



Freedom of Information Act Publication Scheme	
Protective Marking	Not Protectively Marked
Publication Scheme Y/N	Yes
Title	Investigation of Missing Persons and Unidentified Persons Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs)
Version	2
Summary	The purpose of these SOPs is to introduce minimum standards of investigation of missing persons and unidentified persons and bodies within the MPS.
Branch / OCU	Territorial Policing Crime Strategic Committee
Date created	May 2008
Review date	May 2011



Equality Impact Assessment

The Equality Impact Assessment Guidance **must** be used when completing this form:

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Branch / OCU: Territorial Policing Crime Strategic Committee

Date created: May 2008

Review date: May 2011

Version: 2

Author: Operation Compass

Directorate/Department/Borough/OCU:

Name, type or title of proposal (If a corporate policy, a policy workbook must also be completed):
Investigation of Missing Persons and Unidentified Persons Standard Operating Procedures

1. Aims and Purpose of Proposal - see Step 1 of the Guidance

The policy is intended to set minimum requirements for the investigation of missing persons, unidentified persons found and unidentified bodies found where the death is non-suspicious. It will provide a framework and clear guidance for MPS staff conducting these investigations. A standard approach will therefore be established across the MPS. The policy also lays out the principle that each case will be risk assessed on an individual basis. This ensures that all risk factors are taken into account and weighted accordingly. This is an improvement on previous points based systems where cases could be improperly assessed if they did not match certain criteria, which in turn indicates that policy is reviewed and developed on an ongoing basis.

2. Examination of Available Information – see Step 2 of the Guidance.

The available information on missing persons in the MPS is contained in a computer investigative tool called Merlin which forms the basis of a data pool which is searchable on different criteria in order to identify trends. In addition further data is available from the Police National Missing Persons Bureau (PNMPB). Advice has been sought from a focus group of the MPS Independent Advisory Group (IAG) covering the IAGs for race, disability and LGBT issues. Further guidance has been obtained from the ACPO document, Guidance On The management, recording and Investigation of Missing Persons.

3. Consultation/Involvement - see Step 3 of the Guidance

a. Who is responsible for managing this consultation/involvement?

The consultation will be managed by Operation Compass who has responsibility for MPS policy on missing persons.

b.	Why is this consultation/involvement taking place? The consultation is taking place to identify any issues arising out of current MPS policy and systems in this area. Although the investigation of missing persons has been a traditional role for the MPS there is no legislative framework dictating police action.
c.	Who is included within the consultation/involvement, including which group(s)? Consider beneficiaries, stakeholders, service users or providers and those who may be affected. The consultation has involved the following groups; MPS Independent Advisory Groups Race, LGBT, and Mental Health. TP BOCU Missing Persons Units SCD26 Metropolitan Police Service Missing Persons Bureau (MPSMPB) Police National Missing Persons Bureau The charity 'Missing People' MPS Mental Health policy unit SCD5 Child Abuse Investigation Teams (CAIT) HR Training Metropolitan Police Authority Government Office for London Diversity and Citizen Focus Directorate SCD20 Crime Academy
d.	What methods of consultation/involvement are employed to ensure full information sharing and participation, e.g. surveys, interviews, community meetings? Focus groups have been held with all BOCUs with Missing Persons Units (31 BOCUs) Focus groups have also been held with the IAGs for race, disability and LGBT. Individual interviews have been held with the charity 'Missing People', SCD26 MPSMPB and SCD5 CAIT. Invitations for comments and submissions have been made on the MPS Intranet.
e.	What are the results of the consultation/involvement? How are these fed back into the process? As this proposal involves a review of an existing SOP it has been possible to provide this to participants in order for amendments to be suggested and recorded. All meetings, interviews and focus groups have been minuted.

