

# Missing Persons



## Missing persons

It is common for children and vulnerable adults to become separated from their guardian(s) at events. These situations can be very stressful and frightening for those involved and if they are not handled well can develop into dangerous situations. It is therefore important that procedures are developed to ensure that these situations are resolved quickly and that missing persons are cared for appropriately.

A child/vulnerable person, who has been found and is in the care of event staff but separated from their guardian is a less stressful and dangerous situation than one where a child/vulnerable person is missing and their whereabouts unknown. For this reason, the processes, actions and timescales for dealing with missing and found persons should differ.

When developing missing and found person procedures and policies, Aberdeen City Council recommend that event organisers.

## Designate a missing person supervisor

The missing person's supervisor will be responsible for the care of persons who are found at the event, for ensuring that they are cared for appropriately and for ensuring that event procedures, including the completion of any forms or the vetting of those claiming to be the missing person's guardian are adhered to.

Aberdeen City Council advise that, as this person will potentially be required to care for children or vulnerable persons, that they are a members of [Disclosure Scotland's Protecting Vulnerable Groups \(PVG\)](https://www.mygov.scot/disclosure-types/) scheme (<https://www.mygov.scot/disclosure-types/>) and that they are not disqualified from working with children or vulnerable people under the Protection of Vulnerable Groups (Scotland) Act 2007.

As well as being appropriately vetted for the work, Missing Person's Supervisors should ideally be:

- Patient and caring
- Reassuring and kind natured
- Experienced, comfortable and skilled at caring for children
- Not left in the sole care of the person at any point

Aberdeen City Council also advise that this person considers how they will care for, comfort and entertain the found person and may consider preparing themselves with child friendly activities such as pens and paper or small toys and games, to allow the child to be distracted until the responsible adult is found.

## Put systems in place to record incidents and actions

It is important that event organisers record incidents, actions and decisions. Aberdeen City Council advise that organisers produce forms and ensure records are kept during their events. This will help to cover the organiser against repercussions or accusations of fault.

Ideally the missing person supervisor should be provided with forms for both lost and found incidents, which should be completed at the time of the incident to ensure that details of the incident, actions and outcomes are recorded. These forms should include details of how the incident has occurred, who brought the incident to the event organiser's attention, what actions were taken and by whom, and the timing of all key decisions.

Another form should be created to record the outcome of the incident. This form should include details of the missing person, how the situation was resolved, who claimed the missing person, what their relationship is to the person and what evidence was provided to prove that they are the responsible adult for the missing person. You may ask the responsible adult to sign this form to confirm that the information provided is accurate.

It should be noted that any indication that the person claiming to be the missing person's guardian is not genuine, or if the missing person is in anyway unwilling to go with them, then Police Scotland must be notified straight away.

## Designate a missing person point

As well as having a clear procedure, appropriate staffing and correct forms in place to handle a missing or found person, there needs to be a safe, comfortable and non-threatening location for missing persons to be cared for until they can reunited with their guardian. Event organisers should consider the most appropriate location for the care and comfort of the missing person – remember the missing person may be already distressed by the situation so somewhere where they are comfortable is essential.

## Develop methods of communication

It is also important that information relating to the incident can be shared in real time to improve the chances of a positive outcome and ensure that key staff can be given instructions to manage dynamic situations appropriately. The principles of good communication, as detailed here, are vital to ensuring that the missing person's procedures are robust.

### **Other considerations specific to missing person incidents include:**

- To ensure specific details on the missing/found person do not make it into the public domain as this puts the person at greater risk. All communication should be face to face or over mobile phone and out of earshot from members of public
- Specific details should only be provided to those who require it via mobile phone or other more secure methods
- Radios should only be used to communicate general information and where possible discreet coded messages, known as Kilo Codes, should be used (as described here)
- No details of the missing person or information detailing that a person has been either found or is missing should be provided via the public address system as this could potentially put the missing person under greater risk.
- The public address system should only be used to remind responsible adults of the locations of the missing person point(s) or if deemed suitable by the Event Manager for specific adults to be requested to "report to the nearest steward."

## Brief staff and ensure they understand their role

It is important that event organisers remember that they will rely on their staff, stewards and volunteers to manage the event's processes and procedures. A detailed briefing is required, and it is recommended that a streamlined printed version is provided for staff to carry with them, to allow them to remind themselves of the procedures as and when required.

### **Actions of staff upon being notified of a missing person by a distressed adult:**

- Reassure the person and ask them to remain with you. If they refuse to remain with you then you should go with them to ensure a communication link until the situation is resolved.
- Find out as much information as you can about the missing person to assist in resolving the situation; last known location, name, age, description, telephone number etc.
- Contact the event management team to notify them of the situation. This will allow them to take ownership of the situation, utilise the event's full resources to assist as required and to make key decisions

- Be as discreet as possible, use coded messages and only provide specific details of the person via mobile phone out of earshot of the public
- Assist the reporting person in the search for the missing person
- Provide real time information to the event control / Event Manager / Missing Person supervisor

**Actions of staff upon discovering a missing person:**

- Reassure the missing person and ask them to remain with you. If they refuse to remain with you then you should go with them to ensure a communication link until the situation is resolved
- If another adult has brought the missing person to you then you should ask them to remain with you or seek the support of another member of staff, steward or volunteer\*
- Find out as much information as you can about the missing person to assist in resolving the situation; last known location of responsible adult, name, age, description, telephone number etc.
- Check to see whether they are wearing a Missing Person wristband as this will contain contact details for their responsible adult.
- Contact event control / Event Manager / lost children supervisor to notify them of the situation.
- Be as discreet as possible, use coded messages and only provide specific details of the person via mobile phone out of earshot of the public
- Assist the person search for their responsible adult in the area where they were found
- Provide real time information to the event control / Event Manager / lost children supervisor

\*Ensure that staff and volunteers are reminded to never be left in the sole care of the child at any point. If an adult brought the missing person to you then ask them to remain with you. If they refuse gather as much information from them as you can and seek the support of another staff member, volunteer or steward ASAP.

## Agree the appropriate timescale and escalation triggers

In order for the missing & found persons procedure to be robust and to ensure that staff operate to it, it must be clear and concise with prior agreed timescales and escalation triggers.

When setting the timescales and escalation triggers it is important for event organisers to consider the difference in importance between an incident involving a missing and a found person.

You may consider the following when putting together the timescales and escalation triggers within the events missing person policy:

- When to contact event control
- When and who would you contact Police Scotland and would this be on 101 or 999 and what would the difference in timescale be between a found or missing person
- At what point and by whom will other event staff/stewards be made aware of the missing / found person and begin searching
- How long will you search in the immediate location that a missing person was last seen, with the person/parent/guardian who reported the missing person
- When will you return to the designated missing person point with the person/parent/guardian who reported the missing person
- How long do you wait and search with a found person in the location they had been found before reporting to the designated missing person point with the found person

The [Template Event Manual](#) includes an example missing person policy including timescales and escalation triggers.

**Mandatory Conditions:**

Aberdeen City Council will require events which are likely to attract children or vulnerable adults to evidence that they have plans and procedures in place to deal with any missing or found person.