

Local Safeguarding Children Board

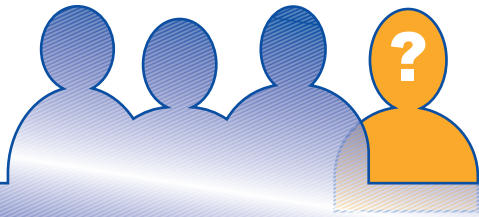
LSCB
Haringey



Missing from Care

Missing from Home

Joint Protocol & Practice Guidance



INTRODUCTION

Haringey Area Child Protection

Committee (ACPC) agreed this Joint Protocol and Practice Guidance on 13th January 2005. It has been created to ensure an effective response across agencies when a child or young person runs away, is missing, or returns. The protocol should be read in conjunction with the London Child Protection Procedures and any local procedures for children's homes or fostering agencies. It complies with government practice guidance.

Thanks are due to the staff from Haringey Social Services, Haringey Police Missing Person's Unit, Haringey Education Department, Haringey Teaching Primary Care Trust and Haringey Children's Rights Service who were involved in its development.

The ACPC became a Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) on 1st April 2005. The Local Authority Education Directorate and Children's Social Services became a single Children's Service at the same time. The terminology used within this protocol reflects these changes; social services for children are referred to as children's social care services, in line with government guidance.

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CONTENTS

PART ONE: JOINT PROTOCOL

- 1** Definitions.....Page 01
- 2** Common Principles.....Page 01
- 3** Information & NotificationPage 02
 - 3.1** Reporting a child missing
 - 3.2** Referring a child on for follow-on support
 - 3.3** Confidentiality
 - 3.4** Involving the media
- 4** Key Roles & Responsibilities: Children's Social CarePage 03
- 5** Key Roles & Responsibilities: PolicePage 07
- 6** Key Roles & Responsibilities: EducationPage 09
- 7** Key Roles & Responsibilities: Voluntary/Independent Agencies.....Page 11

PART TWO: PRACTICE GUIDANCE

- 8** Risk AssessmentPage 12
 - 8.3** Risk Assessments for children running away from carePage 12
 - 8.4** Risk Assessments for children running away from home.....Page 13
 - 8.5** Categories of AbsencePage 13
 - 8.6** Information Sharing.....Page 15
- 9** Monitoring and ReportingPage 15
- 10** Children in Need Assessment ThresholdPage 15
- 11** Return InterviewPage 16

APPENDICES

- Appendix **One**: Sample Risk Assessment GridPage 19
- Appendix **Two**: 'Missing from Care' Form.....Page 21
- Appendix **Three**: Notification Form – Missing.....Page 27
- Appendix **Four**: Notification Form - ReturnPage 29
- Appendix **Five**: Agency Lead Officers.....Page 30
- Appendix **Six**: Contact telephone numbersPage 31

PART ONE: JOINT PROTOCOL

I. DEFINITIONS

I.1 For the purpose of this protocol a child (i.e. a young person under the age of 18 years) is to be considered 'missing' if he/she is absent from his/her place of residence without authority, to a degree that, or in circumstances where, the absence causes concern for the safety of the child or there is potential danger to the public.

I.2 Absences that cause concern are those where there is no indication that a child is likely to return within a short space of time or where there is immediate concern for the child's safety.

I.3 Sometimes children stay out longer than agreed either on purpose or unwittingly, or fail to tell their parents/carers of their whereabouts. This kind of boundary-testing activity is well within the range of normal teenage behaviour and does not come within the definition of 'missing' for this protocol.

I.4 Young people running from a forced marriage situation may be reported as missing by their families. The forced marriage may not be apparent when the report is made and young people may be at risk of significant harm if they are returned to their families.

I.5 Professionals should bear in mind when working with children and families where there are outstanding concerns about a child's welfare, that a series of missed appointments may indicate that a family

has moved out of the area or overseas. Children's social care services and the police should be informed immediately such concerns arise.

I.6 Three categories of absence are commonly used when assessing risk: Unauthorised Absence¹; Missing and Absconded. Appropriate use of the categories is included in Part Two (8.5) of this document.

I.7 If a child is in care or looked after - including Unaccompanied Minors - no more than 4 hours should elapse before reporting them to the police as missing. In many cases a shorter period would be appropriate. The individual risk assessment, including a judgement made about I.3 above, must inform this decision.

2. COMMON PRINCIPLES

The following principles underpin this protocol:

- The safety and welfare of the child is the prime aim;
- Promoting children's wellbeing and safeguarding them from harm depends on effective information sharing, collaboration and understanding between agencies and professionals;
- Child protection is the responsibility of everyone in the community and all children and young people deserve the chance to achieve their full potential;

¹ Not to be confused with the term 'Unauthorised Absence' used by education to denote a pupil absent from school without permission

- Parents, carers or those with parental responsibility should be considered and be informed and involved if this is appropriate and in the best interests of the child;
- Professionals caring for Looked After Children (LAC) must make and regularly review assessments of risk.

3. INFORMATION AND NOTIFICATION

3.1 Reporting a child missing

Detailed information is required by the police and other agencies as appropriate in order to assess risk and to identify and locate a missing child as soon as possible. (Part Two: Practice Guidance 8.6). Social workers reporting children missing/ returned to senior managers should use the official Notification Forms, as attached to this protocol at Appendices Three and Four.

3.2 Referring a child on for follow-on support

Information being passed to agencies who provide the return interviews or any follow-on support needs to include the child's name, address, means of contact, age, date of birth, ethnicity, first language and any additional communication needs as a minimum.

