



Missing Persons & Child Exploitation

Memorandum of understanding (MOU)

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1 Introduction

This Memorandum of understanding (MOU) has been agreed voluntarily by partners namely Surrey County Council (Care leavers) and Surrey Police. It relates to children placed in supported living, lodgings or accommodation in Surrey who may be at risk of going missing and/or forms of exploitation. The Surrey Safeguarding Children Partnership expect both partners to implement this MOU and will ensure the relevant staff have had sight of it.

2 Purpose

2.1 The aim of this document is to provide guidance for partners so we may harness all available resources and create a sustainable process to respond to risk and harm in our community. It is a tool to help consider the practical steps necessary to ensure children in Surrey are kept safe whilst resident in care.

2.2 Surrey Police work in accordance with

- College of Policing Authorised Professional Practice (APP) 'Missing Persons'.
<https://www.app.college.police.uk/app-content/major-investigation-and-public-protection/missing-persons/>

2.3 Partners work in accordance government publications including

- HM Government 'Working together to Safeguard Children' document dated July 2018
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-together-to-safeguard-children--2>
- Department for Education 'Children who run away or go missing from home or care' Jan 2014
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/children-who-run-away-or-go-missing-from-home-or-care>

Please also refer to local Surrey County Council procedure
<http://surreyscb.procedures.org.uk/page/contents>

3 Intention

We must work together to ensure that:

- All appropriate agencies and individuals are notified if children are missing and when they return
- All appropriate agencies and individuals are notified if a child is at risk of exploitation
- A clear plan of effective inter-agency action is in place to trace or return children who run away or go missing
- A clear plan of effective inter-agency action is in place to manage and reduce exploitation of children
- Appropriate and effective actions are taken when children return or are located. This includes provision of a prevention interview by police, a further independent return home interview and on-going support where required
- Children are positively encouraged to influence the outcome of any professional intervention
- Vulnerable children are protected and prevented from going missing. Children with mental or emotional health needs, learning and physical disabilities are particularly vulnerable when missing and are at risk from being exploited.
- Effective early intervention and prevention strategies are implemented to help reduce repeat incidents.

4 Missing children

4.1 Definitions

As per College of Policing’s APP guidance a missing person is defined as **‘Anyone whose whereabouts cannot be established will be considered as missing until located, and their well-being or otherwise confirmed’**.

4.2 Categories of risk

All reports concerning children and adults sit within a continuum of risk. On receipt of a report to Surrey Police the risk associated with that individual will be evaluated and categorised by Surrey Police as per APP guidance. The following table defines each of these categories:

Low risk	the risk of harm to the subject or the public is assessed as possible but minimal	proportionate enquiries should be carried out to ensure the subject has not come to harm
Medium risk	the risk of harm to the subject or the public is assessed as likely but not serious	active and measured response by police and partner agencies
High risk	the risk of harm to the subject or the public is assessed as very likely	immediate deployment of police resources

Surrey Police no longer use the APP guidance category ‘no apparent risk’ for missing persons.

5 Migrant children

5.1 Child looked after (CLA) migrant child placements

Some of the children that Surrey local authority look after may be migrant children and some of this group may have been trafficked into the UK and remain under the influence of their traffickers even while they are looked after.

The UK government recognises migrant children as some of the children in greatest need. Migrant children are at higher risk of going missing with most going missing within one week of becoming a Child Looked After (CLA) and many within 48 hours. Migrant children who go missing immediately after being looked after should be considered as victims of trafficking. If suspected, this will likely involve a criminal investigation into a crime in action as opposed to a Missing Person Investigation.

It is important Surrey Police are made aware of all migrant children placed in local authority care to enable the best response possible in the event they are reported as a missing child.

5.2 National Referral Mechanism (NRM)

Where it is suspected that a child has been trafficked to the UK, a referral should be made in all cases into the UK’s victim identification framework - the National Referral Mechanism at the UK Human Trafficking Centre (UKHTC).

