



Unclassified

NORFOLK
CONSTABULARY

Our Priority is You

Norfolk Constabulary

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Norfolk County Council
Childrens Services
County Hall
Norwich

Date: 15th October 2013

Your Ref: DS/JW MISPER

Our Ref:

Dear Sir / Madam

MISSING PERSONS – A NEW APPROACH

I am writing to inform you of a new national working practice agreed jointly by the Home Office and Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) Reducing Bureaucracy programme, concerning the new definition for 'Missing Person'.

Nearly 900 people per day are reported missing in the UK. The police are often the first agency to take a missing person report and it is essential that the best possible and proportionate response is deployed to those most at risk from harm, enabling officers to focus on more serious incidents and proactive safeguarding. This means that procedures need to be in place to ensure that the correct cases are identified so that resources go where they are most needed. The new definition means that risk and demand can be assessed more effectively, freeing up officer time.

The new definition encourages an improved risk-based police led investigation of individual incidents, while supporting and demanding a multi-agency commitment to better safeguard vulnerable children and adults.

"Missing" will refer to individuals whose whereabouts cannot be established and where it is out of character for the individual to go missing, or where the individual is considered to be a possible subject of crime or is at risk of harm to themselves and/or others. Anyone reported as missing who is under the age of 18 will automatically be treated as a high risk missing person, but we may choose to downgrade them to 'absent' once a full assessment of the circumstances has been carried out. A full police response is deployed for those identified as 'missing'.

A new category of **"Absent"** will apply to an individual who is not at a place where they are expected or required to be at a particular time, categorised as such only after a full assessment of the circumstances has taken place and that they are not feared to be at danger or at risk of harm. The police will record these but will no longer actively look for the absent person or investigate their absence. This remains with the reporting person/organisation who also has the responsibility to call the police with any update to the whereabouts of the individual.

However, where there is ever a doubt over the safety of an individual, they will be classified as 'missing' and treated in the appropriate manner. 'Absent' individuals can be reclassified as 'missing' at any time. Any report that is treated as 'absent' is regularly reviewed by the police until we are satisfied that the individual is not at harm.

The new definition will come into effect across Norfolk and Suffolk Constabularies on **Monday 18th November 2013**.

The contents of this letter are national policy and numerous police services across the UK already operate in this way. We will continue to work with our partners to ensure that where individuals are regularly reported to us as missing, but who now may be treated as absent, that the necessary safeguarding measures take place to look at the wider issues surrounding their behavior.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Julie Wvndth', with a horizontal line extending from the end.

Julie Wvndth
Detective Superintendent
Vulnerability & Partnerships Command
Vulnerability, Partnerships & CCR Directorate