3.3 Confidentiality

Agencies should be clear with children from the outset about confidentiality policies. Sharing information about a child should be with their consent and the amount of information shared kept to a minimum. Children should be informed that, where there are concerns about high levels of risk to themselves or others, information will be shared with social services and child

protection procedures will be activated. Issues regarding confidentiality and information sharing are outlined in Haringey's Information Sharing Agreement.

3.4 Involving the media

3.4.1 Decisions relating to how, where and/or whether to publicise a child missing from care in the media should be made at the initial strategy meeting, in conjunction with the Police Missing Persons' Unit. The Council Press Office must be informed at this point if there is a decision to proceed. The parents and family and/or anyone else with parental responsibility should be informed and their consent for media contact given. The chair of the strategy meeting or the police MPU should make contact with the National Missing Person's Helpline and media as considered appropriate.

3.4.2 Referrals to the National Missing Persons' Helpline should be made to the Missing From Care Department² (020 8392 4527 during office hours or freephone 0808 800 7070 out of hours). Referrals should include evidence of consent from whoever has parental responsibility for the missing child, the missing person's report from the police, a photograph and, where relevant, a copy of the care order for information.

3.4.3 Any decision to contact the press about a child running away from home should not be made without advice from the Police Missing Person's Unit.

²The Missing from Care Department handles referrals concerning any child known to or in contact with children's social care services, not just children who are in care.

4. KEY ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES: **CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE**³

- 4.1** The following procedures apply when children's social care services become aware that a missing child is:
- On the Child Protection Register (CPR);
 - Subject to a Section 47 (S.47) enquiry or child protection (CP) enquiry;
 - A looked after child who is subject to an interim or full care order or accommodated under S.20 and is absent without authority;
 - Subject to an initial/core assessment where there are growing concerns;
- Or** where professionals with a responsibility for the child's welfare agree that there are concerns for their safety and wellbeing if they are not located.
- 4.2** Each children's home in the borough must have written procedures that should be followed when a child is missing. The procedures must be compatible with this protocol and with the National Minimum Standards for Children's Homes and Children's Homes Regulations (2002).
- 4.3** Haringey Fostering Service and all independent fostering agencies must have written procedures that should be followed when a child is missing. The procedures must be compatible with this protocol and with the National Minimum Standards for Fostering and Fostering Regulations (2002).
- 4.4** Planning and assessment of young people in care by staff and carers should include a risk assessment of whether they may run away from the placement. This should be revised and updated regularly (cf. Part Two (8)).
- 4.5** Children should be told what will happen if they run away, including their right to be interviewed by an independent person on or prior to their return. They should be given information about Haringey Children's Rights Service and other advocacy options.
- 4.6** When a child runs away or is missing:
- Urgent effort should be made to locate them;
 - Staff and carers should assess risk and decide on the category of absence (see Section Two, (8.5)). If the child is in a children's home, children's home staff should complete a 'Missing from Care' Form (see Appendix Three), drawing on the information contained in the risk assessment;
 - Reports, including the risk assessment and where relevant the 'Missing From Care' form, should be made to the local police station, the Police Missing Person's Unit and Police Child Abuse Investigation Team appropriate to the risk assessment and category of absence. The police will then manage the missing person's investigation;
 - As soon as it is clear that a child is missing and following an initial risk assessment meeting, the social worker or Team Manager should complete the Notification Form: Missing Children + Action Plan (see Appendix Four). This must be sent to the Service Manager, Child Protection & Planning and the

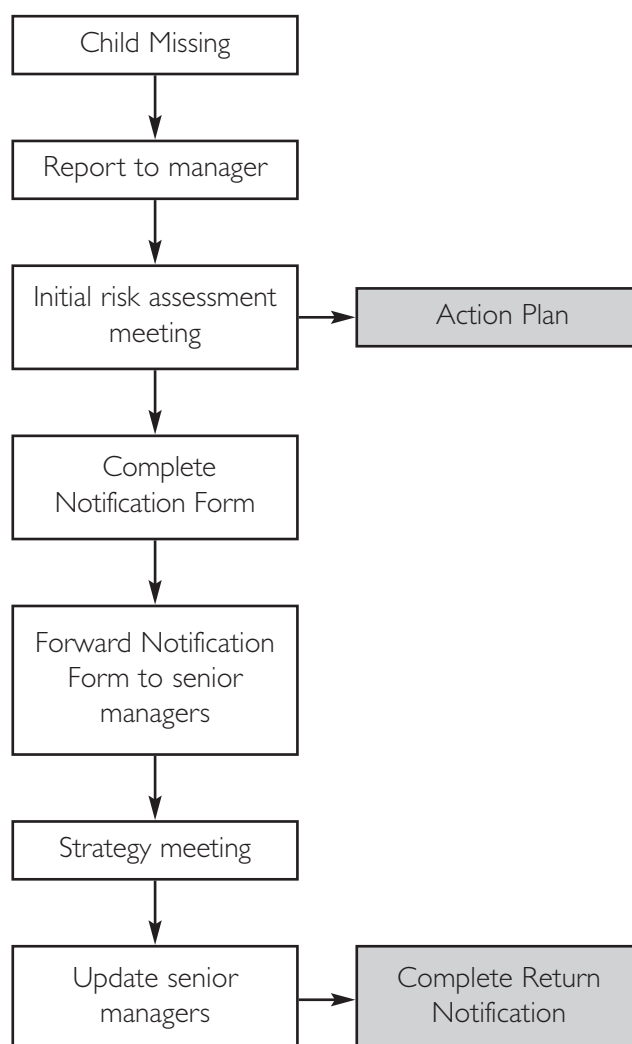
³ Cf. London Child Protection Procedures 2003 section 9.7

