

Specific missing persons investigations (appendix)

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This section provides additional information to aid the investigation, based on the vulnerability of the individual and the circumstances in which they are missing.

Missing children

Safeguarding young and vulnerable people is a responsibility of the police service and partner agencies (go to [Children Act 2004](#)). When the police are notified that a child is missing, there is a clear responsibility on them to prevent the child from coming to harm.

Officers and staff must inform local children's services if the missing person is aged under 18 years, in accordance with local procedures. In high-risk cases, consideration should be made to notify them immediately if appropriate through the emergency duty team (EDT) if out of hours. Where appropriate, a strategy meeting may be held. For further information, go to [Local data sharing](#).

For further information on missing children, go to:

- [Child abuse APP](#)
- [Voice of the child](#)
- [Voice of the child practice briefing](#)
- [Section 11 of the Children Act 2004](#)
- [Department for Education: Statutory guidance on children who run away or go missing from home or care](#)
- [Children's views on being reported missing from care](#)

Information relevant to the child

When a missing person report relates to a looked-after child, forces should work with all the agencies and carers that have been in regular contact with the child. Agencies and carers may have information about the child that might help to locate them.

Forces should ensure close engagement with the carers when a child is missing from care. Officers should ask the care home or local authority for details of the child's risk assessment, so that it can be taken into account during the investigation. Many forces are using the [Philomena Protocol](#) to guide their actions in relation to relevant cases involving children.

A child, especially a teenager, is unlikely to share all information about their life with their parents or carers. Investigators should not overlook information from siblings, friends, associates, schoolteachers and others. The online activity of the child may also provide valuable additional information that parents and carers may not be aware of.

For further information, go to:

- [Children's views on being reported missing from care](#)
- [No place at home: Risks facing children and young people who go missing from out of area placements](#)

Out-of-area placements

When children placed out of their local authority go missing, the local authority and social services in the area within which they have been housed or placed most is responsible for following the local [Runaway and missing from home and care \(RMFHC\) statutory guidance](#). These services will also need to ensure that they comply with any relevant processes within the RMFHC policy of the local authority area within which the child originally lived. This authority is also known as the 'placing' or 'responsible' authority.

It is possible that the child will return to their home area. It is, therefore, essential that communication with the police and other professionals in that area is effectively managed and coordinated. This should prevent issues of logistics and/or distance delaying or interfering in the actions of planning to locate the child.

Initial enquiries must be completed to determine if the person is in the force area where they have gone missing or if they have returned to the placing force area. Professional experience has shown that many young people will gravitate towards their home area. It will often be best to transfer an investigation to the force where the child lived before the placement. There may also be reasons why this is not the best course of action – for example, if the child's family has moved to another area. The decision on which is the most appropriate force to investigate the case should be based

on the needs of the investigation.

For more information, go to [Cross-border cases](#).

Process to follow if young person from area A is placed in area B

- Missing person report taken by police force area B.
- Initial investigative actions and assessment of risk carried out by police area B.
- If significant factors relating to the investigation are centred in area B, the investigation will remain with force area B.
- The case should be transferred to area A if the investigation reveals that either:
 - there are no reasons why the missing person might have stayed in area B or suffered harm there
 - there are no other reasons to suggest that the child's connection with force area A has been broken

Accommodation and care considerations

Finding suitable emergency accommodation for children can be difficult. However, police stations are not appropriate places to accommodate children. Where a child or vulnerable adult is in care, there should be a risk assessment on the care setting (go to [Indication of exploitation or harm](#)).

For looked-after children, the local authority will be responsible for making the decision about whether they should be returned to their placement. In some instances, they will do that following consultation with police officers and other professionals (go to [Care planning on return](#)).

Children remanded to local authority accommodation

In a small number of cases, young people become looked-after children because they are subject to a remand to local authority accommodation (RLAA) by a youth court. Under [section 92 of the Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act 2012](#), where a court denies bail, a child may be subject to an RLAA or to youth detention accommodation. The child may be placed in secure accommodation or in a non-secure children's home or foster placement.

