
Haringey Safeguarding Children Board

Protocol for children & young people who run away or go missing from home, care or education 2015



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1 Introduction

- 1.1 It is estimated that 100,000 children and young people run away from home or care in the UK each year – one every five minutes¹.
- 1.2 When children run away or go missing from home or care or from education it is often a clear indication that something is wrong in their lives. Running away and missing education **has serious implications for a child's welfare as it puts them at risk of harm in the short term and can affect their longer term outcomes**. Research also indicates that children who go missing are more vulnerable to sexual exploitation, substance misuse and involvement in crime: it is estimated that around a quarter of them are at risk of significant harm such as sleeping rough, being sexually exploited or becoming involved in crime or gangs².
- 1.3 Multi-agency responses to children and young people who run away or go missing are the subject of statutory guidance:
- Working Together to Safeguard Children (2015)
 - Statutory guidance on children who run away or go missing from home or care (2014)³
 - Children missing education statutory guidance, January 2015⁴
- 1.4 This protocol has been produced in accordance with this guidance and the Children Act 1989 guidance and regulation volumes in respect of care planning and review⁵ and the London Child Protection Procedures, Part A, and Guidance in Part B, Fifth Edition 2015.
- 1.5 In Part B there is additional practice guidance for:
- Asylum Seeking Children
 - Safeguarding Trafficked and Exploited Children
 - Safeguarding Children Abused through Sexual Exploitation

¹ Rees, G. (2011) Still Running 3: Early findings from our third national survey of young runaways London: The Children's Society

² Ibid

³ [DfE Statutory Guidance on 'Children who run away or go missing from home or care'](#), January 2014

⁴ Children missing education: Statutory guidance for local authorities January 2015

⁵ The Children Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations Volume 2: Care Planning, Placement and Case Review

2 Purpose

2.1 Haringey Safeguarding Children Board (HSCB) has produced this protocol to ensure that all agencies in Haringey work together to:

- Prevent children from running away
- Take action to safeguard the welfare of children who have run away or gone missing from home, care and education
- Monitor patterns of running away
- Take action against any alleged perpetrators

2.2 The Protocol provides guidance for assessing both actual and potential risks to children that go missing from home, care and school. It covers all children who run away or who are missing from home, school or care, including children who are forced out of the family home and children missing from education. Further, it sets out the actions that should be taken by professionals to locate the child, to assist with their return and to identify the issues which caused, and may continue to cause, the child to run away or go missing again.

2.3 Haringey Safeguarding Children Board expects all agencies working with children to implement this Protocol and ensure that all relevant staff are aware of it and how to use it.

2.4 Principles

The following principles have been adopted by the LSCB and its partner agencies in relation to identifying and locating children who go missing:

- The safety and welfare of the child is paramount
- Locating and returning the child to a safe environment is the main objective
- Child protection procedures will be initiated whenever there are concerns that a child, who is missing, may have suffered, or is likely to suffer, significant harm.

3 Definitions

- 3.1 It is important to establish a common language across the whole safeguarding partnership to ensure that all young people who are missing or who run away are identified, responded to and supported in a clear and consistent manner. The terms below are used throughout this document with the following definitions:
- 3.2 **Child:** anyone who has not yet reached their 18th birthday. *Children* therefore means *children and young people* throughout this guidance.
- 3.3 **Young runaway:** a child who has run away from their home or care placement, or feels they have been forced or lured to leave.
- 3.4 **Missing child:** a child reported as missing to the police by their family or carers
- 3.5 **Looked after child:** a child who is looked after by a local authority by reason of a care order, or being accommodated under section 20 of the Children Act 1989.
- 3.6 **Responsible local authority:** the local authority that is responsible for a looked after child's care and care planning.
- 3.7 **Host local authority:** the local authority in which a looked after child is placed when placed out of the **responsible local authority's area**.
- 3.8 **Care leaver:** an eligible, relevant or former relevant child as defined by the Children Act 1989.
- 3.9 **Missing from care:** a looked after child who is not at their placement or the place they are expected to be (e.g., school) and their whereabouts is not known.
- 3.10 **Away from placement without authorisation:** a looked after child whose whereabouts is known but who is not at their placement or place they are expected to be and the carer has concerns or the incident has been notified to the local authority or the police.
- 3.11 **Since April 2013 police forces have been rolling out new definitions of 'missing' and 'absent' in relation to children and adults reported as missing to the police:**
- 3.12 **Absent:** a person not at a place where they are expected or required to be; and
- 3.13 **Missing:** anyone whose whereabouts cannot be established and where the circumstances are out of character or the context suggests the person may be subject of crime or at risk of harm to themselves or another. All children missing under these circumstances must be reported to the police immediately.
- 3.14 **Absconded**
If a child or young person is on bail or the subject of a criminal court order requiring them to remain at a particular address and they run away from that address, this will be a criminal matter and the child must be reported as missing to the police immediately.
- 3.15 **Abducted**
If a child is unlawfully removed from the care of anyone who is legally looking after them,

whether it is a parent or foster carer, the child must be reported as missing to the police immediately. This includes any child who is removed from placement by parents or others contrary to the care plan.

3.16 Unauthorised absences

Some children may absent themselves from home or placement without permission but their whereabouts are known by parents and carers, or they are known to be safe or this is a pattern of repeated behaviour where the young person returns home after a few hours. An example of this may be a teenager who stays out beyond a curfew but whose whereabouts remains known to their parent or carer and/or whom remain in touch during their absence. These children are not classed as missing, and generally, should not be reported to the police unless there are risk factors present that may make the child vulnerable whilst absent. However, if they continue to stay away from their home or placement without permission for more than 24 hours they should be reported as missing to the police.