Deputy Director, Children's Services. Copies should be sent to the Reviewing Manager, the Service Manager of the relevant District service, the Placements Team Manager and the manager of the Policy & Performance Team. If the child is on the Child Protection Register, a copy should also be sent to the Senior Administrator, Child Protection & Planning. Updates should be provided to the above officers according to the assessed level of risk - high risk will be daily, medium risk every 2/3days and low risk no less than weekly (see fig.1);

- All other agencies that may know the child should be contacted, to obtain any information that may help the police officer undertaking the missing person investigation to trace them.
- The Child Protection Co-ordinator (Education) and Designated Nurse (TPCT) should be notified;
- All people with parental responsibility should be contacted as appropriate and with consideration to notifying extended family members;
- Legal services should be contacted if a child is subject to court proceedings;
- If court proceedings are current, the Guardian ad Litem should be notified;
- Staff and carers should record accurate and up-to-date notes of actions taken and messages received/given.

4.7 If, following this process, the child is not traced, a strategy meeting should be held within 5 working days. The risk assessments will determine the urgency of the timescale. In addition to the police,

Fig. 1



the meeting will need to involve the child's social worker, carer and parent (if appropriate), and representatives from other involved agencies, such as education,

CAMHS or the Youth Offending Service. The meeting will need to consider:

- Whether to circulate the child's details to other local authorities and other agencies in the area to which the child is thought to have gone;
- Notifying national authorities and agencies including Social Security, the Benefits Agency and Child Benefit Agency;

- Notifying the media and the National Missing Persons' Helpline;
- Appropriate legal interventions and consulting legal services if there is any suspicion that the child might be removed from UK jurisdiction;
- The Chair should complete a 'Record of Strategy Discussion'.

4.8 If a child on the CPR is **not** found within 20 working days a review CP conference must be brought forward to consider any additional action.

4.9 If a child on the CPR **is** found within this timescale, their social worker, team manager, Child Protection Advisor and head of the child protection service must decide and record whether to hold a review CP Conference.

4.10 When the child is found a strategy discussion between the agencies involved should take place within the same working day to consider:

- Immediate safety issues;
- Whether to start a S.47 enquiry;
- Agreeing a single or joint agency enquiry;
- Who will interview the child as part of a S.47 enquiry;
- Who will interview the child if not part of a S.47 enquiry;
- Who needs to be informed of the child's return;

4.11 The Chair should complete a Record of Strategy Discussion.

4.12 If a S.47 enquiry is the agreed outcome, the police CAIT and a Children's Service Child Protection Advisor will need to have a final strategy discussion to agree the

outcome and the need for a child protection conference or review child protection conference. The views of other concerned agencies will be sought as appropriate. The Chair should complete a Record of Strategy Discussion.

4.13 If the child is looked after, the Senior Team Manager responsible for the child, in conjunction with the registered manager of the children's home or fostering service, should arrange a multi-agency risk management meeting if the child remains missing, refuses to return, persistently goes missing and/or encourages other children to run away with them.

4.14 Managers of children's homes and foster carers are expected to maintain the following records, which should be made available for inspection:

- Each occasion that a child is recorded as missing, absconded or on unauthorised absence;
- The name and date of birth of the child;
- The date and time reported missing;
- The risk assessment record;
- The category of absence (missing, absconded, unauthorised);
- Whether or not the police were informed;
- The precise reason for calling the police;
- The date and time returned;
- The date and outcome of the return interview;
- Whether or not the social worker was informed;
- The action taken by the social worker.

4.15 On the child's return, staff or carers should make every attempt to communicate with them about the incident and to show concern.

- 4.16** After any missing period, the child or young person should be offered an interview with someone independent of the care setting. In most cases this will be the allocated social worker, but if the child would prefer to be interviewed by an independent person, such as a Children's Rights Officer, or an Education Welfare Officer, then this will be accommodated, following the guidance set out in Section Two of this document. The aim of this interview is for the child to be able to discuss freely any concerns, away from their parents and/or carers.
- 4.17** If, in any interview or exchange following the child's return, allegations about criminal offences are mentioned, the child should be referred to the police for a 'debrief' interview.
- 4.18** If a young person running from a forced marriage is located, a social worker must interview them to determine whether or not it is in their best interests to return home.
- 4.19** The social worker and team manager must decide and record whether or not to bring forward the next Review. Other concerned agencies are also entitled to request that the care plan be reviewed.
- 4.20** Where Haringey children who are looked after are placed outside the borough and go missing, the authority in which they are placed must be involved in any strategy discussion.
- 4.21** The Service Manager, Child Protection & Planning, is responsible for reporting information about patterns of absence. These reports are made available to the Director of Children's Services, to members of the Children's Service Advisory Committee and to the Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI) and HMI/Ofsted as required.
- 4.22** The Service Manager, Child Protection & Planning, must ensure that all duty systems keep, record and refer to notifications of children who are missing from other local authorities. These details may be removed after two years if there is no communication from the other authority.
- 4.23** Reports about children missing will be provided on a regular basis to Haringey's Local Safeguarding Children Board.
- 4.24** Where notifications are received for children missing who are not on the Child Protection Register or looked after and levels of concern fall within Haringey's child in need threshold criteria, discussion between the concerned agencies should take place. Depending upon the outcome, consideration should be given to providing an initial assessment of need within 7 days and referral on to appropriate agencies.

