

CHILDREN WHO RUN AWAY OR GO MISSING FROM HOME OR CARE STRATEGY

January 2015

(Updated October 2016)

Version 2

Document Owner: C.Dutton AED
Review date: November 2017

Contents

Section 1 – Background

Introduction	4
Scope	5
Named responsible officer	6
Principles	6-7
Definitions – explanation of terms	7-9
Children missing from education	9

Section 2 – Children Missing From Home

Principles	11
Reporting a child as missing	11-12
Return of the child	12
Referral to Children’s Social Care	13
Return Interview	13-14

Section 3 – Children Missing From Care

Pre-placement	15
Corporate Parenting responsibilities	16
Away from placement without authorisation	18
Before contacting the police	19
Going missing on an external activity	20
Absconders	20
Reporting to the police	21
The return	21
Independent return interview	22
The role of care planning	23
Out of borough placement	23
Independent placement providers	24-25

Section 4 – Police responsibilities

Initial report and risk assessment	25-26
Planning for return	27
Longer absences	27-29
Return of the young person	29
Child protection concerns	29
Scaled intervention	30

Section 5 – Strategic arrangements

Governance arrangements	32
Strategic review	33
Training and induction	33
Complaints	33

Appendices

Appendix 1	CSE Gathering Intelligence Form CSE1	35-41
Appendix 2	Return Interview Form	42
Appendix 3	Missing Strategy Meeting Pro Forma	43-46
Appendix 4	Flowchart for Absent Children	47
Appendix 5	Flowchart for Missing Children	49
Appendix 6	Intervention Meeting Agenda	51-52
Appendix 7	Escalation Meeting Agenda	53
Appendix 8	Escalation Meeting Report Template	54-55
Appendix 9	Risk Assessment Document	56

Section 1 - Background

1.1 Introduction

The Children's Society's "*Still Running*" survey estimated that around 100,000 children under the age of 16 run away from home or care each year across the UK. We know that many of these children stay with friends or family members, but there are some who do not have or don't access these support systems, or who are forced to stay in environments that are harmful to their safety and well-being, and so end up engaging in activities that may put them at risk.

There are strong links between children being exploited sexually or criminally and other behaviours such as running away from home or care, bullying, self-harm, teenage pregnancy, truancy and substance misuse. In addition, some children are particularly vulnerable, for example, children with special needs, those in residential or foster care, those leaving care, migrant children, unaccompanied asylum seeking children, forced marriage and those involved in gangs.

The majority of children who go missing are not in care and go missing from their family home however, children who are looked after are much more likely to run away than those who live at home, and over 50% of young people in care have run away at some point.

Whilst each case needs to be considered on its merits, children who run away are at a heightened risk of being victims of crime, sexual exploitation, involved in substance misuse and/or becoming involved in crime and disorder.

Additionally, research shows that the level of risk to the individual child escalates with each episode they go missing and repeat episodes have been identified as a significant indicator of high risk to the child or young person.

This strategy defines missing children and young people as those who go missing and those who run away.

The local authority with partner agencies has a responsibility to ensure that children who go missing from home or care are monitored closely and receive return interviews to ascertain the underlying issue/s and timely interventions that meet their needs.

1.2 Scope

These procedures relate to:

- Children and young people looked after by Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council, placed in either local authority or privately run children's homes within or outside the borough of Knowsley.
- Children and young people placed in foster care within Knowsley.
- Children and young people looked after by councils outside of Knowsley, placed with care providers within Knowsley.
- Children and young people missing from their home address or other non-care related addresses, including schools or hospitals.

For the purposes of this protocol; a child is defined as anyone who is under 18 years of age. Care leavers can comprise of young people from 16-24 years of age.

A missing or runaway child will be defined as one where the missing or runaway episode has been reported to the police and or recorded on the police COMPACT database.

Knowsley Borough Council retains responsibility for Knowsley children looked after who are placed outside the local authority boundaries. In these cases Knowsley Children Social Care (CSC) will require the placement provider to comply with this protocol and those local to their area.

Other responsible authorities placing children within Knowsley boundaries will be required to comply with the responsible and Knowsley protocols.

This policy is in line with two of KSCB Strategic Priorities:

- 1) Children in Knowsley are safeguarded and protected from harm, including abuse, neglect and exploitation.
- 2) The voices and experiences of children are fully embedded in practice and service planning.

1.3 Named Responsible Officer

The Assistant Chief Constable Matrix Serious and Organised Crime, Merseyside Police, is the designated lead officer with primary strategic responsibility for children missing from care and home.

The local authority has designated the Executive Assistant Director for Children's Social Care as their lead officer with primary strategic responsibility for children missing from care and home.

The LSCB Business Manager will help to ensure that reporting arrangements are managed in accordance with this procedure.

1.4 Principles

The following principles should be adopted by all agencies involved with young people who may go missing:

- Going missing is a dangerous activity and can have short and long term consequences. All individuals have a responsibility to report a child if they are missing. If a parent or carer does not report a child missing within a reasonable timescale when their whereabouts are unknown, this should be seen as displaying compromised parenting and should be considered as a potential safeguarding concern.
- It is imperative that services working with children are able to and actively identify those who are commencing a pattern of running away behaviour and provide the appropriate interventions at the earliest opportunity to prevent future incidents which may place them, or others, at risk.
- Many children will exhibit normal adolescent behaviour in testing boundaries and it is not helpful to consider every incident of lateness or absence for all children as high risk. However, some children will need to be treated as missing immediately due to their vulnerability. This protocol is based upon the principles of sound individual risk assessment, by carers and agency professionals and by Merseyside Police in classifying and responding to the incident.
- Accurate and up-to-date information from the child's past and present is key to appropriate risk assessment and response to missing, and other, incidents. This should include if there is any suggestion the child or young person may have travelled abroad. Information from previous assessments, immediate welfare checks or return Interviews should be fed back to Police and carers so this picture of behaviour and experiences can be developed.
- The police will only become involved after the reporting individual has completed all reasonable checks to locate the individual. Missing children and young people remain the responsibility of the person / organisation which has legal parental responsibility for the child, even after they have been reported missing.

- The primary function of the police is to investigate the disappearance and attempt to locate the young person prior to any harm befalling them or the general public. Police response and associated actions will be based on a police risk assessment of the incident and knowledge of the individual(s) concerned, which will utilise information from partners and those who know the child.
- It is a statutory requirement that all young people who have an episode where they are reported as missing should have an independent interview on their return. A copy of all return interviews should be sent to Knowsley.vpu.referrals@merseyside.pnn.police.uk so that intelligence and patterns can be analysed and used to inform service delivery.
- Children and young people's views must continue to be taken into account when responding to incidents and any expectations put on children and young people through this policy should be discussed with them, as part of the care planning and review process and during other interventions for children not in local authority care.

1.5 Definitions and Explanation of Terms

The current National Police Chief's Council (NPCC, previously ACPO) definition of missing is:

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."

Absent – "A person not at a place where they are expected or required to be."

The 'absent' category should comprise of cases in which people are not presently where they are supposed to be and there is no apparent risk.

Police classification of a child as missing or absent will be based on an on-going risk assessment. Note that 'absent' within this definition would not include those defined as 'away from placement without authorisation' (see below).

A child whose whereabouts are known would not be treated as either 'missing' or 'absent' under police definitions; guidance on how the police will apply these new definitions to children was issued by NPCC (previously ACPO) in April 2013.

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 reported to the local authority or the police.

Looked After – A child is ‘looked after’ by a local authority if they are ‘in care’ by reason of a court order, or if they are provided with accommodation for more than 24 hours by agreement with parents/carers or with the child if they are aged over 16.

Accommodated – A child is accommodated if they are looked after by the local authority with the voluntary agreement of parents/carers, or the child if they are over 16 years old.

Responsible local authority – The authority that is responsible for the young person’s care and care planning. This would usually mean the placing authority.

Host local authority – The authority in which the young person is placed when placed outside of the responsible authority’s area.

Care leaver – an eligible, relevant or former relevant child as defined by the Children Act 1989.

Young runaway – A child or young person under the age of 18 who has runaway from their home or from care, or feels they have been forced or enticed to leave, or whose whereabouts are unknown.

Missing Person Coordinator – Approval of the National Police Chief’s Council definition is conditional on the role of missing person coordinator or someone performing this function in each police force. NPCC advise that ideally the role has close links with arrangements to deal with Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) and in Knowsley there are two officers in the joint role of Missing From Home/CSE who develop intelligence and investigate and prevent CSE and Criminal Exploitation (CE).

Absconded – When a child or young person has gone missing who is subject to an order or requirement resulting from the criminal justice process (e.g. remands, curfews, tagging, conditions of residence, ASBOs) or a secure order made in either civil or criminal proceedings.

