

# Procedures regarding missing children and young people

May 2019

Review due May 2020

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

These procedures refer to situations when children go missing from home or when children who are looked after by the local authority go missing from residential or foster care.

It defines the roles and responsibilities of agencies and staff concerned with safeguarding children and young people.

This document should be read as guidance, which cannot anticipate every situation. Police, Children's Services staff and foster carers should use their professional judgement to take any action they feel necessary to protect the safety of the child based on an assessment of risk for each individual child.

All parties involved in the protocol should be clear about the definition of a "missing person" – This guidance should be read alongside the most up to date guidance from Northumbria Police as this will include a definition of "missing" and the actions taken on each occasion.

Children who go missing are at increased vulnerability of being abused and/or exploited. As well as short-term risks there are also long-term implications; adults with serious problems have often run away as children.

The reasons for running or going missing are often varied and complex and cannot be viewed in isolation from their home circumstances and their experiences of care.

Every 'missing' episode should attract the proper attention from the professionals involved with the missing person and they must collaborate to ensure a consistent and coherent response is given to the missing person on his/her return.

The statutory guidance on children who go missing from home or care can be accessed from <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/children-who-run-away-or-go-missing-from-home-or-care> including a summary written specifically for care workers and foster carers.

## **2. DEFINITIONS**

Where this protocol refers to a 'child' or 'children', these terms include all young people under the age of 18 years.

Definition of missing

## **3. RISK ASSESSMENT**

### **Background**

In assessing the significance of any child's missing episode a risk assessment must be conducted.

Where a child is missing, relevant staff from Gateshead Council and Northumbria Police, must consider the above definitions and take into consideration guidance already agreed on and incorporated into the child's care plan and factors listed below, when assessing risk.

Out of hours this will usually be the Emergency Duty Team (EDT) social worker and the police RWD Sergeant. If a young person is not looked after by the local authority the police will use the same criteria to assess the risk following discussions with parents.

- The legal status of the young person (e.g. Emergency Protection Order, Full or Interim Care Order, remanded, curfew conditions etc.)
- Previous behaviour patterns. (Such as a history of absence and quick return)
- The child's state of mind/perceived risk. (Is child likely to self-harm or commit suicide? Does child see risks in a balanced way?)
- Group behaviour at the time of the absence.
- Whether the young person is perceived as running to someone or running from a situation.
- Any physical or learning disabilities the child may have which increase the risk to them.
- Whether the child vulnerable due to age or infirmity or any other factor
- Whether the child suspected to be the victim of a significant crime in progress, e.g. abduction
- Whether there are family /relationship problems or recent history of family conflict, including domestic abuse
- Whether the missing person has any physical illness, disability or mental health problems
- Whether they are in the company of a person who may cause them harm

- Whether they require essential medication which is not likely to be available
- Whether there is ongoing bullying or harassment, e.g. racial, sexual, homophobic or local community concerns and/or cultural issues
- Whether they pose a threat of harm to others
- Whether there is drug or alcohol dependency or substance misuse
- Any other particular circumstances at the time of the incident influencing the risk assessment

All children who go missing must be reported to the police. The Police will determine the level of risk (low/medium/high) based on the information shared with them.

All professionals must ensure that all known information held on a child/young person is shared with the Police to ensure that the correct level of risk is applied – including if child is LAC or any other vulnerabilities.

