



# **MISSING FROM CARE POLICY**

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# MISSING FROM CARE POLICY

## 1. Introduction to the Policy

This policy sets out the framework, principles, and procedures that **Byram House** follows when a child or young person is absent without authorisation, goes missing from the home or their expected location, or runs away. The policy applies to all staff, volunteers, agency workers, and anyone acting on behalf of Byram House, whether at 62 Deighton Road, 66 Deighton Road, or elsewhere. Young people are less likely to go missing where they feel secure and safe and are able to express their feelings and wishes, make appropriate choices and develop positive relationships with staff and their peers, which are free from bullying. The updated **Social Care Common Inspection Framework (SCCIF) 2026** places a sharper focus on what daily life feels like for children living in the home, how well staff understand each child, their identity and communication, and how well the home promotes stability and prevents unnecessary moves.

While a child is missing, the risk of exploitation and abuse increases significantly. Children who are missing are more vulnerable to being groomed and may also go missing as a result of being groomed.

The government takes the issue of any child going missing, from home or care, extremely seriously and has provided clear guidance about responsibilities for all children who go missing.

### **This policy therefore ensures that:**

- Each missing episode is treated seriously and with continuous risk assessment.
- Missing incidents are recognised as a warning sign of other safeguarding concerns (exploitation, radicalisation, FGM, mental health difficulties).
- Prevention, early intervention, and multi-agency working are prioritised.
- Every child who returns is welcomed without blame and offered a return interview by an independent person.
- Staff are trained to respond calmly, professionally, and in line with legal frameworks.

## 2. How this Policy Benefits the Home

This Missing From Care Policy benefits Byram House in the following ways:

- **Legal Compliance** – It meets the requirements of the Children’s Homes (England) Regulations 2015 (including Regulation 40 notifications), the *Statutory guidance on children who run away or go missing from home or care* (DfE, 2026 edition), the updated **Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026**, and local safeguarding partnership procedures.
- **Child Safety** – It embeds the principle of **continuous risk assessment whilst the child remains absent**, ensuring a proportionate response that escalates appropriately and reduces the likelihood of harm to vulnerable children.
- **Clarity for Staff** – It provides clear step-by-step actions for each stage of a missing episode, including search, notification, return, and recording, with particular reference to the dual-site operation of Byram House (62 and 66 Deighton Road).
- **Multi-Agency Working** – It establishes clear protocols with the police, the MASH (Kirklees Front Door Safeguarding Hub), social workers, independent return interviewers, and Ofsted, reflecting the strengthened multi-agency expectations of the **Families First Partnership Programme**, supported by **£2.4 billion**, and the **Information Sharing Duty** introduced by the Children’s Wellbeing and Schools Bill.
- **Prevention Focus** – It requires individualised Missing from Care Risk Assessments, **Philomena Passports** (a living document describing the child’s appearance, risky behaviours, friends, likely locations, and pre-police actions), and proactive strategies to reduce the frequency of missing incidents, aligning with the **SCCIF 2026** focus on stability and preventing unnecessary moves.
- **Training Framework** – It sets out regular training for all staff on missing from care procedures, including the updated framework.
- **Inspection Readiness** – Comprehensive recording, chronologies, and a shift from *describing activity* to *demonstrating what has genuinely changed and mattered for the child* support positive Ofsted Regulation 44 and Regulation 45 audits, in line with the **SCCIF 2026** emphasis on impact over process.

### 3. Definitions & Legislation

#### 3.1 Definitions

Term	Definition
<b>Home</b>	Byram House, the children’s home registered with Ofsted, comprising two residences at 62 Deighton Road and 66 Deighton Road.
<b>Young person</b>	Anyone who has not yet reached their 18th birthday.
<b>Young runaway</b>	A young person who has run away from their home or care placement, or feels they have been forced or lured to leave.
<b>Missing young person</b> (police definition)	A person whose whereabouts cannot be established and where the circumstances are out of character, or the context suggests the person may be subject to crime or at risk of harm to themselves or another.
<b>Absent</b> (police definition)	A person not at a place where they are expected or required to be, but whose whereabouts is known and the risk assessment does not justify a “missing” classification.
<b>Looked after young person</b>	A young person looked after by a local authority under a care order or section 20 of the Children Act 1989.
<b>Responsible local authority</b>	The local authority responsible for a looked after young person’s care and care planning.

