



Bedfordshire
county council

Children and Young People Missing from Care Policy

A Joint Policy between
Bedfordshire Police and
Bedfordshire Children's Services

Approved by: Children's Services Senior
Management Team

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1 POLICY STATEMENT

- 1.1 This policy identifies: -
- 1.2 That the local authority accepts its responsibility for the safety of children who are looked after, acting in cooperation with the Police. They will also act as part of a multi-agency strategy to assess the risk to children missing in the community.
- 1.3 That this responsibility should be carried out through a strategic, multi-agency framework for policy and procedures in relation to children who are missing from residential or foster care.
- 1.4 The objective of all agencies involved in this protocol will be locating and returning the child to a safe environment.
- 1.5 A framework of risk assessment that will be used to determine appropriate action plans for individual cases.
- 1.6 That a range of preventive measures should be implemented at all stages of the care process with the objective of reducing the level of absconding and managing the effects of those incidents that do occur.
- 1.7 A strategic review system is introduced for the Department and Police.

2 DEFINITIONS

- 2.1 For the purpose of this policy the following categories of absence can be defined as:

2.2 Unauthorised absence

Where children or young people are absent for short periods and not considered to be at risk. In this case social workers or carers may consider action to determine the child or young person's whereabouts before reporting this to the police.

2.3 Missing

A child (i.e. a young person under the age of 18 years) is to be considered "missing" if he/she is absent from his/her place of residence without authority; to a degree or in circumstances where the absence causes concern for the safety of the child or there is potential danger to the public. This will include children or young people placed in short term respite placements.

- 2.4 This definition may also apply to young people in the age group 19 to 21 with learning disabilities, where there may be similar concerns.

- 2.5 Absences that cause concern are those where, family staff or carers have no indication that a child is likely to return within a short period of time or where there is immediate concern for the child's safety.

2.6 Absconded

An absconder is a child who is missing and is also "looked after" as a result of a court order. The police have powers of arrest without warrant when the child is absent without the permission of the person responsible for her/him.

3 THE LEGAL FRAMEWORK

- 3.1 Children Act 1989,
Children's Homes Regulations 1991 Regulation 20, Volume 4 Guidance, Residential Care.

Under section 20, the responsible authority must provide to all staff and children (on admission) written procedures to be followed when a child is absent without permission. In the case of very young children and poor readers the procedure should be explained to them in language appropriate to their age and understanding.

Osman –v- The United Kingdom, European Court of Human Rights 1999, rejected blanket immunity previously granted to the Police in allegations of negligence. This has led to development of risk assessment procedures by the Police in all missing person's cases.

4 PRINCIPLES

- 4.1 **The safety of the child is the prime aim.** As a corporate parent the local authority has a duty to care for the well being and safety of the child. This involves locating and making decisions concerning the return of the child.
- 4.2 Notification to the police will only take place in clearly defined circumstances.
- 4.3 There should be an opportunity for risk assessment to take place in locally agreed circumstances with police and Children Services agreement on the process.
- 4.4 Children Services and police will agree definitions of various categories of "missing children" (a generic term).
- 4.5 The police will act on any report of a child missing from the care of the local authority.
- 4.6 Initial reporting of missing children by the local authority will comply with jointly agreed protocols.
- 4.7 In circumstances where children are accommodated under Section 20 of the Children Act children's parents or anyone else with parental responsibility should be informed wherever possible and share responsibility at every stage of the process.
- 4.8 Where the local authority has parental responsibility, parents and any other appropriate person should be informed and consulted in the same way with the local authority retaining ultimate responsibility for decisions in cooperation with the Police.
- 4.9 All relevant agencies, including the health and education service will share in the responsibility for the welfare of missing children.

5 PROCESS

5.1 Pre- Placement

Prior to any placement, an assessment should be made of the degree of risk of a child going missing. Parents and relevant agencies must be asked if a child has been missing before and the details of these episodes (in particular where the child has gone). The following process will be followed if this is seen as a significant issue. Additionally, if the child is an unaccompanied asylum seeking child (UASC), the social worker should consider whether the child is particularly vulnerable to trafficking and/or other forms of exploitation. Working Together 2006 recommends referring to the *Trafficking Toolkit* which provides guidance for Children's Services and the Police on dealing with trafficking (useful excerpts from the toolkit are contained within Appendix 1) <http://www.crimereduction.gov.uk/toolkits/tp00.htm>

5.2 Keeping Safe Plan

5.2.1 Based on the information supplied the social worker will, in discussion with the child, parents and carers complete the Keeping Safe Plan (BIC 453) which will record:

- The degree of risk of a child going missing;
- The level and kind of risk presented if the child is missing;
- The level of supervision/support to be offered to the child in placement;
- Any other child or adult who could be involved in this behaviour;
- The parent's advice on what action they feel should be taken if the child goes missing.

