

Freedom of Information Publication Scheme					
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Title	MPS Missing Persons Policy Statement.				
Summary:	Policy Statement on the Investigation of Missing Persons in the MPS.				
Branch / OCU:	Continuous Policing Improvement Command (Missing Persons)				
Date created:	03/03/2022	Review date:	March 2024	Version:	4.0
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Application

When? This Policy Statement applies from 31st March 2022.

Who? All police officers (including special constables) and police staff, including the extended police family and those working voluntarily or under contract to the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime (MOPAC) or the Commissioner must be aware of, and are required to comply with, all relevant Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) policy and associated procedures.

This applies in particular to officers and staff in the following roles that may be related to missing persons (this list is not intended to be exhaustive):

- All officers and staff deployed throughout front line operational command units including Emergency Response Policing Teams, Resource & Demand Teams, Public Access / Reception Officers, Neighbourhood Teams, Criminal Investigation Departments, Public Protection Desks, Operations Rooms, Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hubs and Missing Persons Units.
- Roads & Transport Policing Command (RTPC)
- Met Command & Control Communications staff (MetCC)
- Specialist Crime
- Met Intelligence Command (MO2)

What? College of Policing Authorised Professional Practice (APP) sets out the expected MPS response for missing persons within the framework of major investigation and public protection¹. There is no MPS internal policy for missing persons beyond the agreement to reflect College of Policing APP throughout the police response and investigation.

College of Policing APP will be supported in the MPS by internal policy guidance to provide a clear overview of expectation for roles, processes, and missing persons grip & progression methodology.

¹ College of Policing APP includes an additional missing persons risk category of 'no apparent risk' that all but two UK constabularies **have not** adopted. National debate has determined that this risk grading has no defined benefit to the public or the police service and it is expected to be removed from APP in a future revision. The MPS have not adopted 'no apparent risk' -this is the only deviation from APP.

Policy Principles

The MPS requires officers and staff to follow the guidelines set out in College of Policing APP and supporting MPS Policy Guidance when investigating missing persons, ensuring:

- The protection of vulnerable adults and children at risk of harm.
- Appropriate support for family members or other relevant persons in the event someone close to them is missing.
- The effective identification and assessment of risk elements to consider and report on the likelihood and severity of harm.
- The consideration and application of a risk grading for each incident with supporting bespoke rationale that is appropriate for the circumstances.
- The creation of a bespoke investigation strategy seeking to locate the missing person, or otherwise mitigate risk, that is proportionate to the circumstances and risk grading.
- The delivery of a bespoke investigation strategy managed through the effective tasking of police resources.
- Recording of the incident, risk management and investigation within the prescribed MPS recording platform.
- The assistance of non-police partners is utilised where appropriate and their services signposted to those who go missing and those who are left behind.

Health and Safety Impact Statement

The College of Policing APP and the associated MPS missing persons policy guidance are compliant with the relevant controls designed to mitigate risk to the MPS, including:

- Compliance with health and safety at work statutory provisions including codes of practice.
- MOPAC / MPS Safety Management System.
- Service delivery that may impact officer, staff or public safety.

Purpose and Benefits

The purpose of this policy statement is to acknowledge the College of Policing APP for missing persons as the primary expectation for the MPS response to such incidents. Furthermore, it acknowledges that policy guidance produced by the MPS in respect of missing persons will no longer act to replace or infringe in anyway on APP, but will exist solely to support MPS frontline and secondary investigators in responding appropriately and providing the best possible service.

Previously (up to the previous policy refresh in 2016), MPS instruction and expectation led to the development of internal policy toolkits built on checklists in which expectations for the police response and investigation were outlined and defined. Organisational learning in the following years has shown this approach to be problematic in three key areas:

- **Cohesion with the College of Policing APP**

The approach of the MPS to create internal policies alongside College of Policing APP has created challenges that are somewhat unique to missing persons due to the relative frequency in which incidents will be scrutinised (e.g. IOPC investigation, Coroner's Inquest). The lack of cohesion between MPS Policy and College of Policing APP has complicated the response to reviewing bodies in having to explain the distinction and rationalise any benefit for such an approach, particularly when considered against UK policing as a whole and the views of the College of Policing.

- **Clarity in the distinction between MPS policy and guidance**

The previous MPS missing persons policy toolkits have been subject to ongoing development in response to organisational learning. However, the distinction between what is MPS policy and what is guidance in respect of that policy does not present clearly. Again, this has created challenges when responding to reviews or inquests in order to clearly differentiate between required and ancillary processes.

- **Accessibility and usability of guidance for frontline and secondary investigators**

The format and presentation of the previous missing persons policy toolkits did not usefully cater for the realities of frontline policing and the type of guidance that is sought by practitioners. There was no clear through-line and no convenient way to seek support for any individual aspect of the expected approach. This has led to the toolkits being underutilised and has prompted frequent, repeated efforts by individual BCUs to create their own guidance at a significant time cost across the organisation, with much of what has been produced not being fit for purpose or reflective of organisational learning.

Alignment with College of Policing APP means that a standalone in-depth MPS missing persons policy is unnecessary beyond the acknowledgement of APP. It is however recognised that the MPS must have further guidance to support the text of the APP to ensure that processes and the roles of individual officers and relevant teams within those processes are given suitable clarity. As such, this will be delivered through three missing persons policy guidance documents to cover ancillary processes and best practice, as follows:

- **Incident Development (pre-48 hours)**
- **Incident Development (post-48 hours)**
- **Incident Closure**

In addition to these key guidance documents, further support will be provided by way of a central resource to include training and guidance related to specific functions (e.g. guidance on developing and recording risk assessment and investigation strategy).

Associated Documents and Policies

Internal documents are available directly from the intranet and will not be hyperlinked.

- [College of Policing Authorised Professional Practice \(APP\)](#)
- MPS Missing Persons Policy Guidance
- General Investigation Policy
- Death Investigation Policy
- Vulnerability and Protection of Adults at Risk
- Child Rescue Alert
- Child Abduction
- Child Sexual Exploitation
- Mental Health
- Abandonment of Babies