



# **Tees Protocol for Children Missing from Home and Care**

## **Contents**

<b>1. INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>2. PURPOSE</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>3. OBJECTIVES</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>4. SAFEGUARDING</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>5. WHY ARE MISSING CHILDREN IMPORTANT?</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>6. DEFINITIONS</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>7. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF AGENCIES</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>8. INFORMATION SHARING</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>9. RISK ASSESSMENT</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>10. DECIDING WHETHER A CHILD OR YOUNG PERSON IS MISSING</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>11. MAKING A MISSING PERSON REPORT TO THE POLICE</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>12. DURING AN ACTIVE MISSING EPISODE</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>13. CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE LOOKED AFTER BY HARTLEPOOL, MIDDLESBROUGH, STOCKTON ON TEES OR REDCAR &amp; CLEVELAND WHO ARE PLACED WITH AN INDEPENDENT FOSTERING AGENCY OR INDEPENDENT CHILDREN'S HOME.</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>14. WHEN A CHILD IS LOCATED OR RETURNS HOME OR TO THEIR PLACEMENT</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>15. INDEPENDENT RETURN INTERVIEWS</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>16. MULTI AGENCY MEETINGS</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>17. VULNERABLE, EXPLOITED, MISSING, TRAFFICKED (VEMT) PRACTITIONERS GROUP (VPG)</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>18. PHOTOGRAPHS FOR USE IN LOCATING MISSING CHILDREN (LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN)</b>	<b>32</b>
<b>19. POLICE POWERS</b>	<b>33</b>
<b>20. NAMED SENIOR RESPONSIBLE OFFICERS</b>	<b>34</b>
<b>21. REPORTING TO LOCAL SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN BOARDS</b>	<b>35</b>
<b>22. SIGNATURES</b>	<b>36</b>
<b>APPENDICES</b>	<b>37</b>

## **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 The protocol has been updated as a result of the authorised professional practice issued by the college of policing January 2017 on children who run away or go missing from home or care ([click here for report](#)). The protocol is underpinned by local procedures in the four unitary authorities of Hartlepool, Middlesbrough, Stockton on Tees and Redcar & Cleveland.
- 1.2 This protocol is important for the safeguarding of children across Teesside. It should be read and implemented, where necessary, by all practitioners and managers working with children who are at risk of going missing from home or care or who are already doing so. This protocol will assist in developing robust responses to running away and should be used to engage partner agencies in developing preventative services for children and young people who are at risk of running away.
- 1.3 The Local Safeguarding Children Boards expect all agencies working with children or young people who are **missing from home or care** to implement this protocol and ensure that all relevant staff are aware of it and how to use it. It should be used in all new contacts with children.
- 1.4 The four Local Safeguarding Children's Boards of Hartlepool, Middlesbrough, Stockton on Tees, and Redcar & Cleveland will be responsible for ensuring an annual review of the effectiveness of all aspects of this protocol.

**2. Purpose**

- 2.1 The purpose of the protocol is to outline what action will be taken to ensure that effective safeguarding responses are in place when a child goes missing from home or care. The protocol depends on good communication and a willingness by all agencies to work together to promote the welfare of all children.
- 2.2 This protocol should be read in conjunction with the Tees Child Protection Procedures <http://www.teescpp.org.uk>

### **3. Objectives**

3.1 The objectives of the document are to:

- Promote the prevention of children running and missing from their home or care.
- Ensure effective safeguarding of those children and young people who are running and missing from their home or care.
- Locate children who are running and missing from their home or care.
- Outline the actions Cleveland Police and Local Authorities will take when children are running and missing from their home or care and return home.
- Promote the exchange of accurate and consistent data about running and missing from home and care between Cleveland Police and the four Tees Local Authorities.
- Try to reduce future possible missing episodes from their home or care.

**4. Safeguarding**

- 4.1 This protocol does not alter the current arrangements and procedures that exist between Cleveland Police and each Local Authority in respect of safeguarding children. If Cleveland Police believe that a child is at risk of or is suffering significant harm, they will contact the relevant Local Authority using the existing procedures and contact points in respect of day time office hours Monday to Friday and the Emergency Duty Team outside of office hours.

## **5. Why are missing children important?**

5.1 We all have a responsibility to safeguard the young and vulnerable. Running away can be symptomatic of wider problems in a child's life, but whatever the reason, one thing is clear: children who decide to run away are unhappy, vulnerable and in danger. More tragically, 'missing' may result in loss of life and may be the first stage of a police murder enquiry.

5.2 The Children's Society through its research has identified the following risk factors that can precede a missing incident:

- Arguments and conflicts
- Conflict within a placement
- Poor family relationships
- Physical and emotional abuse
- Boundaries and control, although it should be noted that inappropriate boundaries and control may be an over kill and could also be a risk factor.
- Step parent issues

The immediate risks associated with going missing include:

- No means of support or legitimate income – leading to high risk activities
- Involvement in criminal activities
- Victim of abuse (including Forced Marriage, Honour Based Violence)
- Victim of crime, for example through sexual assault and exploitation
- Alcohol/substance misuse
- Deterioration of physical and mental health
- Missing out on schooling and education
- Increased vulnerability

Longer-term risks include:

- Long-term drug dependency / alcohol dependency
- Crime
- Homelessness
- Disengagement from education
- Child sexual exploitation
- Poor physical and/or mental health

It is important, through the risk assessment process, to ensure that resources are targeted at locating those children who are particularly vulnerable.

## **6. Definitions**

- 6.1 The Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) definition of a missing person is:

**Missing** - 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' through to high-risk cases that require immediate, intensive action.

- 6.2 **Child:** anyone who has not yet reached their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday. 'Children' therefore refers to 'children and young people' throughout this protocol with the exception of a former relevant child within the meaning of the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000; these young people continue to be the responsibility of the Local Authority up to the age of 21 (24yrs if in receipt of full time education).
- 6.3 **Looked After Child:** a child who is looked after by the Local Authority by reason of a Care Order, or being accommodated under section 20 of the Children Act 1989.
- 6.4 **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.
- 6.5 **Unauthorised absence from school:** a child who is not present at school as required or who is absent without explanation from school. Unless there is a belief that an absent child is at risk of significant harm, these matters should be referred to the Local Authority by schools after they have followed their own school level actions. Where there is a pattern or frequency of absence episodes that cause concern this may require an investigation to determine if the child is suffering or is likely to suffer significant harm.
- 6.6 **Children Missing Education:** a child believed after reasonable investigation from the school to have moved out of the area and whose whereabouts are unknown. The response to this falls within the children missing education (CME) procedure.
- 6.7 **Absconded:** When a missing child is subject to a court order, such as curfew or bail conditions, police must be made aware of the order and the expiry date in order for the child to be classified as an absconder. If the expiry date of the order is not known, the child will be classified as a "missing person" NOT an absconder.
- 6.8 **Missing From Home (MFH), (return) interviews:** Once a child has been located, the police will carry out a police prevent interview as soon as possible after the child has returned. It will not be conducted over the telephone. The purpose is to check for any indications that the child has suffered harm; where



and with whom they have been; and to give them an opportunity to disclose any offending by, or against them.

6.9 **Return Home Interview (RHI):** The relevant Local Authority is responsible for carrying out a return interview of children for each missing episode. These are covered in section 15 of this report.