When a child who is subject to an RLAA goes missing, a risk assessment and appropriate action (in accordance with established procedures) must take place to:

- safeguard the individual's wellbeing
- ensure they are returned safely (go to the [Wanted and missing](#) section for additional information)

Expertise of officers and staff who deal with missing person enquiries may be helpful to find the missing child and should be considered at an early stage.

The investigating officer will need to liaise with an appropriate officer in the area's youth offending team.

Provision of services for children in need

The [Children Act 1989](#) places a duty on local authorities to promote and safeguard the welfare of children in need in their area.

[Section 17 of the Children Act 1989](#) states that it shall be the general duty of every local authority to provide a range of appropriate services to children in need. In some cases, emergency care placements may need to be used to cover the initial period following the return of the missing person. Each force should have an appointed lead officer for issues relating to safeguarding children.

For further guidance on the management and protection of children, go to:

- [APP on Concern for a child](#) (including [Police protection](#) and [Suitable accommodation](#))
- [Working together to safeguard children](#)
- [Welsh Assembly Government: Safeguarding Children: Working Together Under the Children Act 2004](#)
- [Child sexual abuse: Guidelines on prosecuting cases of child sexual abuse](#)

Migrant children

Incidents of migrant children (mainly unaccompanied asylum-seeking children) going missing from local authority care may be linked to serious crime, such as modern slavery or child sexual exploitation. These children can be extremely vulnerable and should normally be recorded as missing persons when their whereabouts are unknown.

Anyone under the age of 18 years (or who claims to be 18 years and who has not been age-assessed) must be treated as a child and child protection issues must take priority. Where the young person's physical appearance and demeanour very strongly suggest that the young person is significantly over 18 years of age, the police may decide to regard the young person as an adult.

For further guidance, go to:

- [National Police Chiefs' Council \(NPCC\) guidance to police forces on missing migrant children](#)
- [\(R \(BF \(Eritrea\)\) v Secretary of State for the Home Department \[2021\] UKSC 38\)](#)

Before a migrant is placed in a children care facility, one of the following must apply:

- a migrant will have provided evidence of their age
- a migrant will have undergone an age assessment and been found to be under the age of 18 years
- there is further investigation being undertaken as part of the age assessment process

Child protection issues take priority for anyone who is:

- under the age of 18 years
- being treated as under the age of 18 years while the age assessment is being carried out

If a young person is accompanied by an adult, consideration should be given to whether there is any cause for concern for the child's safety. Consideration should be given to the risk of returning migrant children into the care of adults who may be 'gang masters' or traffickers for serious and organised crime. Even if a child appears to be with the person willingly, they may still be being coerced.

In many cases, young people enter the country in possession of a mobile phone or a telephone number and use this to contact the traffickers who assisted their entry into the country. Although the young people may appear to be in the country willingly, they may often be brought here by deception or coercion. They may honestly believe that they have no other option but to comply. They may also have been led to believe that the UK authorities are their enemy and to view figures of authority with mistrust and suspicion.

When a potential victim of [modern slavery](#) is identified, it is essential that:

- special measures are put in place to ensure that the person is given the opportunity to engage with the authorities in this country
- the opportunities for them to go missing are minimised
- a [national referral mechanism \(NRM\)](#) referral is completed as soon as practicable

For further information, go to:

- [Department for Education: Care of unaccompanied and trafficked children ? Statutory guidance for local authorities on the care of unaccompanied asylum seeking and trafficked children](#)
- [Department for Education: Safeguarding children who may have been trafficked](#)
- [Department for Education: Statutory guidance on children who run away or go missing from home or care](#)
- [NPCC: Guidance to police forces on missing migrant children](#)

International child abduction

Taking a child abroad without the appropriate consent of the child's parents or the individual who has parental responsibility is a criminal offence under the [Child Abduction Act 1984](#). Prompt action and engagement with the relevant authorities is essential in such cases. Forces should be guided by the document [Parental child abduction: A brief guide to understanding, managing and responding to parental child abduction](#) (you will need to sign in to College Learn) when responding to and investigating such cases.