Child abduction - Where a child has been abducted or forcibly removed from their place of residence, this is a ‘crime in action’ and should be reported to the Police immediately.

Forced marriage - Some young people run away because they are at risk of abuse. Forced marriage in particular can lead to young women running away from home

Further guidance on this can be found in the LSCB procedures manual – visit www.knowsleyscb.org.uk and also <https://www.gov.uk/forced-marriage>

Child Exploitation – Children and young people may run away or go missing from home or care following grooming by adults who are seeking to exploit them

sexually. Children and young people can also be exploited for the purposes of criminal activity. Children and young people who are regularly reported as either missing from home or care are particularly vulnerable to being exploited. Further guidance can be found at www.knowsleyscb.org.uk

Child Trafficking - Some missing children and young people subsequently become trafficked, often for the purposes of sexual exploitation. They may be trafficked across both small and large geographical areas – visit www.knowsleyscb.org.uk

Independent Return Interviews - This is an in-depth interview and is best carried out by an appropriately trained practitioner independent of providing care to the young person within 72 hours of the return. In Knowsley this is commissioned through Catch 22 with the case holding social worker (if an open case,) following up any actions that emerge and informing future care planning and development of an individual risk management plan. Knowsley have a contract with Catch 22 to undertake all return interviews, they can be reached at Mfh.Knowsley@catch22.cjism.net

Other responsible authorities who have placed a child in Knowsley can commission Knowsley to complete their return interviews on their behalf.

1.6 Children Missing from Education

Children and young people miss education either because they do not have a school place, or they are having some other difficulties in attending school. This makes them vulnerable and more likely to be at risk of neglect or abuse.

Certain groups of children and young people are more likely to miss education, including college, they include:

- Young people who have committed offences
- Children and young people that are being exploited
- Children and young people living in women's refuges
- Children and young people of homeless families, perhaps living in temporary accommodation
- Young runaways
- Children and young people with long-term medical or emotional difficulties
- Looked after children
- Children and young people from a traveller background
- Young carers
- Children and young people with transient families
- Teenage mothers
- Children and young people who are permanently excluded from school
- Migrant children, whether in families seeking asylum or economic migrants
- Trafficked children and young people

For detailed guidance on Children Missing Education see “Revised statutory guidance for local authorities in England to identify children not receiving a suitable education (DCSF 2009)”.

Knowsley has a Children Missing Education (CME) Officer and a system for recording and monitoring those children who fall into this category. The CME Officer works with colleagues in order to secure and maintain educational provision. School attendance data is also cross referenced with child exploitation data to ensure that all safeguarding concerns are appropriately responded too.

For children and young people without a school place contact:

The School Admissions Team
Telephone: 0151 443 5143
Visit www.knowsley.gov.uk (search for school admissions).

1.7 Non-school attendance

There is a duty on the local authority to identify and support children and young people with attendance difficulties. Each school has the support of the Children Missing Education Team who should be contacted via the school for assistance on attendance issues.

For young people without a college place, contact:

Knowsley Community College
Telephone: 0151 477 5850
www.knowsleycollege.ac.uk

Section 2 – Children Missing From Home

2.1 Principles

A co-ordinated response is equally required for children who are missing from home. This may include sharing information about children missing from education, presenting at accident and emergency or are known to the Youth Mutual.

Children who are going missing from home and education are at an increased risk of exploitation and all agencies should be alert to the relevant risk indicators.

Anyone who 'takes or detains' a child under 16 years of age without lawful authority may be prosecuted under section 2 of the Child Abduction Act 1984.

Children and young people who go missing and are under the age of 16 are not considered as being able to live independently away from home. Young people over the age of 16 who are living away from home can be vulnerable and consideration should be given to a child's physical and emotional needs and the potential risk of harm in making a professional judgement about their individual circumstances.

There is an expectation that parents or guardians will report their child as missing. Failure to do so should be considered as a potential child protection issue and if appropriate the Knowsley Safeguarding Children's Board (KSCB) procedures followed.

2.2 Reporting A Child As Missing

In the first instance parents/carers are expected to make reasonable efforts to locate the missing young person, providing that it is safe to do so, they should:

- Search their bedroom and house including any outbuildings and vehicles.
- Contact known friends and relatives where the child or young person might be.
- Visit locations where the child is known to frequent if it is safe to do so.

When all reasonable steps have been exhausted, parents and anyone who has care of a child or young person should inform the police and if appropriate, Children Social Care via the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH.)

To inform the police about a missing young person **dial 101**. **In exceptional circumstances if a very vulnerable child goes missing and an immediate, urgent response is needed dial 999, explain the circumstances of the child's disappearance and the reasons for your concern.** The police will need to know:

- The child's name
- The child's date of birth
- Where, when and with whom the child went missing
- What the child was wearing
- A description of the child
- Agreement to provide a recent photograph
- Their medical history
- The time and location they were last seen
- Circumstances of going missing
- Details of any friends or associates
- Details of any places they are known to visit

Officers will conduct a risk assessment forming the basis for resulting proportionate actions. They will make ongoing enquiries, sharing information with parents and other agencies as appropriate.

2.3 Return of the Child

Family, friends or carers locating a child missing from home should return them to their home address.

Where a risk is present, a police officer may accompany the family/carers or the police may be requested to return the child to the place of residence only if it is safe to do so.

Parents/carers must inform the police when a child returns of their own accord.

The police will conduct an interview known as a 'safe and well check' to establish the young person's wellbeing and safety, and whether they were the victim of abuse or a crime whilst missing.

The police risk assessment will be informed by:

- Individual circumstances, including family circumstances in which the child has gone missing
- Their motivation for running
- Their possible destination
- Their recent patterns of absences (if any)
- If the parent/s appear unable, or unwilling, to work to support and meet the needs of children

2.4 Referral to Children's Social Care

Where the police or other agencies assess that a child is suffering or is likely to suffer significant harm a referral to Knowsley Children's Services must be made immediately through: KNOWSLEYMASH@Knowsley.gcsx.gov.uk

Additionally the police will refer to Children's Social Care when there are 3 missing reports in less than 90 days for the same child.

If the concerns raised require immediate safeguarding then a Strategy Meeting (Appendix 3) under Section 47 will be convened by the MASH and chaired by the MASH CSC team manager. If there is information to suggest current child exploitation concerns then the Shield Coordinator will chair the strategy meeting. If the child or young person is an open case to Knowsley CSC then a strategy meeting will be convened by the allocated social worker and chaired by the CSC team manager.

If there is no evidence that the child is at risk of significant harm then Shield will arrange an Intervention Meeting which can be chaired by Shield social worker. If the child or young person is an open case to Knowsley CSC or Family First then an Intervention Meeting will be convened and chaired by the allocated lead practitioner or team manager. The Intervention Meeting will determine the appropriate threshold for the family to be assessed or supported. This judgement will take into account the number and seriousness of previous missing episodes.

The Missing From Home Coordinators should be invited to the intervention meeting however there needs to be a confidential section at the start of the meeting for police and other agencies to share confidential information that cannot be disclosed in front of the young person and their parent/carers attendance.

2.5 Return Interviews

The purpose of the return interview is to:

- Identify factors which led to the missing episode
- Prevent further missing episodes
- Inform any subsequent missing person investigation
- Share intelligence and information

Particular attention should be paid if a child is suspected of being involved in or at risk of trafficking or exploitation as they may be fearful of giving information.

Prior to any interview conducted with a child or young person the interviewer should inform them who this information will be shared with, when and why and gain consent before sharing.

It is crucial that any information gained through this interview is fed back to police and to any Intervention Meetings so that a picture is built up and any issues can be dealt with. If consent is not given to disclose but in the interests of safeguarding the child or other children it is necessary to share the information, then it should be disclosed.

For this purpose, the return interview pro forma has been developed and can be found at Appendix 2. These should be returned to Education, health and CSC if an open case as well as the police:

Knowsley.vpu.referrals@merseyside.pnn.police.uk

All Knowsley children and young people who have been reported missing over a two hour period are offered a return interview according to the format provided in Appendix 2. All missing/absent reports under two hours will be considered within the Shield Team as to whether they require a return interview.

The return interview should be carried out within 72 hours of the child being located or returning from the missing episode. This is particularly important if they have been missing before and/or there are risks indicators suggesting potential child sexual or criminal exploitation or if they have been hurt or harmed. The completed return interview proforma should be saved to the child's record and copies sent to care home placements, health, education and the police at Knowsley.vpu.referrals@merseyside.pnn.police.uk

Children of school age who go missing from home but who are not referred on to CSC will also receive return interviews from Catch 22 as all police notifications are logged by MASH. MASH refer the case to Catch 22 to conduct the return interview. The outcome of the interview is recorded which includes:

- No further action
- Signposting
- Early Help
- S17 Initial assessment
- S47 Child Protection

Section 3 – Children Missing From Care

3.1 Pre-placement

Prior to each accommodation arrangement for a Child Looked After, the placing responsible social worker must consider within the care planning process all potential risks to the child including an assessment of the potential for them to go missing. The child and their parent/carer should be involved in the planning process and it should be related to that individual's needs, previous history and views. Missing episodes prior to the child becoming "looked after" must be taken into account.

