



Thames Valley Missing Children Protocol

September 2009

This protocol is an agreement between the Local Authorities and Thames Valley Police under the auspices of the nine Thames Valley Local Safeguarding Children Boards and should not be amended without reference to all parties.

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1 - INTRODUCTION

The Government's response (1998) to the **Children's Safeguards Review (1997)** included a commitment to develop guidance on the action to be taken when a child goes missing or runs away. In November 2002, the **Department of Health (DH)** issued statutory guidance **under Section 7 of the Local Authority Social Services Act 1970**. This guidance was detailed in **Local Authority Circular 17 (2002)**, which builds on the report from the **Social Exclusion Unit (SEU, November 2002)**.

The **DH Statutory Guidance (2002)** summarises messages from various research reports and makes recommendations on prevention. This aims to ensure the safety of those that run away, advises on appropriate help on their return and highlights coordinating responsibilities at a local and national level.

Following the **Laming Report (2003)** which enquired into the death of Victoria Climbié the **Every Child Matters Green Paper (September 2003)** highlighted the needs for better communication and collaborative practice with regard to children at risk. This agenda has been taken forward in **The Children Act (2004)**, and the National Indicator set.

The Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) is responsible for coordinating agencies activities aimed at safeguarding children, and ensuring the effectiveness of these activities.

The **DH Guidance** and **SEU Report** requires local agencies to establish systems for early identification of young people likely to run away. This system needs to operate within the framework of **Identification Sharing and Assessment (ISA)** which all local authorities and their partners were required to put in place during 2004/05.

One of the DH key recommendations for local authorities, the police and partners is to:

- "Ensure that multi agency protocols are in place on the action to be taken when children go missing from care and home or runaway".

Why do we need a protocol?

Formal protocols are necessary to clarify the roles and responsibilities of agencies involved in working with children and young people who go missing from home. The following protocol has been created in order to provide a joined-up response to children and young people who are missing from home and/or care or have run away. The protocol relates to all children and young people. This protocol should fit into other locally developed procedures.

These procedures will sit alongside the LSCBs' Child Protection Procedures.

National context

Running away is a dangerous activity that puts children and young people at risk:

- Each year it is estimated that 100,000 young people run away from home or care citing reasons such as abuse, neglect or violence
- 1 in 9 children who have runaway have been forced to leave home by the time they are 16
- 67% of young runaways will stay with a stranger and get hurt
- 25% of runaways will sleep rough
- A significant number of children and young people are from a care background
- 21% will be physically or sexually assaulted
- Running away is associated with truancy and exclusion from school.

Rees, G (2001) "Working with Runaways: Learning from Practice" (London Press).

Risk Factors

Young people who go missing face a number of risks:

- No legitimate income - leading to high risk activities
- Involvement in crime - both as a victim and perpetrator
- Abuse through sexual exploitation
- Deterioration of health
- Missing schooling and education
- Exposure to high risk activities e.g. substance misuse, joyriding
- In some circumstances children have died.

2 - APPLICATION OF THIS PROTOCOL

The protocol covers:

- Children missing from the care of the local authority – unauthorised absence, missing from care with cause for concern or absconders. Specifically :-
 - Children looked after by a local authority in within the Thames Valley Police area.
 - Children looked after by the local authority placed with foster carers within the Thames Valley Police area.
 - Children looked after by the local authority and placed in private establishments or with agency foster carers within the unitary authority boundaries, where compliance with the protocol is specified in the contract or placement agreement.
- Missing from home or run away with cause for concern.
- Children missing from a private fostering arrangement
- Children missing from a residential school

The protocol applies to children and young people below the age of 18. Young people do not stop being vulnerable on their 18th birthday; related missing persons arrangements will apply. For style purposes, the term “children” is used which should be taken to mean all children and young children below 18 years old.

The term ‘parent’ and ‘carer’ are used interchangeably unless specified otherwise. The terms ‘child’ and ‘young person’ are also used interchangeably. Home is the place of normal residence of the child.

MISSING CHILDREN: CATEGORIES

Clearly some children absent themselves for a short period and then return and their whereabouts are known. Sometimes children stay out longer than agreed, either on purpose or accidentally, and may be testing boundaries. This kind of boundary testing is well within the range of expected teenage behaviour, and does not fall under the remit of this protocol.

Police powers are limited and difficulties can arise when missing children are found but do not want to return to their place of residence. Under the Children Act 1989, when there is reasonable cause to believe that the child could otherwise be likely to suffer significant harm Police can take children into police protection under the Children Act 1989, police may remove the child to suitable accommodation which could include the home from where the child originally went missing. The police are not given the power to use force to take children into police protection.

There will be occasions when a child is found in a location that may be considered unsuitable, but where there would not be legal grounds for using a police protection . In such cases, Police and the accountable manager from Children's Social Care will need to liaise to discuss what steps may be necessary to safeguard the child's welfare.

For the purposes of this protocol, four categories of identification are used that call for different responses from the agencies. Local inquiries and risk assessments need to be carried out to determine which category the young person falls into.

A child or young person under the age of 18 years is to be considered 'missing' through:

- **Where the child or young person's location or reason for absence is unknown and/or there is cause for concern because of their vulnerability or there is potential danger to the public.**
- **Missing children currently receiving a service from Children's Social Care, including those subject to a child protection plan.**
- **Missing from care - missing from care with cause for concern; missing in breach of Court Order.**
- **Missing families including children subject of a Child Protection plan.**
(See relevant section of LSCB Child Protection Procedures.)