6.10 **Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE):** is a form of child abuse. The revised statutory definition of child sexual exploitation is:

*Child sexual exploitation is a form of child sexual abuse. It occurs where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, manipulate or deceive a child or young person under the age of 18 into sexual activity (a) in exchange for something the victim needs or wants, and/or (b) for the financial advantage or increased status of the perpetrator or facilitator. The victim may have been sexually exploited even if the sexual activity appears consensual. Child sexual exploitation does not always involve physical contact; it can also occur through the use of technology.*

## **7. Roles and Responsibilities of Agencies**

- 7.1 The joint aim is to reduce the incidence of all children going missing. Children who go missing may place themselves and others at risk and each missing episode is potentially serious. The reasons for their absence are often varied and complex and cannot be viewed in isolation from their home circumstances or their experiences of care. Every “missing” episode should attract proper attention from the professionals involved, who must collaborate to ensure a consistent and coherent response is given to the child on his/her return.
- 7.2 Local Authorities placing Looked After Children in care settings have a statutory responsibility to:
- a) Inform the host authority Director of Children Services of the intended placement and seek views regarding the appropriateness of the placement.
  - b) Ensure that a holistic assessment of risk takes place regarding potential risks to the placed child and potential risks from the placed child towards other children.  
This would include reviewing any residential home’s location risk assessment which should outline any concerns in the local area including CSE.
- 7.3 Tees Local Authorities should contact Cleveland Police Vulnerable Exploited Missing and Trafficked team (Police VEMT team), who will conduct local and national police checks and provide police information to inform risk assessment in relation to any care placement in the Tees area.
- 7.4 When a child does go missing the aim is to prevent that child suffering harm and to recover the child to safety as soon as possible. We will do this by partnership working, information sharing, problem-solving and performance management.
- 7.5 All reports of children running or going missing must be seen as a multi-agency investigation to identify the reasons for the child going missing, find them and take action to prevent them going missing again. It is not simply a matter for the police or children’s services nor is it just about finding and returning the missing child. A range of agencies need to be involved, sharing information and developing strategies for safeguarding those at risk of harm and those actually suffering harm or significant harm. Early identification of risk should lead to the development of a safety plan to address the causes of that risk.
- 7.6 Where a coordinated multi-agency response is required for those children who run or go missing from home or care, the Local Authority will be the lead agency. The Local Authority must ensure that effective support services are provided to reduce the risk of further incidents of running or missing from home and care and reduce the risk.

- 7.7 The accountability for monitoring trends, reporting statistics and co-ordinating a reduction in instances of this group of children lies with the Local Authority via the Local Safeguarding Children Board.
- 7.8 The lead responsibility for finding and returning children reported as running or missing from home or care lies with Children's Social Care in conjunction with Cleveland Police. The procedure also recognises that a police station is not a place of safety for a child unable or unwilling to return to their home address. In these circumstances staff from Children's Social Care services and the Emergency Duty Team have a responsibility to actively seek to remove children from police stations as soon as is practicable.
- 7.9 If it comes to the attention of any agency that a **non LAC** child is missing, they must advise the parent/carer of the need for them to report the matter to the police. They also need to advise the parent of the agency's duty to ensure that the matter has been reported to the police and that they will follow this up by contacting the police to verify that the child has been reported missing.
- 7.10 In the case of a Looked After Child who has been reported missing by their carer's, the Local Authority remains responsible for the child. This responsibility is not absolved when the child has been reported missing to the police. Carers and the child's social worker will be responsible for liaising with the police, taking an active part/interest in the investigation and passing on all information, which may help to inform the investigation and assist in protecting the child whilst missing. Once a child is reported and agreed as **'missing'** to the police, the police will have primacy in respect of the investigation to trace the child.

## **8. Information Sharing**

- 8.1 Information will be shared between Cleveland Police and the individual Tees Local Authority. The purpose of exchanging the data is to ensure that the welfare of children whom are reported running or missing from home and care is safeguarded in line with statutory guidance.
- 8.2 There will be daily data exchange between the police to each Local Authority to ensure the timely completion of return interviews within 72 hours of the child returning home or to placement. Information relating to children who have run away or gone missing from home and care will be reported to each relevant Local Authority by Cleveland Police's VEMT team. The information will categorise children under the relevant risk headings. The information from Cleveland Police will record the date and time the child went missing in addition to the date they were reported missing and the date they were found and returned. This will ensure each Local Authority will be clear as to the length of time a child has been missing from home and care.
- 8.3 Where a Looked After Child, placed in the Tees area by an external Local Authority, goes missing, Cleveland Police information will share this information with the home Local Authority as well as the host (Tees) authority. If information is shared with Cleveland Police by another Police Force about a missing episode of a Looked After Child placed in the other police area by a Local Authority in the Tees area, this will be forwarded to the relevant Local Authority.
- 8.4 Each Local Authority will carry out and share information from return interviews with Cleveland Police for the purpose of intelligence gathering regarding specific areas of risk the child may be placing themselves in whilst running or missing from home and care. This will be submitted as intelligence on a partner intelligence sharing form and directed by email: [force.intelhub@Cleveland.pnn.police.uk](mailto:force.intelhub@Cleveland.pnn.police.uk). This should include specific areas of risk if known that the child may be placing themselves in whilst running or missing from home and care including addresses attended and who with which might direct officers looking for the child in future. The Operation Shield form should be used see Appendix B.
- 8.5 Information on children reported as running or missing from home and care will be shared at each Local Authority Vulnerable, Exploited, Missing & Trafficked Practitioners Group (VPG). This information will be provided by the Local Authority having received the data from Cleveland Police. A week prior to the VPG the chair of VPG will ensure that the list of children who are to be discussed at the VPG meeting is sent to the VEMT inbox via secure email. This is in order for Cleveland Police to collate any relevant intelligence or information they may hold on the child including information regarding concerns about individuals or accommodation where the child located or who the child was in association with.
- 8.6 Information on children reported as running or missing from home and care **meeting a set criteria** will be shared by Cleveland Police with the chair of each

Local Authority Vulnerable, Exploited, Missing & Trafficked Practitioners Group (VPG). Cleveland Police will also share data showing the following:

- All children missing on 3 or more occasions in a 90 day period;
- The Teeswide monthly Top 10 missing children and locations from which children are missing, and any recognised themes and trends.
- All children deemed to be high risk missing children

8.7 The role of the VEMT Practitioner Group (VPG) is discussed further at Section 17.

## 9. Risk Assessment

9.1 There will be several types of risk assessment undertaken when children go running or missing from home and care and it is agreed that the assessments will each have a different focus.

9.2 Before reporting an incident of missing from care to the police the risk assessment should consider the risk posed to the child as a result of the incident and whether the child or young person should be considered as:

- **‘Missing’** in which case the incident should be reported to the police immediately; unless they are missing with ‘no apparent risk’ in which case the incident should be reported to police and the carer should indicate they believe the child is missing with a recommendation on an appropriate review period. Should the child be reported to the police as ‘no apparent risk’ then a time frame within which the case will be reviewed should be established based on the circumstances of the report.

No apparent risk cases must not be allowed to continue without regular and robust re-assessment of how they should be investigated. If there is any change in the circumstances which increases the risk then escalation to low, medium or high should be considered.

- **‘Away from placement without authorisation’** in which case the incident should **not** be reported to the police unless there are specific concerns that require police intervention.
- *For Looked After Children, this assessment of risk is the primary responsibility of the foster carer or residential carer who can seek advice and guidance from the allocated social worker or the Emergency Duty Team depending on the time of the incident*

9.3 Whilst the child is missing the risk assessment is the primary responsibility of the police. The assessment of risk is often a difficult process and must be carefully considered. Out of character behaviour is a strong indicator of risk but must not lead to complacency over those who are frequently missing. It is not correct to consider that these circumstances indicate no or low risk. Careful consideration must be given to all reports to ensure that an absence of information indicating that the child has come to harm isn’t mistaken as a demonstration that the child is safe and well. Other specific vulnerabilities for some children such as those with Child Protection Plans, disabled children, gang-associated children etc. could all result in additional risks during periods of absence or missing. Looked After Children have been identified as at greater risk, and includes all of those that are within the care system, including those in children’s homes and foster placements. They are inherently vulnerable, which is why they are within the care system and this should be considered when assessing risk.

