



Home Office

Identifying people at risk (enforcement)

Version 2.0

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About this guidance

This guidance tells Immigration Enforcement officers about some of the vulnerable or “at risk” people you may encounter. It provides some advice on how to identify if a person may be a victim of exploitation and/or abuse of various types but this guidance is not intended to be a comprehensive guide. Further links are provided where guidance that is more detailed exists. It also deals with the actions you must take, the agencies and teams you may need to involve and how to find more information.

Contacts

If you have any questions about the guidance and your line manager or senior caseworker cannot help you or you think that the guidance has factual errors then email Enforcement Policy.

If you notice any formatting errors in this guidance (broken links, spelling mistakes and so on) or have any comments about the layout or navigability of the guidance then you can email the Guidance Rules and Forms team.

Clearance and publication

Below is information on when this version of the guidance was cleared:

- version **2.0**
- published for Home Office staff on **22 May 2019**

Changes from last version of this guidance

- minor housekeeping – broken links fixed
- changes reflect a change to contact details and a slight change to the paragraph regarding the NRM process

Related content

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Identifying people at risk

This page gives advice to Immigration Enforcement officers who may encounter people at risk during operational visits and provides information about the various types of risk that may be suspected or identified. It also provides information about where to find more detailed guidance and advice.

All officers must try to strike the right balance between protecting the vulnerable and ensuring the maintenance of legitimate immigration control.

As part of the operational planning process, an assessment should have been conducted of the available information, prior to any visit being undertaken with a view to considering whether detention was a likely outcome.

Where an individual is assessed as being at risk, or self-notifies that they believe themselves to be at risk, there is a policy presumption that they will not be detained. However, an assessment must be conducted to determine whether it is right to set aside that presumption because of other overriding factors. Details of how to conduct this assessment and the factors to be taken into account is found in Immigration Enforcement: general instructions.

An individual may be regarded as being an adult at risk if they fall within the categories of those described in this guidance. In addition, they will be considered to be potentially an adult at risk and subject to the assessment described above if:

- they declare that they are suffering from a condition, or have experienced a traumatic event, that would be likely to render them particularly vulnerable to harm if they are placed in detention or remain in detention
- those considering or reviewing detention are aware of medical or other professional evidence which indicates that an individual is suffering from a condition, or has experienced a traumatic event, that would be likely to render them particularly vulnerable to harm if they are placed in detention or remain in detention – whether or not the individual has highlighted this themselves

Related content

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Modern slavery

This page gives Immigration Enforcement officers an overview of their responsibilities when identifying and processing victims of modern slavery. Modern Slavery is a term used to encompass all aspects of slavery and trafficking and includes servitude, and forced or compulsory labour.

Guidance associated with modern slavery

You must read the modern slavery section of this guidance, in conjunction with general guidance and further information, relevant to your region, as listed below:

- UK:
 - [National Referral Mechanism: guidance for child first responders](#)
 - Victims of modern slavery: guidance to frontline staff
 - Victims of modern slavery: competent authority guidance
- England and Wales:
 - National Referral Mechanism for adults – England and Wales
 - National Referral Mechanism– child – England and Wales
- Scotland and Northern Ireland:
 - National Referral Mechanism for adults – Scotland and Northern Ireland
- Scotland:
 - [National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland](#)
 - [Safeguarding children in Scotland who may be trafficked](#) issued by the Scottish Government
- Northern Ireland:
 - [‘Working Arrangements for the Welfare and Safeguarding of Child Victims of Human Trafficking’](#) - this guidance details the procedures to be taken when a child is a victim or suspected victim of child trafficking, and was issued jointly by The Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety and The Police Service for Northern Ireland in February 2011

For information on supporting victims of human trafficking in Scotland and Northern Ireland see

- Victims of modern slavery: guidance to frontline staff
- Victims of modern slavery: competent authority guidance

For more guidance on human trafficking and links to National Referral Mechanism referral forms see Victims of modern slavery: guidance to frontline staff.

National Referral Mechanism (NRM) and The Single Competent Authority

The National Referral Mechanism (NRM) is a victim identification and support process. The NRM is designed to make it easier for all agencies that could be involved in a trafficking case (e.g. the police, UK Visas and Immigration, local authorities, non-governmental organisations) to share information about potential victims and facilitate their access to advice, accommodation and support. As part of the National Referral Mechanism Reform Programme, the Home Office launched the new Single Competent Authority (SCA) on 29 April 2019. From this date, the SCA became responsible for all NRM decisions regardless of an individual's nationality or immigration status.

This expert case working unit sits in the Home Office, and replaced the competent authorities previously located in UK Visas & Immigration, Immigration Enforcement and the National Crime Agency. This change creates a single process for all NRM referrals.

To contact the SCA or make an NRM referral, please:

email: National Referral Mechanism

or call: 020 7035 5689.

For further information, please refer to: Victims of modern slavery: competent authority guidance

Referring victims of modern slavery

Referrals into the NRM must be for all potential victims of trafficking and modern slavery, who can be of any nationality, and may include British national children.