All such missing children or young people will be considered to be a child at risk under Section 47 of **The Children Act** (1989) (refer to 3.2). This section of the Act gives the power to all appropriate agencies to disclose relevant information to provide a positive outcome for the child or young person/s.

The Children Act 1989 Section 17 defines **a child in need** as follows:

- She/He is unlikely to achieve or maintain or to have the opportunity of achieving or maintaining, a reasonable standard of health or development without the provision for him of services by a local authority.
- Her/His health or development is likely to be significantly impaired, or further impaired, without the provision for him of such services; or
- She/He is disabled.

All statutory partners of the LSCB have a duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of children in need under s11 the Children Act 2004

S10 of the **Children Act** 2004 also places a duty upon the Children's Services Authority and relevant partners to cooperate with a view to improving the well-being of children in the authority's area.

The **Assessment Framework** and **Common Assessment Framework** provide a common language for agencies working with children and families. This assists in defining concerns for a child and thus identifying whether the intervention of Children's Social Care is necessary and appropriate.

3 - ADDITIONAL PROCEDURES & STRATEGY

Specific additional procedures apply if a child or young person is in the care of the local authority (looked after), or is receiving a service from Children's Social Care. see Section 3.1.

Agencies working with children and young people and their families and carers must use well established, comprehensive, transparent and consensual information sharing systems and processes that places the individual at the centre of how their information is used.

This must be delivered in accordance with the:

- **Data Protection Act** (1998)
- **Children Act** (1989)
- **Human Rights Act** (2000)
- **Children Act** (2004).
- **Expectations laid down in National Indicator 71**
- **And other relevant legislation and guidance.**

All information obtained and shared in support of this protocol must be fully recorded within the organisations; management systems and be clearly referenced to the evidence and the information upon which decisions have been made. This must include details for any third parties and full details of all the information/evidence that they have supplied/been given.

Local Area Information Sharing and Assessment Protocols provide the overarching framework that will facilitate this and it should be read in conjunction with this document.

Whilst assessing risk, attention should be given with regard to sexual exploitation in line with **DH Guidance Safeguarding Children and Young People involved in Prostitution: Practice Guidance** (2000), and the trafficking of children in line with [Working Together to Safeguard Children - Safeguarding Children who may have been trafficked](#) (DCSF, 2007)

Common Assessment Framework (CAF) - The aim of the CAF is to identify vulnerable children and young people as early as possible so that risk factors can be identified and tackled, and any protective factors in the child's life strengthened. Through early intervention, further and more serious outcomes for the child may be prevented. The protocol for children who run away or go missing will aid early identification of risk and vulnerability; assist in the investigation into tracing the missing person and make valuable use of any information received from the return to care/home independent interview in preventing further incidents.

Assessment Framework for Children in Need – The Children Act 1989 places a duty on local authorities to provide services to children in need under Section 17 of the Act. These services should work alongside those that respond to children who require protection. In this way the intention is to produce an integrated response to the needs of children which may change over time.

The Assessment Framework seeks to identify and respond to children in need by:

- The clear and consistent identification of need.
- Effective partnership between agencies and with children, young people and their families.
- Holding inter-agency planning meetings to discuss complex cases and formulate care plans with children and their parents.
- Agencies working together to provide a high level of community support for children and young people who have complex medical needs.
- Measurement, planning and review of all children in need services and an evaluation of their effectiveness.

4 – ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES

FOR ALL CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

COMMENT:

Every individual has a duty to inform the authorities if a child is missing

Role of Alerter

Normal teenage behaviour including boundary testing may not come within the category of 'missing' for this protocol. However, each individual child should be subject to a risk assessment based on individual circumstances and vulnerability (Appendix 1).

In considering a child or young person who is considered to be **missing from home** by their parent, carer or guardian, they will apply their own judgement with regard to the overall circumstances of the child or young person and the circumstances in which they have gone missing. If, in their opinion, the absence of the child or young person is more than 'boundary testing' activity, then they will, in normal circumstances, alert the police who will then apply a risk assessment to the report being made and deal accordingly.

Some children missing from home will be **receiving services from Children's Social Care and may be subject to a child protection plan**. In these cases the responsibility to report a child missing remains with the parents or carers. If Children's Social Care assess that the parents failure to notify the Police may lead to the child suffering significant harm they should initiate child protection procedures.

In respect of children and young people **absent from the care of the local authority**, the unauthorised absence/boundary testing behaviour requires assessment by those responsible for the care of the individual in determining when to alert the police.

Where the Alerter is	Action to be taken
Parent and or Carer	The parent/carer must take reasonable steps to find the child and report the matter to the Police. If the child is the subject of a Care Order or is accommodated by the Local Authority, or deemed a Child in Need or subject of a Child Protection Plan (i.e. currently receiving a service from Children's Social Care) the Children's Social Care Department should also be informed by the alerter and confirmed by the police.

