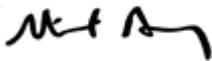


CHILDREN'S SERVICES DEPARTMENTAL PROCEDURE NO: 10/18	
TITLE: CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE MISSING FROM HOME OR CARE	
DATE:	October 2018
EFFECTIVE DATE:	October 2018
KEYWORDS:	Children, Children in Care, Missing
ISSUED BY:	Stuart Ashley, Assistant Director, Children's Services
CONTACT:	Vanessa Johns, District Manager, Hampshire County Council Kev Brown, Service Manager, Isle of Wight.
PROCEDURES CANCELLED OR AMENDED:	Procedures 01/13 – 'Children and Young People Missing from Care' and 04/13 – 'Children and Young People Missing from Home' are cancelled.
SIGNED:	
DESIGNATION:	Assistant Director, Children's Services
Version Control.	
Amendment:	Date:
YOU SHOULD ENSURE THAT:-	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ You read, understand and, where appropriate, act on this information ▪ All people in your workplace who need to know see this procedure ▪ This document is properly filed in a place to which all staff members in your 	

workplace have access.

PURPOSE

This procedure informs Hampshire and the Isle of Wight Children's Services staff and carers of the actions to be taken in circumstances where **any** child under the age of 18, whether living at home or under the care of the local authority is at risk due to being missing, absent or away from placement without authorisation.

SCOPE

LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN: This procedure applies to all children and young people looked after by Hampshire and Isle of Wight Children's Services Department under Section 31 of the (Children Act 1989), i.e. a child for whom the Local Authority has a Care Order) or accommodated under Section 20 of the (Children Act 1989). i.e. a child for whom the Local Authority is providing accommodation.

NON LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN: This procedure will apply to a child living at home with their parents or others with parental responsibly.

POLICY

Hampshire and the Isle of Wight Children's Services Department recognise the potential risks to children who are missing, and the need to support them and their families. When a child is looked after and is missing, Children's Services will show the same concern as any good parent. A current risk assessment will inform what support services are required to prevent children and young people from running away, and to judge when it is appropriate to report them missing to the police.

REFERENCES TO LEGAL, CENTRAL GOVERNMENT AND OTHER EXTERNAL DOCUMENTS

[The Children Act 1989](#)

[Statutory Guidance on Children who run away from home or care. Department for Education, January 2014](#)

[Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment Offenders Act, 2012](#)

[Missing Persons – College of Policing APP 2016](#)

HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES DEPARTMENT REFERENCES

[Missing Child Risk Assessment Tool](#)

[Community Partnership Information Form](#)

[Trafficked Risk Assessment](#)

[Missing Child - Record of Return Interview](#)

[SERAF \(Sexual Exploitation Risk Assessment Framework\) Form](#)

[Trafficked Children Initial Enquiry / Referral Form](#) (Barnardo's)

[National Referral Mechanism Form: child](#)

[Missing Child subject to CP Plan Notification](#)

[Missing CLA Notification](#)

DEFINITIONS

LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN: Any child who is in the care of the Local Authority under Section 31 of the (Children Act 1989), i.e. a child for whom the Local Authority has a Care Order) or accommodated under Section 20 of the (Children Act 1989), i.e. a child for whom the Local Authority is providing accommodation. This applies to children in the care of Hampshire and the Isle of Wight Children's Services Department regardless of the placement type they are living in and therefore includes children in placements outside the Hampshire and Isle of Wight respective boundaries.

NON LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN: For children who are not looked after this procedure applies to children living at home with their parents or others with parental responsibility. Non looked after children includes children who are privately fostered and children living in family and friends arrangements.

ROLES

District / Service Managers and Team Managers are responsible for ensuring this policy and the procedure is adhered to. The role and responsibilities of District / Service Managers, Team Managers, Social Workers and Children's Services staff as well as parents and carers are laid out throughout this procedure.

AUTHORITY TO VARY THE PROCEDURE:

The Assistant Director, Children and Families.

PROCEDURE:

This procedure is laid out in the following sections:

1. Introduction
2. Categories of missing

- 3. How to decide on the appropriate category**
- 4. Planning and risk assessment before the event**
- 5. What to do when a child is not where they are supposed to be**
- 6. Information to be made available to the Police**
- 7. Who to notify**
- 8. Children not known to Children's Services**
- 9. Support**
- 10. Planning for a return**
- 11. Return Interviews**
- 12. Recording the event on ICS**
- 13. High Risk Strategy Meetings**
- 14. Publicity**
- 15. Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE)**
- 16. Trafficking**
- 17. Children who Remain Missing**
- 18. Children missing on Child Protection Plan**
- 19. Children/Young Person on Remand**
- 20. Role of Out of Hours**
- 21. Police Powers**
- 22. Performance Standards**

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 For any child who is missing, or is not where they are expected to be, there will be a level of concern for their welfare and safety. Research shows us that the majority of children who go missing or run away each year are living at home, however, there is an added level of concern for children who go missing from care. This is related to the increased level of vulnerability due to their experience and trauma. In addition they can be specifically targeted and

groomed by perpetrators. The reasons behind any absence are often varied and complex and cannot be viewed in isolation from their home circumstances and their experiences of care.

- 1.2 There can be a range of 'push' and 'pull' factors for children that may be reasons for being missing or absent:

Push factors:

- Conflict with parent / carers
- Feeling powerless
- Bullying
- Being unhappy in care or at home
- Physical or sexual abuse
- Domestic abuse
- Parental drug & alcohol misuse.

Pull factors:

- Wanting to be with family or friends.
- Peer pressure: established behaviour, attractions of street life.
- Attraction of people who may present a risk and exploit the child.
- Pressure from traffickers to flee local authority care in order to re-establish contact (especially where the child is a suspected victim of child trafficking).

- 1.3 Every missing or absent episode should attract proper attention from professionals, parents and carers involved with the child and they must collaborate to ensure a consistent and coherent response is given to the missing child on his/her return.

