



**METROPOLITAN
POLICE**

TOTAL POLICING

Freedom of Information Act Publication Scheme	
Protective Marking	Not Protectively Marked
Publication Scheme Y/N	Yes
Title	Policy on the Investigation of Missing Persons, Unidentified Persons / Bodies and Hospers and associated Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)
Version	3.0
Summary	The policy sets out procedures for all investigations of persons reported to police as missing. Further, it sets out instructions for dealing with incidents of unidentified bodies found and persons taken to hospital where no next of kin have been informed.
(B)OCU or Unit, Directorate	Territorial Policing (TP) - Capability and Business Support (CBS)
Author	TP Capability & Business Support
Review Date	March 2020
Date Issued	7 March 2016

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Branch / OCU:	Territorial Policing (TP) - Capability and Business Support (CBS)				
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Application

When? This Policy applies from 9th May 2016.

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 Policy applies in particular to officers and staff in the following roles (This list is not intended to be exhaustive):

- All officers & staff deployed throughout Territorial Policing operational command units including Emergency Response Policing Teams, Public Access / Reception Officers, Safer Neighbourhood Teams, Criminal Investigation Departments, Public Protection Desks, Grip & Pace Centre, Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hubs and Missing Persons Units.
- Roads & Transport Policing Command (RTPC)
- Met Command & Control Communications staff (Met CC)
- Pan London Taskforce - Specialist Crime & Operations (SC&O20)
- Met Intelligence Command (SC&O36)
- Homicide Command (SC&O1)

Policy Principles

The MPS requires officers and staff to follow the guidelines set in this policy and associated

toolkit when investigating incidents of missing persons; unidentified persons / bodies found and identified persons admitted to hospital where friends or next of kin are not informed.

It is important to note the procedural response adopted by the MPS since July 2014 in relation to individuals considered 'Absent'. Absent is defined as 'A person not at a place where they are expected to be and there is no apparent risk'. This process is handled by Met CC and will not usually generate the attendance of a police officer.

All officers and staff must adhere to all actions in this policy when dealing with incidents, ensuring that:

- The protection and safeguarding of vulnerable children and adults is in line with the Vulnerability Assessment Framework (VAF);
- All relevant information and intelligence is recorded on the missing person report to ensure lines of enquiry are identified and prioritized;
- There is effective management of all identified risks for the safety of the individual and the public;
- 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

This policy and associated toolkit have been developed with appropriate consultation with the MPS Safety and Health Risk Management Team to ensure that all significant Health and Safety risks have been quantified. Suitable and sufficient controls are in place aimed at mitigating the risk to the MPS such as:

- 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 MPS is committed to locating and safeguarding those who go missing and to provide an effective response to members of the public who report individuals as missing. The policy supports the following objectives:

- Provide a framework for investigations that will ensure a consistent response to cases reported to the Metropolitan Police Service;
- Ensure incidents and ongoing cases are regularly and effectively supervised and resourced;
- Manage and reduce the volume of missing incidents experienced by vulnerable members of the community.

Associated Documents and Policies

MPS toolkit directly supporting this policy:

- Missing Persons

Other relevant toolkits:

- General Investigation
- Sudden Death
- Vulnerability and Protection of Adults at Risk
- Child Rescue Alert
- Child Abduction
- Child Sexual Exploitation
- Mental Health
- Abandonment of Babies

National Policy:

- ACPO (2010) Guidance on the Management, Recording and Investigation of Missing Persons (Second Edition).
- ACPO (2013) Interim Guidance on the Management, Recording and Investigation of Missing Persons.
- College of Policing Authorised Professional Practice (Consultation, September 2015).

Other relevant documents:

- London Safeguarding Children's Board London Councils Protocol (2015).

- Pan London Child Sexual Exploitation Protocol (March 2015).
- Mental Health AWOL Partnership Plan (2013).

Notices to be Cancelled / Amended

Cancel Item 2, Notices 34/08, 20 August 2008.

Equality Impact Assessment

Policies are developed and reviewed using a consultative approach involving relevant internal and external stakeholders. Additionally, developers must consider what action needs to be taken to help overcome or minimise any disadvantages that people who share a protected characteristic will experience in compliance with the Equality Act 2010. Finally, the impact of the policy will be monitored to identify any emerging issues, learning and benefits post-delivery of the policy. The table below summarises the outcomes of these steps:

Research and consultation	
Review of research	Existing policy and standard operating procedures.
Internal consultation	The following were consulted in the development of this toolkit: Directorate of Legal Services, Safety and Health Risk Management Team (SHRMT), Finance Business Partner, Information Assurance Unit (IAU), Met-TUS (MPS trade unions secretariat); SAMURAI (Staff Associations Meeting Up Regularly and Interacting); Critical Incident Advisory Team; Missing Persons Units. In addition a cross section of ranks from Police Constable to Detective Superintendent, and Missing Persons Co-ordinators were asked to review the toolkit.
External Consultation	External consultation was carried out with the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime (MOPAC); National Missing Persons Bureau (National Crime Agency) and Missing Persons Charity.
Protected Characteristics (Equality Act 2010)	
Summary of Equality Impact Assessment	MPS personnel are instructed to consider the protected characteristic/s of all victim / witness / suspects (as defined by Equality Act 2010) and treat them according to their needs.
Age	Age can be a huge factor in the investigation of missing persons. Research tells us that children missing from home and looked after children missing from care homes represent the majority of missing cases. Age therefore is a precursor to vulnerability; children, young people and older people that come to police notice will be assessed for vulnerability, using the Vulnerability Assessment Framework (VAF), and if appropriate referred to relevant agency for protective safeguarding. Policy users are directed to other toolkits such as safeguarding children and safeguarding adults to ensure appropriate action is taken. We have adopted age-specific actions within the policy to ensure police prioritise cases according to risk; this includes a mandatory 'medium' risk for all children under 18 and the decision that nobody aged 13 or under will be considered as 'absent'.

