

Missing Persons Incident Development (pre-48 hours)

Policy Guidance

V1.3 June 2023

[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this document from anywhere other than the Missing Persons Policy Toolkit or SharePoint it should be considered out of date and not be relied upon)



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

Contents

- [Missing Persons Definitions](#)
- [THRIVE+](#)
- [Missing Persons Incident Development Overview \(pre-48 hours\)](#)
- [Incident Development \(pre-48 hours\)](#)
 - [Initial CAD Receipt](#)
 - [Low & Medium Risk Incident Development](#)
 - Triage: Informant Contact & Research
 - Informant Engagement & Support Expectations
 - Incidents Not Generating a Police Missing Persons Investigation
 - Risk Grading
 - Merlin Minimum Standards
 - Risk Assessment
 - Priority Actions
 - Cross-Match Searches
 - Ownership of Identified Complex Concern
 - Incident Progression
 - Joint Responsibility
 - Emerging or Rising Concern
 - Ongoing Incident Review
 - [High Risk Incident Development](#)
 - Golden Hour Principles
 - Formal Risk Assessment
 - Incident Transfer to the MPU
 - Case Specific Support/Advice
 - Incident Management Transferred to CRIS
 - Ongoing Incident Review
 - [Handover to Incident Development \(post-48 hours\)](#)
- [Supporting Process & Policy](#)
 - [Address Visits & Searching](#)
 - [DNA](#)
 - [Photos](#)
 - [Publicity](#)
 - [Significant Witnesses](#)
 - [Incident Ownership & Transfers](#)

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

If not accessed through the Met Missing Persons Policy Toolkit or SharePoint this document should be considered out of date.

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>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>The risk of harm to the subject or the public is assessed as likely but not serious.</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>The risk of serious harm to the subject or the public is assessed as very likely.</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 Decision-Making & Recording



THRIVE+ is a decision-making framework that is intended to be used dynamically throughout an incident. It helps us consider all the relevant factors that lead to good decision-making and provides a structure for recording our rationale. It works equally well with complex decisions as it does with simple ones.

THRIVE+ is not a replacement for the [National Decision Making model \(NDM\)](#). It complements the NDM by encapsulating its principles within a consistent framework and is consistent with the College of Policing Risk Principles and the Code of Ethics.

HOW to use THRIVE+ in missing persons incident development

Consider and utilise the elements of THRIVE+ that are relevant to the decision or part of the process you are dealing with. While smaller decisions within an incident may not require all THRIVE+ elements to be utilised, the following should be kept in mind as overarching considerations:

- THREAT:** Explain the threat to, or presented by, the subject relevant to the here-and-now. Clarity of the threat at all stages of the incident will help determine the immediacy and speed of response.
- HARM:** Explain the likely impact and severity of harm for the subject or others (e.g. physical, emotional, financial, reputational). Consider what measures will need to be adopted to prevent this harm occurring or that otherwise may reduce the damage.
- RISK:** Explain the likelihood of the threat happening. Consider what makes it likely or less likely drawing on knowledge of the subject, the circumstances, and the crucial input of family/friends.
- INVESTIGATION:** Highlight your investigative strategy, actions and opportunities.
- VULNERABILITY:** Not all vulnerabilities are obvious and may change as the incident develops. Consider knowledge of the subject, information gained during the investigation, and through ongoing engagement with family/friends.
- ENGAGEMENT:** Explore all opportunities to support the subject, their family/friends, or other relevant persons during the incident. See '[The Importance of Informant Contact & Engagement](#)'. Where relevant, consider other agencies, charities, third-party partners and wider community engagement.
- PREVENTION / INTERVENTION:** Think about how we can stop this happening again. Consider appropriate referrals (e.g. social care), problem solving, or preventative work (e.g. Op Resolute).

