SES KITE

RESIDENTIAL ACCOMMODATION

Missing From Care
Policy and Practice

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SES Kite Ltd (12634002) is a subsidiary company of
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1 INTRODUCTION

This policy outlines the arrangements in place at SES Kite to safeguard and protects young adults who are absent or missing from care.

This policy has been created with reference to the following legislation and guidance:

- Care Act 2014
- Mental Capacity Act 2005
- Health and Social Care Act 2008 (Regulated Activities) Regulations 2014
- Suffolk Safeguarding Partnerships and Suffolk Constabulary "Safeguarding People Who Go Missing from Home or Care (reviewed 2024)

The purpose of this policy is to provide clear direction for all staff to ensure that any absence or missing episode is managed promptly, proportionately and with full regard to individual rights, welfare and safety.

2 RATIONALE

There may be occasions when young adults who are living at SES Kite establishments leave the premises without staff awareness, or do not return at an expected time. This may result from impulsivity, distress, anger, frustration or any other emotion or life event that the young adults find difficult to manage. We know from experience that because many of the young adults in our care have social, learning or communication difficulties, they can respond to events in a very reactive manner, sometimes resulting in flight behaviours. Some may lack capacity to make safe decisions about leaving, or underestimate risks in the community.

Our response must balance each person's right to liberty, autonomy, privacy and independence, with our duty of care to protect from avoidable harm. All staff share responsibility to act swiftly and in accordance with this policy whenever a person's whereabouts is unknown or there is a reason to believe they may be at risk.

3 CULTURE

Young adults are less likely to run away, become missing or absent when they feel safe, respected, listened to, and able to express their feelings and wishes, make appropriate choices and develop positive relationships with the staff who understand and respond to their needs.

They should clearly understand what is expected of them, their rights to make choices about going out or leaving the home, and the importance of letting staff know where they are so that their safety and wellbeing can be supported, if appropriate and proportionate. Staff must support autonomy and independence while ensuring welfare and safeguarding duties are met.

For young adults, any restriction on movement must be necessary, proportionate and lawful, taking account of their capacity to make the relevant decision. A

safeguarding plan may set out how staff will respond to risks but does not itself authorise a deprivation of liberty, and where a deprivation of liberty is required, appropriate legal authorisation must be in place. Staff will encourage communication and responsible decision-making while respecting their right to freedom and choice.

If patterns of absence or missing episodes develop, the RSM will review culture and strategy within the home, update risk assessments, and consult with relevant professionals. The appropriate and suitable location review for each provision must be read in conjunction with this policy, as it identifies potential risks or triggers that may lead to a person going missing.

4 DEFINITIONS

Missing

A young adult whose whereabouts are unknown and whose absence gives cause for concern for their safety or wellbeing, or where there may be danger to others.

Absent Without Agreement

A young adult who is absent for a short time, where their location is known or thought to be known, and where there is no immediate concern for safety. Such absence should still be recorded and monitored.

Absconded

A young adult who is a missing while subject to a legal order or requirement, such as bail, curfew, or deprivation of liberty authorisation, the breach of which may require police involvement.

5 ASSESSING LEVELS OF CONCERN

The following criteria will assist staff in determining whether a young adult who is absent or missing should be considered as high risk or medium risk. Judgements must always take account of individual care, personal history and current circumstances:

HIGH RISK **A Young adult is automatically High Risk in the following circumstances**
• If the young adult is **Remanded**, **Lawfully Detained**, or subject to a **deprivation of liberty authorisation** and leave without authorisation, they are considered to have absconded; • There is reason to believe that death or serious injury may occur; • There is an immediate risk of serious harm, e.g. from adverse weather conditions or the inability to stay safe; • The young adult requires essential medication or urgent medical attention; • There is evidence or likelihood that the young adult will suffer Significant Harm; • The young adult may come into contact with a person who may pose them a risk or who may exploit or coerce them; • The young adult may be injured, including self-injury, and require medical attention; • There is a warrant for the young adult's arrest, or they are subject to bail or license conditions that have been breached; • The young adult may commit a violent or criminal offence while absent; • There is an indication of abduction or unlawful removal; • Or where an adult safeguarding plan, court of protection order, or DoLS authorisation indicates high risk;

OTHER RISK FACTORS

These are risks/indicators that should be considered when assessing other young adults, who do not automatically fall into the High-Risk Category

Time Factors:

Risks must be (re) assessed every two hours or if circumstances change;

If a young adult categorised as **Low Risk** has been Absent or Missing for 6 Hours s/he is automatically categorised as **Medium Risk**;

If a young adult categorised as **Medium Risk** has been Absent or Missing for 6 Hours s/he is automatically categorised as **High Risk**.

