

Missing Child Protocol & Police Liaison Strategy

Prepared on behalf of: Ellies Place Ltd

Site Address: 94 Hartsbourne Road, Reading, RG6 5SJ

Proposal: Change of use from C3 Residential Dwellinghouse to C2 Residential Institution (Children's Residential Care Home) — Residential Children's Home

Application Type: Full Planning Permission

Local Planning Authority: Wokingham Borough Council

Prepared by: Inhaus Planning, Suite Ra01, 195–197 Wood Street, London, E17 3NU

1.0 Introduction

This Missing Child Protocol and Police Liaison Strategy has been prepared by Inhaus Planning on behalf of Ellies Place Ltd in support of the Full Planning Permission application for the change of use of 94 Hartsbourne Road, Reading, RG6 5SJ from C3 residential dwellinghouse to a C2 children's residential care home. It sets out the procedures that will be followed in the event that any young person resident at the home is reported as missing, and the arrangements for liaison with Thames Valley Police and other relevant agencies.

2.0 Safeguarding Framework

The home operates within the statutory safeguarding framework established by the Children Act 1989, Working Together to Safeguard Children (2023), and the Children's Homes (England) Regulations 2015. Missing episodes are recognised within this framework as a significant safeguarding concern requiring immediate, structured, and documented response. The Registered Manager holds overall responsibility for the implementation of this protocol and for ensuring that all staff are trained in its application.

3.0 Prevention Measures

The most effective response to missing episodes is their prevention. The home will work proactively to reduce the likelihood of young people going missing by maintaining a warm, structured, and engaging residential environment in which young people feel safe, valued, and connected. Individual risk assessments will identify young people at heightened risk of going missing and will specify additional supervisory and support measures to mitigate this risk.

Staff will be trained to recognise early warning signs that a young person may be considering leaving the home without permission, including changes in mood, behaviour, or communication patterns, and will respond proactively with increased engagement and de-escalation strategies. The home will maintain strong, positive relationships with each young person's family, social worker, and other key adults in their network, as family connections are a significant protective factor against missing episodes.

4.0 Definition of Missing

For the purposes of this protocol, a young person is considered to be 'missing' when their whereabouts are unknown and they are not in the care of an authorised person. A young person is considered 'absent without authorisation' where they have left the home without permission but their whereabouts are known or believed to be known. Both categories are treated as matters of concern requiring immediate action, but the response procedures differ according to the level of assessed risk.

5.0 Response Procedure

Where a young person is identified as missing, the on-duty staff member will conduct an immediate search of the property and immediate vicinity. If the young person cannot be located within fifteen minutes, the Registered Manager will be notified immediately, regardless of the time of day or night. The placing

authority's emergency duty team will be notified within one hour of the young person being reported as missing, or sooner where there is immediate concern for the young person's safety. Thames Valley Police will be notified in accordance with the timeframes specified in the young person's individual risk assessment, which will be agreed with the placing authority and the police at the point of placement.

6.0 Police Liaison

The home will establish and maintain a proactive working relationship with the local Thames Valley Police Safer Neighbourhood Team covering the Hartsbourne Road area and with the Force's specialist Missing Persons Unit. Prior to the home becoming operational, the Registered Manager will make contact with local police and will provide briefing information about the nature of the home, the profile of young people likely to be resident, and the home's safeguarding and missing persons procedures.

Thames Valley Police will be invited to attend the home's annual safeguarding review and will be kept informed of any changes to the resident group or risk assessment framework that may be relevant to police response planning. The home will cooperate fully with any police investigation arising from a missing episode.

7.0 Return and Follow-Up

Upon the safe return of any young person who has been missing, the home will conduct an immediate welfare check and will arrange for an independent Return Home Interview to be conducted in accordance with the statutory guidance. The interview will be conducted by an appropriately trained professional independent of the home, in accordance with arrangements established by Wokingham Borough Council. The purpose is to establish the circumstances and experiences of the young person during their absence, to identify any safeguarding concerns, and to inform the review of the young person's risk assessment and care plan.

8.0 Recording and Review

All missing episodes will be recorded in the home's incident log and in the individual young person's care record. Reports will be submitted to the placing authority and to Ofsted in accordance with the notification requirements of the Children's Homes (England) Regulations 2015. The Registered Manager will review the pattern of missing episodes on a monthly basis and will consider whether any changes to the home's procedures, environment, or staffing arrangements are required in response.

9.0 Conclusion

The Missing Child Protocol and Police Liaison Strategy set out in this document demonstrates that Ellies Place Ltd has in place robust, structured, and proportionate procedures for responding to missing episodes. The protocol reflects best practice in the sector and is fully consistent with the statutory framework governing the operation of children's residential care homes. The Local Planning Authority is invited to consider this document as evidence that the proposed use will be managed in a safe, responsible, and professionally accountable manner.