

Consultation on the ACPO (2010) Guidance on the Management, Recording and Investigation of Missing Persons

This consultation commences on Monday 14th December 2009 and closes on Monday 18th January 2010, by which date all responses must be received.

Responses are to be sent by email (preferred) or post to the following addresses:

codeconsultation@npia.pnn.police.uk

or,

Consultation Response
NPIA Missing Persons Bureau
Foxley
Bramshill
Hook
Hants RG27 0JW

This revision to the 2005 ACPO Guidance incorporates many of the principles set out in that document but combines the good practices that have been developed since it was published. The guidance has also been streamlined to follow the process of the investigation. It is intended that the final document will give sufficient information to conduct an effective investigation, but link to some other key documents for fuller information and to avoid duplication (identified by LINK in the guidance). These documents are:

- ACPO (2006) Practice Advice on Search Management and Procedures
- ACPO (2008) Code of Practice on the collection of missing persons data
- DCSF (2009) Statutory Guidance on children who run away or are missing from home or care

All of these documents will be published electronically in a format that will allow them to be uploaded onto intranet systems and hyperlinks will join relevant sections together.

When published, the guidance will be supported by examples of good practice, all contained within a resource centre or library maintained by the NPIA Missing Persons Bureau. This will ensure that developing good practice can be shared with practitioners as soon as its value has been evaluated.

KEY CHANGES

In order to make the process of consultation as simple as possible, the key changes to the guidance are outlined below.

There are two key messages within the document. Firstly, missing should be considered as an indicator of other problems or criminality that are impacting on the person's life and are the reason for them going away. Secondly, the investigation should be dealt with as a cycle, which should address safeguarding issues and reduce the potential for future missing incidents.

Definition – while this remains the same, there are a number of qualifying statements that explain what might not be a missing person case that the police will investigate.

Risk assessment – unfortunately we still do not have the data to develop a more accurate risk assessment tool, but this work is starting in 2010. It is still necessary to base the decisions about risk on officer judgement and it is hoped that some training in the form of workshops will be offered, starting in 2010. Supervisor responsibilities have been altered to recommend that the risk level allocated is confirmed as soon as possible in all cases, not in the staged manner in the previous guidance.

Direct reporting – it is recommended that missing person reports are input directly onto missing person management systems, not being managed on command and control or paper, except in serious cases requiring a significant amount of incident and resource management. This continues the philosophy set out in the 2005 guidance an officer's primary function is to investigate, not fill in forms.

Unauthorised absence – while this is still available for local authorities to use, it is not a category that should be reported to the police. This is in line with the DCSF Guidance and both documents set out those enquiries that should be made before reporting a person in care as a missing person to the police.

Cross border cases – the wording has been changed slightly and an additional section added in relation to young people in care who are placed out of their normal area.

Family support – one of the criticisms that are levelled at the police is the lack of support and information that is available to those who are left behind. There is now a section in the guidance that covers this.

Missing person liaison officers – more forces are recognising the benefits of having a structure in place that manages missing persons and a section is included that gives recommendations about what this structure should look like and what roles are of benefit.

Charlie Hedges
Liaison and Support Officer
NPIA Missing Persons Bureau