

01 Background:

The issue of missing is complex. People in very different situations – from a child abducted by force, to an adult who chooses to leave the family home – may all be termed ‘missing’. A missing person is defined as *‘Anyone whose whereabouts cannot be established and where the circumstances are out of character, or the context suggests the person may be the subject of crime or at risk of harm to themselves or another.’* UK police forces received 321,992 calls about missing or absent people in 2014-15 & subsequently recorded 210,632 missing incidents relating to 129,046 individual missing people. There are more incidents than people because some people are reported missing more than once - although some missing people will never be reported to the police. In 2014/15 the Metropolitan police force in London recorded the highest number of missing incidents in the UK – Greater Manchester Police recorded the second highest number.

Why it matters:

Although the majority of people who go missing return, or are found, many vulnerable children and adults suffer harm and exploitation. Risks for **children** include becoming a victim of abuse/sexual exploitation/radicalisation, becoming a victim of crime, alcohol/substance misuse, deterioration of physical/mental health, involvement in criminal activities/ missing out on schooling/education. Up to 80% of **adults** who go missing have mental health issues & a significant number have experience of domestic violence, financial problems, family conflict, or alcohol problems. In addition, 40% of adults who have dementia will go missing at some point. Sadly, around one in every 100 people who go missing is found to have died, with suicide one of the most common causes.

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What to do?

Contact the police on 999 in an emergency or call 101 to report that a person is missing.

Practitioners should ensure that they are familiar with:

- [GM Missing Children Protocol](#)
- [GMP Missing/Absent Persons Policy](#)
- [Rochdale Missing Children Strategy](#)
- <https://www.missingpeople.org.uk/>

Questions:

Are we clear about the expectations of us as practitioners when children/adults go missing or are at risk of going missing?

Are we clear about the [services available](#) for children & young people and adults at risk of abuse & neglect?

How can we help to reduce the risk of people going missing?



Information: Children running away and going missing from home or care is a **safeguarding issue**. There are particular concerns about the links between children running away and the risks of sexual exploitation. Looked after children who go missing are particularly vulnerable to abuse. Unless they are within the criminal justice system or detained under the Mental Health Act – **adults** have a legal right to go missing. When an adult goes missing the primary concern is to establish whether the individual is safe and well.

Information: Children and young people make up approximately two thirds of all missing reports with those between the ages of 12 & 17 most likely to go missing. **Adults** aged between 24 and 30 are reported missing more frequently than any other adult age bracket. From 30 years, there is a gradual reduction in the number of missing person reports. Overall, roughly equal numbers of males and females go missing. However, in teenagers, more females go missing than males; whereas in adults, males go missing more often than females. The police are responsible for undertaking a [“Safe and Well Check”](#) after a missing person returns to find out where they have been, if they suffered harm, and to provide an opportunity to disclose any offending by or against them. All children are also offered a return interview. The Rochdale Borough Missing Children [Strategy](#) ensures that services are cohesive & that information is shared to safeguard children who go missing or are at risk of going missing.

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