Care should be taken when establishing where the child or young person should be accommodated:

- Is the home able to meet the needs of the young person?
- Is the placement a good match in terms of other young people in the placement?
- Are there external factors in the area of the placement which need to be taken into account when considering the placement?

When placing outside the responsible authority, it is even more critical to properly assess the above issues. If there is a need to discuss specific risks or issues, the placing authority should speak to the Safeguarding Unit in the authority in which the child will be living.

When a placement is confirmed, the responsible authority must always follow the formal notification process as detailed in 'Out of authority placement of looked-after children: Supplement to The Children Act 1989 Volume 2: Care Planning, placement and review guidance; July 2014', this will inform the new authority that a looked after child is being placed in their area. If children and young people are being placed within Knowsley then the notification form should be sent to Knowsley notifications at KNOWSLEY.MASH@Knowsley.gcsx.gov.uk

The initial placement plan is an opportunity for the care provider and the social worker to discuss with the young person any issues around going missing and absent and to explain the rules and responsibilities of all involved. It is also the opportunity to provide the carer with details of the young person and their family and history. This will help carers to understand any risks to the young person or themselves if they go missing and it may help to locate the young person and a copy should be provided to the child's placement. The placement plan should cover:

- Any trigger points for absence or missing episodes.
- Risks to themselves, the public and/or the carer before, during or after a missing episode including when being picked up.

- What steps can be taken to reduce the likelihood of the child going missing and coming to any harm or harming others.
- Friends and family details and contact numbers as well as addresses commonly found at.
- Expectations of the young person: for example, curfews and, when and how to make contact, and the consequences of lateness etc.
- Expectations of the care provider: for example at which point the Police will be notified, what processes will follow an incident, who will collect a child if they are missing, details of who conducts immediate assessments on their return and arrangements for full return interviews.
- Agreements around rules for staying overnight at friend's houses or going on trips. This is frequently cited as a major issue by young people who wish to behave like their peers who are not looked after. Local Authority Circular (2004) suggests that "decisions on overnight stays should normally be delegated to foster carers and residential care staff. Arrangements for such decisions should be written into the placement plan or equivalent." There is no statutory duty for DBS checks to be carried out on adults in a private household where a child/young person may stay overnight and so restrictions should only be placed on looked after children if there are exceptional circumstances.

Care Providers together with responsible local authorities and all other relevant agencies should operate a system of intervention strategies designed to reduce the possibility of a child or young person going missing again, as stated under Standard 5 of the Children's Homes: National Minimum Standards 2011. These must relate to the individual young person and take into account their experiences and needs.

If there are specific concerns or risks to young people, then consideration by placing responsible social workers should be given to liaison with local community policing, to the extent of sharing potential addresses and locations where children might run to and possibly engaging the police in speaking to the young person about potential dangers in the local area.

3.2 Corporate Parenting Responsibilities

When a child or young person is reported missing, the carer(s), the responsible local authority and the police have a joint responsibility for protecting the wellbeing of the individual. Whilst the police are the lead professionals for the investigation of missing people, any child who is looked after by the local authority remains the responsibility of that local authority at all times.

A police officer will attend all reports of missing children or young people and will require the carer to provide information to assist the investigation of the missing child or young person, specifically:

- Known acquaintances and addresses frequented

- Any previous history of being missing and circumstances where found
- Name and addresses of the child or young person's GP and dentist
- Details of when the child or young person was last seen and with whom.
- A recent photograph
- Mobile phone number of child or young person, email and bank account details (to help with tracking)

The act of reporting a child or young person missing by staff at the care establishment or foster home does not absolve the carers from their 'duty of care' to the individual and of a continued duty to do what a 'reasonable parent' would do in the circumstances. This should include making all possible enquiries with family, friends and associates and also visiting known addresses and locations frequented by the child, prior to reporting them missing to the police. If an assessment of the risks to the child necessitates it, however, police should be advised of the missing episode without delay. These enquiries should continue to be carried out by carers throughout the time the child is missing. Any other additional checks eg social media should also be conducted by carers.

All staff must consider the circumstances of the child. This will include detailed consideration of:

- The circumstances of the absence
- The child's care plan
- The age of the child
- The maturity of the child
- Any physical or cognitive disability of the child
- Any continuing or urgent need for the child to have medication or treatment
- The legal status of the child
- Previous behaviour and history of the child
- Danger posed by the child to themselves or others
- General vulnerability of the child
- The child's tendency to drug/substance misuse
- Whether the child is perceived as running to, or running from, someone or something
- Any circumstances within the placement, say with carers or other residents that may be relevant to the absence
- The risk of offending
- The influence of peer groups, families or friends
- Predatory influences on the child - these may relate to others wanting to use the child for crime, sex or drugs
- Any known risk of abduction
- Environmental factors including weather, time of year, community events or tensions

Children who are missing from their placement are considerable concern to carers and there is a need to locate them and ensure that they are safe. These children can be thought of as being on a continuum, with there being little cause for concern at one end, and with significant cause for concern at the other.

Children who are a few minutes late home from school would not normally give rise to concerns; they may have missed the bus, or they may be exhibiting normal adolescent testing out, to establish the boundaries of acceptable behaviour, or to show their disagreement with aspects of their placement. It is not helpful to consider every momentary absence as warranting a formal missing person report.

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

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

3.3 Away from placement without authorisation

Clearly some children absent themselves for a short period and then return, with their whereabouts known to the carer. Sometimes children stay out longer than agreed, either on purpose to test boundaries, or accidentally. Examples of situations where an unauthorised absence is likely to apply are:

- Running away after a dispute
- Failing to return on time
- Staying at a known location with a friend or relative

If the carer assesses that the child is at risk due to any factor/s known to the carer, then the child should be reported missing without delay and the believed risk communicated to the police.

If the assessment of the carer is that there is no apparent risk for their immediate safety but are away from home without permission it is still important that staff/carers record these incidences as reported absences in the child's record. In addition to this staff/carers should always start a dated/timed record of their contacts, risk assessment and decisions throughout the episode from the point that they are aware of the child's absence, in case the level of risk changes and decisions are auditable.

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

If the child's whereabouts are known or suspected, the responsible local authority will decide whether to allow the child to remain at that location, albeit temporarily, or to arrange for their return. If the decision is to arrange their return and there is reason to believe that there may be public order difficulties, the police will assist. Police assistance in these circumstances does not mean that the child is categorised as missing. Each such occurrence needs to be evaluated based upon the factors mentioned above and upon other information gleaned from the child, friends, family and associates.

Instances of children being away from placement without authorisation should not be reported to the police and the police will not routinely record absences.

The responsibility for managing unauthorised absences lies with the staff of the residential home or carer. It is not the responsibility of the police to influence or determine the decision of whether a person is missing or reported as unauthorised absence.

A clear assessment needs to be made by the carer in each individual case as to the length of time that elapses before a child who is reported absent becomes categorised as missing.

A reported absence must be kept under regular review by the appropriate carer.

It is important to consider whether the circumstances of the disappearance would now render the child at risk of harm, for example, the child requires medication at a set time or, weather conditions have severely deteriorated

3.5 Before Contacting the Police

When a child or young person is identified as not being at a location they are expected to be, the reporting individual (care provider / foster carer / social worker etc) must take proactive steps to trace the child's whereabouts prior to contacting the police. Such steps would include:

- Physical checks of the residence, including the child's bedroom and any other location the child may be hiding within the house / building
- Physical checks of any garden, garage, sheds, grounds and surrounding area(s) or any location the young person is known to frequent

- Attempting to contact the missing person directly, via mobile phone, text, or social networking sites such as Twitter or Facebook
- Contacting the missing person's family and friends
- Make reference to any risk assessments, placement plans or action plans that allow for some leeway with curfews for 'boundary testing'

If the child is located through such enquiries, they should not be reported as missing to the police unless there are significant safety issues with the child being at the location. In such circumstances, the reporting individual should contact the police and request a "safe and well" check.

It should be recognised that police powers to return an individual to a care address are limited unless they are subject to a care order or police protection is considered necessary. Children / young people must not be reported missing as a behaviour management tool and police protection must not be considered merely as a tool to return an individual.

