

# Children Missing from Home and Care Protocol



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## 1 Scope

This protocol sets out the Medway Council Children's Social Care and Kent Police in Medway partnership response to children who go missing from home or care. It should be read in conjunction with the Kent Police policy N08 entitled "Missing Persons" (see **Guidance** section).

## 2 Foreword

Children and young people who go missing from home and care can place themselves, and others, at risk. The reasons for their absences may be varied and complex and cannot be assessed in isolation from their home circumstances and experiences. Every missing episode should, therefore, attract attention from professionals to assess the risks and respond appropriately and proportionately. Children and young people (up to the age of eighteen) who run away or go missing from home or care face a range of immediate and long term risks including:

- No means of support or income
- Involvement in criminal activities
- Being a victim of abuse
- Being a victim of criminal activities
- Alcohol and substance misuse
- Deterioration of physical and mental health
- Missing out on school and education
- Extreme vulnerability
- Estrangement from family and friends
- Becoming disenfranchised from society.

When a child goes missing, the priority must be to return them as quickly and safely as possible to their home or placement or an alternative place of safety, if return to the home they left would be unsafe.

This protocol is important for the safeguarding of children and families in Medway, or those using services in Medway. It should be read and implemented, where necessary, by all practitioners and managers working with children or young people who are missing from home and care.

It is incumbent on the police and Medway Children's Social Care to work together to ensure a consistent and coherent response to children who go missing. It is therefore essential that both agencies work to agreed procedures that incorporate the key principles and objectives. This joint protocol has been developed for that purpose. It seeks to set out the responsibilities and duties of each partner and support the effectiveness of joint working.

## 3 Guidance

Department for Education statutory guidance on children who run away or go missing from home or care, January 2014

Flowchart to accompany the statutory guidance on children who run away or go missing from home or care, January 2014

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/children-who-run-away-or-go-missing-from-home-or-care>

Medway Safeguarding Children's Board Safeguarding Procedure  
<http://www.proceduresonline.com/kentandmedway/>

Kent Police policy entitled "Missing Persons" N08 (last reviewed 28 July 2014)  
[http://www.kent.police.uk/about\\_us/policies/crime-intelligence/n08.html](http://www.kent.police.uk/about_us/policies/crime-intelligence/n08.html)

Kent and Medway Inter-Agency Threshold Criteria for Children, March 2011  
[http://www.kenttrustweb.org.uk/UserFiles/KCT/File/LCT\\_Boards/Shepway/18th\\_March/K\\_M\\_Eligibility\\_and\\_Access\\_FINAL\\_Electronic\\_March\\_2011.pdf](http://www.kenttrustweb.org.uk/UserFiles/KCT/File/LCT_Boards/Shepway/18th_March/K_M_Eligibility_and_Access_FINAL_Electronic_March_2011.pdf)

Working Together to Safeguard Children, 2013  
<http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20130401151715/https://www.education.gov.uk/publications/standard/publicationDetail/Page1/DFE-00030-2013>

Home Office Missing Children and Adults Strategy, 2011  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/missing-children-and-adults-strategy>

#### **4 Definitions**

##### ***Child***

A child or young person who is or claims to be under the age of eighteen years.

##### ***Looked after***

A child is looked after by a local authority if they are "in care" by reason of a court order, or of they are provided for accommodation for more than twenty-four hours by agreement with their parent(s) or with the child if they are aged sixteen or more.

##### ***Accommodated***

A child is accommodated if the local authority looks after them with the voluntary agreement of their parent(s) or with the child if they are aged sixteen or more.

##### ***Missing***

For the purposes of this procedure, a child or young person is "missing" when they are absent from their placement (if a looked after child) or family home without the authority of their parent or carer and their whereabouts or likely whereabouts are not known nor likely easily to be ascertained, or are staying in accommodation with persons unknown to the carer or parent and in circumstances where the absence causes concern for their safety. The absence of any young person should be risk assessed both in terms of that particular absence and the circumstances surrounding it and whether there is any particular concern associated with that absence on that occasion. In particular consideration should be given to:-

- Previously assessed level of vulnerability
- Whether the child is subject to a Child Protection Plan
- Age of the child
- The legal status of the child
- Time of day or night
- History of self-harm
- Physical/learning difficulties
- Whether the child has any essential medical needs
- Previous behaviour patterns

- Any known problems with money, employment, friends, family, relationships, school, college, drugs or alcohol
- Any agreement reached regarding staying out beyond the usual time
- Likely associations while missing
- State of mind at time of going missing
- Whether the child is a current victim of bullying or harassment, eg. sexual, racial, homophobic, or is the subject of local community concerns
- Group behaviour
- Any pre-placement Risk Assessment
- Any other particular circumstance at the time of the incident.