5. KEY ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES: **POLICE**

- 5.1** The police will act on missing person's reports in line with police procedures and this protocol. They will manage the investigations of any missing children referred to them.
- 5.2** It is the responsibility of the police to inform the media about children missing from care, but a decision to go public will always be made in consultation with social care staff, who will in turn consult those with parental responsibility.
- 5.3** It is the responsibility of the police to investigate allegations of crime by preserving and gathering evidence; every missing person is a potential victim of crime.
- 5.4** When a police officer receives a missing person's report/risk assessment they will collate the information needed to make a full risk assessment; decide when an officer will attend in person if contact was made by telephone and pass details to the initial supervising sergeant.
- 5.5** The police rely on full and accurate information in order to pursue any investigation. It is imperative that the missing person's report contains as much factual information as possible and includes the child's legal status (Part Two (8.6)).
- 5.6** Where children reported missing are located, the police can take a Police Protection Order (PPO) if they think the child would be likely to suffer significant harm if they went home. They can take the child to a "place of safety" for up to 72 hours, during which time there should be an initial assessment from children's social care. There will be occasions when a child is found in a location that may be considered unsuitable, but where there are no legal grounds for a PPO. In this event the police and the social work manager who is accountable should liaise to determine the steps necessary to safeguard the child.
- 5.7** The police officer conducting the investigation will complete a Missing Person's Report, which will generate a CTN form. This is sent to the Police Child Abuse Investigation Team (CAIT). If there are continuing child protection concerns, the CAIT need to consider contacting children's social care to hold a strategy meeting. The police may need to attend multi-agency strategy meetings with partner agencies and consider media notification and contacting the National Missing Persons' Helpline.
- 5.8** The police officer conducting the investigation will keep a record of all actions and decisions made on the Missing Persons' Investigation IT system (Merlin).
- 5.9** On the child's return the police will usually conduct a short 'debrief' interview (usually within 72 hours). This gives the child the opportunity to declare any crimes to which they may have fallen victim or any criminal offences that may have been committed.
- 5.10** The investigating officer will also make it clear to the child that they are entitled to a 'return interview' with a person independent from their home or care setting. If the child is looked after or on the Register the interviewer will be the child's social worker unless there is good reason for this not to be the case. If the child is not on the Register or looked after, arrangements for the return interview would be agreed at the strategy meeting.

- 5.11** If the child makes an allegation of crime that occurred while they were missing or that was a cause of them running away, the police will record this allegation and investigate it.
- 5.12** Accurate and up to date records of all actions taken and messages received or given must be kept.

6. KEY ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES: **EDUCATION**

- 6.1** Schools, because of daily registration, are very well placed to notice if a child has run away and to act on this information. This is a key responsibility and staff, particularly form tutors, SENCOs and designated teachers, should ensure they are trained for the role.
- 6.2** The education department also has an essential prevention/early intervention role to play through the provision of information to children about the causes and risks of running away and the services that could give them help.
- 6.3** Once it comes to notice that a child has run away, the Head of Access & Pupil Support must be informed immediately. Schools may make this referral directly or through the Education CP Co-ordinator, or Attendance & Welfare Strategy Manager.
- 6.4** In addition, the school's designated teacher should inform the headteacher, the Education Welfare Service (EWS), the allocated social worker or team manager, children's home or foster carer immediately if the child is:
- On the CPR or subject to a S.47 enquiry;
 - A looked after child;
 - Known to a statutory agency or social worker because of growing concerns for their safety.
- 6.5** If none of the above apply, the EWS should make enquiries, a home visit, liaise with children's social care services and consider contacting the police to ensure that the child is reported missing. The Attendance & Welfare Strategy Manager will direct EWOs for primary and special schools to do this. In secondary schools, management of the EWO is devolved to headteachers and it is the headteachers' responsibility to ensure that this happens.
- 6.6** Where it is not possible to obtain an explanation for absence, the EWO should inform a manager, the relevant social work Referral and Assessment Team and the Police Child Abuse Investigation Unit within 2 days of receiving the referral. This should be confirmed in writing.
- 6.7** The school representative should attend any multi-agency strategy meeting or planning meeting. They will be supported as appropriate by a Children's Service officer.
- 6.8** The Education (Pupil Registration) Regulations (1996) allow for a child's name to be deleted from the school register where they have not attended for at least four weeks, where the whereabouts are unknown and where all reasonable attempts to locate the child by the school and local authority have failed. In Haringey, headteachers are required to consult with the Education Welfare Service before **any child** is removed from the register. No child who is deemed as 'missing' under the definition of this protocol will be removed from the school register until their whereabouts have been established and a decision has been made regarding their future care and education placements. The EWS will continue to liaise with partner agencies to locate the child and the school should send the school file to any new school or provision when it is established that the child has been taken on roll. The national School to School (S2S) database provides a facility for schools to share information on children in these

circumstances, enabling the out-going schools to post the file electronically and the receiving school to access the information.

- 6.9** Accurate and up to date records of all actions taken, decisions made and messages received or given must be kept. The EWS will monitor this area of school responsibility through regular register checks.