WHEN to use THRIVE+ in missing persons incident development

THRIVE+ should be viewed as the overriding mind-set for missing persons incident development and utilised at *appropriate times*. For a majority of incidents it will form the foundation of decision-making and recording in key areas, such as triage, risk assessment and investigation strategy. However, it will remain relevant to all decision-making throughout an incident; for example, the handling of new information that impacts on the risk or circumstances, or when considering the emergence of new priority lines of enquiry. The decisions may be simple or complex and the timing will likely differ from case-to-case.

- PAUSE:** At the appropriate times during an incident PAUSE to apply the THRIVE+ model. This could be at times dictated by the process (e.g. formal risk review), on receipt of new information, or when considering the approach to specific enquiry (e.g. the necessity for/extent of a premises search).
- THINK:** Think through all of the THRIVE+ elements that apply at that time and come to a decision about their impact and the action to take.
- RECORD:** Use free-text to record your decision-making. It is not compulsory to record under the THRIVE+ headings and you need not use 'n/a' if elements do not apply. If the THRIVE+ mind-set is applied it will be apparent in the text.

Missing Persons Incident Development Overview (pre-48 hours)

Initial CAD Receipt

For missing persons, the role of the **Ops Manager (400)** is to act as gatekeeper for BCU CAD receipt, thereby triggering appropriate early action and intervention on a case-by-case basis. On appraisal of the CAD, three pathways may be considered:

- Incident likely to be treated as missing (not high risk). The Ops Manager will task the incident into the RaDT for triage and further development, and record their action on the CAD.
- Incident contains clear and obvious indicators of high risk or identified complex concern. The Ops Manager will task the incident into the RaDT for a priority response, and record their action on the CAD.
- Incident deemed unlikely to be suited to a police missing persons investigation. The Ops Manager will utilise the RaDT to complete basic enquiries to support decision-making for closure, ensuring that the informant is fully updated, and bespoke rationale for the decision is recorded on CAD. See [Incidents Not Generating a Police Missing Persons Investigation](#).

Ops Manager involvement with the incident will end on completion of one of the three pathways.

Low & Medium Risk Incident Development

<p>The RaDT PC will complete an initial triage of the incident and risk concerns.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contact informant and establish full circumstances. • Manage informant expectations. • Complete full research. • Brief RaDT Sergeant and agree risk grading or raise any concern that the incident should not be treated as 'missing'. 	<p>The RaDT Sergeant will review the outcome of the initial triage and agree the incident as 'missing' or 'not missing'.</p> <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, and notify the informant. • If incident to be treated as 'missing' task within RaDT for further development.
<p>The RaDT PC will develop the response to the incident.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create Merlin with 2 hours of CAD origin. • Record full circumstance and risk concerns. • Circulate to PNC. • Complete cross-match searches, eliminate results, or raise potential linked incident(s) to RaDT Sergeant. • Complete priority actions. • Flag presence of any Identified Complex Concern. 	<p>The RaDT Sergeant will supervise the response.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supervise Merlin within 2 hours of creation. • Record a formal risk assessment. • Set priority actions (if potential cross-match identified, task supporting actions to confirm or eliminate link). • Inform Incident Manager in cases of Identified Complex Concern – to be transferred to MPU.
<p>The RaDT PC will progress the investigation strategy, develop emerging lines of enquiry, and respond to emerging risk concerns.</p> <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 as necessary to progress the investigation. • RaDT Sergeant (or Incident Manager) must be notified of emerging risks or elevated concern. 	<p>The RaDT Sergeant will develop a proportionate investigation strategy, task appropriately, and supervise progression.</p> <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.
<p>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.</p>	<p>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.</p>
<p>The incident Manager will complete a formal risk review at 24 hours & 48 hours (from Merlin creation).</p>	
<p>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.</p>	

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.**

<p>The RaDT PC will record the initial circumstances and risk concerns and create the Merlin.</p> <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. 	<p>The RaDT Sergeant will escalate the BCU response and supervise the initial recording of the incident.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inform the Incident Manager. • Supervise Merlin within 2 hours of creation.
<p>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.</p> <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). 	
<p>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. <i>(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).</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review the Merlin within 2 hours of notification. • Allocate OIC and set investigative strategy. • Consider case specific support/advice (e.g. PolSA). • Consider moving incident management to CRIS. • Ensure Pacesetter inclusion where appropriate. 	
<p>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.</p>	
<p>The Public Protection DI will complete a formal risk review at 24 hours & 48 hours (from Merlin creation).</p>	

