

Missing Persons

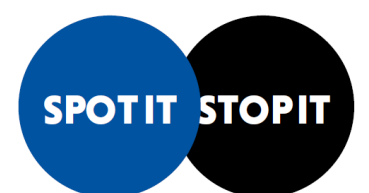
Incident Development (pre-48 hours)

Policy Guidance

V1.0 March 2022

[Based on the College of Policing
Authorised Professional Practice](#)

DO NOT PRINT OR DOWNLOAD THIS DOCUMENT
(If you have accessed this document from anywhere other
than the Missing Persons Policy Toolkit it should be
considered out of date and not be relied upon)



**PROTECTING THE PUBLIC.
KEEPING THE
VULNERABLE SAFE.**

Contents

- [Missing Persons Definitions](#)
- [Missing Persons Incident Development Overview \(pre-48 hours\)](#)
- [Incident Development \(pre-48 hours\)](#)
 - [Initial CAD Receipt](#)
 - [Low & Medium Risk Incident Development](#)
 - [High Risk Incident Development](#)
 - [Handover to Incident Development \(post-48 hours\)](#)
- [Supporting Process & Policy](#)
 - [Address Visits & Searching](#)
 - [DNA](#)
 - [Photos](#)
 - [Publicity](#)
 - [Significant Witnesses](#)
 - [Incident Transfers](#)

Note: 48 hours is measured from the time of Merlin creation.

Missing Persons Definitions

Definition of Missing

Anyone whose whereabouts cannot be established will be considered as missing until located, and their well-being or otherwise confirmed.

Risk Grading Definitions

Low Risk	Medium Risk	High Risk
<p>The risk of harm to the subject or the public is assessed as possible but minimal.</p>	<p>The risk of harm to the subject or the public is assessed as likely but not serious.</p>	<p>The risk of serious harm to the subject or the public is assessed as very likely.</p>
<p>Low Risk cases should not generally demand the deployment of police but still receive clear management, oversight and review.</p> <p>Proportionate enquiries should be carried out to ensure that the individual has not come to harm.</p>	<p>Medium risk cases require an active and measured response by police and other agencies in order to trace the missing person and support the person reporting.</p> <p>Cases will generally demand the deployment of police to develop the incident.</p>	<p>High risk cases will nearly always demand the immediate deployment of police. A BCU response is expected, which means utilising the full range of available BCU resources, in order to respond proportionately to the overall risk concern. Wider Met support should also be sought where appropriate.</p>

Identified Complex Concern

- **Missing Person cases concerning an individual known to be at current risk of coercive and exploitative influences or;**
- **Missing Person cases presenting identified elements of complex concern meaning the individual is at risk of exploitation within this incident.**

Cases involving exploitation and presenting as complex may include those where an OPEN CE/CSE CRIS exists or where the circumstances of the missing episode generates a new or reopening of a CE/CSE CRIS.

It does not mean the risk grading should automatically be considered high in these circumstances, however it will mean the raising of an 'Enhanced Concern' on Merlin and a more specific and targeted response is generated by officers across public protection.

- Identified Complex Concern is neither a new 'category' of risk or in conflict with existing APP definitions of High, Medium or Low risk.
- It is purely a means for the Met to determine early ownership of cases to the BCU Missing Persons Unit by identifying risk elements which will require heightened attention from the outset.
- Like high risk cases, incidents of identified complex concern will therefore be subject to thorough initial recording and risk assessment by the RaDT/ERPT before being formally handed over to the BCU MPU.

Missing Persons Incident Development Overview (pre-48 hours)

Initial CAD Receipt

The **Ops Manager** will review each missing persons CAD passed to the BCU by MetCC. This is a short review and gatekeeping role intended to appropriately and efficiently steer incidents towards either the RaDT triage process or for a priority response. Alternatively, in some instances the CAD may close at this stage. The Ops Manager involvement will end on transfer to the RaDT.

