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## 12.10 Lost and Found Children

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### INTRODUCTION

1. All adults who, as part of their operational activities, come into contact with children and young people have a duty of care to safeguard and promote their welfare. You must always act, and be seen to act, in the child's best interests.

### SUPPLEMENTARY READING

2. The following information supports this particular document and its contents:

- ✓ Safeguarding – Section 10.1
- ✓ Watchkeeping – Section 12.1
- ✓ Incident Reporting – Section 12.3A and 12.3B

### DEALING WITH LOST CHILDREN

3. As soon as a lost child is reported to you, you must immediately contact the police and HMCG using the 999 service, and pass the minimum details required to aid swift recovery:

- child's name
- time and place where the lost child was last seen
- a physical description of the child (age, sex, ethnicity, height, build, hair colour, wearing spectacles . . .)
- what clothing they were wearing
- whether the lost child has a disability or requires (regular) medication

Request that the informant remains at the Station, as the police/ coastguard will need to speak with them personally.

4. Although you cannot detain the person(s) who reported the lost child, you must do your utmost to keep them at the Station until the police and/or HMCG arrives. Giving them a pair of binoculars to help search the area will encourage them to feel they are doing something constructive.
5. In addition to the details taken in para 3 above, obtain and record in the Logbook as much of the following information as possible:
  - day, date and time the report is received
  - home address (and holiday address if relevant) of the lost child
  - home and holiday phone/mobile numbers
  - relationship of the reporting person to the lost child
  - reporting person's address, phone/mobile number(s)
  - any other significant information (day tripper, first language spoken)
6. You must not leave your Station to search for lost children.

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## 12.10 Lost and Found Children

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### DEALING WITH FOUND CHILDREN

7. If children come to the station and say they are lost/cannot find their parents/guardian, or if an adult brings a 'found' child to the Station, you must immediately contact the police and HMCG using the 999 service.
8. Wherever possible, avoid being left alone with the child and encourage whoever has brought them to the Station to stay until the police/HMCG arrive. If the finder refuses to stay or to provide information, record in the Logbook a full description of them and the direction they took on leaving.
9. Where cameras have been installed to record internal Station activities, ensure as far as is possible, that you and the child remain within the field of view. Activate the voice recording device if the Station has this facility.
10. Reassure the child that you are organising help for them.
11. There may be occasions, particularly with young children, when the child is in obvious distress. It is most important that you are circumspect when offering reassurance, and that you provide any comfort in an age-appropriate way. Always clarify first that the child wishes to be helped in the way you are suggesting; always maintain clear professional boundaries. Physical contact with the child should be avoided where possible.
12. Then obtain and record in the Logbook as much of the following information as possible:
  - name, address and contact details of the finder
  - day, date and time
  - name, address of the child and phone/mobile number(s)
  - a physical description of the child (perceived age, sex, ethnicity, height, build, hair colour, wearing spectacles . . .)
  - their emotional state and any statements/comments they make
  - any injuries or marks seen, but without touching them
13. Do not:
  - render first aid, unless there appears to be a life-threatening situation
  - give the child food or drink
  - repatriate the child/vulnerable adult with anyone claiming to be a relation, guardian or friend until the police have arrived

### WHAT TO DO IF YOU ARE WORRIED A CHILD IS BEING ABUSED

14. Everyone working with children and young people should be familiar with local procedures and protocols for safeguarding the welfare of children and young people in their area. Watchkeepers must report any child protection or welfare concerns to their Station Manager, who will report any concerns to the local social care office.