National Referral Mechanism (NRM) referral form

If you identify a potential victim of modern slavery, you, as the first responder, must refer them to the NRM to be considered by the Single Competent Authority. You must refer them to the Single Competent Authority by completing a [NRM referral form](#).

Before you make a referral, adult victims must give their consent. If the potential victim of trafficking (PVOT) is a child (under 18), the child's consent to be referred into the NRM is not required.

Official – sensitive: start of section

The information in this section has been removed as it is restricted for internal Home Office use.

Official – sensitive: end of section

First responders will need to capture as much information about the individual and their circumstances as possible on the referral form. You must then complete the NRM referral form. Guidance on completing the form is contained within it.

Indicators of modern slavery

Indicators assist officers (who are considered the first responder (FR)) in making a primary assessment of whether the individuals encountered are, or may be, a PVOT. Indicators highlight a potential situation to the FR who can then dig deeper to investigate what has happened.

It is not the case that a set number of indicators equate to a person being a victim; it could be just one or a combination of indicators that demonstrate that the person may be a victim. You should consider each case on its own merits. This is not an exhaustive or definitive list, for which see: Victims of modern slavery: guidance to frontline staff but highlights the more common indicators:

- found in, or connected to, a type of location likely to be used for exploitation
- distrust of authorities
- expression of fear or anxiety
- depression (lack of interest, hopelessness, suicidal)
- hostility (annoyed and irritated easily, temper outbursts)
- acting as if instructed by another
- passport or documents held by someone else
- perception of being bonded by debt
- being placed in a dependency situation
- threat of being handed over to authorities
- threats against the individual or their family members
- injuries apparently a result of assault or controlling measures
- evidence of control over movement, either as an individual or as a group
- limited social contact
- lack of access to medical care
- no or limited access to bathroom and/or hygiene facilities
- claims to be older than their actual age, if you suspect that an individual may be a child (less than 18 years of age) you must contact Social Services immediately
- a child within a family has a different immigration status (or lack thereof) compared to other children in the family
- child makes repeated trips in and out of the UK, missing school

Handling possible victims of modern slavery

You must take the potential victim to a secure environment (away from any potential traffickers or other potential victims) and inform them of their right to:

- independent emotional and practical help
- protection
- assistance to allow their rights and interests to be presented and considered at appropriate stages of criminal proceedings against offenders

There is more information on interviewing possible victims of modern slavery in the 'Enforcement interviews' guidance.

Under the NRM, the person may also be entitled to:

- temporary safe accommodation
- medical treatment
- help coping with their experience
- an interpreter (or translator services)
- help finding independent legal advice

Overseas Domestic Workers (ODWs)

See also:

- Guidance on domestic workers who are the victims of modern slavery or trafficking
- Guidance on enforcement action against ODWs

Indicators of domestic servitude

Indicators of domestic servitude:

- living with, and working for, a family in a private home
- not eating with the rest of the family or being given only leftovers to eat
- no proper sleeping place or sleeping in shared space, for example the living room
- no private space
- forced to work in excess of normal working hours or being 'on-call' 24 hours a day
- employer reports them as a missing person
- employer accuses person of theft or other crime related to the escape
- never leaving the house without employer

Related content

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Safeguarding children

This page tells Immigration Enforcement officers how to deal with any child encountered during an enforcement operation.

Children: definition and safeguarding responsibilities

Under article 1 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, a child is anyone under the age of 18 unless majority is attained earlier under the law applicable to the child.

There is no single law that defines the age of a child across the UK. England, Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland each have their own legislation setting out the duties and responsibilities of organisations to keep children safe. However, they all agree that a child is anyone who has not yet reached their 18th birthday. Additionally, in Scotland, a young person between the age of 16 and 18 may be viewed as both a child and an adult dependent on whether they are still subject to a supervision requirement or require intervention to protect them and as such would be treated as an adult with care and support needs.

Consequently, for the purposes of this guidance a 'child' is a child or young person under 18 years of age. The children who may be encountered are likely to fall into one of the following groups:

- a child looked after by a local authority
- a child in the care of one or both of their parents, a family member or non-family private foster care
- the dependent child of a FNO, these dependants could be British Citizens or have extant leave

[Section 55 of the Borders, Citizenship, and Immigration Act 2009](#) places a duty on the Secretary of State to make arrangements for ensuring that immigration, asylum, and nationality functions are discharged having regard to the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children in the UK. The duty applies to our contractors as well as Home Office borders and immigration staff.

For more information about safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children see: [Statutory guidance – Every Child Matters](#)

Office of the Children's Champion

The Office of the Children's Champion (OCC) includes staff with social work experience and is available to provide specialist safeguarding and welfare advice to staff. This includes, but is not limited to, advice relating to applications from children, adult family members, family reunion applications, and proposals to separate family members. The OCC can also offer advice on other issues relating to children including family court proceedings and complex cases. If you need advice, please e-mail the Children's Champion inbox.

Encountering a child during a visit

See also: [Missing children found by Home Office staff](#)

Identifying the child

If you encounter a child, you must take all reasonable steps to ascertain their identity and who has parental responsibility for them. You must check the information provided against Home Office records to check the details are consistent with the records already held for them and to verify their immigration status.

A child must never be left alone in the premises when you are departing.