A report should be made to the UK Borders Agency jointly prepared with Surrey Police if it is suspected a child has been trafficked so that any offences can be investigated and other children safeguarded.

5.3 Further Information

‘Safeguarding Children Who May Have Been Trafficked’ contains practical guidance for agencies who may have referred to them children who have been trafficked.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/safeguarding-children-who-may-have-been-trafficked-practice-guidance>

6 Child Exploitation

6.1 Definitions

Sexual exploitation of children under 18 involves **exploitative situations, contexts and relationships where young people (or a third person or persons) receive ‘something’ as a result of them performing, and/or another or others performing on them, sexual activities.** This can occur through the use of technology without the child’s immediate recognition, e.g. being persuaded to post sexual images on the internet/mobile phones without immediate payment or gain. Watch the video on how to Spot the Signs https://www.barnardos.org.uk/what_we_do/our_work/sexual_exploitation/about-cse/cse-spot-the-signs.htm

6.2 Child criminal exploitation of children under 18 takes advantage of **an imbalance of power to coerce, control, manipulate or deceive a child or young person under the age of 18. The victim may have been criminally exploited even if the activity appears consensual.**

6.3 County lines is a term used to describe **gangs and organised criminal networks involved in exporting illegal drugs into one or more importing areas within the UK, using dedicated mobile phone lines or other form of “deal line”. They are likely to exploit children and vulnerable adults to move and store the drugs and money and they will often use coercion, intimidation, violence (including sexual violence) and weapons.** Criminal exploitation of children is broader than just county lines, and includes for instance children forced to work on cannabis farms or to commit theft.

Violence, coercion and intimidation are common, involvement in exploitative relationships being characterised in the main by the child’s limited availability of choice resulting from their social/economic and/or emotional vulnerability. A common feature of child exploitation is that the child does not recognise the coercive nature of the relationship and does not see themselves as a victim of exploitation. In all cases, those exploiting the child have power over them by virtue of their age, gender, intellect, physical strength and/or economic or other resources.

7 Partnership responsibilities

7.1 Basic measures

In the event that a child is missing from the accommodation then staff and providers should attempt to ascertain their whereabouts before telephoning police for assistance. If a child has not arrived back to the accommodation as expected or agreed, efforts must be made by staff or providers to contact the child and/ next of kin/ nominated emergency contact to establish their whereabouts before telephoning the police. Please see Appendix A: Action flow chart, a helpful guide as to what to do before telephoning police to report a child missing.

7.2 Missing Action Pack (MAP)

If a child is not present on site and despite best efforts cannot be located by staff OR if a safe location has been prior agreed and it becomes apparent that they have not been at the agreed location AND their whereabouts is unknown/not suspected to be known AND there are signs of risk then a report to Surrey Police should be made.

If a resident is not where they are supposed to be and is uncontactable, this does not necessarily mean they should be reported to police as a missing person. If a resident decides to leave the premises or not return when agreed, this does not necessarily mean they should be reported to police as a missing person. First consider whether this is out of character or you have reason to believe that the person will likely come to harm if not located. Consult the Emergency Duty Team at Surrey County Council to talk about the

circumstances and establish whether a care worker for the child or family might know their location. The missing reporting process should not be used to inform partners that a resident is not complying with the terms in their voluntary care agreement. Whilst accommodation providers do not have parental responsibility for a child, if concerns about their wellbeing are raised then reasonable steps must be taken by staff to ascertain whereabouts before calling police for assistance.

The accommodation provider should provide as much detail as possible at the point of the call, preferably utilising the Surrey Police Missing Action Pack (MAP) to record concerns surrounding the child's welfare and care plan. Use the action log to record steps taken by staff to try and locate them. Surrey Police rely on full and accurate information in order to make risk assessments and pursue any subsequent investigation. Completing the MAP prior to telephoning police, will reduce the time taken answering questions during the call. Please retain a copy of the MAP for your records and if an officer attends, make it available for them to read.