Carers must also inform without delay:

- The parents/those who have parental responsibility (unless indicated otherwise on the care plan).
- The key social worker or appropriate team manager.
- If out of hours, the responsible authorities out of hours service, and the social worker and appropriate team manager at the start of the next working day.

3.6 Going Missing on an External Activity

After careful consideration of the National Police Chief's Council NPCC (previously ACPO) definitions, if a child or young person goes 'missing' whilst on an external activity, the carer or responsible staff member will be required to:

- Arrange an initial search of the area the child or young person was last seen.
- Notify the local police immediately. This should be the police force responsible for the area where the child or young person was last seen. This report should NOT be delayed until the carers have returned to their home area.
- Notify the child or young person's social worker or team manager both locally and within the placing authority.
- Notify the senior manager at home (if applicable).
- Notify the emergency out of hours duty team (if applicable).

3.7 Absconders

An absconder is a child or young person who is absent from the placement without permission and who is subject to an order or requirement resulting from

the criminal justice process (eg remands, curfews, tagging, conditions of residence, other bail conditions, PACE detention or ASBOs), or a secure order made in either civil or criminal proceedings. A child or young person in this category must be reported to the police without delay.

If an absconder is under the age of 18 years, or if the absconding does not involve a power of arrest, the police will treat the case as either a missing person or an absconder this will be informed by colleagues in Probation who would apply for any potential breach.

If they are considered to be a missing person this will lead to a proactive police investigation managed locally by the police on the 'COMPACT' computer system. Moreover, the individual will be circulated nationwide via the Police National Computer System.

However, if the person is aged 16 or over and is liable to arrest, the police will treat the person solely as an absconder and not as a missing person, unless there are grounds to suspect that factors other than the absconders desire to evade justice are involved in their disappearance. If the police treat the case solely as one of absconding, in these circumstances they will actively seek the absconder for arrest. Notwithstanding, absconders in this category must also be reported to the police without delay.

3.8 Reporting to the Police

If the child or young person is not located, the reporting individual should contact Merseyside Police without delay either by dialling 101 or, if there are immediate concerns and if the child is felt to be at high risk, ring the emergency number on 999. In all cases, the police will provide an incident number and it is important that a note is kept of this number in the child's case record.

Parents and carers with parental responsibility for the child or young person should be notified at the time reports are made to the police and also on the young person's return provided that it does not put the child at any additional risk for example in cases of forced marriage.

In instances where concerns regarding the welfare of a missing child are considered to be high, resulting in public awareness raising through a press release, the Council's Communications team must be notified in advance by the police this would normally be from the Merseyside Police press office.

3.9 The Return

On the child or young person's return, carers should make clear to the young person that they are relieved to see the young person is safe and well. Their general condition should be assessed immediately, and if appropriate, medical attention should be arranged. Food and drink should also be a priority. The safety

and welfare of the young person should also be ensured especially if it seems that they have run away because of bullying or harassment.

Parents, police, responsible authority social workers and all others informed of the absence should be advised of the young person's return without delay. They should be informed of any information gathered on their return.

The police should be informed immediately following the voluntary return of a young person who has been reported missing or absent. The police will make a return phone call to a residential home/foster home to ensure that the notification of return is genuine. The police may choose to visit the children's home to verify a young person's return; this will be dependent on individual circumstances. If verification of a return to a foster home can be provided by a social worker, verification by the police can be delayed until a mutually agreed time.

If concerns are raised that require immediate safeguarding then a discussion with the responsible authority will take place to decide who will convey and chair a Strategy Meeting (Appendix 3) under Section 47. If the responsible authority does not agree to chair the meeting then this will be convened by the MASH and chaired by the MASH CSC team manager. If there is information to suggest current child exploitation concerns then the Shield Coordinator will chair the strategy meeting. If the child or young person is a Knowsley child or young people placed in or out of borough then a strategy meeting will be convened by the allocated social worker and chaired by the CSC team manager.

If a child or young person placed in Knowsley by another responsible authority has 3 missing reports in less than 90 days and there is no evidence the child is at risk of significant harm, then the Shield social worker will contact the responsible authorities' social worker to establish what action is being taken to assess and respond to presenting risks. This judgement should take into account the number and seriousness of previous missing episodes. If there is no response within three days then the Shield Coordinator will email the responsible authorities' team manager to clearly record that Knowsley CSC has no further involvement and that the responsible authority is required to ensure the care plan has been reviewed.

3.10 Independent Return Interview

This is a more in-depth interview and is best carried out by an appropriately trained practitioner independent of providing care to the young person. In Knowsley this is a commissioned service by Catch 22. Other responsible authorities can commission Knowsley to complete their return interviews on their behalf. A copy of the return interview is shared with the case holding social worker who is then able to follow-up any actions that emerge and will inform future care planning and development of an individual risk management plan.

The purpose of the return interview is to:

- Identify factors which led to the missing episode
- Prevent further missing episodes
- Inform any subsequent missing person investigation
- Share intelligence and information

Particular attention should be paid if a child is suspected of being involved in or at risk of trafficking or exploitation as they may be fearful of giving information.

Prior to any interview conducted with a young person the interviewer should inform the young person who this information will be shared with, when and why and gain consent before sharing.

It is crucial that any information gained through this interview, is fed back to police and to any intervention meetings so that a picture is built up and any issues can be dealt with. For this purpose, the return interview pro forma has been developed and can be found at Appendix 2.

3.11 The Role of Care Planning

Every looked-after child must have a care plan based on a comprehensive assessment of their needs that takes into account their wishes, feelings and aspirations for the future. All care plans must be kept under review. The review meeting must be chaired by an Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO).

The statutory review should consider the adequacy of the care plan in addressing why a child has gone missing and in ensuring adequate strategies are in place to address future missing episodes. The review should consider all push/pull factors in relation to missing episodes (eg sexual exploitation, running to spend contact time with family).

Alongside the care plan, a Placement Information Record (PIR) should be completed between the responsible local authority and the provider of the child's placement. The expectations as to how they will meet the child's needs should be set out in the PIR and a copy should be provided to the child's placement.

3.12 Out of Borough Placements for Knowsley children and young people

Children 'looked after' by Knowsley but placed out of the local area should be subject to equal rigour of care planning as those placed within borough. They should be subject to escalation meetings, reporting requirements and return interviews as specified in these procedures.

The PIR and care plan should clearly detail a young person's needs in relation to missing episodes. Critically, the PIR should detail the expectation that all missing episodes are reported by the placement provider to the case holding social worker.

Standards for return interviews and intervention meetings should be maintained for children placed outside the local authority's borders.

If a Knowsley young person is placed outside of the borough consideration will be given to the local Catch 22 service to complete the return interviews on Knowsley Catch 22's behalf. Catch 22 may be required to perform return interviews for Knowsley children who are placed further away where this is not being provided by the host authority. Other methods of communication can be utilised by Catch 22 such as Skype or a telephone call.

In order to maintain a full overview of children missing from care, the allocated IRO is required to report the number of missing episodes and the adequacy of responses to these episodes following each statutory review of a looked after child placed outside of Knowsley. This will inform strategic planning and reporting. The IRO should inform the relevant Head of Service of any escalation meetings/return interviews for children placed out of borough that have not been managed in accordance with these procedures.

3.13 Independent placement providers and other responsible Local Authority Placements within Knowsley Borough Council

All independent providers operating residential and fostering provision within the local authority area will be provided with a copy of these procedures. Such providers have a responsibility to comply with these procedures and also to comply with any other processes specified in the responsible authorities missing from home and care procedures.

In Knowsley a care home scrutiny protocol exists whereby issues concerning care homes within the borough are considered at a panel chaired by Merseyside Police and the Assistant Executive Director of Safeguarding and Quality Assurance. This panel considers among other items, where there are concerns regarding the home and/or the placing local authority's response to children or young people going missing.

Other responsible local authorities placing children within Knowsley are required to inform Knowsley Council of their placement. Upon receipt of this notification, a record of the child and their placement will be recorded within the electronic children's social care record. On receipt of a notification that a child is placed in Knowsley, MASH will send a letter to the placing authority asking them to advise MASH of any risks, including CSE and CE.

The letter also outlines that the responsible authority should ensure contact is made with the child within 72 hours of them being located for their return interview. It will outline that Knowsley commissions Catch 22 to complete return interviews and if they would also like to commission this service via Knowsley CSC then they need to complete an enclosed form and return it to Knowsley MASH. The letter will also outline costings and how the responsible authority will be invoiced on a six monthly basis.

Upon receipt of a missing notification regarding a child placed in Knowsley, a letter will be sent from the MASH to the responsible local authority advising them of the missing episode and informing them it is their responsibility to ensure a return interview takes place if they have not commissioned Knowsley CSC to organise this on their behalf. It will also outline that if the responsible authority has decided to make their own arrangements for return interviews, any intelligence should be captured and shared with the police and host authority to inform prevention stage and ensure activity is undertaken to address the underlying causes.