If there is someone who has parental responsibility for the child, but they are not at the address where the child is encountered, you must take all reasonable steps to find out who they are, where they are and when they will be back. You must not leave the child alone in the premises. It may be appropriate to liaise with the local police so they can reunite the child and the parent, and if necessary investigate the circumstances of the child being left alone.

In some cases, it may be appropriate to carry out a [Police National Computer \(PNC\) check](#). If a PNC check is conducted and the child has any known alias names, the same checks must also be conducted on those details. All alias names must also be fully recorded.

You must not ask a child to undergo a mobile fingerprint scan unless there is an appropriate adult present, who has given their consent for the check to be made. The definition of a person who must be present when a child is fingerprinted is found in [section 141 of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999](#). An immigration officer is not classed as an appropriate adult for the purposes of checking or taking fingerprints, or any other situation where the presence of an appropriate adult is needed, for example, interviewing.

For more information, see Identity management (enforcement).

If you put questions to the child and/or parent to find out their identity and parental responsibility and they refuse to answer them, you must fully record this in your personal notebook. You must fully evaluate the known or suspected risks and continue to gather and assess information as far as possible. Consider:

- contacting an interpreter if one is not on the visit
- explaining the consequences of not co-operating
- referring to other agencies

Making a safeguarding referral: children

See:

- Victims of modern slavery – frontline staff guidance
- [National Referral Mechanism: guidance for child first responders](#)

- [Referring victims of modern slavery](#)

Children: causes of concern

Missing children

See: [Child missing from their parents](#)

Child abuse

If you suspect that a child has or is being abused or neglected, they will be in need of protection. When there is a child protection concern, you must call the police and refer the circumstances to local social services immediately. This includes children who:

- may not be subject to immigration control
- are with their parents or someone who has parental responsibility for them

The welfare of the child must be ensured before any other form of action is taken.

If the child is subject to immigration control you may, as an exceptional measure, detain them under immigration powers for a short period while alternative arrangements are made for their care. However, it should be noted, there has to be an administrative immigration basis for that detention, such as the need to identify and/or document the child. Children cannot be accommodated at Immigration Removal Centres.

You may also come across children where there is no suspicion of abuse, but they are in a situation where they are in need of support. For example a child who has a disability or a child who provides care on their own to a parent with disabilities or chronic health problems. In such cases, you may refer both the child and the parent to children's services.

If none of the checks highlights any cause for concern, no further action need be taken in respect of the child.

For more guidance see:

- Guidance on referring children to welfare agencies
- [NSPCC guidance on identifying physical abuse or neglect](#)

Child trafficking and exploitation

Child trafficking works through personal and family networks, as well as through highly organised international criminal networks.

Traffickers specifically target impoverished communities to exploit their vulnerability. Poor and displaced families may entrust the care of their children to traffickers who promise to provide them with education or skills training, but ultimately exploit them for the purposes of prostitution, forced labour or irregular adoption.

Any child moved into a situation of exploitation, or for the purposes of exploitation, is considered to be a trafficking victim, whether they have been forced or deceived. This is because it is not considered possible for children to give informed consent. Even when a child understands what has happened, they may still appear to submit willingly to what they believe to be the will of their parents or accompanying adults. It is important to realise that parents and relatives may be involved in the exploitation of the child, and that children are likely to be very loyal to their parents or caregivers.

Do not expect that the child, on its own initiative, will ask for protection. Children who are in a trafficking situation are often extremely reticent with information, and often tell their stories with obvious errors, possibly because their stories are composed by others and learnt by rote.

Children are trafficked for a number of purposes, including:

- sexual exploitation through prostitution
- illegal adoption
- under-age forced marriage
- benefit fraud
- child labour, such as:
 - domestic servitude
 - work in sweatshops
- criminal work, such as:
 - begging
 - producing and selling drugs

A number of children arrive in the UK accompanied by adults who are either not related to them or in circumstances which raise child protection concerns. For example, there may be little evidence of any pre-existing relationship or even an absence of any knowledge of the sponsor. There may be unsatisfactory accommodation arranged in the UK, or perhaps no evidence of parental permission for the child to travel to the UK or stay with the sponsor. These irregularities may be the only indication that the child could be a victim of trafficking.

Children trafficked into the country may be registered at a school for a term or longer, before being moved to another part of the UK or abroad. This pattern of registration and de-registration may be an indicator that a child has been trafficked. It has been identified as a particular concern in schools that are situated near ports of entry, but you must be alert to this possibility in all schools.

If, having examined the available evidence and considered the indicators of trafficking, you have concerns, you should refer the child. Where things are not clear, always err on the side of caution and refer the case to the appropriate local authority children's services, (first by 'phone and then by referral form), or, if the child is in

immediate danger, by phoning the police. You should decide what risk of significant harm the child may need to be protected from, and which agency has the duty to do this.

For more guidance, see *Victims of trafficking: guidance for frontline staff*.