Other Risk Factors that must be considered when assessing the risks to the young adult or others:

- Any guidance agreed within the young adult's risk assessments and care plan;
- Vulnerability due to age, maturity, level of understanding;
- Particularly vulnerable young adult;
- In need of regular medication (e.g. insulin dependent diabetes);
- Previous history of being missing;
- History of self-harm, suicidal thoughts or mental-health crisis;
- Possible involvement in, or exposure to, crime;
- Current physical or mental health concerns;
- Environmental factors such as severe weather, isolation or unsafe locations;
- Dependency on drugs and/or alcohol;
- Known vulnerability of the young adult, raising concern that they may have been led into danger, including sexual exploitation;
- Known associates who present risk (e.g. involvement in offending, exploitation or substance misuse);
- Degree of risk to the public;
- Recent significant events, contributory factors and the young adults state of mind at the time of the absence;
- Time of day/night;
- Length of time living at the establishment;
- Legal status or current orders;
- Access to technology, transport or mobile phone;
- Access to money, debit or credit cards;

6 PROCEDURES

All young adults supported by SES Kite are entitled to freedom of movement and to make their own choices wherever this can be done safely. However, some may face risks if they leave without informing staff – including exploitation, harm from others, or deterioration in their physical or mental health. Staff must therefore maintain consistent communication with every individual, understand their patterns, routines and emotional needs, and respond quickly if contact cannot be made.

For young adults, any intervention must respect liberty and capacity while fulfilling our duty of care under the Care Act 2014 and Mental Capacity Act 2005.

Once it is certain that a person has left the home and not returned or made expected contact, the RSM or on-call senior staff must be informed immediately. They will decide how best to respond based on the known facts and risk indicators. Above all, staff must act calmly and professionally, providing accurate information and avoiding panic or blame.

In some circumstances it may be advisable to allow a short period for the young adult to have space or regain composure before intervening. In others, if the young adult is believed to be at risk of significant harm, staff may need to take immediate action to ensure their safety. This may include searching the immediate or local area, where it is safe to do so. Searches beyond the local vicinity must only occur with the approval of the RSM. Staff should only follow a person when there is a reasonable chance of returning them safely, without creating distress or leaving others unsupervised.

If the decision is made that the level of concern is medium or high risk (as outlined in section 5), the staff member, in liaison with the RSM, must contact the police and inform the placing authority, social worker or funding body without delay.

6.1 PHOTOGRAPHS

Two recent (dated) photographs of the young adult (face and full body length) should be held on the young adult's care plan (including electronic and physical copies). Digital photographs are preferable and they should be regularly updated at a minimum frequency of six months. Should a young adult go missing it is vital to the safe recovery of the young adult that a recent photograph of them is made available.

On admission, staff should explain why a recent photograph may be needed if the young adult goes missing, seek their agreement to taking and holding it for that purpose, and record their wishes. If the young adult lacks capacity to make that decision, staff must make and record a best interest's decision. If the young adult goes missing, lack of advance agreement must not prevent staff from sharing an available photograph with the police where this is necessary and lawful to help protect them, and the reason for sharing must be recorded.

The RSM will ensure this requirement is met in a way that avoids stigma and protects dignity. Every young adult must be made aware of what will happen if they are reported missing, and will be offered access to advocacy if they wish to discuss

concerns or influencing factors related to the absence. Information leaflets and contact details for advocacy and support services must be available and explained as part of admission.

Photographs must not be used for any other purpose without the individual's informed consent, unless required by law or in the person's best interests for safeguarding reasons.

7 ACTIONS ON A YOUNG ADULT'S RETURN

Once the young adult has returned safely to the home or supported accommodation, staff must respond in a calm and supportive manner. The priority is to re-establish a sense of safety and belonging and to ensure they are not made to feel blamed or punished for their absence.

If the young adult had been reported as missing to the police, staff must inform the police promptly when they return. The young adult's placing authority, social worker or personal advisor, and any relevant representative should also be informed as appropriate. The police will decide when to close their missing-person report. The RSM or First Port of Call will ensure SES Kite's internal missing persons record remains open until the necessary welfare checks, recording and follow-up actions have been completed.

The young adult must be offered food and a hot drink if they have missed a meal or have been absent for a number of hours. Staff should undertake a brief welfare check to establish whether they require medical attention or other immediate support. If there are any signs they have been harmed or are in distress, staff should immediately seek medical advice or assistance from emergency services.