Advice and assistance when responding to cases where children may or have been taken or kept abroad in a [Hague Convention country](#) is available from:

- [Central Authority for the Hague: Convention on the civil aspects of international child abduction](#)
- [European Convention on recognition of enforcement of decisions concerning custody of children](#)

For further information, go to [Foreign and Commonwealth Office: International child abduction](#).

Central authority contacts for Hague Convention countries

The relevant central authority contact is:

- for England and Wales, the [International Child Abduction and Contact Unit \(ICACU\)](#)
- for Northern Ireland, the [Northern Ireland Courts and Tribunals Service](#)

Where children may or have been taken or kept abroad in a non-Hague Convention country, advice and assistance is available from the [Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office](#) (FCO).

Reunite

Reunite is an NGO that provides advice and support to families and the police in cases of international parental child abductions. Its advice line can be contacted on 0116 255 6234 or via their [website](#).

Missing adults

Adults can be vulnerable when missing. This includes:

- adults who are accommodated in residential care
- day patients at hospital
- adults experiencing personal problems, such as financial, mental health or relationship difficulties

Senior officers should ensure that protocols should be in place to support partnership working.

For further information, go to:

- [Adults at risk APP](#)
- [APP on Mental vulnerability and illness](#)
- [Multi-agency response for adults missing from health and care: Framework](#)

Missing from hospital emergency departments

It can be challenging to determine the level of risk to persons who go missing from emergency departments, particularly when assessing their medical needs. Where an individual has walked out of health and care settings, the [Right Care, Right Person \(RCRP\)](#) approach may be appropriate.

It is important that full details of the individual's medical conditions are obtained, to make the risk assessment and decide on actions to be undertaken. This includes the impact of not taking any medication. Where relevant, advice should be sought from qualified medical staff on:

- the likely outcomes of a vulnerable adult not receiving treatment
- their ability to look after themselves or to survive

The hospital has a duty to ensure the welfare of the individual. It should be expected to undertake reasonable enquiries to establish their whereabouts and wellbeing before reporting them missing to the police. Examples of reasonable enquiries include attempting to contact them at their home address and conducting a search of the hospital grounds. Where there is immediate risk of harm, police should not delay action to find the missing person. Officers should consider the level of risk and circumstances of the individual leaving the hospital emergency department.

- If the level of risk and circumstances warrant the home address being checked before taking any other search action, then [RCRP Walk out of healthcare setting policies](#) should be applied
- If the level of risk and circumstances warrants immediate police search enquiries to commence before the home address has been checked, officers should apply missing person policy. Examples of police search enquiries include co-ordinated area searches, urgent mobile phone checks, CCTV enquiries and automatic number plate recognition (ANPR) enquiries.

Incidents dealt with under RCRP policy may subsequently become missing person incidents if the person does not return home as expected.

Detained hospital patients that are absent without leave (AWOL)

[AWOL patients APP](#) provides guidance on the appropriate police response to reports concerning patients that are absent without leave from secure inpatient facilities.

Wanted and missing

There will be occasions when people may be reported as missing who are wanted in relation to a criminal investigation, such as:

- their suspected involvement in a criminal investigation

- an outstanding warrant issued by a court
- having absconded from lawful custody or care – being absent without leave (AWOL)
- having entered the country without appropriate authority (go to [Immigration cases](#))

Officers and staff should evaluate each case individually and adopt an approach that achieves the safest and most efficient resolution. For example:

- a person wanted for a minor offence but assessed as high-risk missing should be treated primarily as a missing person
- a low-risk missing person wanted for a serious offence may require a wanted-person approach

Where appropriate, a missing person report may be closed or marked as inactive while a wanted investigation continues. Forces should avoid duplicating investigations and records. Supervisors should consider and decide which response and [investigative approach](#) to take based on a risk assessment. This should be guided by the national decision model.

