

AWOL/Absconder Patients

Responsibility for the safe return of AWOL patients rests with the detaining hospital. However, detained patients may be taken into custody and returned by:

- An approved mental health professional
- Any member of the hospital staff
- Anyone authorised in writing by the hospital managers
- A police officer

Entry cannot be forced to premises for this purpose and a warrant under the Mental Health Act 1983 section 135(2) is required if consent to enter premises is not provided.

The police should be informed if an AWOL patient is one of the following:

- Dangerous
- Particularly vulnerable
- Subject to part III of the Mental Health Act 1983

Absconder/Hospital Walkouts

Unless a patient lacks capacity, there is no legal framework to return the patient.