- 1.4 Prevention is the most important strategy. Wherever possible the underlying potential reasons for going missing need to be understood. For a child in care a strategy needs to be identified which utilises all the support that the child can access. Placement location, Pathway Plans and Care Plans should all be considered for appropriateness of preventing the child going missing.

- 1.5 In circumstances where a child has gone missing it is important to ensure family and carers are aware of the support services available to them outside of Children's Services. Open channels of communication and effective joint working between the local authority, Police, health and local relevant organisations must be established and maintained in order to facilitate a partnership approach.

- 1.6 This underpins the local runaway and missing protocol and is supported by Hampshire's and IOW Missing, Exploited and Trafficked (MET) groups which are multi-agency in its membership. In addition, for children looked after, locally Registered Managers specifically, as well as District/Service Managers, should establish a good working relationship with their Local Community Safety

Inspector and Police Missing Person's Co-ordinator.

- 1.7 In January 2014 the Department for Education issued updated statutory guidance relating to children who run away or go missing from home or care which includes new definitions in relation to children not being where they are expected to be. (See 2, Categories of Missing, below)
- 1.8 It is important to be aware that it is **NOT** the length of time a child is missing that dictates reporting the matter to the police (previously 24 hours) but the fact that the whereabouts of the child is **not known** and their individual risk assessment raises a concern.

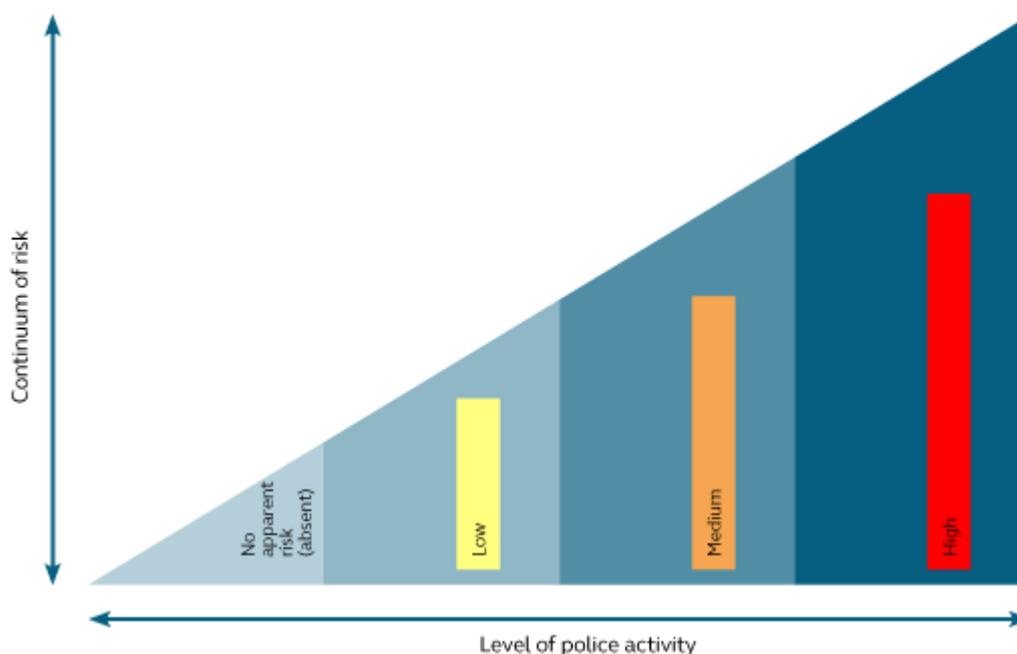
2. CATEGORIES OF MISSING

- 2.1 **The Police definition of a missing person according to the ACPO and College of Policing interim guidance 2013 (revised November 2016) is:**

'Anyone whose whereabouts cannot be established will be considered as missing until located and their well-being or otherwise confirmed'.

All reports of missing people sit within a continuum of risk from 'no apparent risk (absent)' through to high-risk cases that require immediate, intensive action.

Missing definition



Risk assessment and response

The Risk Assessment Table

1. The following table should be used as a guide to an appropriate level of **police response** based on initial and on-going risk assessment in each case. Risk assessment should be guided by the College of Policing [Risk principles](#), the [National Decision Model](#) and Police [Code of Ethics](#).

No apparent risk (absent)

There is no apparent risk of harm to either the subject or the public.

Actions to locate the subject and/or gather further information should be agreed with the informant and a latest review time set to reassess the risk.

Low risk

The risk of harm to the subject or the public is assessed as possible but minimal.

Proportionate enquiries should be carried out to ensure that the individual has not come to harm.

Medium risk

The risk of harm to the subject or the public is assessed as likely but not serious.

This category requires an active and measured response by the police and other agencies in order to trace the missing person and support the person reporting.

High risk

The risk of serious harm to the subject or the public is assessed as very likely.

This category almost always requires the immediate deployment of police resources – action may be delayed in exceptional circumstances, such as searching water or forested areas during hours of darkness. A member of the senior management team must be involved in the examination of initial lines of enquiry and approval of appropriate staffing levels. Such cases should lead to the appointment of an investigating officer (IO) and possibly an SIO, and a police search adviser (PoISA).

There should be a press/media strategy and/or close contact with outside agencies. Family support should be put in place where appropriate. The MPB should be notified of

the case without undue delay. Children's Services must also be notified immediately if the person is under 18.

2.2 Risk of serious harm has been defined as (Home Office 2002 and OASys 2006):

'A risk which is life threatening and/or traumatic, and from which recovery, whether physical or psychological, can be expected to be difficult or impossible.'

2.3 Where the risk cannot be accurately assessed without active investigation, appropriate lines of enquiry should be set to gather the required information to inform the risk assessment.

2.4 Hampshire Constabulary's Missing Person guidance is clear that when risk assessments are being made with regard to missing persons under 18 years old, consideration must be given as to whether the person is displaying, or has previously displayed, vulnerability to child sexual exploitation (CSE). If it is suspected that they are or have recently been in situations and circumstances where they are likely to have been victims of CSE and the circumstances are such that immediacy cannot be ruled out, then any report of them going missing should be treated as high risk.

