

St Albans Mencap

Charity number: 210073

stalbansmencap.org.uk

Missing Service User Policy

St Albans Mencap encourages, where deemed appropriate, adult clients to make informed choices and this policy sets out how we deal with a client failing to arrive at an agreed deadline or not reaching a point of contact.

Document control:

Version:	Date approved:	By:	Review due:
1.1	18/06/26	Peter Seymour, Chair OAS	Dec 2027

Summary of changes:

Version:	Changes:
1.0	Converted old version to new format (May 2026) for review
1.1	Reviewed and edited (June 2026)- Phoebe Durrant

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Aim

St Albans Mencap wishes all its clients to be safe at all times.

Independent Adults

Some adult clients, where deemed appropriate, are encouraged to make informed choices. It is therefore not possible to always know where a client is at all times. Staff should consider the individual's mental capacity regarding decisions about their safety and whereabouts. Any actions taken should comply with the Mental Capacity Act 2005 and be proportionate to identified risks. It is however possible to know or to arrange with clients where they are going and what time they hope to return, if for any reason they have permission to move away within the location of any activity (e.g. a visit to Thorpe Park). It is also as part of a risk assessment to put in some safety valves such as the need for escort or a way to contact somebody accessing the community independently i.e. a mobile phone.

If it is felt that a client has failed to meet a deadline or has not reached a point of contact such as college or work placement and cannot be reached or contacted in any way it may be wise to take into account the history of the person and make a decision on whether the person is filling his or her own leisure time or is indeed to be presumed missing.

If it is felt that the person is missing, the procedure below should be followed by staff.

Children and Dependent Adults

Children and some adults (due to complexity of their learning disabilities) need to have an escort with them at all times. If for any reason any individual requiring an escort at all times leaves the building on their own, they should immediately be classed as a missing person and the below procedure followed.

Action to be taken if you suspect somebody is Missing

Following the Hertfordshire Police protocol, it is important to carry out a thorough search if you presume a client to be missing. It is advised that the following steps in a search be taken initially:

1. Search the place the person was last seen, in case the person is hiding or may have fallen and been injured. Remember that children can hide in very small spaces
2. Look out for any notes or clues that may suggest where they may be
3. Check to see if they have left you a message on your phone voicemail or email
4. Contact family members and friends to verify that they are actually missing and not simply somewhere unexpected.

It may be helpful to keep a record in a notebook of what you have done (including all phone calls) and anything that seems out of the ordinary or suspicious, to assist the police and help keep track of what still needs to be.

If you have established that someone is missing and you are concerned, report them as missing to your local police force immediately following the below procedure

1. As all St Albans Mencap clients are vulnerable individuals the missing person would be deemed an emergency as they would be considered at risk of harm dial 999.

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The police will take some details from you and provide a reference number. Make a note of this and any other details that they provide you.

2. Complete the Hertfordshire Police Missing Person form below providing details of the missing individual
3. Inform your manager:
 - a. The manager or delegated senior staff member must notify parents, carers, next of kin, legal representatives, social workers, care coordinators or other relevant professionals as soon as practicable, unless there is a safeguarding reason not to do so.
 - b. All actions taken, decisions made, telephone calls and notifications must be recorded contemporaneously and retained within the service user's records.
 - c. Consideration should be given to whether the incident meets safeguarding referral criteria, particularly where there are concerns regarding abuse, exploitation, neglect, self-harm, mental health crisis, radicalisation, criminal exploitation or a person's inability to keep themselves safe.
4. Await further guidance from the police and/or your manager.

Missing Person Police Information Form

1. About the missing person	Add as much information as you can
Full name and address	
Age and date of birth	
Physical description • Height • Build (e.g. thin, medium, large) • Ethnic appearance (e.g. White, Asian, Afro-Caribbean) • Eye colour • Hair colour and style • Any glasses or contact lenses worn	
Any distinctive features such as tattoos, scars, birthmarks or any other distinguishing features?	
Do you have a recent photograph?	
If the missing person has a mobile phone with them, write down the number and the network (e.g. Three, Vodafone, etc.) if you know it.	

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Does the missing person suffer from any medical condition, including mental health conditions? Do they need medication for this and do they have it with them?	
What are the circumstances of this person going missing and where were they last seen?	
2. Information to keep handy	
Police officer name and contact number:	
Police reference number:	

Return of Missing Person

After the person has been found after you have reported them missing to police, you must contact the police to let them know.

If there are any allegations of abuse, or a suggestion that the individual has been a victim, or a perpetrator of any crime, the police need to be contacted immediately. Due consideration must be given to the securing of evidence and possible forensic examination. This may include keeping any clothes the individual was wearing and/or sensitively discouraging bathing/showering and toileting where this can be managed appropriately. The police will advise on appropriate procedures to follow.

Any concerns identified must be reported through safeguarding procedures and documented in the service user's records.

In the case of children within a HCC setting, an Events & Notifications form is completed and forwarded onto Duty Brokerage team, along with an immediate call to the child's social worker/team, within 24 hours of the incident.

Where the incident involves a child and meets the criteria for a serious incident or notifiable event, Ofsted must be notified in accordance with the relevant regulatory requirements and timescales. The Registered Manager is responsible for ensuring that all required notifications are submitted and recorded.

Within 14 days of the individual's return, a formal debrief and review meeting must take place. The purpose of the meeting is to:

- Review the circumstances surrounding the incident.
- Identify any lessons learned.
- Consider whether procedures were followed appropriately.
- Review and update the individual's risk assessment, support plan and missing person protocol.
- Identify any additional support, supervision or staffing arrangements required to reduce future risk.

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- Determine whether any organisational learning should be shared across the service.

The following people should be included:

- The Manager
- The Group Leader
- Key staff working with the service user at the time he / she went missing.

Parents / Carers/ Social Workers may also wish to be involved.

A detailed incident report must be completed and stored within the service user's records. Any amendments to risk assessments, support plans and safeguarding documentation must be completed without delay. Significant incidents, emerging trends and lessons learned should be reviewed by senior management and be presented and discussed with the board of trustees