Private foster care arrangements

There is no provision in the Immigration Rules for a child to come to the UK in order to be privately fostered, so the child will enter the UK under one of the provisions in the Immigration Rules, such as a “visitor” or “student”. Private foster carers may be distant members of the extended family such as a cousin or great aunt, or may be a friend of the family or someone unknown to the family. A grandparent, brother, sister, uncle or aunt, whether of the full blood, half blood, or by marriage or civil partnership, will not be a private foster carer.

Note: In England, Wales and Northern Ireland, a child aged 16 or 17 will only be privately fostered if they have a disability. In Scotland, a child is only privately fostered if below the upper limit of the age for compulsory education.

Private foster carers, parents and others with parental responsibility are legally required to notify the local authority of their intention to set up a private fostering arrangement:

- in England and Wales: a minimum of 6 weeks in advance of a placement
- in Scotland and Northern Ireland: a minimum of 2 weeks in accordance with Reg 3 of the Foster Children (Private Fostering) (Scotland) Regulations 1985/1798

In some cases, families in the UK are not aware of these rules or are persuaded to ignore them.

It should be made clear that failing to notify the local authority (or, in Northern Ireland, the Health and Social Services Board), of a private fostering arrangement is an offence under section 70 (1) (Ai) of the Children Act 1989 and a written record of this warning should be recorded in your notebook.

In Scotland the offences relating to foster care arrangements are set out in section 15(1)(a) of the [Foster Children \(Scotland\) Act 1984](#).

In NI the offences are set out at article 117(1)(a) of the [Children \(Northern Ireland\) Order 1995](#).

Where you believe an arrangement may be a private fostering arrangement and are satisfied that the local authority has not been, or will not be notified, you should report the situation to the local authority in whose area the child will be living.

Related content

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People who are absent or missing

This page tells Immigration Enforcement officers the definitions of 'absent' and 'missing', the triggers indicating a child or [vulnerable adult](#) may be absent or missing and the required response.

Definitions of 'absent' and 'missing'

In line with the police, local authorities and other safeguarding agencies the action or response required will depend on the risk associated to the disappearance of the child or [vulnerable adult](#).

Absent or missing are the terms used to describe when a child or vulnerable adult fails to report, attend a pre-arranged interview or meeting or reside at a specified address.

Absent:

For the purpose of this guidance, a child or vulnerable adult is to be considered **absent** if they are not at a place where they are expected or required to be

The 'absent' category is for cases in which people are not presently where they are supposed to be, as detailed above.

You must not ignore an 'absent' person and, when a child or vulnerable adult is reported absent, you must take action within 24 hours to find them, as detailed below.

Missing:

A child or vulnerable adult is **missing** if their whereabouts cannot be established and where the circumstances are out of character or the context suggests the person may be subject of crime or at risk of harm to themselves or another.

Adults who are accommodated in residential care situations, or are day patients at hospital, including accident and emergency departments, can be vulnerable when missing. Their vulnerability may arise from age, infirmity, mental or physical health issues, being targeted for human trafficking exploitation or a combination of factors.

Vulnerable adults whose whereabouts are unknown can be treated as either a missing person or an absconder. An adult should be dealt with as a missing person based on the risk to, and the vulnerability of, the adult and whether they have capacity to make decisions regarding where they move.

When a child or vulnerable adult is missing as defined above a missing persons referral must be made immediately to the police, UK Missing Person Bureau and the local authority children's or adult services.

For further information on the non-compliance and absconder process, see Absconders and non-compliance guidance.

For further information on safeguarding children, see:

- Safeguarding children: advice from the Office of the Children's Champion
- Guidance on referring children to welfare agencies.

Responsible areas: contact points

Responsible officer: definition

For the purpose of this guidance, the responsible officer is the person who first identifies a trigger that a child or vulnerable adult is absent or may be missing. This officer makes initial enquiries to establish if that person is at risk or may be missing. If the person is missing, this officer informs an officer not below the grade of HEO or CIO, reports the person as missing, and informs the caseworker.

Caseworker: definition

For the purpose of this guidance, the caseworker is the officer who is progressing or managing the person's case when they are reported as missing. This officer is responsible for liaising with relevant parties once the missing referral has been made and when the person is found. Where a current caseworker cannot be identified, the Regional Safeguarding Coordinator carries out this role.

UK Missing Persons Bureau (MPB)

The [National Crime Agency \(NCA\) MPB](#) is the national and international point of contact for all missing person and unidentified body investigations. They provide support and advice to police forces in order to resolve cases and act as a hub for the exchange of information and expertise in this area. They also maintain the national database of missing and unidentified records.

Contact details:

Email: missingpersons bureau@nca.x.gsi.gov.uk

Telephone: 0845 000 5481

Fax: 01344 872 572

Command and control unit

The command and control unit (CCU) in Manchester are responsible for:

- being a central contact point for the police to notify the Home Office that a child or [vulnerable adult](#) has been reported missing or has been found
- notifying the caseworker and the National Absconder Tracing Team (NATT) that a child or vulnerable adult has been reported as missing or has been found

- updating the missing breach on the CID Restrictions screen to show that the child or vulnerable adult has been reported to the police as missing or has been found, following notification by the police
- updating the CID Notes screen with the details of the police officer and station dealing with the referral

Official – sensitive: start of section

The information in this section has been removed as it is restricted for internal Home Office use.