For further guidance, go to:

- [APP on AWOL patients](#)
- [National Police Chiefs' Council \(NPCC\): Advice to police forces on restricted patients under s37 and s41 Mental Health Act 1983 who abscond](#)
- [NPCC: Flow Chart for police forces on restricted patients under s37 and s41 Mental Health Act 1983 who abscond](#)

Suspicious missing person investigations

In many missing person cases, the reasons for disappearance cannot be readily established and various hypotheses must be investigated simultaneously. This may mean running a twin-track investigation, with one side focusing on the possibility that the missing person has become a victim of crime and the other focusing on alternative reasons for the disappearance. In such cases, or where this is being considered, advice is available from the [UK Missing Persons Unit \(UKMPU\)](#).

The following APP is also available:

- [Missing person who is an alleged domestic abuse victim](#)
- [Missing person who is an alleged domestic abuse perpetrator](#)

No-body murder investigation

Where it is apparent that the missing person is subject of a major crime, there are well-established procedures in place to give [structure to the investigation](#).

If the level of the investigation is raised to a murder inquiry, it is strongly recommended that all initial enquiries and searches are reviewed to ensure that nothing has been missed.

A proof-of-life pack to assist forces with undertaking relevant enquiries is available from the National Crime Agency (NCA) [Major Crime Investigative Support](#) (telephone: 0345 000 5463), to support a prosecution where no body has been located.

Found remains or people

Responding effectively when a body or human remains are found is important, as the individual may be the subject of a missing person report.

Until enquiries determine otherwise, where a body or remains of a missing person are found, the case should be treated as suspicious. Early engagement with the coroner is required, and the principles of an effective murder investigation should be adhered to until the case has been established to be non-suspicious. The coroner will then take primary responsibility for establishing the identity of the individual, with the police assisting enquiries.

When the deceased person has been identified, officers should check the PNC for any missing person report and contact the owning force if one exists. If no report exists, the deceased persons details should be circulated on the PNC. This PNC entry will enable police forces to relate any subsequent missing person report back to the deceased and inform the reporting person.

Where an unidentified body is found, details should be recorded and notified to the UKMPU so that other forces are able to check their records of missing people.

The [UKMPU](#) is available to provide specialist support when an unidentified person or remains have been found. The UKMPU acts as the central repository for these cases and maintains a national database, to facilitate matching of unidentified cases with outstanding missing persons reports.

The UKMPU must be notified of all unidentified bodies, body parts and people within 48 hours. This is in accordance with the [Code of Practice](#).

The following APP is also available:

- [APP on Disaster victim identification](#)
- [APP on Suicide and bereavement response](#) ([After an apparent suicide](#) and [Conveying the message](#))

Cross-border cases

Difficulties can arise when a person reported missing resides outside the area where the report is being made. Examples include students in temporary accommodation or daytrip visitors. The police area that receives the report must record it and carry out all necessary initial actions. If the responsibility for a case is subsequently transferred to another force area, the rationale for doing so must be recorded. Written acknowledgement from the receiving force should be obtained.

When deciding where ownership of the investigation lies, the principal issue is to consider:

- where the majority of the enquiries are
- who has the greatest opportunity of locating the missing person

It is probable that the place where the person was last seen would generate the majority of the initial enquiries. However, this is not always the case (go to [Out-of-area placements](#)).

Cross-border enquiries

In cross-border tasking and requests, details of the result of the risk assessment carried out by the investigating force, and other contextual information, should be passed to forces likely to become involved in the enquiry. This transfer of information allows colleagues to decide on the focus of their enquiries.

There is a responsibility on communications staff and investigating officers to request this information. The officer in charge of the investigation in the initiating force should ensure that all relevant information, including the risk assessment, is passed to the force that will be managing subsequent enquiries. It is important that there is a seamless transfer of responsibility for the investigation, so that no cases are missed. The officer making the transfer should check that all materials have been received in the receiving force and that details of the person who received the information are noted. Developing a process that includes providing this additional information will

reduce the risk to all involved. All police forces should have email addresses that are available 24 hours a day, so that investigation records can be shared and transferred where relevant.