7. KEY ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES: **VOLUNTARY/INDEPENDENT AGENCIES**

- 7.1** Voluntary/independent agencies are well placed to identify or respond to children who have run away or who are at risk of running away.
- 7.2** Voluntary/independent agencies may also be well placed to carry out independent interviews with children when they return from an episode of running away.
- 7.3** Voluntary/independent agencies who have agreed to carry out return interviews should:
- Respond to referrals made by relevant agencies within 3 working days by contacting the child;
 - Agree interview arrangements with the child including time and venue.
- 7.4** The purpose of the interview is to:
- Give the child an opportunity to talk about why they ran away and assess risk, including the risk of running away again;
 - Consider requests to the relevant Referral & Assessment Team to carry out an initial child in need assessment based on Children & Families' threshold criteria. If the criteria are met, the manager of the independent agency should contact the R & A Duty Service;
 - Provide advice, information and support;
 - Decide with the child what services are available to best meet their needs;
 - Appropriately refer the child on to mediation, counselling and/or health services.
- 7.5** Responsibilities of voluntary/independent agencies include:
- Operation of the London Child Protection Procedures and any service specific procedures on child protection and confidentiality which have been endorsed by Haringey's Local Safeguarding Children Board;
 - Being clear with the child from the outset about these procedures and the need to share information with a third party in some circumstances;
 - Attending multi-agency strategy meetings to share information;
 - Appropriate liaison with enquiries from the police and/or social services trying to find the missing child.
- 7.6** Voluntary/independent agencies providing placements for a Haringey child must follow written procedures if a child runs away or is missing, in compliance with the National Minimum Standards for Children's Homes and the National Minimum Standards for Foster Care.
- 7.7** Accurate and up to date records of all actions taken, decisions made and messages received or given must be kept.

PART TWO: PRACTICE GUIDANCE

8. RISK ASSESSMENTS

8.1 The risk assessment process must take account of different circumstances, for example:

- Children who may have a pattern of absenting themselves for a short time and then returning. Often their whereabouts is known or suspected;
- Children who stay out beyond agreed limits on purpose or without knowing;
- Decision-making based on what is appropriate given the child's individual circumstances.

8.2 It is important not to dismiss the significance of multiple episodes of running away or going missing. Often, agencies label such children as a 'problem', which can take the focus off the risks that they are facing. Equally, it is important not to underestimate the significance of one missing episode. Every incident could be a way of asking for help.

8.3 Risk Assessments for children running away from care

8.3.1 Individual risk assessments enable staff/carers to be clear what the risks are for a particular child and/or the risks they pose for the public. A risk assessment will help staff to decide whether/when a child should be reported if they are missing and to share full and accurate information with the police and other agencies.

8.3.2 The risk assessment should be renewed and updated regularly - at least at intervals that coincide with the LAC Review or Review CP Conference and whenever a child's circumstances change. It should be discussed at the placement agreement meeting, clearly recorded and included in the placement and care plans. It should include information about:

- The likelihood or risk that the child might run away or be removed without consent;
- The child's view of the current placement;
- Levels of supervision/support provided;
- Views of parent/carers on their child's needs and the action that should be taken if they are absent;
- The risks that the child - or public - faces if they do run away;
- Details of those that it is permissible to stay with overnight and in what circumstances. Clarity is needed here as to whether and under what circumstance children are permitted to stay with a parent or parents.

8.3.3 The registered manager, key worker, supervising social worker and foster carer will need to consider the timing of reporting children missing to the police. This decision needs to be informed by the risk assessment. Children's home staff and foster carers will be expected to make the kind of enquiries that a reasonable parent would make prior to contacting the police.

8.3.4 In children's homes, the risk assessment grid (Appendix One) will help to guide the assessment and completion of the

'Missing from Care' form (Appendix Two). This form should be completed as soon as a child runs away and given to the police within the appropriate timescale. The categories of absence (8.5 below) should be used with the risk assessment grid to inform decisions about the timing of reports to the police.

8.3.5 When a child arrives at a children's home or foster placement it is good practice for staff/foster carers to prepare a 'grab pack' in the event that a child goes missing. These should be updated on a regular basis and a copy handed to the police in the event that a child goes missing. Packs should ideally contain the following:

- Personal details of child;
- Family addresses and history;
- Known associates and addresses frequented;
- A photograph;
- Mobile phone number;
- Behavioural information;
- Medical information;
- Details of previous missing episodes;
- Details of passport.

8.3.6 Children should have this protocol explained to them, together with the potential risks that they encounter should they run away. They need to understand the implications of any action they may subsequently take.

8.4 Risk Assessments for children running away from home

8.4.1 The risk assessment is also relevant to children and young people who run away from home. Agencies should use the sample risk assessment grid (Appendix One) as a guide to assessment and to help them discuss and gather information.

8.5 Categories of Absence

8.5.1 As part of the assessment of risk, staff must agree the category of absence. The decision must be taken in consultation with the on-call manager or accountable social worker/EDT worker, as it will determine what action will be taken next.

8.5.2 There are three categories of absence and associated actions for children who run away from care: unauthorised absence, missing and absconded. Unauthorised absence is generally lower risk; missing or absconded are high-risk categories. There will be variation within the higher risk categories, with the highest risk being those young people who present an immediate risk to themselves or to other people.

8.5.3 Any child of 12 years or younger whose whereabouts is unknown will automatically be considered as at high risk and classed as missing or absconded. They must be reported to the police immediately.

8.5.4 Any child who is on the Child Protection Register is classed as high risk and must be reported to the police immediately.

8.5.5 If a child is abducted from care they are high risk and should be reported to the police immediately.

8.5.6 If a young person is on a curfew and goes missing beyond the curfew onset, they should be reported to the police immediately.