5.2.2 A recent photograph should be obtained if possible from the child's family with the child's knowledge and consent.

5.2.3 The child/young person will be given information concerning this policy in a way compatible with their age and level of understanding and be told what actions will be taken if he/she is absent without permission.

5.2.4 Staff and carers are expected to act positively to prevent a child or young person leaving their placement without permission. This prevention will normally be through advice and guidance.

5.3 Notification of absence

5.3.1 Whoever discovers that a child is absent without permission from a residential establishment should inform the senior manager on duty immediately and complete a record form (BIC 835).

5.3.2 If a child is absent without permission from foster care, the carer should immediately notify the child's Social Worker or Intake and Assessment (Emergency Duty Team outside hours). The carer or foster carer should not delay in phoning the police if they believe the child to be at risk.

5.3.3 In all cases of absence without permission from a residential unit, the manager will complete the department's risk assessment form to determine the level of concern (see BIC834 for guidance and a copy of the form) and decide whether the level of concern justifies reporting to the police.

5.3.4 **All absences that continue 6 hours from when the absence was noted should be considered to be high risk within the protocol. This should be seen as a maximum period and in most situations much shorter periods will be appropriate.**

5.3.5 Action to be taken following risk assessment: -

- a) **Low Risk** - The unit manager or duty officer will ensure that the child has returned to the placement within 6 hours (or less if felt appropriate).
- b) **Medium Risk** - The unit manager/duty team leader ensures that the child or young person is located in order to ensure his/her safety.

5.3.6 If this is not possible within 6 hours the child/young person should be considered missing and reported to the police.

c) **High Risk- if the absence is considered to fall within the high-risk category the senior manager or duty officer should inform the following without delay:**

- The Police who will treat the matter as involving a “vulnerable missing person”;
- The parents (and anyone else who has parental responsibility);
- The Social Worker and the Team Manager;
- The responsible Head of Service and the Assistant Director Children in Need;
- Any other relevant professional e.g. Head Teacher or Head of School Year.

CATEGORIES OF ABSENCE THAT ARE AUTOMATICALLY HIGH RISK WITHIN THE PROTOCOL

Children or young people who have been assessed as such by the relevant manager and children or young people who are subject to: -

- An Emergency Protection Order
- Detention under the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1981
- Remanded to the Care of a Local Authority
- A Secure Accommodation Order S25 Children Act
- Court ordered secure remand S97, 98 Crime and Disorder Act 1998

5.4 Notification to Police

INFORMATION TO BE MADE AVAILABLE

When reporting the matter to police the following information should be made available: -

- The child's Keep Safe Plan
- A description of the child
- When the child was last seen and with whom
- A recent photograph (to be returned when the child has been safely relocated)
- Family Addresses
- Known acquaintances- names and addresses
- Any previous history of absconding
- The name and address of the child's GP and Dentist

Circumstances, which increase the risk to a child or to the public, should be drawn to the attention of the police

5.5 Initial inquiry procedures

On referral from the social worker or carer, a police officer will visit the residential or foster placement home to take details as described above as soon as possible within the first 4 hours. The officer will then make inquiries concerning the child with all known family members, acquaintances and with school and hospitals as appropriate. If the child is not located, or has not returned within 24 hours, management of the situation is transferred to the divisional inspector and sergeant who will delegate an officer to carry out further inquiries.

MISSING DURING EXTERNAL ACTIVITY

If a child goes missing or is "lost" during an external activity (such as an outing to a theme park), the carer or member of staff in charge of the activity will: -

- Notify the local Police in that area.
- Notify the relevant Team Manager or Head of Service
- The Head of Service will notify the Assistant Director Children in Need
- Initiate a local search if staffing or circumstances permit.
- The Head of Service after consultation with the responsible staff will decide within 24 hours whether the party should return home.

The social worker/unit manager will ensure the child's family and all relevant managers are informed and that the provisions of the protocol are activated (if considered appropriate) as with an absence in this area.

5.6 Joint Action Plan

5.6.1 At this stage a joint action plan should be developed between the Social Worker and Team Manager (or EDT) and the relevant Police Divisional Sergeant (Child Abuse Investigation Unit) based on the level of risk that is now identified, this could include:

- Further visits to the child's family and any other place the child may be.
- Information needed to be given to other police units and social service offices
- Support to the family/carers of the child
- Contact with the school or other agencies
- Any publicity needed at this stage

5.6.2 Any case of a missing child which causes particular concern or difficulty or where circumstances give rise to suspicion should be brought to the notice of the Head of Service and Police Detective Superintendent (Child Abuse Investigation Unit) or their nominee without delay. They will then decide on further action and will inform the Assistant Director Children in Need who will inform the Director of Children Services. The Police Divisional Superintendent (Child Abuse Investigation Unit) will inform the Assistant Chief Constable.