For further information, go to [**NPCC: Advice to police forces on tasking other forces to conduct missing person enquiries and the transfer of investigations.**](#)

British Transport Police

British Transport Police (BTP) has a valuable role to play in supporting relevant investigations. The responsibility for the investigation of missing persons will remain with the relevant Home Office territorial police force. However, BTP should be notified in the following instances:

- There is specific information that the missing person is on, or is going to visit or use, the railway system. 'Specific information' is defined as information around locations or times that will allow the deployment of police resources.
- There is a risk of real and significant harm to the missing person, or a threat to life, and they are on, going to visit or near to the railway system. 'Near to' is defined as locations that are close to railway lines, stations or other infrastructure where risks to safety may be heightened. This could include a railway bridge, a car park roof or a location adjacent to railway land.
- BTP have placed a suicide-related information marker on the missing person's Police National Computer (PNC) or Law Enforcement Data Service (LEDS) record.
- There is specific information that:
 - the missing person is a victim of modern slavery or human trafficking, or is involved in county lines exploitation
 - the railway is being used in the commission of this exploitation

If a search of BTP jurisdiction is required, then make contact with the BTP control room, not with an individual officer.

Engagement with BTP should form part of the investigation strategy and should be related to tangible lines of enquiry or search strategy. These enquiries should be initiated by an emergency telephone call to BTP.

Where the initial report of a missing person is made to BTP, they will take initial information to enable an assessment to be made of the need for any fast-track safeguarding actions. BTP will

then inform the relevant geographic police force control room of the report. Arrangements can then be made by that force to deal directly with the reporting person, as the geographic force will have responsibility for the missing persons investigation.

Return of a missing person

BTP will contact the investigating police force to identify a suitable place where transfer of care can take place. This will usually be at a suitable 'halfway' point.

If it is agreed that BTP will return the person home, BTP will check with the police force responsible for the missing person whether they can be returned safely to the address from which they are missing, mitigating any risk. The investigating police force will retain responsibility for carrying any follow-up contact and interview.

Immigration cases

In some instances, a person who is reported missing to the police has entered or stayed in the country without the appropriate authority. The decision on which authority should deal with the report will depend on the circumstances of disappearance and level of risk.

Consideration should be given to whether:

- the individual is a victim of **modern slavery** or is being **exploited**
- the person is intentionally missing and seeking to avoid immigration procedures or repatriation
- there are any suspicious circumstances surrounding their disappearance

The assessment of risk is important when deciding the status of the person. Officers should consider:

- the extent to which the individual is vulnerable
- whether they have been able to exercise consent
- whether there is any reason to suspect any degree of coercion or deceit

Children must always be considered as vulnerable and not being able to consent to their own exploitation. Safeguarding issues must take priority and this should be the responsibility of all agencies.

For further information, go to:

- [Wanted and missing](#)
- [Modern slavery APP](#)
- [NPCC: Advice to police forces on adult asylum seekers, undocumented migrants and visa applicants who abscond and when they should be recorded as missing](#)

Missing persons at large events

It is important that consideration is given to ensuring effective assessment and recording of reports received during major events, such as music festivals. While many of these reports maybe the result of family or friends becoming temporarily separated from one another, in some instances these missing individuals are at risk of harm.

The police should work with the organisers of the events to establish appropriate missing person procedures prior to the event. Procedures should enable officers to:

- capture all relevant details
- properly risk assess the report
- carry out follow-up enquiries, including transfer to the team that will continue enquiries if the person is not traced at the event
- confirm that the person has been located

For further information, go to [Planning and deployment – Working with partners](#).

International investigations

There are cases where a missing person investigation extends beyond national borders. This means that procedures will need to be modified to conform to international law and processes. Any reports of missing persons overseas will, in the first instance, be investigated by the relevant agency within the country where the person went missing.