<b>Host local authority</b>	The local authority in which a looked after young person is placed when placed out of the responsible local authority's area.
<b>Care leaver</b>	An eligible, relevant, or former relevant young person as defined by the Children Act 1989.
<b>Missing from care</b>	A looked after young person who is not at their placement or the place they are expected to be (e.g., school) and whose whereabouts is unknown.
<b>Away from placement without authorisation</b>	A looked after young person whose whereabouts is known but who is not at their placement or expected place, and the carer has concerns or the incident has been notified to the local authority and/or police.
<b>Fail to Return (FTR)</b>	An agreed authorised absence (e.g., a visit home) where the young person fails to return at the specified time.
<b>Safe &amp; Well check</b>	A check carried out by the police when a missing child is found, conducted in line with police duties to * protect life and investigate crime*.
<b>Return interview</b>	An in-depth interview conducted by an independent person within <b>72 hours</b> of the child's return, to understand the reasons for going missing and identify support needs, including mental health support, to help prevent further missing episodes.
<b>Philomena Passport</b>	A living document that describes the child's appearance, risky behaviours, friends, frequent locations, and specific actions to take before reporting to police. Updated regularly, including after each missing incident.
<b>Missing from Care Risk Assessment and Action Plan</b>	An individualised document that identifies causal factors (push/pull factors), vulnerabilities, specific actions to prevent missing incidents, and escalated responses.

<b>Contextual Safeguarding</b>	An approach recognising that children may be at risk of harm outside their family, in neighbourhoods, schools or online.
<b>Family Help</b>	The integrated system of non-statutory and statutory multi-agency help, support and protection that responds flexibly and wraps support around families at the point of need. Brought together by <b>Working Together 2026</b> , combining Targeted Early Help and Section 17 support into a single, seamless offer.
<b>Multi-Agency Safeguarding Arrangements (MASA)</b>	Local arrangements established by safeguarding partners (local authority, health, police) to work together to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.

### 3.2 Key Legislation and Statutory Guidance (2025 – 2026)

Legislation / Guidance	Key Provisions	Relevance to this Policy
<b>Children Act 1989</b>	Section 47 – duty to investigate Significant Harm. Section 20 – accommodation of looked after children.	Provides the legal framework for when a missing episode triggers a Section 47 enquiry or where a child is accommodated under Section 20.
<b>Children’s Homes (England) Regulations 2015</b>	Regulation 40 – notification of serious events to Ofsted. Regulation 44 – monthly independent person visits. Regulation 45 – annual review.	Requires the home to notify Ofsted of missing episodes that meet the serious event threshold (e.g., overnight absence, CSE involvement). Monitoring through Reg 44 and 45 audits includes

		scrutiny of missing from care incidents.
<b>Data Protection Act 2018 &amp; UK GDPR</b>	Sets out lawful bases for sharing information without consent where necessary for safeguarding and locating a missing child.	Not a barrier to sharing information with police, local authority, or other professionals during a missing episode.
<b>Online Safety Act 2023</b>	Fully implemented from 25 July 2025. Requires online services to implement child safety codes of practice.	Recognises that children may go missing to meet online contacts or as a result of online grooming. Staff must assess online risks in the Missing from Care Risk Assessment.
<b>Statutory guidance: <i>Children who run away or go missing from home or care</i></b> (DfE, 2026 edition)	The primary guidance on planning, response, return interviews, and multi-agency working for missing children.	This policy is directly based on this guidance. It sets out the 72-hour return interview requirement, the role of the independent interviewer, and the need for continuous risk assessment.
<b>Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026</b>	Introduces Family Help framework, strengthens multi-agency accountability, and emphasises extra-familial harms and anti-discriminatory practice.	Missing episodes are often linked to extra-familial harms (exploitation, radicalisation). The Family Help framework ensures coordinated support when a child returns.