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

For missing persons, the role of the **Ops Manager (400)** is to act as gatekeeper for BCU CAD receipt, thereby triggering appropriate early action and intervention on a case-by-case basis. On appraisal of the CAD, three pathways may be considered:

- Incident likely to be treated as missing (not high risk). The Ops Manager will task the incident into the RaDT for triage and further development, and record their action on the CAD.
- Incident contains clear and obvious indicators of high risk or identified complex concern. The Ops Manager will task the incident into the RaDT for a priority response, and record their action on the CAD.
- Incident deemed unlikely to be suited to a police missing persons investigation. The Ops Manager will utilise the RaDT to complete basic enquiries to support decision-making for closure, ensuring that the informant is fully updated, and bespoke rationale for the decision is recorded on CAD. See [Incidents Not Generating a Police Missing Persons Investigation](#).

Ops Manager involvement with the incident will end on completion of one of the three pathways.

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.• Manage informant expectations.• 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, and notify the informant.• 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?

Informant Engagement & Support Expectations

An appropriate and relevant level of engagement and support must be considered in all cases, particularly if the informant is a family member or close friend.

Refer to [Informant Engagement & Support Expectations](#) and supply the [contact e-factsheet](#) in all relevant cases (download and email as .pdf as the hyperlink will not be accessible externally).

Incident Development (pre 48-hours)

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 that an incident will not generate a police missing persons investigation, 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.

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.

If applicable, the informant or relevant other persons (e.g. a family member) must be suitably updated. If an incident does not generate a police missing persons investigation interested parties should be in doubt about the decision that has been made.

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 within 2 hours of CAD origin—minimum standards apply.• Record full circumstance and risk concerns.• Circulate to PNC within 2 hours of CAD origin.• Complete cross-match searches, eliminate results, or raise potential linked incident(s) to RaDT Sergeant.• 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 (if potential cross-match identified, task supporting actions to confirm or eliminate link).• 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.

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

Incident Development (pre 48-hours)

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.

Cross-Match Searches

[Cross-match searches](#) should be completed to establish any potential links to existing incidents (e.g. an unidentified body or person).

The searches rely on the accuracy and quality of information recorded in subject descriptive fields.

On completion of the search, any results returned should be manually considered and eliminated. On review results may be eliminated quickly due to a significant discrepancy in the descriptive detail. However, any match that cannot be confidently eliminated at this stage should be raised to the RaDT Sergeant.

The RaDT Sergeant will review the cross-match results and where necessary will task suitable actions to confirm or eliminate the link. In some instances, this may require development of [DNA](#) and [identification](#) enquiries.

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 & the Missing Persons Dementia Framework.

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. PolSA).
- 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 (PolSA) 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.
 - PolSAs 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 'PolSA' 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.

Incident Management Transferred to CRIS

If incident management is transferred to CRIS this action must be clearly recorded on the Merlin with the relevant CRIS reference shown, and also directing anyone accessing the Merlin to the CRIS. No updates to the investigation should be recorded on Merlin following a transfer and must be entered on CRIS only. If an update is entered on Merlin in error, it must be mirrored on the CRIS.

While the investigation is ongoing, Merlin will require risk reviews to be completed at various intervals. For admin purposes these entries can simply reflect the current risk grading and refer to the CRIS reference.

If transferred ensure both the **review** and **action** screens are activated within the CRIS report and are utilised 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

Prior to the use of any publicity tactics, nationally developed and agreed MPS guidance must be considered to ensure that the approach is appropriate and suitable.

Any decision to publicise, internally or externally, must be supported by recorded rationale.

[Missing Persons - Publicity and Sightings](#)

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 Ownership & Transfers

The following guidance should be followed at all times.

- [Internal Ownership & Transfers](#)
- [National Incident Tasking & Transfer Process](#)