

<http://www.tscb.org.uk/missing-from-care.html> (Missing from care procedures)

Children and Young People Who Go Missing from Care

Introduction

Going missing is a dangerous activity. A child or young person who goes missing just once faces the same immediate risks as faced by a child or young person who regularly goes missing. However, children who go missing when they are young (and/or more frequently) are more likely to face longer-term problems.

This joint protocol has been created to assist in developing a robust joined up multi - agency response. It should be read and implemented, when required, by all practitioners and managers working with children or young people who are at risk of going missing from home or care or who are already doing so.

The procedures aim to aid early identification of risk and vulnerability; assist in the investigation and tracing of the missing person and make valuable use of any information received from the return to care and "independent interview" to prevent further incidents. The most effective assessment and support comes through good information sharing, joint assessments of need, joint planning, professional trust between agencies and joint action in partnership with families.

Research has shown that every year approximately 77,000 under 16 year olds go missing overnight in England. Peak ages for going missing are between 13 and 16 year old and a quarter are under 11 years old (Children's Society, Still Running 1999/ Social Exclusion Unit [SEU], 2002).

Why Children go Missing

The Children's Society through its research has identified the following risk factors that can precede a missing incident:

- Arguments and conflicts.
- Poor family relationships.
- Physical and emotional abuse (including Domestic Violence).
- Step parent issues.
- Boundaries and control.

The Common Assessment Framework (CAF) is key to assisting agencies to identify and respond effectively to these risk factors and going missing should be seriously considered as a possible outcome, and appropriate support put in place to prevent any potential missing incidents.

Although in many cases young people who go missing from home are already known to agencies and in receipt of support before they run away, all agencies need to be able to recognise and respond to risk factors that could lead to missing incidents.

The immediate risks associated with going missing include:

- No means of support or legitimate income – leading to high risk activities.
- Involvement in criminal activities.
- Victim of Abuse.
- Victim of crime, for example through sexual assault and exploitation.
- Alcohol/substance misuse.

- Deterioration of physical and mental health.
- Missing out on schooling and education
- Increased vulnerability.

Longer-term risks include:

- long-term drug dependency / alcohol dependency.
- crime.
- homelessness.
- disengagement from education.
- child sexual exploitation.
- poor physical and/or mental health

The introduction of parenting work has significantly improved the comprehensive intervention on offer and parents report this has reduced the number of runaway incidents.

Local Context

Over 5000 children and young people go missing each year in Greater Manchester . More than 3,500 of the total incidents are first time runaways with over 800 of those children aged under 11. Research suggests that looked after children are three times more likely to go missing than children living at home, and children living in 'other family forms' (living with relatives, grandparents, or other adults) are five times more likely to go missing than children living with birth parents.

Definitions

The following definitions apply to this protocol and relate to children and young people under 18 years old who go or have gone missing. The definition of running away is taken from the SEU Young Runaways report (2002) and includes reference to young people whoself-define running away as being forced to leave because, for example, they do not believe they have any alternative.

Missing Person - ACPO Definition:

"A missing person is anyone whose whereabouts are unknown, whatever the circumstances of disappearance. He or she will be considered missing until located and his or her well being, or otherwise, established."

Runaway:

A child or young person, who is absent from their home or placement without permission for any length of time where their age and experience, background and ability make this a concern or who has been forced to leave by their parents or carers.

Looked After Child or Young Person:

A child is looked after by a local authority if s/he is "in care" by reason of a court order, or if s/he is provided with accommodation for more than 24 hours by agreement with her/his parents or with the child if s/he is aged 16 or more.

- If the child is subject to a Care Order or Interim Care Order (Section 31 of the Children Act, 1989), then Children's Services acquire parental responsibility and become a legal parent alongside the parent/guardian.
- If the child is accommodated under S20 of the Children Act 1989, s/he is looked after by the Local Authority with the voluntary agreement of his/her parents, or with the child if s/he is over 16 years old. Parental responsibility remains with the parent/guardian.

Child:

A child or young person under the age of eighteen years.

Police SPOC:

Single Point of Contact.

Unauthorised absence ACPO definition:

Absent for a short period of time and after a careful and thorough risk assessment the absence does not raise concern for their immediate safety or that of the public. In accordance with the ACPO Manual of Guidance 2005 this period of absence should not exceed 6 hours.

Absconded:

When a child or young person has gone missing who is subject to an order or requirement resulting from the criminal justice process (e.g. remands, curfews, tagging, conditions of residence, ASBOs) or a secure order made in either civil or criminal proceedings. A young person in this category must be reported to the police without delay. Police must be made aware of the order under which the child has been placed in the residence and the expiry date of the order for the child to be classified as an absconder. If the expiry date of the order is not known, the child or young person will be classified as a "missing person" not an absconder.

Scope

The procedure is designed for:

- All children and young people under 18 who go missing from the parental home.
- Children and young people "Looked After" by Trafford Borough Council (TBC) placed
 - in Local Authority Children's Homes within the authority's boundaries.
 - with Local Authority foster carers within the authority's boundaries.
 - in private establishments or with agency foster carers within the authority's boundaries and where compliance with the procedure is specified in the contract or placement agreement.
 - Children and young people resident in children's homes controlled by private care providers having been placed there by other Local Authorities / Children & Young People's Services outside of the TBC area.

Social Care staff should follow this protocol for children and young people "Looked After" by Trafford placed outside of the authority's boundary. In other authorities, there will be a local protocol with the police. This protocol is in line with the Pan Greater Manchester Protocol/Procedures and therefore reflects practice across the Greater Manchester authorities.

These procedures should be read as guidance, which cannot anticipate every situation. All agencies should use their professional knowledge and judgement to take any action that is deemed necessary to safeguard the child/young person, based on an assessment of risk for each individual child.

Principles

Any missing episode is potentially serious, one runaway is one too many. Every "missing" episode should attract proper attention from the professionals involved, who must collaborate to ensure a consistent and coherent response is given to the child on his/her return.

Every Individual has a duty to inform the authorities if a child is missing.

Effective interventions are best achieved by partnership working, information sharing, problem solving and performance management.

Prevention work relating to children going missing is of paramount importance. The prevention of children and young people going missing requires an integrated multi agency approach and existing prevention strategies will need to include this risk factor and include:

- Awareness and training for all professionals.
- Awareness and safety sessions for young people via curriculum opportunities.
- Multi agency assessment procedures, including CAF, should include the risk indicators for running away.
- Consistent implementation of this protocol and procedures across all agencies.

- Monitoring of compliance with the protocol and the monitoring of outcomes through quarterly performance reports.
- Support to parents via the Family Engagement Strategy for Trafford.
- Use of existing legislation such as Section 2 of the Child Abduction Act 1984.