This section covers the roles of the different agencies and what they need to do	
All Agencies and Voluntary Organisations	<p>If it comes to the attention of any agency or voluntary organisation that a young person is missing from home they must:</p> <p>Advise the parent/carer of the organisations' duty to ensure the matter is reported to the police who will ensure search, locate and return procedures are activated; and if necessary follow this up by contacting the police to verify the reporting by the parent/carer has occurred.</p> <p>Contact may include any organisation which has been identified under the Missing from Home or Care Protocol; this may include ensuring the young person is offered, where available, an independent interview to assess their needs with regard to advice, information and support; and collate information. This will also enable the local area to develop services to reduce the number of children and young people who go missing from home and/or care in the future.</p>
Residential Care	<p>If the missing child is looked after by the Local Authority a care plan will be in existence which must provide the staff and carers with sufficient information to complete a missing person report and include a current photograph showing a good likeness of the child. Residential staff will make an assessment as to whether this incident falls within the boundary-testing arena and conduct a preliminary search of the premises before notifying the police of the occurrence as a missing report. Children's Social Care staff will then complete an initial assessment of risk, provide a recent photograph of the child, and gather information for the descriptive information form (Appendix 3).</p> <p>Children's Social Care staff will try to ascertain the circumstances under which the child has gone missing, including their state of mind and who they may be with. Details of clothing worn and any thing taken with them will be required</p> <p>See Page 18 for definition of 'missing children.'</p>
Foster Carer	If the missing child is looked after by the Local Authority foster carer a care plan will be in existence which must provide staff and foster carers with sufficient information to complete a missing

	<p>person report and include a current photograph showing a good likeness of the child. The foster carers will make an assessment as to whether this incident falls within the boundary-testing arena and conduct a preliminary search of the premises before notifying the police of the occurrence as a missing report. The foster carer will provide information to allow the police to complete a risk assessment and provide a recent photograph of the child together with information for the descriptive information form (Appendix 3).</p> <p>See Page 18 fro definition of ‘missing children.’</p>
<p>Police</p>	<p>The Police will, upon receiving a report of a child or young person being absent from care or missing from home, carry out pro-active enquiries to locate, trace and return the subject as soon as possible in collaboration with Children’s Social Care.</p> <p>Police will inform all parents / carers of the fact that the case will be notified to Children Social Care.</p> <p>All children or young persons reported missing from home or absent from care are risk assessed by the Police. An officer will attend the home to gather the information required to inform such an assessment. This will then be subject of discussion with a supervisor prior to the initial risk assessment level being assigned. The risk assessment level can be modified throughout the life of the investigation.</p> <p>Thames Valley Police will contact Children Social Care (emergency duty team when out of normal hours) to determine the status of the child re child protection plan. Additionally Thames Valley Police will notify Children Social Care of all missing children each working day.</p> <p>National Guidance defines the levels of risk and the required response as;</p> <p>High Risk (risk posed is immediate and there are substantial grounds for believing that the subject is in danger through their own vulnerability; or may have been the victim of a serious crime; or the risk posed is immediate and there are substantial grounds for believing that the public is in danger) - requires the immediate deployment of police resources and a member of the Basic Command Unit senior management team or similar command level must be involved in the examination of initial inquiry lines and approval of appropriate staffing levels. Such cases should lead to the appointment of an SIO. The press/media strategy and/or close contact with outside agencies.</p> <p>Children assessed as Medium Risk (likely to place the child in danger or they are a threat to themselves or others) requires an active and measured response by police and other agencies in order to trace the missing child and supporting the person reporting.</p> <p>Children assessed as Low Risk (there is no apparent danger to</p>

either the child or the public) – the police will record the information on the PNC, and 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. The missing person's details will be passed to 'Missing People' in line with the national protocol. Low risk missing persons however must be kept under review as risk can increase with the passage of time.

In addition to specific internal actions to locate and trace the missing person, the following times scales are of relevance:

Within 2 hours the Police National Computer will be updated with the subjects details.

- Regular contact with the person reporting (alerter) is to be established as soon as possible and maintained until the child or young person is returned.
- Liaison with partner and other agencies to be established as soon as possible.
- Continual risk assessment to be applied.
- Each Basic Command Unit will have a designated Missing Person Coordinator whom will oversee the investigation and provide a Single Point of Contact for other agencies as the investigation progresses. All initial reports should be made to the Police Enquiry Centre who will record the details on the Missing Person Database.

If Missing for 24 hours: Forward case to Child Abuse Investigation Unit referral manager to review case and consider whether child protection procedures should be invoked.

If Missing up to 5 days:

- Missing People to be informed.
- Close contact with partner and other relevant agencies to be maintained.

If Missing over 5 days:

- In line with Child Protection Procedures a strategy discussion or meeting will be held.
- All missing Children and Young Persons to be considered for High Risk assessment (as per National Definition) if not already assessed at this level before this time lapse.

If Missing over 14 days:

- Police National Missing Persons Bureau to be informed – if not already actioned.

If Missing for over 10 weeks:

- Ensure the Police National Computer report on the subject is extended for further year period (minimum).

Police Action upon Return

Once the child or young person has been located, the police or children's Social Care will carry out an initial 'safe and well' check

	<p>(as agreed between the 2 agencies). This interview will ascertain as far as possible, any child protection issues or concerns relating to the missing child. If child protection concerns are identified a Section 47 Investigation will be initiated, and if a serious criminal offence is identified the police will be notified immediately. Other relevant agencies will be notified as appropriate and the missing person reports will be cancelled within 2 hours.</p> <p>If there are already concerns in existence relating to either: A. The missing individual, the circumstances under which they went missing, their activity whilst missing or potential exposure to danger / risk whilst missing, or, B. The care establishment that the child or young person has been absent from, or their home circumstances, Then a joint interview by the police and children’s Social Care will be arranged.</p>
Health	<p>Children and young people missing from home or care often present themselves for health care at various health services e.g. Accident and Emergency Departments, Walk-in Centres, GP Surgeries.</p> <p>The local Designated Professionals (Doctor, Nurses etc.) will co-ordinate the circulation of missing child alerts. They will ensure that the relevant health services are alerted.</p> <p>If a child initially discloses that they have run away, then the Health Professional needs to refer to “ All agencies, Role of the Alerter” (2.1)</p>
Education	<p>Compliance with locally agreed missing from education protocol.</p>

Note:

1. There is an expectation that parents will report their child missing following reasonable attempts to find the child if they are absent without permission, if not, this may be raised as a child protection issue.
2. If the missing child or young person is subject of a Child Protection Plan or there are any child protection concerns identified at the time of reporting, there must be immediate implementation of child protection procedures (See Appendix 2).
3. Where staff are seconded or working within a partner agency, there needs to be an agreement between the agencies involved about the procedures that should be followed.

