

# Pan Cheshire Missing From Home Service – Parent Support Pack

We have put together this pack of resources to support our colleagues in education settings.

The resources are designed to support parents with children who have had missing incidents or are at risk of being reported as missing from home.

This pack includes:

- **Service Overview & Contact Information**
- **Supporting children as lockdown restrictions change**
- **Our Tips for Supporting Children to Prevent MFH**
- **Reporting a child or young person as missing**
- **Increased Risks during COVID-19 /Key Resources**
- **Guide to Setting boundaries**
- **Guide to have better conversations**

## Service Overview

We Are With Are is the commissioned service to provide Independent Return Home Interviews to children and young people reported missing from home or care within the four Pan Cheshire local authorities (Warrington, Halton, Cheshire East and Cheshire West & Chester).

### What is a Return Home Interview?

The purpose of a Return Home Interview (RHI) is to give the child who has returned a chance to talk about their lives holistically, exploring why they ran away (push and/or pull factors), what happened whilst they were missing and how they are feeling now they are back.

The interview is an opportunity for children or young people to speak to a professional who can provide appropriate follow up with referrals or signposting for any of the risks identified. It is important to both gather and analyse information from the child such as associates and locations they frequent.

## Contact Information

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# Supporting children as lockdown restrictions change

The COVID-19 outbreak has significantly disrupted the lives of young people.

The routines and boundaries for many young people will have been significantly altered due to the lockdown measures that have been in place.

As lockdown measures will be subject to change over the coming weeks and months it is possible that children and young people will grow increasingly frustrated and wish to make the most of potential new freedoms when they are able.

## Our Top Tips for Supporting Children

There are a number of things we would recommend to support children and young people during this period.

- **Have a clear agreement with children about expectations when they are out**
- **Consider changing the curfews/agreements that have previously been in place and be clear about why**
- **Agreed to complete increased check ins when they are out**
- **Make sure you know who they are with and have contact numbers for them**

# Reporting a child or young person as missing

The police are entitled to expect parents and carers to accept normal parenting responsibilities and undertake reasonable actions to try and establish the whereabouts of the individual.

This includes:

- **Make attempts to contact them**
- **Call friends or family**
- **Visiting areas they frequent**
- **Visit place known to be attending (for example friend's house or party)**
- **Checking to see if any items are missing from the home.**

Once those enquiries have been completed, it may be appropriate to record the child as missing and take actions set out in national police guidance.

Children who are breaching parental discipline should not be dealt with by police unless there are other risks.

# Increased Risks during COVID-19

Young people are spending more time online during the COVID-19 outbreak as a means of staying in touch with friends, entertainment and for education.

While the internet can be a positive tool to support young people during this period, they can be targeted by perpetrators and exploited.

It is essential that young people are effectively monitored and supported.

You can find online safety support here:

[National Online Safety](#)

[CEOP](#)

[O2 NSPCC Parent/Child Resources](#)

Many parents will be juggling childcare with working from home.

This blog post includes [Top tips for parents working from home.](#)

The NSPCC has created an information and advice resource for parents/carers of young people with anxiety about Coronavirus which can be accessed [here](#).

# Setting boundaries

We all have limits when it comes to other people's behaviour.

You may draw the line at being lied to, for example, or being sworn at.

These limits are sometimes called boundaries.

## How boundaries help us

When you have healthy boundaries it means everyone knows where they stand.

For example, if you all agree there should be no swearing in your home, everyone is clear and it's more likely to happen.

Healthy boundaries make our relationships stronger. They also encourage everyone to take responsibility for their own behaviour.

## What happens when boundaries are unclear?

It can be hard to set healthy boundaries when someone close to you is causing you distress.

The problem is, if you don't follow through, it sends a message that boundaries are there to be broken.

It also takes away your loved one's motivation to change because there are no consequences for their actions.

## How to set boundaries

It can be helpful to see setting boundaries as something for you and your loved one to solve together.

Ask for some time to talk things through. Be honest and direct. Try to stay calm and positive.

Talk about what they want and what you want. Think about what the compromise could be.

## Think about the consequences

It's important that everyone is clear about what the consequences will be if the new boundary is broken.

Some boundaries have their own natural consequences.

Whatever boundaries and consequences you decide on, it's important you feel confident you can stick to them.

# How to have better conversations

When somebody is not adhering to rules or boundaries it's easy to start saying negative things or blaming each other.

These simple communication tips will help to keep your conversations calmer and more positive.

## Watch and listen for green lights

Imagine there are traffic lights in conversations to tell you when to stop or go.

The light is green when your loved one is engaged with you, willing to listen and be constructive.

The light is red when your loved one is shouting, swearing, going silent or not listening.

Red lights are frustrating, especially when you really want to see change.

But if you ignore red lights you may end up fighting, saying things you regret and no closer to positive change.

If you get a red light, it's best to let the conversation go. But let your loved one know you want to pick it up at a later time.

## Ask open questions

Open questions are ones where there is no "yes" or "no" answer.

For example, "What was the best thing about your day?" is an open question but, "Did you have a good day?" isn't (because you can answer yes or no).

Open questions encourage people to open up in conversations. They also help you understand what is going on for the other person.

Some open questions you could try are:





- What are some of the things you like about...? (starting with positives can help to build trust)
- What things do (...staying out late/drinking/poor behaviour) get in the way of?
- What are the things that make you want to do those things?
- What worries you the most about not doing those things?

Be patient and give your loved one time to think and to respond.

## Use "I statements"

"I statements" are a way to say how you feel without making the other person defensive.

They can help your loved one hear what you have to say and understand how their actions affect you and other people.

To use "I statements" build your sentences like this:

- **I feel** (say how you feel)
- **When** (describe their behaviour in a non-judgemental way)
- **Because** (explain how the behaviour affects you or other people)

Here's an example:

- **I feel** really worried
- **When** you don't come home at night
- **Because** I'm scared that you're in danger

You can also use "I statements" to say positive things:

- **I feel** really happy
- **When** you're home in time for tea
- **Because** we can be together as a family

Using "I statements" may feel awkward at first. With a bit of practice, it can become a natural part of how you talk in your family.

## Practise listening

Sometimes the more you try to make someone see your point of view, the more they shut down.

Listening has the opposite effect. The more you listen, the more people open up.

Often when we think we're listening we're actually judging, disagreeing or busy putting together our response.

The secret to listening is to do just that – listen.

Do your best to hear what your loved one is saying without judging them.