



Truancy Procedure

This procedure is part of North Yorkshire Police policy to which all Chief Constable personnel and the functions provided by the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner are required to adhere.

Procedure Statement:

North Yorkshire Police is dedicated to ensuring all individuals are safeguarded and all risks assessed to ensure the correct level of deployment and investigation takes place.

This policy details how North Yorkshire Police will respond to reports of children or young person's absent from school.

Procedures:

Missing Persons Procedure

Other Documents:

APP CoP Missing Persons

Process:

Children or Young People who are absent from school are not necessarily always "missing" people who require police intervention. In most cases the child or young person will return to home or school within a short period of time or can easily be located with some basic enquiries.

Where a child or young person is reported to have left school premises without the permission of school staff they will NOT be recorded as a missing person or require police deployment unless either of the following a) or b) apply:

- a) It is considered that there is an **immediate and real risk** that the child / young person will suffer **significant harm** or cause **significant harm** to another person if they are not found.
- b) Where there is an agreement in place between the school and police that the child / young person should be treated as missing immediately in all circumstances.

If a child / young person has failed to attend school as planned, prior to contacting Police the School MUST have made reasonable enquiries to confirm that the child is not absent from school for genuine reasons or that their whereabouts are known. Where enquiries have been made by the school and the child / young person is not accounted for then a report should be made to the Police where a risk assessment will be carried out in line with current policies and any actions determined.

If there is an agreement in place that a child / young person will be treated as missing immediately in all circumstances, then this will be identified by an Information Flag on their Niche profile.

An immediate and real risk is one that is present at that time and not a potential risk which may arise at some point in the future.

The risk must be of significant harm. Significant harm could be from violence or some other cause such as sexual offending or self-harm.

Whilst the Police have a legal duty to act when there is an immediate real and substantial risk that the child or young person will suffer **serious** harm, North Yorkshire Police will deploy where there is an immediate and real risk of **significant** harm. This brings the policy in line with the Police's core functions and public duty and is also in accordance with the National direction of missing people statutory guidance.

Definitions of Harm

Significant Harm: Under S31(9) Children's Act 1989

- Harm means ill-treatment or impairment of health or development including for example impairment suffered from seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another
- Development means physical, intellectual, emotional, social or behavioural development
- Health means physical or mental health
- Ill-treatment includes sexual abuse and forms of ill-treatment which are not physical

There is no absolute criteria on which to rely when judging what constitutes significant harm

Serious Harm: The College of Policing Missing Person APP states that serious harm is defined as

- A risk which is life threatening and/or traumatic and from which recovery, whether physical or psychological, can be expected to be difficult or impossible. (Home Office 2002 and Offender Assessment System 2006)

Serious harm includes death and serious injury that give risk to an Article 2 ECHR duty. It also includes degrading treatment or a prolonged period of pain or distress that give rise to an Article 3 ECHR duty.

Assessing Risk

The risk can arise due to risk from others and risks they pose to themselves such as self-harm or suicide.

When assessing risk, account must be taken of all the circumstances which may include age (both chronological and mental), vulnerabilities, disabilities and mental health.

Where concerns about a child / young person relate to more long term behaviour, care or home environment it is unlikely that an immediate and real risk will arise unless there are further identified risks.

The information that establishes the risk may come from any source and can include school staff, parents / guardians, carers, police and children's social care.

Process

Where school staff notify the Police of a child / young person having left school premises, the following process must be followed:

- The call handler will open a STORM log as 'PSW Missing – Pending Assessment and **NOT** concern for safety. This will auto populate a series of risk assessment questions and will auto transfer to the FIM for review.
- The school must be asked whether there is an **immediate and real risk** that the child / young person will suffer significant harm and/or cause significant harm to any other person if they are not found.
- Where the school staff state that there is such a risk then they must be asked to clarify the nature and details of that risk and why it is thought the risk exists.
- The call handler must record school staff comments on the STORM log to assist the FIM in assessing the risk.
- School staff should be asked to supply any contact details and information that may help in locating the child / young person.
- The call handler should ask the school what measures the school has taken / is taking to find the child / young person and record their response.
- The FIM will review and assess the information and determine whether the incident is either concern for safety, truancy, missing low, missing medium or missing high.
- Where the FIM is unavailable due to Operational demand the incident should be referred to the CII to review and assess the information and determine whether the incident is either concern for safety, truancy, missing low, missing medium or missing high.
- If the FIM agrees that there is an immediate and real risk of significant harm, then the Police will deploy resources and the matter will be progressed in line with the Missing Persons Procedure ensuring that the incident be headed as 'MFH high risk.' The FIM / CII must record rationale for the decision on the STORM log using the National Decision Model. All available information must be considered.

- If the FIM assessment deems that there is no such immediate and real risk of significant harm and there is no agreement in place between School and Police that the child / young person will be treated as missing in all circumstances, then they will be treated as a “truant.” There will be no Police deployment and the incident can be closed as an ‘ADMIN Contact Record’

Recording

The Organisation reporting should be told that no police deployment will occur and provided with an incident number in the event of further information becoming available.

The Organisation reporting must be advised to recontact if the circumstances change, and the risk level increases sufficiently to justify police deployment.

The Organisation reporting must be advised that it is their responsibility to notify parents / guardians (and where appropriate any other interested 3rd parties such as social workers) of the child / young person and to inform them that should the child / young person NOT return home at their normal expected time then it is parent / carers responsibility to report them as missing once all reasonable actions have been taken to establish their whereabouts.

If an incident falls within the criteria it should be recorded as a missing person and dealt with in accordance with missing persons procedure.

Key Points

The call handler must make it clear that North Yorkshire Police will take no action for truancy unless the situation changes and there is a change to the risk.

Should further information be received that impacts upon the risk then the incident will be reviewed by the FIM. If deployment is deemed necessary based on the new information and risk, then a missing person’s report should be created and investigated in line with the missing person procedure.

The overarching principle is that there MUST be an immediate and real risk of significant harm for North Yorkshire Police to deploy resources and commence a missing person investigation.

Expectations

Police will investigate all cases falling within the definition of missing (where the incident has not been otherwise classified as truant) in accordance with National Missing Persons Policy guidance.

Where appropriate the school will be expected to assist in finding the child / young person and to work cooperatively with Police during any enquiry.

Following any report of a missing person to Police the school must inform and update parents / guardians and other appropriate agencies.

If the incident is logged as a truant and the caller has been advised that the Police will not be deployed, then the caller must advise parents / guardians of this when notifying them of the absence.