5.7 Communication

- 5.7.1 Where a child is accommodated within a residential unit, should the absence continue, and after police, social worker and parents have been informed, the unit manager of the home, should inform all children and staff (normally within a 12 hour period) to avoid distressing rumours and to obtain any additional information about the child's whereabouts. Foster carers should have similar discussion within the family.
- 5.7.2 During the period a child is missing, the social worker should be in daily contact with the Police Divisional Sergeant (Child Abuse Investigation Unit), the child's placement and family if possible.
- 5.7.3 Contingency plans should be considered for the child's return (See section 5.11).
- 5.7.4 The social worker will contact the child's school and local hospital in case they have, or can obtain information about a child's whereabouts. Local hospitals should be contacted in respect of any admissions.

Any such information should be passed on to the Police.

5.8 Unauthorised absence over 12 hours

- 5.8.1 Any unauthorised absence over 12 hours must be reported to the responsible Team Manager, Commissioning Service and the child's social worker by the senior manager of the home (where a child is placed in a residential unit). If the child is in a fostering placement, the foster carer should notify the child's social worker as soon as possible. The social worker will report it to their line manager, Head of Service and Assistant Director Children in Need. The Assistant Director Children in Need will notify the Director of Children's Services.
- 5.8.2 The Head of Youth Offending Team (where appropriate) should be notified no later than 48 hours after the absence.
- 5.8.3 A strategy meeting should be planned within **the first 24 hours** of the absence.

(Refer to the Local Safeguarding Board Procedures on Strategy Meetings)

The strategy meeting should: -

- **Pool all information concerning the child's movements**
- **Assess whether all possible actions are being taken in respect of the absence**
- **Confirm the present action plan**
- **Agree a time to review the plan**

5.8.4 Unauthorised absence over 24 hours

Where an absence lasts over 24 hours, the custodian of the Child Protection Register should be notified and they will send an alert to other local authorities. The joint action plan should be followed and support offered to the family and carers of the child. Frequent contact should be maintained between the social worker, police and

the child's family and placement and the relevant Head of Service in consultation with the Police and Assistant Director Children in Need may involve the media (see 5.9)

5.8.5 If the absence continues past 24 hours, the case should be subject to ongoing strategy meetings, statutory reviews should also continue and Child Protection meetings if the child is subject to a child protection plan. This is particularly important to ensure that plans are in place to facilitate the safe return of the child.

5.8.6 Notification of all outstanding missing persons should be sent to Police National Missing Persons Bureau (PNMPB) within 14 days, however forces will not be precluded from forwarding information to the PNMPB in a shorter time if a particular case appears to warrant more urgent attention. In cases of children who go missing this should be reported within 24 hours of the child going missing. The absence should also be reported to the Conference and Review Service for notification to all local authorities.

5.8.7 The cases of all children and young people under the age of 21 who are missing from placement should be subject to continuous review jointly with the Police until their whereabouts and welfare can be established.

5.9 Informing the Press

It is for the police to advise the media regarding a child missing from the care of the Local Authority. This may be arranged at a local level by direction of the Police Divisional Superintendent (Child Abuse Investigation Unit) (or their nominee). A decision to publicise by press and/or television must be made with the responsible Head of Service and the Assistant Director Children in Need. This decision may be taken within 24 hours.

5.10 Recording

5.10.1 Throughout the process identified in this protocol a full record should be kept of all actions taken. Messages received/given by all parties searching for a missing child will be kept: -

- On the Police missing persons form.
- The home's or carer's logbook with a duplicate (photocopy) entry on the child's file.

5.10.2 These records will be accessible to both parties who should maintain individual histories of the situation.

5.11 Return

PLANNING

- If a child's absence continues beyond two hours and falls within this protocol, the social worker and team leader in consultation with the unit manager, or family placement worker, parents and police should commence contingency planning for when the child is located.
- Such plans should include:-
 - Will the child be placed with the previous carers or transfer to another placement?
 - How will he/she be conveyed there?
 - Do the police wish to interview the child before he/she is returned to his/her placement?
 - Who will be the appropriate "independent" person to talk to the child after his/her return?
 - The support required to ensure the child / young person settles in the placement

- 5.11.1 The Police will co-operate in the arrangements made by Children's Services to return a child to his/her residence and *where appropriate* may assist in this.
- 5.11.2 Any photograph used in searching for a child will be returned to the placement (or social worker where appropriate).
- 5.11.3 Police will need to interview a child on return to obtain information concerning his/her whereabouts, who (s)he was with and any other relevant information.
- 5.11.4 In the event of a child/young person being in police custody having committed offences while absent, plans will be reviewed depending on Police action.
- 5.11.5 Occasionally, if a child is over 16 years old and is being looked after by the local authority, the Police may have limited power to enforce a return if the child resists this and is not apparently at any risk. If risk factors are identified, legal advice may be necessary in considering options.
- 5.11.6 The police could need to speak to staff or carers in connection with the incident and the reasons a child is missing.