Procedures for a Child Missing from Home

These procedures detail the roles and responsibilities of agencies, and the circumstances in which it will be appropriate to refer a child or young person to the local authority for an initial child in need assessment.

For the purposes of these procedures, "home" is defined as the permanent residence of family, relatives and friends. "Parent" is defined as parents and carers, including friends, relatives, and private foster carers, as applicable.

Planning Before the Event/Prevention

Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children is a shared responsibility and depends upon joint working between agencies and professionals.

The Common Assessment Framework (CAF) is key to assisting agencies who are providing services for children to identify and respond effectively to these risk factors and going missing should be seriously considered as a possible outcome, and appropriate support put in place to prevent any potential missing incidents.

Responsibility of Parents/Carers

Parents (and carers) are expected to undertake the basic measures to try and locate their child if considered safe to do so:

- Search bedroom / house / outbuildings / vehicles.
- Contact known friends and relatives where child/ young person may be.
- Visit locations that the child is known to frequent, if it is safe to do so.

Parents and anyone who has care of a child without parental responsibility should take all reasonable steps to locate the child/young person and ascertain their safety. It would be considered a reasonable step for parents to inform the police and Children's Social Care that their child is missing.

Anyone who has care of a child without parental knowledge or agreement should do what is reasonable to safeguard and promote the child's/young person's welfare. In these circumstances, they should inform the police, Children's Social Care and the parents of the child/young person of their whereabouts and safety. If this is not complied with, the Police could consider advice or warning under the Child Abduction Act, if appropriate.

Anyone who 'takes or detains' a runaway under 16 without lawful authority may be prosecuted under Section 2 of the Child Abduction Act 1984.

It is important to understand that children and young people, who go missing under the age of 16 are not legally considered as being able to live independently away from home. For children and young people over the age of 16, consideration should be given to their physical and emotional needs when making a judgment as to whether they can live independently away from home.

All Agencies / Members of the Public

If it comes to the attention of any agency (including voluntary organisations) that a young person is missing from home, they must:

- Advise the parent / carer of the organisation's duty to ensure that the matter is reported to the police, who will ensure procedures are activated, and if necessary follow this up by contacting the police to verify the reporting by the parent / carer has occurred.

The consent of a person with parental responsibility will be sought for a photograph to be used in any subsequent missing person investigation. If possible the consent of the child/ young person should be gained.

Police Response to Report of a Missing Child/Young Person

See Section 7 Role of Police

Quick Reference Guide – Missing From Home Address

Parents identify time by which the child should be in the address. Parents will be expected to make enquiries to locate the missing person with relatives / friends. This should include searches of the residence and local area.

Parents should then telephone police with details of the missing person:

Details Required: Child's name / D.O.B. / Where, when and who missing with? / What the child was last wearing / Description of the young person / Recent photo / Medical History / Time & Location where last seen. All efforts to locate the child / young person must be recorded and auditable.

Greater Manchester Police

GMP Officers to conduct a Risk Assessment which will form the basis for resulting proportionate actions. Enquiries are then ongoing.

Sharing of information between the Police, Parents and other agencies as appropriate.

MISSING PERSON is located or returns to home address

When a missing child is located by family or friends etc, it is their responsibility to return the child to the home address. Where a risk is present, a police officer may accompany the family or the police may be requested to collect and return the child/young person to the place of residence. Parents must inform the police when a child returns of their own accord.

The Police will conduct a return "1-10" interview to establish missing persons well being, and safety and to establish whether they were the victim of crime or abuse whilst missing.

The Police will refer the child or young person to Children's Services Social Care for Initial Assessment via the Divisional SPOC. The Divisional SPOC will liaise with the PPIU to confirm receipt and agree action. In some cases it may also be appropriate for the Police to also refer the child or young person to the Safe In The City project.

Consideration should also be given, dependant upon intelligence gained from the return interview, for other children or young people in the same residence to be referred to Children's Services.

Procedures for a Child Looked After

Planning Before the Event

Notifying of New Children's Homes

All care providers, both local authority and private sector, are required to inform the local police of any new children's homes being established within Divisional Boundaries prior to the placement of any children and young people. This will enable local policing procedures/policies to be prepared should children subsequently be reported missing from such an address.

The Care Plan

Prior to each accommodation arrangement for a looked after child, the social worker must consider within the care planning process all potential risks to the child including an assessment of the potential for them to go missing. The child and her/his parent/carer (if appropriate) should be involved in the assessment and planning process. "Missing from home episodes" prior to the child becoming "looked after" need to be taken into account during the assessment and care planning.

All relevant information should be included in the placement plan and in the child's care plan. Where there is a risk of a child going missing, the placement plan and care plan should include intervention strategies to

prevent the child from going missing. A Missing From Care Risk Assessment and Action Plan should also be completed (see Appendix 1) which details action to be taken by carers and prevention strategies. As part of this assessment it may be appropriate to consult with the police to share information that may be of relevance. The Police Missing From Home Officer (SPOC) may be consulted for advice in relation to the action plan.

Risk Assessment

Individual risk assessments are an essential part of this procedure. They will enable staff/carers to be clear what the risks are for the particular child or young person and/or the risks they pose for the public.

The Missing From Care Risk Assessment and Action Plan (Appendix 1) in this procedure should be completed for all children in residential care and for children in foster care where a risk of running away is identified, or after the first occasion when a young person has run away.

The Missing From Care Risk Assessment should be used as a guide, to encourage discussion and to help bring together information. An accurate and current risk assessment will assist staff to decide a category of absence, inform the timing of reporting children and young people missing to the police and enable the fullest and most accurate information to be shared with the police and other concerned agencies.

The risk assessment should include:

- what is the risk that the child or young person might go missing?
- what risks might the child or young person or public face if they do go missing?
- with whom is it permissible for them to stay overnight and in what circumstances?

It is important not to dismiss the significance of multiple episodes of running away or going missing by a child or young person. It should be noted that children who repeatedly go missing are at greater risk of vulnerability.

The Risk Assessment and Action Plan should be completed prior to a planned placement within the placement planning meeting. In emergency placements, it should be completed at the earliest opportunity and no later than 3 working days following the placement. The meeting should always include the carer and Social Worker, also Family Placement Officer when applicable. The meeting will usually also include the young person and her/his parents unless this is deemed inappropriate (e.g. where issues of risk or non-engagement preclude this). If issues are complex, consider consultation with the Police Missing from Home Officer. The Risk Assessment should be reviewed regularly, at minimum every 6 months. It should be included in the child or young person's care plan, and considered at each Looked After Review.

