

Missing Service User Policy and Procedure

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Introduction

Whilst the emphasis of this policy and procedure is on when Service Users go missing, it is fundamentally vital that OneCall24 Limited (OneCall24) does all it can to prevent this happening in the first place.

This policy outlines the responsibilities and procedures to be followed by temporary staff placed by OneCall24 in the event a service user goes missing during a shift. It provides clear guidance to support immediate action, maintain service user safety, and ensure compliance with the specific policies of the authority or organisation.

This policy applies to all temporary staff placed in healthcare, residential, and supported living environments through OneCall24. Staff must also adhere to the specific missing person procedures of the service or facility where they are assigned.

Preventing Missing Person incidents

To reduce the risk of service users going missing, temporary staff must ensure the following steps are taken before starting their shift:

- **Comprehensive Induction:** All temporary staff must receive a full site induction before starting work, including orientation to the building layout, security measures (e.g., door codes, sign-in/out procedures), and emergency exits.
- **Familiarisation with Service Users:** Staff must be introduced to all service users they will be supporting, with a focus on those identified as at risk of absconding or wandering. This includes:
 - Service user profiles and daily routines
 - Communication needs and behaviours
 - Triggers and de-escalation strategies
- **Access to Care Plans and Risk Assessments:**
 - Staff must know where to access up-to-date care plans and individual risk assessments.

- Particular attention should be paid to any section identifying a service user's history or risk of going missing.
- **Knowledge of Emergency Contacts:**
 - Staff must be shown where emergency contact information (e.g., next of kin, GP, social worker) is kept and how to access it quickly if needed.
- **Team Communication:**
 - Temporary staff must participate in all shift handovers, ensuring any known risks, including those of wandering or absconding, are communicated.

Care staff from OneCall24 should always remain vigilant and be aware of exactly where service users are at any given time.

If a Service User Goes Missing

Situations where a missing person's report should be made include the following:

- Where a service user has not returned from or has got lost during an arranged activity or walk.
- Where a service user cannot be found in their house or grounds and no prior arrangements have been made to explain their absence.

If it becomes clear that a service user may be missing, it is vital that all members of staff in the agency work as a team and follow a clearly defined procedure.

In the event a service user is found to be missing or unaccounted for:

- **Immediate Actions**
 - **Confirm** that the service user is indeed missing (check bedrooms, bathrooms, common areas, garden, etc.).
 - **Notify the On-Site Manager** or the most senior member of staff immediately.
 - **Search the Surroundings** following local procedures, ensuring other service users remain safely supported.
 - **Check Sign-In/Out Logs** and CCTV footage if accessible.
- **Notify Relevant Parties:** Once the absence is confirmed:
 - **Service/Facility Manager:** Ensure they are informed as they will usually lead the local response.
 - **Next of Kin:** Notify as per the care plan and facility protocol.
 - **Emergency Services:** If the service user is deemed at high risk (due to vulnerability, health condition, weather, etc.), the police must be contacted immediately.

- **OneCall24 On-Call Consultant:** Staff must notify OneCall24 so that support can be provided and internal processes followed.

Staff should pass on all relevant information, such as the full details of the service user (it is important to correctly identify the service user) and full details of the incident, including when and where the service user was last seen, who by and what the service user was wearing.

The member of care staff should then remain at the service user's home or place of care in case the service user returns until informed otherwise by the office.

Incident Recording, review and Notifications

Staff must complete an incident report detailing:

- Date and time of disappearance
- Circumstances leading up to the incident
- Actions taken and times
- Who was informed (including contact names and times)
- Submit the report to the facility manager and OneCall24 within 24 hours.

Debrief and Review:

- Participate in any debriefing sessions or investigations.
- Support any safeguarding reviews or updates to risk assessments.

Staff Responsibilities

All temporary staff are responsible for:

- Adhering to this policy and the Authority organisation's procedures.
- Exercising vigilance, particularly with high-risk individuals.
- Acting promptly, calmly, and professionally during any missing person incident.
- Reporting concerns about potential risks of absconding to the facility and OneCall24.

Staff Support

At all stages, the manager or coordinator should be sensitive to the needs of the members of care staff involved, who may well be upset by the emergency incident, and should provide or arrange any support required, including bringing in extra staff to help or sending someone to 'sit' with the care staff involved, and checking staff are okay.

If at any stage office staff are unsure of what to do, then the Registered Manager should be contacted immediately for advice.

Review

This policy statement will be reviewed annually as part of our commitment to upholding professional standards. It may be altered from time to time in the light of legislative changes, operational procedures or other prevailing circumstances.