

# The police investigation

### Why are the police looking for me?

Adults over the age of 18 have a right to go missing, unless they have been detained ('sectioned') under the Mental Health Act, or are legally in the care of another person. However if you are reported missing, the police have a legal obligation to ensure that you are safe. To do this, they need to make contact with you and ensure you are safe and are not at risk of coming to any harm. The police do not want to force you to go home, they simply want to make sure you are safe and well.

### What will the police do to look for me?

The extent of the police search and the way they conduct their investigation will depend on how much risk or danger they believe you to be at. If you have gone missing in what they consider suspicious or unexplained circumstances and are worried about your safety, the search may be quite broad and could include a detailed search of the area from which you left. In other situations, where the police do not believe you to be at risk their search may be less active.

In either case, the police may ask Missing People to make and distribute posters to be displayed in the area that you went missing from or an area they think you may have gone to, they may also launch their own appeals.

To read more about how to stop the police and Missing People searching for you please read our guidance sheet [How can I stop people looking for me?](#) (You can download this from the [Adult Guidance homepage](#))

### How can I stop the police looking for me?

The police will close their investigations once they have ensured that you are safe and not in danger. In order to do this the police must undertake a Safe and Well Check. They will not close their investigation until they are satisfied that this has been completed.

Safe and Well checks can often be quick and simple. If you are an adult, and not in the legal care of someone else, you may simply be able to walk into a police station front office or call the police on their non-emergency number 101 to arrange to meet the police somewhere for them to do their check. Remember, being missing does not mean you are in trouble with the police. For further information on safe and well checks please read our

guidance sheet [How can I stop people looking for me?](#) (You can download this from the [Adult Guidance homepage](#))

### **Will I be arrested or in trouble?**

Going missing is not an offence and is a legal right for adults over the age of 18 (unless detained ('sectioned') under the Mental Health Act, or legally in the care of another person) therefore if you are not wanted for a crime the police will not arrest you, they will simply wish to ensure you are safe so that they can stop looking for you.

### **What if I am wanted for a crime?**

If you have committed a crime before or during the time when you went missing, the police may need to talk to you about this. However in some circumstances the police may consider their concern for you as a missing person to outweigh their wish to speak to you about any offence you may have committed. This will depend on your individual circumstances and the particular offence.

If you are concerned the police may arrest you if you call in to a police station, Missing People can connect you to a three-way call so you can speak with a police officer who may be able to advise you what action the police are likely to take. All three-way calls are entirely confidential and neither the police nor Missing People will be able to trace your call.

### **Will the police tell my family?**

If your family has reported you missing the police will inform them that they have spoken with you and performed a safe and well check. The police will explain that they have had contact with you and they have therefore closed their missing person investigation. The objective of the police is not to force you to go home; it is simply to ensure that you are safe and well. They will not tell your family where you are or where you have been if you don't want them to. If you wish to pass a message on to your family, the police may be able to do this. Missing People can also pass messages between you and your family via our confidential [Message Home](#) service.

This guidance has been produced with the kind assistance of the Missing Persons Bureau

**116 000** is the number for advice, support, help and options if you, or someone you care about goes missing. Call or text the charity Missing People on 116 000 - it's free, 24 hour and confidential. You can also email us at [116000@missingpeople.org.uk](mailto:116000@missingpeople.org.uk) for advice and support