- Review CAD information and determine appropriate tasking to the RaDT – this will be either the RaDT triage of the incident and risk concerns, or a requested priority response to the RaDT in cases of obvious high risk or identified complex concern.
- Some CAD incidents may not be suited to a police missing persons investigation either on incident type or the established facts of the incident. In such circumstances, ensure that the RaDT is utilised to complete basic enquiries to support decision making and record rationale on CAD closure – ensuring the informant is fully updated. See [Incidents Not Generating a Police Missing Persons Investigation](#).

Low & Medium Risk Incident Development

The **RaDT PC** will complete an initial triage of the incident and risk concerns.

- Contact informant and establish full circumstances.
- Complete full research.
- Brief **RaDT Sergeant** and agree risk grading or raise any concern that the incident should not be treated as 'missing'.

The **RaDT Sergeant** will review the outcome of the initial triage and agree the incident as 'missing' or 'not missing'.

- Consider outcome of triage and agree risk grading.
- If determined to be 'not missing' update CAD with decision and full supporting rationale.
- If incident to be treated as 'missing' task within RaDT for further development.

The **RaDT PC** will develop the response to the incident.

- Create Merlin – minimum standards apply.
- Record full circumstance and risk concerns.
- Circulate to PNC within **2 hours** of CAD origin.
- Complete priority actions.
- Flag presence of any **Identified Complex Concern**.

The **RaDT Sergeant** will supervise the response.

- Supervise Merlin within **2 hours** of creation.
- Record a formal risk assessment.
- Set priority actions.
- Inform Incident Manager in cases of **Identified Complex Concern** – to be transferred to MPU.

The **RaDT PC** will progress the investigation strategy, develop emerging lines of enquiry, and respond to emerging risk concerns.

- Complete actions for police – emerging lines of enquiry may take priority.
- Liaise with informant if joint responsibility enquires set.
- Request ERPT deployments as necessary to progress the investigation.
- **RaDT Sergeant** (or **Incident Manager**) must be notified of emerging risks or elevated concern.

The **RaDT Sergeant** will develop a proportionate investigation strategy, task appropriately, and supervise progression.

- Record to Merlin actions to be completed by police.
- Record to Merlin any joint responsibility enquires to be progressed by the informant (e.g. parent or carer).
- Task incident within RaDT.
- Set review time appropriate for incident risk and circumstances.
- Ensure Pacesetter inclusion where appropriate.

Pre-48 hours, the **RaDT PC** will ensure that the incident is developed in line with the investigation strategy that has been set, develop emerging lines of enquiry and respond to emerging risk concerns.

Pre-48 hours, the **RaDT Sergeant** will review the incident during each shift to confirm that the risk grading remains appropriate and to identify and task progressive actions throughout 48 hour ownership.

The **incident Manager** will complete a formal risk review at **24 hours & 48 hours** (from Merlin creation).

Above roles will be replaced by MPU PS/DS and MPU PC if handed over to the MPU in instances of Identified Complex Concern (MPU PS/DS to complete 24 & 48 hours reviews). An ERPT Sergeant may assist the RaDT Sergeant in instances of heightened demand.

High Risk Incident Development

All high-risk cases will demand a BCU response whether a very likely serious risk of harm is identified via MetCC first contact or at any stage of the investigation that follows. **Overall ownership will be held by the MPU.**

The **RaDT PC** will record the initial circumstances and risk concerns and create the Merlin.

- Create Merlin – minimum standards apply.
- Record initial circumstances and risk concerns.
- Circulate to PNC within **1 hour** of CAD origin.

The **RaDT Sergeant** will escalate the BCU response and supervise the initial recording of the incident.

- Inform the Incident Manager.
- Supervise Merlin within **2 hours** of creation.

The **Incident Manager** will task progressive enquiries to appropriate BCU resources to determine the full circumstances and develop a thorough understanding of the risk concerns.

- Consider the immediate deployment of resources under the '**Golden Hour Principles**'.
- Record a formal risk assessment with supporting case specific rationale.
- Notify and pass incident to Public Protection DI during operating hours (outside of these hours the Incident Manager will retain the incident but will notify the Cluster DI for review).