2.5 The categories of missing children in Hampshire and Isle of Wight are:

- **Missing from care:** A looked after child who is not at their placement or the place they are expected to be (e.g. school) and their whereabouts is not known.
- **Missing child NON LAC:** A child reported as missing to the police by their family or carers. 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.
- **Away from placement without authorisation:** A looked after child whose whereabouts is **known** but who is not at their placement or place they are expected to be and the carer has concerns or the incident has been notified to the local authority or the police.

2.6 There will be occasions whereby a child's whereabouts is **known** but they are not where they are expected to be. While this group are not missing, such a situation could still generate concern for the welfare of the child as they may still be placing themselves at risk because of where they are. For example, they may choose to stay at the house of friends where the carer has concerns about risks of sexual exploitation.

- 2.7 In such cases, although they will not fit the criteria for being formally missing, the situation should be carefully monitored and risk assessed by the social work team/OOHs and carer/residential staff as the situation could escalate and require a referral to the police either as a missing child or in relation to safeguarding concerns associated with their location.
- 2.8 **Absent:** An absent person is defined in the ACPO and College of Policing interim guidance 2013 as *'A person not at a place where they are required or expected to be.'*
- 2.9 The level of risk for an absent child is assessed as 'no apparent risk'. It can be seen from this definition that it will not be appropriate to classify an individual who is deemed vulnerable by reason of their age, disability, health, mental health, past conduct or other factor as absent. Absent cases should not be ignored and must be monitored over agreed periods of time with consideration given to escalating to missing if there is a change to the circumstances that has increased the level of risk.
- 2.10 Some children absent themselves for a short period and then return and their whereabouts are known. Sometimes children stay out longer than agreed, either on purpose or accidentally, and may be testing boundaries. This kind of boundary testing is within the range of normal teenage behaviour and should not necessarily be considered a risk or reported to the police.
- 2.11 An on-going risk assessment should inform the decision making process in terms of whether a child or young person should be reported to the police as missing.

3. HOW TO DECIDE ON THE APPROPRIATE CATEGORY

- 3.1 In determining the level of risk and identifying when a child should be categorised factors need to be considered, based on the knowledge of the child concerned.

These include, but should not be limited to the following:

- The child's age and understanding,
- Length of time lapsed,
- Previous episodes of being missing/absent,
- The general level of knowledge of the child (if the child is newly admitted to the care system and little is known about them, then it must be assumed they will be missing unless proved otherwise),
- Their physical and mental health (particularly where they have diagnosed conditions requiring regular medication, e.g. diabetes), including whether they have expressed any intention of harming themselves,
- The behaviour of the child as influenced by peer groups or others (e.g. if the child is a victim of bullying),
- Safeguarding issues, i.e. if they are the subject of a child protection plan,

- The risk that the child may be targeted for sexual exploitation,
- Whether or not they pose a risk to themselves or others, including a risk of offending,
- Whether the child is perceived as running to/running from someone/something,
- Their legal status (e.g. those remanded to local authority accommodation),
- Their knowledge of the area in which they have gone missing,
- The prevailing weather conditions and clothing the child is thought to be wearing,
- Whether the child is an unaccompanied asylum seeking child and if so, consideration must be given to whether it is possible that they are a victim of child trafficking.

3.2 Staff, parents and carers should avoid dismissing the potential significance of repeated periods of missing, away from placement without authorisation or absent episodes. Often, such children are immediately labelled as the problem and insufficient consideration is given to why they persistently abscond. Persistent running away needs to be explored, particularly at the time of post return interviews.

4. PLANNING AND RISK ASSESSMENT BEFORE THE EVENT

- 4.1 Where there is a likelihood that a child may go missing from home or their identified placement, a risk assessment and plan must be agreed by the social worker, parent / carer / residential staff at the earliest opportunity, i.e. placement planning stage using the [Missing Child Risk Assessment Tool](#) . This will consider the likelihood that the child might go missing and the risks they may face as a consequence. Parents and carers should contribute to this assessment and the process should actively include the child. This assessment must be considered at regular intervals throughout the care planning process or the appropriate CIN or CP process.
- 4.2 For children entering residential care, the local police Missing Person Co-ordinator should be invited to the first placement planning meeting where a concern exists regarding the risk of missing. This is to ensure they become aware of children who may be particularly at risk of going missing, in order to aid information sharing. Police involvement in the placement planning stage for those in foster care will be on an individual basis dependent on vulnerability, risk and previous history of going missing.

These assessments should include information on the following:

- The likelihood of the child going missing,
- The child's view,
- The level of supervision / support that care staff/carers propose to provide for the child,
- The views of parents/carers regarding their child's needs,
- A plan detailing actions that need to be taken if the child goes missing/is

absent, including at what point a formal missing persons referral is made to the police,

- The risk of harm to the child and his/her vulnerability if he/she is absent, away from placement or missing,
- The level of assessed risk regarding child sexual exploitation,
- Consideration of any external influences which may result in a child's removal without consent, e.g. child abduction, custody disputes,
- The likelihood of the child being harboured,
- Any information about the child's whereabouts during previous absences,
- Actions to try to prevent a child from going missing, in terms of diversionary activities/strategies,
- Practical arrangements for returning the child or young person to their placement after being missing, e.g. transport arrangements, especially if after hours or during the night,
- Consent sought from child and parent/adult with Parental Responsibility to have a photo of the child, which can be used in any subsequent missing person investigation.

4.3 The child should have this procedure explained to him/her and the potential dangers that they may encounter, so that he/she understands the implications of going missing.

5. WHAT TO DO WHEN A CHILD IS NOT WHERE THEY ARE EXPECTED TO BE

5.1 See Missing from Care flowchart showing the process for Children Services staff, parents / carers when a child is not where they are expected to be.

