



National Missing Person's Framework

North Ayrshire

FINAL GUIDANCE



Introduction

The National Missing Person’s Framework for Scotland (Scottish Government 2017) is a national framework to prevent people from going missing in the first place and limit the harm associated with people going missing. North Ayrshire has developed this localised guidance in response to the National Framework and has been co-produced by North Ayrshire Child Protection Committee and North Ayrshire Adult Support and Protection committee, in recognition that this guidance will apply to children and adults.

All individuals who go missing are at risk of harm and this harm can be exacerbated by their circumstances. Children and young people have increased risks of being exploited, adults with dementia have increased vulnerabilities and mental health problems can also increase the risks of the individual coming to harm.

The National Missing Person’s Framework focuses on four objectives:

- Prevention
- Response
- Support
- Protection

North Ayrshire Adult Support and Protection committee and North Ayrshire Child Protection committee are committed to these objectives in ensuring that preventative measures reduce the number of episodes that people go missing, professionals respond appropriately, support is provided following missing episodes and vulnerable people are protected to reduce the risk of harm.

What is this guidance for?

The guidance ensures that there is a multi-agency localised response to the National Missing Person’s Framework in North Ayrshire. The aim is **to prevent people going missing and limit the harm to those who have gone missing** (National Missing Person’s Framework, Scottish Government 2017). This applies for both children and adults.

North Ayrshire are committed to the four objectives as outlined in the framework:

- **To introduce preventative measures to reduce the number of missing person episodes.**
- **To respond consistently and appropriately to missing persons episodes**
- **To provide the best possible support to both missing people and their families**
- **To protect vulnerable missing people and reduce the risks of harm.**

This guidance outlines how multi-agency practitioners will meet these objectives, and includes:



- Prevention planning
- Ensuring that people most at risk of going missing are prioritised
- How agencies share information to ensure that missing people are located quickly
- A consistent multi-agency approach
- How return discussions will be co-ordinated and facilitated
- Support that is available to people who have been missing and their families within North Ayrshire

Who is this guidance for?

This guidance is for all practitioners who would be involved in the prevention, response, support and protection of people, which includes both children and adults, who are at risk of or go missing. This includes but is not limited to practitioners in the following agencies and services:

- North Ayrshire Health and Social Care Partnership
- Police Scotland
- Education, Youth Services and Children’s Residential Settings
- Third Sector
- Care at Home
- Care Homes
- Third Sector

NHS Ayrshire and Arran Acute Services should see the Absent Vulnerable Patient procedure found under Clinical Guidelines on AthenA

NHS Ayrshire and Arran Mental Health Services have a Missing Person/Absent Without Authorisation Guideline which provides a consistent response for inpatient settings. This clinical guideline applies to all patients regardless of status under the Mental Health (Care and Treatment) (Scotland) Act 2015 or Criminal Procedure (Scotland) Act 1995 and can be found under Mental Health Services Guidelines and Policies on AthenA

Definition of a Missing Person

A missing person is defined in the National Missing Person’s Framework as follows:

‘A missing person is anyone whose whereabouts are unknown and where the circumstances are out of character; or the context suggests the person may be subject to crime; or the person is at risk of harm to themselves or another’. **(National Missing Person’s Framework, Scottish Government 2017)**

This definition has been piloted in other areas across Scotland and evidence suggests that it has proved to have been effective in the management of a person who has went missing and in assessments. The specified definition should be used within North Ayrshire.



Further information on national and local statistics on missing persons is in **Appendix 1**.

Case Studies

Alice (85 years old)

Alice is 85 years old, suffers from dementia and lives alone. Her husband recently passed away. Alice has no local family however carers attend morning and evening to make sure she is safe, well and to administer medication.

Alice’s mental health has deteriorated due to her dementia. Carers have found that she is often confused, talking of visiting her mother who died some time ago.

Recently Alice’s evening carer found her to be very unsettled. She waited beyond her allocated time until Alice had calmed and was ready for bed. The following morning carers found Alice’s front door to be ajar and Alice missing.

An extensive police search commenced involving local officers and specialists. Early that afternoon Alice was found in shrubbery next to the B class road 1 mile from her home. It appeared she fell sometime during the previous evening. Luckily, her injuries were minor in nature although she was cold and hungry. Police submitted an Adult Concern Report to the Health and Social Care Partnership requesting them to undertake a return discussion with Alice. This discussion facilitated the development of a new Protection Plan to keep Alice safe, which was shared with all relevant Partners.

Ella (14 years old)

Ella is 14 years old. She has recently been placed with a foster family following a number of issues at home with her Mum who abuses controlled drugs. Concerns have also emerged over relationships Ella has been in with males aged 18-20 years old.

For the first few weeks Ella appeared settled with her foster family. After this time however she began staying out beyond her curfew, refusing to go to school and continually demanding money from her foster parent.