4 Multi-agency working

4.1 To ensure a high quality of integrated working and joint responses when children go missing, all agencies will:

- Share information in a timely and lawful manner;
- Base decisions and actions on missing children risk assessments;
- Make appropriate referrals to agencies for services for children, including child protection referrals where the child is at risk of significant harm;
- Work jointly to share information and intelligence that enables the development of services for missing children and runaways in Haringey;
- Appoint a designated officer with lead responsibility for missing children and for the implementation of this protocol;
- Ensure all staff have the right training and support to carry out their role under this protocol.

5 Information Sharing

- 5.1 Information sharing between partners routinely takes place within the Haringey Multi-agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH). Haringey has an Information Sharing Agreement in respect of MASH agreed by partners through the MASH Board which ensures input from all key partners.
- 5.2 All contacts will be notified via the CYPS Single Point of Access (SPA) and will be shared, confirmed and logged by on the CYPS database MOSAIC. CYPS Triage will review the contact and fast track referrals to the MASH for consideration by the partnership.
- 5.3 Where a child runs away to another area, liaison and information sharing with different local authorities is led by the existing identified social worker or the identified MASH officer/ partner if the child is unknown or not currently allocated.
- 5.4 Where it is known that a Haringey child has run away to another local authority area, the Haringey Police will contact the Police in that area. If the child is known to Children and **Young People's Service (CYPS)** the Haringey social worker will notify the local authority in the area where the child is believed to be.
- 5.5 Where a child subject to a child protection plan in Haringey goes missing with their family, Haringey CYPS will send out notifications to all other local authorities giving details of the family in order to identify their whereabouts.
- 5.6 **If a child from another area is found in Haringey, CYPS will notify the child's home local authority.**
- 5.7 Haringey will also share any intelligence with regard to CSE with neighbouring boroughs

6 Data Analysis & monitoring

6.1 The following information will be collected about children who run away or go missing from home, care and education and children from other boroughs who have been placed in Haringey:

- Name of child
- Ethnicity
- Gender
- Date of Birth
- Address
- dates of episodes and duration
- **date of Police 78 “Merlin” report**
- whether the child was missing from home, care or education
- whether the child is at risk of CSE
- date of safe and well check completed
- whether a missing risk assessment has been completed
- whether a missing child notification has been completed
- date of return to care interview
- whether a return home interview has been offered.
- whether a return home interview has been completed

6.2 This information is shared, considered and analysed in a number of ways with the LSCB:

- information about children who are causing concern considered at the monthly MASE meetings regularly includes children who run away or go missing and it is a theme on the standard agenda for the meetings;
- the MASE reports into the bi-monthly CSE Sub-group meetings with regular CSE Profile reporting and the group also considers the wider issues for additionally vulnerable children in the borough;
- the quarterly Practice and Performance Outcomes Sub-group reviews the LSCB Performance Scorecard including information on children who run away or are missing;
- both sub-groups report into the bimonthly Executive Sub-group which engages in forward planning for Board reporting and has agreed an annual reporting cycle with specific reporting in relation to missing children.

6.3 Both MASE meetings and the CSE Sub-group involve the Haringey Gangs Action Group Violence Against Women and Girls representatives to share information and integrate action planning.

6.4 **Additionally the Director of Children’s Service (DCS) has established regularly monthly breakfast meetings with the Borough Commander and senior health representatives to look at the needs of additionally vulnerable children, including missing and run away**

children. The DCS also chairs the monthly CYPS Quality Performance Network (QPN).

- 6.5 The information also helps partner agencies to gain an understanding of patterns and trends of running away and missing episodes and how it links with risks such as CSE, trafficking and gang activity in the borough.
- 6.6 This data is provided to front line staff to inform care planning and decision making on individual cases.

7 Agency roles and responsibilities

7.1 Haringey Safeguarding Children Board (HSCB)

7.1.1 In order to support and reinforce multi-agency working and accountability this protocol has been produced by the HSCB.

7.1.2 The HSCB will:

- Co-ordinate the multi-agency approach to missing and runaway children in Haringey, ensuring that this Protocol is up to date
- Provide support for the implementation of the missing and runaway protocol;
- Scrutinise the multi-agency response to children who run away or go missing and receive regular reports on children who run away or are missing from home, care or education.

7.2 Police

7.2.1 The Metropolitan Police Service is the lead agency for investigating and finding missing children and will respond to children and young people going missing or being absent based on on-going risk assessments in line with current guidance⁶. The police will prioritise all incidents of missing children as medium or high risk.

7.2.2 Police Definitions

High Risk: The risk posed is immediate and there are substantial grounds for believing that the child is in danger through their own vulnerability, or may have been the victim of a serious crime, or the risk posed is immediate and there are substantial grounds for believing that the public is in danger.

Medium Risk: The risk is likely to place the subject in danger, or they are a threat to themselves or others.

7.2.2 Police Response to missing notifications

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

A risk assessment will be carried out for each child or young person on every separate occasion that they are reported missing to the police. The risk assessment will be conducted by the Initial Investigating Officer and subsequently confirmed or revised by his /her supervising officer and form the basis for the subsequent investigation into the child's disappearance.

All cases classified as 'missing' by the police will receive an active police response – such as deployment of police officers to locate a child.

⁶ Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) guidance on the Management, Recording and Investigation of Missing Persons <http://www.acpo.police.uk/documents/crime/2011/201103CRIIMP02.pdf>

Cases where the child was classified as 'absent' will be recorded by the police and risk assessed regularly but no active response will be deployed.

The absent case will be resolved when a young person returns or new information comes to light suggesting that he/she is at risk. In the latter instance, the case is upgraded to 'missing'. Guidance on how police forces will apply these definitions to children was issued by ACPO in April 2013.