Photographs

Should a child/ young person go missing it is vital to the safe recovery of the child that a recent photograph of the child is made available. The photograph must be a good likeness of the child/young person, and the date the photograph was taken should be endorsed on the back of it to identify its relevance to the enquiry. The photograph will be used by the police to help them identify the child or young person whilst conducting enquiries. In very serious cases, where the child is believed to be at severe risk, the police and local authority may decide to use the photograph more widely, including publishing the photograph to national or local media, and circulation on the Police / ICMEC www.missingkids.co.uk website.

On admission to care, the consent of a person with parental responsibility will be sought for a photograph to be used in any subsequent missing person investigation. If possible the consent of the child/ young person should be gained.

When a Looked After Child goes missing

When a child or young person goes missing from care it is expected that carers will act in the capacity as a 'good parent'. They should act to encourage him/her to return as quickly and safely as possible, ensuring s/he is treated positively on return.

This means that:

- Every reasonable effort will be made to locate the child/ young person, both prior to them being reported to the police and throughout the enquiry.
- Children and young people will not be reported missing as a behaviour management tool.
- On return, children/ young people will be given care and support with their immediate needs being met i.e. offered a hot drink, food and medical attention.

- Children and young people will be given the opportunity to talk about their experiences and their concerns taken seriously.
- When the child or young person returns other than with a police officer, the police must be informed that the child has been located.

Circumstances of a Child or Young Person's Absence

If a child is absent from care the Local Authority need to decide which of the three categories the absence fits: unauthorised absence, missing or absconder.

Children and young people who are absent from their care placement can be a matter of considerable concern to their carers and there is a need to locate them and ensure they are safe. Young people can be thought of as on a continuum, with little cause for concern at one end and significant cause for concern at the other. Children and young people who are a few minutes late home from school would not normally give rise to concerns; they have missed the bus, or they may be exhibiting normal adolescent testing out to establish the boundaries of acceptable behaviour or to show their disagreement with aspects of their placement. It is not helpful to consider every momentary absence as warranting a formal missing person report, and such instances should be considered as unauthorised absences.

However, at some point, depending upon the young person and the circumstances, their absence will give rise to justifiable concern and require a formal missing person report to the police. Whilst there can be no substitute for a considered judgement, based on a sound assessment of the young person and the circumstances, it is the purpose of this framework to assist carers and workers to structure their thinking with regard to the two categories of absence.

Each case must be decided on merit and a formal missing person report to the police may be actioned earlier in some circumstances than in others. Indeed for a small number of young people it may be appropriate to immediately report them as a missing person. Normally this will have been previously agreed as part of the Care Plan because of the young person's vulnerability.

The fact that the young person may have gone missing on a number of previous occasions does not reduce the risk. In fact, children who repeatedly go missing are often being enticed away from their placement by activities that they see as exciting or by predatory influences. Furthermore, short absences may be as risky as lengthy ones.

In deciding the category of absence, all staff must consider the circumstances of the child/ young person and their absence. See the Missing From Care Risk Assessment (Appendix 1) for risk indicators to consider.

Unauthorised Absence

There are a number of situations where young people will be considered absent without authority, most commonly when young people are accidentally or deliberately late home to the placement or when their whereabouts are known and do not jeopardise their safety or well-being. Here, as with lateness, it is not usually expected that the first response of a carer will be to report the young person as missing to the police. Before doing so, the carer should, within the constraints of the care setting, take the steps a responsible parent would take to try to locate the young person and persuade them to return.

If the young person's whereabouts are not known:

Aged over 12:

The carer should check the Missing From Home Risk Assessment and Action Plan. If this specifically allows the young person to be classed as "unauthorised absent" for a limited period of time, then follow the agreed action plan UNLESS there are specific current circumstances that give rise to heightened concern (consider the factors outlined in the above and the circumstances and causation factors that led to the absence, insofar as they impact upon risk to the young person). If in any doubt, report the young person missing to the Police.

A period of six hours should normally be regarded as the absolute maximum for any child whose whereabouts are not known and who cannot be contacted, to remain categorised as unauthorised absent, rather than being formally reported as missing. It will not be appropriate for any child whose whereabouts are not known and who cannot be contacted, to remain out overnight, without being formally reported as missing.

If there is no Missing From Home Risk Assessment or if the Risk Assessment does not specifically address this situation, then the young person MUST be reported as Missing to the Police. A young person with learning difficulties should be considered in relation to their level of functioning, not their chronological age.

Aged 12 and under:

Any child or young person 12 years old or under whose whereabouts are unknown will automatically be classed as missing and must be reported to the police immediately.

If the young person's whereabouts are known: the carer should refer to the Missing From Home Risk Assessment and Action Plan in relation to the action they need to take. This will inform the decision whether to allow the young person to remain at that location temporarily or to arrange for their return (foster carers should refer this to the child's Social Worker or the Out of Hours Duty Worker to make a decision). If the Action Plan is not available and the risks at the address not known, then they should contact the Police to request assistance in returning the child.

Where, initially, the decision was made that this absence should be regarded as "unauthorised" rather than "missing" (i.e. does not fall within this procedure) this decision will be reviewed regularly throughout the period of unauthorised absence (to a maximum of 6 hours) if the young person does not return or his/her whereabouts are not known.

If such a period of absence continues for 6 hours it will automatically be considered to fall within these procedures. This does not mean that the initial report should be delayed for 6 hours. This is the maximum period; and in most situations much shorter periods will be appropriate. (ACPO Manual of Guidance on the Management, Recording and Investigation of Missing Persons 2005). If the young person has not returned by the maximum cut-off point of 6 hours and there has been no agreement given for the child to remain at the location on a temporary basis, then s/he should be reported as "missing".

Arranging for the return of the child/young person

The Social Worker/Out of Hours Worker should assist carers in ensuring the child's safe return when necessary. Every effort should be made to have the young person returned to their placement without police involvement. However, Police assistance should be sought if there are safety issues, or if risks at the location are not known.

Police Powers

Police powers are limited and difficulties can arise when missing children are found but do not want to return to their placement. Any decision to use Police powers should be made in conjunction with the relevant Service Manager (Family Support or Looked After Children, or duty Service Manager if out of hours) and where appropriate with the relevant manager from the Private Care Provider.

For children who are Accommodated, where there is reasonable cause to believe that the child could suffer significant harm, the Police can take the child into Police protection and remove the child to suitable accommodation which could include the home from which the child originally went missing. The police are not given the power to use force to take children into Police protection. This is however a difficult area, with conflicting advice as to what the Police can do in terms of using reasonable force to prevent children from suffering significant harm.