Official – sensitive: end of section

Evidence and enquiry unit

The evidence and enquiry unit (E and E) in Croydon are responsible for:

- being a central contact point for the local authorities to notify the Home Office that a child or vulnerable adult has been reported missing to the police or that a missing child or vulnerable adult has been found
- notifying the caseworker and NATT that a child or vulnerable adult has been reported as missing or has been found
- updating the CID Notes screen with the details of the local authority responsible for the child or vulnerable adult and the police officer and station dealing with the referral

Official – sensitive: start of section

The information in this section has been removed as it is restricted for internal Home Office use.

Official – sensitive: end of section

Police National Computer (PNC) Team

The PNC team in Liverpool are responsible for:

- being a central contact point for receiving copies of all Home Office missing children or vulnerable adult referrals to the police
- notifying NATT that the child or vulnerable adult has been reported as missing
- updating the CID Breaches screen to show that the child or vulnerable adult has been reported to the police as missing or has been found, following referral from Home Office staff

Official – sensitive: start of section

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Official – sensitive: end of section

National Absconder Tracing Team (NATT)

The National Absconder Tracing Team (NATT) in Manchester is responsible for:

- tracing adults who have not been reported missing to the police
- assisting the police to trace missing children or vulnerable adults if requested to do so
- updating the missing breach on the CID Restrictions screen to show that the child or vulnerable adult has been reported to the police as missing or has been found, following notification to E&E by a local authority

Official – sensitive: start of section

The information in this section has been removed as it is restricted for internal Home Office use.

Official – sensitive: end of section

National Crime Agency (NCA) Child Exploitation and Online Protection (CEOP) Command

The [NCA CEOP Command](#) (formerly the Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre) works with child protection partners across the UK and overseas to identify the main threats to children and coordinates activity against these threats to bring offenders to account. They protect children from harm online and offline, directly through NCA led operations and in partnership with local and international agencies.

Official – sensitive: start of section

The information in this section has been removed as it is restricted for internal Home Office use.

Official – sensitive: end of section

Identifying that a person is absent or missing

Triggers indicating a child or vulnerable adult may be absent or missing

There are a number of triggers that would indicate whether a child or [vulnerable adult](#) is absent or may be missing. On their own they are not sufficient to establish that a child or vulnerable adult is missing and needs to be reported to the police and local authority as such.

The following is a non-exhaustive list of such triggers:

- the parent or family member with care of a child (and who usually brings their child to the reporting centre (RC) for child care purposes) fails to attend a physical reporting event
- the parent or family member with care of a child (and who usually brings their child to the RC for childcare purposes) fails to attend an arranged, invited, interview
- a vulnerable adult fails to attend a physical reporting event
- a vulnerable adult fails to attend an arranged, invited, interview
- a child or vulnerable adult fails to reside at a specified address
- the parent or family member with care of a child fails to reside at a specified address
- a child who has been allocated a school place fails to attend school
- a child or vulnerable adult is not at the specified address when a compliance or welfare visit is made
- a child, having reached the age of 17½ years, fails to report to a physical reporting event or attend an arranged interview
- a member of the public or the parent or family member makes a disclosure, either in writing or verbally (telephone or interview), that the whereabouts of a child is unknown
- the Home Office is notified by the police, local authority, National Health Service, education services or other government agency that a child or vulnerable adult is, or may be, missing or there are concerns for their safety
- the Home Office is notified by the asylum support accommodation provider that the family, child or vulnerable adult has unofficially left the address
- a family, as defined by the family returns process (FRP), fails to bring a child to an invited contact management meeting after being specifically asked to do so without a genuine reason, such as the child being at school, with friends, unwell or attending a religious ceremony:
 - where there is any doubt about whether the reason for the child's non attendance is genuine, enquiries must be made to establish that the child is safe and well
- one or both parents reports for removal at port without the child, who also has removal directions for the same flight, and the whereabouts of the child is unknown

As the responsible officer, you are the initial responsible officer and, as such, you must make further enquires to establish if a child or vulnerable adult is at risk or may be missing. You must carry out those enquiries as soon as possible and in any case **within 24 hours**. See: [Initial enquiries](#)

When setting reporting restrictions or inviting for an interview, you must remind individuals of the importance of keeping in contact with the Home Office and notifying any changes that will affect their attendance.

Child or vulnerable adult missing from their parents or a family member

Children subject to immigration controls who are out of touch with the authorities are at risk of harm from many sources. Missing children may be [victims of trafficking](#). Children may be persuaded or coerced into abusing the asylum system by applying on or after arrival in the U.K. Even if they are referred to children's services, they may later abscond or may be abducted by their traffickers. Remember that the children may be entirely persuaded that the trafficker is acting in their best interest and may be unaware that they are being, or have been brought to the U.K. to be exploited. Immigration Enforcement staff should be aware of these risks and if they have any concerns about a particular child, should contact children's services or the police by phone, without delay.

As stated in the section - [Triggers indicating a child or vulnerable adult may be absent or missing](#) - there are a number of triggers that will give rise to the concern that an accompanied child or [vulnerable adult](#) in the care of one or both parents or a family member is absent or has gone missing.