If there is any cause to believe that the child may have been harmed or is at risk of being harmed then the police must be informed immediately on 999

7.3 Prevention Interview (PI)

The accommodation provider should notify Surrey Police as soon as possible should the child return or be located. Surrey Police will in turn ensure the provider is notified if they locate the child. When a child has been located by police and returned home, Surrey Police will speak to the child and/or family and complete a police Prevention Interview. The purpose of the Prevention Interview is to check the child's welfare, identify if they are/have been a victim of any criminal offence and will obtain basic details as to where and with whom they have been.

7.4 Return Home Interview (RHI)

An independent Return Home Interview (RHI) will be arranged by the local authority. Surrey Children's Services will assess if an RHI is required and will appoint an independent worker to undertake this interview. **Independent return interviews provide an opportunity to uncover information that can help protect children from the risk of going missing again, from risks they may have been exposed to while missing or from risk factors in their home. The interview should be carried out within 72 hours of the child returning to their home or care setting** (Department of Education: Missing from home or care 2014).

7.5 Intervention meetings

When a child has been missing on 3 or more occasions in a 90 day period, or their missing episode was significant and/or lasted over 48 hours, then an intervention meeting should be called by a social worker. The child and their family should be present where possible, as well as any professional involved in the care of that child. A representative from the Surrey Police should also attend. During that meeting a plan to reduce missing episodes must be jointly agreed, with the support of the child and family where possible.

7.6 Risk Management Meetings

A child who is identified as a repeat missing person and/or children considered to be at significant and/or continual risk of exploitation should then to be referred to the Risk Management Meeting (RMM) at the relevant area. A risk assessment needs to be completed by the social worker/ youth Worker with help from the education provider or accommodation provider where required. Information should be shared between agencies in order to adequately prepare and implement a safeguarding plan for the child and to remove them from harm and reduce the likelihood of them being reported again as a missing person to police.

7.7 Partnership Information

If the child is already known as at risk of exploitation then any new information should be shared with police and social worker/ youth worker, in order to inform any investigation and to safeguard the child. Whilst information about exploitation or missing can be discussed

with appropriate police officers and staff, it should always be documented using the partnership sharing form. This is extremely important, not only do police use this to assess the provenience of the information but it also evidences sharing information between partner agencies. All intelligence forms need to be emailed to:

Partnership.Intelligence@surrey.pnn.police.uk

The type of information that should be shared is:

- Any new associates – particularly if they are suspected to be perpetrators or other vulnerable children
- New locations they may be frequenting
- Any car registration numbers seen to be collecting them / hanging around
- New phone numbers / social media details
- Any change in behaviour or appearance
- Any unexplained gifts, money or belongings
- Any sign of love bites, injuries or marks that are unexplained
- Anything else of note that causes concern.

7.8 Forensic Considerations

Should there be any suspicion that a child has been engaging in sexual activity whilst away from education, then the police should be called as soon as possible so that a Forensic Examination can be considered. In the first instance, any forensic capture will be the responsibility of the police. Staff are asked however, that whilst waiting for police they try where possible to ensure;

- the child does not wash/shower
- the child's clothes, including underwear, are secured by placing them in evidence bags (using gloves)
- the child's mobile phone and any other digital device are secured (however if the child is likely to go missing then this must be weighed up with the risk of them going missing without a phone)
- marks or injuries are photographed.

8 Partnership interventions

8.1 Trigger Plans

The Police CSE teams will ensure that Trigger Plans are created for any child in your care that is recognised as being at risk of CSE. This will help to prompt a better response should they be reported missing or come to notice of police. This plan should be created in conjunction with both the social worker/ youth worker and staff when appropriate.

8.2 Police Powers

The police have significant powers to safeguard vulnerable children. These include powers to enter premises, to recover children and to take a child in to police protection. Local authorities should give consideration of other civil sanctions for those not covered by police powers and child abduction notices.

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.