5 - RETURNING HOME

If any information is gathered during the course of enquiries which indicates a child or young person will be at risk on their return home, the Police and Children's Social Care must be informed immediately, so that they may take appropriate action. The Police will always give the child or young person opportunity on their own to raise any concern about the carers or care placement.

In all instances of the return of a child or young person who has been reported missing, the Police or Children's Social Care will attend as soon as possible and in any event within 24 hours to perform a return interview; both agencies must agree who should conduct the interview. This interview will ascertain whether the child is safe and well, and ensure as far as possible that it is safe to return to the home or care institution or placement that they have been absent from. The return interview will also explore steps to minimise the likelihood of the child going missing again. If the child is not known to Children's Services but has been missing 3 or more times within a 90 day period, Children's Services will undertake an Initial Assessment of the child's individual and family circumstances, e.g. C.A.F. initial assessment panel discussion as per local procedures.

The Police will then cancel any circulation of the child or young person's details. They will inform all agencies that have been involved in the incident, together with any other appropriate agency identified in the Missing or Runaway from Home or Care Protocol to notify them of the child's return or location.

As detailed above, if there are already concerns **in existence** relating to either:

- A) The missing individual, the circumstances under which they went missing, their activity whilst missing or potential exposure to danger/risk whilst missing, or,
- B) The care establishment that the child or young person has been absent from, or
- C) their home circumstances,

Then a joint interview by the police and Children's Social Care will be arranged.

The young person should be offered access to a further independent interview to assess their needs with regard to advice, information and support and to agree an appropriate response. The appropriate agency, or agency identified to conduct the independent interview, will then make contact with the young person and their carer as soon as is practicable and in any event within 72 hours. The young person's views should be taken into consideration in guiding the decision as to which agency might best offer the necessary independent perspective.

The purpose of this interview will be conducted in order to ascertain sensitively:

- the reason why the child went missing
- if there are any concerns regarding their safety or welfare
- where the child was during the period missing

- to establish if any concerns exist regarding the activity or treatment of the child or young person whilst absent
- and to agree a package of support to meet the needs of the young person.

The interview will be from the perspective of a welfare check, and support for the child should focus on any concerns regarding their home or care environment or influences outside home, which may have caused the child to go missing.

Confidentiality will be respected unless there are welfare, child protection or serious criminal issues. Any relevant concerns will be shared with the appropriate agency (Children's Social Care, Police, Health, Connexions etc).

This assessment will be undertaken using the Framework for Assessment for Children in Need and their Families, after which consultation must take place with the appropriate agencies. If the missing/absence incident is being dealt with under child protection procedures, then a Section 47 core assessment will be completed.

Where there are child protection concerns, these will be reported immediately to the Children's Social Care and the Police.

On the initial return home visit, if the police officer identifies that the young person needs sustained support focussed on individual need, a referral can be made to a Education Welfare Officer or Connexions Personal Adviser if there are no child protection concerns and referral to Children's Social Care is not otherwise indicated.

6 - ADDITIONAL PROCEDURES FOR CHILDREN IN SPECIFIC CIRCUMSTANCES

CHILDREN IN CARE OF THE LOCAL AUTHORITY

PLANNING BEFORE THE EVENT

Each child in care has a care plan based on an assessment of current and future needs, including risks to self or others. The care plan will therefore take account of any risk that the child may go missing in future and any factors which may increase the risk to the child should they go missing. Children's residential and fostering service staff will contribute to this assessment. All information should be included in the placement plan and in the child's care plan. As part of this assessment, it may be appropriate for Children's Social Care to consult with the police and others to gather and share information that may be of relevance.

This assessment of likelihood to run away should include information on the following:

- Likelihood of child going missing
- Child's view on current placement
- Level of supervision/support that care staff propose to provide for the child
- Views of parents/carers on their child's needs and the action that needs to be taken if the child is absent
- Risks of harm to the child and their vulnerability if they run away
- Consideration of any external influences which may result in the child's removal without consent
- Likelihood of the child being harboured

The care plan will remain in the possession of Children's Social Care. It is not a public document. It is not envisaged that the police will need to view the care plan as a matter of course. However, there may well be circumstances when it is necessary to involve the police in aspects of the care planning process to safeguard the child.

All children who are looked after by the local authority will receive an age appropriate information guide, which clearly states:

- What procedure will be followed if they go missing;
- That there is an expectation they will speak to a police officer on their return;
- That where possible they will be offered the opportunity to speak to an independent person identified and approved by each local authority.

When a child arrives at a care home or foster placement it is essential to prepare relevant information in the event the child goes missing. The details of the information required is itemised in Appendix 3 of this document. This information should be updated on a regular basis.

Should a child go missing it is vital to the safe recovery of the child that a recent photograph of the child is made available. The photograph must be a good likeness of the child. Most commonly the photograph will be used by local police officers to help them recognise the child when patrolling or when actively looking for the child at relevant locations. In very serious cases, where the child is believed to be at severe risk, the police and local authority may decide to use the photograph more widely and even involve publishing the photograph to national or local media.