Initial enquiries

As the responsible officer who identified the trigger, you must make the following enquiries to decide if the child or vulnerable adult is missing and/or there are concerns for their safety:

- conduct a full CID check including Notes and Person Notes screens to establish if:
 - there is already an explanation for the person not residing at the specified address or for not attending the pre-arranged interview or meeting
 - action has already been taken to find them or report them as missing to the police and local authority
- if on checking CID, there is no explanation for the person's failure to reside at the specified address or attend a pre-arranged meeting or interview, you must contact the child's or vulnerable adult's parents, family, carers, accommodation providers and legal representatives by telephone to locate the person's whereabouts and establish their safety
- if the child is attending school or college, you must notify the school or college child protection officer:

- if the child is actually in school or college, you must ask the school or college child protection officer to speak to the child to confirm the address they are living at
- if unable to contact the person's parents, carers, accommodation provider, legal representative or school or college child protection officer or, if after making those enquiries, you are unable to confirm the whereabouts of the person and that they are safe and well, arrange for a home visit to be made to their specified address or other address they may be at, you must do this as soon as possible and must be within 24 hours:
 - in cases where the trigger is a failure to report, the reporting centre (RC) will arrange the home visit
 - in all other cases arrange a home visit by contacting the immigration compliance and enforcement (ICE) team assistant director or duty manager
- if a home visit to the address cannot be undertaken, or you consider that to delay making a missing persons referral to the police, based on the circumstances of the case, would put the child or vulnerable adult at risk, record the reasons why on CID Notes and Person Notes screens and a missing person notification form which must be endorsed by a higher executive officer (HEO) or chief immigration officer (CIO), or above
- if the child or vulnerable adult is not at the specified address when the compliance or welfare visit is made, the officers conducting the home visit must make enquiries with their family, other occupants or neighbours to ascertain their whereabouts and that they are safe and well
- if it is believed that a child or vulnerable adult is being coerced to abscond or go missing, this must be reported as a child protection issue with the local police and children's services
- if a disclosure that a child or vulnerable adult is missing is made during an interview, you must ask sufficient questions to establish the connection between the person being interviewed and the child or vulnerable adult and the circumstances of them being missing or other concerns for their safety, you must then make enquiries as outlined above
- if a child or vulnerable adult is no longer residing with their parents or guardians and there are genuine reasons why that person is now residing with another family member, you must amend their IS.96 and update CID to reflect this

The above list is not exhaustive and you must make all reasonable enquiries to locate the child or vulnerable adult before reporting them missing to the local police.

If there is any dispute over the child's age see: Age dispute cases: individuals claiming to be under 18 and Identity management: age dispute.

You must record all enquiries made on CID Notes and Person Notes screens as soon as possible and must be within 24 hours.

Actions following a decision that a child or vulnerable adult is missing

In line with the police, local authorities and other safeguarding agencies the action or response required will depend on the risk associated to the child or vulnerable adult's disappearance.

As soon as there is sufficient information to make a decision that a child or vulnerable adult is missing, or there are concerns for their safety, you must inform an officer, not below the grade of HEO or CIO, and immediately report the person as missing to the local police and local social services:

- complete and save the IS.294 missing persons notification form on CID DocGen
- report the child or vulnerable adult as missing to the local police and provide them with a copy of the missing persons notification
- fax or email a copy of the missing persons notification to the local authority duty desk and the UK Missing Persons Bureau
- email the caseworker and Home Office Police National Computer (PNC) team to tell them that the child or vulnerable adult had been reported missing to the police and local authority, include their:
 - full name
 - date of birth
 - Home Office or port reference number
 - police station and local authority the report was made to
- make a full record on CID Notes and Person Notes screens of the action taken to locate the person and details of the police officer and police station the missing person report was made to

On receipt of the email notification, the PNC team must:

- update CID Restrictions and Special Conditions screens to show that the child or vulnerable adult has been reported to the police as missing
- notify the National Absconder Tracing Team (NATT) that the person has been reported missing to the local police

On receipt of the email notification, NATT must:

- update CID Breaches screen to show that the child has been reported to the police as missing

The caseworker must:

- maintain a mutually agreed upon level of contact with the local authority and the police until the child is found
- make sure that the PNC team are notified when child is found
- record all contact with the police and local authority on the CID Notes and Person Notes screens

Child or vulnerable adult missing as part of a family unit

An accompanied child or [vulnerable adult](#) who goes missing with their parent or a family member will not routinely be referred to the local police and the National Crime Agency (NCA) UK Missing Persons Bureau (MPB) as missing in their own right unless there are or were concerns about the child's safety or welfare prior to the parent or family member absconding.

This does not negate the responsible officer's requirement to conduct the enquiries and checks as detailed above.

Any children who go missing with one or both parent or a family member where no safeguarding concerns exist should be included on the IS.274 absconder notification of the parent or family member who has absconded in line with the Absconders and non-compliance guidance. A separate IS.294 for each child is not required for such cases.

In these circumstances, you must add each child's or vulnerable adult's details to the main applicant's IS.274 absconder referral form at 'stage 6; May be accompanied by'.