Child Abduction Warning Notices (CAWN's) are a useful tool aimed at tackling incidents where children under 16 years old (or 18 under a full Care Order) go missing and are found with families or partners who are much older than them and/or are suspected to be

harbouring a missing child. It is anticipated that this procedure will be used in a limited number of cases per year and should reduce the opportunity for children to go missing. It will be used primarily to tackle people who target children for exploitation.

Partner agencies should contact the police to discuss the potential use of this procedure. Relevant legislation:

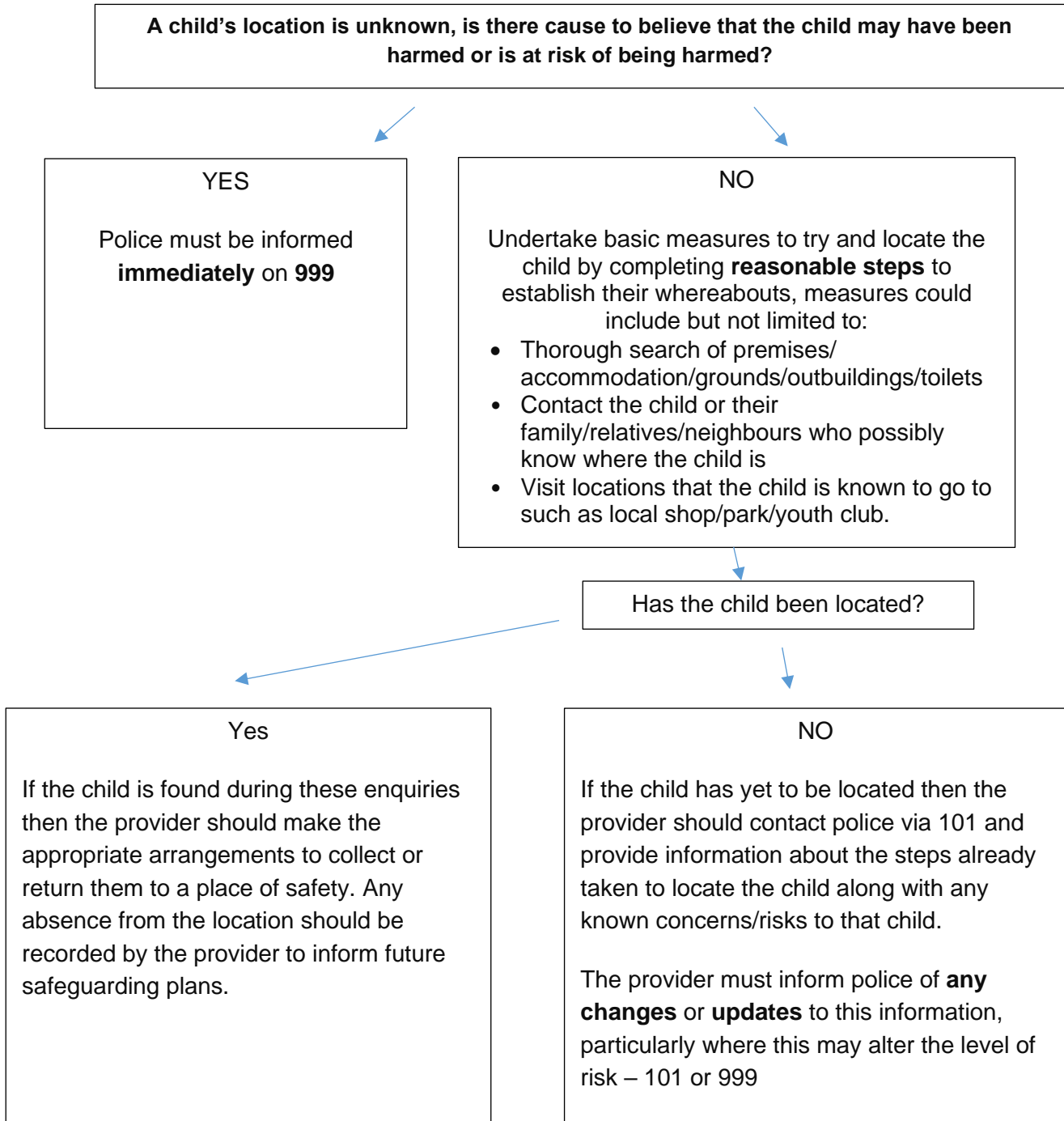
- Sec 2 Child Abduction Act 1984 (child under 16).
- Sec 49 Children Act 1989 (child under 18 subject of Care Order). (This does not apply to children who are voluntarily accommodated under Sec 20).