9.3 The levels of risk category most commonly used to prioritise incidents of missing children are cited below but it is essential that all missing children are

given a new and thorough risk assessment each time based on the individual circumstances of that missing episode. VEMT flags and previous history will form part of that but should not dictate the same risk category on each and every occasion.

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

This category requires the immediate deployment of police resources. A member of the senior management team or similar command level must be involved in the examination of initial enquiry lines and approval of appropriate staffing levels. Such cases should lead to appointment of an Investigating Officer and possibly a Senior Investigating Officer and Police Search Advisor (PoISA). There should be a press/media strategy and/or close contact with outside agencies. Family support should be put in place. The UK Missing Persons Bureau will be notified of the case immediately. CEOP and Children’s Services should also be notified (if they are not already aware). The Police and Local Authority will offer support to the family whilst the child is missing. Following the child’s return an assessment of the child’s needs will be undertaken by Children’s Social Care, if appropriate and support, advice and guidance will be offered under relevant procedures.

- **“Medium Risk”** where the risk posed is likely to place the child in danger or they are a threat to themselves or others.

This category requires an active and measured response by police and other agencies in order to trace the missing child and support the person reporting. This will involve a proactive investigation and search in accordance with the circumstances to locate the missing child as soon as possible. Whilst the child is missing the family will be supported by an appropriate agency such as police or Children’s Services, or any other service deemed as appropriate and best placed to offer support.

Following the child’s return a decision will be made by the supporting agency as to what ongoing support the child will require and the supporting agency will make any referrals as necessary.

- Cleveland Police policy on Missing from Home includes a category of **‘Low Risk’** but it is important to note that an ‘unknown risk’ does not mean ‘low risk’. The police ‘National Decision Model’ allows officers to conduct the risk assessment however clear rationale must be recorded on each and every occasion.
- **“No Apparent Risk”** the incident should be reported to police and the carer should indicate they believe the child is missing with a recommendation on an appropriate review period. Should the child be reported to the police as ‘no apparent risk’ then a time frame within which the case will be reviewed should be established based on the circumstances of the report. No

apparent risk cases must not be allowed to continue without regular and robust re-assessment of how they should be investigated. If there is any change in the circumstances which increases the risk then escalation to low, medium or high should be considered.

## The Risk Assessment Table

- 9.4 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](#).

<b>No apparent risk</b>	
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.
<b>Low risk</b>	
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.
<b>Medium risk</b>	
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.
<b>High risk</b>	
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.



- 9.5 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.’**
- 9.6 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.
- 9.7 9.5 Risk assessment following the running or missing incident will focus on the child’s safety, responding to any risks that were experienced during the running or missing episode and to reduce the likelihood of any future incidents
- *For Looked After Children, this risk assessment is the primary responsibility of the social worker and the foster carer or residential carer and any update should be recorded within local recording systems. If the child is located without having made contact with the police, this absence should be recorded by the social worker in order to inform safeguarding plans. The social worker should record any information gained on the whereabouts of the child whilst absent, and this should be shared as appropriate with the police.*
  - *For children and young people who are not looked after, the assessment will be made by the parent or other primary carer however, if there is an allocated worker this risk assessment can be formalised as part of the child’s plan.*
- 9.8 Cleveland Police and each Local Authority agree to, where appropriate, exchange risk assessments to assist with finding, returning and supporting children who are running and missing and their families. It is recognised by all agencies that it is good practice for police officers, social workers and staff from commissioned services to share risk assessments and agree a risk assessment level for individual missing episodes. This exchange of information will take place within the information sharing context outlined in s.14.
- 9.9 Cleveland Police and each Local Authority and commissioned services agree that work associated with children and their parents who are running and missing from home and care should be open to constructive professional challenge. It is acknowledged that there may be occasions when agencies do not agree on a risk assessment for a child. Where there is disagreement the most cautious assessment should be assumed until the disagreement has been resolved. If a dispute does arise the resolution of any issues should be undertaken utilising the Tees Child Protection Procedures [Professional challenge](#) process.

## 10. Deciding whether a child or young person is Missing

10.1 The decision about what category of missing the child is lies with Cleveland Police. Parents, those with parental responsibility, and anyone else who has care of a child without parental responsibility should take all reasonable steps to locate the child and ascertain their safety before reporting the child as missing to Cleveland Police. They are expected to undertake the following basic measures to try to locate the missing child if considered safe to do so:

- Search bedroom/accommodation/outbuildings/vehicles
- Contact known friends and relatives where the child may be.
- If it is possible, visit locations that the child is known to frequent.
- Visit the address where the child is supposed or thought to be.

10.2 Once the basic measures are completed and the child has not been located it is expected that the police will be informed **without delay**. If there are any **serious concerns** for the safety of the child at any stage, the **police** should be **informed immediately**.

10.3 For all **Looked After Children**, at the time of placement their social worker should complete a pre-assessment of risk which should be noted within the Placement Plan. During this assessment, social workers should seek to record details that will be useful should the child go missing such as:

- a. A digital profile of the child (email address, list of social media apps used regularly with ID's, phone number(s))
- b. A list of family and recent associates (names, addresses and dob)
- c. Information relevant to risk including medical or mental health problems and use of medication.
- d. A list of places frequented.

A photograph should be obtained and kept on file and the child should be informed that, should they go missing, the photograph will be shared with the police for the purpose of locating them before they come to harm.

10.4 During placement, if there are concerns that a Looked After Child may be missing, the foster carer, residential carer or supported lodgings provider (the carer) must make enquiries to locate the child by trying to make contact via telephone / text and checking with their friends and relatives in the first instance. A search of the accommodation and local area/known places where they may be should also be conducted. The carer should also consider checking with the local Accident and Emergency department and the police as in some circumstances the child may have been arrested and refused to give their name or address to the police.

10.5 If these initial enquires are not sufficient to locate the child, the carer will need to report them missing. This decision is based on an assessment of risk which can be achieved if the foster carer or residential carer refers to the placement plan or other recent risk assessment and thinks through the following:

- Any medical issues which would increase the risk to the child.

- Physical, mental or other issues which affect the child's ability to stay safe in unknown or strange environments.
  - Whether the child poses a risk of harming themselves or anyone else.
  - Drug or alcohol use.
  - Previous and recent behaviour and whether the absence is out of character – i.e. does the child often return home late or are they usually home at an agreed time; are they usually compliant or do they often push boundaries etc
  - The presentation of the child prior to the missing incident.
  - The circumstances surrounding the incident.
  - Time that the child was last seen and by whom.
  - Whether there are indications that the child is not expected to return within reasonable time limits; is not staying at homes of others known to them and will not be easily located.
- 10.6 If the current whereabouts of the child are known or can be easily identified and they are not considered to be at risk then they are **away from their placement without authorisation** and are not a missing person.
- 10.7 Where the child in question is twelve years old or younger, it would be exceptional not to report them as missing as their age is considered to be a high risk factor.
- 10.8 For all children in residential care, the residential carer must record their risk assessment on the format used by each Local Authority. A copy must be kept on the child's residential case file and a copy should be shared with the police.
- 10.9 In all cases, the carer can liaise with the child's social worker or the Emergency Duty Team (depending on the time of the incident) for advice and guidance to help to make a decision and agree a course of action.
- 10.10 If the child is considered 'Missing', the carer must make a missing person report to the police without delay. The carer must also report the missing incident to the child's social worker or the Emergency Duty Team. The report must be noted by the Local Authority / EDT.
- 10.11 For all children in foster care the foster carer must pass the information on to their supervising social worker. During the period of absence, frequent communication between the carer and the allocated social worker / EDT is essential.
- 10.12 If a child who is missing but 'no apparent risk' does not return to placement or is not located, the assessed level of risk may eventually increase to the point where it may be necessary to deal with them as missing (low, medium or high risk). This is a matter of professional judgement taking into account all other risk factors and the views of all professionals responsible for the child's health, safety and well being.

