



TIME OUT
fostering

valuing individual needs

SECTION ELEVEN

PROCEDURE FOR WHEN A CHILD IS ABSENT FROM PLACEMENT WITHOUT PERMISSION

2007

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INTRODUCTION

All children and young people missing from a foster home without permission are dealt with according to a joint protocol between the Police and Local Authority, which will be adhered to by Time Out Fostering.

Time Out Fostering takes the view that foster carers are generally well placed to assess the level of risk a missing child is exposed to. This may be based on their age, history, emotional state and behaviour. Common sense should be balanced with risk awareness when judging the urgency of action appropriate to each disappearance. It is always important to communicate with either the social worker or supervising social worker as soon as a disappearance comes to light so that a judgement can be made jointly. Therefore the following procedure should be followed.

Procedure for Carer

Within 60 minutes of a child/young person being absent from home without permission you should;

- Note clothing worn
- Make a thorough search of home and gardens
- Check to see if child is with known friends, etc.

If the above (1.1) does not result in finding the child/young person and the risk seems urgent (e.g.; the child is not late back from somewhere) firstly, report the child as missing to Time Out Fostering on call and then inform the Police on 0845 60 70 999 and note incident number. Then telephone the child's social worker or alternatively the duty social worker and inform them that the child is absent from placement.

Telephone numbers:

Police: **0845 60 70 999**

Local Authority Social Services West Sussex: **01903 694422**

Local Authority Social Services Brighton & Hove: **07699 391462**

Whatever the situation, telephone the Supervising Social Worker Or Time Out Fostering On Duty Staff immediately..

If a child does return or is found, record the incident and inform 1) Time Out Fostering, 2) Police, 3) Social Workers.

If the carer was the last person to see the child, they can expect the police to visit them. The police will require the following information about the child/young person;

- Full name
- Place and date of birth
- Physical characteristics and disabilities, drug use etc
- Eyes- colour, glasses
- Hair-colour, length
- Clothing and other items worn when last seen
- Date and time child went missing
- Address of foster carer and address from which the child went missing if appropriate
- Name and address of local authority and social worker
- Legal status

If and when the child returns the carer must be aware of the complexity of the child's feelings and treat the child with due understanding and respect.

2. Procedure for Time Out Fostering Staff

Staff receiving information about a missing child should consult with a manager/ director if unsure about level of risk.

If it has not been done already and is deemed appropriate inform Police and Social Services immediately.

Telephone numbers:

Police: **0845 60 70 999**

Local Authority Social Services West Sussex: **01903 694422**

Local Authority Social Services Brighton & Hove: **07699 391462**

Discuss with local authority social worker who should inform parents and when, and clarify who should inform them if the child returns.

Inform the Supervising Social Worker as soon as possible (if necessary)

Ensure support has been offered to foster carers

Arrange a strategy meeting for three days after the child has gone missing; this can also be used to address future management of child in light of event. This meeting could include child's social worker, Time Out Fostering social worker, and Time Out Fostering manager and a representative from Children and Families Child Protection Team. Meeting should address risk assessment, locating missing child, parental involvement and press office involvement.

Record incident and outcome and place in child/young person's file and a copy in carer's file.