taken to locate the missing individual before they are reported missing to the police. This could be phoning friends/relatives/carers, ring mobile telephones and check in places where the missing person would usually be.
- Once the caller reports the incident to the police, HCS will request that the caller contacts HCS again to inform them of the log/reference number for their case for monitoring purposes.
- The police will then become the authority in charge of the investigation.
- Information relating to the missing episode should be recorded on the individual's care record to reflect an accurate, up to date account of their circumstances.

WHEN AN ADULT IS FOUND

- Once the individual has been found or returns home, HCS should consider undertaking a social care assessment and identify if there are any adult safeguarding issues. Any assessment should assess the level of risk the individual was exposed to when missing.
- A safeguarding referral should then be made if there are concerns regarding abuse or neglect.
- Establish why the person went missing in the first place and assess the risk of the person going missing again in the future.
- If there is evidence to suggest that a crime has happened to, or been committed by the individual whilst missing, the case should be referred to Hertfordshire Constabulary.
- Links to useful websites:
 - Hertfordshire Constabulary: www.herts.police.uk
 - Missing People: www.missingpeople.org.uk
 - Carer's in Hertfordshire: www.carersinherts.org.uk

Adult at Risk of Going Missing – Incident Procedure

For all missing adult incidents, calls should be directed to the police as soon as possible if there are immediate safety concerns for the individual.

HCS can only uphold a monitoring role and provide information to appropriate search agents as required.

HCS receive a call regarding an adult with care and support needs who has gone missing.

Advise the caller that the police are entitled to expect family and carers, including staff in care homes, to undertake reasonable actions to try and establish the whereabouts of the individual before reporting them as missing.

Advise the caller to phone the police and report the individual as missing. Request that they call back and provide HCS with a log/reference number for their case for monitoring purposes.

The police will then become the leading authority regarding the case. HCS will have a log/reference number to monitor the situation as necessary.

Once the individual has returned/ is found, a social worker should organise a visit with the individual to check they are safe; a safeguarding referral should then be made if there are concerns regarding abuse or neglect.

Information relating to the missing episode should be recorded on the individual's ACSIS file to reflect an accurate and up to date record.

It is important that the family and friends of the individual are provided with the appropriate level of support and information throughout the process.

Signposts should be given about relevant charity or voluntary organisations, such as the charity 'Missing People'

www.missingpeople.org.uk

If requested by a service user, their family, relative or carer, HCS can save a copy of the completed Adult at Risk of Going Missing form electronically by scanning and attaching to the individual's Livelink folder.

Forms should be saved in Livelink folder c- 'Assessment, Care Planning & Review', under the sub folder 'Assessment, Care Planning & Review'.

Appropriate HCS file naming conventions must be used to ensure the form is easily retrievable at all times.