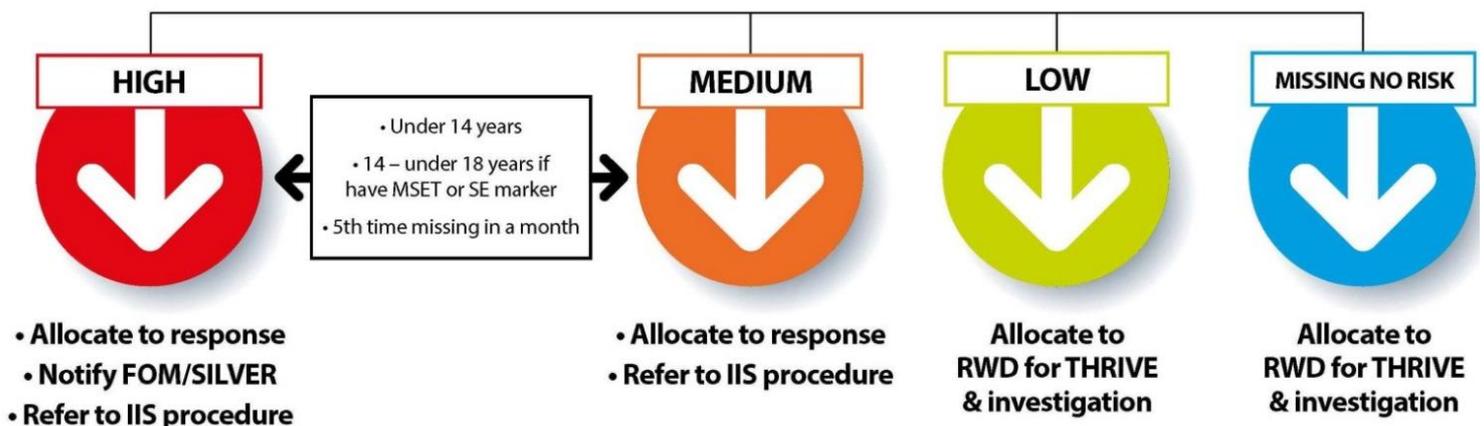
The following children will be categorised as Medium or High Risk Missing and an appropriate risk assessment and proportionate investigation commenced:

- Under 14 years;
- 14 – under 18 years if have an MSET or SE marker; 5th time reported missing in the last month;
- Any child where a credible suicide attempt or significant injury has previously been made.

# INCOMING MISSING REPORT



## Initial Thrive Assessment (As IIS Procedure)



The assessment of risk is a dynamic process and should be reconsidered and challenged at every point during a child or young person’s absence. As a minimum requirement the risk assessment should be reviewed every eight hours and the level of prevailing risk agreed by carers and other professionals responsible for that young person’s health safety and wellbeing.

#### 4. POLICE RESPONSIBILITIES & POWERS

Police will investigate all cases falling within the ‘missing’ definition and will respond in accordance with the Northumbria Police Missing Person policy and procedure, keeping a record on the appropriate missing person report / computer system.

The table below sets out the definition of each category and what each category means in terms of operational response:

DEFINITION OF RISK	OPERATIONAL RESPONSE
<p><b>HIGH RISK</b>                      The risk posed is immediate, and there are substantial grounds for believing that the missing person is in danger through their own vulnerability or may have been the victim of a serious crime,</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>OR</b></p> <p>The risk posed is immediate and there are substantial grounds for believing that the missing person presents a danger to the public</p>	<p>This category will attract silver command (Duty Superintendent or Critical incident Manager) and requires the immediate deployment of police resources.</p> <p>The Duty Superintendent must be involved in the examination of initial enquiry lines and approval of appropriate staffing levels and allocation of ownership.</p> <p>Such cases will always have allocated a named investigating officer. There should be a press/media strategy and/or close contact with outside agencies.</p>
<p><b>MEDIUM RISK</b>                      The risk posed is likely to place the missing person in danger or they are a threat to themselves or others.</p>	<p>This category requires an active and measured response by police and other agencies in order to trace the missing person and support the person reporting.</p>
<p><b>LOW RISK</b>                      There is no apparent threat of danger to the missing person or the public.</p>	<p>In addition to recording the information on the PNC, the police will advise the person reporting the disappearance that following basic enquiries and unless circumstances change, further active enquiries will not be carried out by the police. Low risk missing persons, however must be kept under review as risk can increase with the passage of time.</p>

As part of the daily triage process, Northumbria Police Missing Persons lists are checked for children/young people that have been or are currently missing and MASH officer's check that a Child Concern Notification has been submitted. If there is no Child Concern Notification present, one is created within the Police MASH.

In Gateshead, MASH officers have access to Total View which is an agency friendly version of Care First and provides the ability to search for those children and parents recorded on the CCN's and Missing records.

When MASH officers identify a child that is open to children's social care or early help, and is also recorded as a current missing child, they will access the missing report and record on the additional information section who the allocated worker is and contact details for liaison during the missing enquiries. The Police MASH officers advise workers of any identified concerns regarding exploitation and missing, inviting the worker to consider MSET referrals and risk assessments.

CSC will work collaboratively with police during any enquiry to locate a missing child. When Police locate a child reported as missing, Police will return the child to parent/carer/placement. In some instances it may be inappropriate to return a child to their home or placement and in all such cases Police will contact CSC (EDT out of office hours) for an evaluation of their safety.

