



Warwickshire
Safeguarding

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN CARE

Care Providers' Information Pack

**Working together to keep children and young
people safe**

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

Aims of the pack

This pack has been developed by Warwickshire Safeguarding Partnership and their partners. The aim is to provide useful information around responding to risks faced by children and young people (CYP) in care who may be vulnerable to going missing.

The information pack aims to:

- Provide information about the definition of missing
- Support providers in the management and de-escalation of challenging behaviours exhibited by some children in care, avoiding inappropriate prosecutions
- Provide information to care and support providers and CYP in care to promote awareness of the roles and responsibilities of all agencies involved in safeguarding
- Build effective relationships between the police, care and support providers and CYP in care in Warwickshire
- Improve partnerships to ensure positive outcomes for CYP in care
- Create opportunities for CYP in care to have their say and provide feedback to agencies around how they are treated



2.0 DEFINITIONS UTILISED FOR MISSING CHILDREN

Going missing can be a warning sign of a range of serious harms including sexual and criminal exploitation; bullying; mental health issues and unhappiness. Some children and young people that go missing will experience serious harm whilst away and patterns of missing may result in them experiencing ongoing harm. It is therefore essential that professionals and carers responsible for a child's care know how and when to report a child missing.

Missing Person – Anyone whose whereabouts cannot be established will be considered as missing until located, and their well-being or otherwise confirmed.

Repeat missing – A person who has been reported as missing on more than one occasion within the previous 12 months.

Long-term missing person – A person who has been reported missing for at least 28 days.

3.0 ACTIONS PRIOR TO CONTACTING THE POLICE IN RESPECT OF A MISSING CHILD

There are risks to reporting a child missing inappropriately. Over-involving the police can cause significant harm and damage the CYP's relationships with the professionals around them. CYP in care are more likely than any other CYP to be reported missing. This may be because of the increased risks and harm in their life; however, this can also be because of existing policies or procedures and the professional feels compelled or having a duty to report a child missing when following the guidance provided to them

All professionals and carers responsible for a CYP's care should consider their role in the prevention of, and response to, CYP going missing and consider what a responsible parent would do in the circumstances

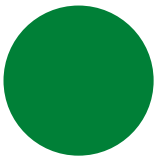
3.1 Senior Managers

Managers have a responsibility to review their missing policies and ensure that their staff are trained to understand missing, prevention and risks. It is vital that they ensure their staff feel equipped and are supported in decision making around contacting the police. Decision making about reporting a child should not lie solely with the front-line worker and there should be clear policy and procedures in place; these procedures should have been followed before contacting the police.

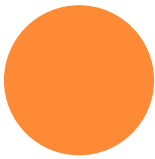
3.2 Levels of intervention

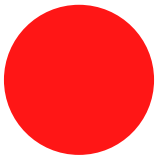
Those responsible for the care of a CYP should consider what their concerns are when a CYP is not where they are supposed to be, and what action they should be taking. The following model supports this decision making;

LEVELS OF INTERVENTION

Assessed Level of Concern		Intervention
No Immediate Intervention Required 	The carer is not concerned for the child's safety at this time, or the safety of others based on the information they have about the child and the circumstances of the missing occurrence.	Based on the information known about the child and the circumstances of the missing occurrence, the carer makes an informed decision to wait some time, to see if the child returns of their own accord.
Actions and Outcomes		
Actions The carer waits a reasonable time* to see if the child returns of their own accord. Outcomes • The child returns of their own accord. • The child contacts the carer (or another) and child agrees to either return home independently or be collected by the carer. • The child contacts the carer and what the child says raises the level of concern to either carer intervention or police intervention. • The carer receives information that raises the level of concern to either carer intervention or police intervention. The child does not return within a reasonable time, so the level of concern raises to carer intervention		

* reasonable time needs to be agreed by senior managers as part of each child and young person's risk assessment procedure