For children who are subject to a Care Order or Emergency Protection Order, an application for a Recovery Order (section 50 of the Children Act 1989) may be considered.

Missing Looked After Child/Young Person

If the child or young person is missing, the relevant staff member, i.e. residential child care worker, child's social worker, duty social worker, will as soon as practical inform:

- the Police and
- the child/young person's parents/and those with parental responsibility.

If the child is missing from a foster placement, the foster carer must inform the Police and the child's social worker/Duty social worker, or the Out of Hours Service if out of hours. The Social Worker will then inform the parents. Whilst notifying the police of the absence of a child or young person is an essential part of the overall process, carers should take all the steps that they can to attempt to locate the missing child/young person, including searches of the residence, immediate searches of the local area, where possible, and making enquiries with the family and friends, when appropriate.

It is recognised that the Police will categorise the risk (high, medium or low) upon attending the residence from which the child or young person has been reported missing, taking into account other factors that are not

directly associated with the child. This categorisation will inform the level of police resource allocated to the recovery of the child.

In every case where, following consultation with the Police, the level of risk to the child is deemed to be HIGH the Social Worker, Duty Social Worker or Out of Hours worker must report the matter to the appropriate Head of Service, Trafford BC (If out of hours, the Senior Manager on call) and the Divisional Commander (Police) or their nominees.

All Agencies / Members of the public

If the whereabouts of a child missing from care comes to the attention of any agency, they must advise the police, carer and local authority of the child's whereabouts.

Information to be made available to the Police by the Carers

When reporting the matter to the Police, the following information needs to be made immediately available to the police:

- a description of the child (including description of clothing, if known);
- when the child was last seen and with whom;
- a recent photograph (including the date of the photo and confirmation that it is a true likeness of the missing person);
- the Missing From Home Risk Assessment and Action Plan details if already completed
- family addresses;
- known acquaintances;
- any previous history of running away or going missing;
- the name and address of the child's GP, school and dentist;
- circumstances which increase the risk to a child should be drawn to the attention of the Police; and
- Any health concerns and details of any medication e.g. the need for any time-based treatments eg diabetes
- Legal status of the child or young person (eg Sec 20 / Sec 31; absconder or missing)
- Legal status – who has parental responsibility?
- Any action agreed or taken.
- Length of time in current placement (if applicable)
- Overall length of time "Looked After"
- Reason for the missing person being "Looked After"
- Immediate circumstances prior to disappearance (eg phone call received, visitor etc)
- Missing person's demeanour immediately prior to disappearance (excited, anxious etc)
- When the Alerter is or has been made aware of the location of a missing person, this must also be disclosed
- Details of all actions that have already been undertaken to locate the child or young person – ie names and telephone numbers of family and friends already contacted by the residential staff in an attempt to locate the missing person. Trafford BC will ensure that sufficient information and knowledge about a looked after child/young person is recorded to enable carers to provide the information to enable the police to complete the GMP OPUS Missing Person Report – Form 737 (see Appendix 3) should the child/ young person go missing in the future. Where available, a paper version of the GMP Form 737 – OPUS Missing Person Report should be considered by the carers in advance to enable speedy reporting when required. It is not an expectation that carers should complete the form however. This will be undertaken by the Police Officer, who will also complete a search of the property and immediate vicinity.

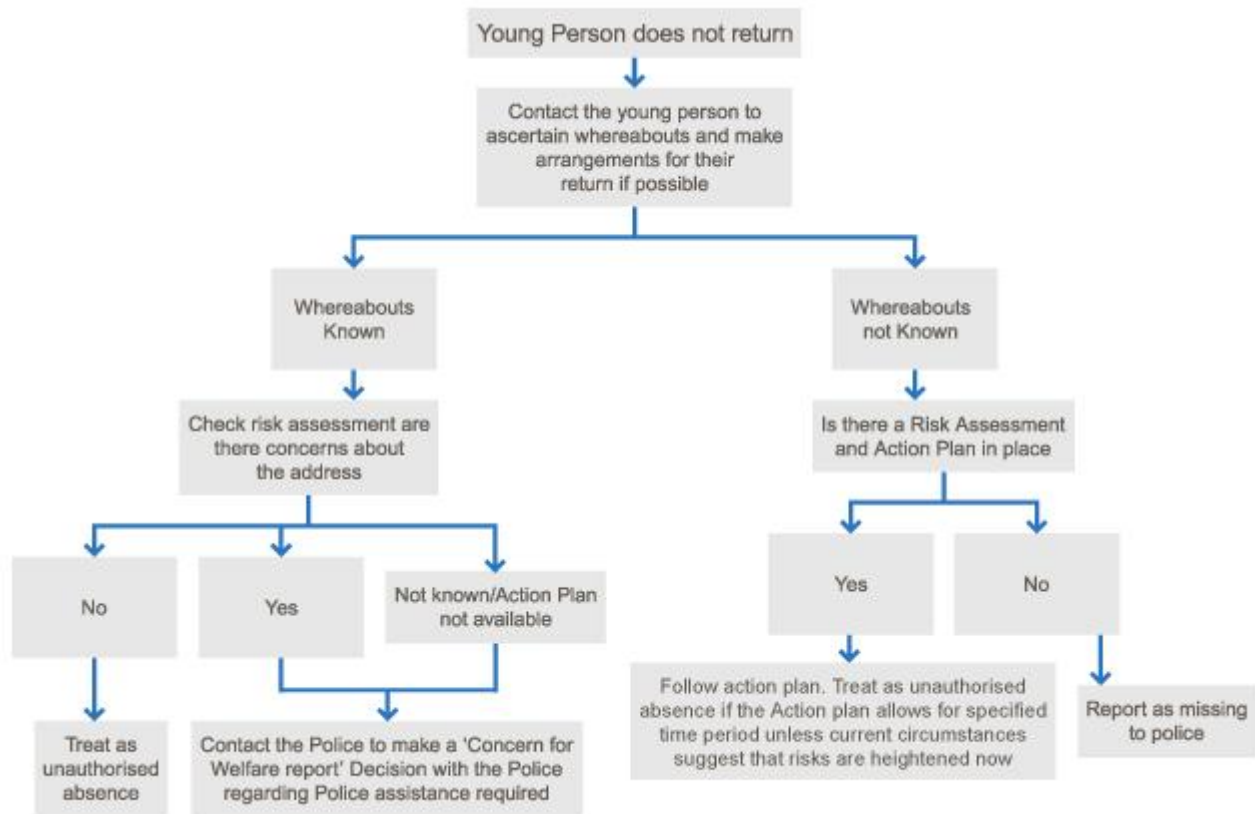
The children's home manager/foster carer should consider the most appropriate ways to meet the above requirements and should ensure that the child/ young person is made aware of what will happen if they go missing, including their right to be interviewed by an independent person on or prior to their return, and be given a choice as to who that may be. They should be given information leaflets and contact details of advocacy services / other services that they can access or that can be accessed on their behalf.