When consideration of these factors gives rise to concern about the absence, immediate action should be taken in terms of this protocol.

**MPLO**

Kent Police Missing Person Liaison Officer.

**PPU**

Kent Police Public Protection Unit.

**5 Key principles**

***A child-centred approach***

Any and all actions and any subsequent provision of resources must take into account the views of the child or young person. Consideration must be given to the diversity of each individual young person and include an awareness of the importance of cultural sensitivity. Young people who run away or go missing should be given the opportunity to express their wishes and play a central role in plans to prevent further incidents of running away.

***Supporting parents and carers***

Most of the time parents, carers and families play the important role in safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children. Whilst professionals need to take into account all circumstances when assessing and deciding how best to safeguard children and young people, working in partnership with families is preferable to intervention, where it is safe and appropriate to do so.

Parents, carers and members of the extended family should be included as integral participants in the “team” around the child; and in some instances with minimal support they can be the entire “team” around the child. The role of professional partners in working with children and young people who go missing is to ensure that no child falls through the net. The aim for Medway Children’s Social Care is to offer early help where appropriate and early intervention where necessary.

**6 Reporting a missing child**

Usually the initial notification that a child is missing from home will be made to the police, at which point the procedures set out in Kent Police Missing Persons Policy (N08) will apply (see **Guidance** section). For procedures regarding children missing from home, refer to **Part 1** of this protocol and for children missing from care refer to **Part 2** of this protocol.

## **7 Longer absences of a “missing” child - more than twenty-four hours**

Whenever a child who does not have an allocated social worker in CSC goes missing for longer than 24 hours a contact must be sent by the Missing Children Co-ordinator via Customer First. The Triage team in CSC will then review and assess whether the threshold has been met for a CSC intervention or sign posting on to partner agencies.

For a child that has an allocated worker the Triage team will, on receiving the information, send information via a significant contact episode on FWI, to the relevant virtual team duty box so appropriate action can be taken. This will ensure action is taken in the absence of the allocated SW or SW manager. A strategy discussion will take place if required and the relevant Service Manager informed.

Whenever a looked after child has been missing from care for over twenty-four hours, the Missing Children Co-ordinator will notify the Designated Manager (Missing Children) and the relevant Children’s Social Care Team Manager. At this time a Medway Council Children’s Social Care strategy meeting should be considered.

For a looked after child or child subject to a child protection plan the designated IRO or CP Chair must be informed by the missing children co-ordinator within 24 hours.

## **8 Longer absences of a “missing” child - more than five days**

Whenever a child is missing (from home or from care) for five days the allocated Team Manager should explore with the Police Missing Person Liaison Officer whether a Multi Agency Review (MAR) should be held. Calling a MAR is at the discretion of the Police and where a young person has been missing for more than 5 days CSC should always advocate for a MAR to take place. Where a MAR is held this will in addition act as the first Strategy meeting.

Where the police feel a MAR is unnecessary a Medway Council Children’s Social Care Strategy meeting will be held, attended by appropriate staff from Medway Council Children’s Social Care, the police and other agencies involved. Regular meetings should be carried out in accordance with the Medway Safeguarding Children’s Board Safeguarding Procedure (see **Guidance** section).

The allocated IRO/CPC Chair must attend the MAR or Strategy meeting, bring forward the next LAC review or RCPCC in order to ensure that there is co-ordinated partnership work amongst all agencies to ensure the safe return of the young person and that agencies work together to prevent them going missing again once found.

The relevant Service Manager should alert the Assistant Director, who should also alert the Lead Member and Director of Children’s Services if the child is still missing (from home or from care) after five days (or earlier where they are known to be particularly high risk factors).

