

# A GUIDE TO CHILDREN GOING MISSING/ RUNNING AWAY

Information for parents and carers



**Solihull**  
**Safeguarding**  
Children Partnership

# What to do when your child is missing?

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The Children's Society estimate that every year 100,000 children and young people go missing or run away from home. There can be many varied and complex reasons for a child to go missing, but often this is an indicator that there is a need to take some time to really listen to what is happening for them.

**It can be very upsetting for any parent or carer when a child goes missing or runs away. Try not to panic;**

- ✓ Check for signs of where they might have gone; check their room, their social media, call friends, check their friend's social media.
- ✓ Think if there have been any recent changes in their behaviour? Have they changed the way they appear? been wearing different clothes? changed their friends? using substances or alcohol? or any other changes in their circumstances?
- ✓ After carrying out the checks above, if you cannot find where your child is, call the police and report them missing- you should report them missing as soon as you have carried out your checks, and share any information you have thought about with the police.

If during your checks you find out where your child is, but you are concerned that they are in an unsafe environment where you could be put at risk if you attempted to gain access to fetch them, you can still contact the police, but you will need to report the concerns you have about their welfare and where they are, rather than report them as missing.

Always make a note with details (time, names, responses) of who you have spoken to in your checks and when you call the police.



# Reporting a child missing

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It is commonly thought that you must wait 24 hours before reporting somebody missing, but this is not true. 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. Before contacting the police, check to see if they have left you or another household member a message on your phone voicemail, text message or social media.

When you call the police, you are usually put through to a call-handler rather than an actual police officer. You should tell them right away that you are calling to report a child missing. If this is not the first time you have reported your child missing, you need to state that your call relates to an on-going concern about your child. The call handler will then ask for your location and the length of time your child has been missing.

If you have concerns your child could go missing, it might be helpful to have the information required by the police on hand. [Solihull LSCP have a Missing Child/ Young Person protocol- to be hyperlinked template](#) for you to collect this information, as well as to record any missing events that occur.

Once you have given this information, the call handler will either 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 Missing Person Coordinator.
- An alternative police contact, should the named person not be available to take your calls (ie when they have gone off-duty).

While working to find your child the Police are required to share information with Childrens Services to see if any other agencies can assist with information that may help find your child. If you wish to contact Children's Services you can call **0121 788 4300** (Monday-Thursday 8.45am-5.20pm, Friday 8.45pm-4.30pm) In the event of an emergency outside of these hours call **0121 605 6060**. While your child is missing you may wish to seek support from [Missing People](#) ; they have a helpline that is open 7 days a week from 9am to 11 pm **116000**, you can also text them on this number or email [116000@missingpeople.or.uk](mailto:116000@missingpeople.or.uk)

# After they have returned home

When your child is found or returns home, although you may feel very anxious, worried, or even angry that they have not let you know where they are, try to stay calm & welcome them home. A police officer will need to carry out a safe and well check, to do this they need to meet with your child. This is to check if they may require any medical attention, or if they wish to report anything that happened while they were away.

In 2014 the Government introduced a process that means that every child who goes missing or runs away should be offered an Independent Return Interview. The purpose of this is to provide your child with the opportunity to discuss with a professional what caused them to go missing/ runaway, what happened when they were missing, and what help and support they may like to receive now they have returned. This means that following your child's return, someone from the missing team will be in touch to arrange to carry out a Return Interview.

If your child does not wish to speak to someone from the **missing team**, they will be asked to identify another professional they already know who they would prefer to speak with; this could be someone from their school or other services they are already involved in.

If your child refuses to speak with anyone the **missing team worker** will ask you to speak with them about any concerns or support you feel is required. However, if your child changes their mind and wishes to take part in a Return Interview, they can contact the **missing team worker** on [missing@solihull.gov.uk](mailto:missing@solihull.gov.uk) or ask someone they already work with at any time.



# Why may someone have gone missing?

## If you have noticed a change in your child's behaviour:

- They suddenly start using abusive language,
- They become hostile or aggressive with you and/ or close family members,
- They are obsessed by their mobile phone.
- They become secretive,
- They disengaged from usual activities
- You find that they are not where you expect them to be.
- Or they are frequently going missing / running away, often 'on demand'; having received a phone call, text message or gaming/social media contact, it may be possible that your child has been groomed by an individual or group. This may mean that your child has been targeted by a person/ people who intentionally set out to befriend them and lure them into a friendship/relationship. It is unlikely your child will realise they have been groomed, the person will initially be very nice and understanding and may give them things they do not usually have, or involve them in things that initially feel like fun.

The person/ people grooming your child will be aiming to drive a wedge in the relationship you have with your child, as this will make it much easier to manipulate them, so try not to get angry or argue with your child, but seek help and support from services and those around you, so that you can all work in partnership to keep your child safe and you can continue to show your child how much they mean to you. You may find it useful to read about other [parents experiences](#) and seek support from [PACE](#) (Parents Against Child Exploitation)



# Contact Information

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If you are unhappy with an individual agencies, their performance and the provision or non-provision of services you should follow the relevant agency's complaints procedure.

For independent information you may wish to contact:  
Solihull Citizens Advice – general advice queries 0808 2787 976 open Monday - Friday 10am-2pm Family Rights Group A free telephone advice line open Monday to Friday between 9.30am and 3pm (excluding Bank Holidays) on 0808 801 0366. For Textphone dial 18001 followed by the advice line number <https://frg.org.uk/get-help-and-advice/>