5.2 When it is identified that a child is not where they are expected to be the following basic, initial checks should be carried out:

- Try to contact them on their mobile phone/social media – i.e. Facebook,
- Contact friends and family members,
- Contact school to check they were in attendance and there were no issues during the day to trigger them not being where they should be,
- Check local area and places the young person is known to go,
- Carry out any other tasks identified in the placement plan or risk assessment.

5.3 For looked after children, if after the above have been completed the whereabouts of the child has still not been confirmed the carer/residential worker must contact the allocated social worker or duty officer to advise them of the situation.

5.4 At this stage a joint decision should be made as to whether to report the child formally as missing, based on their risk assessment and placement plan. Outside of business hours, contact will be with the Out of Hours service.

- 5.5 For non-looked after children the responsible parent or carer must initiate contact with the police.
- 5.6 For those children reported to the police and assessed to meet the criteria as 'missing', the police will visit the parent, foster carer or residential unit to collect as much information as possible. The current risk assessment (either in full or relevant parts) must also be shared with the police.

6. INFORMATION TO BE MADE AVAILABLE TO THE POLICE

- 6.1 When reporting to the police, the following information will be required:
- A description of the child and their clothing,
 - Details of when the child was last seen and with whom,
 - A recent photograph,
 - Family addresses and next of kin,
 - Known associates and addresses frequented,
 - Personal details of the child, e.g. name, date of birth, legal status,
 - Any previous history of absconding/absenteeism and circumstances of where found,
 - The circumstances under which the child is absent,
 - Any factors which increase the risk to the child,
 - Whether there is a formal child protection plan in respect of the child,
 - Name of staff member/carers/parent that has completed search of home for the child (N.B. police reserve the right to conduct further searches),
 - Details of contact with family, friends and local searches of areas frequented by the missing child.
- 6.2 If the child has a mobile phone it is crucial to report this, with the number, if known as this may prove to be a means of keeping in touch.
- 6.3 Even after reporting a child missing, staff and carers should recognise that Children's Services are responsible for children in their care at all times and this responsibility is not absolved when they have reported a child missing to the police. The Team of District/Service Manager must ensure that positive action is taken to follow up any information that might confirm the whereabouts of a child who is unaccounted for.
- 6.4 Carers and the child's social worker will be responsible for liaising with the police taking an active interest in the investigation and passing on all information which may help to inform the investigation and assist in protecting the child while absent.
- 6.5 Carers and the child's social worker should continue to make appropriate enquiries with other residents or by telephone with all persons who may be able to assist with the investigation, unless they are requested not to do so by the police.

- 6.6 Once a child is reported missing to the police, they will then have primacy in respect of the investigation to trace the child. If the child is missing during school hours, the school must be informed of the absence in case they hold any significant information which may need to be reported to the police. There may be school friends who have information for example.
- 6.7 Part of the continued involvement should be to plan for the child's return and early identification of any factor contributing to the motivation to go missing.

7. WHO TO NOTIFY

- 7.1 The Team Manager of the allocated team will inform the District/Service Manager responsible for the child at a point no later than one working day, i.e. 24 hours after the child has gone missing. Depending on the individual child's situation and risk assessment, a District/Service Manager may need to be informed of a missing child immediately.
- 7.2 The parents and/or those who have parental responsibility must also be informed if appropriate at the earliest stage, unless otherwise indicated on the Care Plan, and agreement reached about who contacts them.
- 7.3 The Out-Of-Hours team must be notified if the child goes missing out of office hours, ensuring that the Social Worker/Team Manager are notified immediately the next working day and the supervising authority alerted (if this is not Hampshire or Isle of Wight Children's Services).
- 7.4 If a child is looked after, the Independent Reviewing Officer for the child who is missing must also be notified.
- 7.5 The Area Director must be notified of any child missing for more than 48 hours.

8. CHILDREN NOT KNOWN TO CHILDREN'S SERVICES

- 8.1 Every missing child referred to the police should, via the PPN process, be referred to Hampshire or Isle of Wight Children Services. A missing child may or may not be known to Children's Services and each will have varying degrees of need for support or services. The level of response to a notification of a missing event for a child/young person unknown to Children's Services will be decided by CRT/ MASH.
- 8.2 Just as the police risk assess any missing notification, so will Children's Services in order to decide upon the most appropriate response. A number of factors will be considered in making this decision including:
- Age of the child,
 - Length of time missing,
 - Previous history of missing episodes – frequency, any specific concerns that arose during previous episodes, where child/young person ran to,

- Known associates and any related concern,
- Events leading up to going missing,
- Family situation and support requirements whilst child is missing,
- If child/young person was victim or perpetrator of a crime.

8.3 In some situations the case may be forwarded to the relevant CAST team for a Child and Family Assessment to be undertaken in order to gather more information, assess the needs of the child and family and how best these needs can be met. This assessment would be counted as a 'return interview' (See section 11 for full details).

8.4 The potential outcome of a Child and Family Assessment and any further action will be dependent on the information gathered during this first contact with the family but could lead to :

- Further assessment being required,
- Safeguarding procedures being instigated,
- Referral for support from another agency, Early Help or Supporting Families Programme,
- No further action.

9. SUPPORT

9.1 When a child in care goes missing there must be consideration about informing the parent(s) to ascertain if they have had any contact from the child and, where appropriate, involve them in any plans for publicity. Parents should also be included in a High Risk Strategy meeting. Children should also be invited where appropriate. Support to the family can be offered from both Children's Services and external organisations.

10. PLANNING FOR RETURN

10.1 For children looked after, arrangements about how the child will be returned should be discussed as part of the initial Placement Planning meeting, as it is recognised that there are times when it will be difficult for residential staff or a carer to collect the child, especially at night time and the police may not have the resources to do so, particularly at busy times. For children who present particularly high risks to themselves and/or others, and for whom it would be deemed inappropriate to place in a taxi, contingency plans should be put in place which may include purchasing a secure escort to return the child. These should be clearly recorded on ICS and authorised at the appropriate Children's Services management level. For in-house residential units there may be the opportunity to approach local community safety officers to assist with the return of a child to their placement at specific times over a weekend period.