5.12 Return to Placement

- 5.12.1 A professionals meeting should be held within 24 hours of the child's return to agree what support is needed and to ensure that the reasons the child had for going missing are fully considered.
- 5.12.2 The child should be told: -
- That we would expect him/her to talk to an independent person or an appropriate friend or person the child trusts about the absence;
 - He/she should be advised that the independent person would normally be the social worker (so that appropriate support is offered to ensure that the child settles and does not run away again) but if he/she wishes, it could be another professional, independent, visitor, or an appropriate friend;
 - In addition, it is the responsibility of the social worker to interview a young person within 72 hours of the incident;
 - On return the child's medical condition should be discussed and an offer made to arrange medical attention;
 - Parents, Police, Social Worker and all others informed of the absence should be advised of the child's return without delay.
- 5.12.3 Where a young person is frequently goes missing from a residential unit the social worker in consultation with their line manager should agree how often the child needs to be met to have a discussion. This is the only circumstance under which the meeting may not necessarily take place straight away and the reason must be logged on SWIFT and on the young person's file.
- 5.12.4 All unauthorised absences should be recorded (see 5.10) and a full report of their circumstances made available for the child's next review.
- 5.12.5 Regular or serious individual absences should be discussed with the Review Manager with a view to an early review being called if necessary.
- 5.12.6 The review will consider any initial risk assessment in relation to the report presented and consider how the level of absence can be diminished. The Keeping Safe Plan (BIC 453) should also be reviewed at this time to include information relating to the absence.

6 MISSING CHILDREN WHO ARE NOT LOOKED AFTER

- 6.1 Police will make referrals to Children Services of all missing children whether or not they are currently known to Children Services for whom there are: -
- Multiple reports of absences
 - Unduly prolonged absences
 - Particular family difficulties
- 6.2 These reports will usually be with the knowledge and consent of the family and will be made on the basis of the agreed risk assessment document. As the result of a CAF referral, a multi agency strategy meeting will be called to consider any child protection issues and develop a multi agency plan. For further details please refer to the *Multi-Agency Protocol on Young Runaways*.
- 6.3 Where children are missing, these will be notified by the Conference and Review Service to the Children Missing Education team who will make checks against their database and share any information they may have on the child's whereabouts. Please refer to the policy *Children Missing Education*.

7 UNACCOMPANIED ASYLUM SEEKING CHILDREN (UASC)

- 7.1 Unaccompanied asylum seeking children can be particularly vulnerable when they go missing. This may be due to various forms of exploitation, prostitution, abuse and trafficking combined with sometimes very limited, if any, knowledge of English. If the child that goes missing is UASC, agencies should, ***in addition to*** these procedures, refer to the trafficking toolkit: (<http://www.crimereduction.gov.uk/toolkits/tp00.htm>) and consult the social worker responsible for UASC who will register that the child has gone missing on the National Register for Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children. This database will be checked on a daily basis to see whether the child has appeared in another authority.
- 7.2 Any UASC who goes missing must be reported immediately to the Home Office. This should be followed up by the social worker responsible for UASC on a regular basis to ensure that the service is informed if the child has been detained or returned to their country of origin.
- 7.3 Where a young unaccompanied asylum seeker has been age assessed as under the age of 18 years old and is looked after, that young person will remain looked after but classified as 'missing' until they reach the age of 18 years old. Once they have reached the age of 18 years old a decision may be taken on a case by case basis with the Assistant Director Children in Need and the responsible Head of Service to deregister the young person.

8 CHILDREN WHO GO MISSING FROM THE COUNTRY WHO ARE SUBJECT TO A CHILD PROTECTION PLAN

- 8.1 When it is reported that a child, whose is subject to a Child Protection Plan, is believed to have gone abroad, and their whereabouts may or may not be known follow the procedure "[When a Child goes missing from the UK, when on Bedfordshire's Child Protection Register](#)"

9 IMPLEMENTATION AND MONITORING

- 9.1 The Conference and Review Service will maintain a database of children who are and have been missing from residential and foster care. This will be derived from records of incidents kept by children's homes and foster carers and will be available for local and strategic review meetings as needed. This information will provide a

systematic way of monitoring the trends relating to the circumstances of children who go missing from care.

CONTENT OF RECORDS

- BIC 453 (Keeping Safe Plan)
- BIC 834 (Risk Assessment)
- BIC 835 (Missing person log)
- Copy of home's or carer's log book
- Copy of Police MISPER form

- 9.2 Regular meetings will take place between police and Children's Services at local level. This will include the Police Divisional Superintendent Police Divisional Sergeant (Child Abuse Investigation Unit) or his nominee(s), the Heads of Service and the Assistant Director Children in Need and will identify any actions that may be taken to reduce the incidences of children going missing. Responsibility to monitor information on children who go missing including incidences and patterns of behaviour will fall to the Operations Board of the Local Safeguarding Children Board.