Assessed Level of Concern		Intervention
Carer Intervention 	The carer has some concerns about the child and their whereabouts, but at the outset of the missing occurrence the carer does not have any immediate concerns about the child's safety or the safety of others that would warrant contacting the police immediately.	The carer takes responsibility for trying to locate the child and ensure their safe return.
Actions and Outcomes		
Actions • The carer considers if there has been any precursor behaviour or trigger incident that warrants the child being immediately reported to the police as missing. • The carer/child's social worker continually tries to contact the child by phone, text, and social media. • The carer undertakes a search of the home and surrounding areas (or agrees with the child's social worker who will do this if they are unable to). • The carer undertakes a search of the place the child was expected to be and the place the child was last seen (or agrees with the child's social worker who will do this if they are unable to). • The carer/child's social worker contacts family and friends. • If possible and safe to do, the carer/ child's social worker visits locations and addresses where the child may be. • The carer and the child's social worker continue to liaise until the child is found or returns. Outcomes • The child returns of their own accord. • The child contacts the carer (or another). • The carer contacts the child. • Contact is made and the child agrees to return home independently. • Contact is made and the child agrees to be collected. This is arranged by/between the carer and the child's social worker. Contact is made and what the child says raises the level of concern to police intervention, so the child is reported as missing to the police. The carer/ child's social worker receives information that raises the level of concern to police intervention, so the child is reported as missing to the police.		

Assessed Level of Concern		Intervention
Police Intervention 	Based on the information the carer has about the child and the circumstances of the missing occurrence, the carer is worried about the child's safety. The carer has been unable to contact the child, or they have made contact, but have assessed that the child or others are not safe.	The carer/child's social worker reports the child as missing to the police.
Actions and Outcomes		
Actions • The carer/child's social worker shares their concerns with the police. • Where applicable, the carer / child's social worker shares the child's Missing Assessment / Plan / Incident form with the police. • In most cases, where the carer / child's social worker has completed basic enquiries, the Communications Centre will record the child as missing. According to policy a child will never be recorded as 'absent' or 'standard', as a minimum they will be recorded as medium risk. If the police have recorded the child as missing, the police conduct enquiries to locate the child		

4.0 MAKING A REPORT TO THE POLICE - IN RESPECT OF A MISSING CHILD

All reports to Warwickshire Police of a CYP being missing will result in a risk assessment to help understand the level of risk that is posed to or by the CYP and to determine the appropriate response.

It is therefore vitally important that as much information is provided during the initial contact. The Philomena Protocol has been developed to encourage carers, staff and families to compile useful information which could be used in the event of a young person going missing from care to help find them quickly and safely.



4.1 WARWICKSHIRE PHILOMENA PROTOCOL



What is the Philomena Protocol?

The Philomena Protocol is a scheme that asks carers to identify children and young people who are at risk of, or have a history of going missing, and to record vital information about them that can be used to help find them quickly and safely. This sensitive information should only be shared and used for this purpose.

Your Role

If you're concerned that a young person might go missing, fill in part one of the incident form and the risk assessed locations form as soon as possible and notify the Police and the allocated social worker. Provide as much information as you can and liaise with the social worker if there are some details you don't have. Please make sure you review the details and keep them up to date with new information on things like description, friends, associates, locations frequented, phone numbers and anything else that will help to find them swiftly and safely. It is important that you keep the information in a safe, secure place and that you review and update the information on a regular basis.

The Philomena Protocol has three sections. The flowchart below provides advice and guidance

The Philomena Protocol has three sections. Scan the QR code for a flowchart that provides advice and guidance:

Or click [here](#)





PHILOMENA PROTOCOL

If a young person leaves your care or supported accommodation setting

The Philomena Protocol is used in many areas nationally, so please transfer the form to the new carer/support provider, who will be responsible for keeping it safe and up to date. This can be facilitated by the allocated social worker. Similarly, if a young person transfers to your care/support from another area, check whether they have an existing Philomena Protocol in place that you would now be responsible for.

What if I am a care/support provider situated outside of Warwickshire, or caring for/supporting a young person from a different local authority?

We still want you to apply the

Protocol and complete the forms in view of the benefits the scheme brings. We want every child in care/supported accommodation living in Warwickshire (from here or another area), or placed out of area by Warwickshire, to be better safeguarded from the risks of going missing. If your local Police haven't implemented the Protocol, we will speak to them about accepting the forms.

What can care / support providers do to help when reporting a child missing?