The **Public Protection DI** or another senior detective (**Cluster DI – out of hours**) will review the incident and set a strategy for the investigation and overall incident management. (*The Cluster DI will support this initial first stage response only. BCU Public Protection DI/DS to manage out of hours response during subsequent investigation*).

- Review the Merlin within 2 hours of notification.
- Allocate OIC and set investigative strategy.
- Consider case specific support/advice (e.g. PoSA).
- Consider moving incident management to CRIS.
- Ensure Pacesetter inclusion where appropriate.

The **MPU PS/DS** will review the incident during each shift to confirm that the risk grading remains appropriate and to identify and task progressive investigative actions.

The **Public Protection DI** will complete a formal risk review at **24 hours & 48 hours** (from Merlin creation).

Handover to Post 48-Hour Process

A handover to the BCU MPU should be completed at 48 hours or at earliest opportunity thereafter (if not already owned by MPU).

Ownership and progression should remain unchanged where it is not possible to complete the handover (e.g. out of hours), until such time that written acceptance of the incident has been recorded on Merlin by the MPU.

Incident Development (pre 48-hours)

Initial CAD Receipt

The **Ops Manager** will review each missing persons CAD passed to the BCU by MetCC. This is a short review and gatekeeping role intended to appropriately and efficiently steer incidents towards either the RaDT triage process or for a priority response. Alternatively, in some instances the CAD may close at this stage. The **Ops Manager involvement will end** on transfer to the RaDT.

- Review CAD information and determine appropriate tasking to the RaDT – this will be either the RaDT triage of the incident and risk concerns, or a requested priority response to the RaDT in cases of obvious high risk or identified complex concern.
- Some CAD incidents may not be suited to a police missing persons investigation either on incident type or the established facts of the incident. In such circumstances, ensure that the RaDT is utilised to complete basic enquiries to support decision making and record rationale on CAD closure – ensuring the informant is fully updated. See [Incidents Not Generating a Police Missing Persons Investigation](#).

Low & Medium Risk Incident Development

If at any stage during the incident development a high risk concern becomes apparent, divert to [High Risk Incident Development](#).

Throughout this process, many of the roles should be considered as working in tandem, rather than one requiring completion of another to progress.

The RaDT PC will complete an initial incident and risk triage.	The RaDT Sergeant will review the outcome of the initial triage and agree the incident as 'missing' or 'not missing'.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Contact informant and establish full circumstances.• Complete full research.• Brief RaDT Sergeant and agree risk grading or raise any concern that the incident should not be treated as 'missing'.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Consider outcome of triage and agree risk grading.• If determined to be 'not missing' update CAD with decision and full supporting rationale.• If incident to be treated as 'missing' task within RaDT for further development.

Triage: Informant Contact and Research

Contact with the informant is not telephone reporting and should be considered the start of an appropriate and thorough investigation.

Research using Met intelligence indices should focus on uncovering concerns that are relevant in the here-and-now of the reported incident.

Risk triage – likelihood and severity of outcomes:

- In respect of a particular risk or concern – How likely is it that something will happen?
- If something does happen in respect of a particular risk or concern – How serious do you expect the outcome to be?

Incidents Not Generating a Police Missing Persons Investigation

The BCU response may determine that some CADs classified as a misper at the call handling stage are inappropriate for the Met to progress as such. This could occur on initial CAD receipt or as further understanding is obtained through informant contact, incident triage or other investigation.

In instances where it is believed to be justified not to treat the individual as missing, intel checks relevant to the concern should be completed to support the decision making. This should include PNC and IIP searches and running unident persons/bodies cross-match searches on Merlin.

Refer to ["Missing or Not Missing" Guidance](#) to assist in decision making.

If not accessed through the Met Missing Persons Policy Toolkit
this document should be considered out of date.

Incident Development (pre 48-hours)

Prior to Merlin creation any incidents deemed to be inappropriately reported, or otherwise 'not missing', should be updated on CAD with a written record of decision making and rationale. If a Merlin has been created then a full rationale should also be recorded within the report prior to closure.