Appendix 1 – Excerpts from the Trafficking Toolkit

Appendix 2 - BIC 453 (Keeping Safe Plan)

Appendix 3 – BIC 834 (Risk Assessment)

Appendix 4 – BIC 835 (Missing Person Log)

Appendix 5 – BIC 840 (Checklist)

Appendix 1 Trafficking Toolkit Children

The responsibilities of social services regarding child victims of trafficking may include:

- providing victims/potential victims with a safe place to stay;
- provision of support services (e.g. counselling, legal advice, schooling);
- identifying victims/potential victims according to agreed profiles or receiving referrals from other agencies who have identified them;
- contributing to joint inter-agency profiling of victims/potential victims;
- undertaking initial interviews, including joint interviews with the local police, to assess risk, harm and agree child protection plans;
- provide advice about who to contact concerning their immigration status;
- assist in the identification of possible traffickers masquerading as 'relatives';
- ensure contact with police and provision of information to the police;
- finding of relatives in country of origin, and verification of what would be in the best interests of the child, and whether they should be able to remain in the UK or if it is safe to return home;
- ensure that NGO or other support is available if they are returned to their country of origin;
- monitoring of children in social services for signs that they are meeting the traffickers including monitoring their phone calls;
- providing support and building up a relationship to encourage the child not to leave with the trafficker.

One approach that has been successfully employed in some areas has been to appoint a designated lead officer with responsibility within their child protection procedures for the trafficking of children and young people.

The National Missing Persons Helpline has a Department of Health funded project 'Missing from Care'. This project receives, from a number of Social Services departments, all details of young people who are missing from care. This includes children and young people who have been victims of trafficking^[1].

^[1] National Missing Persons Helpline: www.missingpersons.org

<http://www.crimereduction.gov.uk/toolkits/tp050301.htm>

Safety issues

A victim who escapes exploitation and receives shelter and assistance represents a 'lost investment asset' in the eyes of the trafficker, and is likely to trigger serious and potentially violent reprisals against the escaped victim. They may do this by taking action on the victim or through threats to the victim's family. If the victim agrees to become a prosecution witness, the risks are likely to change significantly. The threat to traffickers and exploiters is seriously increased and they will be keen to prevent the victim from giving their testimony.

Given that the victim will be receiving support, the risk extends to include those who are providing this support and may come between the trafficker and the victim.

A risk assessment therefore needs to be carried out as soon as possible after a trafficking victim has come to notice and then be regularly reviewed.

Security issues apply to:

- accommodation (including emergency alarms/video cameras/ immediate access to police if needed);
- secure transport to/from services/hearings/airports etc;
- witness protection where indicated.

Special security issues may relate to children, including their security while being provided with education services and the fact that they may have been instructed by their traffickers to make contact. It may be appropriate, for example, to provide dedicated education provision in small groups, with chaperoned travel to and from the teaching centre, rather than open attendance at school or college with no protection.

It needs to be remembered that there are legislative requirements not to restrict the exercise of human rights of victims.

<http://www.crimereduction.gov.uk/toolkits/tp0608.htm>

Special issues relating to child victims

All child care agencies – social services, health, education and the police - and LSCBs need to consider what would provide the best protection for children in the specific cases presented. This should include plans for their immediate and their longer term needs.

They must be placed in a trusting and safe environment, with carers who understand their needs, including an understanding of their cultural background and any associated issues, and preferably with those who speak the same languages. Whilst they must be given protection, they must not be made to feel that they are being locked up, as this for some, may be worse than being outside and with their trafficker.

Social services can provide protection to children by carrying out good monitoring to ensure that they are well, safe and happy. The children need to feel safe and secure in the environment where they are being cared for, if they are going to stay.

Specialist counselling will be required, to address the trafficking issue, and specialist and sensitive health care is important.

For many, the debt they owe is the main reason they must leave, so understanding of this issue is vital, as is accepting that they may be terrified of ritual curses. In the case of Eastern European children, the level of violence they are likely to have suffered is high, as control is often exerted through repeated raping and beatings.

Should children wish to return home, efforts must be made to ensure appropriate reception arrangements in their country of origin. However, children may be reluctant to return, and in some cases may have been sold by their families. The safety of the child is paramount and if it is deemed that the child would be in danger were they to return, then exceptional leave will be granted either for 4 years or until they reach the age of 18. Children will only be returned to their country of origin if appropriate arrangements can be made for their safe return. It is important that efforts are made to reassure the child on this matter.

The decision on where to accommodate the child will depend on an assessment of need, and of the skills and training of available carers. No young person aged under 18 should be placed in unassisted accommodation, such as bed and breakfast, and they should be provided with an initial period of 24 hour care, and monitoring of their health and welfare needs.

Local protocols should be established between social services, the police and the immigration service on how to best to work with children thought to be at risk of being trafficked.