All missing episodes reported to the police are recorded and shared with Knowsley CSC for strategic monitoring and planning purposes. Return interviews with children and young people should take place as laid out within this procedure.

Where a child placed in Knowsley by another responsible authority is identified to be suffering or at risk of suffering significant harm, child protection procedures will be enacted.

Where a child placed in Knowsley by another responsible authority has gone missing nine times in a 90 day period or where there are concerns that a child has been inappropriately placed the Assistant Director in the responsible authority will be informed in writing and asked to ensure that all appropriate measures are in place for the future care and safety of that child. Formal written details will be required so that the child's electronic social care record can be updated. A copy of this letter will be forwarded to the police missing from home coordinator.

Where missing episodes continue to escalate despite the above noted intervention, the Executive Assistant Director in Knowsley will consider the necessary further actions.

Section 4 – Police Responsibilities

4.1 Initial Report and Risk Assessment

An initial risk assessment is made by the call taker and used to determine the classification of the incident and the appropriate level of response.

At the point of initial report, it will be necessary for the call taker in Merseyside Police to determine whether the person is missing or absent and all reports of absent or missing will be subject to an initial and ongoing risk assessment.

A secondary risk assessment is conducted as a result of an officer being deployed to take a missing person report. Using all the information available, the officer will determine the level of risk of danger to the missing person, which in turn informs the extent and urgency of the enquiries to be made.

Questions to assist in the assessment of risk are available as part of the 2010 Guidance and on the Police Online Knowledge Area (POLKA).

The following set of questions, informed by the National Decision Making Model (NDMM) should be used to define the status of the missing episode.

- What is the specific concern in this instance?
- What has been done so far to trace this individual?
- Is this significantly out of character?
- Are there any specific medical needs?
- Are they likely to be subjected to crime?
- Are they likely to be the victim of abuse?
- Are they currently at risk of sexual exploitation?
- Are they likely to attempt suicide?
- Do they pose a danger to other people?
- Is there any other information relevant to their absence?

Where a report is categorised as absent, a record should be created and the time frame within which the case will be reviewed should be established, based upon the circumstances of the report, and this will be agreed with the informant at the time of report. All reports of missing children or young people will be subject to a risk assessment by the police. This is a subjective assessment and determines the appropriate level of investigation. It is an ongoing process and will be reviewed throughout.

In accordance with National Protocol the police will inform The National Missing Person Bureau of any high risk cases after three hours has elapsed.

A child or young person who is missing from care will never be treated as low risk and any child under 12 years of age will always be reported as missing.

After considering this and other information the police will decide the risk level to be assigned to the case, this will either be high or medium:

High Risk

The risk posed is immediate and there are grounds for believing that the child or young person 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 the public is in danger.

Medium Risk

The risk posed is likely to place the child or young person in danger or they are a threat to themselves.

In the event of any dispute arising over the level or risk posed to any individual child, the matter should be referred expeditiously to the Critical Incident Manager via the Operational Communication Department by dialling 101.

Children who have gone missing may come to the attention of the Police in a variety of circumstances. Where the police locate a child who they believe may be missing, although not officially reported, assessment and enquiries based on the child's account of the circumstances will be made. These should include checks of police systems, ie PNC / COMPACT / Storm as well as enquiries at the home address.

In the event that a missing child has not been reported by parents / carers this should trigger further enquiries and assessment by the police and other relevant agencies in accordance with safeguarding procedures.

4.2 Planning for Return

When a child who is looked after is reported as missing the child's social worker, residential unit or foster carer responsible authority and placement provider, and if possible and where appropriate in consultation with the parents and police should commence planning for when the child is located. Such plans should include:

- Whether the child will return to the same placement.
- How and by whom they will be conveyed there.
- Do the police wish to interview the child before they return to their placement? This would only occur if the young person was an offender or a victim of crime.
- Create a sensitive environment for the child's return.
- Identify and arrange for an appropriate professional person, independent of the child's placement, to talk to them prior to their return to the placement.

Police will visit the child to conduct a 'safe and well' interview. This should not be confused with the role of the independent interview. This is especially relevant to cases concerned with child abduction and child trafficking.

Whoever finds a young person has a responsibility to try and find out why the young person ran away. This may be the only opportunity a young person has to report abuse, bullying or mistreatment in a care setting. In the event of significant concern the young person should be reported under Section 47 child protection procedures to KNOWSLEYMASH@knowsley.gcsx.gov.uk

4.3 Longer Absences

When a Knowsley child has been absent for a period of 24 hours the child's social worker should inform their Head of Service via the usual line management

route. If there is significant concern the Head of Service should be alerted immediately.

Throughout the enquiry, carers and the police will continually review the case. After the young person has been missing for 72 hours, or earlier, if deemed appropriate, CSC MASH will convene a strategy meeting following Knowsley safeguarding procedures which will be chaired by MASH CSC team manager. If the young person is placed within Knowsley by another responsible authority then discussions will take place to decide who will convey and chair a strategy meeting. If the responsible authority do not agree or not able to chair the meeting then this will be convened by the MASH and chaired by the MASH CSC Team Manager. If the child or young person is a Knowsley child or young people placed in or out of borough then a strategy meeting will be convened by the allocated social worker and chaired by the CSC team manager.

The Strategy Meeting will involve police officers, carers, the child's social worker, and any other care professional involved in the care of the child. Although not exhaustive, circumstances where an early strategy meeting should be held include where there is a risk of CSE, high risk self harm, younger children or cases where children have contact with a person known to present a risk to children.

The meeting will review:

- What action has been taken so far by the police and care professionals.
- What action needs to be taken by the police and care professionals.
- Whether the young person should return to that placement when located.
- Any other relevant information.
- Date of further meeting to be agreed by all parties should the missing episode continue.
- Decide if procedures should be invoked under section 47 of the Children Act 1989.

Minutes of the case review should be provided to the child's Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) and the Executive Assistant Director upon request but specifically in respect of high risk cases Further such reviews will take place at least every five days thereafter or earlier, if deemed appropriate.

If a child or young person remains missing after 28 days the police will refer to the Merseyside Police Public Protection Unit who will review to progress of the case.

All police missing person's files will remain live until the person is traced or until a senior police officer, is satisfied that all lines of enquiry have been exhausted. They will then forward the file to their appropriate line managers who will take the final decision to file or otherwise. The Executive Assistant Director for CSC must be informed of all such cases.

Where the decision to file has been made, Merseyside Police will be responsible for bringing forward the file on persons who remain missing for review by the appropriate senior managers, 12 months after the file date.

4.4 Return of the Child or Young Person

If the whereabouts are known or suspected, it is the responsibility of the responsible authority or independent provider to arrange for a child or young person's return.

However, there will be exceptional circumstances when, in the interests of the safe return of the young person, the police may agree to requests from the responsible authority or independent provider to assist in recovering the young person. The police will provide assistance in cases where they may be a perceived risk. However, the police will not agree to requests purely to provide escorts for young runaways, which would involve officers leaving their normal areas of patrol.

It is the responsibility of the carer to contact the police by telephone and to confirm that the missing child has returned to the home. The police will accept confirmation from care professionals; however, they may still conduct a safe and well check. This will lead to the police closing the missing person investigation and the case being cancelled on the police national computer.

4.5 Child Protection Concerns

If it is apparent, upon the return of a young person, that they have been the victim of a crime whilst absent, or that they may be in danger or at risk from any person arising out of circumstances that have occurred whilst they were absent, then the police must be called and asked to attend without delay. This is vital for the protection of the child and for the speedy recovery of evidence.

A parallel referral is also required to the MASH under KSCB child protection procedures. A referral should always be made when information indicates that the child may have been subject to, or at risk of, significant harm.

Where runaways from one local authority present themselves in another local authority it is important that the host authority works with the responsible local authority to ensure they get access to the help and support services they need.

Responsibility for making child protection enquiries rests with the host authority, it may negotiate with the responsible local authority to continue with these enquiries (section 47, Children Act 1989).

In such circumstances, the missing persons clothing, mobile phone and trace evidence from their body, fingernails or hair may be crucial. In cases of sexual abuse the child should be discouraged from washing and immediate advice

sought from the police. If carers become aware of the location of the scene of any crime committed against the young person, or of the location of any crucial evidence (ie a used condom) they must notify the police without delay. This will enable the police to take steps to secure and preserve evidence.

In cases where there is suspicion of sexual abuse the police have access to specially trained officers, doctors and facilities designed to care for the victim and obtain evidence.