Even after reporting a child missing, parents and carers should recognise that they are responsible for children in their care at all times and this responsibility remains when they have reported a missing child to the Police.

A child under the age of 16 will not be assessed as being of low risk. In all cases, police will inform CSC of all children who are reported missing within 1 working day.

### **Police Powers**

Police powers are limited and difficulties can arise when missing children are found but do not want to return to their home or placement. In some instances it may be inappropriate to return a child to their home or placement, in all such cases Police will contact IRT (EDT if out of office hours).

Under the Children Act 1989, where there is reasonable cause to believe that a child could suffer significant harm the police can take that 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 a child into **Police Protection** but reasonable force may be used to prevent a child suffering significant harm.

Where **Police Protection** is taken Police will inform the Local authority via the local CAIU (Child Abuse Investigation Unit) during office hours, or EDT will be contacted out of hours.

Any child who is unlawfully at large from a secure unit or penal establishment may be arrested and returned by Police. If the child is on remand without conditions, the Police will return the child to the designated placement. If the child is on remand with conditions (e.g. curfew) they will be detained and appear before a court.

## 5. RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE LOCAL AUTHORITY WHEN CHILDREN IN CARE ARE REPORTED MISSING OR ABSENT

Initial action to be taken by carers, when a child is missing or absent

Carers must take all reasonable and practical steps to

- Establish the whereabouts and well-being of the child or young person
- Determine the level of risk of harm to the child or young person
- Determine the nature and reasons for absenteeism
- Ascertain the likely intentions of the child or young person before contacting the police

Actions should include:

- Searching their own premises and immediate locality
- Make enquiries with other children and young people in the home/school /workplace (using social media where appropriate)
- Make enquiries with other professionals
- Make enquiries with relatives unless it is considered not in the child or young person's best interests
- Consider recent events
- Telephone/text the child and young person to establish their safety and well- being and use social media where appropriate

**All issues/decisions/actions should be fully documented.**

### Informing the police

**Every child goes who goes must be reported missing to the police immediately.** Whenever a child goes missing from a children's home or foster home then the foster carer or the Lead Person on duty in a children's home should also ensure that the following individuals and agencies are also informed as soon as practicable and in all cases within 24 hours.

The carer or other responsible person must inform

- The parents or those who have parental responsibility, where appropriate
- The Social Worker or Team Manager
- The Emergency Duty Team, if out of hours.

### Reporting procedure

Once a decision has been made to report the child or young person missing the carer should contact police using the non-emergency telephone number (101) unless they have significant concerns about the welfare of the child.

The carer, in consultation with other professionals responsible for the young person's health, safety and well-being, must be explicit when reporting an episode to the police so that the level of perceived

risk to the child or young person is clear from the outset. This will determine the level of police response. The carer will be given a unique reference/log number, which should be retained and used in any future contact with the police.

### **Information to be made available**

When reporting to the police the following minimum information is required;

1. Description of the child or young person including their clothing;
2. Details of where the child or young person was last seen and with whom;
3. Recent photograph;
4. Relevant addresses;
5. Known associates and addresses frequented;
6. Personal details of the child or young person;
7. Previous history of absenteeism and circumstances of where found;
8. Circumstances under which the child or young person is absent;
9. Any factors which increase the risk to the child or young person; and
10. Name of the staff member completing the risk assessment and / or the search of the home and locality.

### **Missing during external activity**

If a child or young person becomes absent outside of their area, the carer in charge of the external activity will

- Arrange a search in the area where the child or young person became absent
- Notify the local police for that area
- Notify the child or young person's parent or guardian
- Notify the child or young person's Social Worker or Team Manager
- Notify a senior manager of the home
- Notify the Youth Offending Team if the child or young person is on remand
- Notify the Emergency Duty Team, if out of hours

### **Longer absences**

A strategy discussion/meeting must be held **within 72 hours** if a young person is missing for a prolonged period of time. The meeting will be convened for the purpose of developing a strategy to locate and return that child or young person to safety (this may or may not include the initiation of s47 enquiries).

Whenever a child or young person is missing for a longer period of time and in any case where the child or young person has been missing for 72 hours, a senior manager (including the Service Director – Social Work, Children & Families) in Children's Services will also be informed.