Ella was reported missing 8 times in a 14 day period. She was caught stealing cans of alcohol from a local shop on 2 occasions and concerns were further raised regarding Child Sexual Exploitation due to the strong indicators that she was associating with older males when staying out late and in some occasions overnight.

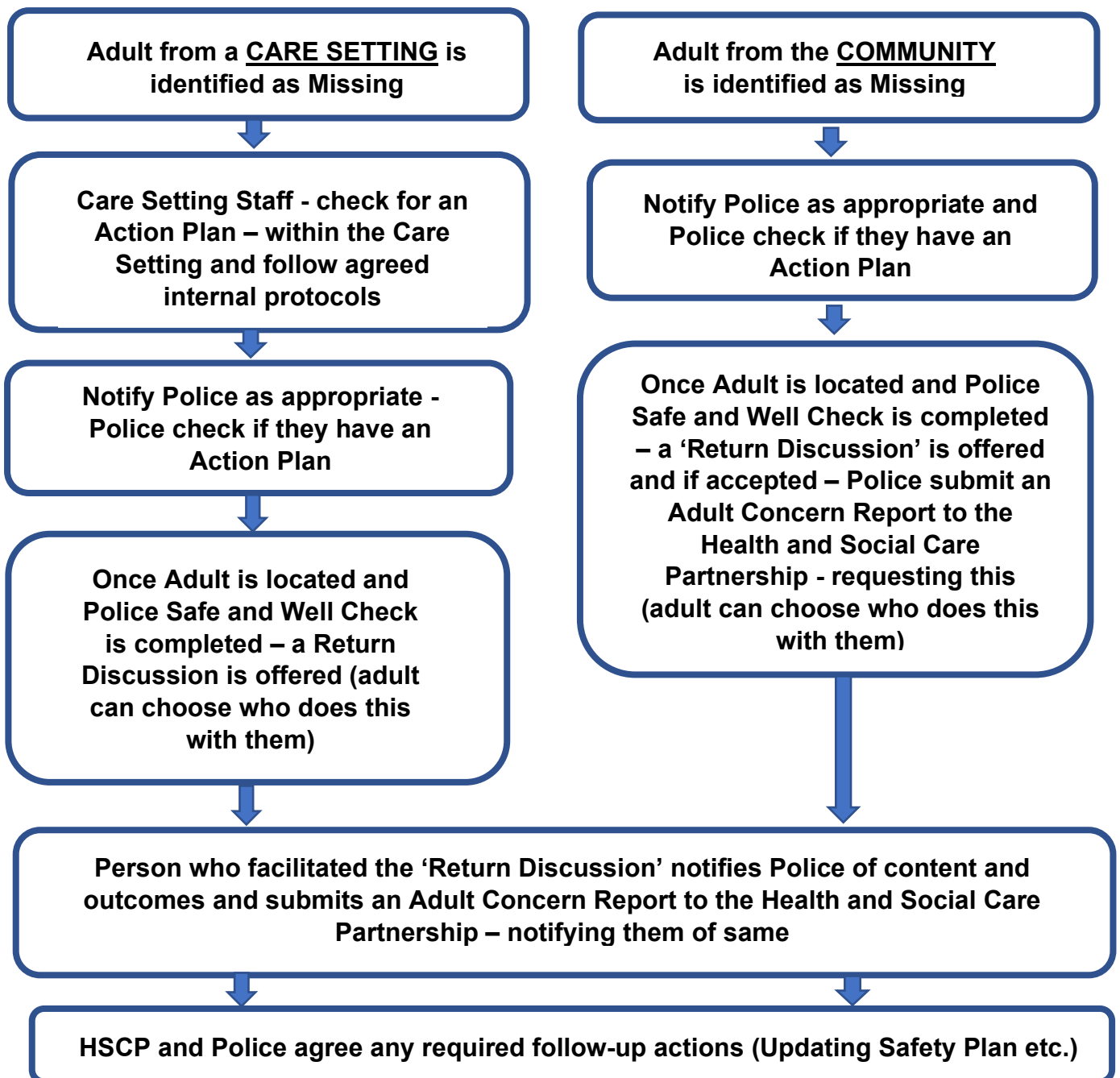
A police officer carried out a return discussion with Ella and assisted partners by transporting her to new, more suitable accommodation which was obtained to better protect her and deal with the issues she was experiencing.