A recent photograph bearing a good likeness to the child will be kept on record by Children's Social Care. If appropriate, the consent of a person with parental responsibility will be sought for a photograph to be used in any subsequent missing person investigation. If possible the agreement of the young person should also be gained, however the refusal of the young person to grant such consent will not prevent the disclosure of any photograph to the police.

7 - NOTIFICATION OF ABSENCE

Comment:

The longer a child is missing the more their level of vulnerability increases.

Definitions

A child looked after may fall into one of three categories when absent from home

- Absent without authority – such as when boundary test activity is occurring, or the location of the child is known but not approved.
- Missing - where the location of the child is not known but no order or requirement resulting from the criminal law is in place (e.g. remands, curfews, tagging, conditions of residence, other bail conditions, PACE detention or ASBOs)
- Absconder - where the location of the child is not known and a legal requirement / order is in force.

Where, initially, the decision is made that this absence is classified as absent without authority, the matter will be reviewed every hour if the child does not return or his/her whereabouts are not known.

Note - It is not usually expected that the first response of a carer in circumstances where a child is late home will be to report the child as missing to the police. It is the duty of a carer to exercise sound judgement as to the status of the missing child. Where the carer is of the view that it is necessary to report the disappearance to the police, but before doing so, it is expected that parents/carers, care home staff and/or foster carers will make reasonable enquiries prior to police involvement. These enquiries could include phone calls, visits to addresses where the child is likely to be etc the carer should, within the constraints of the care setting, take all steps a responsible parent would take, to try to locate the child and to make a careful assessment in accordance with known risks faced by the child.

If the young person's whereabouts are known or suspected, the carer / care home staff will decide whether to allow the young person to remain at that location, albeit temporarily, or to arrange for their return. If the decision is to arrange their return and there is reason to believe that there may be public order difficulties, the police will assist the attending social worker. Police assistance in these circumstances does not mean that the young person is categorised as missing.

Where a child runs away following an incident or occurrence it is not usually expected that the first response of a carer will be to report the child as missing to the police. Before doing so, the carer should, within the constraints of the care setting, take all steps a responsible parent would take, to try to locate the child and to make a careful assessment.

If the absence is considered to fall within these procedures the staff in charge, i.e. child's social worker, duty social worker, Emergency Duty Team social worker, will as soon as practical inform:-

- The child/young person's parents/and those with parental responsibility; and
- The Police.

In every case where, following consultation with the Police, the level of risk to the child is deemed to be high as a result of the risk factors listed at 2.1 then the matter must be brought to the attention of the appropriate Service Manager Children's Social Care and the BCU Commander (Police) or their nominees without delay. They will then decide upon further action and consider the need to inform the Head of Children & Families, Children's Social Care or appropriate equivalent Senior Manager and Head of Operations/Assistant Chief Constable of Police.

Where a missing child is classified as an absconder, police will follow the following procedures. If an absconder is under the age of 16 years, or if the absconding does not involve a power of arrest, the police will treat the case as BOTH a missing person case AND an absconder. This means that it will be necessary to provide detailed information to the police on the missing person form (see Appendix 1 & 3). This will lead to a proactive police investigation managed locally by the police. When the person is traced however, it is likely that they will also be arrested where such a power exists or dealt with by the police in relation to any offence or breach.

If the person is aged 16 or over and is liable to arrest the police will treat the person solely as an absconder and not as a missing person, unless there are grounds to suspect that factors other than the absconders desire to evade justice are involved in their disappearance. If the police treat the case solely as one of absconding, in these circumstances they will actively seek the absconder for arrest. Notwithstanding, absconders in this category must also be reported to the police without delay.

8 – DIVISION OF RESPONSIBILITIES

Before reporting a missing looked after child to the police it will normally fall to carers / staff to

- Thoroughly search any premises and its grounds to verify that the child is in fact absent.(This search will be repeated by police.)
- Search the premises for any important leads (i.e. mobile phones, diaries, letters, notes explaining absence, email and website activity etc), which may inform the investigation and/or assist in protecting or recovering the child.
- Speak with other residents to obtain relevant information about the missing child.
- Make all appropriate telephone enquiries regarding the whereabouts of the child. This will involve trying to contact the child themselves, friends, family, associates, appropriate locations, local hospitals and the local police custody office.
- If the above enquiries fail to recover the missing child, the case will be reported to the police, together with the details of enquiries completed.

Even after reporting a child missing, the carer remains responsible for the child in their care. This responsibility is not absolved when the child has been reported missing to the police.

Carers and the child's social worker will be responsible for liaising with the police, taking an active interest in the investigation and passing on all information, which may help to inform the investigation and assist in protecting the child while absent.

Carers and the child's social worker should continue to make appropriate enquiries with other residents or by telephone with all persons who may be able to assist with the investigation unless they are requested not to do so by the police. All information gleaned from these enquiries should be passed to the police.

Once a child is reported missing to the police, the police will have primacy in respect of the investigation to trace the child.

In certain circumstances the police may need to revisit the duties initially performed by carer/ staff. When necessary they will do so in liaison with appropriate person and will do so sensitively, causing as little disruption as possible to others at the premises.

Throughout the process in this protocol, residential carers and social workers must keep a full record of all actions taken and messages received and given. Police will likewise keep a record of all aspects of the investigation.

In some cases, particularly where a missing child is felt to be especially vulnerable or where they have been missing for a long period of time, it may be necessary to publicise the case via the media. Such an approach is not routine but is usually a response to very serious concerns for the child's safety. Either Carers or the police may

suggest such an approach. Normally, such decisions to publicise will be jointly made, and where appropriate, in consultation with parents. However, for operational reasons primacy over such decisions must lie with the police.