- 10.13 If the child has not returned to placement or been located by the start of the next working day, the carer must update the allocated social worker (or the team manager if the social worker is not available).
- 10.14 The allocated social worker in collaboration with their team manager (or EDT if the absence is over a weekend / holiday) must keep the unauthorised absence / missing from care risk assessment in continual review. The appropriate service manager (this will be the on-call service manager if being contacted by EDT) must be informed when an absence reaches 24 hours.
- 10.15 Any absence which lasts for 48 hours must be reported to the police and the child will then be considered as a missing person. The Local Authority will update the appropriate service manager.

## **11. Making a missing person report to the police**

11.1 The responsibility for making a missing person report to the police rests with:

- the parent or primary carer for children who are not looked after by the Local Authority, or are subject to a care order and placed at home with a parent or person with parental responsibility.
- the foster carer, for children in foster care
- the residential carer for children in residential care
- the supported lodgings provider for children in supported accommodation

11.2 If the child goes missing from a hospital or educational setting etc., the staff must inform a person with parental responsibility (if appropriate). If the hospital or educational staff are concerned about the safety of the child, they should inform the police without delay and report them as missing or absent.

11.3 Missing person reports should be made via telephone to the non emergency number 101, or by using the 999 system if it believed the child or young person is at serious/immediate risk of harm. The police will require as much of the following information as possible (some may be provided in a follow-up visit by the police):

- Details of the child / young person, name, date of birth, legal status, mobile telephone number etc;
- A physical description including clothing worn when the child or young person left the placement;
- Names, addresses and contact numbers of family members, significant others and friends;
- Details of where, when and with whom the child or young person went missing;
- Legal status of the child or young person, who has parental responsibility, or Local Authority care section 20 or 31;
- If the child is looked after and overall time in care;
- Medical history;
- A recent photograph;
- Any other relevant information e.g. addresses / locations frequented;
- Previous history of missing/truancy and circumstances of where found;
- Actions already taken to try and locate the child or young person along with the results of this action;
- Any factors which may increase the risks to the child or young person.

11.4 The person making the missing person report will be given a unique reference number which should be retained and used in any future contact with the police regarding this matter.

11.5 Following the initial telephone notification, a police officer will visit the child's home or placement to collect any information not already provided.

## **12. During an active missing episode**

- 12.1 For all Looked After Children, if not already done, the allocated social worker (or team manager if the social worker is not available) must be notified by the carer that the child has been reported missing to the police. The child's parent(s) must also be notified as appropriate.
- 12.2 Cleveland Police will investigate all cases of missing children in accordance with the Cleveland Police Missing Person's Policy.
- 12.3 Responsibility for the child or young person remains with:
- the parent or other person with parental responsibility for all children who are not looked after;
  - the Local Authority for all Looked After Children
- 12.4 For all Looked After Children, as and when updates occur following the missing person report, the carer must update the police with the status of the child's absence including details of any action that has taken place to locate them such as attempts to contact via mobile telephone. If the police provide any updates or information to the foster carer or residential carer, they must note this in their diary (foster carer); residential case file (residential care) or other recording system (supported lodgings).
- 12.5 The allocated social worker must send a daily update on the missing incident to the Emergency Duty Team using the EDT Message Sheet until the child has returned to placement or been located.
- 12.6 When a child has been missing for 24 hours, the appropriate children's social care service manager must be informed. Where the child is looked after, the independent reviewing officer should also be informed at this time.
- 12.7 The police or the Local Authority may call a multi-agency meeting at any point to develop a plan to manage and reduce any risks posed to or by the child while they are missing and to review and plan actions to locate them.
- 12.8 When a Looked After Child has been missing from their placement with no contact or sightings for 48 hours, a Senior Children's Services Manager/Assistant Director must be notified by the appropriate service manager (or on-call service manager via the Emergency Duty Team if out of hours) and if there has not already been one, a multi-agency meeting/strategy discussion must be held. The following professionals should be invited to attend the multi-agency meeting (any absences must be recorded):
- A representative of the police VEMT team.
  - The team manager
  - The social worker
  - The foster carer or residential carer
  - The foster carer's supervising social worker (if applicable)
  - The Team Manager Child Placement (if applicable)

- Fostering agency manager (if the placement is with an Independent Fostering Agency)
- Residential children's home manager
- Independent Reviewing Officer
- Education representative/school nurse
- Any other relevant agency representative
- Parents / Carers (as appropriate)

Further such reviews will take place at least every five days thereafter or earlier, if deemed appropriate.

- 12.9 The police have responsibility for advising the media regarding children who are missing in order to assist in locating that person or warning the public if the child is a significant threat. For all Looked After Children, any decision to publicise will always be made in consultation with the Local Authority. The senior representative of Children's Services is the delegated decision maker regarding any decision to release publicity about a missing Looked After Child.
- 12.10 If the child has been missing for 28 days, a senior police officer and a children's social care service manager should jointly review the case and take any actions they consider necessary to locate and return the child.
- 12.11 During the missing episode, the professionals involved will identify the most appropriate agency to support the family. Depending on the circumstances of the case, this will generally be the police or Children's Services Department however in some instances it may be more appropriate for another agency to assume this role.
- 12.12 Publicity / Media Strategy**
- 12.13 It is the responsibility of the Police to advise the media regarding any missing child or young person. For those missing from their "home / parental" address, the approval of the parents (or those with parental responsibility) will always be sought, but Cleveland Police reserve the right to publicise the child without parental consent if they believe that the concerns for the child outweigh any reservations highlighted by those with parental responsibility.
- 12.14 For those missing from the Local Authority or private care providers, the decision to publicise by press and/or television will always be made in consultation with the child's social worker and the Head of Service, Children's Social Care and with the agreement of the Assistant Director (Children's Social Care), however Cleveland Police reserve the right to publicise the child if there are serious concerns for the welfare of that child.
- 12.15 Such publicity will be arranged at local level, by direction of the IO (investigating Officer) or SIO (Senior Investigating officer).

**13. Children and young people looked after by Hartlepool, Middlesbrough, Stockton on Tees or Redcar & Cleveland who are placed with an Independent Fostering Agency or Independent Children's Home.**

- 13.1 Any placement provider located outside of the local area should be given a copy of this procedure so that they are aware of their responsibilities should a child in their care be missing. It is the responsibility of the child's social worker to provide a copy of this procedure to the placement provider.
- 13.2 Responsibility for reporting the child as 'missing' lies with the foster carer or residential carer in the placement. The placement provider will also have their own procedures covering reporting requirements but their risk assessment in relation to the child must be communicated and agreed with the allocated social worker.
- 13.3 If a child placed in an out-of-borough placement is reported missing, the carer must report the incident to their local police force and responsible authority for the child. This will be the home authority Emergency Duty Team (if the incident happens outside of office hours) or to the allocated social worker (or the team manager if the social worker is not available).
- 13.4 During a missing episode, there must be regular liaison and exchange of information between the police and professionals in the host authority where the child is placed and within the placing authority. This exchange of information must be well managed and co-ordinated. Cleveland Police must also be informed of the missing incident by the police force in the host authority.
- 13.5 The allocated social worker must also communicate regular updates to the child's parent(s) as appropriate.