4. Screening Process for relevance to Diversity or Equality issues - see Step 4 of the Guidance

(i)	Will the proposal have significantly higher impact on a particular group, community or person the MPS serves or employs? Yes Explain: Statistically people of Afro Caribbean ethnicity appear more often missing persons reports than would be expected. This is reflected in MPS Merlin data. As missing persons reports are entirely reactive it is not felt that MPS action is the cause of this anomaly. This point has been raised with the IAG for race. They contended that the fact that Afro Caribbean's were more prevalent in missing persons figures was not in itself a matter for concern. Increased reporting could be an indicator of increased confidence in the MPS. What would be an issue is if there was an increased incidence of negative outcomes for Afro Caribbean subjects i.e. those cases where the subject is found dead. There is no evidence that Afro Caribbean's are more likely to suffer a negative outcome. It is likely that there will be more than one reason for the increased numbers of Afro Caribbean subjects. Factors such as the numbers of Afro Caribbean children in care will influence the totals. Further research will be carried out into this area to try and establish whether any causes can be identified in order to develop preventative strategies. This research will include identifying at risk groups in order for direct contact to be made.
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(ii)	Will any part of the proposal be directly or indirectly discriminatory? No Explain: No factors have been identified which suggest any group will be discriminated against whether directly or indirectly.
(iii)	Is the proposal likely to negatively affect equality of opportunity? No Explain: No factors have been identified which would lead to inequality of opportunity for any person or group.
(iv)	Is the proposal likely to adversely affect relations between any particular groups or between the MPS and those groups? No Explain: A missing persons enquiry is a reactive enquiry with the sole purpose of ensuring the safety and well being of the missing individual.
(v)	Are there any other community concerns, opportunities or risks to communities arising from the proposal? No Explain: It is incumbent on the MPS to have robust and thorough procedures for dealing with missing persons. The expectation of the public is that when a person is reported missing this will be taken seriously and dealt with appropriately by the MPS. This therefore provides an opportunity to increase public confidence in the service which will in turn encourage greater participation by the public in assisting the MPS with enquiries.
(vi)	Is the proposal likely to harm positive attitudes towards others and discourage their participation in public life? No Explain: The policy is not directed at any particular section of the public. It is one of the few areas of police work where the MPS is not beholden to legislation but can provide a service based purely on the needs of each individual.
(vii)	Is the proposal a major one in terms of scale or significance? Yes Explain: The policy determines MPS action in relation to the important area of missing persons.

From the answers supplied, you must decide if the proposal impacts upon diversity or equality issues. If yes, a full impact assessment is required. If no, complete the following box and enter a review date at the end of the form.

Full Impact Assessment Required	Yes / <i>(delete as applicable)</i>
Signed:	Date:
Supervised:	Date:

5. Full Impact Assessment – see Step 5 of the Guidance

a)	Explain the likely differential impact (whether intended or unintended, positive or negative) of the proposal on individual service users or citizens on account of:
	Age: older people, children and young people.
	Details: It is likely that reports of missing subjects who are either elderly or children/young persons under 18 will attract an increased risk assessment due to perceived increased vulnerability. This should in turn lead to an increased response by Police. As this increased response is entirely driven by the requirement to ensure the subjects welfare this is seen as a positive differential impact. The general public would rightly expect the MPS to deliver an adaptable service based on need.

Disability in line with the Social Model.	
Details: People with disability whether physical or mental health in nature can also expect to have an increased risk assessment due to a perception of increased vulnerability, although this will be assessed on a case-by-case basis. Again it is likely that this will lead to an increased level of police activity which, when intended to ensure welfare of the subject, provides a positive differential impact.	
Faith, religion or belief: those with a recognised belief system or no belief.	
Details: An increased appreciation of cultural and religious issues especially around the subjects of forced marriage and honour based violence mean that these issues are specifically identified in the SOPs as increased risk factors. It is intended that this will ensure that each case will receive the best possible service from the MPS and that officers can address any faith/race issues and seek appropriate advice and support.	
Gender or marital status: women and men.	
Details: Recorded incidents of missing persons show no significant statistical bias towards female or male subjects (13,823 female subjects in 2007 compared to 14,063 male subjects.)	
Race, ethnicity, colour, nationality or national origins.	
Details: One of the main tenets of the policy is that each case must be risk assessed and dealt with individually. Each set of circumstances is different and no two cases will ever be identical even where the same individual is involved. For this reason procedures are biased on the basis of risk and no other criteria.	
Sexual orientation, transgender or transsexual issues.	
Details: There is no difference procedurally between cases of subjects with different sexual orientation or transgender/transsexual issues. Investigators are expected to identify all areas of risk connected with missing subjects and proceed accordingly. As each enquiry is tailored to the individual this is seen as a positive factor. From the small number of transgender/transsexual cases (11 in 2007) it is not yet possible to identify any trends, however this will be monitored on an ongoing basis.	
Other issues, e.g. public transportation users, homeless people, asylum seekers, the economically disadvantaged, or other community groups not covered above.	
Details: There are a significant number of missing persons reported who it transpires are in the UK as asylum seekers. If the asylum process has been exhausted with the outcome that the individual is likely to be returned to their country of origin there is an increased likelihood that they will go 'missing' to avoid any action by the Borders and Immigration Agency. In these circumstances the subject has clearly gone missing of their own accord however as they fit the definition of a missing person enquiries would be carried out to trace them. This would be against their wishes and could be viewed as a negative differential impact. However the tracing of people who are in breach of immigration regulations is a matter of public interest. It is also true that missing persons enquiries are carried out with a view to confirming the welfare of the subject and as such this policy is proportionate, legal, accountable and necessary. Children missing from Care homes- possible neglect/ abuse	
b)	Is the proposal directly or indirectly discriminatory? Is there a genuine occupational requirement?
Details: As stated earlier this policy is not discriminatory either directly or indirectly as each cases is individually assessed according to risk. In such an important area there is a genuine need for a pan London policy to provide guidance to officers.	