The meeting will involve:

- The Team Manager from Children's Social Care responsible for the child or young person's welfare;
- A police representative from the Safeguarding Team and/or the Missing Person's Coordinator

- The registered manager of the children's home or fostering service and foster carer where appropriate;
- Other relevant staff representatives from Children's Social Care and the Youth Offending Team
- Other relevant professionals working with to the young person (e.g. health, education etc); and
- The LSCB Business Manager (on behalf of the MSET).

The meeting may also involve parents if relevant or appropriate.

These senior officers will review the actions taken up to this point and satisfy themselves that all possible steps are being taken to locate and return the child or young person.

If the child or young person has been missing for 28 days a senior police manager and the Service Director – Social Work, Children and Families (or their nominated deputy) should jointly review the case and take any actions they consider necessary to locate and return the child or young person.

### **Recording**

Throughout the period that the child or young person is missing, carers and social workers must keep a full record of all actions taken and messages received or given. Police will keep a record on the appropriate missing personal report/computer system.

The records should clearly include details of where the young person was found, any reasons the child has given for going missing and any actions taken in light of those reasons. This information is important for any future missing from care episodes.

### **Planning for return**

If a child or young person is missing the appropriate manager from the Children's Social Care, in consultation with social workers, carers and police as appropriate, should prepare a contingency plan for when the child or young person is found.

Considerations should include

- Arranging for an independent person to talk to the child or young person about the reasons that they went missing;
- Arrangements to escort the child or young person and support them on their return;
- Whether the police wish to interview the child or young person before s/he is returned to placement.

### **Planning before the event**

When children become looked after, parents or carers consideration should be given as part of the assessment of their needs as to whether they have ever runaway, staying in unknown, possible unsafe, places.

Prevention and early intervention services should be reviewed, and effectiveness evaluated every year, gaps identified, and plans made to fill any gaps.

A prevention or early intervention service working with those identified as being at risk of going missing or who have already gone missing should be in place to prevent the continuation and escalation of behaviour.

If the Integrated Referral Team (IRT) of Children's Social Care receive three or more Police CCNs on the same child, regardless of the reason, a further discussion would be triggered, regardless of the outcome of each individual CCN. This will capture those children running away on repeat occasions where each individual episode does not give cause for concern when viewed in isolation, however when viewed as a pattern of episodes more concerns may be raised.

## **6. THE RETURN**

### **General principles**

When a child or young person is located the police, parents, social workers and any other person informed of the child or young person's absence should be notified without delay (unless these would place the young person at risk of significant harm).

For looked after children the general principle is that the children's services for the area from where the child is missing will be responsible for recovering the child or young person and returning that individual to their home or placement, unless the child is located by police. In some instances it may be inappropriate to return a child to their home or placement and in all such cases police will contact EDT for an evaluation of their safety.

If there are specific and identified issues of safety or public order associated with returning that child or young person then a coordinated approach to recover the child or young person should be agreed with the police.

Any out of hours referrals received by EDT involving a child or young person who has been reported missing or has returned should be forwarded to the relevant social worker or the Integrated Referral Team (IRT). This information must include where the young person was placed.

### **The return interview**

Police interview or 'Safe and Well Check'

The police will interview all children when they return from a missing episode. The purpose of the interview will be to gather intelligence about the missing episode and it serves to confirm the identity of the child and that they have returned. If the child makes an allegation of crime that occurred whilst they were missing or that contributed to him/her running away, the police officer will record this allegation in their pocket note book and take appropriate action.

### **Independent return interviews**

Every child who goes missing will be offered a return interview. Return interviews will be conducted, where appropriate, by an independent suitably trained person from within the Early Help Service.

High risk factors include:

- Been missing for over 24 hours
- Been missing on two or more occasions in six months
- Engaged (or believed to have engaged) in criminal activities during their absence
- Been hurt or harmed whilst they have been missing (or this is believed to be the case)
- Known mental health issues
- Known risk of sexual exploitation or contact with persons posing risk to children

Contact to arrange the interview should ideally take place within 72 hours of the child or young person's return.

Information gathered, as part of the return interview will be recorded on the young person's electronic social care record and shared with the police Missing From Home Coordinator. Intelligence gathered from all interviews each month will be shared at the monthly MSET meeting (see later)

Where any allegation of abuse is made or becomes evident, local child protection procedures must be implemented immediately. If a young person discloses information that leads the independent interviewer to be concerned that there is an immediate risk to the young person's safety then the police and Children's Services (IRT during office hours, EDT at other times) should be informed immediately.