**14. When a child is located or returns home or to their placement**

- 14.1 For children who are missing from home, if the child returns of their own accord, the parent or primary carer must inform the police. If the whereabouts are known or suspected, it is the responsibility of the parents or carers to arrange for the child's return. In **exceptional** circumstances and in the interests of safeguarding the child, the police may agree to requests from parents or carers to assist. Where the police locate a missing child and they indicate that they are running away because of abuse within the home or care setting, then the police will not return the child to that setting and will instigate child protection procedures.
- 14.2 For Looked After Children, if they return to their placement of their own accord the carer must inform the police, the social worker and the parents (if appropriate) as soon as possible. If the child is located somewhere it is the responsibility of the foster carer or residential carer to recover them from the place where they have been located where this is safe and practical. If necessary, the carers can seek support from the social worker.
- 14.3 If there are specific and identified issues of safety or public order associated with returning the child then a coordinated approach to recover the child should be agreed with the police.
- 14.4 When a missing child has returned home the police will conduct a Prevent Interview to establish their wellbeing, check for any indications that they have suffered harm, where and with whom they have been and to determine whether they were a victim of crime while they were missing. The police must be confident that there is nothing untoward that has been missed. It is common for missing children to be unwilling to engage in this process. If this is the case, it is important to record their demeanour, their physical state and any other factors that may be relevant later.
- 14.5 If a missing incident has led the police to have sufficient concerns about the child's welfare, they will make a referral to Children's Services. If the child is already receiving services the information will be forwarded to the allocated worker. If the child is not currently in receipt of services the referral will be reviewed by the First Contact/Duty team or the Children's HUB for Stockton and Hartlepool to decide whether it should be progressed for assessment.
- 14.6 If a child is believed to have suffered significant harm while they have been missing or if the missing incident leads professionals to believe that the child may be at risk of significant harm, Tees Child Protection Procedures must be followed and if appropriate, this will include an enquiry and assessment under section 47 of the Children Act 1989.
- 14.7 When a missing Looked After Child is found, they must be offered the opportunity to speak with someone independent of their placement before they are returned if it is considered that there are issues within that placement. However, they cannot be compelled to speak to someone if they choose not to.

- 14.8 When the child has been found or returned, the professionals involved will identify the most appropriate agency to support the family. Where there is an allocated social worker, Children's Services will generally assume this role. If Children's Services are not actively involved with the child and their family, this role may be assumed by another agency such as early intervention services or the child's school etc.
- 14.9 As part of the management of young people who have been found at a location or with a person in circumstances that may have encouraged directly or indirectly a young person to stay away from carers, professionals may wish to utilise a child abduction warning notice. The procedure aims to identify, warn and where necessary prosecute these individuals for harbouring or abduction in order to disrupt this activity under section 47 of the Children Act 1989 or section 2 of the child abduction act 1984. Warnings can be given in relation to children under the age of 16 years if they live at home and under 18 years of age if they are a Looked After Child. The notice can only remain in place until the young person reaches that age. Cleveland Police will give the warning where appropriate and record them on the IRIS system. In the case of a Looked After Child, this will be done in cooperation with the relevant Local Authority.
- 14.10 If during the course of a missing episode it is established that a child has been moved from A to B for the purposes of CSE, the child should be referred to the UK Human Trafficking Centre using the National Referral Mechanism (NRM) available on the National Crime Agency website. This will ensure the child is assessed as being a trafficking victim, given support and will establish patterns and prevalence of trafficking nationally / globally.

## **15. Independent Return Interviews**

- 15.1 Once any missing child has been found they should be offered an independent return interview. 'Return Interview' is the term applied to the safety, needs and risk assessment carried out by Children's Services and/or their partners. It should include exploration of the reason the child left their home or placement as well as what risks they were exposed to whilst missing. The return interview should not be confused with the Police Prevent Interview which has a very different purpose.
- 15.2 The return interview is important in safeguarding the child in the future. It **must not** be viewed as a routine or administrative task. The Local Authority in each area is responsible for deciding whether a return interview is conducted for each missing episode. For a Looked After Child, a return interview should always be considered as part of the ongoing risk assessment.
- 15.3 The purpose of the interview is:
- To better understand the reasons why the child went missing
  - To explore the circumstances which led to the missing episode(s)
  - To inform future prevention strategies
  - To inform any future missing person investigation should the child go missing again
  - To learn of the activities, associates, risks and victimisation involved in the missing episode, and where possible to address those risks with appropriate and proactive strategies.
  - To identify and address any harm the child has suffered, including harm that may not have already been disclosed as part of the police prevent interview.
- 15.4 Each Local Authority within Tees will ensure that **all** missing episodes graded low-high involving young people will be offered a return from missing interview in accordance with the statutory guidance on children who run away or go missing from home or care 2014. Each Local Authority may also decide to initiate a return home interview for some missing episodes that are graded 'No apparent risk' as they would have done in previous cases of absent. Tees VEMT has agreed a best practice guide in respect of conducting and managing these interviews. Authorities should attempt to utilise this guide where appropriate. This is attached at Appendix A.
- 15.5 In exceptional circumstances, a Local Authority officer not below the level of Service Manager may determine that a return interview is not required i.e. where the missing child was very young and was missing for a very short period of time or the missing child was located in hospital following an accident.
- 15.5 Intelligence obtained from these interviews should be shared with police through the Shield Form procedure as a matter of course. Appendix B.

- 15.6 In the case of multiple missing episodes one return interview is permitted, should the circumstances dictate provided that each episode is defined separately during the interview.
- 15.7 Although a child should be offered a return interview by someone who is not involved in caring for them the child cannot be compelled to engage in which case parents and carers should be offered the opportunity to provide any relevant information and intelligence they may be aware of. In addition exceptions to offering an independent return interview may be made where the child has expressed a preference to talk to someone with whom they have a strong relationship with rather than with an independent person.
- 15.8 Where a return interview leads to a disclosure that needs specific action, for example, to safeguard the child or investigate a crime the matter should be referred to the Local Authority and/or the police.
- 15.9 For all new referrals that are progressed for assessment, the return interview can be incorporated within the single children and families assessment.
- 15.10 The return interview must be undertaken within 72 hours of a child returning home or to their placement. Each Local Authority will have their own mechanism for how return interviews are recorded.
- 15.11 The return interview should explore the “push factors” i.e. those which drove a child to run away or go missing (such as a dispute with their carers) and / or the “pull factors” i.e. those factors outside of the placement that drew a child (such as influences of a peer group).
- 15.12 The interview should assess the risk of harm to the child when they were running or missing and should consider the likelihood of any future episodes occurring.
- 15.13 If the child is considered to have suffered or be at risk of suffering significant harm, the Tees Child Protection Procedures must be followed.
- 15.14 Repeatedly running away should be viewed with as much concern as children who run away for the first time. The persistence of this behaviour can suggest that actions following earlier assessments to reduce the likelihood of future episodes should be reviewed and alternatives considered.
- 15.15 It is acknowledged that a returning child may well share different parts of their experience with different people. It is the responsibility of all agencies therefore, to attend to issues of immediate safety, future support and safeguarding needs, and information sharing in a way which respects and safeguards children. The acceptable minimum in the event of a single missing episode is that the missing episode is risk assessed following information gathered and cross referenced from the child, the carers and the police.
- 15.16 Where there is a decision not to carry out a return interview, this should be justified and recorded in the child’s social care record.

