



Policy Title	Date Implemented or Date of Last Review	July 2024
Child Protection - Unauthorised Absence (Missing)	Date of Next Review	July 2027

Policy

Good News Nwk Ltd. (the Home) accepts responsibility for the protection and safety of every child in its care and will respond immediately to any situation of unauthorised absence.

At all times staff will comply with the local Runaway and Missing From Home and Care (RMFHC) protocols and procedures maintained and managed by the police or by the local authority for the area where the home is located. Where there is likelihood that a child may go missing, then appropriate risk management strategies will be considered and implemented. All children living with Good News NWK will have a Philomena Protocol completed in case of episodes of unauthorised absence. These are kept up to date and reflect any changes in needs/behaviours etc. Interaction with the local community policing and missing persons team is encouraged and facilitated. This includes the Officers from the police missing team and PCSOs coming to visit. They introduce themselves to any new children and become familiar faces to the children already living in the home. The home also informs them when children move out

Procedure

Introduction

As a corporate parent the home is entitled (and required) to view any instance of unauthorised absence as potentially serious, and will undertake a series of escalating actions geared towards returning the child to the safety and comfort of the home. The home will adopt the following procedure:

Contact

Generally, due to the nature of their learning disabilities, all children in the care of the home will be supported by staff at all times in the community. However, if the child is away from the home without staff support (e.g. on school transport, on family contact etc) and is then late in returning to the home, then the home will attempt to make contact with the transport service or family member responsible by telephone. This may be, for example to:

- To the telephone number of the place at which they were last believed or known to be;

**Head Office Address: 107 Alexandra Road
Wellingborough NN8 1EG**



- Or to any other telephone number where contact is considered possible.

Search

If contact by telephone is not possible, or a child has absconded whilst on an outing then a search will begin immediately. The search will include, for example,

- The home, including the child's room;
- The immediate vicinity around where the child was last seen
- Known locations where the child might be.

Reporting

As soon as it becomes evident that a child is neither in the home, nor with any agreed person(s) within the community, then the child will be reported as missing to the Police, the placing authority and to others, (including parents) subject to consultation with the placing authority. The home will establish and record the police contact number and share this with all staff on duty so that any additional information can be passed on without delay or confusion. Where young people have a significant learning disability that increases their vulnerability and safety when unaccompanied, the police should be made aware of this so that they prioritise the case accordingly. Police will be given a copy of the child's Philomena Protocol which will contain information that may help locate the child.

Gathering Information

Where a child is reported as missing then the home will assist in gathering information as to the possible/actual whereabouts of the child. This will include talking to friends and acquaintances of the missing child, other children in the home, neighbours, etc. The home will also conduct regular searches of the area in which the child went missing or where it is felt that they are likely to be. Any useful information obtained will be passed on to the police, immediately, in all cases.

Return to the home

Upon return to the home the child will be welcomed and offered a drink and/or food and asked how they are and whether they need medical attention. This will be done using the child's preferred mode of communication.

Arrangements will be made for the child to be interviewed by his/her social worker or a person independent of the home to consider the reasons for the unauthorised absence. The home will take account of information provided by such interviews when assessing risks and putting arrangements in place to protect each child.



Any report from a child that she/he went missing because of abuse at the home must be referred immediately, to the local social services department for consideration under area child protection procedures and appropriate action must be taken immediately to protect the child concerned and any other children as necessary.

Regulations require that all instances of absconding must be recorded. The home will record:

- The circumstances surrounding the incident;
- All action taken by staff;
- The circumstances of the child's return;
- Any reasons given by the child for absconding;
- Any action taken in the light of the reasons.

Information will be shared with the placing authority and, where appropriate, the child's parents.

The home rarely experiences any missing episodes. However if a child begins running away persistently or engages in other risky behaviours, such as frequently being absent from the home to meet with inappropriate adults, the home in consultation with the child's placing authority, will convene a risk management meeting to develop a strategy for managing risks to the young person. The strategy should be agreed with the child's placing authority, the local authority where the home is located and the local police.

Leaving without Permission

All staff are made aware of and do not exceed the measures they can take to prevent a child from leaving the home without permission under current legislation and government guidance.

If the home believes that a child might go missing then key workers and staff are informed and close monitoring of the child's whereabouts at any one time is undertaken. Staff will be informed as to how the child may be prevented from leaving the home. Procedures may include physical modifications to the premises, behavioural and/or therapeutic approaches to change the child's behaviour, or in extreme cases agreed physical restraint (which must be recorded).

Truancy

The home will maintain regular contact with schools attended by children in order to monitor attendance. Where children are thought to be especially vulnerable or prone to frequent absences during the school day, then this will involve daily contact with the school. Where there is frequent and continued absence from school, or a worrying pattern of absence, then further measures will be taken, and reflected in the child's Placement Plan and Personal Education Plan.



References to Legislation and Quality Standards	
Children's Homes (England) Regulations 2015	Regulation 12
Quality Standard	Protection of Children