

## 5.1.2 Absenting Children, Levels of Concern

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### Regulation and Standards

#### England

- Regulation 12: The protection of children standard
- Guide to the protection of children standard
- Regulation 34: Policies for the protection of children
- Regulation 40: Notification of a serious event

#### Wales

- Regulation 18: Provider Assessment  
<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/wsi/2017/1264/regulation/18/made>
- Regulation 15: Personal plan  
<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/wsi/2017/1264/regulation/18/made>
- Regulation 27: Safeguarding policies and procedures  
<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/wsi/2017/1264/regulation/27/made>
- Notifications: Schedule 3 <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/wsi/2017/1264/schedule/3/made>
- Statutory Guidance on Regulated Services (Service Providers and Responsible Individuals) (Wales) Regulations 2017 <http://gov.wales/docs/dhss/publications/180201statutory-guidanceen.pdf>
- All Wales Protocol Missing Children
- Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014

### Scope of this chapter

The Absent Children Procedures, contained in **Absent Missing Children/Young People Policy** of this manual, describe the actions that must be taken if a child is Absent from a children's home or foster home.

Those procedures state that the Police, Social Worker and others should be consulted and must be notified in certain circumstances; usually where there is a medium or high level of concern.

This guidance is designed to assist staff/carers in assessing these risks and determining the levels of concern.

### Relevant guidance

**Statutory guidance on children who run away or go missing from home or care (DfE, January 2014)** where the child is, or has been, persistently absent from the placement;

**ACPO Interim Guidance on the Management, Recording and Investigation of Missing Persons (2013)**

## 1. High Level of Concern

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If a child is **Absconded** from lawful detention, s/he automatically falls into the High Level of Concern category.

If the child is Missing and remains absent for 12 hours, or s/he is missing overnight, this automatically falls into the High Level of Concern category.

Also any child who is Missing or **Absent**, immediately falls into the High Level of Concern category if the following or similar circumstances apply:

- A. The child's death may occur;
- B. The child may be at risk of serious injury or harm, e.g. from adverse weather conditions or the child's inability to stay safe;
- C. The child requires essential medication/medical attention;
- D. The child is likely to suffer **Significant Harm**;
- E. The child may come into contact with any individuals who pose a risk to children;
- F. The child may be injured, including self-injury, and require medical attention;
- G. There is a warrant for the child's arrest;
- H. The child may commit a violent or an arresting offence;
- I. The child may be abducted;
- J. The child is subject to a **Child Protection Plan**;
- K. The child is subject to **Police Protection**;
- L. The child is subject to an **Emergency Protection Order** or **Recovery Order**.

## 2. Medium and Low Levels of Concern

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The criteria for deciding whether a child falls into the low or medium category can not be defined absolutely. It is for staff/carers on the day to decide what level of concern to apply depending on the age, background, level of understanding of the child, their missing/absenting risk assessment and other circumstances on the day.

Staff should consult the manager, social worker or the Police.

Age and level of understanding	Age is a factor, but not alone. Also consider level of understanding, ability to make informed decisions, the child's ability to operate in urban or rural environments, social and life skills, disability etc. The more able the child is, the less concern staff should have.
Number of Absences	Consider the number of times the child has absented him/herself and from what situations. For example, children who have absented themselves from similar accommodations and returned safely may be of less concern than those who are not known to staff or who do not normally absent themselves. Consider if they usually have time to themselves in the community.
Behaviour whilst absent	Consider what the child does or is suspected to get involved in whilst absent on previous occasions. Also consider how recent such problems have been. Higher levels of concern should be attributed to those who are known, recently, to have

	<p>placed themselves or others at risk of significant harm. The factors that may result in higher levels of concern are that the child has previously:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Made contact with known/suspected Schedule 1 Offenders;</li> <li>• Been abducted;</li> <li>• Self-injured or attempted suicide;</li> <li>• Committed or been associated with a serious or an arresting offence;</li> <li>• Been subject to sexual exploitation;</li> <li>• Or other serious risks/concerns.</li> </ul>
Circumstances on the day	<p>The following are examples of circumstances, which may be considered in deciding the level of concern on the day. The fact that they apply to a child does not automatically mean there is a high level of concern; the decision rests with the manager having considered all the circumstances.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Out of character/unusual behaviour prior to disappearance;</li> <li>• Absence with no prior indication;</li> <li>• Possibility of sexual exploitation or being drawn into offending behaviour.</li> </ul>

## Revision History

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**End**