- 15.17 For Looked After Children, the social worker and their team manager must liaise with the Independent Review Officer (IRO) to decide whether to convene a Looked After Review to consider the missing episode and to review the care plan.
- 15.18 When a Looked After Child is placed in another Tees area and they return from a missing episode, then it is the responsibility of the Local Authority who is the corporate parent to make arrangements for a return interview to be undertaken. A copy of the return interview form must be shared with the host area in line with the North East Protocol for missing children. For Tees, the return interviews should be sent securely to:

Hartlepool:	<a href="mailto:childrenshub@hartlepool.gcsx.gov.uk">childrenshub@hartlepool.gcsx.gov.uk</a>
Middlesbrough	<a href="mailto:firstcontact@middlesbrough.GCSX.gov.uk">firstcontact@middlesbrough.GCSX.gov.uk</a>
Stockton	<a href="mailto:childrenshub@hartlepool.gcsx.gov.uk">childrenshub@hartlepool.gcsx.gov.uk</a>
Redcar	<a href="mailto:missingchildren@redcar-cleveland.gcsx.gov.uk">missingchildren@redcar-cleveland.gcsx.gov.uk</a>

## 16. Multi Agency Meetings

### 16.1 Multi agency meetings may be called when:

- Children have been reported missing from their home or placement and where they are assessed as being at high risk of harm or that they pose a high risk of harm to others while they are missing. The purpose of the meeting in this set of circumstances is to share information about the child, to review actions taken to locate them and to determine what further actions, if any, need to be undertaken to ensure the child's safe return as well as developing a plan to manage and reduce any risks posed to or by the child while they are missing – ***Whilst a child or young person is missing, the police will chair any such meeting.***
- Children have returned to their home or placement following a running or missing episode where they had been assessed as being at high risk of harm or that they posed a high risk of harm to others. The purpose of the meeting in this set of circumstances is to develop a plan to respond to any risks suffered by the child while they were missing and to formulate a plan to reduce any future running or missing incidents – ***For those children with an allocated social worker the children's social care team manager will chair the meeting; where there isn't an allocated social worker the police may consider making a referral to children's social care.***
- The same child is frequently reported as missing and is assessed as being at high risk to themselves or others while they are missing. The purpose of the meeting is to:
  - plan a response to any future missing episodes – including a reporting strategy;
  - manage and reduce the risks posed by or to the child; and
  - try and reduce the frequency that the child runs away or goes missing by considering appropriate interventions to address long term issues

***Where the child is not currently missing and where there is an allocated social worker, children's social care team manager will chair the meeting; where there isn't an allocated social worker the police may consider making a referral to children's social care.***

### 16.2 Multi agency meetings can be requested by the police, children's social care or children's home. Any unresolved issues should be escalated to a discussion between the Detective Inspector (VEMT team) and a Service Manager from the Local Authority.

**17. Vulnerable, Exploited, Missing, Trafficked (VEMT) Practitioners Group (VPG)**

- 17.1 Each of the four Local Authorities has a VEMT Practitioners Group (VPG) in place. The VPG is a multi agency group made up of frontline practitioners from a number of agencies including; children's social care, health, police and voluntary sector organisations. The VPG works collaboratively to ensure the safeguarding and welfare of children, who are vulnerable due to missing, exploitation or trafficking (or any combination of these factors).
- 17.2 The VPG seeks reassurance that appropriate risk management strategies are in place to reduce the risk for children at risk of or involved in VEMT. The Group also identifies any specific themes or trends relating to children such as hotspots and identifies potential facilitators/perpetrators of children running or being exploited; and ensuring that service provision for these children is adequate, identifying gaps in service provision. The potential risk of children being involved in sexual exploitation can be explored through the use of a child sexual exploitation risk assessment tool. The risks from potential perpetrators can be shared through the use of the Police Operation Shield form. It allows for the identification of local 'hot spots' for children and perpetrators who target children across the Tees area.
- 17.3 The VPG chair will receive information from Cleveland Police in relation to missing children and should determine which cases should be subject of multi-agency information sharing and problem solving discussion through the VPG structure or, in line with specific Local Authority procedures, through an alternative multi-agency group. As a minimum standard, the following missing cases must be subject of multi-agency information sharing and problem solving:
- All children missing on 3 or more occasions in a 90 day period;
  - Any child falling within the Teeswide monthly Top 10 missing children;
  - Any location from which children go missing regularly that falls within the Teeswide 'Top 10';
  - All missing children deemed to be 'high risk'.

This does not affect the ability of a practitioner from any agency to make a referral into VPG for any child where they feel it is appropriate.

- 17.4 The list of cases to be discussed at VPG should be circulated to member agencies in advance to allow information to be researched and presented at the meeting.

**18. Photographs for use in locating missing children (Looked After Children)**

- 18.1 The sharing of photographs for use in locating missing children (Looked After Children) should be in line with the protocol agreed by the Tees Strategic VEMT. This protocol is attached at Appendix C



## **19. Police powers**

### **19.1 Emergency Police Protection**

Cleveland Police have powers under the Children Act 1989 to take children into emergency police protection for a period of up to 72 hours where it is considered necessary to prevent significant harm to a child.

Decisions to take a child into Police Protection must always be discussed between an officer of Inspector rank and a social care / EDT manager.

### **19.2 Child Abduction Warning Notices (CAWN's):**

Anyone who has care of a child without parental knowledge or agreement should do what is reasonable to safeguard and promote the child's welfare. Where, in these circumstances, the young person is believed to be at risk of offences being committed against them, Cleveland Police will consider issuing a Child Abduction Warning Notice.

When a missing child is found or known to have been in company with an adult during any missing episode, in circumstances which afford reasonable grounds to suspect that an offence has been committed by that adult relating in any way to that child (i.e. child abduction, sexual offence, drug offence, assault, aid, abet, counsel or procuring child to commit an offence etc.) the incident will be taken seriously throughout the process of reporting, investigation and provision of follow up care.

The police priority is the safety and well-being of the child; thereafter, the police will take positive action against any perpetrators, hold them accountable for their actions and prefer charges where appropriate.

It is recognised that children who have been the victim of a serious offence may not always see themselves as victims or be willing to assist in the investigation, particularly in the early stages. Likewise those whom others have used for criminal purposes may not be willing to assist the police. A complaint from a victim is not required to make an arrest. Usually reasonable suspicion is enough to arrest. When such an offence has occurred and a power of arrest exists, the offender should normally be arrested. An officer should be prepared to justify a decision not to arrest in these circumstances.

Without prejudice to the welfare of any child, the Local Authority will support the police in taking appropriate action against those who commit crimes against children and/or involve children in their offending behaviour.

**20. Named Senior Responsible Officers**

- 20.1 The 2014 Statutory Guidance requires Local Authorities to name a senior Children's Services manager as responsible for monitoring policies and performance relating to children who go missing from home or care.