Information sharing should be carried out in accordance with information sharing principles set out in both Working Together 2006/2009, information Sharing: Practitioners' Guide (DfES 2006) and Trafford Children and Young People's Information Sharing Policy and Confidentiality Policy and Guidance (Tier 5). To access the CYPS document follow the link <http://www.trafford.gov.uk/integratedworking> and click the Information Sharing heading. Within Tier 6 there are Information Sharing Guides for parents/carers and for young people.

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Quick Reference Guide:

Immediate Decision Making When A Young Person In Care Aged 12+ Does Not Return.



STATUS	ACTION	WHO TO BE INVOLVED
Young person absent.	Wherever possible carers should locate young person. Search building and surrounding grounds. Phone friends and family to see if they know whereabouts. Consult MFC risk assessment and follow action plan.	Staff on shift at unit/foster carers.
Young person absent believed not at risk, possibly testing boundaries.	Review regularly up to timescale determined by Action Plan (maximum duration of 6 hours).	Staff on shift at unit/foster carers
Young person still absent deemed to be at risk (after reference to MFC risk assessment)	Report to Police. Social Worker/duty social worker notified as soon as practically possible. Parent or whoever has PR notified by staff/Social Worker. Unit Manager/Family Placement Worker and Out of Hours notified as soon as practically possible. If high risk, residential	Report to Police. Social Worker/duty social worker notified as soon as practically possible. Parent or whoever has PR notified by staff/Social Worker. Unit Manager/Family Placement Worker and Out of Hours notified as soon as practically possible. If high risk,

	staff/(duty)Social Worker should immediately bring to the attention of Head of Service/Out of Hours Duty Manager	residential staff/(duty)Social Worker should immediately bring to the attention of Head of Service/Out of Hours Duty Manager
Young person missing for 24 hours or more.	Unit Manager, Residential/Family Placement and Operations Manager (Social Care) /Head of Service (Children in Care) /Joint Director (Social Care) should be notified by either Unit Manager or if child in foster care, Operations Manager and school informed. Social Worker to complete movement form. Up-dates to be sent to Joint Director and Head of Children in Care Service every 24 hours by e-mail by either Unit Manager or Operations Manager.	Operations Manager (Social Care), Residential/Family Placement and Head of Children in Care Service, Joint Director(Social Care)Unit Manager, school and Social Worker.
Young person missing for 72 hours.	Missing From Home meeting called to include The Police, Social Care Operations Manager, Social Worker, RSW/foster carer, Unit manager/Family Placement Officer and, where appropriate, parent. Copies to be sent to Safeguarding Children Team and Head of Children in Care Service And Joint Director.	Operations Manager (Social Care) Unit Manager
Young person missing for 7 days.	Police place on Missing Persons Bureau. Heads of Service (Children in Care/Family Support (Social Care) and Operations Manager agree how to review the situation. Missing From Home meetings to be held weekly if young person remains missing. Missing From Home Action Plan to be updated and circulated to Heads of Service.	Operation and Unit Managers Heads of Service Joint Director (Social Care) informed by e-mail.

Role of Greater Manchester Police (GMP)

Upon receiving a report of a child or young person being absent from care or missing from home, GMP will carry out enquiries (which are proportionate to the perceived risk) aimed at locating the child/young person as soon as possible.

Whilst missing persons aged under 18 years are automatically classified as "Vulnerable Missing Persons", this is NOT an indication of risk.

A risk assessment will be carried out for each individual on every separate occasion they are reported missing to the Police. This Risk Assessment, conducted by the Initial Investigating Officer, and subsequently confirmed or revised by his or her supervising officer prior will form the basis for the subsequent investigation into the person's disappearance.

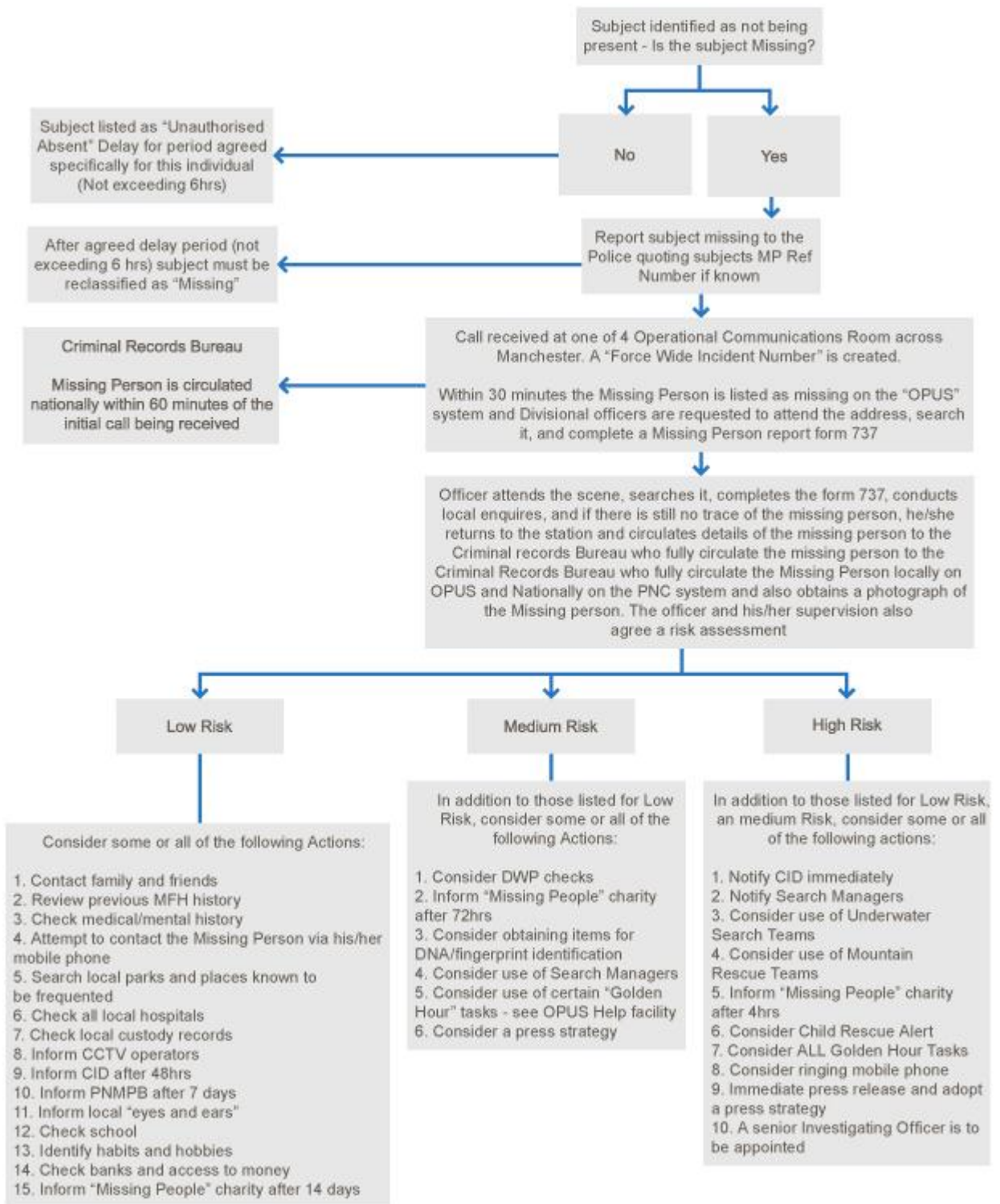
Anyone who 'takes or detains' a runaway under 16 without lawful authority may be prosecuted under Section 2 of the Child Abduction Act 1984.