As part of the initial response to children who are reported missing the police will:

- Gather sufficient information about the missing child to support an effective investigation and informed decision making.
- Establish where and when the child was last seen and the circumstances around their disappearance
- Take any action required to facilitate the immediate recovery of the missing child

In addition to this Police will:

- collect and collate missing persons reports via the Police National Computer (PNC) **missing children's reports**;
- notify the Local Authority of missing children reports via a notification (sometimes known as a MERLIN Report);
- use police powers under the Children Act 1989 as required to safeguard missing children who are located;

The Police will carry out a 'Safe and Well' check with a 'missing' child who returns and may also carry out an independent "Return Review" interview in exceptional circumstances.

Where there are child protection concerns, the Police Child Abuse Investigation Team will be informed and involved in strategy discussions and enquiries as appropriate.

7.3 Children and Young Peoples Services (CYPS)

7.3.1 Section 13 of the Children Act 2004 requires local authorities and other named statutory partners to make arrangements to ensure that their functions are discharged with a view to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children. This includes planning to prevent children from going missing and to protect them when they do.

7.3.2 Local authorities must ensure that all incidents where children go missing are appropriately risk assessed, and should record all incidents of looked after children who are missing or away from placement without authorisation.

7.3.3 In Haringey the senior manager responsible for monitoring policies and performance relating to children who go missing from home or care is **the Head of Safeguarding, Quality, Impact and Practice**.

7.3.4 Children who are unknown or not open to CYPS:

All contacts in relation to children who are missing from home and school and who are unknown or closed to CYPS are received in the Single Point of Access (SPA). This includes children who have been reported missing to the Police and subject to **notification via a Police Form 78 “Merlin” notification.**

The nature and level of need and risk will be considered by CYPS taking into account:

- The contact details contained in the notification
- Any other previous information already known about the child/young person by MASH partners
- Haringey LSCB Thresholds Guidance (2015)

CYPS will make a decision about whether to undertake a social care (single) or early help assessment taking into consideration any specific features or risk factors associated with **the missing episode including “offender, location and themes” e.g. CSE warning signs as per “The London CSE Operating Protocol” (revised version, February 2015).**

Where the decision is to undertake a single assessment, a social worker will be allocated within 24 hours of the contact being received and assessments will be completed as soon as possible within a maximum of 45 working days.

Where the threshold for statutory intervention is not met the child and their family will be referred for early help services. An early help (CAF) assessment will be completed by the early help provider, with the consent of the young person and/ or person with parental responsibility for them to prevent problems escalating or becoming entrenched.

7.3.5 Looked After Children

The needs and circumstances of a looked after child who remains missing, or has repeat episodes of being missing, should be considered as part of a child protection strategy meeting (*appendix 1*). Information sharing and cross borough working arrangements are particularly important for looked after children placed outside of Haringey and should be agreed as part of the strategy meeting.

Looked after children, wherever they are placed, remain the statutory responsibility of the **placing local authority who continue to be the looked after child’s corporate parent** wherever they are placed.

Whenever Haringey looked after children are going to be placed outside of Haringey the CYPS Placement Team will contact the Placement Team in the local authority where the placement is located and the Police in that local authority area if there is any contraindication about the safety of the placement or risk associated with the local area.

Whenever a Haringey looked after child is placed outside of the borough, the CYPS Placement Team will formally notify:

- The local authority where the child is being placed
- The health authority where the child is being placed
- Confirm with these agencies when the placement is ended.

When another authority placed a looked after child in Haringey the formal notification process should be undertaken in exactly the same way. The notification should be logged by CYPS as a contact in MOSAIC for information and future reference if required.

Whenever a looked after child placed in Haringey by another local authority goes missing, Haringey CYPS will notify the placing authority having verified these details on MOSAIC. Routinely the Police notification will be forwarded to the relevant placing authority.

CYPS will make telephone contact with the placing authority to ensure that this information has been received and understood in the manner intended.

Whenever a Haringey looked after child who has been placed in another borough goes missing, contact should be made with the allocated social worker in Haringey by the host authority.

7.4 Foster carers, residential workers and supported housing workers

7.4.1 Where the child is looked after by Haringey, a Haringey care leaver or living in supported housing, their foster carer, residential worker or housing support worker should take all reasonable steps to locate and return the child when they are suspected of being missing, including (but not restricted to) the following :

- Telephoning the child on their mobile phone
- Telephoning friends of the child and the parents of their friends
- **Telephoning the child's own parents and relatives (where appropriate)**
- Visiting places the child may be staying, including the homes of friends and/or relatives

7.4.2 All reasonable enquiries to establish the whereabouts and return of the missing child should take place promptly and concluded without delay. Reasonable enquiries should be completed within 1 to 2 hours maximum. Failure to locate the missing child or establish a safe return within a reasonable timescale should prompt a report to police and the allocated social worker or the Emergency Duty Social Worker (if out of hours).

7.4.3 The *Looked After Child Information Sharing Form (Appendix 2)* should be used when reporting the child missing to the police. If the child is located via phone but refuses to return to placement this should also prompt a report to the police and **the child's** allocated social worker or Emergency Duty Team. An appropriate assessment of risk (*Sec 10.1 & Appendix 3*) should also be undertaken.

7.4.4 Additionally, foster carers, residential workers and supported housing workers should:

- contribute to any plans designed to reduce the risk of running away within the care or pathway planning forum;
- respond to missing incidents in line with this protocol;
- carry out joint risk assessments with social workers of children missing from placements;
- work with the police and CYPS **to ensure the child's safe return to placement;**