Risk Grading

A risk grading should be considered with all identified risk elements in mind. Rationale will be required to appropriately grade the incident as either low, medium or high risk.

Risk elements must be suitably explained. For example, it is not sufficient to state simply that the subject is at risk due to age or exploitation. In these cases it would be necessary to explain how the age creates a concern, or what the specific circumstances of the exploitation are and how that creates risk for the subject.

The RaDT PC will develop the response to the incident.	The RaDT Sergeant will supervise the response.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Create Merlin – minimum standards apply.• Record full circumstance and risk concerns.• Circulate to PNC within 2 hours of CAD origin.• Complete priority actions.• Flag presence of any Identified Complex Concern.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Supervise Merlin within 2 hours of creation.• Record a formal risk assessment.• Set priority actions.• Inform Incident Manager in cases of Identified Complex Concern – to be transferred to MPU.

Merlin Minimum Standards

Ensure [Merlin Creation Minimum Standards](#) are followed to develop a quality record of the incident at the earliest stage.

Risk Assessment

The formal risk assessment should be a bespoke and case specific entry recorded on Merlin.

Do not use generic copy and paste templates. Utilise the [Grip & Progression Guidance](#) to develop a bespoke and appropriate written record.

Priority Actions

The initial investigation should consider clear and obvious lines of enquiry that may resolve the incident if suitably expedited. This may include deployments to family or other addresses, or speaking with established contacts.

Identified Complex Concern

In cases of **Identified Complex Concern** the incident should be flagged to the MPU via the Incident Manager to accept ownership.

A handover to the MPU should occur at the earliest opportunity, however, ownership and progression will remain unchanged when it is not possible at that time (e.g. out of hours).

Ownership will only be handed over at such time when written acceptance of the incident has been recorded on Merlin by the MPU.

Incident Development (pre 48-hours)

The RaDT PC will progress the investigation strategy, develop emerging lines of enquiry, and respond to emerging risk concerns.	The RaDT Sergeant will develop a proportionate investigation strategy, task appropriately, and supervise progression.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete actions for police – emerging lines of enquiry may take priority. • Liaise with informant if joint responsibility enquires set. • Request ERPT deployments where necessary to progress investigation. • RaDT Sergeant (or Incident Manager) must be notified of emerging risks or elevated concern overall. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Record to Merlin actions to be completed by police. • Record to Merlin any joint responsibility enquires to be progressed by the informant (e.g. parent or carer). • Task incident within RaDT. • Set review time appropriate for incident risk and circumstances. • Ensure Pacesetter inclusion where appropriate.

Incident Progression

A **proportionate bespoke investigation strategy** must be set for each incident – utilise [Grip & Progression Guidance](#). Actions for police should not be drawn from generic copy and paste wording, but individual selected based on sound reasoning and an honestly held belief that carrying out each action will take the investigation forward, either to locating the individual, or mitigating risk and lowering overall concern.

The investigation strategy should be developed as requested, however, if emerging lines of enquiry develop and there is an honestly held belief that following such a lead will resolve the incident sooner, or mitigate risk, then those actions should take priority.

Joint Responsibility

The police are entitled to expect parents, carers and professional partners to undertake reasonable actions to establish the whereabouts of the individual. This may include staff acting in a parenting role in care homes, who should accept normal parenting responsibilities, or NHS mental health hospitals, who should adhere to expectations laid out in their own internal policies.

In relevant cases of preventable or inappropriate reporting, additional action to escalate locally should be considered under [Op Resolute](#): Philomena Protocol, Affinity Protocol & Herbert Protocol.

Parents or carers may need police support if they are very distressed, incapacitated or otherwise unable to undertake enquiries

A review time should be set for any joint responsibility actions agreed with the informant.

Emerging or Rising Concern

Emerging risk concerns that may alter the current risk grading should be addressed immediately through further review. If the incident is currently graded as medium risk and may rise to high risk, the Incident Manager must be informed.

