There have been some issues raised regarding children who are going missing from home or care. It is important that we give the clear message to parents, foster carers and residential workers that is business as usual. This document is to be read alongside safeguarding procedures. Please see Swindon and Wiltshire Missing from home and care procedures.

<https://safeguardingpartnership.swindon.gov.uk/info/5/procedures/12/procedures>

**Covid-19 - Advice if a child goes missing**

Please find information regarding guidelines for parents/carers of children who go missing during this pandemic.

* Parents/carers/foster carers/residential workers are still required to report children missing during this outbreak of COVID-19.
* Parents/carers/foster carers/residential workers should be advised that they are required to take the usual expected parental responsibility should a child go missing: this means doing what is required to locate the child before calling the police, i.e. calling the child, contacting them via social media, contacting their friends, checking they are not with family.  If parents think they know where their child is, they should try, whenever possible, to locate their child and go to collect them. It is not the intention of the government to prevent parents/carers from going to look for their children when they leave home without permission. It is also not a police responsibility to look for children where the child has simply gone against government guidelines and left their home. Police are not responsible for dealing with incidents of children breaching parental discipline unless there are other risks.

* When a child returns home, parents/carers/foster carers/residential workers should ensure government guidelines are adhered to, i.e. Children must thoroughly wash their hands. If there is a vulnerable person living in the household please refer to full government guidelines which you can find here: **https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-on-shielding-and-protecting-extremely-vulnerable-persons-from-covid-19/guidance-on-shielding-and-protecting-extremely-vulnerable-persons-from-covid-19**
* We need to reinforce to parents/carers/foster carers/residential workers that they still have parental responsibility for their child in these current circumstances and are therefore expected to care and protect them as at any other time.
* Please see the resources attached which can be used to provide a simple, child-friendly understanding for children about COVID-19 and for parents/carers to support children and young people with worries about COVID-19.

Parents/carers/foster carers/residential workers can access help and support from the **Missing People helpline on 116000.**  Safe Call is a confidential helpline offering support for children who may go missing and are being exploited: **Safe Call 020 8392 5710** **SafeCall@missingpeople.org.uk**

Jackie Benson 1/4/20

**JB2@swindon.gov.uk**