

Sunbeam House Services Policy Document	Title: Missing Persons Policy
	Effective Date: 29 August 2017



Document Control

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1.0 POLICY:

Absences which cause concern are those where staff, have no indication that a client is likely to return within a short space of time or where there is immediate concern for the client's safety.

1.1 GUIDELINES:

In assessing the significance of a client's absence, staff will take the following into consideration:

- Guidance already agreed and incorporated within the client's *Individual Safety Plan*
- Previous behaviour patterns
- State of mind/perceived risk
- Medication needs
- Whether the client is perceived as running to someone or running from a situation

When a client goes missing, it is necessary to initiate procedures which encourages them to return as quickly and safely as possible, and ensures they are treated positively on return. These procedures can be divided into two stages:

Stage 1 – procedures immediately carried out by the staff directly involved in the supervision of the client at the time they went missing.

Stage 2 – escalation procedures which follow Stage 1 when the client has not returned or been found within a short period of time, or there is immediate concern for their safety. How quickly Stage 2 is activated is person specific taking into account their Individual Safety Plan.

Recording Timelines – The time it is discovered that a person is missing must be recorded. The time Stage 1 is activated must be recorded. The time Stage 2 is activated must be recorded.

Stage 1 Procedures:

- Staff must phone the mobile phone number of the missing person to try and contact them directly.
- Staff must inform the Services Manager and the staff/clients that were present at that time and find out who might be aware of the last known movements of the missing person

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- With a team of staff (taking into account the supervision needs of the remaining clients), staff should immediately search all known vicinities where the person was last seen. Also search all other areas close by where the missing person might be found e.g. local train/bus station, coffee shops, favourite place they like to go, etc. Staff taking part in the search should ensure that adequate staffing levels remain in the location to ensure there is no safety risk or vulnerability of the remaining clients.

Stage 2 Procedures:

- The Services Manager must inform the Managing Director, Senior Services Manager (or in their absence another Senior Manager) and the Health & Safety Officer of the situation.
- The Senior Services Manager (or in their absence another Senior Manager) will set up an incident base in the local area (e.g. SHS Killarney Road, BRI, Dunavon, etc.) and will co-ordinate the search from the incident base. This person will be referred to as Incident Co-Ordinator in the remainder of this document.
- The staff member who last seen the missing person must return to the incident base and help co-ordinate the search (they know the clothes the person was wearing, state of mind, etc. and will be of more help assisting the Incident Co-Ordinator than out searching).

The Stage 2 Incident Co-Ordinator should:

- Collect all relevant information from the Location of the missing person's details. This should be contained in the one-page summary in an easily accessible file in the location and should include the emergency contact number of the family/guardian, a clear photograph of the missing person, what they were wearing at the time, distinguishing features and relevant details their of medication needs. This information should contain details of their likes, dislikes, habits, and favourite places which may help with the search.
- Phone the emergency contact number on the client's file and inform them of the disappearance of the person.
- Inform the Gardaí of the situation and provide them with all the relevant information of the missing person. This should include:
 - A description of the person including clothing and distinguishing features.
 - When they were last seen, where and with whom.
 - A recent photograph.
 - Family addresses.
 - Known acquaintances.
 - Any previous history of going missing.
 - Medication needs.
 - Circumstances which increase the risk to the person should be drawn to the attention of the Gardaí.
- Set up a large search party including as many of the staff of SHS as possible, the client's family and members of the public (if appropriate) in the search of the missing person.

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Contact as many available staff as possible (taking into account the supervision needs of the remaining clients in a location) to assist with the search. Before joining the search party, staff should ensure that adequate staffing levels remain in the location to ensure there is no safety risk or vulnerability of the remaining clients.

- Draw up a list of searching staff, their mobile number, and the area they are going to search. Ensure that staff have the Incident Co-Ordinator’s number to call back to and ensure they regularly check back to the Incident Co-Ordinator so the search can be tracked and planned.
- Preferably send staff out to search in groups of two.
- Ensure that searching staff have a mobile phone, maps of the area they are searching, and money for food, incidentals, petrol, etc. They should also have a copy of the information page, and a number of copies of the photo of the missing person which they can show to people and issue to business premises, train stations etc. during the search.
- A list of all people contacted and issued with the photo should be kept by those who made the contact so that these people can be informed when the missing person is found.
- Remind staff who are checking shopping centres to make contact with the security department in the shopping centre and request access their CCTV.
- Contact the area hospitals and the local train stations to alert them to the situation and ask them to contact the Incident Co-Ordinator should the missing person turn up.
- Contact local taxi offices and ask them to put out an alert to all their taxi drivers to look out for the missing person.
- It is for the Gardaí to advise the media regarding the disappearance of the client from SHS. This decision will be made in consultation with the SHS Managing Director and the next of kin/guardian.
- Set up posters in consultation with the Gardaí and next of kin/guardian to inform the public of the missing person and the Garda phone number if anyone has seen any sighting of the missing person.
- Should the person’s absence continue the Services Manager should make arrangements to inform all the other clients in the Location so that distressing rumours may be avoided and additional information regarding the missing person’s whereabouts might be obtained?
- If the search is prolonged, ensure that all searchers take breaks for food and rest.
- When the missing person is found or returns to the location, their medical condition should be discussed immediately and medical attention arranged if necessary. The next of kin/guardian, the Gardaí, and all others informed of the absence should be advised of the person’s return without delay.
- All people contacted and issued with the photo should be contacted and informed that the missing person has turned up.

