

# What to do if your child goes missing

Advice for parents and carers

ISLINGTON  
SAFEGUARDING  
CHILDREN BOARD

ISCB



Working together to safeguard  
all Islington's children



# 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

## 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

- 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



## 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. Islington Children's Services Contact Team can advise you where to get support, **020 7527 7400**

## Contacts:

Children's Services Contact Team

Tel 020 7527 7400 Email [csctreferrals@islington.gov.uk](mailto:csctreferrals@islington.gov.uk)

Police

Tel 999

Barnardo's Miss U Service

Tel 0207 700 2253 Email [missing.london@barnardos.org.uk](mailto:missing.london@barnardos.org.uk)

Islington Safeguarding Children Board

3 Elwood Street

London N5 1EB

Tel: 020 7527 4209/4234

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