Care and support staff should complete the Philomena Protocol part 3 with as much detail as possible to help assist with finding the child as quickly and safely as possible. It is really important that when calling in the missing incident, the staff member has as much information

regarding the missing episode and known risks surrounding the child. If the risk is not fully understood it cannot be properly assessed and the correct response provided. Care/support providers must continue to look for the child/young person alongside the Police as the more people looking the quicker the child/young person can be located. Safeguarding the child is everyone's responsibility.

Where can I go for advice?

If you have any queries about the forms or the scheme, depending on the nature of your query, you can contact;

Police –
missing.person@warwickshire.police.uk

WCC –
cemissing@warwickshire.gov.uk

PHILOMENA FORMS

The following forms should be regularly reviewed and refreshed:

- [Risk assessed locations & contacts to assist to locate a missing child](#)
- [Philomena Protocol Missing Person Incident Form](#)

PHILOMENA PROTOCOL

5.0 PRACTITIONER ESCALATION PROTOCOL

All practitioners working with children, young people, adults with care and support needs and carers have a responsibility towards their clients to ensure that the child's or adult's welfare is seen as a priority at all levels of practitioner activity. Practitioners are individually responsible for being satisfied about the substance and progress of safeguarding plans for service users.

The scope of this protocol relates to all individuals who work as practitioners with children, young people, adults with care and support needs and carers. The protocol should be used in all situations where there are concerns about practice, decision making or resource allocation and applies whether the practitioners work in a paid or voluntary capacity in the statutory and voluntary sector.

Examples of potential areas for escalation include:

- Where there is a disagreement about the response to a missing CYP that cannot be resolved.
- Disagreement between agencies about interpretation and implementation of thresholds for intervention.
- Where no or inadequate action is being taken by an agency or any other issue where a practitioner remains concerned about a child or adult.
- Concern there is drift or unreasonable delay in progressing a case resulting in a lack of sustained change and the outcomes have not improved.
- Where there are concerns about practitioner practice in any agency.
- Where a practitioner is uncomfortable about the position taken by their own management.
- Where there are concerns about management response to a child in care's challenging behaviour, which may have resulted in inappropriate escalation or minimalisation.

The protocol offers a three-stage procedure and includes a reporting and monitoring processes. All organisations should have a policy for internal escalation of disagreements about safeguarding issues which is made known to staff in their induction and refresher safeguarding training.

To access the Practitioner Escalation Protocol and supporting briefings, visit WSP website:

<https://www.safeguardingwarwickshire.co.uk/safeguarding-children/i-work-with-children-and-young-people/practitioner-escalation-protocol>



6.0 PREVENTION INTERVIEW WITH CYP

Once a missing CYP has been located, or returned home of their own accord, the care/support provider should contact Warwickshire Police as soon as possible.

Should any care/support provider suspect that a serious offence has occurred whilst the CYP has been missing, they should consider supporting the CYP to preserve forensic opportunities.