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. 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.

9 Contact details

- 9.1 Emergency Duty Team (EDT) at Surrey County Council Monday to Friday 5pm to 9am
Weekends 24 hours a day. The EDT also operates throughout all bank holiday periods.
- 9.2 Surrey Police Missing Persons Coordinator
MissingPersonsCoordinator@surrey.pnn.police.uk
- 9.3 Surrey Police Child Exploitation and Missing Units (CEMU) Office hours only.
CEMUEast@surrey.pnn.police.uk
CEMUNorth@surrey.pnn.police.uk
CEMUWest@surrey.pnn.police.uk
- 9.4 Surrey Police Partnership Intelligence Mailbox
Partnership.Intelligence@surrey.pnn.police.uk

10 Appendix A: Action flow chart



Once the child has been located

Have you updated the police to say they have been found? Has the child told you any information that is considered to be useful to the police? If yes please share by calling us on 101 or using the Surrey Police **Partnership intelligence form**

11 Appendix B: Indicators of risk

These indicators should be explored during the Independent Return Home Interview (RHI) but the list below should assist staff within education establishments, so they are aware of the many posing factors when a child is missing. The questions below explore the possibility of the child being at risk of harm, including being at risk of child exploitation (CE).

General:

- What might be happening within the home or out of the home for the child to go missing?
- Is there any bullying within or outside of the home?
- Is there evidence of drugs and alcohol?
- Is going missing related to contact?
- Did the missing episode appear to be planned, what food, clothes and money may have been taken?
- Is the child indicating they may have been kept against their will or are they scared?
-

Travel and Communication:

- When a child goes missing – how did they travel? By foot, bus, train or picked up by car?
- Is Social Media / phones being used to make arrangements – calls, texts, Facebook etc.?
- Are there other children involved or any adults?
- Was the child trying to attend a party either pre-arranged or impulsive?

Unaccounted for money or goods:

- How might the child be finding – tobacco or alcohol?
- Does the child returning from being missing seem hungry – where might they have stayed or got food from?
- Has the child got money / goods – e.g. clothing, underwear, jewellery that they could not afford?
- How many mobile phones do they have, or sim cards?

Carer observations:

- Have you noticed a change in the child's behaviour?
- Has attendance at school deteriorated?
- Is there reduced contact with family and friends and other support networks?
- Are you aware of the child having a much older boyfriend/girlfriend?
- Staying out overnight with no reasonable explanation?
- Does the child dress overtly sexualised?
- Under the influence of any substance, alcohol/drugs?
- Presenting with a poor self-image?
- Evidence of self-harming/eating disorders?
- Regularly coming home late or going missing
- Overtly Sexualised dress, sexualised risk taking (including on the Internet)
- Unaccounted for monies or goods
- Experimenting with drugs and alcohol
- Non school attendance
- Being groomed on the internet
- Multiple sexually transmitted infections
- Pattern of street homelessness and staying with an adult believed to be sexually exploiting them
- Multiple miscarriages or terminations
- Reports of being involved in CSE through being seen in hotspots (i.e. certain flats, recruiting grounds, cars or houses and maybe in company of known CSE adults)
- Repeat offending
- Being taken to clubs and hotels by adults and engaging in sexual activity
- Disclosure of serious sexual assault and then withdrawal of statement.