Police Risk Definitions

The following are the definitions the Police use in relation to missing persons:

RISK	DEFINITION
High	The risk posed 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	The risk posed is likely to place the subject in danger, or they are a threat to themselves or others.
Low	There is no apparent risk of danger to either the subject or the public.

GMP Initial Investigation Flowchart



Photographs

Should a child/ young person go missing it is vital to the safe recovery of the child that a recent photograph of the child is made available. The photograph must be a good likeness of the child/young person, and the date the photograph was taken should be endorsed on the back of it to identify it's relevance to the enquiry. The photograph will be used by the police to help them identify the child or young person whilst conducting enquiries. In very serious cases, where the child is believed to be at severe risk, the police and local authority

may decide to use the photograph more widely, including publishing the photograph to national or local media, and circulation on the Police / ICMEC www.missingkids.co.uk website.

Extended Police Response

- After 48 hrs, local CID are automatically informed of all missing persons, regardless of risk.
- After 72 hrs the Divisional Chief Inspector Operations is requested to review the case notes.
- After 7 days, the Divisional Superintendent Operations is also requested to review the enquiry.
- After 7 days, the GMP MFH Manager is requested to ensure that the National Policing Improvement Agency Missing Person Bureau (MPB) at New Scotland Yard are made aware of the missing person. MPB circulate the missing person on their database after 14 days. Additionally at this time, circulation of the child on the www.missingkids.co.uk website must be considered.
- After 28 days, (and every 28 days thereafter) the case is referred to the Chief Inspector Operations.
- After 183 days, the case is referred back to the Supt Ops for review.

Publicity / Media Strategy

It is the responsibility of the Police to advise the media regarding any missing child or young person.

For those missing from their “home / parental” address, the approval of the parents (or those with parental responsibility) will always be sought, but GMP reserve the right to publicise the child without parental consent if they believe that the concerns for the child outweigh any reservations highlighted by those with parental responsibility.

For those missing from the Local Authority or private care providers, the decision to publicise by press and/or television will always be made in consultation with the child’s social worker and the Head of Service, Children’s Social Care and with the agreement of the Joint Director (Social Care), however GMP reserve the right to publicise the child if there are serious concerns for the welfare of that child.

Such publicity will be arranged at local level, by direction of the Divisional Commander (or nominee). Prior to any publicity the child’s social worker will be informed in order to allow the parents to be informed.

Additionally GMP will automatically inform the “Missing People” charity of all high risk missing persons with 4 hrs of them being reported, Medium risk missing persons within 72 hrs of them being reported, and Low risk missing persons within 14 days of them being reported.

GMP may also utilise the website facility of the International Centre for Missing and Exploited Children (www.missingkids.co.uk) to publicise the child or young person.

Recording

Throughout the process identified within this procedure a full report must be kept of all actions taken and messages received/given. In cases of children going missing from their home address, such recording can only be carried out by the police.

In the case of a child missing from a children’s home, this will be made in the log book and on the child’s individual file. In the case of a child missing from a foster placement the carer should record on their incident/events diary.

The allocated Social Worker will be informed and updated at all stages and this information must be considered in the care planning and review process for the child.

Missing Child/Young Person Is Located or Returns

All Missing Children

- The Police will conduct a “Safe and Well” return interview for ALL children reported missing.
- Parents and carers must be immediately informed that the child/ young person has been found. When the child is located by agencies other than the Police, or returns to their home address, the

attending adult (parent / guardian / carer) is to notify the Police of the child's return (and location) without delay.

- The locating agency will remind the child and the parent / carer that they will be spoken to by the police, the purpose of this interview being to confirm their well being, and to discover whether they have been the victim of any crimes whilst missing.
- The locating agency should ensure that on the child's return, his/her medical condition is discussed with the child and his/her parents / carers immediately, and an offer made to arrange medical attention if necessary.
- If any information is gathered during the course of enquiries which indicates a child / young person is at risk on their return home, the Police and Children's Services must be informed immediately, so that they may take appropriate action.
- A risk assessment should be carried out by Police (and Social Worker) to ensure that it is safe for the child to return to their placement/ parental home.

Police Referral to Children's Social Care

If a Looked After child / young person is:

- reported missing 4 times in 1 month, or
- reported 6 times in 2 months, or,
- if information comes to light which gives cause for concern.

The Divisional Missing From Home Single Point Of Contact (SPOC) will contact the relevant social worker, highlighting the concerns. This will be documented by the Divisional Missing From Home SPOC on the OPUS Missing From Home system. Consideration should be given to holding a Missing From Home meeting in this instance (see 9.3 following).

If the child or young person resides with parents or family member, and is not a Looked After child, if the child / young person is:

- reported missing 4 times in 1 month, or
- reported missing 6 times in 2 months, or,
- information comes to light which gives cause for concern,

The Divisional Missing from Home SPOC will consider referral to MARAT, Children's Social Care.

If the child has an allocated social worker, the Divisional Missing from Home SPOC will contact the Social Worker directly.