10.2 If the whereabouts of a child are known or suspected, it will be the responsibility of Children's Services to arrange for the child's return between the hours of 0900 hrs to 2100 hrs / 7 days a week. It is not the role of the Police to transport

Missing Persons of any age from a place where they are located to their home or other place of safety. However, in certain cases where a person is found and through a combination of their vulnerability, the nature of the location and the time of the day or night, it may be appropriate for Police to co-operate in this process at the discretion of a supervisory officer. The police should not unreasonably withhold assistance in cases involving the recovery and transportation of vulnerable children at immediate risk of harm. However the police will not agree to requests to provide escorts for missing children which would unreasonably involve officers leaving their normal area of patrol.

- 10.3 Once the child has been found it is important that they feel welcomed back to their placement and are not worried about being penalised by their carer/staff for going missing. Some children may have been missing for a period of time and it is important that they are offered a meal, time to clean themselves up and sleep. The exception to this is if there are concerns that the child may have been the victim or perpetrator of a crime and forensic evidence may be destroyed by allowing these activities.
- 10.4 If the child is suspected of being involved in the commission of a crime or crimes, then the child may contain evidence. In this case the child has specific rights and it must be remembered that all necessary permissions are obtained from the child's parents and/or those with parental responsibility. The child cannot give consent to some of these procedures taking place. The police will lead on this. It is essential to recognise that the welfare of the child is paramount and careful consideration might be given to the potential effects of the procedures on the child. If there is evidence to suggest that the child has been the perpetrator of abuse, a separate social worker than the one allocated to the child should be involved for the different processes.
- 10.5 Parents, police, social workers, the Out-of-Hours Service and any other persons informed of the child's absence, should be advised of the child's return without delay.
- 10.6 The child's allocated social worker and line manager should decide in consultation with residential staff/foster carers, the child and the Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO), whether they should convene a statutory review of the child's care plan.