Incident Development (pre 48-hours)

Pre-48 hours, the **RaDT PC** will ensure that the incident is developed in line with the investigation strategy that has been set, develop emerging lines of enquiry and respond to emerging risk concerns.

Pre-48 hours, the **RaDT PS** will review the incident during each shift to confirm that the risk grading remains appropriate and to identify and task progressive investigative actions throughout 48 hour ownership.

The **incident Manager** will complete a formal risk review at **24 hours & 48 hours** (from Merlin creation).

Per Shift Review

This is not a formal risk review but simply a report entry proportionate to the case. It should be relevant to the circumstances and should look to ensure outstanding or new lines of enquiry are recorded, suitably tasked and progressing.

Formal Risk Review (24 & 48 hours)

The formal risk review should be completed within the Merlin report under review options (24 hours). If the incident is recorded on CRIS then review screens should be utilised – a Merlin entry will be made to reference this. The review should address the following:

- Current risk grading – Does it remain accurate or require alteration? Consider the passage of time and the significance of a lack of sightings or contact.
- Ensure grip is maintained by relevant supervision and that any outstanding or incomplete actions are flagged and progressed.
- Identify new/prioritise existing lines of enquiry and ensure resources in place to progress.

Utilise [Grip & Progression Guidance](#).

Ensure Pacesetter inclusion where appropriate.

Incidents Handed-Over to the MPU

Incidents handed-over to the MPU pre-48 hours (e.g. case of Identified Complex Concern) should continue to follow the process outlined. However, in these instances a MPU PC and MPU PS/DS will replace the respective roles shown. The MPU PS/DS will complete 24 & 48 hour reviews.

Incident Development (pre 48-hours)

High Risk Incident Development

All high-risk cases will demand a BCU response whether a very likely serious risk of harm is identified via MetCC first contact or at any stage of the investigation that follows. Overall ownership will be held by the MPU.

The RaDT PC will record the initial circumstances and risk concerns and create the Merlin.	The RaDT PS will escalate the BCU response and supervise the initial recording of the incident.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Create Merlin – minimum standards apply.• Record initial circumstances and risk concerns.• Circulate to PNC within 1 hour of CAD origin.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Inform the Incident Manager.• Supervise Merlin within 2 hours of creation.
The Incident Manager will task progressive enquiries to appropriate BCU resources to determine the full circumstances and develop a thorough understanding of the risk concerns.	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Consider the immediate deployment of resources under the 'Golden Hour Principles'.• Record a formal risk assessment with supporting case specific rationale.• Notify and pass incident to Public Protection DI during operating hours (outside of these hours the Incident Manager will retain the incident but will notify the Cluster DI for review).	

Golden Hour Principles

Consider the immediate deployment of resources under the 'Golden Hour Principles':

- Victims.
- Scenes.
- Suspects.
- Witnesses.
- Physical Evidence.
- Prevent Contamination - Consider: Victims, suspects, scenes, and exhibits.
- Log all decisions, clearly accounting for reasons, resources, conditions and circumstances known to you at that time.
- Responsibility - Ensure that there are clear lines of responsibility. Identify, inform, brief, co-ordinate and review.
- Family / Community - Identify, inform and establish their needs, concerns and expectations. Provide primary support and sensitivity. Consider deployment of FLO through the Family Liaison Coordinator. Consider contacting IAG for independent advice. Make use of the Resources Directorate - Language and Cultural Services.
- Intelligence - Identify and prioritise all intelligence. Maximise and exploit what is available, remembering community and open source intelligence. Consider contacting the Service Intelligence Bureau.
- Community Concerns - Establish, through Lay advice / IAG. Anticipate any possible developments, particularly the risk of public confidence. Consider the effect of rumours and be open and transparent.
- Press / Media - Establish contact with the Directorate of Media Communications (DMC) for media strategy.

Formal Risk Assessment

The formal risk assessment should be a bespoke and case specific entry recorded on Merlin.