The MAR/Strategy meeting chair should elicit a clear statement about the actions being taken in respect of the absence and its precipitating factors as known and actions taken to recover the child. Consideration should be given to the following:

- Any press or publicity issues
- Notification of other authorities
- All ports and airports alert.

Risk factors that the meeting/s must consider include:

- Sexual exploitation and child trafficking
- Forced marriage
- Genital mutilation
- Honour based killings
- Domestic violence
- Self-harming or suicidal behaviours
- Known mental health issues
- Known risk of contact with persons posing a risk to children.

If the child remains missing, regular review strategy meetings should be held at appropriate intervals.

The Assistant Director, Children's Social Care and Designated Manager (Missing Children) should formally review all cases where children have been absent for two months or more.

### **9 Police multi-agency review**

The police will arrange and chair a police multi-agency review if the police consider that the missing child or young person meets certain criteria:-

*Where a child is recognised as a "top 10" runaway, they will be subject to a multi-agency meeting facilitated by an MPLO and attended by all interested parties (including PPU representation) in order to manage the risks and reduce the occurrences.*

*All children aged 16 years or under who have been reported as missing for over 7 days must be subject to a multi-agency review. MPLOs will facilitate such meetings ensuring attendance from interested parties (including PPU CST DS).*

### **10 Informing the press**

For a child who is missing from home, the police will liaise with the child's parents about informing the press.

For a looked after child who is missing, a decision to publicise by press and/or television will be made by the Assistant Director CSC only after consultation with the child's social worker and the police and having been provided with a briefing on the absence and action taken to date by the relevant Team/Service Manager, and with prior warning in order to allow the child's parents to be informed. This will be done in accordance with police rules about communications with the media.

Where a young person is subject to S20 accommodation and parents disagree with publicity, Legal Services will be consulted about options available. Where the young person is subject to a S31 Care Order, agreement for publicity rests with the AD but parents must be consulted and informed as far as is practicable.

The Local Area Designated Officer should also be informed and the Assistant Director will provide weekly updates to the DCS and lead Portfolio holder or as required.

## **11 Decision making / escalation**

As above if the missing child is the subject of a Child Protection Plan and is not found within five working days, the Review Child Protection Conference must be brought forward to consider whether any other actions should be taken.

Similarly if the missing child is looked after, the LAC review must be brought forward to consider the current situation.

The relevant team manager should consider the need for an urgent legal professionals meeting in order to secure a court order to effect the safe return of the young person.

## **12 The return**

### ***Police safe and well check***

The police will interview all children when they return from being missing by means of a series of simple questions about where the child was, who they were with, etc.

### ***Return Interview***

The child will be offered an independent return interview to talk about their absence, with consideration given as to the best person to do this, avoiding conflict or bias. This may be with the child's social worker, unit manager or the Medway Council Missing Children Co-ordinator but if the child wishes it could be someone with no connection to them, including a police constable. It could be a teacher, school nurse, Medway Youth Trust, Youth or YOT Worker, a voluntary sector practitioner or a police officer whom the child knows and trusts.

This interview should provide a safe opportunity for the child to discuss any concerns regarding his or her care, understand and address the reasons the child ran away, try to avoid it happening again and deal with any harm the child has suffered whilst they were missing. The interview must take place without parents, foster carers or residential staff being present or in close proximity, unless the young person expresses a wish to the contrary. The interviewer should complete the Missing Child Return Interview Questionnaire (**Appendix 4**) or a report that offers the same information.

The interview must be sent to the allocated SW where it is undertaken by someone other than them and whoever undertakes it must be uploaded onto FWI within 3 working days.

Where there is a safeguarding issue, the local safeguarding procedures are to be initiated and followed.

## **13 Recording**

The Medway Council Missing Children Co-ordinator will receive, collate and analyse all reports of missing children and information relating to a child's return. Sources of this report will be the police, social workers or out of hours services.

Details of each missing child incident will be shared with relevant agencies, such as child protection officers in schools or colleges, social workers, CAF lead professionals, and in the case of looked after children, the Independent Reviewing Officer.

## **14 Reporting**

The recording and tracking of all children reported as missing and outcomes following Return Interviews enables the Medway Council Missing Children Co-ordinator to provide a monthly analysis of missing children activity to the Designated Manager (Missing Children), Service Managers and the Assistant Director, Children's Social Care. This report is also brought to the attention of the Lead Member for Children's Services through their regular meetings with the Assistant Director.