<http://www.crimereduction.gov.uk/toolkits/tp0610.htm>

Keeping Safe Plan

CHILD/YOUNG PERSON KEEPING SAFE Plan Number:

This form has been designed with the help of some looked after young people. Please remember that the child/young person should be able to choose who they fill this in with.

Please make sure that they fully understand everything that is written about them.

Where possible services should not be started until the Keeping Safe Plan has been completed.

The child/young person or anyone involved with the child/young person's care can request a review of the plan at any time without waiting for the next review date.

NAME:	
DATE OF BIRTH:	
ADDRESS:	
MARS/SWIFT NO:	
LAC1:	
LEAVING AND AFTER CARE:	
FILLED IN BY:	
JOB TITLE:	
DATE COMPLETED/UPDATED:	
DATE FOR REVIEW:	

This plan is to be filled in with the child or young person to agree what needs to be done to keep them safe in different situations.

This is a checklist of the kind of thing we might need to know. It can be reviewed at any time by the child/young person or anyone involved with the child/young person.

1. ANXIETY

Eg fear of dogs, being away from home

Are there any concerns? (from anyone)	
What does the child/young person think?	
What does the carer think might be of concern?	
What starts it off?	
How to keep safe and avoid unsafe situations?	

2. SELF HARM

Self harming behaviour, e.g. caused by taking drugs, drinking alcohol, new people (also see item 2 – Anxiety)

Are there any concerns? (from anyone)	
What does the child/young person think?	
What does the carer think might be of concern?	
What starts it off?	
How to keep safe and avoid unsafe situations?	

3. SAFETY WITH OTHERS

Physical aggression towards other people and/ or animals. Sexualised behaviour towards other children / young people / adults. Sexual risk from others. NB check history

Are there any concerns? (from anyone)	
What does the child/young person think?	
What does the carer think might be of concern?	
What starts it off?	
How to keep safe and avoid unsafe situations?	

4. ABSCONDING/HEALTH

Eg medicine needed? Eating problems? Feeling low?

Are there any concerns? (from anyone)	
What does the child/young person think?	
What does the carer think might be of concern?	
What starts it off?	
How to keep safe and avoid unsafe situations?	

5. PERSONAL SAFETY

eg road safety

Are there any concerns? (from anyone)	
What does the child/young person think?	
What does the carer think might be of concern?	
What starts it off?	
How to keep safe and avoid unsafe situations?	

6. OTHER

Are there any concerns? (from anyone)	
What does the child/young person think?	
What does the carer think might be of concern?	
What starts it off?	
How to keep safe and avoid unsafe situations?	

SAFETY PLAN AGREEMENT

Completed with...

DATE	ROLE	NAME	SIGNATURE
	CHILD/YOUNG PERSON		
	PARENT		
	SOCIAL WORKER		
	TEAM MANAGER		
	SERVICE MANAGER		
	CARER		

If the child/young person has not helped fill this form in, please state why.

This form will be shared with the following people (to be completed by the Social Worker):

Please send to Conference and Review Service at least 5 days prior to the Child/Young Person statutory review.

Risk Assessment: Missing from Care

Simple Actuarial Classification

Points	Level	Label
1-5	1	Low risk
6-10	2	Medium risk
11 and over	3	High risk

Factors Affecting Score	Score	Points
Age of Child		
Under 10	5	
10-14	4	
14-16	3	
16-18	2	
History of Missing		
Never before	4	
Once before	3	
More than once	2	
Frequently	1	
History of Harm		
Previous evidence of actual self harm	3	
Previous threats to self harm	2	
Threats made to self harm upon disappearance	3	
Risk posted by other persons	3	
History of Criminal Offending		
Offences have posed high risk to public (drink/drugs related assaults, vehicle theft)	3	
Offences which pose low risk to public (nuisance-dishonesty)	1	
Subtotal:		

Medical Circumstances		
Needs immediate medical attention (e.g. overdose)	5	
Needs regular medical attention (e.g. diabetes)	3	
Has condition that requires regulation (e.g. asthma)	2	
Circumstances at time of Disappearance		
Misper subject to court order remand to secure accommodation	2	
Misper had argument with residential staff/carer	2	
Misper is the subject of police investigation/wanted	2	
Misper unsettled following contact with relative	2	
Misper failed to return from authorised visit	1	
Likelihood of Self Harm		
Likely to return	1	
Possible in the circumstances	2	
Unlikely in the circumstances	3	
State of Mind/Body		
Emotionally upset	2	
Intoxicated by drink/drugs	2	
	TOTAL	
Risk identified as Low <input type="checkbox"/> Medium <input type="checkbox"/> High <input type="checkbox"/>		

Note:

The above scoring system is based on levels of concern and not necessarily the period of time that the person is missing, although this could be considered as an additional factor when assessing risk.