If there is evidence that a child or young person has been a victim or perpetrator of crime, consideration must be given to securing evidence by police, including forensic examination (with appropriate consent). It is essential to recognise that the welfare of the child or young person is paramount and careful consideration should be given to the potential effects of the procedures on the child or young person.

## **7. REPEAT ABSENCES**

If a child or young person repeatedly goes missing (3 or more times in a month) or causes specific concerns due to risk factors when missing, a **multi-agency strategy meeting** should be held to develop a strategy to prevent future missing events and reduce the risk of harm to the child or young person should they go missing again.

The purpose of the strategy meeting is to:

- Agree and record a pre-risk assessment
- Agree a reporting strategy
- Recommend the minimum enquiries to be undertaken by
- Carers
- Children's Services
- Police
- Agree an appropriate return strategy
- Consider appropriate interventions to address the long term issues

A child protection action plan to bring about behaviour change should be put in place, and regularly reviewed in accordance with child protection procedures for its effectiveness.

Research has shown that there is no developing pattern in which the risks to a young person escalate the more often that they run away. Short absences may present the same risk as longer ones and should be viewed with equal seriousness and urgency. It is not the number of previous absences but the particular information about what happened when the young person was away from home that indicates the level of risk that they might face should they go missing again.

Consideration should be given to carrying out a new risk assessment every time a young person runs away. Repeat runaways should be viewed with as much concern as children who run away for the first time. The persistence of this behaviour would suggest at least that the action following from earlier assessments should be reviewed and alternative options considered.

When a young person is missing two or more times in a calendar month they will automatically be considered for discussion at the MSET pre-meeting (see later).

## **8. OUT OF AREA PLACEMENTS**

In cases where a child placed in the Gateshead area by another local authority runs away from their placement, the home authority should call a strategy meeting. If necessary this will include the relevant organisations from both the home and host authority and will establish a plan, as above. Local procedures should be followed and the response should also be based on the young person's care plan

Where there is a history of the young person running away, the home authority must inform the host authority as part of the placement agreement. Appropriate details should be shared to support the home authority (who retain ownership) to manage the risk and informal care planning for the child. Any information gathered as part of the return interview will also be shared with the host local authority.

## **9. HARBOURING**

Children and young people who abscond or go missing are at an increased vulnerability of being abused and/or exploited, and other forms of harm. It is frequently the case that parents, foster carers or social workers know where the young person is staying but feel powerless to prevent the adult in question from harbouring the child because there is no proof of a crime being committed against the child. In accordance with the missing children protocols, the police are usually called upon to assist with retrieving the child/young person, which involves their service in a great deal of time and resources, often with no positive outcome for the child.

In order to address this, the police in Gateshead have adopted a harbouring procedure aimed at disrupting and prosecuting those who present a risk to children and young people who they enable to stay away from lawful custody.

Guidance has been issued by Northumbria Police in relation to investigating and safeguarding children and young people through the use of Child Abduction Warnings (formerly known as Harbourers' Warnings). The guidance contained within this protocol is aimed at tackling those young people aged under 16 (under 18 if in local authority care) who are at risk of significant harm due to their associations and the forming of inappropriate relationships. Any report of a child abduction or immediate child protection will not fall under this procedure – such cases will be considered a crime in action and the relevant force child protection procedures will apply and supersede this process. Police officers can access this guidance via the force intranet and professionals from other agencies can seek further advice regarding Child Abduction Warning Notices from the PVP/Safeguarding Department. The Warning Notices are issued by the police in accordance with Northumbria Police protocol and are not issued by other agencies.

There are two types of Child Abduction Warning Notice which can be issued by Northumbria Police, one is for a child under 16 who is not under local authority care, and the other is for a child aged under 18 who is in the care of a local authority under section 31 Children Act 1989.

To issue a Warning Notice for children aged under 16 and not in local authority care the police will need a complainant statement from one of the parents. Where young people are looked after under section 31 the local authority will have full parental responsibility. In cases of interim care orders this responsibility can be shared.