Staff should take time to speak with the young adult, in a calm and non-judgemental manner, to understand what led to the absence, what happened while they were away, and whether they feel safe to remain in the home. This discussion should be recorded accurately, and any safeguarding concerns must be reported without delay.

All facts associated with the absence must be documented in detail. The record should include:

- Actions taken by staff during the absence;
- The circumstances of the young adult's return;
- Any reasons offered for leaving;
- Action taken in light of those reasons;
- Evidence that a follow-up meeting or missing from care review has taken place or be requested;

This conversation should allow the young adult to talk freely about the reasons for leaving and any ongoing worries they may have. Where appropriate, an advocate or other professional may be involved at the young adult's request. All details of the visit must be recorded on the Serious Incident Form. If this does not take place, a

record must be made of the reasons why and of any steps taken by SES Kite staff to facilitate it.

Where a person is persistently absent or at continuing risk of significant harm, the RSM should request a risk management meeting with the placing authority and other professionals to agree a multi-agency strategy for reducing risk.

If it becomes apparent the young adult has been the victim of a crime, or they may be in danger from any person or situation that occurred while they were missing, the police must be informed immediately. This is essential for both protection and for securing any evidence.

Any disclosure that the person left because of abuse, neglect or fear must be referred straight away to the local safeguarding authority for consideration under the Safeguarding Adults procedures.

The DSL, as the CQC registered manager, must assess whether a missing episode requires notification to CQC. Where an incident connected with the young adult's absence is reported to or investigated by the police, CQC must be notified without delay if the incident occurred while the regulated service was being provided or as a consequence of it. The DSL must also consider whether another notification category applies, such as abuse, an allegation of abuse or a serious injury. The decision and reasons must be recorded, together with the date and reference number of any notification made.

Every person who has been reported missing must be offered an opportunity for a return conversation. This is a chance for them to talk about what happened, to identify any issues that contributed to the absence, and to agree what support might help prevent recurrence.

The purpose of this discussion is to:

- Identify the factors leading to the missing episode;
- Inform future care and risk-management planning;
- Learn about any activities, contacts or experiences that placed the young adult at risk;
- Build understanding and trust between the young adult and the staff supporting them;

Wherever possible, the conversation should be conducted by someone with whom the young adult feels comfortable, and a record of outcomes must be made on the person's care record.

8 PREVENTION OF IMPROPER ABSENCE

SES Kite provides safe and stable environments that supports young adults to develop positive relationships, confidence and a sense of belonging. Preventing missing episodes begins with understanding each young adult's story, strengths, vulnerabilities and ensuring they feel respected and heard.

Preventative practice includes:

- Highly personalised care tailored to individual needs;
- Building trust through consistent keywork and mentoring sessions;
- PAN (My Journey) documents;
- Holding regular house meetings to encourage open communication;
- Promotion of family and community links wherever safe and appropriate;
- Individual therapeutic approaches as appropriate to the young adult
- Opportunities to discuss concerns with key staff in privacy
- Proactive measures for dealing with any occurrences of bullying, conflict or isolation are addressed quickly and sensitively;
- Access to advice and guidance from staff when needed;

Staff should take every opportunity to support young adults to understand how to manage risk, make safe choices, and seek help when they are worried. Positive, trusting relationships between staff and young adults remain the most effective means of preventing people from going missing.

The RSM will monitor incidents and trends as part of quality assurance and will take action to address any emerging patterns, training needs or environmental factors that may contribute to missing persons.

9 SUPPORTING YOUNG ADULTS TO SEEK HELP IF MISSING

Despite the best preventive efforts, there may be times when a young adult becomes missing. Staff must ensure that everyone supported by SES Kite understands the risks of being missing and knows how to seek help if they feel unsafe or unable to return.

All young adults should be given information about support services during their admission and reminded of these whenever appropriate. These include:

Missing People Helpline – 116 000 (Free calls from 10am-5pm, texts from 10am-10pm, Confidential)
Email: 116000@missingpeople.org.uk

Adult Safeguarding Team contact information

Police 999/101

Local Advocacy and Independent Mental Capacity Advocacy (IMCA) services (if applicable)

For young adults who may become disoriented or vulnerable due to cognitive or health conditions, SES Kite will use the Herbert Protocol, in partnerships with Suffolk Police, to assist with prompt location and safe return.

Staff must ensure that information about these services is clearly displayed in communal areas and that everyone understands how they can access help if

needed. Discussions about personal safety and available support should form part of regular keywork sessions.