Generic copy and paste wording should not be use. Utilise [Grip & Progression Guidance](#) to develop a bespoke an appropriate written record.

Incident Transfer to the MPU

If out of hours the Incident Manager will accept ownership until such time that the handover to the MPU can be completed.

Incident progression should not cease because the incident has not or cannot be transferred.

The transfer to the MPU will be arrange through contact with the Public Protection DI.

Incident Development (pre 48-hours)

The **Public Protection DI** or another senior detective (**Cluster DI – out of hours**) will review the incident and set a strategy for the investigation and overall incident management. *(The Cluster DI will support this initial first stage response only. BCU Public Protection DI/DS to manage out of hours response during subsequent investigation).*

- Review the Merlin within 2 hours of notification.
- Allocate OIC and set investigative strategy.
- Consider case specific support/advice (e.g. PoISA).
- Consider moving incident management to CRIS.
- Ensure Pacesetter inclusion where appropriate.

Case Specific Support/Advice

- **Specialist Search Support and Advice**
 - A referral to a Police Search Advisor (PoISA) can be made by the senior investigating officer to obtain specialist search support and advice.
 - Obtaining advice should be considered in cases where a strategy is required for searches of multiple locations or large open areas.
 - PoISAs also have access to other specialist search resources, including, searching of marine or other hazardous environments, victim recovery dogs, search volunteers from London Search and Rescue (LonSAR) and other partners (e.g. LFB, BTP, MOD).
 - For further information, contact details and availability, search 'PoISA' on the Intranet.
- **Homicide**
 - A referral to the Homicide Teams should be made in cases where there is a substantive reason to suspect life has been taken, or is under threat.
 - Utilise BCU buddy arrangement to initiate timely contact – DCI to DCI.
 - For further information, search 'homicide teams' on the intranet.
- **Modern Slavery & Child Exploitation**
 - For complex cases where modern slavery and/or child exploitation is suspected advice may be sought from a MSCE supervisor.
 - Further information, support and guidance, including contact details, is available on the modern slavery policy for first responders – search 'modern slavery' on the intranet.

CRIS

If the incident management is moved to CRIS ensure both **review** and **action** screens are activated to support the investigation.

Incident Development (pre 48-hours)

The **MPU PS/DS** will review the incident during each shift to confirm that the risk grading remains appropriate and to identify and task progressive investigative actions.

The **Public Protection DI** will complete a formal risk review at **24 hours & 48 hours** (from Merlin creation).

Per Shift Review

This is not a formal risk review but simply a report entry proportionate to the case. It should be relevant to the circumstances and should look to ensure outstanding or new lines of enquiry are recorded, suitably tasked and progressing.

Formal Risk Review (24 & 48 hours)

The formal risk review should be completed within the Merlin report under the 24 hour review options. The review should address the following:

- Current risk grading – Does it remain accurate or require alteration? Consider whether risk mitigation has lowered overall concern.
- Ensure grip is maintained by relevant supervision and that any outstanding or incomplete actions are flagged and progressed.
- Identify new/prioritise existing lines of enquiry and ensure resources in place to progress.

Utilise [Grip & Progression Guidance](#).

Ensure Pacesetter inclusion where appropriate.

Handover to Incident Development (post-48 Hours)

A handover to the BCU MPU should be completed at 48 hours or at earliest opportunity thereafter (if not already owned by MPU).

Ownership and progression should remain unchanged where it is not possible to complete the handover (e.g. out of hours), until such time that written acceptance of the incident has been recorded on Merlin by the MPU.

