

Initial response and investigation

This page is from APP, the official source of professional practice for policing.

First published 21 November 2016 Updated 22 November 2016

Written by College of Policing

4 mins read

The primary consideration for the first responder is the safety of the missing person. Judgements made at this early stage may have a significant impact on the outcome of the investigation.

The initial investigating officer (IIO) should:

- begin the investigation – identify places where the person might be, check information and assumptions, corroborate what they have been told, review the risk assessment, seek and secure evidence
- conduct appropriate searches – places where the missing person might be such as hospital, custody, friends and or relatives
- conduct appropriate intelligence checks – PNC, force intelligence systems, ViSOR, PND
- continually reassess the level of risk using the risk principles
- assess the level of support required for the missing person's family, residential worker or foster carer as appropriate

If it is suspected a serious crime has occurred or the individual is at significant risk of harm, the IIO should inform a supervising officer immediately.

There are a [**number of actions**](#) that may be carried out by the IIO to ensure that sufficient information is gathered:

- Consider seizing electronic devices, computers, and other documentation, for example, diaries, financial records and notes and obtain details of usernames and passwords.
- Obtain photos of the missing person. These should ideally be current likeness of the missing person and obtained in a digital format.
- Obtain details of the individual's mobile phone and if they have it with them. If they do, [**arrange for a TextSafe©**](#) to be sent by the Missing People charity.
- Obtain details of any vehicles to which the missing person may have access.

- Confirm if the person has taken their passport; consider prompt circulation if it is deemed likely the individual may leave the country (This is particularly important where there are concerns that an individual has been radicalised and is intending to travel abroad. See [National Ports Office – Heathrow.](#))
- Upload the missing person report and place markers on relevant vehicles on the PNC without delay.
- Circulate details of the missing person on local information systems and to relevant local partners, for example, hospitals, ambulance service, taxi and bus firms.
- Consider obtaining any physical evidence of identity such as fingerprints or DNA samples (in accordance with [Code of Practice \(2009\) Collection of Missing Persons Data](#)).
- Consider whether specialist officers or resources are required, for example, force helicopters.

Tags

Missing persons