The named positions and officers who have agreed the implementation of this protocol are:

**Cleveland Police**

Anne-Marie Salwey  
Detective Superintendent Protecting Vulnerable People

**Hartlepool Borough Council**

Danielle Swainston  
Assistant Director Children's Services

**Middlesbrough Borough Council**

Alison Brown  
Assistant Director Safeguarding and Children's Care

**Stockton on Tees Borough Council**

Rhona Bollands  
Assistant Director Safeguarding and Looked After Children

**Redcar & Cleveland Borough Council**

Wendy Medd  
Head of Service – Safeguarding and Looked After Children

## **21. Reporting to Local Safeguarding Children Boards**

21.1 Reporting on Runaways and Missing from Care is required at least annually by the LSCB's as part of the agreed LSCB Performance Management Framework

21.2 Tees Strategic VEMT has previously considered the reporting requirement and recommended that quarterly reports are produced for each Local Authority area to include the following:

- Emerging themes
- Trend information by quarter covering at least 15 months (to allow comparison with same quarter the previous year)
- Number of missing episodes and number of individual missing children to be reported separately
- Frequency of missing episodes by individual presented in groupings as per Middlesbrough report
- Age, gender and ethnic breakdown of statistics
- Breakdown of those missing from care, missing from family or other.
- Postcode / ward based data
- % of return interviews completed (with annual audit of quality of return interviews)
- Interventions resulting from return interviews (by type)
- Intelligence reports submitted to police
- Service user feedback (annual)
- Reasons for missing
- Case examples of problem solving activity

**22. Signatures**

**Cleveland Police**

Anne-Marie Salwey  
Detective Superintendent Protecting Vulnerable People

Alison Jackson  
Head of Cleveland Police Force Control Room

**Hartlepool Borough Council**

Danielle Swainston  
Assistant Director Children's Services

**Middlesbrough Borough Council**

Alison Brown  
Assistant Director Safeguarding and Children's Care

**Stockton on Tees Borough Council**

Rhona Bollands  
Assistant Director Safeguarding and Looked After Children

**Redcar & Cleveland Borough Council**

Wendy Medd  
Head of Service – Safeguarding and Looked After Children

**Appendices**

Appendix A – Return Interview good practice.

Appendix B – Shield Form.

Appendix C – Use of photographs guidance.

# Missing from Home/Care – Response/Interview

**Document to be completed and closed within 72 hours of the first episode recorded**

←RAISE Client No:		←RAISE Referral No:	
←Family Name:		←First Name(s):	
←DOB or EDD:		←Sex:	
←Address:			

MISSING EPISODE 1			
Date Missing		Time Missing	
Date Returned		Time Returned	

What are the circumstances of the missing episode?			
Who made report to the Police?	Date:		Time:

Who has been notified of episode?	
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Risk Factors to be considered	Missing for 24 hours	Domestic Abuse	
	Alcohol/Substance Misuse	Victim of Crime	
	Engaged in Criminal Behaviour	Harmed/Injured whilst missing	
	At risk of CSE	Gang Knowledge/Associations	
	Mental Health Concerns	Active to VEMT	
	Repeat Missing Episode	Other	

Risk	DROPDOWN - Low/Medium/High
Resilience/Protective Factors to be considered	
Initial Response <i>Detail all actions taken</i>	

MISSING EPISODE 2			
Date Missing		Time Missing	
Date Returned		Time Returned	

What are the circumstances of the missing episode?			
Who made report to the Police?	Date:		Time:

Who has been notified of episode?	
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Risk Factors to be considered	Missing for 24 hours	Domestic Abuse	
	Alcohol/Substance Misuse	Victim of Crime	
	Engaged in Criminal Behaviour	Harmed/Injured whilst missing	
	At risk of CSE	Gang Knowledge/Associations	
	Mental Health Concerns	Active to VEMT	
	Repeat Missing Episode	Other	

Risk	DROPDOWN - Low/Medium/High
Resilience/Protective	

## Missing from Home/Care – Response/Interview

<b>Factors to be considered</b>			
<b>Response</b> <i>Detail all actions taken</i>			
<b>MISSING EPISODE 3</b>			
<b>Date Missing</b>		<b>Time Missing</b>	
<b>Date Returned</b>		<b>Time Returned</b>	

<b>What are the circumstances of the missing episode?</b>			
<b>Who made report to the Police?</b>			
	<b>Date:</b>		<b>Time:</b>

<b>Who has been notified of episode?</b>	
--	--

<b>Risk Factors to be considered</b>	Missing for 24 hours		Domestic Abuse	
	Alcohol/Substance Misuse		Victim of Crime	
	Engaged in Criminal Behaviour		Harmed/Injured whilst missing	
	At risk of CSE		Gang Knowledge/Associations	
	Mental Health Concerns		Active to VEMT	
	Repeat Missing Episode		Other	
	learning disability or difficulty		Other	

<b>Risk</b>	DROPDOWN - Low/Medium/High
<b>Resilience/Protective Factors to be considered</b>	
<b>Response</b> <i>Detail all actions taken</i>	

<b>MISSING EPISODE 4</b>			
<b>Date Missing</b>		<b>Time Missing</b>	
<b>Date Returned</b>		<b>Time Returned</b>	

<b>What are the circumstances of the missing episode?</b>			
<b>Who made report to the Police?</b>			
	<b>Date:</b>		<b>Time:</b>

<b>Who has been notified of episode?</b>	
--	--

<b>Risk Factors to be considered</b>	Missing for 24 hours		Domestic Abuse	
	Alcohol/Substance Misuse		Victim of Crime	
	Engaged in Criminal Behaviour		Harmed/Injured whilst missing	
	At risk of CSE		Gang Knowledge/Associations	
	Mental Health Concerns		Active to VEMT	
	Repeat Missing Episode		Other	

<b>Risk</b>	DROPDOWN - Low/Medium/High
<b>Resilience/Protective Factors to be considered</b>	
<b>Response</b> <i>Detail all actions taken</i>	

## Missing from Home/Care – Response/Interview

MISSING EPISODE 5			
Date Missing		Time Missing	
Date Returned		Time Returned	

What are the circumstances of the missing episode?			
Who made report to the Police?	Date:		Time:

Who has been notified of episode?	
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Risk Factors to be considered	Missing for 24 hours		Domestic Abuse	
	Alcohol/Substance Misuse		Victim of Crime	
	Engaged in Criminal Behaviour		Harmed/Injured whilst missing	
	At risk of CSE		Gang Knowledge/Associations	
	Mental Health Concerns		Active to VEMT	
	Repeat Missing Episode		Other	

Risk	DROPDOWN - Low/Medium/High
Resilience/Protective Factors to be considered	
Response <i>Detail all actions taken</i>	

OUTCOME OF MISSING EPISODES	
Interview offered/held?	MANDATORY DROP DOWN <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>MFH Return Interview Offered and Accepted</li> <li>MFH Return Interview Offered but Declined</li> <li>Unable to Locate or Unable to Contact</li> </ul>

MISSING FROM HOME RETURN INTERVIEW	
Name of Professional undertaking interview	
Date of Return Interview:	

<b>Interview:</b> <i>Include where held and who was present. If this interview covers a series of episodes in quick succession then each one must be considered separately and written in chronological order of episodes</i>

<b>Why did you go missing?</b> <i>Push Factors (within the home) and Pull Factors (outside of the home)</i>

<b>Tick the factor(s) that apply</b>			
Adoption		Low self-esteem or confidence	
Attending inappropriate households		Mental Health Issues (child)	



## Missing from Home/Care – Response/Interview

Bereavement or loss		Mental Health Issues (parent/carer)	
Bullying		Poor Communication (parent/child)	
Chaotic/dysfunctional household		Poor friendship group	
Difficulties in relationships		Poor parenting (inappropriate supervision)	
Found with inappropriate family member		Substance Misuse (child)	
Gang association		Substance Misuse (parent)	
Inappropriate relationships		Young carer	
Learning difficulties		Young person withheld reason	
Other			

### What happened whilst you were missing?

*Where did you go/stay? What did you do? Were you scared to return? Did anything happen to you i.e. injured, drugged, abused (sexually, physically, mentally)? Were you offered alcohol/drugs – bought, given, stolen? Did you commit a crime, on own, were you asked to?*

### What can be done to prevent you going missing?

Were you returned by someone? Were you scared to return? How do you feel now you are back? Is there anything that you need?