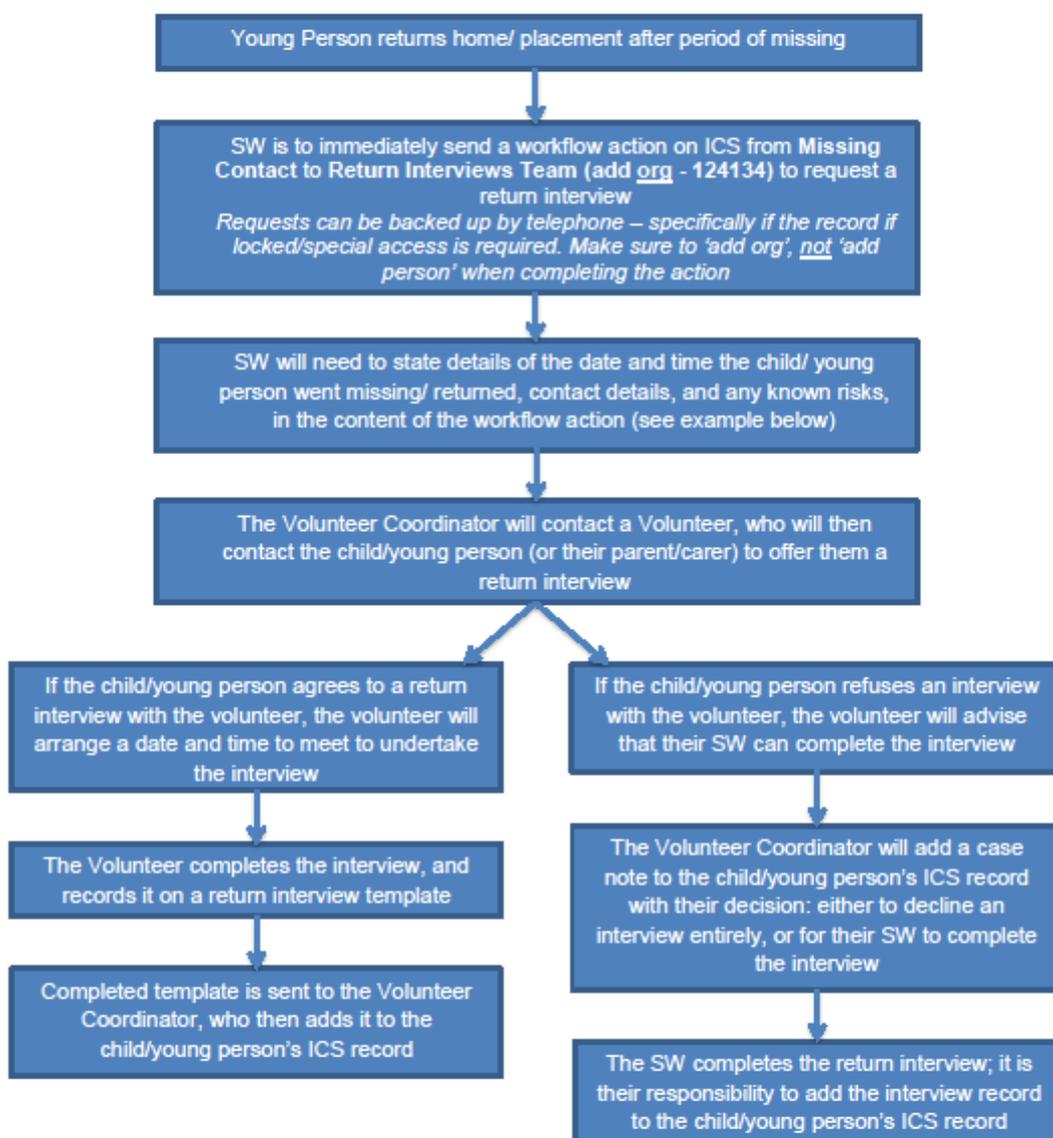
11. RETURN INTERVIEWS

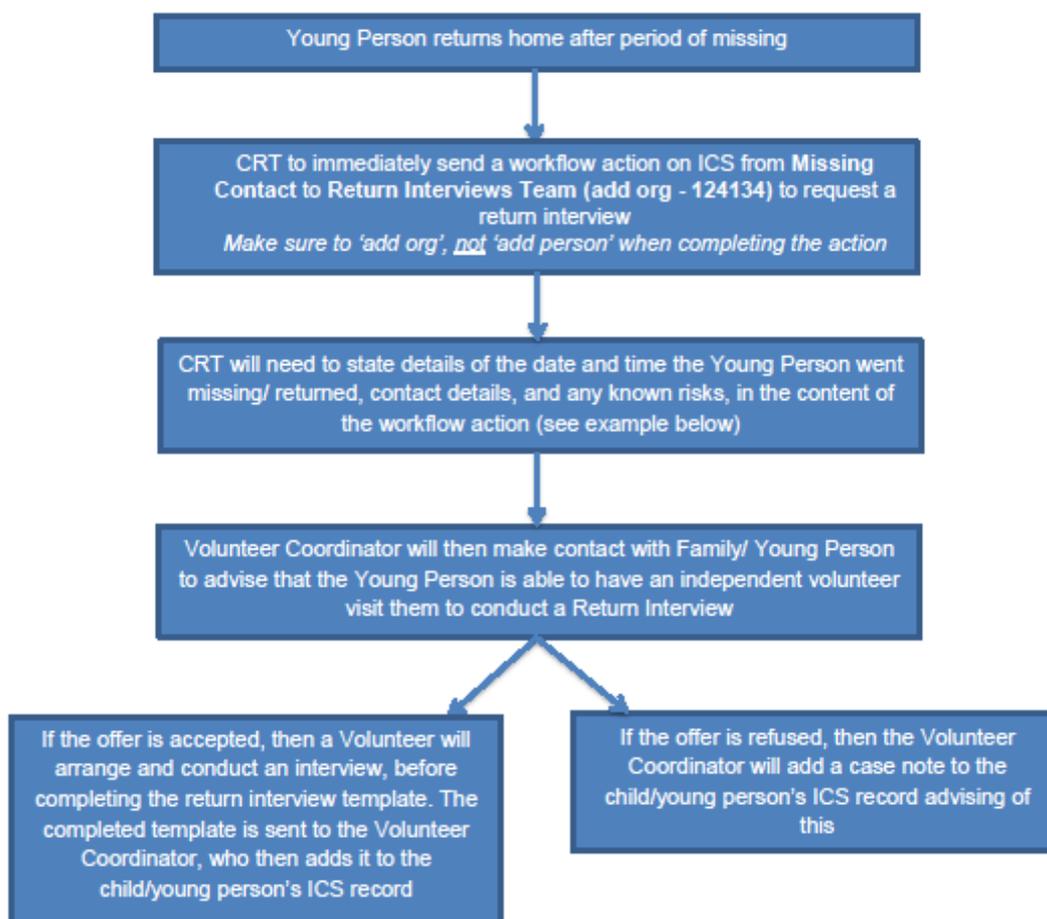
- 11.1 In addition to a Safe and Well check being carried out by the police, it is a statutory requirement that any child or young person who goes missing is offered the opportunity to have a return interview undertaken with them by an independent person upon their return from being missing. This is regardless if the child or young person has gone missing from home or care. Return interviews must be completed within **72 hours** of the child's return from missing. There is a return interview template [Missing Child - Record of Return Interview](#) that must be completed by the person undertaking the return interview which is added to the child's ICS record. In Hampshire all children

and young people returning from being missing will be referred to the Innovation Volunteer Service to undertake the return interview.

Return from Missing Interviews

Referral Process if Young Person is open to Children's Services:



Referral Process if Young Person is NOT open to Children's Services:**Example Case Note:**

- Missing from 28/02/18 09:30 Missing to: 28/02/18 22:00
- Please contact Mary Adams on 00035 19343. Address as per ICS record
- No known risk to volunteer meeting young person

Please do not submit a referral until the Young Person has returned.

Please be Mindful that statutory guidance requires all interviews to be completed within 72 hours of a Child / Young Person returning – so timely referrals are imperative to ensuring that they have the opportunity to talk to someone impartial about the reasons behind their missing episodes and what could help prevent future episodes.

- 11.2 In exceptional circumstances it may be appropriate for the Team Manager to agree that the return interview between the child and the volunteer can be undertaken by telephone, rather than a visit. This decision should be based on the access to the child, not issues relating to capacity to undertake the visit and the rationale clearly recorded on the child's case record. Where an allegation of physical or sexual abuse is made or becomes evident, Section 47 (Children Act 1989) procedures must be instigated immediately. If there is a suggestion that the young person is a victim or perpetrator of a crime, contact should be made with the police and potential forensic evidence secured.
- 11.3 On the Isle of Wight as from 1 April 2017, when a child in care goes missing a referral should be made to the Missing Child Coordinator to allocate a volunteer to undertake the interview – 01983 823171 or e-mail Earlyhelp@iow.gov.uk. Where the child is placed off the Isle of Wight a referral should be made directly to the National Youth Advocacy Service (NYAS) to undertake the return interview. Where the child is open to Children's Services but not looked after the return interview should be completed by the child's Social worker. For children not open to Children's Services, CRT/MASH should task these to the Missing Child Co-ordinator who will allocate a member of the Early Help Team to undertake the interview. In situations where there are concerns that the reason for going missing was associated with the care placement, then such an interview should take place prior to the child returning to their placement.
- 11.4 On completion of the return interview with the child the return interview **must** be recorded on the [Missing Child - Record of Return Interview](#) and saved to the child's record. In addition, a separate case note must be entered onto ICS using the case note header 'Return Interview Held'. The allocated worker must review the return interview write up and add a case note acknowledging they have seen and read the form and any actions arising from this missing episode.
- 11.5 Where a child is returned out of business hours, the Out of Hours service will record the child's return on ICS. The return interview will be undertaken by the Volunteer day-time service, at the earliest opportunity (not by OOHs).
- 11.6 On completion of the return interview in Hampshire, the completed form is emailed by the volunteer co-ordinator to the Willow Team via willow.team@hants.gov.uk who will ascertain if any intelligence has been gathered that can inform the wider problem profile in Hampshire and Isle of Wight (The Willow Team work closely with Hampshire Police which covers Isle of Wight). The Willow Team should share intelligence and profile problems with Police Missing Person Co-ordinators and where appropriate the Missing/ Exploited Team to ensure effort is placed towards preventing incidents.