NORTH AYRSHIRE - MISSING PERSON

FLOWCHART FOR ADULTS

(to both address current missing situations and help prevent future ones)

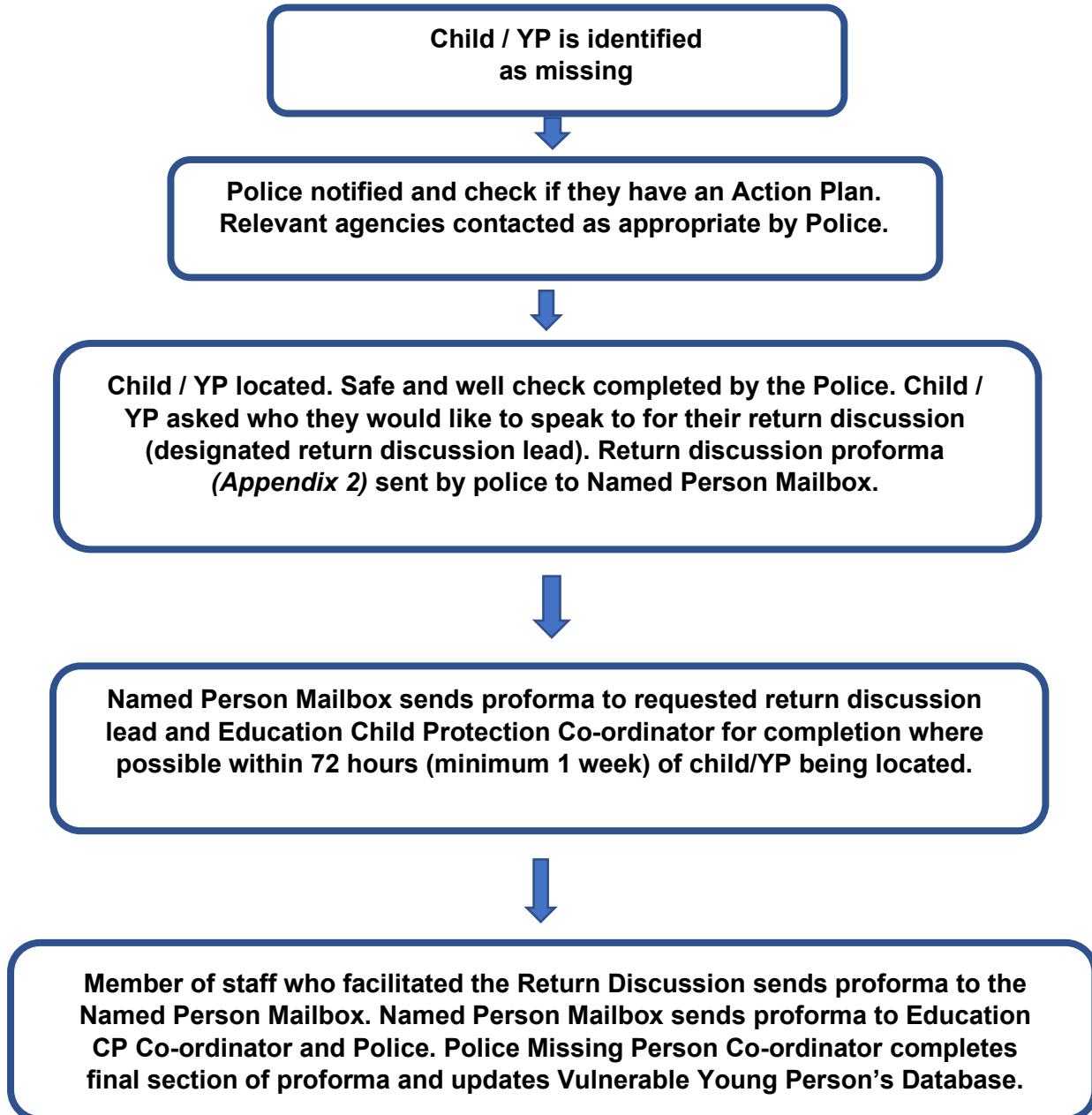


adultprotection@north-ayrshire.gov.uk



NORTH AYRSHIRE - MISSING PERSON

FLOWCHART FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE (under 18 years old)



Note: **If a child or young person goes missing during periods of school holidays and requests a member of education staff conduct the return conversation, then the child or young person should be offered a return discussion facilitated by a member of the school counselling team. In the event the child or young person declines this offer they should be supported to identify someone from out with education to facilitate the return discussion.*



Investigation and risk assessment when someone is reported missing

When a person is reported missing, a risk assessment will be undertaken by Police Scotland and thereafter categorised as high, medium or low. This risk assessment will be carried out jointly with partners, when they are involved, to capture all information that will assist in determining the correct category of risk. Police officers have been issued with an aide memoire consisting of 21 questions to assist in determining the most appropriate risk category – the questions are produced below.

Missing Person Low Risk Status

Low Risk is deemed as any person that goes missing where there is low risk of harm to that person or others.

Missing Person Medium Risk Status

Medium Risk is a missing person that is likely to place themselves in danger or they are a threat to themselves or others.