Following receipt of the IS.274, the National Absconder Tracing Team will trace the family.

Child or vulnerable adult accommodated by the local authority or in hospital

It is the responsibility of the local authority or NHS, in accordance with their own procedures, to conduct any enquiries necessary to locate the child or [vulnerable adult](#), or report the person as missing to the local police. The local authority will also notify the Home Office evidence and enquiry unit (E and E) when a child or vulnerable adult in their care goes missing, or when a missing child or vulnerable adult returns or is found.

On receipt of notification from the local authority, E and E must:

- confirm with the local social services or NHS and police that the child or vulnerable adult has been reported missing:
 - if the person has not been reported missing to the police, you must complete the IS.294 missing persons notification form on CID DocGen, based on the information provided by the local services and make a missing persons referral to the local police
- update CID Restrictions screen and Special Conditions screen to show that the child or vulnerable adult has been reported to the police as missing
- make a full record on CID Notes and Person Notes screens of the child's social worker, local authority contact details and the details of the police officer and station the child or vulnerable adult was reported missing to
- email the caseworker and the National Absconder Tracing Team (NATT) to notify them that the adult with care and support needs has been reported

missing to the local police

On receipt of the email notification, NATT must:

- update CID Breaches screen to show that the person has been reported to the police as missing

The caseworker must:

- maintain a mutually agreed upon level of contact with the local authority and the police until the person is found
- notify the Police National Computer (PNC) team when the person is found
- record all contact with the police and local authority on the CID Notes and Person Notes screen

When a missing child or vulnerable adult is found

Child or vulnerable adult found by Home Office staff

Home Office staff may encounter a missing child or [vulnerable adult](#) because of an enforcement operation, a compliance visit, family or welfare visit or at a port of entry.

You may identify a missing child or vulnerable adult as such by checking the Police National Computer (PNC), CID and/or by questioning.

Official – sensitive: start of section

The information in this section has been removed as it is restricted for internal Home Office use.

Official – sensitive: end of section

In these circumstances, the safety and wellbeing of the child or adult with care and support needs is the primary consideration and the local police and local authority must be informed immediately.

In consultation with the local police and local authority, a decision will be made as to where the child or vulnerable adult is to be taken if they are not to be left at the address where they are encountered.

Home Office staff encountering the missing child or vulnerable adult must:

- make sure that the child or vulnerable adult is safe and well and attend to any medical needs
- inform an officer not below chief immigration officer (CIO) or higher executive officer (HEO) that a missing child or vulnerable adult has been found
- inform the police and local authority that a missing child or vulnerable adult has been found
- in consultation with the police, local authority and CIO or HEO, arrange for the child or adult with care and support needs' to be taken to a place of safety

- notify the caseworker and the National Absconder Tracing Team (NATT) that the missing child or vulnerable adult has been found and the police have been informed
- make a full record on the CID Person Notes screen of the circumstances of the encounter, action taken and location to where the missing child or vulnerable adult was taken

On receipt of the email notification, NATT must close the missing child or vulnerable adult restriction breach on the CID Breaches screen to show that the missing child or vulnerable adult has been found.

The caseworker must:

- follow up enquiries with the local police and children or adult services in order to identify if there are any safeguarding issues the Home Office must be aware of
- create a record of those arrangements on the CID Person Notes screen

Child or vulnerable adult found by the police or local authority

The Home Office Command and Control Unit (CCU) will be the single point of contact for the local police and Evidence and Enquiry (E and E) team will be the single point of contact for the local authorities to notify the Home Office that a child or adult with care and support needs has been found.

Official – sensitive: start of section

The information in this section has been removed as it is restricted for internal Home Office use.

Official – sensitive: end of section

CCU and E and E must then:

- create a full record on CID Person Notes screen of the circumstances in which the child or vulnerable adult was found, any safeguarding arrangements put in place and the location they were taken to
- inform the caseworker and NATT that a missing child or vulnerable adult has been found, NATT will then close the missing child or vulnerable adult restriction breach on the CID Breaches screen

The caseworker must:

- follow up enquires with the local police and children or adult services in order to identify if there are any safeguarding issues the Home Office should be aware of
- create a record of those arrangements on the CID Person Notes screen

Related content

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Referring vulnerable people

This page tells Immigration Enforcement officers their responsibility and action required when making initial referrals of a child or vulnerable adult who is considered to be at risk to local authorities.

Adults at risk: definition

For the purposes of this guidance, an adult at risk, also known as an adult with care and support needs, is a person 18 years of age or over who is, or may be, in need of community care services by reason of mental or other disability, age or illness; and who is, or may be, unable to take care of him or herself, or unable to protect him or herself against significant harm or exploitation, or where there is a risk of self harm or suicide, or is a victim of trafficking.

Whilst in most cases the child or vulnerable adult at risk would be expected to be a foreign national, the circumstance may arise when that person is a British or European Union (EU) national and therefore would not have a record on CID. It will still be appropriate to make health and social services aware of any perceived risks to the person concerned in such a situation.

For detailed guidance on when and how to make a referral regarding children is available see referring children to welfare agencies.

For information on how and when to make a referral regarding at-risk children and adults is available, see referral to health and social services agencies and managing individual cases.