If the case falls within the criteria for 'Child Rescue Alert' (e.g. child abduction) then any decision to publicise the case is likely to be urgent. It will be made in accordance with nationally agreed procedures by a police officer of the rank of Detective Superintendent. Where practicable, the appropriate social care department will be consulted in advance.

If the whereabouts of a missing child are known or suspected, it is the responsibility of the carer / staff to arrange for the young person's return. However, Thames Valley Police may in exceptional circumstances assist in the case of local recovery and transport of vulnerable children.

When a child or young person returns to a care placement, it is the responsibility of Social Services to notify any person notified of the missing episode (e.g. parents.)

INFORMATION TO BE MADE AVAILABLE

When reporting a missing looked after child to the Police, the residential social worker, social worker or duty social worker will use the **Personal Descriptive Form** (Appendix 3) in order to enable the Police to appropriately investigate the matter. In assessing the significance of a child's absence, all staff must apply information already agreed and incorporated into the child's information contained in their Looked After Children's Materials including :-

- ❖ The age of the child;
- ❖ The legal status of the child;
- ❖ Previous behaviour and history;
- ❖ The emotional needs of the child, e.g. whether there has been any variation in their mood or whether they have expressed any intention to harm themselves or others;
- ❖ Behaviour of the child as influenced by peer groups or others;
- ❖ Behaviour of the child is perceived as running to/away from someone/something;
- ❖ The risk of offending;
- ❖ The risk that the child may be targeted for sexual or criminal exploitation, forced marriage, or female genital mutilation.

INFORMING THE PRESS

It is the responsibility of the Police to advise the media regarding a child or young person missing from local authority accommodation, with close co-operation from the key agencies who have safety and welfare concerns. Unless considered urgent, this will be arranged at local level, by direction of the Area Commander (or Senior Investigating Officer). Any decision to inform the press or media will, again unless urgent, be made in

consultation with the Head of Children & Families or equivalent, Children's Social Care and Senior Managers from appropriate agencies, together with prior warning in order to allow the parents/carers to be informed.

RECORDING

Throughout the process identified within this protocol a full report must be kept of all actions taken and messages received/given. In the case of a child missing from a residential establishment, this will be made in their log book. In the case of a child missing from a foster placement the carer should record in their incident/events note pad.

There should always be an entry on the child's electronic social care record about the incident, this may include a copy of log or note pad entries.

The Police will record all details of contacts and enquiries made as a part of the investigation into tracing, locating and the return of the child or young person.

Each agency will be required to nominate a designated officer who will be responsible for information sharing during the course of any individual investigation.

9 - THE RETURN

COMMENT:

The purpose of the protocol is not just to return the child/ young person to a safe environment and discover what happened to them whilst they were missing but also to ascertain the reason for their leaving in the first place. This may not always be apparent nor may the true reason immediately be disclosed by the child/ young person. It may take some time to ascertain and requires professionals to continue to work closely.

This interview will need to comply with the standards laid out in National Index 71. (See Appendix 6.)

Children In Care

- ◆ Professionals should carefully consider the circumstances of the 'return' of the looked after child/ young person to ensure that they are not being placed in a position of potential risk. If a child returns to a care setting of their own accord then this may be seen to be a safe setting. If the child is 'found' then any signs of reluctance on the part of the child to return to their care setting should form part of a risk assessment before a child is 'returned' or accommodated elsewhere. (See Appendix 2 – Activation of Child Protection Procedures).
- ◆ Parent/Carer, Police, Social Worker, School, Health Services, Connexions Personal Adviser and all others informed of the absence will be advised of the child's return without delay by the lead agency that first locates the child or young person.
- ◆ On the child's return his/ her health condition should be discussed with the child and his/ her parents/carers immediately and an offer made to arrange medical attention if necessary. There may be some children who should always be seen by a doctor e.g. with diabetes or young pregnant teenager. If the nature of the need for medical attention is, or has the potential to be, part of a 'Child Protection' investigation then those procedures should be implemented.
- ◆ The child will be reminded that they will be visited by a suitable professional who has been identified, the purpose of this interview being the same as the returning home interview for children in the community (see 2.2) to establish safety and welfare.
- ◆ All notifications of the return of the child under these procedures will be sent to the appropriate agency. Within 5 working days they will offer the child/ young person an interview to assess their needs with regards to advice, information and support.
- ◆ Even in cases where 'Child Protection' or 'Child at risk of prostitution' Procedures are not invoked consideration will be given to the need to convene a 'Professionals' Meeting' to consider the circumstances of the child going missing, their return and the events during the intervening period, and any identified criminality that may have occurred. This meeting may raise sufficient concerns whereby 'Child Protection' or associated procedures are activated and consideration will be given to convening a LAC review (for Looked After Children). The child's LAC review meeting will be

convened as soon as possible after the child's return and any issues around the child going missing will be discussed and addressed, where possible, within the review of the child/ young persons 'Care Plan'.

- ◆ All 'looked after children' will have a named Personal Adviser who should be invited to the Professionals Meeting. The Personal Adviser should also attend the LAC review and any subsequent Personal Education Planning meetings for young people aged 16+.

CHILDREN RECEIVING A SERVICE FROM CHILDRENS SOCIAL CARE

This section refers to children receiving a service from children's social care including those subject to a child protection plan.

These children remain the responsibility of parents or carers, but Children's Social Care must consider child protection procedures. If the child is subject to a child protection plan, a section 47 enquiry must be carried out.