Deaf/ disability	Physical and mental disability is often factor in missing person cases. Officers and staff are told to assess a victim's vulnerability to directly address risk gradings in all cases. This captures disability, and they are reminded that communication issues may arise for example when communicating with a Deaf or hard of hearing person. This policy contains prompts to consider non-police partner assistance and referrals such as guidance for families caring for individuals prone to missing episodes through Alzheimers or Dementia.
Gender reassignment	Nothing in this policy affects the manner in which police officers or staff will approach the investigation of individuals according to their choice of gender. The individual concerned will remain the focus of the investigation and therefore equality will remain a priority. Relevant known information concerning gender reassignment will need to be recorded by staff in cases of unidentified persons or bodies for the accuracy of unidentified cross-match searching.
Marriage and Civil Partnership	Not applicable - this relates to employment purposes only.
Pregnancy and Maternity	This policy applies to all who may become the subject of a missing person or unidentified person / Hosper enquiry (A 'Hosper' is when an <u>identified person</u> is admitted to hospital or a similar institution but their next of kin, relative or friend have not been informed). Pregnancy or cases of missing nursing mothers will clearly become the focus if an enhanced risk assessment. The presence of children in cases will generate Merlin PAC (pre-assessment check) report whether born or unborn. Staff will be reminded of links to toolkits focused on child abduction including parental child abduction where relevant.
Race	The investigation of these matters is focused on the needs of the individual regardless of race. Therefore the policy reflects an approach where staff will act according to the merits of each case. Where race impacts upon the needs of the family or community, staff are to be mindful to address such matters in investigative plans, reviews and media campaigns. The use of Language Line or a colleague with a second language to facilitate clear communication. Community leaders are to be engaged where necessary and staff are directed to consider the critical incident toolkit where relevant.
Religion or belief	There is nothing specific in this policy that is known to be contrary to religious practices or beliefs. However it is recognised that associated policy procedures such as Sudden Death can impact where body recovery is necessary. The policy relies on the appreciation of community diversity considerations by all staff expected to use it.
Sex	This policy is aimed at locating and ensuring safeguarding measures for all those recorded as missing. There is nothing central to this policy that would apply differently to men or women. Risk assessments considering vulnerability are likely to address gender specific risks such as child sexual exploitation in young missing females and staff are instructed to seek guidance from recognised protocols and the MPS exploitation command.

Sexual Orientation	The MPS recognises vulnerabilities that may impact on individuals going missing could include confusion or concern at others acceptance of their sexual orientation. Investigating officers are reminded of the network and partnership opportunities in the LGB (Lesbian Gay and Bisexual) community where Family Liaison Officers and community considerations become apparent.
Other issues for example: Low income groups, single parents, rough sleepers	Missing or unidentified persons investigations can affect the entire cross section of society in London. The promotion to consult with, and links developed with non-police partners including charities (Missing People) are contained within the toolkits.
Monitoring	
12 month implementation plan	Monitoring will include: • Review the TP Borough Operational Command Unit (BOCU) Risk & Organisational Learning self-assessment form and update to ensure its relevance to renewed policy guidance. This includes risk assessment and the necessity to complete timely safe and well checks. • Missing Person coordinators and TP missing person investigators will be heavily involved in ensuring compliance to policy in the oversight of Merlin reports and dealing with those agencies most commonly associated with raising missing person investigations with the MPS (MH Facilities / NHS Trusts / Children and Adult care homes) • Case reviews: High risk, long term or deceased cases reviewed for organisational learning and policy adherence. • Missing Person Unit / Coordinator leads bi-monthly meetings review borough performance around compliance of policy • Missing Person Diamond Group meeting, chaired by MPS lead, will include performance reviews aligned to policy compliance. This will also include reviews of the TP borough self-assessment managed by Performance, Risk and Assurance unit. • The policy has been reviewed to ensure compliance with the Equality Act 2010. The data collection by Performance, Risk and Assurance to monitor the compliance of this policy will enable the CBS team to identify any EIA related issues and adjust the policy if needed. • The MPS will also invite and gather feedback from partner agencies including London Safeguarding Children's Board and London Safeguarding Adults Network. This will include continued liaison with the UK Missing Persons Bureau (NCA), College of Policing • Performance, Risk and Assurance will supply borough level Merlin data on a monthly and an annual basis to measure how boroughs are managing time-critical actions within Merlin and throughout investigations.