Identifying welfare issues and operational risks

Any contact with families or children undertaken by the Home Office is an opportunity to obtain and update any welfare issues and identify possible operational risks.

Home Office staff must use risk assessments (RAs) and may also use safe systems of working (SSoW) as supplementary tools to identify and control any identified issues or risks to themselves (and others) in carrying out their tasks. Individual responsibility and accountability for ensuring that risks are managed effectively during operations remains with the officer in charge (OIC) and enforcement managers.

If there are significant concerns about the welfare of an individual, or information suggesting that an individual is vulnerable or at risk of significant harm (through health, disability, a propensity to self-harm, or any other factor) this must be clearly noted on CID Special Conditions screen and a timely referral must be made to local children's or adult social services.

Where there are safeguarding concerns about a child, make the notification immediately by telephone, followed up with the Office of the Children's Champion (OCC) child referral form. This ensures an immediate referral with the benefit of the officer being able to seek advice on what to include on the form, if needed. Written or e-confirmation of social services receipt of the notification must also be obtained.

The Home Office network of local safeguarding co-ordinators (and the OCC where children are involved) can provide advice to caseworkers, on liaising with local authorities.

Involvement with local safeguarding boards or equivalents

Information sharing between local agencies dealing with children is enabled by:

- Local Safeguarding Children Boards (LSCBs) in England and Wales
- Child Protection Committees in Scotland
- Area Child Protection Committees in Northern Ireland

Home Office staff working in Scotland must refer to the [Scottish Children's Charter](#), which sets out how to protect children and young people from harm.

Although not required to attend by law, the Home Office uses these forums to provide opportunities to ensure immigration legislation, rules and processes are understood; facilitate appropriate information sharing with the Home Office; and proactively resolve any difficulties with particular agencies.

Should you be requested by LSCBs or their equivalents to provide information for serious case reviews, or similar reviews, refer to the current process in the serious case review (SCR) guidance.

For guidance on referring vulnerable adults, see [Suicide and self harm: Links with local agencies](#) and for referring children see [Keeping children safe guidance](#).

For the Home Office safeguarding co-ordinator network, requesting information from local child welfare agencies, and for referral forms, see [Safeguarding children: advice from the Office of the Children's Champion](#).

Related content

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Honour-based violence

This page tells Immigration Enforcement officers about 'honour-based' violence, forced marriage and female genital mutilation.

So-called 'honour-based' violence is an umbrella term, which encompasses crimes that have been committed to protect or defend the honour of the family and/or the community.

Forced marriage

Forcing someone to marry is a criminal offence in England and Wales and carries a maximum penalty of **seven years' imprisonment**.

A forced marriage is a marriage in which one or both spouses do not (or, in the case of some adults who do not have the necessary mental capacity, cannot) consent to the marriage and violence, threats or any other form of coercion is involved. Coercion may include emotional force, physical force or the threat of physical force and financial pressure. In an arranged marriage, both parties have consented to the union and can refuse to marry if they choose to.

The Forced Marriage Unit (FMU) can offer advice to frontline staff handling cases of forced marriage at any stage in a case. The FMU offers further information and advice on the wide range of tools available to tackle forced marriage, including legal remedies, overseas assistance and how to approach victims.

Telephone: 020 7008 0151 (Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm)

Email: fm@fco.gov.uk

Web: [Forced marriage - Detailed guidance](#)

For all out of hours emergencies, telephone 020 7008 1500 and ask to speak to the Global Response Centre.

Female genital mutilation (FGM)

The mandatory reporting of FGM came into force on 31 October 2015 through the Serious Crime Act 2015. The Act's provisions mean that health and social care professionals and teachers in England and Wales must report cases of FGM in under 18-year-olds to the police (it does not apply where a woman aged 18 or over discloses that she had FGM when she was under 18. The duty is also limited to 'known' cases that are identified by a professional or disclosed by the victim). More information on this duty can be found on [GOV.UK](#).

The mandatory reporting of FGM does not apply to case-working staff but you still have a [safeguarding](#) responsibility. As stated above, you should immediately make a safeguarding referral where you identify that a child has been, or is at risk of being, subjected to FGM.

The [OCC](#) can advise if required. Any general enquiries (non-urgent or non-operational) about FGM can also be addressed to: FGM Enquiries.

See also: [Safeguarding children](#)

Related content

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Sexual exploitation and vice

This page tells Immigration Enforcement officers how to identify sexual exploitation and vice.

Indicators of sexual exploitation include:

- advertises for sexual services offering individuals from particular ethnic or national groups
- sleeping on work premises
- movement of individuals between brothels or working in alternate locations
- individuals with very limited amounts of clothing or a large proportion of their clothing is 'sexual'
- only being able to speak sexual words in local language or language of client group
- having tattoos or other marks indicating 'ownership' by their exploiters
- person forced, intimidated or coerced into providing services of a sexual nature
- person subjected to crimes such as abduction, assault or rape
- someone other than the potential victim receives the money from clients
- health symptoms (including sexual health issues)
- signs of ritual abuse and witchcraft (juju)
- substance misuse

This list is not exhaustive.

Related content

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