Missing Person High Risk Status

High Risk is a missing person where the risk posed is immediate and there are substantial grounds for believing that the Missing Person:

1. Is in danger through their own vulnerability; and / or
2. May have been the victim of a serious crime; and / or
3. The risk posed is immediate and there are substantial grounds for believing that the public is in danger.

A Risk Assessment Determination is utilised by Police Scotland (*see appendix 3*).

Repeat Missing: How to check for an Action Plan

When a person has previously been missing, Police Scotland will have a record detailing the circumstances of all previous times they have been missing. There is also a Police Action Plan which is completed for some of those who have been missing. Police Scotland will contact all appropriate agencies as part of their initial investigations.

Your agency may also have an agreed Action Plan to follow in relation to someone who has been missing before. Often, these Action Plans will detail agreed processes to follow and may contain helpful information relating to where the person has previously been found etc.

Ensure that Police have your contact details and are aware that they should notify you as soon as the person has been located. You can then make arrangements to ensure that the Return Discussion takes place in a timely fashion, following the Police Safe and Well Check.



Missing (non- repeat)

How to make a report to Police

If you feel that the person who is missing is in immediate danger – do not hesitate to call this in as a Police emergency on 999. If you feel that there is no immediate danger, you can call to report the person missing on 101.

There is no need to wait any specific, prescribed length of time before making a report to Police.

Children’s houses do have a specific process and phone number agreed with Police to assist them in making their reports.

Best Practice for Return Discussions

The Framework is advisory not statutory – however, is recognised as best practice. **Appendix 4** is a template with suggested questions for facilitating a return discussion.

WHO should be invited?

Any person who has been reported missing should be offered a return discussion. The appropriate agency to deliver this should be identified depending on the individual’s (person who was missing) circumstances – the important thing is that when it takes place it is as supportive and participatory as possible. That may mean that the return discussion is taken forward by someone who knows the adult or child already – perhaps a professional already working with the person. It will be important that the person who agrees to provide the return discussion, is clear about the process, the objectives and what to do following the return discussion.

WHAT is the Purpose?

Identify risks, support the person, prevent future missing episodes.

WHEN should it take place?

There is no set time, although it is best practice to make first contact within 72 hours of the missing incident and the discussion to occur within one week of this. Each missing person will have a unique set of circumstances and they should be given the opportunity to speak then they are ready to.

WHERE should it occur?

Home may not always be the safe place or most ideal place to deliver a return discussion and a more neutral location may be a better setting. The decision should be led by the person. In some circumstances it may not always be necessary to meet with the person face to face – for example if it is a young person who would prefer to have a phone or virtual conversation, that should be accommodated where it is assessed as appropriate and safe to do so.



Assessing the Risk

Missing people are considered on a 'continuum of risk' and that risk should not be inflexible or static. For example, a person may change from low risk to high risk depending on new information coming to light. Return discussions often fill a gap in our knowledge about risk, which is why they are so vital. The important thing for participants to consider is that someone may have been categorised as low risk, however they may disclose something during a return discussion which indicates there may be greater risks posed if they were to go missing in the future.

A missing person is anyone whose whereabouts are unknown and:

- Where the circumstances are out of character; or
- The context suggests the person may be subject to crime; or
- The person is at risk of harm to themselves or another

What to do following a Return Discussion

1. It will be important to link in with Police colleagues in order to provide timely feedback on any pertinent issues that arose in relation to the Return Discussion. Police will require to create a record or update their Vulnerable Person Database (VPD). For a child or young person, the return discussion proforma should be completed (see flowchart on page 8 and **Appendix 2**)
2. If the risk has been assessed as low and no further action is required - ensure that other appropriate agencies involved have been notified of the incident and any pertinent outcomes from the Return Discussion e.g. the 3rd Sector - so that they may update their records
3. If further action is required - consider the criteria for Child Protection or Adult Support and Protection and make a referral if required (following your own agency procedures). Further information on these processes can be accessed at: www.north-ayrshire.gov.uk/public-protection/public-protection.aspx
4. Where the criteria for making a Child Protection or Adult Support and Protection referral has not been met – Social Work can consider several other supportive processes – information from the Return Discussion will inform this.
5. Ensure that the person is aware of the process in relation to return discussions, its purpose and how information will be shared.