<b>Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026 (proposed)</b>	Expected September 2026. Addresses emerging online risks and peer-on-peer abuse.	Informs the home's approach to missing episodes where the child may be at risk from online contacts or peer influences.
<b>Children Missing Education (CME) statutory guidance (September 2025)</b>	Places greater emphasis on children at risk of harm, exploitation, or radicalisation; requires CME processes to be embedded into safeguarding strategies.	Relevant where a child's missing episodes involve non-attendance at school or where the child is of compulsory school age and their whereabouts is unknown.
<b>Social Care Common Inspection Framework (SCCIF) for Children's Homes 2026</b>	Effective 1 April 2026. Focuses on children's lived experience, stability, preventing unnecessary moves, and demonstrating genuine change.	Inspectors will examine how the home manages missing episodes, whether prevention is effective, and whether the home can evidence a reduction in risk and improved outcomes for the child.
<b>Crime and Policing Bill 2025-2026</b>	Introduces new notification requirements for child cruelty offenders.	Relevant where a missing child is at risk of contact with a known child cruelty offender. Staff should be aware of any local notifications.
<b>Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill (introduced December 2024)</b>	Introduces an Information Sharing Duty and a Single Unique Identifier to improve information sharing between agencies.	Helps ensure that when a child goes missing, relevant information (e.g., from health, education, police) is

		shared promptly to locate the child and understand risks.
<b>Police missing person procedures (updated January 2026)</b>	Ensures a proportionate response, avoiding unnecessary criminalisation where a child commits an offence when located. Provides for use of a <b>police request for missing child discussion form</b> to request discussions with the Missing Persons Unit.	Guides how and when staff should involve police, including initial classification as 'missing' or 'absent', and how to escalate concerns.
<b>Families First Partnership Programme (£2.4bn)</b>	Delivers national reforms to Family Help, Multi-Agency Child Protection and Family Group Decision Making.	Underpins the multi-agency response expected when a child goes missing, including funding for early support hubs (£7m announced for mental health drop-in services for 11-25 year olds).

## 4. The Policy

### 4.1 Planning and Prevention

Staff must take proactive steps to reduce the likelihood of a young person leaving without consent.

#### Preventative actions include:

- **Consistent approach** – Agree how to respond to specific behaviours and manage individual young people.
- **Planning** – Develop strategies to avoid missing episodes, e.g., supporting a young person before a difficult meeting.
- **Risk assessment on admission** – Complete a **Missing from Care Risk Assessment and Action Plan** for every child, reviewed regularly and after each missing episode.
- **Vigilance** – Be alert to factors that may cause a child to go missing, such as bullying, abuse, exploitation, changes in emotional state, or new online contacts.
- **Review meetings** – At the request of the young person or where there are repeated missing episodes, the Registered Manager must arrange a meeting with the placing authority and, where appropriate, the **Family Help** lead practitioner, to explore reasons and modify behaviour.

**The SCCIF 2026** reinforces that homes must demonstrate how they promote stability and prevent unnecessary moves, including understanding why placements succeed or break down and the child's lived experience.

#### The Missing from Care Risk Assessment must consider the following factors:

Area	Considerations (non-exhaustive)
<b>Child's characteristics</b>	Age, learning/physical disability, mental health, dependency on drugs/alcohol

<b>Health &amp; medication</b>	Need for regular medication (e.g., diabetic), ongoing physical or mental health conditions
<b>History</b>	Previous missing episodes, self-harm, exploitation (CSE, county lines)
<b>Circumstances</b>	Peer pressure, family problems, possible involvement in crime, drugs, online grooming
<b>Environment</b>	Weather, geography, time of day/night, possible location
<b>Resources</b>	Possessions or money (or lack thereof) that create risk
<b>Associates</b>	Known friends or adults giving rise to concern (e.g., known to be involved in criminal/exploitative activity)
<b>Length of time missing</b>	Short vs prolonged absence (triggers different escalation)
<b>Direction of travel</b>	Running to someone or from a situation?
<b>Legal status</b>	Care order, Section 20 accommodation, or other status affecting response
<b>Online risks</b>	Use of social media, online games, messaging apps; contacts made online

## 4.2 Philomena Passport

Every child must have an up-to-date **Philomena Passport**, a living document that includes:

- A current photograph and full physical description.
- Communication needs and preferred methods.
- Risky behaviours (e.g., CSE, county lines, radicalisation).
- Key friends and associates (both offline and online usernames/handles).
- Frequent locations (local parks, transport hubs, addresses of known contacts).
- Pre-police search actions agreed with the child's social worker.