Merseyside Police, Knowsley CSC, health professionals, and other relevant partners will operate an escalating system of interventions to reduce the likelihood of a child repeatedly going missing.

4.6 Scaled Intervention

Intervention meetings should take place in the event of repeat episodes of Knowsley children going missing from home or care. Scaled Intervention Meetings are not Strategy Meetings but are to prevent a repeat missing episode. Intervention Meetings should take place when the child has returned. For these meetings to work, and thereby improve our collective responses, appropriate attendance and clarity of purpose are essential. For children and young people who are placed in Knowsley by other responsible local authorities, it is their responsibility to ensure action has been taken to assess and respond to the presenting risks via care planning review and discussion with the placement.

After three episodes in less than a 90-day period

An intervention meeting should be held and chaired by an allocated lead practitioner or team manager. If it is not an open case to Family First or Knowsley CSC then the Shield social worker will chair the intervention meeting. It should be noted that it is not necessary to wait for 90 days to elapse; this meeting should be initiated as soon as three missing episodes have been reported.

The Intervention Meeting will determine the appropriate threshold for the family to be assessed or supported. This judgement will take into account the number and seriousness of previous missing episodes. The young person and advocate (except in exceptional circumstances), their parent or those with parental responsibility, the child's social worker, relevant police officer, residential worker/foster carer/fostering social worker (as appropriate), health and education representative and person who conducted return interview if different to above, should all meet and agree a plan of action.

In the event that at the independent return interview certain issues become evident, it would be appropriate to invite relevant professionals to this meeting to benefit from their specialist knowledge.

The Missing From Home Coordinators should be invited to the intervention meeting however there needs to be a confidential section at the start of the

meeting for police and other agencies to share confidential information prior to a young person and their parent/carers attendance.

This meeting should try to identify any 'push' or 'pull' factor in the case and any other voluntary or statutory agency, which has an interest, or may take an interest, in the missing person's welfare and circumstances. In the case of 'pull' factors it may be necessary to target those in the community who harbour the missing person or exploit them with regard to crime, sex or drugs.

It is appropriate at this point to assess the risk should the young person go missing again and whether a review meeting is required. It may be appropriate to keep a photograph of the young person to be used to help locate them should any further instances occur. The photograph should be scanned into the electronic recording system, ICS.

If a child or young person placed in Knowsley by another responsible authority has 3 missing reports in less than 90 days and there is no evidence the child is at risk of significant harm, then the Shield SW will contact the responsible authorities' social worker to establish what action is being taken to assess and respond to presenting risks. This judgement should take into account the number and seriousness of previous missing episodes. If there is no response within three days then the Shield Coordinator will email the responsible authorities' Team Manager to clearly record that Knowsley CSC has no further involvement and that the responsible authority is required to respond.

After nine episodes within a 90-day period:

A chair from the Quality Assurance Unit (QAU) will chair an escalation meeting for a Knowsley child looked after. If a child is open to CSC on a Child in Need or Child Protection Plan then consultation is required with QAU to discuss if an escalation meeting is required. Escalation meetings should be held in Knowsley or if the placement is out of borough, at the placement to allow maximum attendance from relevant professionals and the child. There may however be circumstances where it would not be appropriate for the child to return to the Knowsley area due to assessed risks, this will be determined in discussion with the chair and CSC team manager. The Agenda can be found at Appendix 6.

A report should be compiled for the meeting by the allocated social worker (Appendix 7). It is appropriate at this point to assess the risk should the young person go missing again and whether a review meeting is required. A risk assessment should be completed following the meeting and should be returned to the Quality Assurance Unit within 3 days of the meeting, having been signed off by the head of service and team manager (Appendix 8.)

The Missing From Home Coordinators should be invited to the intervention meeting however there needs to be a confidential section at the start of the meeting for police and other agencies to share confidential information prior to a young person and their parent/carers attendance

The child or young person and advocate (except in exceptional circumstances), parent or those with parental responsibility, children's team manager, fostering team manager, police missing person coordinator, residential manager (as appropriate), social worker, representatives from health and/or education (as appropriate,) person who conducted return interview if different to above, should all be invited. The IRO should be invited, although capacity may prevent this. They should in all circumstances be provided with minutes of the meeting.

Where a child placed in Knowsley by another responsible authority has gone missing nine times in a 90 day period or where there are concerns that a child has been inappropriately placed, the Assistant Director in the responsible local authority will be informed in writing and asked to ensure that all appropriate measures are in place for the future care and safety of that child. Formal written details will be required so that the child's electronic social care record can be updated. A copy of this letter will be forwarded to the police missing from home coordinator.

It should be noted, however, that the number of incidents is not the only reason to launch an intervention or to escalate the level of intervention. The following are both examples of other reasons to launch or escalate interventions:

- Any case where the risks involved in even a single future-missing episode is very high.
- Cases where it has been identified that immediate action is necessary to ensure the well being of the person.
- A quick succession of missing episodes eradicating the need for 90 days to elapse.

Meetings at this level should be rare provided that this protocol has been followed with regard to earlier intervention meetings and return interviews. In addition to seeking to reduce future missing episodes and reduce any apparent risks to the young person/child, this meeting should also quality assure compliance with the protocols and the efficacy of earlier intervention meetings and return interviews.

Section 5 – Strategic Arrangements

5.1 Governance Arrangements

This procedure has been approved by the Knowsley Safeguarding Children's Board (KSCB) Policy and Procedure Sub Group.

The KSCB Quality Assurance Sub Group will need to receive quarterly reports regarding compliance with this procedure, including statistical analysis of local needs arising and any identified gaps in service delivery.

Exception reports, including any issues pertaining to joint commissioning, will be reported to the KSCB.

A monthly Shield Multi Agency Operational Meeting is held to review operational matters including individual children who are identified through the implementation of this procedure. The meeting is chaired by the Shield Coordinator. The meeting will monitor the completion of return interviews with children and young people and the analysis of any themes or patterns that can be identified. A monthly analysis from Catch 22 return interviews is considered at the meeting.

The Shield Operational meeting will report/ escalate to the Shield Performance Group on a quarterly basis. Relevant information from this meeting will also be shared with the Care Home Scrutiny Protocol Panel. The Performance Group will then report to the KSCB Child Exploitation/Missing sub group on a quarterly basis.

5.2 Strategic Review

The Quality Assurance Sub Group will consider the quarterly reports received and provide bi-annual reports to the LSCB and Corporate Parenting Board. Strategic issues regarding missing children are considered at the KSCB Child Exploitation/Missing Sub Group.

5.3 Training and Induction

The contents of this strategy should be shared with all key members of staff within each agency. The protocol should be part of the induction of residential staff, foster carers, operational social workers, MASH and foster carer support staff. It should be part of the induction of staff within the police force, supervisors within force control and local policing unit commanders.

5.4 Complaints Procedure

If a complaint is made against a specific worker then the agency complaints procedure should be followed. If a complaint is made regarding the Missing process, the Safeguarding Boards complaints procedures should be applied.

Appendices

Appendix 1	CSE Gathering Intelligence Form CSE1
Appendix 2	Catch 22 Return Interview Form
Appendix 3	Missing Strategy Meeting proforma
Appendix 4	Flowchart for reporting children absent
Appendix 5	Flowchart for reporting children missing
Appendix 6	Intervention Meeting Agenda
Appendix 7	Escalation Meeting Agenda
Appendix 8	Escalation Meeting Report Template
Appendix 9	Risk Assessment Document

Appendix 1

CSE1

REFERRERS DETAILS				
Name Date of referral.....				
Agency Name Job Title.....				
Agency type: Health / Children's Services / Education / Youth Services / Police / Probation / Voluntary services Other – please state.....				
Email address..... Telephone No.....				
CHILD DETAILS				
Forename(s)..... (M/F)				
Surname / family name(s)..... D.O.B.....				
Ethnicity..... Religion..... Nationality.....				
Address..... Postcode.....				
Is this Address: Home / Other family member address / Foster care / Residential Care / Semi independent Hostel / Secure unit / Other – please state				
Home tel no. Mob / other contact no.....				
GP name..... Surgery.....				
School				
CHILDRENS SOCIAL CARE INVOLVEMENT				
Not known to CSC	EHAT / CAF	Child in Need	Child Protection Plan	LAC / Leaving Care
Is this child placed here from another local authority? YES /NO				
If yes – state which.....				
PARENT/CARER/GUARDIAN'S DETAILS			Parental Responsibility? Yes / No	
Forename(s)..... (M/F)				
Surname / family name(s)..... D.O.B.....				
Ethnicity..... Religion..... Nationality.....				

Home address.....Postcode.....

Home tel no. Mob / other contact no.....

Occupation.....