8.5.7 If a child is in care and on unauthorised absence, there should be a **maximum** interval of four hours before reporting to the police, depending upon the risk assessment against the categories of

Fig. 2 - **Categories of Absence****Unauthorised absence**

Absence for a short period of time; sometimes it is known or suspected where the child might be

Usual action

- Carry out risk assessment
- Make enquiries to locate child and search premises
- Inform on-call manager/allocated social worker/EDT
- Do not inform police at this stage unless individual risk assessment gives cause for concern
- Inform/contact family and those with parental responsibility
- Review decision not to call police at agreed intervals to reassess category of absence
- Once child is missing for longer than the agreed period, follow-on action needs to be agreed

Missing

If the child's whereabouts is unknown and/or the reason for absence is unknown and there is cause for concern because of their vulnerability or there is potential danger to the public

Usual action

- Carry out risk assessment
- Make enquiries to locate child and search premises
- Inform on-call manager/allocated social worker/EDT
- Report child missing to the police providing full details of risk assessment and the 'Missing from Care' form.
- Inform/contact family and those with parental responsibility

Absconded

Where a child is considered missing and is also looked after

Usual action

- Carry out risk assessment
- Make enquiries to locate the child and search premises
- Inform on-call manager/allocated social worker/EDT
- Report child missing to the police providing full details of risk assessment and the 'Missing from Care' form.
- Inform/contact family and those with parental responsibility
- Inform YOS/probation/legal as appropriate

absence. Judgement should be exercised as to how far the absence of the child is boundary testing with the intent to return (see 1.3).

8.5.8 If the child does not return within the agreed interval and there is no additional information that reduces risk, the category of absence should be reclassified as missing/absconded and necessary action taken.

8.6 Information Sharing

8.6.1 It is imperative that the police are provided with full information to trace and/or identify a missing child.

8.6.2 The person reporting a child missing to the police should ensure that they give:

- A full description of the child or young person;
- The child's ethnicity and language;
- A description of the clothes they might be wearing;
- Any distinguishing marks, tattoos or piercing;
- Any street name, nick name or alias;
- A recent photograph (with requisite permissions);
- Mobile phone number (if relevant);
- Passport details;
- The child's legal status;
- Details of who holds parental responsibility;
- Details of the local authority responsible for the child and contact details for the allocated social worker;
- Next of kin with addresses and phone numbers;
- Family addresses;
- Addresses of known friends and acquaintances;
- Name & address of GP and dentist;
- Any previous links with street-based

agencies;

- Efforts already made to locate the child; and,
- The risk assessment.

Good practice is to prepare a 'grab pack', as in 8.3.5 above.

8.6.3 Referrals to agencies conducting the return interview should include any details necessary to appraise the worker conducting the interview of the child's circumstances and the incident in question.

9. MONITORING AND REPORTING

9.1 Local authority service managers must monitor patterns of absence from individual children's homes and foster carers and provide reports to the Director of Children's Services, to the Local Safeguarding Children Board and to members. Service Managers are also responsible for monitoring policies and performance relating to children missing from home.

10. CHILDREN IN NEED ASSESSMENT THRESHOLD

10.1 The following criteria should be considered when requesting an initial child in need assessment from Children's Service Referral & Assessment Teams. If a child meets the criteria, the manager of the agency carrying out the return interview and/or providing follow up support should make a referral to the Tottenham or Hornsey Referral & Assessment Team Manager. It is important to be as clear as possible about the purpose of the assessment and what may be offered as a result.

10.2 The primary reason for requesting an initial assessment would be concern for the child's welfare, safety and wellbeing. Whether or not an initial assessment goes ahead will be influenced by consideration of the following:

- The number of times they have run away (3 or more times in a two year period);
- Risk of significant harm, for example:
 - Neglect and/or physical and/or sexual and /or emotional abuse
 - Parenting issues: out of parental control; failure of parents to report child missing; parental substance misuse; persistent non-school attendance with parent's knowledge or collusion; domestic violence; mental health/behavioural problems of parent(s); risk of female genital mutilation; forced marriage situation;
- Refusal of access to an independent or voluntary agency that has tried to make contact, where there are concerns about the child's health and safety or access is considered unsafe;
- Indicators of sexual exploitation;
- Learning difficulties, mental health issues and/or physical disabilities;
- Behavioural disorder, particularly where a child poses a risk to themselves or to others.

10.3 Referral could be made as a result of one or a combination of the above. Child protection and sexual exploitation concerns should trigger child protection procedures and practice guidance.

11. THE RETURN INTERVIEW

11.1 Preparation

Before the interview the following should be considered:

- The information within the referral from the police investigating officer;
- If the child is already known to the agency;
- Who is the most appropriate person to conduct the interview to enable the child to participate fully;
- Whether or not the involvement of an interpreter is appropriate;
- Any known wishes of the child, including whether they would prefer the interview to be conducted by someone else;
- Whether there was more than one person involved in the episode;
- Any risk factors (using the risk assessment);
- The health & safety of staff.

11.2 A good return interview process should contain the following:

- A clear framework and careful planning;
- Staff with the necessary skills and experience in communication, child protection, interviewing and assessing risk to conduct the interviews;
- Clarity about information sharing;
- Clear information provision to the child about the process, including the confidentiality policy;
- A clear route in to the police and the child protection service;
- Clear support mechanisms for staff, children and their families;
- Good cross-agency working;
- A mechanism for review of the process and provision of training.

11.3 Conducting the interview

11.3.1 The child should be enabled to feel as comfortable as possible and the interview conducted in a relaxed and professional manner. The interviewer should be objective, non-judgemental and sensitive.

11.3.2 The interview should take place away from parents and carers, as the emphasis should be on support for the child. Family members should not be used as interpreters.

11.3.3 Interviewers should explain what the interview is for and the agency that they represent. They should explain Haringey's policies and procedures around confidentiality, child protection and children missing. An explanation should also be given as to what will happen to information if the child is thought to be at risk. They should check that the child has understood and give them the opportunity to ask questions.