Assessment of Risk

	Notification:	Action Taken:	Notes:
Low Risk	Manager	Y <input type="checkbox"/> N <input type="checkbox"/>	
Medium Risk	Manager	Y <input type="checkbox"/> N <input type="checkbox"/>	
High Risk	Manager	Y <input type="checkbox"/> N <input type="checkbox"/>	
	Police	Y <input type="checkbox"/> N <input type="checkbox"/>	
	Family	Y <input type="checkbox"/> N <input type="checkbox"/>	
	Others	Y <input type="checkbox"/> N <input type="checkbox"/>	
Signed by:		Date	
Signed by:		Date	

Missing Child Record Form

Name of child:		D.O.B	
SWIFT ID:		Incident Date:	
Time it was established that child was missing:			

Category of Concern:	
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Time reported to Social Services:		Time reported to police:	
Reported by:		Police reference number (URN):	
Reported to: (Social Worker name)			

Circumstances leading up to child going missing <i>(please give as much detail as possible)</i> :

When young person has been located:

Date child located:		Time reported to police (where child has returned on their own):	
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Where located and who by:

State of child on return <i>(attach additional sheets if necessary)</i> :

Reason given by child for being missing:

Follow-up Action with child: <i>(brief details)</i>

Has child been given the opportunity to talk with an independent person? <i>(give details of the name of the independent person and the date / time when this meeting took place)</i>

If not, why?

Completed by:		Designation:	
Signature:		Date:	

Copies of this form must be placed on young person's file and to Conference and Review Duty Desk

Missing from Care Checklist and Guidance

Name of young person:				D.O.B	
SWIFT ID:		Incident Date:		Time referred to Social Services:	
Category of Concern:				Police URN number:	

Whilst child is missing:

Immediate Action	Social Worker/Emergency Duty		Residential Unit		Foster Carer / Prospective Adopter		
	The Social Worker will be expected to assist foster carers and prospective adopters in reporting the incident and to work closely with them until the child is located		Residential units will be expected to manage the incident and liase with Social Services until the child is located		Foster Carers or prospective adopters will be expected to liase with social services until the child is located and update them regularly		
	Establish that the child is <i>missing</i> rather than unauthorised absence and complete the Missing from Care Risk Assessment (BIC 834) with the foster carer (Res Units can complete this for themselves). Log the information on SWIFT		<input type="checkbox"/>	Establish that the child is <i>missing</i> rather than unauthorised absence and complete the Missing from Care Risk Assessment (BIC 834)		<input type="checkbox"/>	Establish that the child is <i>missing</i> rather than unauthorised absence
	<i>If the child has absconded this is automatically high risk within the protocol and therefore the police should be contacted</i>						
	Once the risk assessment has been carried out, phone the police and notify the foster carer that the following information will be required when the police visit		<input type="checkbox"/>	Phone the police and notify Social Worker / Emergency Duty Team so that they can enter it onto SWIFT. Print off and complete appropriate sections of MISPER form for police		<input type="checkbox"/>	Notify Social Services (either the social worker or if out of hours the Emergency Duty Team)
	Information to be made available to the police (generally it will only be either the foster carer / prospective adopter or residential unit who will need to gather the following information, but Social Workers should be able to advise Foster Carers / Prospective Adopters of what they should have ready)						
	• A description of the child (<i>including what they were last wearing</i>)		<input type="checkbox"/>	• A description of the child (<i>including what they were last wearing</i>)		<input type="checkbox"/>	• A description of the child (<i>including what they were last wearing</i>)
• When the child was last seen and with		<input type="checkbox"/>	• When the child was last seen and with		<input type="checkbox"/>	• When the child was last seen and	

	whom		whom		with whom	
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Immediate Action

• A recent photograph (to be returned when the child has been safely relocated)	<input type="checkbox"/>	• A recent photograph (to be returned when the child has been safely relocated)	<input type="checkbox"/>	• A recent photograph (to be returned when the child has been safely relocated)	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Family Addresses	<input type="checkbox"/>	• Family Addresses	<input type="checkbox"/>	• Family Addresses	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Known acquaintances- names and addresses	<input type="checkbox"/>	• Known acquaintances- names and addresses	<input type="checkbox"/>	• Known acquaintances- names and addresses	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Any previous history of absconding	<input type="checkbox"/>	• Any previous history of absconding	<input type="checkbox"/>	• Any previous history of absconding	<input type="checkbox"/>
• The name and address of the child's GP and Dentist	<input type="checkbox"/>	• The name and address of the child's GP and Dentist	<input type="checkbox"/>	• The name and address of the child's GP and Dentist	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Circumstances, which increase the risk to a child or to the public, should be drawn to the attention of the police	<input type="checkbox"/>	• Circumstances, which increase the risk to a child or to the public, should be drawn to the attention of the police	<input type="checkbox"/>	• Circumstances, which increase the risk to a child or to the public, should be drawn to the attention of the police	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Legal status of the child (e.g. whether there are any court orders etc)	<input type="checkbox"/>	• Legal status of the child (e.g. whether there are any court orders etc)	<input type="checkbox"/>	• Legal status of the child (e.g. whether there are any court orders etc)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Ask the police for the URN number and make a note of it					
Notify parents / family (where it has been agreed)	<input type="checkbox"/>	Notify parents / family (where it has been agreed)	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Contact any relevant professional (e.g. Head Teacher or Head of School Year if mid-week)	<input type="checkbox"/>	Contact any relevant professional (e.g. Head Teacher or Head of School Year if mid-week)	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Contact local hospital to check whether child has been admitted	<input type="checkbox"/>	Contact local hospital to check whether child has been admitted	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Complete first half of BIC 835	<input type="checkbox"/>	Complete first half of BIC 835	<input type="checkbox"/>		
RECORD ON SWIFT	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Where there are particular concerns for the child or circumstances that give rise to suspicion, the case should be brought to the immediate attention of the Team Manager, the Head of Service and the Police Divisional Superintendent (Child Abuse Investigation Unit). or their nominee without delay					

