

# What to do if your child goes missing

ADVICE FOR PARENTS AND CARERS



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# Why do young people run away?

## Children leave home for a variety of reasons:

- Trouble at school
- Being bullied
- Family quarrels, including leaving on impulse following a quarrel
- Family break-ups
- The arrival of a new step parent
- In protest over a rule or an isolated incident
- Being pregnant or fear that they may be pregnant
- Drug or alcohol problems
- Being drawn away by something outside of home like older friends, excitement or fewer/no rules
- Issues around sexuality
- Fear of gangs, gang involvement

## If you're concerned that your child might be thinking about running away:

- Talk to your child about what might be troubling them or encourage them to talk to someone else
  - Ask them 'What's Going on?' not, 'How are You Feeling?'
  - Listen to what they say
  - Stay calm
  - Be understanding
  - Help them address the reasons why they want to run away
  - Help them to let their emotions 'cool off'
  - Talk to someone who can support you, for example your child's school or a family member
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# What to do when your child's missing

- Check their bedroom and any other place they might be in the house
- Check the surrounding area
- Check with your child's friends, school, work, neighbours, relatives or anyone else who may know of their whereabouts
- Ask them to tell you immediately if they hear from your child
- Find out if any of your child's friends are missing
- Try to contact your child directly via mobile phone, text, or social networking sites like BBM, Twitter, Facebook
- If you still haven't found them, call the police on 999. You do not need to wait for 24 hours. Report your child as missing straight away
- Record the crime reference number
- Your child will then be classified as MISSING and the call taker will explain the next steps. This is likely to include police officers attending your home to take a detailed missing person report
- Think about what your child was wearing when you last saw them
- Check if they've taken any extra clothes
- Check what they've taken with them, for example, mobile phone, money, bank cards, any items
- Have a recent photograph available
- When an officer attends, record their name, badge number and telephone number. Ask who will follow up the initial investigation



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- You will be asked the following questions:
    - When and where was your child last seen? By who?
    - When and where did you last see your child?
    - What were they doing when last seen?
    - What are your most pressing worries and why?
    - Are these circumstances out of character for your child?
    - Are they taking any medication which they may need immediately?
  - Check your home computers for any leads like online contacts or details of planned meetings
  - Check telephone bills for the past few months for any unfamiliar calls
  - Keep a record of everyone you contact , including the date and time, the name of person and/or organisation, and any phone numbers received
  - Keep your phone on and keep a record of any calls; this may be the only way your child can reach you

**If you know where your child is and you are still concerned for their safety, for example, if they are at a house where you suspect criminal activities are taking place, you can ask the police to carry out a welfare check on that house or location**



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# What you can do when your child returns

- Show your child that you're happy to have them back home. Many children fear the initial meeting with their parents
  - Remain calm, express relief and tell your child you love them and that together you will solve any problems
  - Allow time to settle in. Your child may need a shower, a meal, clean clothes, or to go to sleep
  - Make follow-up phone calls. Let all your contacts know that your child has returned home, including the police
  - The police may need to speak or meet with your child to ensure they have returned safe and well
  - Get medical attention. Bring your child to your family doctor to address any medical concerns
  - Talk with your child. Discuss how you can work together to prevent them from leaving again
  - Acknowledge that some problems take time and effort to resolve
  - Help your child learn problem-solving skills: Ask them, 'What can you do differently about this problem? What are some ways we can deal with this problem?'
  - Help them identify the triggers that lead to risky decisions
  - Create an atmosphere of acceptance
  - Check in with your child. Ask them, 'How's it going? Anything you want help with?'
  - Get assistance and support. It's important to reach out and take advantage of any support available to you, your child and your family. Wandsworth Multi-agency safeguarding Hub can advise you where to get support. Tel: 020 8871 6622.
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## Contacts:

### **Multi-agency Safeguarding Hub**

Tel: 020 8871 6622

Email: [mash@wandsworth.gov.uk](mailto:mash@wandsworth.gov.uk)

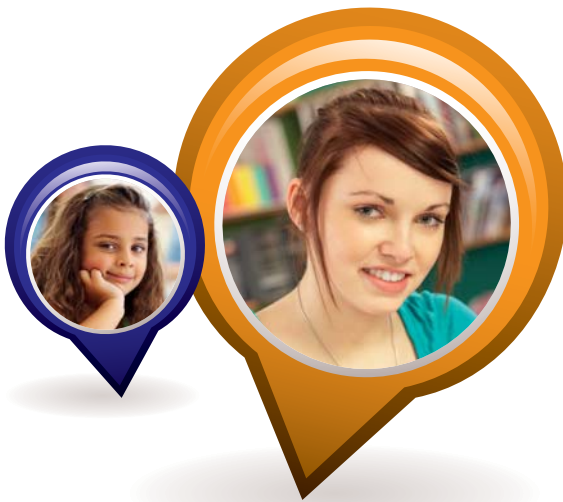
### **Police**

Tel: 999

### **Barnardo's Miss U Service**

Tel: 020 7700 2253

Email: [missing.london@barnardos.org.uk](mailto:missing.london@barnardos.org.uk)



Wandsworth Safeguarding Children Board  
2nd Floor, Town Hall Extension,  
Wandsworth High Street, SW18 2PS:

**Tel: 020 8871 7401/8610**

**Visit: [www.wscb.org.uk](http://www.wscb.org.uk)**