- Keep and provide accurate records of incidents to inform data gathering on individual and group patterns of running away.
- 7.4.5 Completed risk assessments **and the “looked after children information form”** should be kept on the child’s file and a copy given to the police and the allocated social worker.
- 7.4.6 **Children Missing from the Haslemere Centre** All young people who run away from or who are missing from the Haslemere centre or go missing whilst in the community under the care of Haslemere staff are particularly vulnerable and will be considered at high risk. All agencies should make contact with Haslemere staff at the earliest opportunity when a child known to that service is missing.
- 7.5 Emergency Duty Team**
- 7.5.1 **Haringey’s** Emergency Duty Team provides a social work service to cover emergency situations arising out of office hours and will:
- respond to notifications from foster carers, residential workers and housing support workers on behalf of CYPS where a looked after child is reported as missing or where there are concerns for the safety of a child who is absent without authorisation;
 - provide a response for any runaway who is located by either ensuring their safe return home or to their placement or where necessary arranging for emergency overnight accommodation;
 - Pass on all relevant information to CYPS or other services for further action.
- 7.6 Health care professionals**
- 7.6.1 Health care professionals have a key role to play in identifying and reporting children who may be missing from care, home and school. Missing children access a number of services provided by a range of health providers, for example:
- Urgent Care Units;
 - Accident & Emergency Departments;
 - Genito-Urinary Medicine Clinics (GaUM);
 - Community Sexual health Services; and
 - Pharmacy Services
- 7.6.2 All health professionals in Haringey should have an understanding of vulnerabilities and risks associated with children that go missing. Staff working in health settings should be aware of their professional responsibilities and the responses undertaken by the multi-agency partnership. Risks include sexual exploitation, trafficking, forced marriage and female genital mutilation. Radicalisation, also a risk factor for vulnerable young people, is managed via the national **“Prevent” strategy**.
- 7.6.3 The Designated Nurse and Designated Doctor for Looked After Children in Haringey are responsible for the commissioning and delivery of appropriate healthcare, assessments and services and should share relevant information and intelligence relating to high risk individuals or emerging themes and patterns indicative of organised and targeted abuse to their NHS Safeguarding Children **Forum**. They should also ensure that health staff

within Haringey knows how to identify, report and respond to a child who is missing from care.

8 Children missing from education

- 8.1 If a child or young person is receiving an education, not only do they have the opportunity to fulfil their potential but they are also in an environment that enables local agencies to safeguard and promote their welfare. If a child goes missing from education they could be at risk of significant harm.
- 8.2 If a member of school/educational establishment/college staff becomes aware that a child may have run away or gone missing, they should try to establish with the parents/carers, what has happened. If this is not possible, or the child is missing, the designated safeguarding teacher/advisor should, together with the class teacher, assess the child's vulnerability.
- 8.3 From the first day that a child does not attend school and there is no explanation or authorisation of the absence, the following steps should be taken:
- A trained staff member will make contact with the parents/carers (person with parental responsibility for the child) to seek reassurance that the child is safe at home;
 - The outcome of the contact should be assessed and if there are any concerns a consultation with the school/establishment/colleges designated safeguarding adviser **should take place to consider the child's vulnerability.**
- 8.4 In the following circumstances **a referral to children's social care** CYPS and /or the police should always be made promptly:
- The child may be the victim of a crime;
 - The child is subject of a Child Protection plan;
 - The child is subject of s47 enquiries;
 - The child is looked after;
 - There is known risk to the child such as CSE or a person posing a risk to children in the household or in contact with the household;
 - There is a history of the family moving frequently;
 - There are serious issues of attendance.
- 8.5 **Definition of children missing education.**

The Statutory Guidance on Children Missing Education (2015), defines children missing education as those who are not on a school roll or receiving suitable education otherwise than at school. Those who are regularly absent or have missed 10 school days or more **without permission may be at risk of becoming 'children missing education'**.

8.6 **Monitoring and tracking.**

The Identification, Referral and Tracking Guidance 2003 requires all local authorities to have a named person responsible for receiving details of children found to be missing

from education. In Haringey this is Kevin Mousse. Local Authorities are required to track, locate and ensure access to education for all children who:

- Have never accessed education (have neither enrolled at a school, nor received education otherwise than at school since reaching statutory school age)
- Leave educational provision without a confirmed educational destination, and/or fail to access a school place when moving to a new area
- Fail to transfer between a new key stage (for instance the Early years Foundation Stage to Year 1)
- Have been withdrawn by the parent/carer from the education system and are not being educated at home

8.7 All children identified as children missing from education need to be monitored and tracked until the local authority can show they have:

- Been allocated a place at school.
- Reached a destination in another authority and/or the new authority is aware and is investigating
- All reasonable checks have been satisfactorily completed

8.8 Children leaving Haringey

Generally, children leaving the borough have a known educational destination. Schools use the School 2 School (S2S) system to transfer information between local authority areas. In these cases, no action is taken by the local authority.

It is the duty of the head teacher, school staff and school governing body to identify and refer to EWS any child leaving school with no confirmed forwarding address, destination or educational provision, or children who fail to return to school after an unauthorised leave of absence.

8.9 Children who cease to attend school - Individual agency responsibilities

8.9.1 Schools

Most school absence is due to illness and is therefore authorised by the school. Where children cease to attend school without explanation (unauthorised absence) it is the responsibility of the school to follow this up in the first instance, by making all reasonable efforts to locate the child. This includes:

- **Telephoning the child's parents/carers using all contact numbers given on the child's personal files**
- Writing to the family at any known addresses
- Where possible visiting the address where the child was last known to reside
- **Any investigations should be recorded on the child's education file**

Provided there are no immediate child protection concerns, after 10 working days the school must make a referral to the local authority Education Welfare Service (EWS). The school will have regular liaison with EWS to establish the whereabouts of the child.

If after 20 school days it has been agreed with EWS that there are no identifiable concerns, **the child's name may be removed from the school role.**

Schools must then complete the Common Transfer Form (CTF) within 15 school days of **the child's name being removed from role.**

The CTF must be uploaded onto the S2S database by the school using "unknown" as the destination school. The school must retain the child's record.

