

Missing

5 Minute Facts

What is it?

Any child or young person:

- Whose whereabouts cannot be established
- The circumstances are out of character
- There is information that suggests they may be the subject of crime
- Is at risk of harm to themselves or someone else

The reasons why children go missing include push factors such as problems at home, family break-up, mental and emotional health problems, problems at school and bullying; and pull factors such as running to be near friends or family, grooming for exploitation, or adolescent development – when the young person pushes against boundaries making their own decisions.

Risks of missing:

When missing, children may experience physical / emotional abuse, or may take part in risk taking and self-harming behaviour. They may feel fear and loneliness or put themselves in dangerous situations such as sleeping rough, committing crime to survive, or trusting unknown adults for their care. Children who go missing can be vulnerable to being exploited, trafficking, violent crime, or drug and alcohol misuse.

Impact of missing:

When a young person goes missing, family life can be disrupted, relationships with parents or carers can be strained, and it can also affect other children in the household.

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If a child is missing, education is often disrupted, and missing out on education could affect future life chances. Missing education can also have consequences for positive social relationships.

How can missing children be supported?

When a child is found or returns home, they are visited by police (to check they are safe and well and no crimes have been committed). Following that, all children are offered a return home interview to get a better understanding of what led to the missing episode, what happened when they were away and what support that can be given to stop them going missing again. This is usually undertaken by the RUNA service, which is an independent service. This gives the young person an opportunity to say what happened in their own words and is shared to inform plans.

Partnership working

Our aim is to work together to reduce the reasons and circumstances that make children go missing and minimise the numbers of children who feel leaving the family home or placement is their only option. Bolton partners recognise that there are opportunities to work together to respond to any incidents or risks related to the missing. Those already working with the young person are usually best placed to provide additional support. Where a child is missing, and there are concerns or involvement with exploitation, then the Complex Safeguarding Team will also get involved.

Key contact...

Missing and Information Coordinator
mfh@bolton.gov.uk

Bolton
Council