If a British national resident in the UK who is temporarily abroad (for example, on holiday) is reported missing, then a missing person report will:

- be taken by the relevant UK police force

- be created on the force system
- be circulated on PNC

If a British national living abroad or non-British national is reported missing abroad, then a missing person report will:

- be taken by the relevant UK police force
- not be created on the force system
- not be circulated on PNC

Further guidance is available in [UKMPU and NPCC for individuals missing abroad](#).

On receiving any such request, forces should:

- conduct a risk assessment
- complete a missing person report, including all relevant risk assessment information
- forward the missing person report via their international liaison officer to UKICB (INTERPOL)

This report can then be assessed and transmitted to the overseas force responsible for the investigation. This ensures that the overseas force has the most useful information to conduct their enquiries.

A risk assessment completed by a UK police force is likely to be limited by the degree of available information and knowledge that the officer has of the country and area in which the person has gone missing. The risk assessment may or may not lead to actions by the recording force. However, police forces in the UK may then consider any investigative opportunities that can be progressed in the UK to support the country carrying out the investigation (for example, obtaining a DNA sample).

Before visiting another country or carrying out international enquiries and investigations, UK officers must obtain the appropriate authorities through INTERPOL channels.

It is important that the limitations surrounding the actions that UK police forces can take are communicated to the families of the missing person, so their expectations can be managed. Police forces may, however, consider appointing a FLO and/or SPoC to support any such case, depending on the circumstances.

If police officers believe or suspect that a person has travelled abroad for purposes linked to terrorism and radicalisation, this should be communicated to the force counter terrorism unit without delay.

Any UK national will be dealt with by the home force of the missing person (or their closest relative), where the missing person is:

- reported missing from any country outside the UK, including anyone reported missing from a vessel outside UK waters
- reported to the UK, usually through INTERPOL channels

For further information, go to:

- [Investigation APP – International](#)
- [Investigation APP – International investigation useful contacts](#)

United Kingdom International Crime Bureau (Interpol Sirene Europol)

The United Kingdom International Crime Bureau (Interpol Sirene Europol) (UKICB) within the NCA is the national focal point for international assistance. It should be contacted if advice on the conduct of an international search is needed.

INTERPOL

INTERPOL helps police forces around the world understand international crime trends, analyse information and conduct operations.

Each police force has an [international liaison officer](#) who is able to assist and may be contacted for advice when pursuing international investigations.

INTERPOL's criteria for accepting missing person enquiries

- Persons under the age of 18 years.
- Persons aged 18 years and over who are vulnerable, such as through physical or mental ill health, or some other special feature that makes it desirable to have them on record without delay.
- Persons who are aged 65 years or older and are vulnerable.

- Persons whose disappearance gives rise to suspicions that some harm may befall them, or if a criminal investigation has begun.
- Persons normally resident in the UK who are believed to have travelled abroad and are believed to be vulnerable.
- Persons normally resident abroad who are reported to have disappeared in the UK and are believed to be vulnerable.

In addition to the above criteria, if the person has been reported missing by a foreign law enforcement agency, there must be a clear UK connection.

The submitted report must include details about:

- the risk posed to the subject
- the subject
- the location overseas

INTERPOL does not provide a family tracing service, except in high-risk or life-and-death situations.

INTERPOL notices

INTERPOL notices are international requests for cooperation or alerts that allow police in member countries to share information. These include the following:

- Yellow notices – to help locate missing persons, especially minors, or to help identify persons who are not able to identify themselves.
- Black notices – to seek information about unidentified bodies.

The international liaison officer in each force will be able to advise how to create and circulate these notices.

Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

The Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) is responsible for the UK's international relations. One of the functions is to protect and assist British nationals overseas.

The FCDO can be contacted on 0207 008 1500.

Where it is suspected that a missing person has been taken or is being kept abroad for the purposes of a **forced marriage**, the FCDO has a dedicated **Forced Marriage Unit**, which can offer advice and support. Where it is suspected that the individual may be a victim of – or at risk of – female genital mutilation (FGM), an application can be made for an FGM protection order.