If the child has been registered with another school, all relevant agencies must be **informed by the school from whom the child transferred and the child's educational record forwarded to the new school.**

8.9.2 Education Welfare Service (EWS)

All children identified as missing education (CME) and referred to EWS are recorded MOSAIC and allocated to an Education Welfare Officer (EWO)

At the point that a referral is received from school, the EWO will carry out preliminary investigations to try to locate the child. These include (but not exhaustively):

- Check with Council Tax (Revenues and benefits Team) to establish if the family still lives at the address identified.
- Visit the family home to clarify if the family is still in residence
- If the EWO is unable to locate the child and at least 20 school days have passed, **the school will be advised to upload the child's details on the S2S data base and remove the child from the school roll.**
- The EWO will then refer the missing child to the CME co-ordinator who will carry out further checks.
- If the child is located EWS will inform all relevant agencies who will then update their data bases.
- In cases where the child is found, the EWS will follow its own processes to ensure the child is returned to education either in Haringey or elsewhere.

8.10 Children being educated at home

Where a parent notifies the school in writing of their intention to home educate, schools must notify the EWS so that the elective home education advisory teacher can contact the family to ensure the home education offered is of a good enough standard and to **ensure the child's safety and welfare.**

Where a child is not receiving an efficient and full time education at home the EWS will follow its own processes to ensure that an education takes place.

8.11 Independent Schools, academies and free schools any other registered education provider

Independent schools, Academies, Free Schools and any other registered education provider in Haringey are required to provide local authority EWS with the details of all children admitted and removed from their school roll. Independent schools are also

required to complete CTF.

If a child ceases to attend for 10 days or is missing must be referred.

All schools must also report to EWS any child with irregular attendance. EWS will follow their own processes to address this.

8.12 **Schools and colleges**

Schools and colleges will:

- deliver an educational programme aimed at discouraging children from running away (where there is an identified concern);
- where appropriate, refer children on to preventative programmes;
- notify Haringey of children who are missing from the school roll in line with this protocol;
- make referrals to the SPA for children whom it is thought are at risk of running away;
- notify Haringey of any child who is removed from the school roll to be educated at home;
- Help children returning from a missing episode to settle back into education.
- Advise parents to report children who go missing to the Police
- Refer all children believed to be at risk of significant harm to the SPA

9 Preventing running away behaviour

- 9.1 It is important that children who are thinking of running away are able to speak to someone about their situation and get support to help them deal with issues that may cause them to run away. Professionals who are concerned that a child they work with is at risk of running away should refer the child to Haringey CYPS SPA for assessment for services. This includes young people aged 16 or 17 who are considering leaving home due to family problems.
- 9.2 Where CYPS is already working with a child who is at risk of running away, social workers and the professional network will have an opportunity to work with the child to reduce the risk and plan for any incidents.
- 9.3 Risk will be discussed in planning meetings such as CIN or LAC reviews and child protection conferences in order to plan what actions to take and support to provide to the child to reduce the risk of them running away and what actions will be taken in the event that they do run away.

10 Assessing and categorising risk

- 10.1 *A missing children risk assessment* (*Appendix 3*) must be carried out when a child is missing or runs away and there are concerns about their safety. This allows parents, carers and professionals to gather information about the individual child and the circumstances of their being away from home or care that can inform decisions on what actions to take.
- 10.2 In particular, the risk assessment can help distinguish between unauthorised absences and genuine missing incidents and identify risk factors that make the child particularly vulnerable while away. The information can also help the police to conduct a search for the child by providing details of contacts and locations.

11 Children missing from home

11.1 Carrying out a risk assessment

Where a child goes missing from home, the police will normally carry out the risk assessment at the time of the report being made. However, social workers or other professionals who are already working with the family should help parents to carry out the assessment prior to a report being made.

1.2 Reporting a missing child to police

When a child goes missing from home, there is an expectation that their parents will report this to the police, and any failure to do so will be considered a safeguarding issue.

11.3 If a professional becomes aware that a parent has not reported a child as missing, they should refer the child to the Haringey CYPS Single Point of Access (SPA) immediately, **particularly if there were concerns about the child's welfare prior to** them going missing or if they have a history of running away.

11.4 If a social worker who is working with a child in need becomes aware that a child has not been reported as missing, they should discuss the matter with their manager and a Child Protection Officer. Parents should be encouraged to file a missing report or alternatively, it may be decided that CYPS will report the child as missing.

12 Child protection concerns

CYPS will convene a strategy meeting where:

- there are concerns that the child is or may suffer significant harm whilst away or on their return;
- the missing child is already subject to a child protection plan or section 47 investigation;
- the child is known to CYPS and has gone missing in suspicious circumstances;
- a pregnant woman goes missing and there are concerns for the welfare of the unborn child;
- a family goes missing and there are concerns about the welfare of a child because of the presence in the household of a person who poses a risk to children or is already known or suspected to have harmed the child;
- Any child is missing for more than 28 days.

12.1 The police will prioritise missing children reports and their response.

13 Locating the child

- 13.1 Although the police have lead responsibility for locating a missing child, parents, carers and professionals may all have vital information that could help and it is important that agencies working with the child share any information they have.
- 13.2 Runaways may continue to attend school or clubs and activities or try to contact friends whilst missing; if a school or any youth service has any knowledge of a missing child attending, being seen or contacting others, this should be shared with the police and the rest of the professional network. Consideration should also be given to checking the **child's email or social networking accounts to see if they are still being accessed.**

14 Informing the media

- 14.1 In missing children cases where there is a high level of risk, the police may consider using media coverage as a means of enhancing the investigation. This will be discussed with parents and social workers in advance.
- 14.2 Where a child lives at home, any decision to inform the media **will be taken by the child's** parents in consultation with the police.
- 14.3 Where a child is looked after by Haringey CYPS, this decision will be taken jointly by the DCS, following consultation with the allocated social worker and their manager, the **police and the child's parents.**
- 14.4 If the child is on a care order to Haringey, the DCS will make the decision to inform the **media but will inform parents in advance where this is in the child's best interests.**