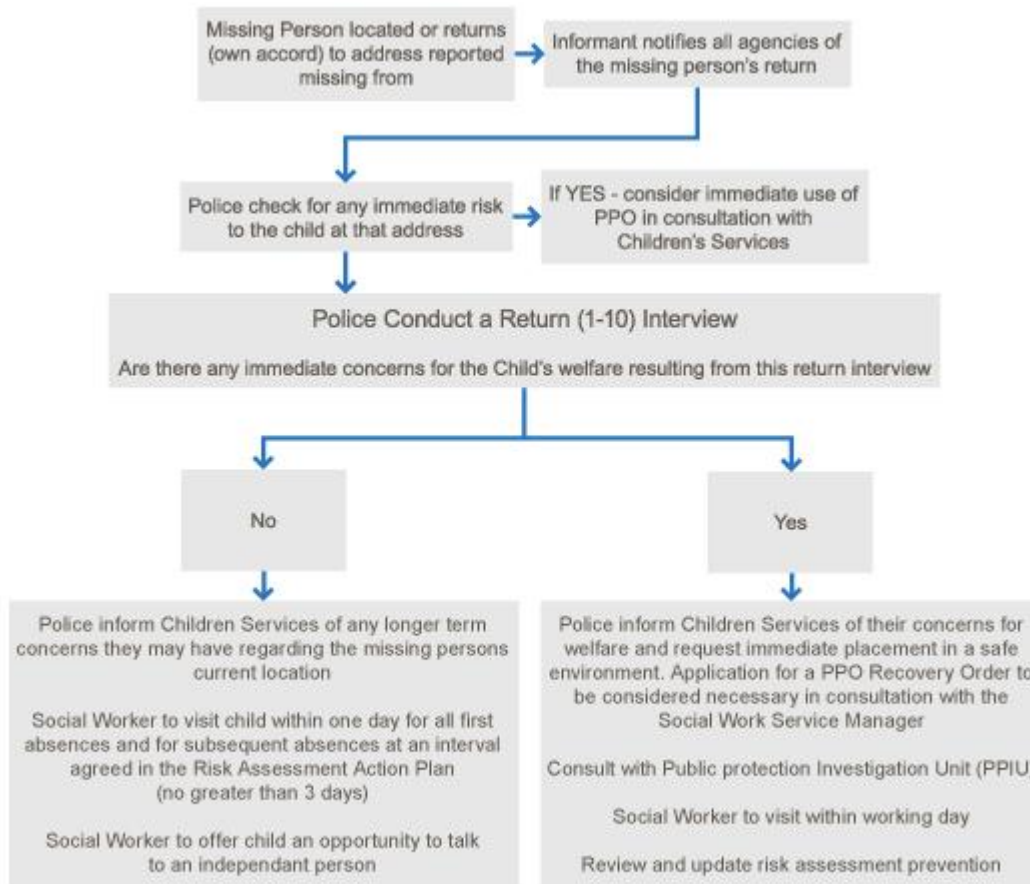
If there is no allocated Social Worker, the Divisional Missing from Home SPOC will obtain a detailed report from the police officer who last had contact with the child/young person and will forward this to the MARAT e-mail address. This will be documented on the OPUS Missing From Home system and the Public Protection Investigation Unit (PPIU) will be notified.

If the return interview indicates the child or any children within the household may be at risk of significant harm, the Police will refer the matter immediately to MARAT, Children's Social Care.

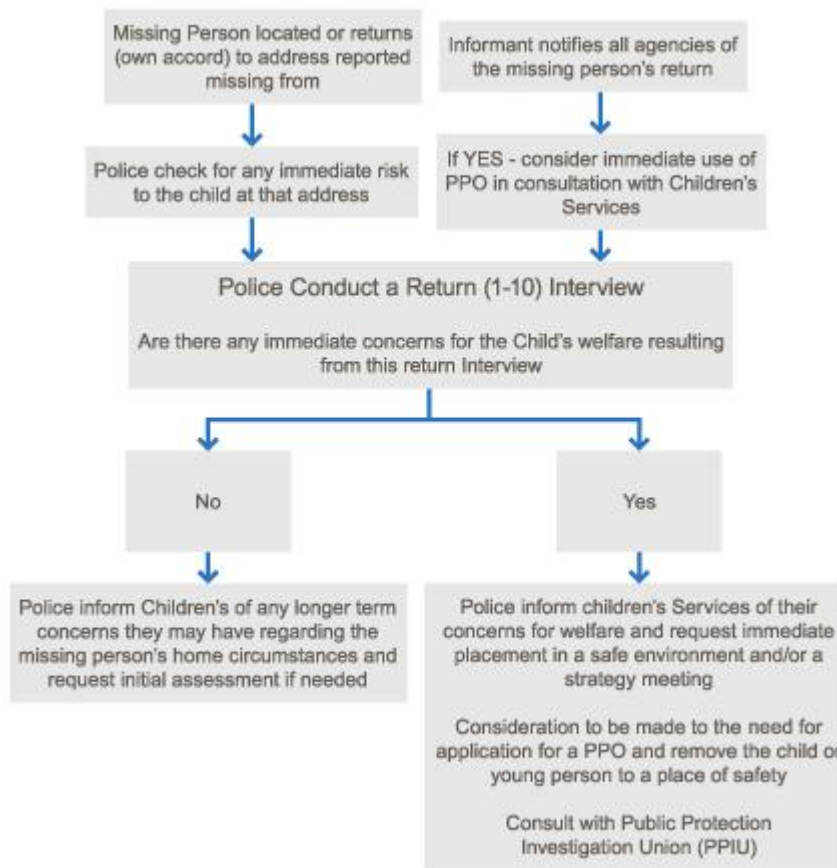
Social Work Visit to a Looked After Child who Returns

In all cases the allocated Social Worker must visit and meet with the young person alone as soon as is possible after his/her return. This should be within one working day for all first absences, and for subsequent absences at an interval agreed in the Risk Assessment Action Plan, not exceeding 3 days. Where this is not possible, e.g. the child is placed at a distance from Trafford or the social worker is not available, a team manager may agree that the child is interviewed at a later date, or by an alternative person. The arrangement, and reasons for this must be fully recorded. The Social Worker will ask the young person if they wish to speak to an independent person of their choice e.g. an advocate from the Children's Rights Service or independent visitor. If the social worker is not available it is the responsibility of the team manager to arrange the visit. In all cases consideration will be given to the need to convene a Missing from Home strategy meeting.

Return Procedures Missing From Care Flowchart



Return Procedures Missing From Home Flowchart



Police Return Interview for all Missing Children/Young People

Once the child or young person has been located, the police will carry out a (Police) Return Interview. It will not be conducted over the telephone, and it must only be conducted by an appropriately trained Police Officer. Return interviews are not to be conducted by Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs).

