



MISSING PERSONS POLICY & PROCEDURE

MISSING PERSONS POLICY

(Supported Living Properties)

Policy Statement

It is common for some of the service users we provide support for to be vulnerable if they are in the wider community without direct support from staff. For this reason, a vulnerable service user going "missing" from their home while under the care of a support worker from this organisation would be an obvious cause for concern, and should be considered as a potential emergency situation.

Preventing Missing Persons Incidents

Support staff from JRH Support should always remain vigilant, and be aware of exactly where service users are at any given time. Service users who are prone to wandering, or who may be at risk of getting lost by reason of their mental state, should have this identified during risk assessment and a suitable entry made in their support plan. Such service users should be kept under observation as appropriate to the level of risk identified.

Situations where a missing person's report should be made include the following:

- Where a service user has not returned from or has got lost during an arranged activity or walk
- Where a service user cannot be found in their house or grounds and no prior arrangements have been made to explain their absence.

If it becomes clear that a vulnerable service user may be missing, it is vital that all the members of staff in the organisation work as a team and follow a clearly defined procedure.

Missing Persons Procedure

Immediately they suspect that a vulnerable service user may be missing, support staff at the service user's home should do the following:

- Initiate an immediate search of the building and its immediate surrounds
- Contact relatives, friends, neighbours or other obvious places where the service user may have gone or has been known to go in the past.

If the service user cannot be found during the initial search, then the member of support staff should immediately raise the alarm by informing their line manager.

They should pass on all relevant information, such as the full details of the service user (it is very important to correctly identify the service user) and full details of the incident, including when and where the service user was last seen, who by and what the service user was wearing.

The member of support staff should then remain at the service user's home in case the service user returns.

Upon receiving a missing person's report the line manager should do the following:

- Make immediate efforts to contact the service user's relatives or carers, if not already done, to inform them of the situation, to gather information and to get advice.
- Contact the police and give full details about the service user, including when and where they were last seen, who by, what they were wearing and any special risk factors involved. Contact telephone numbers should be given and the line manager should co-ordinate the organisations response and maintain communications.
- Co-operate fully with any police search.

Where the police are involved, the General Manager should be informed as soon as possible within office hours as the Care Quality Commission (CQC) might require notifying.

Families should be requested to telephone the office, relevant supported living property or police if the service user contacts them, and relatives should be kept informed at each stage of the search. The line manager should, at the earliest opportunity, fill out an incident form and ensure that a full note of events has been made in the service user's notes by the relevant support staff. Times of actions and decisions should be noted as accurately as possible. On conclusion of the incident, support staff involved should be asked to check the incident form for accuracy and to sign it.

Once the service user has been found, it is essential that all the parties who were advised of the emergency are contacted again and informed that the search has been concluded, including the member of support staff at the service user's home and the police.

At all stages the line manager should be sensitive to the needs of members of support staff involved, who may well be upset by the emergency incident, and should provide or arrange any support required, including bringing in extra staff to help or sending someone to "sit" with the support staff involved, and checking staff are OK before they go home.

If at any stage the line manager is unsure of what to do then the Service Manager should be contacted immediately for advice.

Procedure to Follow After a Missing Persons Incident

Upon conclusion of a missing persons incident JRH Support should mount a full enquiry and investigate the incident thoroughly. Investigations should be led by the Service Manager who will also be responsible for implementing any improvements that are indicated.

Paul Battershall
General Manager