

Northumbria Police Hostel policy

A missing person report to Northumbria Police is not always an effective way to safeguard all adults with vulnerabilities.

Some hostels and supported living accommodation have a policy in place to report a resident as missing if they leave the accommodation without informing staff beforehand or if they do not return within a specified time. Often these individuals have mental health issues, neurodiverse needs, alcohol or drug addictions or other vulnerabilities such as being previously homeless. These individuals have a right to leave the accommodation even if they are exposed to increased risk by doing so.

Northumbria police have no power to intervene and can simply locate the individual to convince the person to return to the hostel or to the supported living accommodation. Our response in these circumstances is to check that at that particular moment in time the person is fit and well and to create an Adult Concern Notification which is then triaged within the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH).

There is fundamentally no difference in the police duty towards an individual who has been reported missing by a hostel and our duty towards all other vulnerable people who have not been reported missing by anyone. If we come across a vulnerable person whilst on patrol, or whilst dealing with an incident, we will refer the person to support agencies as appropriate, but there is no duty to actively search for vulnerable people who have made the decision to leave supported accommodation, no matter how unwise that decision may be.

In seeking to find the balance between protecting vulnerable adults and respecting an adult's Article 8 right to respect for their private and family life, when a hostel or supported living accommodation report an individual as missing to the police, the Risk Management Desk (RMD) can authorise the incident log to be closed if the following criteria apply:

- 1) The matter has been reported as a matter of routine or policy and not because the reporting person has specific critical concerns that would justify a belief that the person has been a victim of a serious crime, or has suffered, or is likely to suffer, death or serious harm.
- 2) The missing person is an adult.

- 3) The missing person is capable of independent living and is only being provided with accommodation.
- 4) The circumstances suggest that the person has decided to leave their current accommodation.
- 5) There are no reasonable grounds to believe the individual at this time is a victim of exploitation or domestic abuse and has been pressurised or coerced to leave.
- 6) There are no suspicious circumstances.
- 7) The behaviour is not out of character as the individual has a transient lifestyle.
- 8) Whilst the individual may have some vulnerabilities (e.g. drug or alcohol addiction or mental health issues), they are not such that the police would have power to intervene under the Mental Health Act or the Mental Capacity Act.

If a decision is made to close the Storm log under this policy, the RMD must record the rationale for their decision on the Storm log using the National Decision Model. In making this assessment all available information should be considered, including a thorough check of Northumbria Police systems.

If the incident falls outside of the above criteria:

- The incident should be dealt with under the Missing Person Policy.
- The RMD must make it clear to the reporting agency that Northumbria Police intend to take no action unless the situation changes.
- The reporting agency should be advised that if further information is received which changes the risk assessment then the incident is to be reviewed by them and reported where required.
- The RMD should make an entry on the person's IS record signposting to the Storm log for any future audit purposes.



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