15 Actions when a child has been found

- 15.1 **Safe and well check;** Safe and well checks are carried out by the police as soon as possible after the child has returned. Their purpose is to check for any indications that the child has suffered harm, where and with whom they have been, and to give them an opportunity to disclose any offending by or against them.
- 15.2 Where a child goes missing frequently, it may not be practicable for the police to see them every time they return. In these cases a reasonable decision should be taken in **agreement between the police and the child's parent or carer with regard to the frequency of such checks** bearing in mind the established link between frequent missing episodes and serious harm, which could include gang involvement, forced marriage, maltreatment or abuse at home, bullying or sexual exploitation.
- 15.3 **Independent Return interviews (IRI).** All children in Haringey who are reported as missing will be offered an Independent Return Interview (IRI). This is to ensure that young people who run away are offered the chance to talk to someone independent on their return and are provided with information on how to stay safe. It also provides an opportunity for the different agencies to collate information with which to make an informed assessment of the needs of the child/young person and prevent the child/young person running away in the future and/or reducing the risk to them should they run away again.
- 15.3.1 **The Targeted Response and Youth Justice Service undertake Independent Return Interviews.** IRI's can be requested by any member of CYPS using the established referral procedure.
- 15.3.2 Upon receiving a notification for a runaway/missing episode, Haringey Targeted Response and Youth Justice Service will make contact with the child within 72 hours of their return home and will offer the child an independent interview to assess their needs with regard to advice, information and support.
- 15.3.3 **If this is refused, the worker will try to identify another member of the child's professional network** who may be able to carry out the interview.
- 15.3.4 The child should be seen on their own unless they specifically request to have someone with them.
- 15.3.5 **It is important that the interview is carried out by someone independent of the child's care.** This being so, foster carers and residential workers should not complete these interviews. However, it is important for the interviewer to be someone that the child has a good relationship with and feels comfortable talking to about their experiences.
- 15.3.6 Where a young person that is known to CYPS refuses to engage in a return home

interview, the social worker should obtain relevant information from the parents or carers. **Information from the return home interview should be used to inform case planning.**

15.3.7 The interview and actions that follow from it should:

- Identify and deal with any harm the child has suffered – including harm that might **not have already been disclosed as part of the ‘Safe and Well check’**– either before they ran away or whilst missing;
- Understand and try to address the reasons why the child ran away;
- **Help the child feel ‘safe’ / understand that they have options**, to prevent repeat instances of them running away;
- Understand what the child would like to see happen next whether short term and/or long term;
- Gather the parents or carers views of the circumstances, if appropriate;
- Provide the child with information on how to stay safe if they choose to run away again, including helpline numbers.

15.3.10 It is especially important that the independent Return Review interview takes place when a child:

- Has been reported missing on two or more occasions;
- Is frequently absent without authorisation;
- Has been hurt or harmed while they have been missing;
- Is at known or suspected risk of sexual exploitation or trafficking;
- Is at known or suspected risk of involvement in criminal activity or drugs;
- Has contact with persons posing risk to children; and/or
- Has been engaged (or is believed to have engaged) in criminal activities during their absence.

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15.4 Further work on return;

15.4.1 If the missing children risk assessment and /or IRI shows that the child has unmet needs, CYPS may carry out an assessment once the child returns from the missing episode or refer them for early help services and a CAF Assessment.

15.4.2 Where the child has run away from a care placement, their social worker and their Independent Reviewing Officer will discuss whether they should remain in their current placement and may convene a LAC review to discuss what support is needed to avoid further missing episodes

15.4.3 When a child is returning to school following a missing episode, the school should

consider holding a reintegration meeting with parents, carers and social workers so that the return to school can be properly planned.

16 Children missing in specific circumstances

16.1 **Children at risk of sexual exploitation;** See London Child Protection Procedures, Part B3, Chapter 8, Safeguarding Children from Sexual Exploitation[27].

16.1.1 The sexual exploitation of children involves exploitative situations, contexts and relationships where the young person (or third person/s) receive ‘something’ (e.g. food, accommodation, drugs, alcohol, cigarettes, affection, gifts, money) as a result of them performing, and/or another or others performing on them, sexual activities. Violence, coercion and intimidation are common.

16.1.2 **Involvement in exploitative relationships is characterised by the child’s or young person’s limited availability of choice as a result of their social, economic or emotional vulnerability.** A common feature of CSE is that the child or young person does not recognise the coercive nature of the relationship and does not see themselves as a victim of exploitation

16.1.3 Going missing is a significant risk factor in relation to sexual exploitation:

- A child may go missing because they are being sexually exploited;
- **A child’s risk of being sexually exploited might increase because they are missing and are spending time with people who may seek to involve them in sexual exploitation.** The risk is heightened whilst they are missing because the protective factors of family or care are not available to them.

16.1.4 Because there is such a strong link between children going missing and risk of sexual exploitation, professionals should always assess whether a child who has gone missing is being sexually exploited or at risk of being sexually exploited.

16.1.5 All professionals should refer to the Pan London CSE Operating Protocol (2015) Haringey CSE Pathway and the Haringey Thresholds Guidance for information on indicators to be aware of and what action to take where there are strong suspicions of sexual exploitation.

16.2 Children at risk of radicalisation

16.2.1 Children and young people can suffer harm when exposed to extremist ideology. This harm can range from a child adopting or complying with extreme views which limit their social interaction and full engagement with their education, to children being groomed for involvement in violent attacks.

16.2.2 Children can be exposed to harmful, extremist ideology in the immediate or extended family, or relatives/family friends who live outside the family home but have influence **over the child’s life. Older children or young people might self-radicalise** over the internet or through the influence of their peer network – in this instance their parents **might not know about this or feel powerless to stop their child’s radicalisation.**

16.2.3 Going missing is a risk factor in relation to radicalisation:

- A child may go missing because they have already been radicalised;
- **A child's risk of being radicalised might increase** because they are missing and are spending time with people who may seek to involve them in radical/extreme activities. The risk is heightened whilst they are missing, because the protective factors of family or care are not available to them.