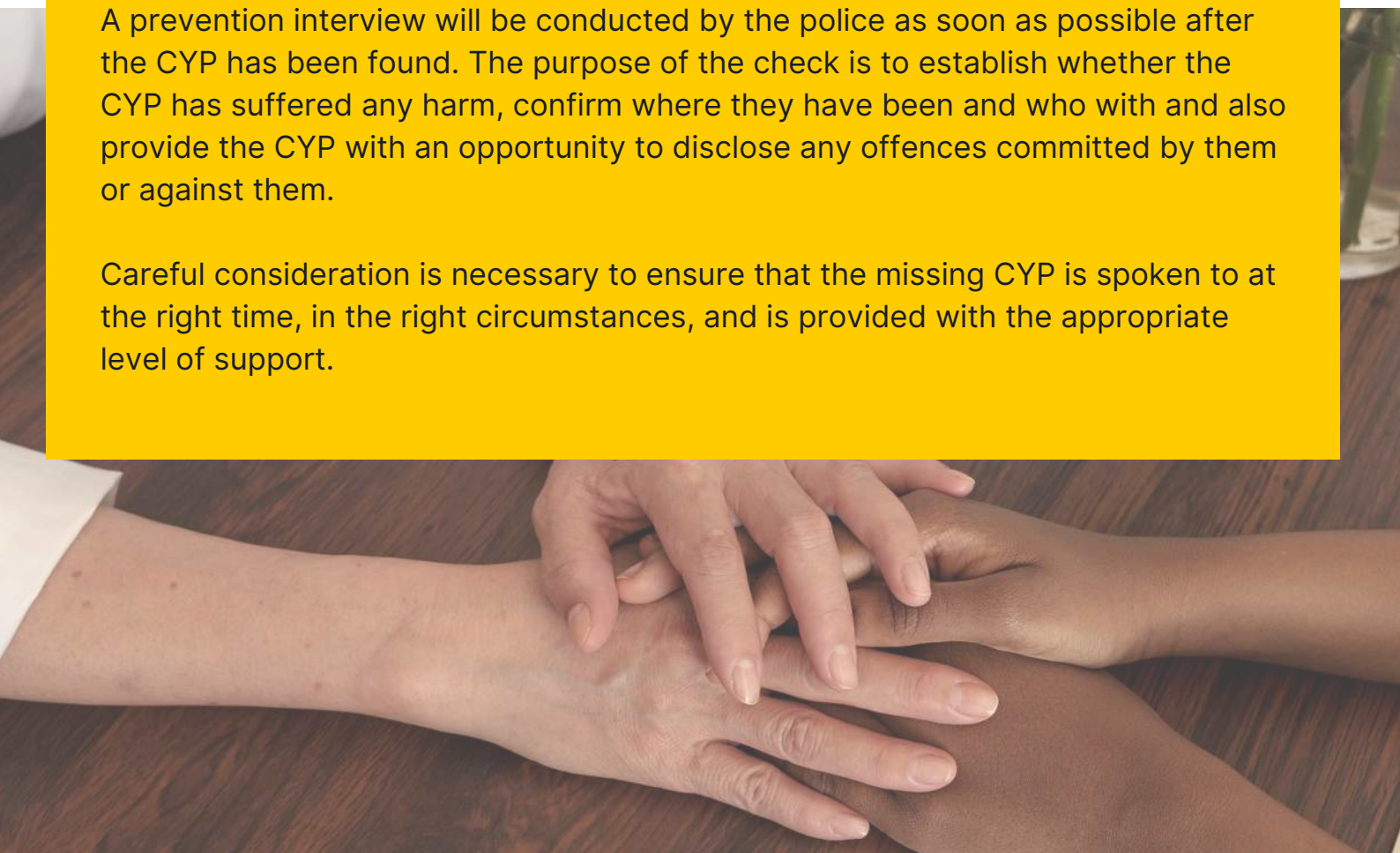
These include:

- Bodily fluids, such as blood, saliva, semen on clothing and the individual
- Presence of injuries that could require photographing
- Electronic data such as mobile phones, tablets, computers

Upon the return of a missing CYP, the immediate priority is to ensure their wellbeing and to provide any medical assistance that is required.

A prevention interview will be conducted by the police as soon as possible after the CYP has been found. The purpose of the check is to establish whether the CYP has suffered any harm, confirm where they have been and who with and also provide the CYP with an opportunity to disclose any offences committed by them or against them.

Careful consideration is necessary to ensure that the missing CYP is spoken to at the right time, in the right circumstances, and is provided with the appropriate level of support.



7.0 RETURN HOME INTERVIEWS



Statutory guidance requires that when a child/young person is found, and returned home after going missing, they must be offered an Independent Return Home Interview within 72 hours of their return. This is different from the police prevention interview (formerly known as a safe and well check) and provides an opportunity to communicate with someone independent to explore in more depth reasons for going missing and better understand risks and issues the child/young person is facing.

For Children in Care, it is the responsibility of the Residential Children's Home Manager or Supported Accommodation Provider Social Worker and placing Authority to ensure that a Return Home Interview (RHI) takes place.

Warwickshire County Council Children & Families employ a team of Independent Missing Children Practitioners (MCP) dedicated to completing the RHI's. The team offer a person-centred, high-quality interview with the purpose of identifying and reporting any harm a child/young person may have suffered whilst missing, and to try to understand and address the underlying reasons (known as 'push/pull' factors) surrounding the child/young person's missing episode.