- Things that calm or reassure the child.
- Legal status and emergency contact information.

The Philomena Passport must be reviewed after each missing incident and updated as circumstances change. It should be readily available to staff at both 62 and 66 Deighton Road.

### 4.3 Leaving Without Consent – Immediate Prevention

If a young person indicates they intend to leave without consent:

- Staff must show **care and concern**, even if they believe the young person will leave anyway. This benefits both the child and others in the home.
- **If the child is at immediate risk of harm** (e.g., leaving to engage in gang activity, drug use, meeting a sexual exploiter, or to commit a criminal offence), staff **may use proportionate restraint** to prevent them from leaving, but only for as long as necessary to manage the immediate risk.
- Use of restraint in such circumstances **must not become an institutional practice**. If a child continues to put themselves at risk by leaving without permission, a meeting must be held with the placing authority, the police missing officer, and the **Family Help** lead practitioner to review whether the placement remains appropriate.
- If the child does leave, staff must, where practicable, follow and continue efforts to encourage return. Good relationships and proactive engagement are the best prevention.

**Note:** Physical force cannot be used to stop a young person from leaving unless there is an immediate risk of harm (including risk of criminal or sexual exploitation). Any use of restraint must be documented in line with the Physical Intervention Policy and notified to the LADO if appropriate.

### 4.4 Immediate Actions When a Young Person is Missing

The policy distinguishes between two scenarios, reflecting the **SCCIF 2026** emphasis on a proportionate response.

## Scenario A – Young person leaves without arrangement or fails to return at a specified time

### Stage 1 (Immediate on discovery of absence):

- Make a thorough search of **both residences** (62 and 66 Deighton Road) and immediate grounds.
- If the young person has a mobile phone, try to contact them directly to ascertain whereabouts and negotiate safe return.
- Ask other staff and young people if they know the young person's whereabouts or likely location.
- Check usual haunts; contact friends or family to ask if the young person has made contact (use the Philomena Passport).

### Stage 2 (If not located within a short time – usually 15–30 minutes depending on risk):

- Consult the young person's **Missing from Care Plan** for specific actions.
- Start a **Missing from Care record** on the home's electronic recording system (Clear Care), with a running log/chronology of all actions.
- Review the Missing from Care Risk Plan.
- **Classify the episode as 'Missing' or 'Absent'** using the police definitions, based on the level of risk.
- **Contact the police** if the child is classified as 'missing' or if risk escalates. Police procedures updated from January 2026 ensure a proportionate response; sometimes police involvement in the first instance may be disproportionate, but identified risks to all children will continue to be fully assessed during the initial call.
- Consider whether the incident may require a **Serious Incident Notification** to Ofsted (Regulation 40) – e.g., overnight absence, suspected CSE, police call-out, or other serious circumstances.

**Continuous risk assessment** while the child remains missing: circumstances may change (e.g., weather, time elapsed, new intelligence about exploitation risk). Staff and managers must reassess risk and escalate as necessary.

## 4.5 Missing from Home Strategy Meetings

A **missing from home strategy meeting** must be arranged by Byram House (in conjunction with the local authority and police missing officer) when the child:

- Has been missing for **72 hours or more**.
- Has been missing **3 or more times within a 28-day period**.
- Is at risk of **significant harm** as a result of missing episodes.
- Has a **pattern of behaviour** causing increased concerns (e.g., signs of CSE, county lines, radicalisation, or self-harm).