PARENT/CARER/GUARDIAN'S DETAILS **Parental Responsibility? Yes / No**

Forename(s)..... (M/F)

Surname / family name(s)..... D.O.B.....

Ethnicity..... Religion..... Nationality.....

Home address.....Postcode.....

Home tel no. Mob / other contact no.....

Occupation.....

SIBLINGS

Relationship to young person

Forename(s)..... (M/F)

Surname / family name(s)..... D.O.B.....

Home address.....Postcode.....

Home tel no. Mob / other contact no.....

Relationship to young person.....

Forename(s)..... (M/F)

Surname / family name(s)..... D.O.B.....

Home address.....Postcode.....

Home tel no. Mob / other contact no.....

SUSPECTED PERPETRATOR DETAILS

Forename(s)..... (M/F)

Surname / family name(s)..... D.O.B.....

Please state whether the following are applicable to this young person...	Yes	No	Don't know
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Home address.....Postcode.....

Home tel no. Mob / other contact no.....

Has suspect previously breached a court order or police bail? **Y / N** If **Y** provide details below

Child suspects only (under 18 years)

School / occupation.....

Absent from school			
Attending school with young people who are sexually exploited			
Change in physical appearance			
Drug or alcohol misuse			
Evidence of sexual bullying and/or vulnerability through the internet and/or social networking sites			
Estranged from their family			
Friends with young people who are sexually exploited			
Gang association either through relatives, peers or intimate relationships (in cases of gang-associated CSE only)			
History of abuse			
Homeless			
Involvement in offending			
Lacking friends from the same age group			
Learning disabilities			
Living in a chaotic or dysfunctional household (including parental substance use, domestic violence, parental mental health issues, parental criminality)			
Living in a gang neighbourhood			
Living in hostel, bed and breakfast accommodation or a foyer			
Living in residential care			
Low self-esteem or self-confidence			
Missing from home or care			
Not in education, employment or training			
Physical injuries			
Poor mental health			
Receipt of gifts from unknown sources			
Recent bereavement or loss			

Organised/ networked sexual exploitation or trafficking	
Party Model	
Peer to Peer	
Group / Gang exploitation	
Other – Please state	

ASSOCIATES OF CHILD / RELEVANT PARTIES
ASSOCIATES OF SUSPECTED PERPETRATOR / RELEVANT PARTIES
IF MISSING WHO WERE THEY FOUND WITH AND WHERE?
LOCATIONS OF CONCERN WHERE YOU BELIEVE CSE IS AN ISSUE
VEHICLES THAT COULD BE LINKED TO CSE AND TO THE CHILD /YOUNG PERSON
TELEPHONE NUMBERS LINKED TO THE CHILD / YOUNG PERSON
TELEPHONE NUMBERS LINKED TO THE SUSPECTED PERPETRATOR

Are Parents/ carers aware of these concerns?	YES / NO
Does the child have awareness of these concerns?	YES / NO
Does the young person consent to you sharing this information?	YES / NO

**PLEASE SEND THIS FORM VIA SOCIAL CARE FRONT DOOR TO THE MACSE
(Multi Agency CSE) MEETING**

It is the responsibility of the referring agency to determine whether the referred child's parents are informed that their child will be discussed at the MACSE meeting.

Clearly best practise would always be to inform / consult with parents regarding their children, but this may be detrimental in some cases. It may not always be in the child's best interests to inform parents and each case should be considered individually.

APPENDIX 2 – RETURN INTERVIEW FORM AND GUIDANCE: To be returned to

Knowsley.vpu.referrals@merseyside.pnn.police.uk

NB. The section at the end of this form should still be completed if holding a return interview has not been possible, attempts made should be detailed and the form returned in the same way to the VPU.

Guidance for staff completing the interview

It is a statutory requirement that all young people who have an episode where they are reported as missing should have an independent interview before or on their return to their home or placement. The interview should be conducted by someone who isn't their carer or parent. If the young person is in residential care, it should also be conducted by someone who is independent of the home.

In Knowsley, Catch 22 is commissioned to undertake return interviews for all Knowsley children and other responsible authorities who have commissioned Knowsley to complete their return interviews on their behalf.

The following are some guidelines to adhere to when conducting the interview:

- The young person should be informed that they will be expected to talk to someone about their absence and who this person will be
- The interview should be conducted within **72 hours of their return.**
- Identify and deal with any harm the young person may have come to.
- Issues relating to health should be attended to immediately.
- Encourage the young person to talk about the reasons **why** they ran away.
- Discuss ways to help it not happening again.

The interview should provide information to the child to prevent further period of going missing. There should be questions that pertain to the personal situation of the child/young person.

Catch 22 Return Interview Form



BLANK RETURN
INTERVIEW.pdf

APPENDIX 3

MISSING STRATEGY MEETING

THE CONFIDENTIAL NATURE OF THE INFORMATION IS STRESSED AND COPIES SHOULD NOT BE MADE WITHOUT THE EXPRESS PERMISSION OF THE QUALITY ASSURANCE UNIT (QAU). SIMILARLY BEFORE NOTES ARE TRANSFERRED TO ANYONE ELSE PERMISSION SHOULD BE SOUGHT UNLESS A GENERAL PERMISSION HAS PREVIOUSLY BEEN GIVEN.

In respect of:

Date of Birth:

Date missing:

Last seen by whom / when:

Last contact:

Return date:

Any other young people thought to be missing / linked to missing:

Present:

Apologies:

Reason for Meeting:

This is strategy meeting convened under Knowsley MBC's safeguarding protocols and in line with **Statutory Guidance on children who run away or go missing from home or care – January 2015**

Background Information: Social Worker to provide in advance of the meeting

- Chronology of missing
- Missing/CSE or CE Risk Assessment
- What has been done to establish the whereabouts of the young person
- Latest information

Notes of meeting:

Strategy Meeting Actions/Recommendations

	Action(s) to be taken	Person / Agency responsible	Date for completion
1	Missing exemplar updated and signed off on ICS	Social Worker	Day of return
2	Return Interview to be undertaken	Catch 22	Within 72 hours of return
3			
4			
5			
6			
7			
8			

Considerations for the meeting	
Have all possible steps been taken to locate and recover the child /young person including undertaking corporate parenting duties such as visiting addresses where children are suspected to be?	YES / NO
Have the child /young person's details been circulated via the Service Manager to other local authorities in areas where they may be?	YES / NO
Specific Risks	
Is the child / young person at risk of sexual exploitation or criminal exploitation?	YES / NO
If Yes, has a CSE1 or CCE form been completed and sent to MACSE or	YES / NO

young person's tactical meeting?	
Is the child / young person at risk of being trafficked?	YES / NO
If Yes has contact been made with the trafficking team at Merseyside Police?	YES / NO
Are there other specific risks to the child / young person while they are missing?	YES / NO
Should a pre- secure planning meeting be requested?	YES / NO
Is there a likelihood that the child/young person may have travelled abroad?	YES/NO
Considerations when the child / young person is located:	
Will a disruption meeting be held?	YES / NO
Is it safe for the child / young person to return to the placement / home?	YES / NO
Should a medical be undertaken?	YES / NO
Do police wish to make further enquiries before the child / young person returns to placement / home?	YES /NO
What steps will be taken to prevent the child / young person going missing in the future?	
Who will be the appropriate 'independent person' to talk to the child / young person when they return?	

High Risk / Long Term Missing	
Have national authorities been notified? I.e: National Missing Persons Unit, Social Security, Child Benefit Agency?	YES / NO
Have legal services been contacted if there is any suspicion that the child / young person may be removed from UK jurisdiction?	YES / NO
Has a press strategy been considered including the involvement of parents / carers?	YES / NO
Recovery Order S50 Children Act 1989: Order to Produce Child on Request and Remove Child	YES / NO

Child Abduction Warning Notices (Harbourers Warnings);	YES / NO
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Recording:	
Has a missing exemplar been completed on ICS	YES / NO
Has a new PIR been opened (after 24 hours of missing) ICS	YES / NO
Has a missing flag been put on ICS	YES / NO
Has a CSE exemplar been completed on ICS in the cases where CSE is identified?	YES / NO

Date, time and venue of next meeting:

(Review Missing from Care Strategy Meetings should be convened every 5 days until the child returns, unless different frequency agreed with Assistant Executive Director for Children’s Social Care) Minutes should be taken by the social worker and distributed within 24 hours.

REPORTING
CHILDREN
ABSENT

APPENDIX 4

Absent – “A person not at a place where they are expected or required to be.”