The MCP is independent of both the Police Service and Children & Families. The MCP will seek to build good quality relationships with vulnerable young people going missing and are responsible for designing an action plan or contribute to an already existing plan (such as Child In Need, Child Protection Plan or to the Care Plan) to address the identified issues of concern in order to prevent or reduce the risks of future episodes of missing and exposure to harm.

MCP's will proactively seek to engage a child or young person, contacting them a minimum of three times, usually by three different methods (telephone call, text, discussion with parent/carer/school or through social media) within 24 hours of receiving the notification. They will discuss this with responsible carers/support providers too in order to help facilitate the interview. The purpose is to engage the young person and arrange a time to meet to undertake the Return Home Interview (RHI) within 72 hours of receipt of the notification that the child has returned. Allocated Social Workers and/or responsible Carers/support providers cannot refuse a RHI being conducted, though if there are concerns about this taking place the reasons must be escalated for consideration by senior managers as to why an independent RHI is not agreed.

The venue of the RHI may be influenced by the wishes and feelings of the child or young person. The child/young person can ask to be accompanied by a responsible adult of their choosing. If they would like to be accompanied by a responsible adult but cannot identify someone who they are happy with to accompany them, an advocate should be available to fulfil this role. For children or young people whose first language is not English, they must always be offered the use of an interpreter.

8.0 JOINT PROTOCOL TO REDUCE PROSECUTION OF CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE



It is intended that the principles contained in this protocol will act as a framework for ensuring the best practice for supporting children/young people in care across Warwickshire. The protocol seeks to reduce, wherever possible, the need to use formal justice system sanctions by encouraging the use of restorative and relational practice.

KEY PRINCIPLES:

- It is important that all people feel safe in the place that they live and/or work, whether that is in a family home, children's home or supported accommodation and that they have confidence in the criminal justice system to intervene and protect them where this is necessary.
- Every effort should be made to avoid unnecessary criminalisation of children/young people in care. Agencies should work to ensure that children/young people are diverted from the criminal justice system, court proceedings and from custody wherever possible.

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- Professionals have a responsibility to build quality relationships with children/young people in care to better understand their experiences and what their behaviour is telling us about their needs.
 - Everyone should feel safe in their community and in their homes. Victims of crime have the right to be heard so professionals understand the harm that has been caused and what needs to happen to repair that harm. Children/young people in care have these same entitlements. Where harm is caused all those affected should be offered the opportunity to work together to find a solution and a way to restore relationships. This includes offences that take place in and around care homes/supported accommodation settings where children/young people in care live. The rights and wishes of victims, including care home/supported accommodation staff or police should be heard and considered when making a decision to avoid prosecution.
 - Restorative and relational practices should underpin the response to children/young people in care, whether their behaviour occurs in their home or in the community.
 - All professionals should take an integrated approach to reduce offending by children/young people in care.
 - Children/young people in care who are already known to criminal justice agencies must be protected from escalation.

Further reading on the national protocol on reducing the criminalisation of children in care can be found [here](#)



8.0 Joint protocol to reduce prosecution of children & young people

CONSIDERATIONS FOR CARE HOMES/SUPPORTED ACCOMMODATION

- Each home/supported accommodation must have a written relationship policy that sets out the measures of control, restraint and discipline which may be used in the children's home/supported accommodation and the means whereby appropriate behaviour is to be promoted in the home/accommodation.
- The police should not be used for low-level behaviour management or matters a parent would not have called the police over. There is an expectation that practitioners in Children and Families, residential care workers or foster parents will demonstrably support children/young people in care in a way that meets the child's needs and minimises the risk of incidents arising. When incidents do arise, carers/support workers should strive to manage them at home through internal resolution without police involvement wherever possible and appropriate.
- It is expected that Children and Families staff, residential care workers, support workers, foster parents and local officers will support children in care by way of internal resolution and the use of restorative and relational practice to minimise the risk of incidents occurring and to meet the needs of the children and young people.
- It is expected that any incidents should be managed in the child/young person's home through internal resolution and without the involvement of the police where possible and appropriate. Informal processes such as restorative justice conferencing, reparation, acceptable behaviour contracts and disciplinary measures by the care/home/supported accommodation may be sufficient to satisfy the public interest and to reduce the risk of future offending.

