Herefordshire Council

REPORTING MISSING GUIDANCE

If your child is missing you **must** report them as missing to the Police.

One of the most frequent indicators of Child Exploitation (criminal and sexual) is your child going missing. It is therefore important that you report your child missing to the Police every time they go missing, even if it is occurring on a daily basis.

* Be mindful that if your child is being exploited they are often coerced into being secretive about where they are – if you have any doubts please report them as missing.

* If your child is missing – stay calm. Send them reassuring voice/text messages letting them know you aren't angry with them and they are welcome home.

* Tell them you care about them and you'll be happy to see them again.

* Don't blame yourself or your child.

*** For more information on child exploitation – see the list of signs and symptoms list included in this pack.**

You can report your child missing by visiting your local Police Station, or over the phone by dialling **101**, which automatically transfers you to West Mercia Police.

If you know that your child is in immediate danger and threatened with violence, injury or threat to life, then dial **999**.

What you need to know

You can make a report to the Police as soon as you have done as much as possible to locate your child and that you consider them to be missing. There is no minimum waiting time.

- When you call the Police, you are usually put through to an Operator.
- You should tell them straight away that you are reporting a child missing.
- If this is not the first time you have reported your child missing and there are ongoing concerns about child exploitation, please state this.
- If your child is under a Plan from Children's Services (e.g. Child In Need, Risk Management, Child Protection etc.) then please state this and if there are any agreed curfew times. For example you may have been asked to report your child missing 15 minutes after a curfew time has been missed.
- The Operator will then ask for your location and the length of time your child has been missing.
- **Please use our Missing Event Templates to assist you with information they will require.**
- They will then put you through to a Police Officer, or request a Police Officer to call you back or visit you at home. It is important that you ask for a Police incident number for future reference.

When you are contacted by a Police Officer, you should also ask them for:

- Their name, collar number, telephone extension and email address;
- Contact details for the Child Exploitation (CE) Team within the Police;
- Contact details for the Missing Person Coordinator; and
- An alternative Police contact, should the named person not be available to take your calls

Response

Once you have reported your child as missing to the Police, they will make an assessment of the level of risk to them.

Your child's age and circumstances of their disappearance (e.g. whether or not they have been reported missing before) will dictate the level of investigation they undertake.
This may include:

- Searching the area/s where your child was last seen, or is known to frequent. This will include your own home and garden, shed and/or garage;
- Attempts to contact them by phone or online;
- Checking local hospital admissions; and
- Reviewing CCTV footage.

What happens when my child returns home?

Your child may return of their own accord, but if the police locate them then they will most likely undertake a **Safe and well check**. This should be within 72 hours of the child's return, but can vary.

In Herefordshire a Return Home Interview (RHI) is also carried out by the Local Authority's Child Exploitation Team. The RHI explores the reasons the child has gone missing, and looks to see if there are any support services that can be referred to help prevent a young person going missing again.

CHILD EXPLOITATION

Child exploitation refers to the use of children for someone else's advantage, gratification or profit often resulting in unjust, cruel and harmful treatment of the child. These activities are to the detriment of the child's physical or mental health, education, moral or social-emotional development (NSPCC).

Signs and Symptoms

List of things/behaviours etc. to look out for:

- Truancy from school
- Missing from home or secretive about where they are when out
- Unaccounted for cash
- Unaccounted for gifts (trainers, tracksuits, food etc)
- Associating with new people / older people
- Change in Behaviour
- Change in Interests
- Train/Bus tickets to places away from where they live
- Signs of assault
- Poor hygiene/extreme tiredness
- Numerous phones
- Secretive with phone use/ Increased number of calls/ messages
- Sexualised behaviour
- Condoms / Vaseline (could be for sexual activity or for packaging drugs)
- Substance misuse (drugs, alcohol)

This is not an exhaustive list.

If you need any concerns about a child please contact:
Hereford MASH (Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub) **01432 260 800**
Monday – Friday 0900 – 1700 hours

Child Exploitation Team (CE team)

Holly Powell – Team Manager
Mersedes Saveker – Managing Practioner
Anthony Locke – SAFE Worker
Michelle Banes – SAFE Worker
Paul Catten – SAFE Worker
Dave Thomas - SAFE Worker
Ben Chappell – SAFE Worker

Direct Line (Mon – Fri, 9am – 5pm): **01432 260072**
Email: exploitationteam@herefordshire.gov.uk