A warning notice can be issued by police if a child under 16 (or 18 if under local authority care):

- Is reported missing and found on two or more occasions to be in the company of a suspect; or
- Is the subject of reports that suggest their behaviour and association with the suspect is giving significant cause for concern

The Detective Inspector in charge of the Safeguarding Department (or Duty Inspector out of hours) must be consulted and authorise the issue of the Child Abduction Warning Notice.

If there is evidence that the terms of a Warning Notice have been contravened, for example if the child has been reported missing and found with the suspect after the Warning Notice has been served, then the subject can be arrested and interviewed on suspicion of having committed an offence under the relevant legislation.

## **10. SAFEGUARDING AND CHILD PROTECTION**

On each occasion that a child is reported missing from home or local authority care:

### **Northumbria Police action**

- Police will submit a child concern to Children's Services in accordance with Northumbria Police procedure within 24 hours (missing from home only).
- At the point of return a Police Officer will visit the child/young person. Where possible the young person should be seen alone. The officer will provide contact details to the child to allow future contact if child wishes. Safe and Well Checks are not always made where a child has been classified as absent.

- Police information will be supplemented by information from other statutory partners and where appropriate the voluntary sector. Information from return interviews will be shared with police and Children's Services
- Where there is any child protection concern, this will be followed up as part of the daily triage process and appropriate child protection procedures followed.

#### **Gateshead Council Children's Social Care action**

- A full needs assessment should be considered by Children's Services so that their broader needs can be identified and addressed.
- Children's Services will provide early intervention and support where necessary to understand and address reasons for running away.

#### **Gateshead LSCB action**

The LSCB Business Manager will be notified of all missing and may:

- Request further information from multi-agency partners
- Consider, in conjunction with the police Missing from Home Coordinator and Detective Inspector in charge of Sanctuary South whether the young person warrants multi-agency discussion at MSET (see below).

### **11. GATESHEAD LSCB MISSING, SLAVERY, EXPLOITED AND TRAFFICKED SUB GROUP (MSET)**

#### **Background**

Gateshead LSCB and its partner agencies have a commitment to safeguard those young people who go missing and who are at risk of exploitation and other forms of harm.

The Gateshead LSCB Missing, Slavery, Exploited and Trafficked Sub Group (MSET) monitors those children and young people who go missing from home or care and/ or are at risk of sexual exploitation, criminal exploitation and/or trafficking/Modern Day Slavery. The group meets monthly and is chaired by the Detective Inspector in charge of Sanctuary South and is made up of representatives from a wide number of agencies including Children's Social Care, Education Welfare, health organisations and drug & alcohol services.

Any professional working with children and young people in Gateshead can refer a case for discussion at MSET submitting a referral form to [safeguardingbusinessunit@gateshead.gov.uk](mailto:safeguardingbusinessunit@gateshead.gov.uk) (the most up to date version of the referral form can be found on the [LSCB website](#)). Ideally this should be completed in a multi-agency setting and include information from everyone working with the young person and the young person themselves.

As detailed in section 4 of this document, any young person reported missing to the police more than once in a calendar month will be considered for inclusion on the agenda at the next MSET meeting. This process is based on the submission of CCNs from the police to IRT and missing from care reports.

## **Information sharing and data collection**

“Intelligence sharing” is a standing item on the agenda for each MSET meeting. This allows police, the Early Help Service (responsible for RHIs) and other agencies to share information on “hot spots” and other areas of concern as well as discussing individual young people.

Information will also be shared on a regular basis between the police and Gateshead Council to enable them to identify patterns where a child has:

- Gone missing on two or more occasions
- Has been involved as a victim or perpetrator in criminal behaviour whilst missing
- Known mental health issues
- Known risk of exploitation (sexual or criminal)
- Known risk of contact with persons posing risk to children
- Incidents that have generated assessments of needs via Common Assessment Framework, S47, or S17 of the Children Act 1989

Aggregate data about the profile of running away in the area will be collated by the police and forwarded to the LSCB Business Manager through which it is shared with Children’s Services and other partner agencies through the monthly MSET meeting. This together with case data recorded via the MSET will allow the LSCB to identify:

- Incidences of running away
- Children’s homes that have particularly high levels of missing report in relation to other homes in the area
- Areas where missing young people are frequently
- The proportion of young people who are hurt or harmed whilst they are away
- The proportion of young people who have committed an offence whilst they are away

Information will be broken down by:

- Child’s age
- Gender
- Ethnicity
- Whether they are missing from home or local authority care (and if so where they are placed)

The data will be regularly reviewed and analysed by the LSCB and will inform a proactive response to running and patterns of running in the local area.