This report includes an analysis of:-

- Total incidents for the month

- Total children recorded as mispers, with repeat missing children identified

- Incidents involving Medway looked after children

- Incidents involving looked after children placed in Medway by other authorities

- Breakdown by gender

- Breakdown by age ranges

- Incidents where children were harmed or a victim of crime whilst missing

- Incidents where children were involved in criminal activity whilst missing

- Incidents where children displayed mental health problems whilst missing

- Incidents where children were known to have used drugs or alcohol whilst missing

- Incidents where children were thought to be at risk of sexual exploitation whilst missing

- Number and identification of children missing for more than twenty-four hours.

Incidents of missing looked after children are submitted to the Department for Education as part of the annual SDA903 return, also known as the Children Looked After return.

Incidents of unauthorised absence (relating to looked after children) are also submitted to the Department for Education as part of the annual SDA903 return, with effect from 1 April 2014.

## **15 Monitoring**

In accordance with government guidelines, the Designated Manager (Missing Children) will be responsible for monitoring the policy and performance relating to children missing from home, and the provisions of this procedure relating to children missing from care shall apply to children missing from home in respect of review, decision making, longer absences of a missing child, and children missing from other local authorities.

## PROCEDURES PART 1 - Children missing from home

### (a) Police response

Usually the initial notification that a child is missing from home will be made to the police. All missing person reports will be attended in person by Kent Police, usually by central response teams and the police procedures will immediately apply and all action possible to determine the location of the child or young person will be initiated. At the same time the police will decide if a referral should be made to:

Medway Council Children's Social Care (via Customer First) or the Out of Hours service.

A report to the Medway Council Missing Children Co-ordinator will be made on a daily basis and include information about actions taken and other referrals made.

The Medway Council Missing Children Co-ordinator will record the information to track and monitor progress. Once the child is found or returns to their home the Missing Children Co-ordinator will make contact with the parent(s) within seventy-two hours of receipt of notification of the missing report, to arrange a Return Interview if appropriate.

If Medway Council Children's Social Care is actively involved with the child and an allocated worker is attached, then liaison will take place to agree the best person to undertake the Return Interview. The Return Interview will be recorded (see **Appendix 4** for copy of interview sheet).

### (b) Referral to Medway Council Children's Social Care at the time of the initial report

When referring a child missing from home to Medway Council Children's Social Care, the police will make available all relevant information to enable Medway Council Children's Social Care to carry out its functions and complete a referral in accordance with the Kent and Medway Inter-Agency Threshold Criteria for Children (see **Guidance** section). Information arising out of the police assessment of vulnerability must be included.

Medway's Children's Social Care Referral, Assessment and Support teams will assess the referral against the threshold criteria and take appropriate, proportionate action. Where the concerns are high and the risk assessment determines an Initial Assessment to be appropriate, a social worker will be allocated to assess the risks further against the Department for Education's "Working Together to Safeguard Children", March 2013 (see **Guidance** section).

This assessment will evaluate the risks if a child or young person were to go missing again; and whether or not they and their family might be appropriately offered local family support services. Medway Council's Children's Social Care will also need to decide whether it is appropriate for enquiries to be made under Section 47 of the Children Act 1989.

### (c) Safe and well check

The police will conduct a safe and well check when a missing child has been located, which should include a debriefing meeting with the parents. The outcome of the safe and well check will either be:-

- No further police action or
- Police referral to Medway Council Children's Social Care (via Customer First)
- Police referral to PPU (Public Protection Unit).

In all instances a report will be made to the Medway Council Missing Children Co-ordinator.

Medway Council Children's Social Care are required to facilitate an independent Return Interview. Therefore, whether or not children who have gone missing from home are assessed as being "in need", they should be offered access to an interview upon their return. The child's views should be taken into consideration in deciding which agency or person might best offer the necessary "independent" perspective. Medway Council's Attendance Advisory Service to Schools and Academies co-ordinates this activity.

If a referral needs to be made to Medway Council Children's Social Care, the referral would go via the Triage Service and if the concerns reached the threshold criteria then an Initial Assessment would follow. The Missing Children Co-ordinator should have a watching brief on such a referral until an outcome is reached.