National Missing Person Framework - Helpful Contacts:

National Contacts

The National Missing Person Framework

www.gov.scot/.../national-missing-persons-framework-scotland

General Missing People Contact:

www.missingpeople.org.uk

Missing People Helpline Contact: 116 000

Police and Care Providers:

Association of Chief Police Officers – Missing from Care: A Multi-agency approach to protecting vulnerable adults – A National Framework for Police and Care Providers:

<http://library.college.police.uk/docs/APPREF/Protecting-Vulnerable-Missing-Adults-Framework-FINAL.pdf>

Older People:

Purple Alert – Alzheimer’s Scotland

www.alzscot.org/.../helpful-apps/purple-alert/how-to-use-purple-alert

The Herbert Protocol - Age UK

<https://www.ageuk.org.uk/.../articles/2018/the-herbert-protocol>

Local Contacts

North Ayrshire – Senior Officer - Adult Support and Protection:

apc@north-ayrshire.gov.uk

North Ayrshire – Lead Officer – Child Protection Committee:

cpc@north-ayrshire.gov.uk

North Ayrshire Social Work Contact (available during weekdays): 01294 310300

Ayrshire Urgent Care Services (available during evenings, weekends and public holidays): 0800 328 7758

North Ayrshire Missing Person’s Champion: North Ayrshire Health and Social Care – Chief Social Work Officer: 01294 317700



Appendix 1: National and local Statistics

National Statistics

what can the evidence* tell us about missing people?

Over **30,000** missing calls are received by Police Scotland each year

However, many missing people are never reported to the police

62% missing investigations are for children and young people

who goes missing? 

 Almost **1 in 2** missing people have been missing previously

why do people go missing? Missing people are often **distressed and vulnerable**, and going missing can be a **sign of harm**

An estimated **40%** of people with **dementia** will go missing

Up to **70%** of **sexually exploited young people** will runaway

 Studies show that many adults who go missing have **mental health issues – up to 80%**

Going missing has a **serious impact on missing people and their families.**

what happens when people go missing?

 Most missing people – **88%** -return or are found **within 48 hours**

1 in 12 are hurt or harmed

1 in 250 are found dead

1 in 6 young people who are missing overnight **sleep rough or with strangers**

what works to support missing people?

Prevention planning can help reduce the risk of vulnerable people going missing

Providing return discussions to people who have been missing can help prevent repeat incidents

*The data available is not definitive and missing people is a complex and wide-ranging issue.

(National Missing Person’s Framework for Scotland, Scottish Government 2017)

The top 10 ‘Missing From’ locations in Scotland relate to residential care and hospitals

Approximately 22,000 people are recorded by Police Scotland as missing every year

99% of Missing People in Scotland are traced or return safe and well

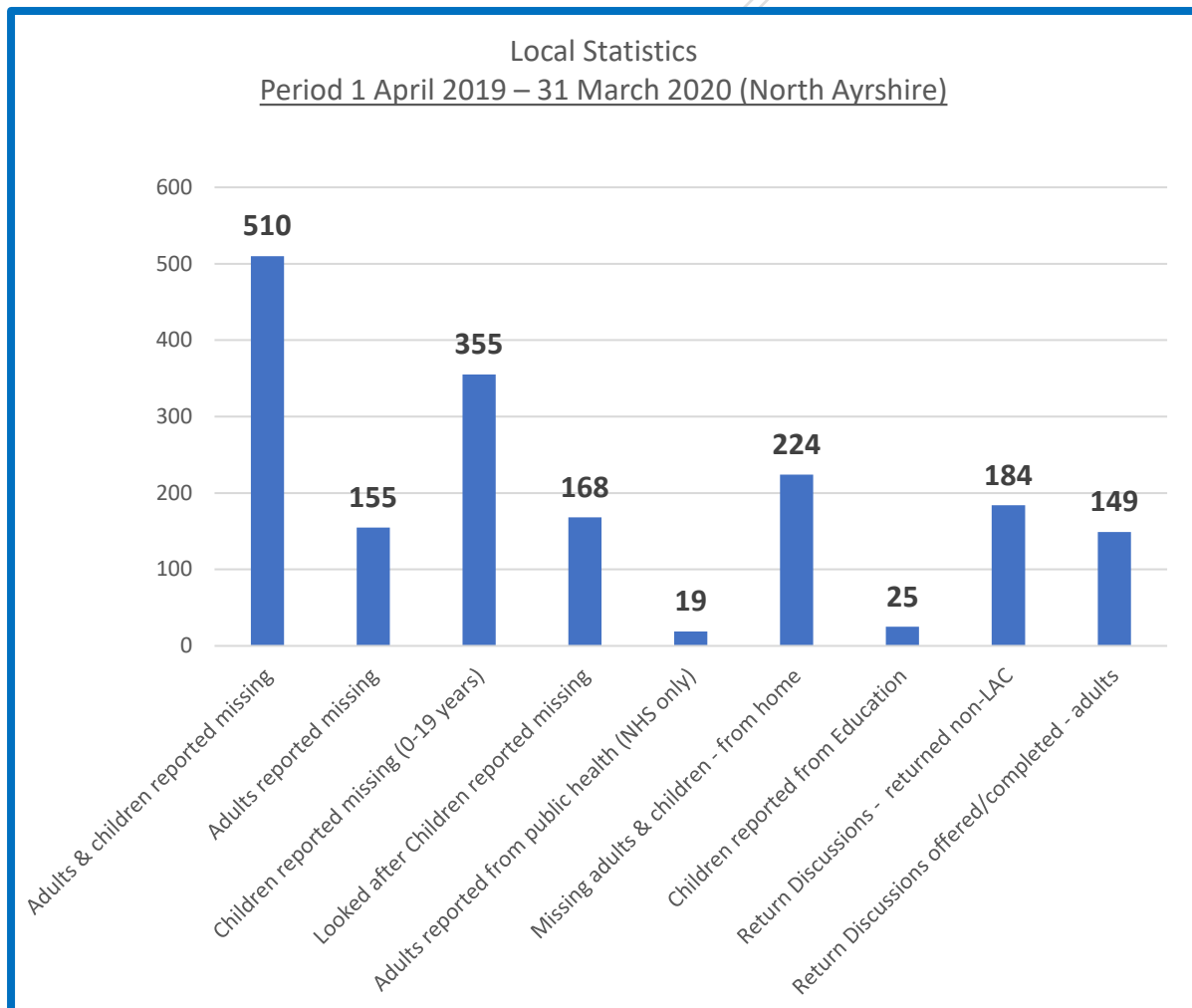
(Police Scotland 2020)