PRIVATELY FOSTERED CHILDREN

Privately fostered children are particularly vulnerable. A privately fostered child is someone being cared for by someone who is not a close relative (a grandparent, brother, sister, uncle or aunt). The parents, carers and local authority has specific duties but the child is not in care. Privately fostered children are often from abroad, or live in informal arrangements with friends. If they are reported missing or assessed as being at risk of going missing their particular needs must be considered and appropriate services offered. See local guidance for further information.

CHILDREN WHO HAVE BEEN TRAFFICKED

The organised crime of child trafficking into the UK has become an issue of considerable concern to all professionals with responsibility for the care and protection of children. Such children are particularly at risk of going missing because of the secret and illegal nature of trafficking. Some children will go missing because they have been forced to move by traffickers, others will choose to go missing because they fear the consequences of return to their country of origin or reprisals from traffickers. Children who have been trafficked should receive not less a response than any other missing child and their particular needs must be addressed when they are found. See local guidance for further information

CHILDREN SUBJECT TO "HONOURED-BASED" VIOLENCE AND FORCED MARRIAGE

A forced marriage, where a marriage is conducted without the consent of both parties, is an issue that can affect young people as well as adults and is illegal. It can be related to "honour-based" violence, which also affects young people. Young people in such circumstances are particularly vulnerable and may go missing from home or care.

These young people may be running away from home because they fear forced marriage or “honour-based” violence, or they may be missing from school or elsewhere because they have taken somewhere, often abroad, to marry against their will. Where it is suspected that a missing young person may have been or about to be coerced into a forced marriage or subject to “honour-based” violence, local guidance on this issue must be consulted in addition to this protocol.

The term “honour-based” violence is used in this document as it is widely understood. It is never acceptable and there is never honourable.

CHILDREN AT RISK OF SEXUAL EXPLOITATION

Many child or young people who go missing are subject to sexual exploitation. They may go missing because of the exploitation or they may become involved after they have run away. Child sexual exploitation involves more than prostitution and includes all young people, up to the age of 18 involved in exploitative situations, contexts and relationships where the young person receives something (e.g. food, accommodation, drugs, alcohol, cigarettes, affection, gifts, money) as a result of them performing, and/or others performing on them, sexual activities. Local guidance must be consulted alongside this protocol.

R U Safe?:

The service works with young people in Buckinghamshire to promote their safety, healthy relationships, reduce risky behaviour, increase self worth and self esteem, so as to raise their aspirations for the future.

R U Safe? aim to reach out to vulnerable young people by providing an holistic package of care, delivered through assertive outreach.

The R U Safe? service receives weekly referrals from the Police for young people who have been reported missing, and then return home.

The missing coordinator will go through the referrals to ascertain levels of risk and in response will send out letters to both the young person and their parent/carer. Low risk letters sent out incorporate information on local services available as well as tips on staying safe. When referrals present as high risk the worker will send letters out and then follow through by making contact with the young person by text or phone to arrange meeting.

Once contact has been made with the young person it is important that positive relationships are developed.

An assessment is completed to identify their needs and a care plan put into place to ensure that appropriate interventions can be provided, and are available in the community.

See Appendix 7.

10 - ALL CHILDREN – LONGER or SIGNIFICANT ABSENCES

COMMENT:

The longer a child is missing the more vulnerable and exposed they are to risks such as sexual exploitation, poor health, violence and sexual assaults.

Whilst the child remains missing/absent, his/her case will remain “open” and allocated to a Social Worker unless decided to the contrary by the Director of Children’s Services in discussion with the Thames Valley Police Protecting Vulnerable People Superintendent (or nominee).

All Police missing person’s files will remain “live” until the person is traced and assessed as being safe and well unless decided by the Thames Valley Police Protecting Vulnerable People Superintendent (or nominee) in discussion with the Director of Children’s Services.

Police Area Co-ordinators will pro-actively manage individual cases and the PNC missing report will be renewed every three years if necessary.

It is the duty of the Police missing persons coordinator to maintain regular contact with parents and carers.

MONITORING AND PREVENTION

This section provides the strategic framework for a prevention. Each area has different needs and will need to establish operational systems for carrying out this strategy, but will need to liaise with other LSCBs and constituent partner agencies as missing children frequently cross local authority boundaries.

Children’s Social Care and Police have joint responsibility for monitoring the effectiveness of this protocol. Monitoring will take place with regular meetings to review local area missing children data provided by the Police. The police will present an annual strategic monitoring report to the LSCB.

This meeting will also monitor individual children who have been missing with a view to preventing repeat incidents.

Any child who police or children’s social care consider to be at high risk of going missing should be considered at the monitoring meeting. All children who go missing on three occasions in a 90-day period will be discussed at the monitoring meeting.

This meeting needs to consider issues outlined in National Indicator 71.

Any agency can call an emergency meeting to discuss a specific child at any time.

Issues to be addressed in the strategic monitoring reports should include:

- Incidents of missing person's episodes (Police to provide report)
- Identification of missing families of concern – All agencies.
- Develop strategies for care, enforcement, prevention and intelligence in the case of each child or family
- Location – are children more likely to be absent from some placements or areas than others? Where do they run to?
- Identification of cases suitable for use of Police Powers under Section 2 Child Abduction Act 1984 See forms held in Appendix 5
- Child protection implications
- Actions when children return
- Practice and procedural issues (quality assurance).

Other agencies will be invited to join this meeting as appropriate.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1	Preliminary Risk Assessment
APPENDIX 2	Activation of Child Protection Procedures
APPENDIX 3	Personal Descriptive Form
APPENDIX 4	Return Interview
APPENDIX 5	Section 2 Child Abduction Act sample statements and notices
APPENDIX 6	National Indicator 71
APPENDIX 7	Actions to be taken when sexual exploitation is suspected.