For further information, see the Joint International Crime Centre (JICC), which provides a single comprehensive service to policing for all cases involving an international component. It includes:

- services previously provided by the International Crime Coordination Centre and UKICB
- the UK INTERPOL and Europol desks
- Part 1 and 3 extraditions
- the international biometrics exchange

National Ports Office – Heathrow

The National Ports Office – Heathrow is staffed by the Metropolitan Police Service. It can offer assistance in cases where urgent action is required to prevent individuals leaving the country.

The National Ports Office – Heathrow can be contacted on 0208 721 6000.

E-Borders

The e-Borders police team located in the National Border Targeting Centre (previously known as JBOC) can enter the missing person onto a watch list. The system screens travellers into or out of the UK before their journey. It then alerts the port where the missing person is expected to arrive or depart, thereby facilitating intervention. Simply circulating the person as missing on the PNC will not ensure that the police are notified if the person attempts to leave the country. Police will only be notified if they stop and check the person at the border for any reason, then conduct a PNC check.

Officers are also able to search journeys made before the missing person was entered onto the system, to ensure they have not already left the UK. Where journeys have been made, the system may also contain details of the person's:

- credit cards
- telephone numbers
- addresses
- travelling companions

- other information helpful to locate the person

Persons lost at sea

This procedure applies to all persons:

- reported lost at sea from a vessel travelling to or from ports within the UK
- reported lost at sea where a vessel is passing close to the UK and the incident is reported to UK coastguards
- missing from offshore installations
- lost from areas of the UK coastline

Where a person has been reported lost at sea from a vessel travelling to or from a port within the UK, a missing person report will be completed. All reports must be properly acted on and should be dealt with by the relevant UK police force. The incident location will be the area of the UK coastline that is nearest at that time. Where there is doubt, the location for the port of destination will be used.

At the earliest opportunity after the initial report, the senior investigating officer (SIO) should review the matter. The SIO should assess if, on the information available, there is any possibility that the missing person is the victim of a crime.

Specialist support services are available for these cases. For further information, go to [HM Coastguards](#).

Missing non-UK nationals

If the missing person is not from the UK, the force to which the initial report is made should:

- retain ownership of the enquiry
- be responsible for all subsequent enquiries, including the transfer of the report overseas if deemed appropriate

Any transfer of ownership of the missing person file should be made only after consultation between senior officers in each force.

It may be appropriate to inform the relevant foreign embassy or high commission, so they may contact the family of the missing person. However, there are some circumstances in which the relevant foreign embassy or high commission should not be informed. These include where the missing person is:

- a political refugee (whether for reasons of race, nationality, political opinion or religion)
- seeking political asylum

Forces should contact the [Home Office Command and Control Unit](#) in all such cases for advice and assistance. A report should also be forwarded to INTERPOL for notification to be sent to the appropriate country and for any relevant background information to be gathered.

Missing people involved in mass disasters

The recognition of the right of individuals to retain their identity after death is described in [INTERPOL Resolution AGN/65/Res13 \(1996\)](#).

The [INTERPOL Disaster victim identification guide](#) is the international standard. Police forces should also be guided by [Disaster victim identification APP](#).

Role of the coroner

In England, Wales and Northern Ireland, the [coroner](#) has overall responsibility for the identification of the deceased following a disaster. In Scotland, the Procurator Fiscal will direct police accordingly. The individual dealing with the case must be consulted throughout the identification process.

Where there is difficulty in identifying large numbers of people in a disaster, it is policy to set up an [identification commission](#) under the chair of the coroner.

Identification process

A senior detective, who is a senior identification manager (SIM), will be nominated by the police gold commander to deal with all aspects of the identification. This officer will work closely with the SIO and the coroner or Procurator Fiscal in assuming overall responsibility for:

- recovering victims and human remains from the site

- police mortuary teams
- police casualty bureau
- police family liaison teams

For further information, go to [Civil contingencies APP – Mobilisation](#) and contact the [National Policing Civil Contingencies portfolio](#).

Tags

APP Missing persons