9.0 POLICE SINGLE POINT OF CONTACT (SPOC)

Every care home in Warwickshire has a Police Community Support Officer (PCSO) assigned to them as their Single Point of Contact (SPOC). Their role is to provide a regular point of contact to build relationship with staff and CYP in care and to provide advice where needed.

What you can expect from your Police SPOC:

- Aim for monthly visits in order to obtain information to help police any ongoing safeguarding risks and to help build an intelligence picture.
- Officers can assist in signposting police officers/staff to relevant Children's Services, Harm Assessment Unit/Front Door, Youth Justice Service and WCC Accommodation Commissioners; supporting where necessary to reduce any behaviour or crime related incidents connected to children and young people in care. This will include working with managers to review any safeguarding measures which could be improved to address such incidents. This partnership approach may include working with Safer Neighbourhood Team managers or with the Missing Person's and Child Exploitation Team, should this be applicable.



What you can expect from your Police SPOC:

- Act as a conduit between other police officers/staff, other key professionals, and the homes/accommodation managers to ensure any patterns and trends are recognised and action is taken where appropriate.
- Support care homes and supported accommodation to deal with incidents at the premises efficiently; reducing demand and working together in the best interests of the children who live there.
- Build professional relationships with managers and staff, providing advice on the Philomena protocol and other police related matters.
- To engage with children within homes, understand risks and build trust and confidence in the police with those children and young people.



10.0 LOCALITY ASSESSMENTS

Location assessments should be completed by managers of existing homes and potential providers of new homes in consultation with relevant services in the area where the home is, or will be, located. Appropriate safeguards should be put in place where risks have been identified before a home opens (or where new risks appear over time). Managers should collaborate with the police and the Local Safeguarding Partnership at all stages of this process, not just in putting the safeguards in place but also in trying to identify the risks in the first place.

It is important for the manager or a potential new provider to have a broad understanding of the characteristics of the area where a home is or may be located. Children and young people in care placed in deprived areas, perhaps far away from the authority responsible for their care, may face disadvantage and lack opportunities to enjoy and achieve in these communities.

The considerations a home manager or potential provider of a new home will need to take into account, as they carry out a location assessment, may include:

- Whether the location of the home influences the potential for an already vulnerable child/young person to be a victim of crime, such as being targeted for sexual exploitation.
- Whether there is a likelihood of children/young people placed in the home becoming drawn into gang crime or anti-social behaviour in the local area.
- The suitability of the local neighbourhood as a location to care for children/young people who may have already been victims of abuse and neglect.
- Whether there are environmental factors that would represent a hazard to children and young people, such as locations near level crossings or busy roads.

Location assessments should also take into account any positive features in a local community that would offer benefits to children/young people living in a children's home or supported accommodation. For example, assessments could include evidence about opportunities for children/young people to participate in leisure, sporting or cultural activities, or links with services that could support the child/young person's ethnic or religious identity.



11.0 USEFUL INFORMATION AND LINKS

These contact are for advice and information only. DO NOT USE to report a CYP as missing.

Any reporting relating to missing should be sent to through via 101 to Warwickshire Police or 999 if the person is in immediate danger

- Warwickshire CE Police Coordinator and Missing Team
Missing@warwickshire.police.uk *
- Child Abuse, Trafficking and Exploitation Team (CATE).
cate@warwickshire.police.uk
- WCC CE & Missing Team
cemissing@warwickshire.gov.uk
- Barnardos - 0121 359 5333 rupertstreetadmin@barnardos.org.uk
- RoSA - 01788 551150
support@rosasupport.org
- Integrated Front Door (replacement of MASH) - Telephone Number: **01926 414144** and includes options for FIS (Option 1), EH Support Line (Option 2) and Safeguarding (Option 3)
- Email address: TriageHub@Warwickshire.gov.uk (The previous MASH email address continues to be monitored and will be phased out over time)
- Something's Not Right
- YOS
- COMPASS
- KOOTH
- AMPARO
- Missing Peoples charity

* These email addresses are not monitored 24/7 – Therefore they are NOT to be used to report persons missing or to report that they are now found, nor are they to be used to report any criminal offences.