12. RECORDING THE EVENT ON ICS

- 12.1 Whether a child is missing, absent or away from placement without authorisation this must be recorded on ICS.

12.2 **Open cases:** The allocated worker, admin officer, or Out of Hours, will record a new contact using the most appropriate pick list item:

- MET - Missing Child
- MET - Absent Child
- MET - Away from Placement Without Authorisation.

12.3 If a PPN1 is received via MASH, this will be sent directly to the allocated team for inputting into ICS. Where the information is received through a police PPN1, this must be recorded using one of the above contact reasons, **not** PPN1. The 'source of referral' will be the police. Only one contact should be recorded per missing episode.

12.4 Throughout the process, carers and social workers must keep a full record of all actions taken and messages received and given and recorded within case notes. Police will likewise keep a record on the appropriate missing person report. Where the child is still missing the social worker for the child must create a case note with the header '**Update for OOH's**' so they are aware of the current situation.

12.5 The same process is repeated when information is received advising the child has returned. The pick list item to record this will be:

MET - Missing / APWA / Absent Child Returned

12.6 All information recorded in ICS regarding missing children will be used to compile annual returns, as well as informing future strategy and policy developments. Details are required of the dates a child goes missing, as well as their return date and the reason for them going missing. Accuracy of recording is therefore vital.

13. HIGH RISK STRATEGY MEETING (HRSM)

13.1 A high risk strategy meeting chaired by the District/Service Manager should be convened whenever:

- There is frequent recording of a child being missing,
- There are concerns for safeguarding, including CSE and/or trafficking.

13.2 It should also be noted that if any one agency or professional has increased or serious concerns for a child's well-being or safety, then they may call a multi-agency intervention meeting (professionals meeting) at any time, regardless of the number of missing episodes. Decisions from such a meeting could lead to initiation of safeguarding procedures, a change in care plan / placement plan and risk assessment.

13.3 This meeting should be attended by:

- A representative of the police,

- A representative of Children's Services responsible for the child's care of sufficient seniority (District/Service Manager) to be able to take authoritative decisions about the steps needed to locate and protect the child,
- The registered manager of the children's home/team manager of the fostering service (depending on the child's placement) and the allocated social worker,
- The child,
- The parent / family members,
- Foster carer,
- A representative from the County's legal team, if the case is likely to result in legal support being required by the department,
- A representative from the authority in which the child is currently living – perhaps from the local team responsible for child protection whenever a looked after child is not placed within the boundary of their responsible authority,
- Other relevant agencies as appropriate to the circumstances, e.g. representatives from the Youth Offending Team, Drug Action Team, CAMHS service, Willow Team, etc.

13.4 If the risks to a child are assessed as high then a High Risk Strategy Meeting must be arranged **immediately**, within a maximum period of five days for any child who is **still** missing. Notification to a District/Service Manager of a missing child who is high risk should be **immediate** to ensure a prompt and appropriate response.

13.5 The minutes of the meeting will be recorded on a standard template. A copy must be e-mailed to all agencies so they can be added to their record system to help inform their decision making and response.

14. PUBLICITY

14.1 There will be times when it is appropriate to involve the media when a child is missing. Whilst the police have responsibility for advising the media, the decision to publicise (including the use of photographs), should always be made jointly with Children's Services and with parents, where appropriate. Liaison with Hampshire or Isle of Wight Press Office should always take place and authorised by the Deputy Director. It may be appropriate to discuss and agree any decision about publicity at the strategy meeting. Organisations such as the national charity Missing People may be used to support an approved publicity campaign.

15. CHILD SEXUAL EXPLOITATION (CSE)

15.1 Children who are absent or missing may be the victim, or at risk of, Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) and therefore it is essential that those working with young people are aware of the signs and symptoms in order to be able to offer the most appropriate response.

- 15.2 CSE is a form of sexual abuse and therefore Section 47 enquiries (Children Act 1989) may be required and/or a multi-agency strategy meeting in order to share information and ensure the young person is well supported.
- 15.3 Hampshire & IOW Children's Services use the Sexual Exploitation Risk Assessment Framework (SERAF) tool for use by practitioners. The SERAF tool enables the practitioner to analyse current and historical information alongside a scoring method, to identify the level of risk of CSE a child may be at.
- 15.4 All information relating to signs and symptoms, the use of the [SERAF \(Sexual Exploitation Risk Assessment Framework\) Form](#)
- 15.5 Where staff have intelligence related to individuals or places involved, or potentially involved, in CSE activity they should complete [Community Partnership Information Form](#)

This is a Police intelligence form and should be used to provide the Police with any information associated with MET, no matter how small. The completed Community Partnership Form should be sent to 24/7-Intel@hampshire.pnn.police.uk.

