

# UK Missing Persons Bureau

## Spring 2013

### **Missing Persons – A new approach**

During January 2013, the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) agreed new working practices, including a new definition for "Missing Person".

The new definition encourages an improved risk-based police-led investigation of individual incidents, while supporting and demanding a multi-agency commitment to better safeguard vulnerable children and adults.

"Missing" will refer to cases where it is out of character for the individual to go missing or the individual is considered to be a possible subject of crime or is at risk of harm to themselves and/or others.

A new category of "Absent" will apply to an individual who is not at a place where they are expected or required to be.

Appropriate police actions and responsibilities will be associated with each category.

The new model is based on one originally developed by Sussex Police and piloted in three force areas. It was then evaluated by the National Policing Improvement Agency and approved by ACPO.

To support police forces in the adoption and implementation of the new model, a series of regional one day workshops are being run from February through to the end of April by the UK Missing Persons Bureau (UKMPB) in partnership with the Child Exploitation and Online Protection centre (CEOP). Invites have gone out to police forces, with a suggestion that representatives from several relevant departments attend, so that staff from all levels, from call handling to Critical Incident Inspector, receive training and support in the

implementation of the new working practices and definition.

ACPO has agreed that roll-out of the new working practices should commence from 1 April 2013. Interim guidance will be issued to supplement the *2010 Guidance on the Management, Investigation and Recording of Missing Persons* and ongoing advice will be available from the UKMPB and CEOP.

Representatives from partner agencies with an interest in 'missing', such as social services or children's charities, may also attend the workshops. However, we would ask that any representatives from partner agencies liaise with their police contacts prior to requesting a place.

For further information or to enquire about attending one of the workshops, please email [missingpersons bureau@npia.pnn.police.uk](mailto:missingpersons bureau@npia.pnn.police.uk) or call us on 0845 000 5481.

### **First International Conference on Missing Children and Adults**

June 18-20 2013 sees the first ever International Conference on Missing Children and Adults. The conference will be hosted at the Centre for the Study of Missing Persons, University of Portsmouth and the theme will be: *Working across borders*.

Aimed at police officers, practitioners, policy makers and academics, the agenda promises delegates a varied and interesting programme. Speakers confirmed so far include representatives from The Netherlands, Australia, USA and from the charity Missing People. Presentations will examine the issues relating to people missing abroad, the new

ACPO definition of Missing and the Child Rescue Alert system. Academic presentations include a look at the politics and geographies of missing persons. A series of workshops is planned, to cover subjects such as Parental Child Abduction, Adult Mental Health and Search and Rescue.

The finer details are now being finalised, but this three day event promises to be an interesting and valuable experience for all who attend. We're even going to be tweeting updates before and during the conference! Join us on Twitter at #Missing2013.

'Save the date' flyers have been circulated and reservations will soon be taken. Details will be posted on our POLKA community and on our website at <http://missingpersons.police.uk>. For further information, please contact us at [missingpersons bureau@npia.pnn.police.uk](mailto:missingpersons bureau@npia.pnn.police.uk).

### **Assistance with international cases**

As the International Point of Contact in the UK for missing person and unidentified body cases, the Bureau regularly receives case notifications from overseas police forces, via Interpol. These include bodies located in other countries where a UK connection is suspected, or foreign nationals who have gone missing and are suspected to have left their home country, possibly travelling to the UK.

One such notification recently came through to the Bureau from Sweden. Police were trying to identify a man who was found in the province of Varmland, in western Sweden. The male was alive, if a little cold and wet, but was unable to identify himself. He consented to having his fingerprints taken, which were checked against police records in Sweden. When this check failed to identify the man, the case was referred to Interpol, which then forwarded it on to the Bureau.

As Interpol had sent a copy of the fingerprints, we were able to forward these to a colleague in the National Fingerprint Office (NFO). Checks against two national databases revealed an identity for the man, a Bangladeshi national who had visited the UK previously. The police in Sweden were quickly updated with the man's identity through Interpol and they were able to give him the help he needed.

In addition to our links with Interpol, we also have a network of contacts known as the North Sea Group (NSG). Members of the NSG include representatives from maritime police units in France, Belgium, The Netherlands and

Denmark. We regularly exchange details with the NSG, particularly where there is a risk that a missing person has entered the North Sea or the English Channel and may be located in the territorial waters of one of the member countries. Information is also exchanged in cases where an unidentified body is recovered from the North Sea and the English Channel.

As a result of this partnership, we've been able to assist with the location of several missing persons who entered the sea from the coastal areas surrounding the North Sea and English Channel. Whilst such outcomes are always upsetting and traumatic for the family involved, we can at least help to enable them to bring their loved one home.

### **Weatherfield Parental Child Abduction**

Popular ITV soap *Coronation Street* has recently run a storyline based on Parental Child Abduction. Whilst the abduction itself was quickly brought to a conclusion, with the child returned to her mother before the father could take her abroad, the story has raised the important issue of Parental Responsibility and parental rights in general.

A mother automatically gains Parental Responsibility at the birth of the child. A father gains it if he's married to the mother at the time of the birth or, if not married, if he's named on the birth certificate (for births after December 2003) at the time the birth is registered. He can also gain Parental Responsibility through a number of court orders or agreements.

Under the Child Abduction Act 1984, an offence is committed if a child is removed from the UK without the permission of all persons with Parental Responsibility for them.

Police officers and staff can access a range of resources on the subject from our POLKA community. Other readers can find more information from our website at <http://missingpersons.police.uk> or from <http://www.reunite.org/>.

#### **Contact us:**

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<https://polka.pnn.police.uk>



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