Prolonged absences:

IN THE CASE OF VERY VULNERABLE CHILDREN THESE TIMESCALES SHOULD BE REDUCED	
6 hours	All absences that continue 6 hours from when the absence was noted should be considered to be high risk within the protocol. This should be seen as a maximum period and in most cases much shorter periods will be appropriate
12 hours	Should a child's absence continue and after police, social worker and parents have been informed, the foster carer or unit manager of the home should inform all children (and staff) within a 12 hour period to avoid distressing rumours and to obtain any additional information as to the child's whereabouts.
	Unauthorised absence lasting longer than 12 hours to be reported to the external line manager, commissioning manager and the social worker by the senior manager of the home or in the case of children in foster care the foster carer should notify the social worker who will notify their line manager, Review Manager, Head of Service and Assistant Director Children in Need.
24 hours	Assistant Director Children in Need to notify the Director of Children's Services within 24 hours of a child being missing
	If the absence has lasted 24 hours a joint action plan should be developed between the social worker and the Police Divisional Sergeant (Child Abuse Investigation Unit).
	The missing child should be reported within 24 hours to the National Police Missing Person Bureau by the police
	Daily contact should be made with Police Divisional Sergeant (Child Abuse Investigation Unit) (or more frequently in the case of a particularly vulnerable child), the child's placement and family
	Contingency plans should be considered for child's return (see 6.9 of the Missing from Care Policy)
48 hours	Report absence to the Head of Youth Offending Team (where appropriate)
72 hours	Remind those involved that a strategy meeting should be held no later than 5 days after the child has first gone missing and advise them to keep date clear for the meeting
5 days	Strategy meeting to be held no later than 5 days after the child / young person has gone missing

If the child is absent:

Try to determine the child's whereabouts (e.g. phoning friends, looking for child etc)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Complete the risk assessment form BIC 834	<input type="checkbox"/>
Dependent on the outcome of the risk assessment, follow the checklist for Missing from Care	<input type="checkbox"/>

If the child goes missing during an external activity:

Notify the police in that area	<input type="checkbox"/>
Notify the unit manager, area duty social worker or emergency duty team	<input type="checkbox"/>
Initiate a local search if staffing levels permit	<input type="checkbox"/>
The carer or member of staff and relevant manager will decide within 24 hours whether the party should return home	<input type="checkbox"/>

Notify Social Services in that area	<input type="checkbox"/>
Follow Missing from Care checklist	<input type="checkbox"/>

When child has been located

If the child has returned on their own, notify the police / children's services	<input type="checkbox"/>
The Police will co-operate in the arrangements made by Children's Services to return a child to his/her residence and where appropriate will assist in this	<input type="checkbox"/>
Professionals meeting to be held within 24 hours of the return to agree any support needed for the child and if necessary for any carers	<input type="checkbox"/>
Notify parents / family and other professionals of the child's return	<input type="checkbox"/>
Complete second half of BIC 835	<input type="checkbox"/>
It is the responsibility of the social worker to interview the child or to ensure that the child can talk to an independent person / appropriate friend about the absence within 72 hours. <i>This must be communicated to the child</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Discuss the incident with the review manager	<input type="checkbox"/>
Review the Keeping Safe Plan in light of the incident	<input type="checkbox"/>
Ensure that any photograph used in searching for the child is returned (to the placement or the social worker)	<input type="checkbox"/>
If the child has been in police custody having committed offences while absent, plans will be reviewed depending on Police action	<input type="checkbox"/>
Child's medical condition should be discussed and an offer made to arrange medical attention	<input type="checkbox"/>
Copies of BIC forms (834 and 835) and this checklist to be put onto the child's file plus copies of any logs made if the child goes missing from a residential unit	<input type="checkbox"/>
Ensure that the Head of Quality Assurance and Conference and Review Duty Desk has been notified about the incident to include on the database of missing children	<input type="checkbox"/>