16. TRAFFICKING

- 16.1 For those children who may have been trafficked to the UK as unaccompanied asylum seeking children or other children who may be being trafficked internally around the UK there are additional actions to take.
- 16.2 On receiving a referral via MASH of an UASC child, the Willow Team will be notified and will support the CAST team to undertake the [Trafficked Risk Assessment](#), which is designed to assess the level of trafficking risk that the child may be at. On the Isle of Wight the Children in Care team will undertake these assessments, supported by the missing co-ordinator.
- 16.3 If a child is risk assessed as being trafficked it is imperative that a safety plan is put in place with the parent/carer to keep the child safe which could include preventing access to phones and internet alongside consideration of that child being accompanied outside the home at all times. A referral to Barnardo's should be made using the Trafficked Children [Trafficked Children Initial Enquiry / Referral Form](#).
- 16.4 If concerns are raised that a child has been trafficked it is important that [National Referral Mechanism Form: child](#) (NRM) is completed. The National Referral Mechanism (NRM) is a framework for identifying victims of human trafficking and ensuring they receive the appropriate protection and support. The NRM is also the mechanism through which the UK Human Trafficking Centre collects data about victims and the information contributes to building a clearer picture about the scope of human trafficking in the UK. It should be

recognised that trafficked children are at the highest risk of going missing during the first 48/72 hours. Risk assessments, placements and the level of support available must reflect this.

- 16.5 Any child identified as trafficked will be referred by The Willow Team to an Independent Child Trafficking Advocate (ICTA) who will act as in independent support for that young person. On the Isle of Wight the allocated social worker will make this referral.

17. CHILDREN WHO REMAIN MISSING

- 17.1 Children in care who go missing **remain** children in care and should continue to be an open and allocated case. All statutory duties and processes continue, including statutory reviews. These meetings will provide an opportunity to inform those connected to the child and the Independent Reviewing Officer of the current situation and steps taken to try and find the child. For those age 16 years and over, they may well attain a care leaver status despite being missing.
- 17.2 For those children who are missing for a continued period of time, such as an unaccompanied asylum seeking child trafficked into the country, they may still be missing upon their 18th birthday. In such situations their case is to remain open and should be transferred to the relevant Care Leaver Team, as per usual guidelines. For care leavers missing at the time of their 21st birthday, their case can be closed with a clear case summary of actions taken to find them and advising that if they contact Children's Services, there is the possibility of re-engaging anytime up until their 25th birthday.

18. CHILDREN MISSING ON A CHILD PROTECTION PLAN

- 18.1 In these cases the social work team should alert the Central Referral Team (CRT) through csprofessional@hants.gov.uk (Hampshire) and IRCP.enquiries@iow.gov.uk (Isle of Wight). This notification is required to be undertaken within a maximum of one working day of the child or young person going missing or sooner if it is suspected that they may present within another local authority or to a local health provider. [Missing Child subject to CP Plan Notification](#) or [Missing CLA Notification](#) form (Hampshire) should be completed.
- 18.2 Upon receipt of the form, Central Referral Team (CRT) will check the details for accuracy and forward to other local authority custodians (cc'd to the child's social worker, to confirm distribution). When the child returns the CRT must be informed. They will complete a profile note in ICS to confirm that other local authorities have been informed.

19. CHILDREN ON REMAND:

- 19.1 With the implementation of the Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act 2012 all children under the age of 17 years old remanded by the

court will automatically become a Looked after Child and subject to Children's Services statutory processes. If the remand has conditions, i.e. there are specific curfews imposed and these are breached due to the child going missing, then the police must be informed immediately and the child will be arrested once found, detained and brought before the court. If there are no conditions imposed with the remand then the decision to report the child to the police as absent or missing will be made in the same way for any other looked after child and will be influenced by the current situation and risk assessment.

20. ROLE OF OUT OF HOURS (OOH)

20.1 OOH's will receive a significant number of contacts regarding concerns for children who are missing, absent or away from placement and they have an active role in overseeing communication and decision making. The expectation is they will:

- Discuss the situation with the parent / carer / key worker , consider the risks posed to the child and agree how the episode should be defined, i.e. absent, away from placement without authorisation or notify the police that the child is missing.
- Conduct a telephone strategy discussion with police to agree missing notification and any other action such as Section 47 investigation if the child is seen to be at significant risk of harm.
- Establish a plan for when the missing child is found, i.e. transferring from place found to appropriate place of safety. This is particularly important if it is suspected the child will abscond or go missing again.
- Facilitate communication between carers and police, ensuring all parties are updated with relevant information.
- OOH's will actively manage and monitor the situation, ensuring that further risk assessment is undertaken as the situation changes, i.e. escalating an 'absent' episode to a 'missing' episode if a young person fails to return after a reasonable amount of time and concerns increase.
- Record within ICS the correct contact related to the event, i.e. Missing, Absent, Away from placement without authorisation and take responsibility to ensure that a corresponding 'return' contact is recorded. Only one contact should be recorded per each missing episode and all other activity/updates recorded within the case notes.

20.2 All carers/care staff must ensure that they have a recent photograph of the child/ren they are looking after so that in the event of a child going missing, the photograph can be provided to the police. A photograph also needs to be e-mailed to the Out-of-Hours Service. Consent for this should have been sought in the initial placement planning meeting, as detailed in paragraph 4.2.

21. POLICE POWERS

- 21.1 Police powers are limited and difficulties can arise when missing children are found but do not want to return home or to their placement.
- 21.2 Under the Children Act 1989, where there is reasonable cause to believe that the child could suffer significant harm, the police can take the child into police protection and remove them to suitable accommodation which could include the home from which the child originally went missing. The police are not given the power to use force to take children into police protection unless it is to prevent them suffering significant harm.
- 21.3 There will be occasions when a child is found in a location that may be considered unsuitable, but where there would not be legal grounds for taking them into police protection. In such cases, police and the accountable manager from Children's Services will need to liaise to discuss what steps may be necessary in order to safeguard the child's welfare. This could include contacting OOH if outside of business hours.
- 21.4 Any child unlawfully at large from a secure unit or penal establishment may be liable to arrest and returned by police. These situations will be particularly high profile and it is imperative that immediate liaison takes place with a county legal representative, the appropriate Area Director from the responsible area and the Deputy Director in order that decisions regarding actions are jointly agreed.

22. PERFORMANCE STANDARDS

- 22.1 There will be regular liaison between Hampshire's Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner and Hampshire and Isle of Wight Children's Services on how to identify any practice issues.
- 22.2 This procedure will be reviewed and updated annually, or as and when required whether this is due to new legislative requirements or internal policy developments.