### Views of relevant others i.e. parent/carer/education/health visitor

### Child's comments

### Analysis

*Including YP's views of sharing information, if parents' consent etc.*

### Social Worker Recommendations

### Risk Analysis

#### DROP DOWN

- Low
- Medium
- High

# Missing from Home/Care – Response/Interview

## TEAM MANAGER'S RESPONSE/DECISION

### Team Manager's Response/Decision

*Including reflection, challenge etc.*

### Outcomes/Actions

Intelligence Sharing with the Police		Risk Management Meeting to be held	
Intelligence Sharing with the Host Authority		Problem Solving meeting to be held	
LAC Review to be held		Referral to VEMT	
Strategy meeting to be held		Other	

**Authorising Manager's Name:**

**Manager QA Date:**

**⇒ Document Closure Date:**



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G 02-22

# OPERATION SHIELD

VULNERABLE EXPLOITED, MISSING, TRAFFICKED (VEMT)



CLEVELAND POLICE

This form should be used by Local Safeguarding Children Board partner agencies to share information with the Police regarding a person being vulnerable, exploited or missing and child sexual exploitation may be connected. This could be occurring in a particular venue/location or involve particular vehicles etc.

It can also be used to share information regarding victims of human trafficking and possible Perpetrators of VEMT related incidents.

The information is then recorded on the Police Intelligence System to support the Police and partner agencies in their work towards VEMT. This form **must not** to be used to share concerns regarding individual children/young people. This information should be shared by using the Safer Referral Form available on [www.teescpp.org.uk](http://www.teescpp.org.uk)

Date/time of report:	
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### DETAILS OF PERSON SUBMITTING

Name			
Post/job title			
Agency			
Tel No. Work:			
Mobile No (if available):			
Email:			
Witnessed Incident	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	3 <sup>rd</sup> Party Reporting
			<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No

### SOURCE DETAILS IF NOT REPORTING PERSON

**These are details of the person who witnessed the incident or supplied the reporting person the information**

Name			
Post/job title			
Agency			
Tel No. Work:			
Mobile No (if available):			
Email:			
Is the source willing to engage with Police?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	

### TO BE COMPLETED BY THE REPORTING PERSON

SOURCE EVALUATION	A. Always reliable	B. Mostly reliable	C. Sometimes reliable	D. Unreliable	E. Untested source
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
INFORMATION EVALUATION	1. Known to be true without reservation	2. Known personally to the source but not the person reporting	3. Not known personally to the source but corroborated	4. Cannot be judged	5. Suspected to be false
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

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G 02-22

**INFORMATION**

Please provide as much detail as possible about the incident using Aide Memoire below, including the circumstances of how the information was received



Please e-mail completed form to: [force.intelhub@Cleveland.pnn.police.uk](mailto:force.intelhub@Cleveland.pnn.police.uk) (secure Police address). If urgent contact the Force Intelligence Hub direct on 01642 301222/301239.

**HUB INTELLIGENCE STAFF**

**ON RECEIPT OF THIS FORM FOLLOW FORCE V.E.M.T. PROCESS**

**AIDE MEMOIRE IN RELATION TO DETAILS REQUIRED FOR CSE INFORMATION REPORT**

- Dates/times of incident(s) the report makes reference to.
- Full name, address and DOB of **all** persons involved (including nicknames).
- Details of trading name / premises of interest (newsagents take away, off licence etc).
- How did the relationship start? / What is believed to be the nature of the relationship?
- Has the child / young person confirmed the existence of the relationship to any person?
- Known mutual associates of the child / young person and adult involved.
- Addresses / locations and days / times of activity taking place.
- Method and times of communication / contact between the parties (including specific detail i.e. social network site account names and numbers / email addresses / telephone numbers).
- Details of any incitement, reward or coercion for sexual activity.
- Details of any payment or other transactions to or from a third party in connection with the sexual activity.
- Details of vehicles used. (Make & Model, Colour, Vehicle registration number).

## PROTOCOL FOR USE OF LAC (LOOKED AFTER CHILD) PHOTOGRAPHS TO ASSIST IN LOCATING MFH

### Overview

When a child goes missing from home, it is standard practice for police officers to ask the parents or carers for a recent photograph, to assist in locating the child at the earliest possible opportunity. Officers will also request consent to publicise the image from the parent or carer of the child.

Photographs can be used in 2 key ways:

- For immediate sharing with police officers, PCSO's and other key professionals with the ability to assist e.g. Local Authority CCTV operators who have been tasked to look for the MFH either specifically, or as part of general duties.
- For publication to members of the public, either generally through media or social media release, or as part of a specific tasking to specific groups e.g. taxi drivers.

These tactics are well established means of locating MFH at the earliest opportunity in order to avoid the risk of harm coming to children.

In the case of Looked After Children (LAC), normal procedure is complicated by the fact that the reporting person may have no ability to consent to release of an image as this responsibility falls to the Local Authority or its delegate as statutory parent, and not to, for example, a foster carer.

There are also concerns about the privacy of LAC and control of the photographic image once the child has returned or been found.

Data shows that LAC's are among those children and young people most likely to go missing from home and most likely to repeatedly go missing from home.

### Principles

As a general principle the consent of the Local Authority, as statutory parent of LAC's, should be sought before any photograph of a child reported MFH is handed to police. Separate consent should be sought before any LAC photo is published in the media or made available to members of the public.

The only exception to this principle is in a case where a child is at imminent risk of serious harm and it is not practicable to secure such consent. This will remain a decision for the police.

Where possible, the views of the LAC child or young person in respect of sharing of photographs or publication should be sought in advance. It should be explained that this is a potential consequence of going missing from home and is done to help locate them before they become subjected to harm.

Photographs passed to the police (in hard copy or digital format) are for the purposes of locating the missing child or young person. Photographs should not be used for alternative purposes without clear additional and specific consent.

## Procedures

1. It is good practice for local authorities to agree with LAC's what action will be taken should they go missing. In line with the runaway and missing from home or care protocol, local authorities hold initial responsibility for assessment of risk and actions to locate the LAC and return them to a place of safety. Where it is deemed necessary to report a child missing to the police, it will assist the speed and effectiveness of the police investigation to find the child if there is available at their place of residence the following information:
  - a. A recent photograph of the LAC
  - b. A digital profile of the LAC (email address, list of social media apps used regularly with ID's, phone number(s))
  - c. A list of family and recent associates (names, addresses and dob)
  - d. Information relevant to risk including medical or mental health problems and use of medication.
  - e. A list of places frequented.
2. As the issue of parental responsibility in the case of LAC's can be complex, Local Authority Social Care should proactively seek to obtain consent for the sharing of photographs in advance with the LAC and any person with parental responsibility.
3. Attending police officers will seek to ascertain the existence of a recent photograph. Care home staff or foster carers should inform police officers whether such a photograph exists but direct them to the relevant First Contact point / EDT for consent to take and use the photograph.
4. The original photograph may be shared with other officers or staff providing assistance to find the MFH. Photographs should not be used for alternative purposes without clear additional and specific consent.
5. The original photograph (hard copy or digital image) must not be altered in any way. It may be subject of a change in format i.e. scanned to allow it to be shared.
6. Unless there is deemed to be an imminent risk of serious harm, Cleveland Police will consult with the relevant Local Authority in relation to publication of the image. Where operational police and social work managers are unable to agree on publication, the matter should be escalated to senior managers in both organisations.