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- The Managing Director, Services Manager, Senior Services Manager, and Social Workers should discuss whether a case management meeting is required in relation to the person's absence and any circumstances around the absence.
- On their return to the location, the client should be encouraged to talk to someone independent of the location & family, e.g. social worker/counsellor, about the absence and any circumstances around the absence.
- After the incident, counselling support should be offered to the family and all staff involved in the search.
- A report of all incidents of missing persons must be completed and a copy sent to the SHS Health & Safety Office and Social Workers.
- An incident debrief session should be held after the incident so that lessons can be learned for the future.

Suggested Checklists

Items to be kept on locations in case of missing persons:	Tick Yes
A one-page synopsis of relevant and appropriate information geared towards Missing Persons will be held in an accessible file for all clients	
Ordinance Survey Maps of the local area or areas regularly visited by the Missing Person or the group	
Train, DART and local bus timetables	
List of Client Mobile Phone Numbers	
List of Staff Mobile Phone Numbers (for when they assist with a search)	
Phone numbers for all Senior Management	
Phone Numbers & Menu's for local fast food establishments should food need to be ordered for those co-ordinating the search or returning from the search	



Before going on an outing (large or small), staff must ensure:	Tick Yes
The group size is suitable for the number of staff going on the trip and the proposed destination.	
Staff have a list of all clients going on the trip.	
Individual staff have been assigned particular clients that they are responsible for on the trip, rather than all staff being responsible for all clients.	
Staff have any medication that needs to be carried for individual clients on the trip.	
All clients are carrying their ID Cards on their person, and are reminded about them and how they should be used.	
All staff going on the trip have mobile phones and the other staff and location manger know each staff mobile phone number.	
All clients who have mobile phones are carrying them, they are switched on and they have the staff contact number and other emergency numbers in their phone.	
Staff have the individual client mobile phone numbers in their phone.	
Decide on an area that will be used as a meeting point should anyone get lost from the group. Ensure all clients know and recognise the meeting point.	
Staff will conduct a head count before the group has set off and check at regular intervals during the trip that everyone is accounted for.	
If travelling by bus/train, staff will ensure that everyone has boarded or alighted the bus/train before it departs.	
If the group splits up during the trip, staff will ensure that all clients have been assigned to the particular staff who are responsible for them on the trip.	
A headcount of all clients is taken before anyone leaves the area to return to SHS or home.	



Checklist for Incident Co-Ordinator:	Tick Yes
Inform the Managing Director (MD), Health and Safety (H&S) and Client's Family of the situation	
The staff member who last seen the missing person is returning or has returned to the incident base to help co-ordinate the search	
Source <i>Missing Person Details Page</i> from the location and make a number of copies of it and separate copies of the person's photo.	
Call Gardaí and give all necessary details	
Early call made for volunteer staff to search	
Set up search party	
Photocopy maps of the local area, and train/bus timetables for searchers	
Check have the searchers got maps, mobile phones & money	
Get mobile phone number of all searchers	
Assign staff to search particular areas (preferably in twos) and note the area each group of two is searching	
Ask staff to call back when they have searched the area and assign them a new area if appropriate	
Ask staff to note who and where they have left missing person photo as these people will need to be contacted when the missing person has returned.	
Note what searchers have called back and what new area you have allocated them to search	
Remind staff checking shopping centres to link with the centre Security Department for CCTV.	
Phone hospitals	
Phone train stations	



Contact local taxi offices and ask them to put out an alert to all their taxi drivers to look out for the missing person.	
If missing person absence is prolonged, arrange for the Client Services Manager to speak to other clients in the location about the situation	
If search is prolonged, ensure that searchers are stopping or returning for rest breaks and food.	
Discuss with the family, Gardaí and SHS Managing Director about contacting the media regarding the missing person.	
Discuss setting up posters to inform the public of the missing person and the Garda contact number should the missing person be sighted.	



Search Party Co-Ordination

Searcher	Mobile No.	Time Started	Area Searching	Time Called Back	New area Searching	Time Called Back



Checklist for Incident Co-Ordinator for after the missing person is found:	Tick Yes
Medical Attention arranged if necessary.	
Inform Family & Gardaí if they do not already know.	
Contact all searchers to stand down.	
Get list of who has been informed of missing person and call them back to let them know the person is found.	
Offer counselling support to family and all staff involved in search.	
Ensure the client who was missing is given the opportunity to talk to someone independent of the location & family e.g. Social Worker/Counsellor about their absence and any circumstances around the absence.	
Arrange counselling for yourself and offer counselling to any other search co-ordinators.	
Arrange an incident debrief session for next day or so to include all staff involved in the incident so lessons can be learned for the future.	
If appropriate arrange a case management meeting in relation to the missing person and any circumstances around their absence.	
Ensure a full report is completed and copied to Health and Safety (H&S) and the Social Workers.	

2.0 SCOPE:

This policy applies to all SHS stakeholders.

3.0 ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES:

All SHS employees are responsible for the awareness of, and compliance with this policy.

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