The Police Return Interview will be based upon GMP's "1-10" Return Interview Questions as at Appendix 3. This is to perform an initial assessment that the child is safe and well.

Interviewing Officers will then update the OPUS Missing Person application, thereby notifying other Policing agencies as appropriate, and the Police National Computer Missing Person Report will be cancelled within 2 hours of the officers update of OPUS.

If there are immediate concerns for the child or young person's welfare, see Flowchart above for guidance and actions to be taken.

If there are already concerns in existence relating to the care establishment that the child or young person has been absent from, or their home circumstances, the Divisional SPOC must highlight such concerns to the Public Protection Investigation Unit (PPIU) who will refer to Children's Social Care.

Independent Interview

Young people will be informed by the interviewing Police Officer that they can have a further interview with an independent professional to assess their needs with regard to advice, information and support.

Where a child or young person who has been missing has indicated a wish to speak to an independent person, the police or allocated Social Worker will refer details to the Children's Rights Service and/or Children's Services as appropriate. Parents and/or carers will need to be informed and involved if this is appropriate.

The interview should take place within 72 hours and its purpose is to ascertain sensitively:

- the reason why the child went missing,
- if there are concerns regarding their safety or welfare
- where the child was during the period missing
- to establish if any concerns exist regarding the activity or treatment of the young person whilst absent.

The interview will be from the perspective of a welfare check and should focus on any concerns regarding the home or care environment or influences outside of the home which may have caused the child to go missing. Confidentiality should be respected unless there are welfare, child protection or serious criminal issues. Child protection concerns will be referred immediately to Social Care.

Response to Escalating Concerns

All agencies who work with children need to be aware of and able to respond promptly to the factors which increase the likelihood of children running away.

A range of “push” and “pull” factors may be reasons for running:

Push factors: problems at home, including difficult relationships, family breakdown and maltreatment or abuse; problems at school, including bullying; and personal problems including mental health issues.

Pull factors: wanting to be near friends and family, peer pressure, or following grooming by adults seeking to exploit them.

The use of the Common Assessment Framework will assist in defining concerns for a child and in identifying what interventions are necessary and appropriate. Crucial to successful prevention is:

- clear and consistent identification of need
- effective partnership between agencies and with children, young people and their families
- inter-agency meetings to discuss and plan with children and their parents
- measurement, planning and review of children in need services and evaluation of their effectiveness.

Repeat Missing and Longer Absences

All agencies will operate an escalating system of interventions to reduce the likelihood of a child repeatedly going missing.

Missing From Home meetings should take place in the event of repeat episodes of children going missing from care, and also from home where Children’s Social Care are involved. Where children are missing from home (parental) address, repeated missing episodes should trigger a referral to Children’s Social Care where concerns are identified (see 8.2). The Missing from Home meeting should have a clearly identified purpose and attendance. The meeting should be held within a week of any trigger episode. The meetings should be chaired and recorded and the increased levels of concern reflected in the seniority of those attending.

The frequency of repeat missing episodes specified below should be a trigger to consider holding a Missing From Home meeting, but this may not be appropriate in all cases for children who go missing from home (parental) address. If it is decided not to hold the meeting, this should be agreed between Children’s Social Care and the Police Missing From Home SPOC and the reasons should be recorded.

After four Missing From Home episodes within a 30 day period or one episode of three or more days: A Missing From Home Meeting should be held, and include: Operations Manager – Social Care (chair), local police officer / Police Divisional MFH SPOC, Social Worker, residential worker or foster carer and family placement worker, and any other appropriate professionals working with the young person and their family.

This meeting should try to identify any ‘push’ or ‘pull’ factors as well as any other agencies that could provide support. In the case of ‘pull factors’ it may be necessary to target those in the community who harbour the missing person or exploit them with regards to crime, sex or drugs. The meeting should also establish which other agencies are already involved in working with the child/young person and make plans for joint working. A routine check will be made to ascertain if the young person is known to the Protect Team (Multi-agency team

to address sexual exploitation based in Manchester's Grey Mare Lane Police Station). If Sexual Exploitation is suspected, the TSCB Sexual Exploitation procedure should be followed and a Sexual Exploitation Meeting held, chaired by an Independent Reviewing Officer at the Safeguarding Unit.

After six Missing From Home episodes within a 2 month period or one episode of 7 days or more: The Head of Service Children in Care/Family Support (Social Care) should either chair the meeting or be involved in the decisions made, and the meeting should also include the Operations Manager(Social Care), Police divisional SPOC, Children's Home Manager/Family Placement Manager (as appropriate), representative from health and /or education and other involved agencies.

Meetings at this level should only be required for a small number of children provided that the protocol has been followed with regard to earlier intervention meetings and return interviews. In addition to seeking to reduce future missing episodes and reduce any apparent risks to the child, this meeting should also quality assure compliance with the protocols and the efficiency of earlier intervention meetings and return interviews. It is recognised that there will be some children who go missing repeatedly within a short period of time where this level of intervention will immediately apply.

If the child/young person continues to be reported missing beyond this level the Joint Director (Social Care) and police should discuss the case and consider whether it is appropriate for them to intervene further or for the Assistant Chief Constable (or their nominated representative) / Director of Children's services to be asked to intervene.

Other risk factors demanding escalated interventions include:

- Any case where the risks involved in even a single future missing episode is very high.
- Cases where it has been identified that immediate action is necessary to ensure the well being of the person.

Monitoring of Performance

The designated Missing From Home Senior Manager (Safeguarding Service Manager) in Trafford will ensure that children and young people missing from home remains a priority by having an oversight of the following:

- Implementation of this procedure
- Reporting information about patterns of absence among looked after children to the Director of Children's Services and to councillors responsible for "corporate parenting"
- monitoring policies and performance relating to children missing from home.

The senior manager will ensure that all missing from home data is subjected to robust analysis and any arising safeguarding issues are promptly brought to the Local Safeguarding Children's Board so appropriate multi agency interventions can be planned and delivered.

The effectiveness of the protocol and procedure will be monitored on a quarterly basis by the Missing From Home Monitoring Group. The group will ensure compliance with the expectations of the National Indicator (NI71): that there is a clear understanding of running patterns and that this information informs local service development and provision. The meeting will therefore include consideration of:

- Incidences of missing young people from home and care
- Analysis of missing from home incidents; patterns and outcomes
- Links with other relevant information in relation to Private Fostering and Sexual Exploitation
- Safeguarding implications
- Practice and procedural issues
- The Working Group will present a joint report to the LSCB on an annual basis.

Appendix 1

<http://www.tscb.org.uk/missing-from-care.html> (Missing from care procedures)