Professionals should always assess whether a child who has gone missing is at risk of radicalisation.

16.3 Trafficked children

16.3.1 The illegal and secretive nature of trafficking can mean that traffickers may take all possible steps to stop the child from coming into contact with agencies and professionals in an effort to hide their activities and maintain control over the child. One method of achieving this is to move the child on quickly. Trafficked children may also be moved on because the nature or location of the exploitation changes over time.

16.3.2 Professionals who are concerned that a child is at risk of or may have been trafficked should refer to the London Safeguarding Children Board Trafficked Children Guidance (2011).

16.4 Children missing on outings and activities

16.4.1 If a child goes missing during outings and activities, the group leader should carry out the following procedures.

- Carry out a search of the area to try to locate the child but do not delay reporting the child as missing.
- Report the child as missing to the local police; this information will be passed on to the **Missing Person's Unit where the child lives and the incident will be jointly investigated.**
- For children living at home, notify their parents.
- For looked after children, notify their foster carer or residential key worker, and their allocated social worker; out of hours, this notification should be made to **Haringey's EDT.**
- Notify the relevant service manager and decide on what action should be taken, for example arranging a further search or returning home.

16.5 Children from other boroughs

16.5.1 A runaway from another borough may come to the attention of Haringey police or approach CYPS for help. In these circumstances, contact will be made **with the child's home authority** to arrange their safe return. Out of hours, this will be carried out by the EDT.

16.5.2 If the child is in immediate danger or at risk of serious significant harm, the police and CYPS will use statutory powers of intervention under the Children Act 1989 to ensure the **child's immediate safety and welfare before referring the matter back to the home authority.**

16.6 Abduction, forced marriage and removal from the UK

- 16.6.1 If it is suspected that a child has been or may be abducted and removed from the UK, normally due to disputes over residency or custody, parents should be advised to contact the Child Abduction Unit in the Official Solicitors Office for details on what action can be taken.
- 16.6.2 Forced marriage involves the obtaining of consent to marry by duress, threats and violence. If there are concerns that a young woman has gone missing because of a forced marriage, social workers and professionals should refer to the government guidance [The Right to Choose](#) for details of what action to take
- 16.6.3 If it is feared that the child may be removed from the UK for the purposes of forced marriage, professionals should contact the Forced Marriage Unit based in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. [Victims of forced marriage](#)

16.7 FGM (Replace 17.6.4)

- 16.7.1 Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) is illegal in England and Wales under the Female Genital Mutilation Act 2003 (“the 2003 Act”). **It is a form of child abuse and violence against women and girls.**
- 16.7.2 From 31st October 2015 Section 5B of the 2003 Act introduced a mandatory duty which requires all regulated health and social care professionals and teachers to report known **cases of FGM in under 18’s which they identify in the course of their professional work to the police.**
- 16.7.3 If there are concerns that a young girl may be removed from the UK for the purposes of FGM, or is in any way at risk of FGM, professionals should follow the guidance set out by the London Safeguarding Children Board and contact the police and Haringey CYPS as a matter of urgency.
http://www.londoncp.co.uk/chapters/sg_ch_risk_fgm.html

17 Resources and support

17.1 All children who go missing will be offered a return home interview and referred on to suitable services depending on their level of need. Parents and carers will also be signposted to suitable support and resources. The following resources are available in Haringey:

Missing People

www.missingpeople.org.uk

Works with young runaways, missing people and their families. Advice and information for professionals working with young people who run away or go missing.

Alone in London

www.aloneinlondon.org.uk

020 7278 4224

Services to engage and support young people aged 16 to 25 who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

Childline

www.childline.org.uk

0800 1111

Reunite

www.reunite.org.uk

01162 556234

Advice and help for parents whose children have been removed from the UK.

Railway Children

www.railwaychildren.org.uk

01270 757 596

Advice, support and outreach work for young people on the streets and Advice for people working with them.

Safer London Foundation

www.saferlondonfoundation.org.uk

07850 630198

One to one work with girls aged 11 to 18 whose missing episodes are linked to CSE and gangs.

18 Lead officers and CSC contacts

Name	Designation	Agency
Carol Carruthers	Head of Service, Children in Need of Support and Protection	Haringey CYPS
Dominic Porter-Moore	Head of Service, Looked After Children	Haringey CYPS
Kirsten Carr	Interim Head of Targeted Response and Youth Justice	Haringey CYPS
Michael Welton	Joint Interim Head of Education Services	Haringey Education Service
Deirdre Cregan	CSE Co-ordinator/ SPOC	Haringey CYPS
Claire Lloyd	Named Nurse, Community and CSE SPOC	Haringey Community NHS Foundation Trust
Steven Hall	Detective Sergeant- CSE SPOC	Haringey Police Public Protection Desk
Mark Wrigley	Detective Inspector- Missing Person's Coordinator	Haringey Police Missing Person's Unit
Kevin Mousse/ Kelley McEvoy	CME Officers	Haringey Education Service
Matt Beavis	Interim Designated Nurse for Child Protection	Haringey CCG
David Elliman	Consultant Paediatrician/ Designated Doctor	Haringey CCG
Lynn Carrington	Designated Nurse for Looked After Children	Whittington Health
Kim Holt	Designated Doctor for Looked After Children	Whittington Health

19 Review of protocol

This protocol will be reviewed on a 12 monthly basis

Appendix 1: Agenda for Missing from Care Strategy Meeting

Items to cover:

- Information on child and family and presenting risks, including history of missing episodes and background of child;
- Plans to locate/ recover the child, including as appropriate:
 - a. Visits to known address;
 - b. Contacting family/ friends, parents and professionals;
 - c. Police- tracing of phone, social networking sites and oyster card;
 - d. Use of the media to publicise details of the case;
 - e. Application of recovery orders and serving of abduction orders;
 - f. Notifications to local authorities, hospitals, ports, airports.
- Additional risk factors including CSE/ offending/ abduction abroad/ substance misuse;
- Parental involvement/ notification;
- Plans once the child is located including the safe and well check, return home interviews, medical attention and social work visit;
- Plans to prevent a repeat missing episode;
- Actions and next meeting

Wider and more public reporting arrangements using media alerts may be considered as part of a missing strategy. This will be considered as a recommendation from the child protection strategy meeting and agreed in consultation with the CYPS Director of Children's Services (DCS).

