

Missing Persons Policy

Purpose

This organisation adheres fully to Health and Social Care Act 2008 (Regulated Activities) Regulations 2014 and participates in the Herbert Protocol (a national scheme encouraging carers to compile useful information which could be used in the event of a vulnerable person going missing).

Preventing Missing Persons Incidents

Care staff from this organisation should always remain vigilant and be aware of where service users are at any given time.

Service users who are prone to wandering, or who may be at risk of getting lost because of their mental state, will have this identified during risk assessment and a risk management plan, appropriate to the level of risk, will be created. In addition, staff should complete a "Herbert Protocol" Form, and a copy should be kept in the folder in the service user's property. Staff should document the clothes and appearance of the service user in the daily notes.

Reporting a Missing Person

Situations where a missing person's report should be made include the following:

- where a service user has not returned from or has got lost during an arranged activity or walk
- where a service user cannot be found in their house, and no prior arrangements have been made to explain their absence.
- Where a service user does not return within the specified time arranged, this is for clients that have these arrangements documented within their care plan only.

If it becomes clear that a service user may be missing, it is vital that all the members of staff in the organisation work as a team and follow a clearly defined procedure.

Missing Persons Procedure

Immediately they suspect that a service user may be missing, care staff at the service user's home or place of care must:

- initiate a search of the premises, checking communal areas within shared buildings if applicable
- notify the office/on call/senior member of staff on site
- contact relatives, friends, neighbours or other obvious places where the service user may have gone or has been known to go in the past.

If the service user cannot be found, then the care / support worker on shift should immediately contact the police, giving full details about the service user, including:

- when and where they were last seen,
- who by,
- what they were wearing
- any places of interest where the service user may have gone or has been known to go in the past (e.g. previous addresses, places from their childhood etc)

- any special risk factors involved.

Contact telephone numbers should be given and the manager/on-call/senior on shift should co-ordinate the organisations response, communications and relevant notify the relevant safeguarding team. The Registered Manager or Nominated Individual will also be required to submit the relevant notification to the Care Quality Commission.

Police Searches

Where the police are involved then the relevant registered manager and the nominated individual must be informed as soon as possible, as well as members of the missing service user's family (if they have not already been contacted). Families should be requested to telephone the office or police if the service user contacts them, and relatives should be kept informed at each stage of the search.

The manager must, at the earliest opportunity, fill out an incident form and ensure that a full note of events has been made on the client file on CarePlanner. Times of actions and decisions should be noted as accurately as possible. On conclusion of the incident, the Quality Manager and Directors must review the incident form to identify any remedial actions required, and those responsible for ensuring that these actions are carried out.

Once the service user has been found, it is essential that all the parties who were advised of the emergency are contacted again and informed that the search has been concluded, including the member of care staff at the service user's home and the police.

At all stages the manager should be sensitive to the needs of members of care staff involved, who may well be upset by the emergency incident, and should provide or arrange any support required, including bringing in extra staff to help or sending someone to “sit” with the care staff involved, and checking staff are OK before they go home.

If at any stage, the manager is unsure of what to do, then the Directors should be contacted immediately for advice.

Procedure to follow after Missing Persons Incident

If this is the first time the individual has wandered or gone missing, then the office needs to ensure a Herbert protocol is completed and placed in the property. Staff members must start to document the Service User's appearance at the visits immediately after the incident.

The Manager and office should consider whether referrals for assistive technology is required, e.g. door sensors.

The Risk Assessment should be updated to document the risk and changes that are required to the care to support the Service User safely.

The office will inform the staff team via CarePlanner with updates to the tasks and procedures to be carried out within the care.

Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed every two years.