Local Statistics

Period 1 April 2019 – 31 March 2020 (North Ayrshire)

Combined number of adults and children reported missing	510
Adults reported missing	155
Children reported missing (stats show 0-19 years)	355
Looked after Children reported missing	168
Missing adults reported from public health (stats show NHS only)	19
Missing adults and children (combined) reported from home	224
Number of children reported from Education	25
Number of Return Discussions completed for returned non-LAC	184
Number of Return Discussions offered/completed for returned adults	149

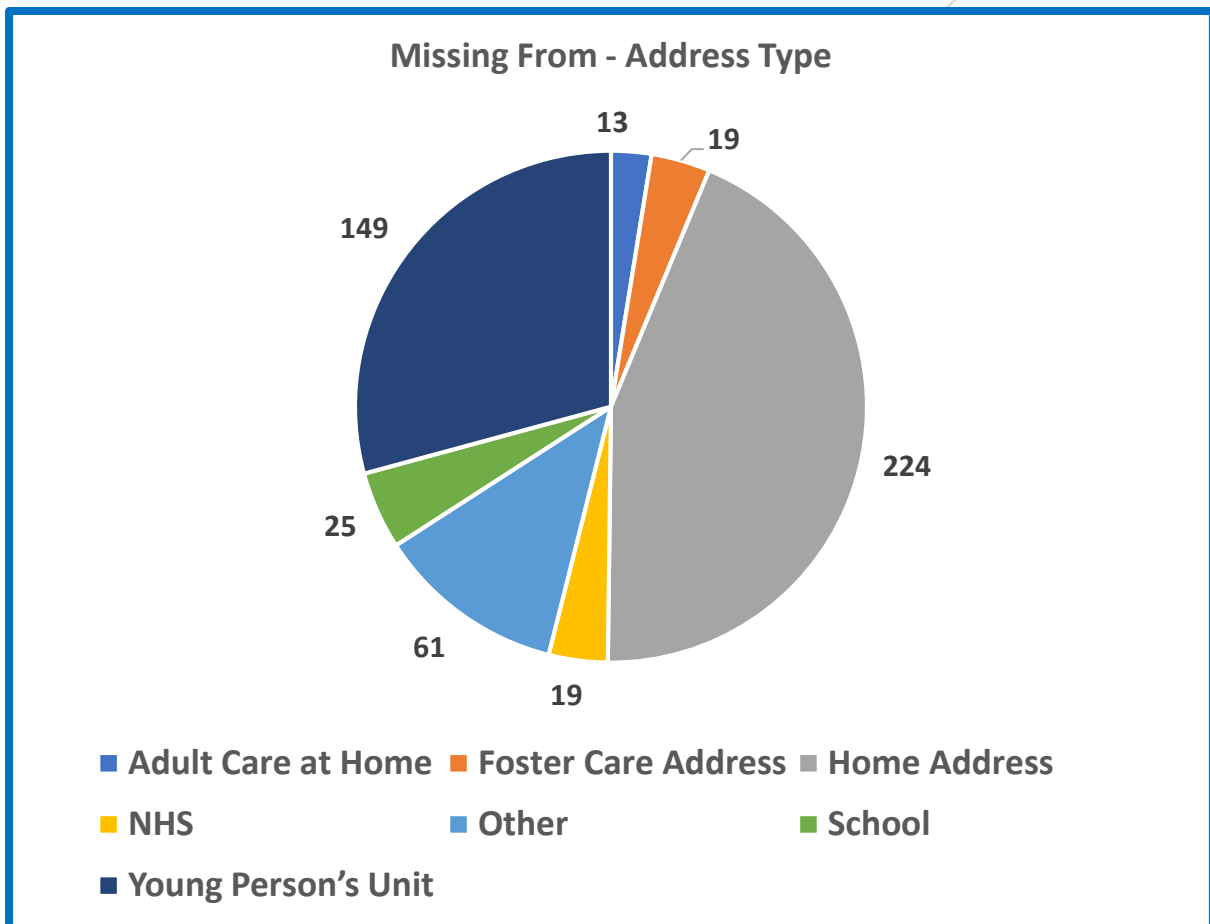
(Police Scotland 2020)