If the missing child is the subject of a Child Protection Plan, the Service Manager (Safeguarding Team) must also be informed.

All children reported as missing by the police will be referred to the Missing Children Co-ordinator and where a child is not known to Medway Council Children's Social Care and a CAF is not already in place, a CAF Pre-Assessment Checklist should be completed by the relevant agency (school or support organisation). The Missing Children Co-ordinator oversees and co-ordinates this process.

The Return Interview should aim to provide the young person with information about how to access follow-on services and for their voice to be heard about the missing incident.

## **PROCEDURES PART 2 - Children missing from care (looked after by Medway Council)**

### (a) Introduction

When children and young people who are looked after leave their placement without notice, permission, or agreement, they should be considered to be at risk and their absence monitored and managed in a consistent manner until their safe return.

This will usually involve joint working between the police, staff in Medway Council Children's Social Care, foster carers, residential care staff in children's homes as well as staff working in other types of provision where looked after young people live.

This procedure has been developed to assist co-operative working and combines the requirements of Kent Police in Medway and Medway Council Children's Social Care.

### (b) Definitions

#### ***Missing***

For the purposes of this procedure a looked after child under the age of eighteen years is to be considered missing if absent from their place of residence without authority to an extent or in circumstances where the absence causes concern for their safety or there is potential danger to themselves and/or the public.

Absences that cause concern are those where the carers have no indication that the child is likely to return within a short space of time or where there is immediate concern for their safety. They will be considered missing until they are located and their well being or otherwise is established. In terms of the steps which need to be taken to locate these children and safeguard their welfare, this procedure includes them as missing children.

#### ***Unauthorised Absence***

This category is important when clarifying the roles of the police and family. Some looked after children may leave their placement for a short period and then return. Often their whereabouts are known or may easily be established through contact with family or friends, or are unknown but for specific, recorded reasons they are not considered to be at risk. Sometimes children stay out longer than agreed, which may be regarded as behaviour that is within the range of normal teenage behaviour. These children's absence may be regarded as an unauthorised absence, and would not usually come within the definition of missing for this Procedure. Unauthorised absences must be carefully monitored however as the child may subsequently be regarded as missing.

The MISPER Risk Assessment must be completed every time a young person absents themselves from their placement and this will help to decide if a young person is missing or taking unauthorised absence. (See **Appendix 2**).

### (c) Planning before the event

When a child or young person becomes looked after, the placement planning process should consider the likelihood that they may go missing or take unauthorised absence and a Provisional Risk Assessment, (see **Appendix 3**) pre-placement, should be completed by the placing social worker in consultation with the child's proposed carers.

This assessment should address the following:

- The likelihood of the child absconding
- The level of supervision/support offered to the child in this regard
- The parents' advice on what action they feel should be taken if the child goes missing
- The level of risk presented if the child absconds
- Any known addresses that the child may frequent or
- Any known adults known to the child who may place him/her at risk.
- The discussion should be recorded in the Care Plan and be subject to regular review – at a minimum at every Looked After Child Review.
- If the risk assessment indicates that there is a high risk of the young person going missing from the placement a MISPER Information Form (**Appendix 3**) containing the information needed to locate them should they go missing, must be completed.

### (d) Action when a child is absent

When a child goes absent without permission the response of the relevant adults, especially those who are caring for the child, should be directed towards securing their safe return as quickly as possible and to this end should demonstrate that the child will not be punished or treated negatively upon their return.

**Residential staff:** Whoever discovers that a child has gone absent without permission should inform the duty (or on-call) manager. The manager on duty will need to decide whether the young person is having an unauthorised absence or is missing.

**Foster Carer:** When the carer becomes aware that the child has gone absent without permission they should be able to make a decision as to whether this is an unauthorised absence or whether the child is missing, by making use of the MISPER Risk Assessment Form (see **Appendix 1**). If there is uncertainty, the carer should contact the social worker or duty social worker or the Out of Hours service for a decision.

**Supported accommodation:** Where there are on call/on site support staff the placement planning process must make clear how absences from placement will be reported to the social worker. Where support staff attend the provision less frequently the placement planning process must explore with the young person the frequency at which they must stay at the placement and contact with their social worker or personal advisor so that they will be aware when/if this has been exceeded.