c)	Explain how the proposal is intended to increase equality of opportunity by permitting positive action.
	Details: N/A
d)	Explain how the proposal is likely to promote good relations between different groups.
	Details: The policy is intended to build on partnership working skills and provides an opportunity for closer relations between the MPS and various groups such as children's homes (through the London Safeguarding Children Board protocol), local authorities (through local protocols to deal with investigations concerning deceased persons), NGOs such as Missing People (through the established protocols) and others. Quality of service to families builds trust and confidence in Police etc.
e)	Explain how the proposal is likely to promote positive attitudes towards others and encourage their participation in public life.
	Details: The policy will reinforce the message that the MPS is a service for all Londoners regardless of ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, age or disability. Projecting a positive image is likely to encourage greater participation from communities.
f)	Explain how the proposal enables decisions and practices to adequately reflect the service users perspective.
	Details: By providing clear guidance as to the standards expected for missing persons investigations the policy will ensure that service users needs are at the fore when planning each investigation.

6. Modifications – see Step 6 of the Guidance

Could the proposal be modified to reduce or eliminate any identified negative impacts, or create or increase positive impacts? What improvements have been made?
There are no areas identified which could be modified.

7. Further Research - see Step 7 of the Guidance

Given the analysis so far, what additional research or consultation is required to investigate the impacts of the proposal on the diversity strands?
Research should be an ongoing process in order to identify developing trends. It would be beneficial to engage in further consultation on a regular basis with representative groups in order to pre-empt any negative effects. (Although this would be purely precautionary as no negative effects are envisaged).

8. Decision-making - see Step 8 of the Guidance

a.	Name, rank or grade of decision maker	
b.	What is the Decision?	
	Reject the proposal	Yes / No <i>(delete as applicable)</i>
	Introduce the proposal	Yes / No <i>(delete as applicable)</i>
	Amend the proposal (an impact assessment should be made of any amendments)	Yes / No <i>(delete as applicable)</i>

- c. Name, rank or grade of SMT/(B)OCU/Management Board endorsing decision
DCI Ron Knight

9. Monitoring - see Step 9 of the Guidance

- a. How will the implementation of the proposal be monitored and by whom?
Implementation of the policy will be monitored by Operation Compass, the MPS lead in this area. Monitoring will take the form of dip sampling of individual BOCUs, in depth reviews of critical and high-risk cases, liaison with BOCU Public Protection desks. Further liaison with other interested MPS departments will take place through established forums such as the Merlin Users Group. Wider communication with BOCUs can be undertaken either through Op Compass or alternatively the quarterly Crime Control Strategy Meeting for crime managers. Recent changes to the Merlin computer reporting system also allow management information searches to be made which will assist identifying trends in reporting.
- b. How will the results of monitoring be used to develop this proposal and its practices?
Operation Compass will use the product of ongoing research in conjunction with regular review of the Missing Persons SOPs to ensure issues identified in monitoring are addressed.
- c. What is the timetable for monitoring, with dates?
The monitoring report is reviewed on an annual basis.

10. Public Availability of Report/Results - see Step 10 of the Guidance

What are the arrangements for publishing, where and by whom?
Strategic Management & Policy Development branch will publish the policy both internally and externally.

Person completing EIA: Detective Sergeant, Operation Compass	
Signed:	Date:
Person supervising EIA:	
Signed:	Date:
Quality Assurance Approval:	
Name and Unit: Detective Sergeant, DCFD	Date:
Date Review Due:	