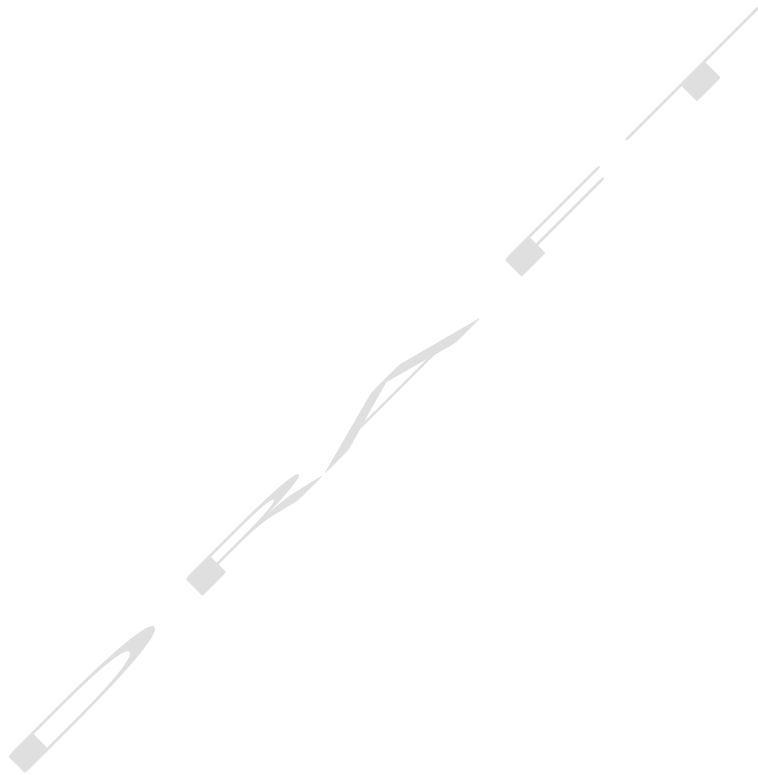
(Police Scotland 2020)

Missing from Address Type	
Adult Care at Home	13
At Sea	0
Foster Care Address	19
Home Address	224
NHS	19
Other	61
School	25
Work Address	0
Young Person's Unit	149

(Police Scotland 2020)



(Police Scotland 2020)





Appendix 2: Return Discussion Proforma

To be completed for all children and young people who are less than 18 years of age and have been located after a missing person notification to the police.

PART 1 – TO BE COMPLETED BY POLICE SCOTLAND

Name of Police Officer Completing Form:	
Child / Young Person’s Name:	
Address:	
Date of Birth:	
Date and Time recorded missing:	
Date and Time located:	
Safe and Well check completed?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
If known, please provide details of agencies who are supporting the child/young person:	
Agency	
Contact details	
Please state any risks known to the child (including child protection concerns):	
Who would the young person like to facilitate their return discussion?	
Name	
Role	
Agency	
Option: Young person does not want to engage with a return discussion	Tick box <input type="checkbox"/>



Once part 1 is completed, This form must be submitted to North Ayrshire Named Person mailbox (namedpersonservice@north-ayrshire.gov.uk)

PART 2 – TO BE COMPLETED BY NAMED PERSON SERVICE

Named Person for child/young person:	
Education establishment:	
CP Co-ordinator:	
Return Discussion Facilitator	
Name	
Role	
Email Address	
Contact Number (If known)	
Form emailed to CP Co-ordinator?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
Date	
Time	
Form emailed to Nominated Return Discussion Facilitator?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
Date	
Time	



PART 3 - TO BE COMPLETED BY NOMINATED RETURN DISCUSSION FACILITATOR OR CP CO-ORDINATOR (IF RETURN DISCUSSION FACILITATOR NOT IDENTIFIED BY YOUNG PERSON)

Please note that the return discussion should be facilitated where possible within 72 hours of the young person being located, however at the minimum this should be within 1 week.