**Bed and breakfast accommodation:** B&B provision is only used in exceptional circumstances and as above the allocated social worker or personal advisor must explore with the young person on placement contact arrangements in order that they may make contact to ensure their safety and stability.

If the young person's absence is deemed unauthorised, the action to follow is set out in the local placement guidance agreed when the placement is made for dealing with unauthorised absences and the situation should be monitored and reviewed accordingly. The child's social worker should be informed as soon as is practicable by e-mail and telephone.

If a decision is made that the young person is missing, the person making the report should inform:

- The police, who will subject the report to an assessment of vulnerability.
- The parents or any persons having parental responsibility, unless there are serious reasons why this should not be done. If a looked after child becomes missing late at night it might not be appropriate to wake parents to inform them, although the police may decide to do so in order to conduct a search of their premises. However, the parents should be notified the next day or immediately if there are serious concerns about the child's safety.
- The social worker or duty social worker. When this occurs outside of office working hours, the Out of Hours service should be informed. Where the absence occurs out of hours it remains the responsibility of the residential worker or foster carer to inform the social worker of events at the first opportunity.

The social worker or duty social or OOH social worker will decide with the carers whether to notify members of the child's extended family, and if so, how.

All local agencies (eg. CAMHS, family centres, LAC nurse, school, etc) who know the child should be contacted and informed of the situation by the allocated social worker. Any information which these agencies can provide to help trace the missing child should be obtained for sharing with the police.

Existing records in these agencies should be checked to obtain any information which may help to trace the missing child, and details should be passed to the police officer undertaking the missing person enquiry.

Where, initially, assessment has been made that the young person is not missing but having an unauthorised absence, this decision should be reviewed frequently if the child does not return. This should be at least, at 8 hourly intervals or more frequently if further information regarding the child's whereabouts/circumstances becomes known. Within office hours the social worker will also be consulted.

Any unauthorised absence lasting for twenty-four hours must be reported to the Designated Manager (Missing Children) by the unit manager/carers. This will generally be regarded as the maximum period for which a young person will be considered to be having an unauthorised absence from their placement. Beyond twenty-four hours, any child or young person still absent will have their status changed to missing.

If there is any suspicion that the child may be removed from the UK jurisdiction, the appropriate Social Care Operational Team Manager should consider whether appropriate legal interventions should be initiated and Medway Council Legal Services should be consulted about options. This can happen at the MAR or initial Strategy meeting or at any point during the young person's absence.

#### (e) Information to be made available to the police

The police, as the lead agency investigating missing children, should be notified as soon as possible when it has been decided that a child is missing. The person making the missing report should supply the police with information from the MISPER Information Form (**Appendix 3**). This form should have the following information:

- The full name of the child, date of birth, sex and ethnic identity
- A description of the child, including height, colour of eyes, clothing, etc
- A recent photograph
- Family addresses and information from family members if they have already been contacted
- Known acquaintances
- Any previous history of absconding
- Name and phone number of social worker
- Details of any court order
- The basis of the risk assessment and classification of "High Risk"
- When the child was last seen, in what circumstances, and by whom
- The name and address of the child's GP and dentist
- Any circumstances which might increase the risk to the child (allergies, medication, medical condition, injury, etc).

#### (f) Planning for return

If a child is missing, the residential manager (with the social worker in office hours) or, in the case of an absence from foster care, the duty officer (or social worker in office hours), if possible in consultation with the parents and police, should commence contingency planning for when the child is located. Such plans should include:

- Whether the child will return to the previous placement
- Arrangements for securing their return
- Whether the police wish to interview the child before return
- Who would be an appropriate "independent person" to talk to the child on return, this would be done in liaison with the Medway Council Missing Children Co-ordinator
- Children who have repeated 'unauthorised' absences should also be offered to talk to an 'independent person' through the Medway Council Missing Children Co-ordinator
- The police will co-operate in the plans developed by Medway Council Children's Social Care to return a child to placement. Children's Social Care will make arrangements for the transportation of the child.

Occasionally, however, especially if the child is over sixteen and is being looked after, the police may have limited power to enforce a return if the child resists this and is not apparently at any risk. Where a missing child is over sixteen and is being looked after by Medway Council, prior

discussions should take place between the police and Medway Council Children's Social Care regarding police/Medway Council Children's Social Care's powers to enforce a return.