Supporting Process & Policy

Address Visits & Searching

- It is not acceptable to request a visit to an address or other venue without sufficient context. The CAD must make clear the following:
 - The risk to, or presented by, the individual.
 - The purpose of the visit.
 - Any specific requests for attending officers.
 - What the required action is for attending officers in both scenarios of the objective being successfully completed or remaining incomplete after the visit.
 - Expectations for reporting/recording the outcome of the visit.
- Searching is by consent (signed by occupier in Form 101) unless S.17 PACE applies. The extent of the search (e.g. single/multiple rooms, whole address, outhouses, gardens and other outdoor areas, vehicles present) should be proportionate to the individual circumstances.
- A written rationale should be created on Merlin to account for the search and the extent of the search, including areas not searched, or where consent is refused.
- An individual search record (Form 101) must be created for all searches completed – To be signed by occupier. The search record should be supervised (Sergeant or above) and filed in line with local BCU processes.

DNA

- DNA material will be seized (e.g. hairbrush, toothbrush – confirm recent usage) **only when appropriate**.
- Check 'DNA confirmed' on PNC. Confirmed status will not usually require any further DNA material to be seized.
- **Seizing DNA material during the initial stage of an investigation is often not necessary** but should be considered with rationale for the decision either way recorded on Merlin. Decisions will depend on circumstances – Consider overall availability of DNA material, timeframe, and how it may be obtained expeditiously if required. If not obtained, set a timescale and ensure the decision remains under review.
- A record of any seized items must be entered in Form 101.

Photos

- Photos should be obtained digitally, either from the source via email/internet message service, or by using a Met device (e.g. tablet) to scan a physical image.
- The photo should be recent and a good likeness. If not possible, changes in appearance must be clearly recorded on Merlin.

Publicity

Internal Circulations (e.g. email, daily briefing)

- Production and sharing of internal misper circulations will be considered appropriate if there is defined value for the investigation and if it is proportionate to the risk and circumstances. Circulations must **only** be targeted to recipients for whom the information is actionable and relevant, including circulations to British Transport Police.
- Any decision to circulate details of a misper should be fully recorded on Merlin. All have a responsibility to ensure that the effectiveness of internal circulations is not undermined by overuse (i.e. spam effect).

External Publicity (media, social media, partners)

- Use of external publicity will be considered on a case by case basis and must account for the individual's right to privacy.
- In all instances the merits of external publicity should be recorded on Merlin with written rationale. The necessity for doing so will be recorded with reference to the risk and circumstances and consideration of the right to privacy. **Specific vulnerabilities should never be disclosed to the public.**
- Online legacy (e.g. digital footprint, searchable internet data) must be minimised wherever possible and efforts to withdraw publicity from the public domain following an incident should be recorded. The information provided about individuals, particularly children, must be kept only to what is necessary to meet the objective. This may include sharing only a first name.

- Missing children (under 18) should not be publicised externally without the **written consent** of their parent or corporate parent (e.g. social worker), unless a delay would potentially prevent the early recovery of the child or otherwise increase the risk. The necessity to publicise will be considered carefully on the individual merits of the incident and any decision to do so must be fully recorded with appropriate rationale. Any decision to publish without consent (e.g. in the event of a delay / consent refused by parent) will require the written authority of a Chief Inspector.
- The media strategy for **high risk** cases should be agreed between OIC and the Directorate of Media and Communication (DMC).

Significant Witnesses

The missing person response should consider and identify **significant witnesses** and secure evidence at the earliest opportunity if it is necessary to do so (e.g. serious concerns, last person to see subject, suspected crime in action).

Incident Transfers

To be considered for cases created outside of the RaDT or otherwise requiring transfer to another BCU or OMPD.

MPD: Metropolitan Police District

OMPD: Outside of the Metropolitan Police District

There are strict considerations for when the transfer of a misper investigation recorded on Merlin may be appropriate:

- The appropriate and intended incident ownership does not align with the Merlin profile of the initial investigating officer (e.g. an officer performing aid outside their home BCU, a non-BCU officer becoming involved in the initial incident).
- An initial report being made by an informant in an area where the misper does not reside.
- The area in which the bulk of enquiries are likely to be conducted is not where the individual resides (not applicable within the MPD – refers to transfer to or from OMPD only).

All of the above are subject to the following policy that must be followed to ensure any transfers are managed expeditiously. The overriding principle at all time will be the welfare of the missing person or the public.