The answers to these questions could help inform the multi-agency response if the person goes missing again. Please note that these questions have been provided as a prompt for practitioners when facilitating return discussions; communication and interpersonal skills in the delivery of the questions are essential. The discussion should be carried out sensitively and at a time when the person is happy to chat through what happened. This proforma can be used as a prompt for the practitioner when completing the return discussion, but where possible it should be completed after the discussion has taken place.

1. What was happening in the lead up to you going missing?
2. Can you tell me how you were feeling before you went missing?
3. Where did you go?
4. What did you do?
5. Were you with anyone?
6. Did you plan to do anything in particular when you were away?
7. Can you tell me how you were feeling when you were away?
8. Was there anything you feel could have been done to prevent you going away?
9. Did anything significant happen to you whilst you were away?
10. Were you hurt or harmed by anyone whilst you were away?



11. Is there anything else you would like to talk about?

Part 3 - Continued

Actions Taken in Response To Return Discussion:
1.
2
3
4
5
6
7
8

If child protection concerns are identified during the return discussion, it is the responsibility of the practitioner facilitating the return discussion to respond immediately in accordance with their agency Child Protection Procedures.

Please ensure that the young person is aware of the return discussion process, its purpose and how information will be shared.

Once part 3 is completed, This form must be returned to North Ayrshire Named Person mailbox (namedpersonservice@north-ayrshire.gov.uk)



PART 4 – TO BE COMPLETED BY NAMED PERSON SERVICE

Completed Proforma Received From Return Discussion Facilitator	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
Name		
Date		
Time		
Email Address		
Contact Number (If known)		
Completed Proforma sent to Police Scotland?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
Name (if known)		
Date		
Time		
Email Address		
Contact Number (If known)		
Completed Proforma sent to CP Co-ordinator?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
Name		
Date		
Time		
Email Address		
Contact Number (If known)		



PART 5 - FOR COMPLETION BY MISSING PERSON'S CO-ORDINATOR (Police Scotland)

Recorded on Vulnerable Person's Database (Tick box) *If young person not engaging please highlight in Vulnerable Person's Database	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
Date	
Time	
Recorded on National Missing Person's database (Tick box)	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
Date	
Time	

Appendix 3: Risk Assessment Determination (used by Police Scotland)

Vulnerability

1. Is there any identified risk of suicide?
2. What are these vulnerabilities?
3. What are the effects of failure to take medication that is not available to them?
4. Does the missing person have medical or mental health conditions, physical illnesses or disabilities?
5. Can the person interact safely with others when finding themselves in unfamiliar circumstances?
6. Is there a dependency on drugs, alcohol, medication or other substances?
7. Do the current/previous weather conditions present additional risk? Consider all circumstances including age & clothing.

Influences

8. Are there family/relationship problems or recent history of family conflict and/or abuse?
9. Are they the victim or perpetrator of domestic violence?
10. Is there an on-going personal issue linked to racial, sexual or any cultural issues?
11. Were they involved in a violent and/or hate crime incident prior to disappearance?
12. Are there any employment or financial problems?
13. Is forced marriage or „honour“ based violence an issue?
14. Are they the victim of sexual exploitation, human trafficking or prostitution? If so, is going missing likely to place them at risk of considerable harm.

Past Behaviour

Behaviour that is out of character is often a strong indicator of risk.

15. Are the circumstances of going missing different from normal behaviour patterns?
16. Is there a reason for the person to go missing?
17. Are there any indications that preparations have been made for absence?
18. What was the person intending to do when last seen? Did they fail to complete their intentions?
19. Has the person disappeared previously and were they exposed to harm on such occasions?

Appendix 4: Suggested template for a return discussion

The answers to these questions could help inform the multi-agency response if the person goes missing again. Please note that these questions have been provided as a prompt for practitioners when facilitating return discussions; communication and interpersonal skills in the delivery of the questions are essential. The discussion should be carried out sensitively and at a time when the person is happy to chat through what happened. This proforma can be used as a prompt for the practitioner when completing the return discussion, but where possible it should be completed after the discussion has taken place.

1. What was happening in the lead up to you going missing?

2. Can you tell me how you were feeling before you went missing?

3. Where did you go?

4. What did you do?

5. Were you with anyone?

6. Did you plan to do anything in particular when you were away?

7. Can you tell me how you were feeling when you were away?

8. Was there anything you feel could have been done to prevent you going away?

9. Did anything significant happen to you whilst you were away?

10. Did anything significant happen to you whilst you were away?

11. Is there anything else you would like to talk about?

- **For Children and Young People (under 18 years)** - please ensure the appropriate Missing Persons documentation (attached with this Guidance) is completed following the return discussion.
- **For Adults** - Please remember to ensure that the person/agency (usually Police) who requested the Return Discussion is informed as to any pertinent issues that arose in relation to the discussion and involved where appropriate, in developing/reviewing any safety plans