

Missing Definitions

It is important to understand that the terms missing, absent, high and medium risk, have specific meanings in practice.

- **Child:** *'anyone who has not yet reached their 18th birthday. 'Children' therefore means 'children and young people'...'*
- **Young runaway:** *'a child who has run away from their home of care placement, or feels they have been forced or lured to leave.'*
- **Missing child:** *'a child reported as missing to the police by their family or carers.'*
- **Looked after child:** *'a child who is looked after by a local authority by reason of a care order, or being accommodated under section 20 of the Children Act 1989.'* In Essex, Family Operations refers to all of these children as *'children in care'*.
- **Responsible local authority:** *'the local authority that is responsible for a looked after child's care and care planning.'*
- **Host local authority:** *'the local authority in which a looked after child is placed when placed out of the responsible local authority's area.'*
- **Care leaver:** *'an eligible, relevant or former relevant child as defined by the Children Act 1989.'*
- **Missing from care:** *'a looked after child who is not at their placement or the place they are expected to be (eg, school) and their whereabouts is not known.'*
- **Away from placement without authorisation:** *'a looked after child [child in care] whose whereabouts is known but who is not at their placement or place they are expected to be and the carer has concerns or the incident has been notified to the local authority or the police.'*

In addition, the Police use the following definitions:

- **Missing:** *'Anyone whose whereabouts cannot be established and where the circumstances are out of character or the context suggests the person may be subject of crime or at risk of harm to themselves or another.'*
- **High Risk:** *'a risk that is immediate and there are substantial grounds for believing that the subject is in danger through their own vulnerability; or may have been the victim of a serious crime; or the risk posed is immediate and there are substantial grounds for believing that the public is in danger.'*
- **Medium Risk:** *'the risk posed is likely to place the subject in danger or they are a threat to themselves or others.'*
- **Absent:** *'A person not at a place where they are expected or required to be.'*