The ‘absent’ category should comprise cases in which people are not presently where they are supposed to be and there is no apparent risk

Police classification of a child as missing or absent will be based on an on-going risk assessment. Note that ‘absent within this definition would not include those defined as ‘away from placement without authorisation’

A child whose whereabouts are known would not be treated as either ‘missing’ or ‘absent’ under police definitions;

Police control room receive report that child is absent
5 questions are asked of caller in order to assist police in assessing level of risk
Answers to the questions help determine if the child is missing or absent and then the relevant response is actioned
If a child is determined to be absent, they will be recorded on Compact There are minimal checks undertaken by police. No debrief will take place for absent children Please note that absent can escalate to missing at any time
Police send all absent logs to the MASH mailbox on a daily basis
MASH receive the information that a child is absent
MASH call handler will open and complete the missing / absent exemplar on ICS for all cases including those children placed in Knowsley by another Local authority
In cases where a child is placed in Knowsley by another Local Authority, MASH will contact the host authority and notify them that the child has been reported absent

CASES OPEN TO CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE

If the case is open, MASH will email the social worker and manager to advise that the child has been reported absent

Social worker has responsibility to contact the Police for any additional information / updates

If the social worker has information which escalates the risk of the young person, they should contact the police and ask for the status of the person to be upgraded from absent to missing – the missing process should then be followed

Social worker and manager assess information and consider risk. Consider need for: CSE Strategy meeting, CP Conference, Review etc

CASES CLOSED TO CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE

If the case is closed, the normal safeguarding procedures will be followed, advice will be taken from a social worker within MASH and if the risk meets the threshold a referral will be generated in the normal way

A decision regarding the requirement for a single assessment is made by a MASH social worker based on information from Police plus a review of historical information

MASH social workers to consider need for: Missing meeting, CSE Strategy meeting, CP Conference etc
If the information does not meet the threshold for single assessment, it will be logged only

RETURN OF ABSENT CHILDREN

In cases of persistent absence, the social worker and the team manager will work together to assess the risk to the young person.
A report of this risk assessment must be shared with the Police MFH Co-ordinator

In cases of persistent absence for cases not open to social care, the case will be passed to Early Help Service by MASH
If risks are identified as part of the work with the young person, the family support service should contact the police and ask for the status of the person to be upgraded from absent to missing – the missing process should then be followed

The Police will notify MASH when the absent child has returned

CASES OPEN TO CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE
MASH will notify the social that the child has returned
The return will be logged on ICS by MASH

CASES CLOSED TO CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE
The return will be logged on ICS by MASH

Family First Service will try to identify the cause of the persistent absence and will escalate any identified concerns to MASH

The Missing From Home Coordinators in the police will have overview of cases and will work to identify patterns and trends across absent children. Such Information can be considered at the monthly multi agency missing meetings chaired by children's social care Quality Assurance Unit when appropriate.

APPENDIX 5

REPORTING CHILDREN MISSING

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.”

Police control room receive report that child is missing

5 questions are asked of caller in order to assist police in assessing level of risk the child may be at.

Answers to the questions help determine if the child is missing or absent and then the relevant response is actioned

Missing Medium or High risk

The decision to record a child missing can only be made by an inspector
If a child is determined to be missing, they will be recorded on compact

Police send all missing Compact logs to MASH mailbox on a daily basis
For high risk missing cases, Police will also telephone MASH and immediately share information

Information received by MASH that a child is missing

MASH call handler will open and complete the missing / absent exemplar on ICS for all cases including those children placed in Knowsley by another Local authority

In cases where a child is placed in Knowsley by another Local Authority, MASH will contact the host authority and notify them that the child has been reported missing

CASES OPEN TO CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE

If the case is open, MASH will email the social worker and manager to advise that the child has been reported absent

Social worker has responsibility to contact the Police for any additional information / updates

If the social worker has information which escalates the risk of the young person, they should contact the police.

Social worker and manager assess information and consider risk. Consider need for: CSE Strategy meeting, CP Conference, Review etc

CASES CLOSED TO CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE

If the case is closed, the normal safeguarding procedures will be followed, advice will be taken from a social worker within MASH and if the risk meets the threshold a referral will be generated in the normal way

A decision regarding the requirement for a single assessment is made by a MASH social worker based on information from Police plus a review of historical information

MASH social workers to consider need for: Missing meeting, CSE Strategy meeting, CP Conference etc
If the information does not meet the threshold for single assessment, it will be logged only

In cases of persistent missing, the social worker and team manager will work together to assess the risk to the young person. A report of this risk assessment must be shared with the Police MFH Co-ordinator

Missing children who are not open to children's social care will be referred to Early Help Service

The Police will notify MASH when the **missing** child has returned

CASES OPEN TO CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE
MASH will advise the social worker and the Team Manager that the child has returned

CASES CLOSED TO CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE
The MASH will advise Education and Health that the child or young person has returned

MASH will refer to Catch 22 for completion of the return interview within 72 hours of the child returning

MASH will refer to Catch 22 for completion of the return interview within 72 hours of the child returning

Return interview form completed and sent to SW, MASH and emailed to police
Knowsley.vpu.referrals@merseyside.pnn.police.uk

Return interview form to be completed and emailed to MASH and the police at
Knowsley.vpu.referrals@merseyside.pnn.police.uk

All completed return interview forms must be returned to the MFH/CSE co-ordinators in Merseyside Police within 72 hours of a child returning.

Knowsley.vpu.referrals@merseyside.pnn.police.uk

A report will be run from Knowsley's ICS system on missing notifications on a monthly basis. The missing report will be cross referenced with the return interview exemplars received by the VPU by CSC Senior Analyst to establish which children have had a return interview and identify those who haven't.

Catch 22 will complete a monthly analysis of cases and will work to identify patterns and trends across missing children. This information will be reviewed at monthly Shield Operational Meeting chaired by the Shield Coordinator, Child Exploitation and Missing Service, Children's Social Care.

Appendix 6

MISSING FROM HOME/CARE INTERVENTION MEETING

A G E N D A

Professionals only section

- 1 Welcome / Introduction
- 2 Confidential Information Section (This section of the meeting is for Police and other professionals to share information that cannot be discussed in front of the family and young person – such as names of other young people or adult and/or intelligence so that the chair is aware of the risk concerns)

Start of the meeting with the family present

- 3 Welcome / Introduction
Apologies
- 4 Confidentiality Statement
- 5 Check family details
- 6 Purpose of the intervention meeting - chair

A Missing from Care Intervention Meeting focuses on understanding the missing behaviour and strategies to manage the missing behaviour and associated risk.

- 7 **Reason for Intervention Meeting/Background Information**
To include information about the most recent missing episode. Chronology of missing episodes with any detail known about each episode. Social Work analysis to include triggers, patterns, themes, associations to hotspots / known offenders / other vulnerable YP, pull and push factors, risk to themselves, carers, public and professionals
- 8 **Profile of the Child to include any Developmental issues**
Other professional's contributions. Any other information specific to the patterns of missing and associated risks
- 9 **Views of Child/Young Person:**
- 8 **Views of Parent(s)/Carer(s):**

9 Wider Family and Environmental Issues

10 Chairs Summary and Analysis of Risk

a) Protective Factors:

b) Risk Factors:

11 Decisions

Is the child at risk of sexual or criminal exploitation? Does a CSE1 or CCE need to be sent to the Shield Team?

Is the child at risk of being trafficked? If so has contact been made with the trafficking team at Merseyside Police?

Is it safe for the child / young person to return to the placement / home?

Should a pre- secure planning meeting be requested?

12 Outline Risk Action Plan

13. Is a review meeting required?

Appendix 7

MISSING FROM CARE ESCALATION MEETING held by QAU



Missing From Care
Escalation Meeting Ac

Appendix 8

Social Work Report for Missing from Care/Home Escalation Meeting

Date:

Child:		D.O.B:		School/College:	
Child's Address:					
Adults in household:	D.O.B:		Relationship to child:		
1) Background and information about the child:					
2) Chronology of missing episodes with any detail known about each episode:					
Dates			Details		
3) List of family, friends and associates and any associated risks:					
4) Young Person's view:					

5) Family and Carer's view:			
6) What steps have been taken to date to reduce the missing episodes?			
7) Social Worker's Analysis: To include triggers, patterns, themes, associations to hotspots / known offenders / other vulnerable YP, pull and push factors, risk to themselves, carers, public and professionals.			
8) Recommendations:			
9) Is a review meeting required?			
Social Worker		Date	

Appendix 8 Completed following an Escalation meeting chaired by QAU.
To be returned to QAU within 3 days

Knowsley's Childrens Services
RISK ASSESSMENT MATRIX

Date: _____
 Completed by: _____

RISK FACTORS	CURRENT PROTECTIVE FACTORS	LEVEL OF RISK Impact: Frequency:		ACTION REQUIRED TO MANAGE RISK	IMMEDIATE ACTION IF RISK REMAINS HIGH