11.3.4 The point of the interview is to give the child the opportunity to talk about the reasons that they ran away and to draw out any worries that they might have and/or things that happened to them while they were away. He/she should be told which agencies may then get involved and what additional services and support have been agreed and need to be arranged.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX ONE: SAMPLE RISK ASSESSMENT GRID

Risk indicators	Risk assessment information	Higher Risk	Lower Risk
Legal status? On CP Register?			
Age? Length of time missing? Time last seen? Who saw last? Are they alone?			
Are they running to someone or from a situation? What time of day/night did they leave?			
Level of maturity re. Self-protection? Any discussion about time to return?			
Access to money/passport?			
Previous history of running away? How long and to where?			
Past method of return? (alone or with family/friends)			
State of mind when last seen? Risk of suicide/selfharm? Use of alcohol/solvents/drugs? What kind and how much?			
Likely involvement in offending? Risk to community? How?			
Risk of sexual exploitation? Have protocols been activated?			

APPENDIX ONE: SAMPLE RISK ASSESSMENT GRID

Continued

Risk indicators	Risk assessment information	Higher	Lower
History of bullying, racial or homophobic abuse in or outside the placement?			
Concerns about friends or associates?			
Concerns re. Abduction or prevention of return? Risk of forced marriage?			
Medical condition/medication?			
Physical or learning disability? Mental health/behavioural issues?			
Lack of information or knowledge?			
Conclusion			
Action to be taken			

Name and position
(Please print)

Signature: Date:

Authorised by (name & position)
(Please print)

Signature: Date:

APPENDIX TWO: "MISSING FROM CARE" FORM

For use in Children's Homes in Haringey

SURNAME:		FORENAMES:		D.o.B.(or age if not known):	
ALIAS(ES):		GENDER:(Male/Female):		HEIGHT:	
Ethnic Appearance:			Mobile Telephone/Pager No:		
Address from which Missing:					
Tel. No.					
Home Address (If different):					
Tel. No.					
WHO HAS PARENTAL RESPONSIBILITY?					
ADDRESS:					
Tel.No.					
NEXT OF KIN: Name:					
Address:					
Telephone Number(s):					
STATUTORY ORDERS/RELEVANT LEGISLATION:(EPO/Interim Care Order/Care Order/Sec 20 Children Act etc.)					
WHERE ISSUED:					
WHEN:					
BUILD:		EYE COLOUR:		HABITS:	
HAIR: Colour:			(smokes, drinks, drugs, etc.)	
Length: Style:		Glasses/Contact Lenses*		Details:	
PHYSICAL CONDITION:		Details:			
COMPLEXION:	Beard/Moustache/Wig/Other:			Marks/Scars (including Tattoos):	
	Details:				
ALLOCATED SOCIAL WORKER:			SCHOOL/COLLEGE:		
LOCAL AUTHORITY:			Tel.No.		
Tel. No.					

APPENDIX TWO: "MISSING FROM CARE" FORM
 For use in Children's Homes in Haringey
 Continued

DOCTOR: Tel. No.	DENTIST: Tel. No.
CLOTHING:(Include Details of all clothing including brand names, logos, and any other distinguishing features)	
PROPERTY CARRIED: (Include Travel Cards, Bank Cards etc.)	
JEWELLERY:	
ANY RELEVANT ILLNESS/MEDICATION:	
CROSS REFERENCE TO OTHER PERSONS MISSING:	
DATE LAST SEEN:	TIME LAST SEEN:
DID THE YOUNG PERSON GIVE ANY INDICATION WHERE THEY WERE GOING? IF YES, WHERE?	
DID THE YOUNG PERSON GIVE ANY INDICATION THAT THEY WOULD RETURN? IF YES, WHEN?	
PERSON COMPLETING THIS FORM: DATE:	

APPENDIX TWO: "MISSING FROM CARE" FORM
 For use in Children's Homes in Haringey
 Continued

Actions

Room Searched for relevant information

Unit & Grounds searched

Senior on duty notified

Duty Social Worker Informed

Persons with Parental Responsibility Informed

Attempts to locate the Young Person

Police Informed (where applicable)

CAD Reference:

ANY OTHER RELEVANT INFORMATION:

Signed.....

Name.....

Date/time.....

APPENDIX TWO: "MISSING FROM CARE" FORM

For use in Children's Homes in Haringey

Continued

The level of risk will be decided at the time of reporting using the following statements as guidelines for your decision making. Your reasons should be detailed in the space provided below.

Low Risk

- There is no apparent threat of danger either to the subject or the public.

Medium Risk

- The risk posed is likely to place the subject in danger or they are a threat to themselves or others.
- Some level of proactivity is required by Police or other agencies.

High Risk

- The risk posed is immediate and there are substantial grounds for believing that the subject is in danger through their own vulnerability or mental state.
- The risk posed is immediate and there are substantial grounds for believing that the public is in danger through the subject's mental state.
- The level of risk will be accompanied by circumstances, which will require senior management in one or other agencies to be involved in press/media strategy and or close contact with other agencies.

High Risk missing persons will need some evidence of Immediate risk needing urgent action. In the absence of Immediate risk then Medium Risk should be considered.

Evidence to support Risk Assessment

I consider the risk to this young person to be Low/Medium/High*.

Signed.....

Name.....

Date/time.....