The meeting must include the **police missing officer**, social worker, **Family Help** lead practitioner (where involved), and other relevant professionals. The independent return home interviewer will be invited and may share information. The meeting will review the Missing from Care Plan, consider whether a **Section 47 enquiry** (Children Act 1989) is needed, and ensure that **multi-agency accountability** under **Working Together 2026** is evidenced.

## 4.6 Monitoring and Notifications

Agency	When to notify	Method / Timescale
<b>Ofsted (Regulation 40)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– A child is missing for an extended period (e.g., overnight)</li> <li>– Involvement or suspected involvement in CSE, county lines, or other exploitation</li> <li>– Serious incident requiring police attendance</li> <li>– Other serious circumstances as defined in the Children’s Homes Regulations</li> </ul>	Follow online notification form or telephone 0300 123 1231 <sup>14</sup> L11-L15.

<b>Kirklees MASH (Front Door Safeguarding Hub)</b>	All missing episodes where there is a safeguarding concern	Telephone 01484 456858 (out of hours 01484 414850)
<b>Police (missing person report)</b>	Where the child is classified as 'missing' (not merely 'absent') and risk assessment justifies deployment	Call 101 (999 if immediate danger)
<b>Placing authority / social worker</b>	All missing episodes, without delay	Telephone and email confirmation
<b>Parents/carers</b>	All missing episodes (unless doing so would place the child at greater risk)	Telephone and written record

**Monitoring:** Incidents of missing from care will be monitored as part of **Regulation 44** (monthly independent person visit) and **Regulation 45** (annual review) audits, using case tracking and analysis of patterns to inform the home's continuous improvement.

## 4.7 Returning the Young Person

When the young person's whereabouts become known:

- Staff must decide what actions are necessary to return the child, in consultation with the social worker and, where proportionate, the police missing officer.
- **Preference is for co-operation and negotiation.**
- If the young person does not co-operate and there are risks to the child or others, staff may consider:

- Using **coercion or force only after consulting the Registered Manager**, unless immediate action is necessary to prevent significant injury or serious damage to property.
- Consulting the **police** if in doubt. The police's powers are limited unless there is risk of significant harm or a criminal offence.

All agencies that were notified of the absence (police, social worker, MASH, placing authority, host authority, Ofsted if notified) must be informed **immediately** upon return.

## 4.8 Upon Return of the Young Person

The young person must be **welcomed back without judgement or blame**. Staff must show care, empathy, and sensitivity to the child's emotional state.

### Key actions after return:

**1. Immediate care** – Offer medical attention if needed (including safe & well check by police if the child was reported missing). Ensure safety and allow the child to rest.

**2. Request an independent Return Home Interview** – The Registered Manager must request an independent return interviewer **as soon as possible**, ideally within **24 hours** of return. The interview must be conducted **within 72 hours** (statutory guidance).

**Why this matters:** Return interviews explore why the child went missing and what mental health or other support they may need to prevent further episodes. The government has announced a **£7 million funding boost** to early support hubs for drop-in mental health support for young people aged 11-25.

**3. If the return interview is not completed within 72 hours**, the following escalation applies:

Time after return	Action
48 hours	Reminder to social worker
72 hours	Notify social worker that statutory timeframe exceeded – escalate within the home to Registered Manager
5 days	Escalate to Team Manager (placing authority)
7 days	Escalate to Service Manager (placing authority)

**4. Return Interview Report** – The completed report must be filed on the child’s record and shared with the social worker, Registered Manager, and **Family Help** lead practitioner (where involved). The report is used to identify patterns, push/pull factors, and safeguarding concerns (including potential exploitation, radicalisation, or online risks).

**5. Review and update plans** – The **Missing from Care Plan, Risk Assessment, and Philomena Passport** must be reviewed and updated following the return interview.

**6. Persistent missing episodes** – If the child has persistent missing episodes, the Registered Manager must notify the child’s **Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO)** and escalate through the local authority’s missing from care forum.

**Safe & Well check by police** – This is separate from the return interview. Police will conduct a safe and well check to determine if the child has come to harm while missing. The outcome must be recorded on the child’s file and shared with the social worker.