Officers should not delay taking action merely because they believe another BCU will be taking over the investigation. The investigation begins at the first point of notification to the police.

Resident in the MPD

- The responsibility for the investigation of Missing Persons rests with the BCU where the person missing was at that time normally residing, that is the person's home address, hotel, hostel, etc.
- Where police decide it necessary to investigate persons reported missing from a temporary location, such as a hospital A&E, the BCU where the venue is located should commence all initial investigative actions – However it is likely that when the subject resides elsewhere in the Met, the case will be transferred to the home BCU.
- If the person was a visitor to London but staying temporarily in accommodation (including hospitals) in the Met area then the investigation lies with the BCU where the temporary accommodation is located. The fact that the investigation may be transferred to another BCU should not preclude the reporting BCU from carrying out any investigative actions.
- Investigations will not be transferred between Met BCUs without the authority of an officer of the rank of Inspector or above.

Resident of UK but OMPD

- If the missing person normally resides in the UK, but OMPD, and has gone missing whilst visiting London (e.g. day trip), then a negotiation must take place between the Met BCU where the person is reported missing and the person's home force. If appropriate, the details of the report should be transferred to the home force area.

- Consideration must be given however to the circumstances of the person's disappearance before determining where the investigation should be based. It is not always appropriate to refer the enquiry to the place where the person usually lives.
- It is vital to **consider where the bulk of the enquiries are to be conducted**. It is highly likely that the place the person was last seen would generate the majority of the fast time enquiries.
- The negotiation referred to above is to be conducted from the Met side by an officer of at least the rank of Inspector. In extreme cases of dispute where it cannot be resolved at this level, it should be referred to a chief officer who will discuss the matter with a chief officer representative of the other force.
- If a report is transferred to another force the details of the member of staff receiving the report, and their phone number, must be shown on the Merlin Dets screen.

Looked After Children (LAC) – Out of Area Placements

London children placed away from the home BCU:

- London children placed away from their home BCU will always present a challenge. For consistency and quality of service across the Met we must apply the same principle as above – That is, **ownership lies with the BCU where the child resides, and will not be routinely transferred back to their home / placing BCU**.
- In some cases, individuals can run away from placements before they have slept there and only in such circumstances should BCUs consider passing ownership; however, across the Met all BCUs have access to the same intelligence tasking and briefing protocols. Any dispute should be on the merits of individual cases and taken up at Inspector level.

London children placed elsewhere in the UK:

- It is common for the Met to be asked to consider ownership of cases where 'placed' looked after children have run away and the likelihood is that they have gravitated back to their home area. In such cases, county forces looking to transfer ownership should ensure a thorough initial investigation has been initiated and the transfer discussion should not be without the authority of an inspector or above.
- There should be credible evidence to suggest the person is not in the force where they have gone missing or have returned to the home force area.

Non-UK Resident

- If a non-UK resident is reported missing whilst visiting the MPD, then **the responsibility for the investigation lies with the BCU where the person temporarily resides**. If no address is known the BCU where the person was first reported missing has responsibility. All liaison with the missing person's home country must be conducted through Interpol.
- In many cases it will be necessary to liaise with the person's home country. Following Brexit, international coordination has changed. The **Interpol Smart Tool** (search 'Interpol Smart Tool' on the Intranet) should be used and offers access to relevant tools such as the Interpol Enquiry Form and Yellow Notice Circulation.
- If further support is required, contact the **International Assistance Unit** (search 'International Assistance Unit' on the Intranet).
- If the report is of a non-UK resident who has gone missing outside of the UK the informant should be directed to the relevant Embassy or High Commission.

Cross-Border Transfers – To or From OMPD

- Any force wishing to transfer a case to the MET should use the nationally agreed form – the completion of which should centre on the rationale for the receiving force to accept the transfer (search '**Cross Border Transfer**' on the Intranet).
- Where justified, the case should be accepted into the Met at the point of first contact. , **even in circumstances where the BCU, with which the initial contact is made, is unlikely to retain ownership**.