#### (g) Missing during external activity of a residential home

If a child goes missing during an external activity arranged by the residential home (or in a similar situation) the person in charge of the activity will:

- Notify the local police in that area
- Notify a duty senior at the residential home or the fostering social worker
- Institute a local search if possible
- Notify the social worker or Out of Hours service.

The duty senior member of staff at the residential home will be responsible for ensuring that the general procedures in relation to a missing child are followed and what further immediate action may be taken. The Looked After Children Service Manager (who has responsibility for residential establishments) must be informed.

The residential home staff will need to maintain communication with the local police where the absence occurred, and the staff will also inform the Assistant Director, Children's Social Care. This will be done via the procedures and escalation policy in the earlier sections.

#### (h) Agencies providing independent advocacy services to looked after children

Looked after children have access to their own Independent Reviewing Officer, can be referred to an Independent Visitor by their social worker (according to need) and can also access an advocate or mentor through the Young Lives Foundation (subject to availability).

The Young Lives Foundation website:- <http://ylf.org.uk/>

#### (i) Other local authority looked after children placed in Medway

For looked after children placed by other local authorities, responsibility for ensuring that a Return Interview takes place rests with the placing authority. The Medway Council Missing Children Co-ordinator will make contact with the relevant placing local authority to inform them of the return of the child or young person to their placement. In some instances, a Return Interview will be undertaken by the Medway Council Missing Children Co-ordinator by pre-arrangement with the social worker from the placing authority.

#### (j) Medway Council looked after children placed outside of Medway

It is the responsibility of the allocated social worker to inform the Medway Council Missing Children Co-ordinator of any instances of the looked after child who is placed outside of Medway, being reported missing to the police.

## 16 Associated resources

Railway Children “Reach” model which looks at before, during and after incidents  
<http://www.railwaychildren.org.uk/our-solution/where-we-work/uk/reach-model/>

Children’s Society Runaways Charter  
<http://www.childrensociety.org.uk/news-views/press-release/new-charter-protect-runaways-missing-children-harm-and-exploitation>

Children's Society Resource Pack  
This pack of teaching resources aims to warn young people about the dangers of running away and looks at the support networks available to those contemplating it. It is targeted at young people between 10-12 years and is available free from The Children’s Society website “My Life 4 Schools” and can be used by both schools or alternative education providers and youth groups. The pack offers lesson plans for teaching National Curriculum PSHE Key Stage 2.  
[http://www.mylife4schools.org.uk/MyLife/teachers/unit\\_8.aspx](http://www.mylife4schools.org.uk/MyLife/teachers/unit_8.aspx)

## 17 Helplines

### ***Missing People***

The Runaway Helpline is a national, freephone, confidential service provided by the charity Missing People.

Phone or text: 116 000

Email: [116000@missingpeople.org.uk](mailto:116000@missingpeople.org.uk)

Website: [www.missingpeople.org.uk/](http://www.missingpeople.org.uk/)

### ***ChildLine***

<http://www.childline.org.uk/pages/home.aspx>

### ***NSPCC ChildLine number 0800 1111***

<http://www.nspcc.org.uk/>

## 18 Administration Forms

Appendix 1: MISPER Risk Assessment Form

Appendix 2: Provisional Risk Assessment

Appendix 3: MISPER Information Form

Appendix 4: Return Interview Form

## Appendix 1 - MISPER Risk Assessment Form

Use this Form to help decide if the young person is missing or having an unauthorised absence.

Score 3 for a YES, 2 for a Not known, 1 for a NO

		Score
Child's name		
Date of Birth		
Home address		
On CP register?		
Legal Status		
Date & Time missing		
Missing from where?		
Circumstances		
History of self harm?		
Physical disability?		
Learning difficulties?		
Medical needs?		
Previously missing?		
Known problems?		
Drug use?		
Alcohol use?		
Substance misuse?		
Young offender?		
Sexual misconduct?		
Being bullied?		
Victim of racial, homophobic, or sexual abuse? Details?		
Pre-placement RA score	Minimum is 4 even if no pre-placement RA exists	
Other information		
	Total Score	

Score 18 or less: *Unless reported circumstances suggest otherwise, this is likely to be an unauthorised absence.*

Score 19+: *Consideration must be given to making this a missing person's report.*

## Appendix 2 - Provisional Risk Assessment (pre-placement)

This form is to be completed by the social worker and should accompany the referral form to Fostering.