## 4.9 Recording of Missing Episodes

A full, factual, and chronological record must be kept for each missing episode, including:

- Date, time, duration, and classification (missing / absent).
- All actions taken (searches of both residences, phone calls, visits).

- Persons contacted (police, social worker, MASH, family, friends, Ofsted).
- Outcome of return (how located, who returned the child).
- Any injuries, illnesses, or incidents during absence.
- Police safe & well check outcome.
- Return interview outcome and any actions arising (including changes to the Missing from Care Plan).
- Notifications made (Ofsted, LADO if physical intervention used, CSE notification if relevant).
- Any criminal offences alleged to have been committed during the episode.

Records must be kept on the child’s case file and include an up-to-date **chronology** to help identify patterns.

The **SCCIF 2026** expects evidence that the home uses case tracking to demonstrate trends and shows what has genuinely changed and matters for the child.

## 5. How the Home Trains its Staff About this Policy

Byram House provides structured training to ensure all staff understand and can implement this Missing From Care Policy effectively.

Training Element	Frequency	Method / Content
<b>Induction</b>	Upon appointment	Face-to-face training covering: definitions (missing vs absent), risk assessment process, Philomena Passport, immediate actions for both residences (62 & 66 Deighton Road), return interview protocol, recording obligations, and the dual-site operation.

<b>Annual refresher</b>	Every 12 months	Classroom or virtual session covering updates to statutory guidance (Working Together 2026, SCCIF 2026, police missing person procedures), local protocols (Kirklees), case studies, and lessons learned from recent incidents.
<b>Risk assessment training</b>	As part of safeguarding training	How to complete the Missing from Care Risk Assessment and Action Plan, including identifying push/pull factors, exploitation indicators (CSE, county lines, radicalisation), and online risks under the Online Safety Act 2023.
<b>Return interview awareness</b>	Annually	Understanding the purpose of independent return interviews (72-hour requirement), how to support the child after return, and how to use outcomes to update plans, with reference to the £7 million early support hubs funding.
<b>Recording and notification</b>	As needed	Training on the home's electronic recording system (Clear Care), Regulation 40 notifications to Ofsted, MASH referrals, police liaison using the <b>police request for missing child discussion form</b> , and Chronology maintenance.
<b>Multi-agency working</b>	Part of safeguarding updates	Liaison with police MASH, social workers, <b>Family Help</b> lead practitioners, independent interviewers, and use of the <b>Information Sharing Duty</b> under the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill.
<b>Restraint and missing episodes</b>	Annually	The limited circumstances where proportionate restraint may be used to prevent a child leaving (immediate risk of exploitation or serious harm); documentation and LADO notification requirements.

<b>Record keeping and impact evidence</b>	At induction and refresh	How to maintain case files that demonstrate not just process but <b>what has genuinely changed for the child</b> , in line with SCCIF 2026 expectations.
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### Staff are required to:

- Read and sign the Missing From Care Policy annually.
- Complete all mandatory training sessions.
- Know where the Missing from Care Risk Assessment and Philomena Passport for each child is kept (available at both 62 and 66 Deighton Road).
- Practice regular scenario-based drills (e.g., a child goes missing from one of the two residences; a child is located and returns; a return interview is delayed).

## 6. Related Policies and Guidance

This policy must be read in conjunction with:

- Safeguarding Policy
- Physical Intervention Policy
- Behaviour Management Policy
- Data Protection Policy
- Whistleblowing Policy
- Children 's Homes (England) Regulations 2015
- **Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026**
- **Statutory guidance: *Children who run away or go missing from home or care* (DfE, 2026 edition)**
- Children Missing Education statutory guidance (September 2025)
- Social Care Common Inspection Framework (SCCIF) for Children 's Homes 2026

- Local safeguarding partnership procedures (Kirklees)



Byram House

<b>Policy Name</b>	Missing from Care Policy	
<b>Home</b>	Byram House (62 & 66 Deighton Road)	
<b>Reviewed by</b>	Danyaal Iqbal / Mustafa Amin	Deputy Manager / Registered Manager
<b>Approved by</b>	Stacey Wagstaffe	Stacey Wagstaffe
<b>Date</b>	May 2026	