Children’s homes also have to complete monthly return on their missing figures. These should also be copied to the MSET inbox ([safeguardingbusinessunit@gateshead.gov.uk](mailto:safeguardingbusinessunit@gateshead.gov.uk))

This process will be overseen by the LSCB Business Manager and, where appropriate, further assistance from analysts within Gateshead Council will be sought.

## **12. FINDING YOUNG PEOPLE WHO ARE NOT REPORTED MISSING TO THE POLICE**

When young people are located in circumstances where identified risk factors are evident, but have not been reported missing to the police by their families or carers, further investigation might be warranted. It may be necessary to consider police protection and enquire into whether there are any

continuing child protection concerns, or whether the young person and their family or carers should be offered family support services.

**Information will be shared via a child concern in such circumstances.**

### **13. INFORMING THE MEDIA**

The police have responsibility for advising the media regarding children and young people who are missing in order to assist in locating that person or warning the public if the child or young person poses a significant threat.

Decisions to publicise children missing from care will always be made in consultation with the Children's Services who in turn will consult with parents and/or carers prior to any media coverage.

### **14. CHILDREN MISSING EDUCATION (CME)**

Children missing education are defined as children of compulsory school age who are not on a school roll, not placed in alternative provision by a local authority, and who are not receiving a suitable education at home.

Gateshead Council has a duty to identify children who are not receiving a suitable education either by being registered at a school or educated otherwise and there is a robust multi-agency process in place to prevent children from being 'lost' from the education system.

Gateshead Council produced their Children Missing from Education Strategy Procedures and Guidance to assist professionals in identifying and managing these children. This strategy ensures that all cases of children identified as CME are investigated by the named CME coordinator.

Initially it is the responsibility of the school or educational provision that the child is on roll with, to try to establish the whereabouts of the child by contacting parents or other family members, visiting the home address, contacting other professionals etc. If they are unable to locate the child a referral to the CME coordinator should be made for further checks. Referrals to other agencies such as Police, Children's Social Care, LSCB, MSET, etc should also be made where appropriate. The CME coordinator will contact partner agencies to establish the whereabouts of the child.

The CME coordinator is responsible for informing schools when a pupil can be taken off roll, if there is no destination for the CTF schools are informed to upload it onto the School2School system.

### **15. SUPPORTING AGENCIES**

Missing children cannot be managed effectively by the police service alone. There are a number of statutory and voluntary organisations that play a role in the prevention and management of all missing children, these organisations include:

- National Police Improvement Agency Missing Persons Bureau – Notification should be made for all missing persons outstanding after 14 days and all foreign nationals missing in the UK or British nationals missing abroad

- Missing People (formerly National Missing Persons Helpline) – this is a charity dedicated to helping missing people, their families and those who care for them. Missing People receive information from police and other public, private and voluntary organisations, and from individuals. National Missing Person
- Helpline (NMPH) and police will share information in accordance with the ACPO/NMPH National Data Exchange Protocol of April 2007.
  - Police and families can contact the 24 hour free phone confidential helpline on 0500 700700.
  - Whenever a report is received by the police and the risk assessment authorised by a Supervisor is assessed as HIGH, the Investigating Officer will consider notifying Missing People as a matter of urgency in order that Missing People can record the disappearance, search their records and inform police of any information held by them which could assist the investigation.
  - For reports assessed as MEDIUM risk, the police will notify Missing People 72 hours after the time the missing person was reported to the police, and will make a record on the missing person report that the information has been shared with Missing People.
  - For reports assessed as LOW risk, if the person is still missing after 14 days, details will be forwarded to Missing People. The parent/carer making the missing person report must consent to the sharing of the information in low risk cases.
  - Police will inform Missing People as soon as practicable when a missing person has returned.
- UK Missing Kids Website (<http://uk.missingkids.com>) – this website helps the police to find missing and abducted children and enables the police to transmit photographs and other information to other police forces around the UK and abroad. This is a secure website maintained by police officers in South Yorkshire.
- Child Rescue Alert – this scheme is used within tightly defined criteria by the Police in relation to the abduction of a child. It should only be used in high risk cases and with the authority of the on-call SIO (Detective Superintendent)

16. MISSING FROM CARE FLOW CHART