Name of child	
Date of birth	
Address	
Telephone	

	Score
1. What is the likelihood of this child absconding from placement? Not likely (1)                      Very likely (2)	
2. What level of supervision/support is to be offered to this child in this regard? Low (1)                      Medium (2)                      High (3)	
3. What is the parental advice on what action they feel should be taken if this child goes missing from placement?	
4. What is the level of risk presented if this child absconds? To themselves?    Low (1)                      Medium (2)                      High (3) To others?                      Low (1)                      Medium (2)                      High (3)	
5. Any known addresses the child may frequent?	
6. Any known adults the child may run to who may place the child at risk?	
7. Additional overall Score by person making the assessment    0 or 1	
Total Risk Assessment Score (minimum is 4)	

*The person making this risk assessment should evaluate items (3), (5) & (6) when determining how to score item (7).*

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Print Name \_\_\_\_\_ Office \_\_\_\_\_

### Appendix 3 - MISPER Information Form

Name, dob, gender and ethnicity	
Description: height, weight, build, complexion, eye colour, hair colour, hair style, clothing worn.	
Family information including addresses	
Known acquaintances	
Previous history of absconding	
Name & telephone number of social worker	
Legal Status /court order	
The basis of the risk assessment and classification of High Risk	
Where last seen, circumstances and by whom?	
Name/tel of GP & Dentist	
Any circumstances which might increase the risk to the child (allergies, medication, medical condition, injury, etc)	
Signature	

## Appendix 4 – Return Interview Form

### MISSING CHILD: RETURN INTERVIEW (SHORT VERSION)

Please complete this short form (typed or handwritten) as fully as possible and return to  
Missing Children Co-ordinator, Attendance Advisory Service to Schools and Academies (AASSA) at  
Woodlands Place, Woodlands Road, Gillingham, ME7 2DT or by email

Young person's name:	
Date of return interview:	
Venue of return interview:	
Name of person conducting return interview:	
Was the young person seen alone?	
Did you offer the young person the opportunity to speak to someone other than yourself, and was this declined?	
Date and time young person reported as missing:	
Date and time young person reported as found:	

<p>Reasons identified by the young person for going missing or running away. Ask questions such as:- <b><i>Was this the first time the young person has run away or has this happened before?</i></b> <b><i>Did the young person run away alone or with others?</i></b> <b><i>What caused them to run away?</i></b> <b><i>Did they try to resolve any problem before it caused them to run away and if so why did this not work?</i></b> <b><i>In their view was there a trigger for them to run, eg. were they running away from something or running to something?</i></b> <b><i>Does this trigger still exist?</i></b></p>
<p>Events during missing episode. Ask questions such as:- <b><i>Where did the young person stay?</i></b> <b><i>How did they get food, washed, clothing, etc.?</i></b> <b><i>Did they get help from anyone whilst they were missing?</i></b> <b><i>How long did they stay away for?</i></b> <b><i>What led them to return or be found?</i></b></p>
<p>Safeguarding. Ask questions such as:- <b><i>Did the young person feel scared at any time for their own safety or the safety of others?</i></b> <b><i>Were they harmed in any way?</i></b> <b><i>Did they need any medical help at any time and if so did they get this and where from?</i></b> <b><i>Did they feel pressurised or bullied into doing things they were not happy about?</i></b> <b><i>Did they offend or were they a victim of crime whilst they were away?</i></b></p>
<p>What next. Ask questions such as:- <b><i>Do the things that caused the young person to run away still exist?</i></b> <b><i>What alternatives to running away might there be?</i></b> <b><i>What would the young person like to change, which would prevent them from running away again?</i></b></p>
<p>What action plan is to be taken to address and support the young person's needs? <b><i>What plans or strategies are in place, or that you as the social worker plan to put in place or feel might be useful to try to prevent or reduce this young person's missing incidents?</i></b> <b><i>Anything else which is relevant from a Social Care perspective with regard to this incident.</i></b></p>

Version 2 – updated August 2014