*Delete where applicable

APPENDIX TWO: "MISSING FROM CARE" FORM
For use in Children's Homes in Haringey
Continued

DETAILS OF ACTIONS:			
Date	Time	Action	Result

APPENDIX THREE: NOTIFICATION: CHILDREN MISSING + ACTION PLAN

For use of social workers/social work managers

Name:		C.I. Number:	
Current Address:			
Home <input type="checkbox"/> Foster carer <input type="checkbox"/> Children's Home <input type="checkbox"/>			
Date of Birth:		Gender:	
Name of Foster Carer (if relevant):		Agency:	
Name of Children's Home (if relevant):			
Child Protection Register <input type="checkbox"/>		Looked After <input type="checkbox"/>	
Date + time went missing:			
Reason for going missing:			
Absconded <input type="checkbox"/>		Failed to return when expected <input type="checkbox"/>	
Unknown <input type="checkbox"/>		Failed to return after argument <input type="checkbox"/>	
Risk Assessment: (please circle)			
High		Medium	Low
Nature of Risk:			
Action Plan: (use bullet points)			
Allocated Social Worker:		Team:	
Date:			
Manager's Signature			

Return to: Service Manager Child Protection + Planning; Deputy Director Children's Services. Copy to: Service Manager, District; Reviewing Manager; Placements Team Manager; Delivery & Performance Team Manager and Senior Administrator, Child Protection

APPENDIX THREE: NOTIFICATION: CHILDREN MISSING + ACTION PLAN

For use of social workers/social work managers

Continued

GUIDANCE FOR COMPLETION OF NOTIFICATION FORM

1. This form is to be used for reporting internally all children who go missing from care, who are on the child protection register or in some circumstances, go missing from home. The boxes expand if the form is completed electronically.
2. It should be used according to the procedure laid out in the joint protocol 'Missing from Care/Missing from Home', sections 4.6 and 4.7.
3. It should be completed as soon as it is clear that a child is missing and sent to the Service Manager, Child Protection & Planning and the Deputy Director, Children's Services.
4. The following managers and staff should also be copied in:
 - ◆ Service Manager of the relevant Children's Social Care service
 - ◆ Reviewing Manager
 - ◆ Placements Team Manager
 - ◆ Policy & Performance Team Manager
 - ◆ Senior Administrator, Child Protection & Planning (if on the CPR)
5. The form needs to clearly state the risk assessment, what action has been taken to date and what action is planned to find/protect the young person.

Risk Assessment (suggestions are not exclusive)

- ◆ What risks does the particular young person face by going missing at this point?
- ◆ Are they repeat absconders? What, if anything, makes this time different?
- ◆ Does the young person misuse drugs or alcohol or do they associate with people who do? Are they known to frequent premises where drugs and alcohol are misused?
- ◆ Could they be at risk from sexual exploitation?
- ◆ Do they have a medical condition: have they enough medication? Will they administer the medication correctly?
- ◆ How old are they?
- ◆ Do they have any disability?
- ◆ Are there any factors that might lessen the risk?

Action Taken/Action Planned

- ◆ What has been done so far to find the child – eg. visits to possible addresses, reports to police, plans from strategy meeting/discussion, conversations with family and friends?
 - ◆ What is planned – eg. strategy meeting, missing person's helpline, visits to family and friends?
6. When the child or young person is found the social worker will complete the 'Notification: Child Returned' form and circulate to all the aforementioned officers.

APPENDIX FOUR: NOTIFICATION: CHILDREN RETURNED

For use of social workers/social work managers

Name:	C.I. Number:
Address:	
Home <input type="checkbox"/> Foster carer <input type="checkbox"/> Children's Home <input type="checkbox"/>	
Date of Birth:	Gender:
Name of Foster Carer (if relevant):	Agency:
Name of Children's Home (if relevant):	
Date went missing:	Date Returned:
Reason went missing:	
Child Protection Register <input type="checkbox"/>	Looked After <input type="checkbox"/>
Predicted future risks: (Any changes to risk assessment as a consequence of episode? What is risk of repeat?etc)	
Action to reduce these:	
Allocated Social Worker:	Team:
Date:	
Manager's signature:	

Return to: Service Manager Child Protection + Planning; Deputy Director Children's Services Copy to: Service Manager, District; Reviewing Manager; Placements Team Manager; Policy & Performance Team Manager and Senior Administrator, Child Protection (if on CPR)

APPENDIX FIVE: AGENCY LEAD OFFICERS

Lead officers with responsibility for this protocol are:

Haringey Council Children's Service

Teresa Walsh Jones

Service Manager, Child Protection & Planning
Hornsey Town Hall Annexe
The Broadway
London N8 9JJ

Rachel Oakley

Service Manager, Looked After Children
40 Cumberland Road
Wood Green
London N22 7SG

Jan Doust

Head of Access & Pupil Support
48 Station Road
London N22 7TY

Haringey Teaching Primary Care Trust

Dorian Cole

Designated Nurse - Child Protection
LI St Ann's Hospital
St Ann's Road
London N15 3TH

Metropolitan Police

Stephen Clarke

Detective Superintendent
Tottenham Police Station
398 Tottenham High Road
London N17 9JA

NCH Haringey Children's Rights Service

Claudia Benjamin

Manager, Red Gables Family Centre
113 Crouch Hill
London N8 9QN

APPENDIX SIX: CONTACT TELEPHONE NUMBERS

Haringey Council Children's Service - Children's Social Care

Service Manager, Child Protection & Planning

020 8489 1177

Child Protection Advisors (Hornsey)

020 8489 1061/1192/1866

Child Protection Advisors (Tottenham)

020 8489 5426/5462

Duty Service (Hornsey)

020 8489 1805/1806/1822

Duty Service (Tottenham)

020 8489 5402/5403/5404

Haringey Council Children's Service - Education

Child Missing Education (CME) contact:

Head of Access & Pupil Support

020 8489 3150

Education Child Protection Co-ordinator

020 8489 2417

Attendance & Welfare Strategy Manager

020 8489 3872

Metropolitan Police

Control Room (for reporting missing children)

020 8345 1212

Missing Persons' Unit (for updates on investigations)

020 8345 1809

Haringey Child Abuse Investigation Team

020 8345 2246

Local Safeguarding Children Board

020 8489 1472/1470