Appendix 2: Looked After Child Information Sharing Form

COMPLETED and UPDATED record to be provided to POLICE

Please use this template to update information on children in your care, or for whom you are responsible.

Section 1

To be completed at the start of the placement and maintained throughout

Full Name:		Recent Image of Child
Previous names		
Nickname/Street name:		
DoB:	Current home address:	
Contact and Social Media	Primary contact: Office Tel No: Mobile Tel No:	Height:
Mobile phone number:		Weight:.....
Facebook Username		Build:
Twitter Username		Complexion:
BBM detail/PIN Access Code:		Eye Colour:
Email addresses:		Hair:
Any other social media: (Instagram etc)	Length at placement:	Marks, scars, tattoos:
		Physical/Psychological disabilities

	Previous placement/Home Address:	Ethnicity: Nationality:
Legal status (including orders/Immigration)		School/College/Employer (including contact details)
Medical requirements – Including Medication		
Placing Authority:	Social Worker name:	
Childs Next Of Kin – Including relationship and contact:	Contact (phone/Mobile/email) Detail of Child protection plan if relevant	
OYSTER Card Number & Adult Sponsor (U16):	Bank Account Details and Access to funds: Eg Debit card etc	
Does the child smoke, consume alcohol or illegal/recreational drugs? Provide full details:	Provide details of the child’s friends, include their home address and contact details:	
Locations Frequented/Places or worship <i>If the child has been missing before, include where they were found</i>	Details of other associates and family members that the child has contact with, include their home address and contact details:	
Risk Factors – Victim or potential victim, of forced marriage, FGM or trafficking, or sexual exploitation		

<p>Risk Factors – At risk from Gang Involvement/Membership <i>Consider new acquaintances, unexplained cash funds, regular travel patterns</i></p>
<p>Risk Factors – Is the child previously known for Suicide Attempts or Self Harm Tendencies: <i>Provide details including dates</i></p>

Section 2

To be updated when the child goes missing

<p>Circumstances:</p>
<p>Risk Factors - Recent Behaviour or incidents that have occurred leading up to being missing <i>Victim of crime or bullying, problems with school/college, bereavement/life changing events. Include recent ABSENT or UNAUTHORISED ABSENCE details</i></p>
<p>Risk Factors - Does the child need essential medication or treatment not readily available to them e.g. asthma inhaler, insulin</p>

Place last seen:	
Time & Date:	
By whom:	
Who with:	
Description:	
Reporting person Name, role and contact details	

Missing Incident – Attempts to Locate Contact Enquiries with Known Friends, Relatives and Acquaintances			
Date	Time	Name/Contact No and Address	Result

Notes	
Completed by	Date / Time
Received by	Date / Time

Appendix 3 : Missing Child Risk Assessment

Name of Child Missing _____

Date _____

Address from which missing _____

Factor	Details and Explanation
10 years old or under	
11 to 14 years of age	
15 up to 18 years of age	
Has a Child Protection Plan	
Needs essential medication or treatment not readily available to them e.g. asthma inhaler, insulin	
May not have the physical ability to interact safely with others or in an unknown environment, e.g. visually impaired, history of abuse or inappropriate adult/stranger relationships, Downs Syndrome etc.	
Lacks reasonable awareness of the risks associated with running away, incl. learning disabled	
Known to associate with adults or children who present a risk of harm e.g. Sexual	

Offenders, Offenders against children	
Mental illness or psychological disorder that may increase risk of harm to themselves or others	
Drugs and/or alcohol dependency	
Suspicion of abduction	
Suspected suicide or self-harm	
Involved in violent and/or racial incident or confrontation immediately prior to disappearance	
Concerns about state of mind e.g. unusual behaviour prior to disappearance or disappeared with no prior indication, or seemed troubled etc.	
Inclement weather conditions where exposure would seriously increase risk to health	
Family/relationship problems or recent history of family conflict/abuse	
Employment problems	
Financial problems	
School or college problems	

On-going victim of bullying, harassment, or exploitation e.g. racial, sexual etc.	
Previously disappeared and suffered or was exposed to harm whilst missing	
Victim or potential victim, of forced marriage, FGM or trafficking, incl. for sexual exploitation	
Known to associate with gang members and other violent offenders	

Summary of Risk

(Summarise the risks in a couple of sentences)

Summary of Actions Taken

Include attempts to talk to child on mobile phone and attempts to contact friends & family

Review Date for Actions Decided

Completed by, full name	Signature
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This Risk Assessment is an aid to action and for information sharing and recording.

Aid to action: As an action tool the purpose of the Risk Assessment is to inform single and multi-agency

agency decision-making and planning to locate a 'missing' child. The Risk Assessment provides an indication of:

- The urgency of inquiries
- Areas of inquiry e.g. where drugs are available or that certain adults frequent, country of origin or country children are trafficked on to etc.
- Type of specialist knowledge that might be needed
- The supervision that may be required
- Agencies who may be first alerted e.g. local Accident & Emergency services

Aid for information sharing and recording: At the time that a child goes '*missing*' the completed Risk Assessment should be shared with all agencies working with the child and kept on the child's file in each agency. In cases where new information becomes available and/or the child remains absent for a protracted period, the risks should be re-assessed, shared with the agencies and kept on the child's file in each agency. The most recently completed Risk Assessment should remain on the child's file in all agencies working with the child.