APPENDIX 1

Preliminary Risk Assessment

Preliminary Risk Assessment

Comment:

Agencies may not have sufficient information about a child or young person to make an effective assessment of risk and should consider liaising with other agencies e.g. Children's Social Care, Police, Connexions.

If it comes to the attention of any organisation within the local area that the child or young person is missing from home and/or care, they should immediately undertake a risk assessment. The police require all persons with parental responsibility to make a risk assessment.

Factors to be considered should include:

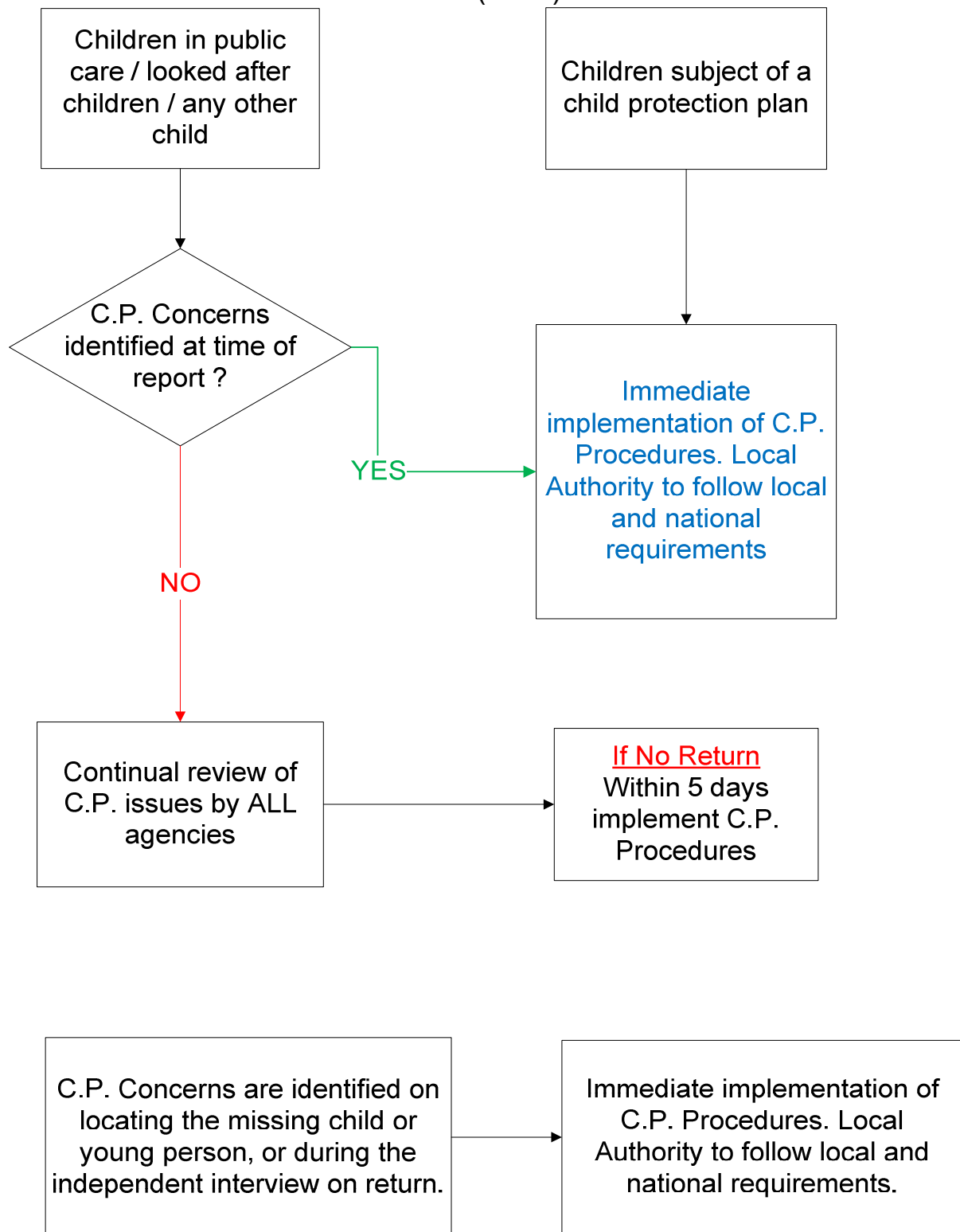
- risk of abduction
- forced marriages
- bullying
- involved in violent homophobic / racist incident immediately prior to disappearance.
- medical considerations, e.g. Epilepsy/diabetes
- age of the child
- Legal Status of the child
- history of self-harm and/or mental health issues
- suffered harm when missing previously
- home environment/family history
- previous behaviour and history
- emotional needs e.g. whether there has been any variation in their mood, or whether they have expressed any intention to harm themselves or others
- behaviour of the child as influenced by peer groups or others
- whether the child is perceived to be running to/away from something
- risk of offending
- the risk the child may be targeted for sexual exploitation
- time of day/night
- inclement weather
- pregnant teenager/teenage parent
- physical/learning difficulties
- previous history or patterns of going missing or running away

- any agreement reached regarding staying out beyond the usual time
- where the child is believed to be staying
- his/her likely associations while missing
- state of mind at time of going missing
- any other particular circumstances at the time of the incident
- concerns around sexual exploitation
- length of time missing
- children on the Child Protection Register or subject to care order
- drug or alcohol issues
- employment problems
- financial problems
- school / college problems
- normally resident in UK and believed to have gone abroad
- normally resident abroad and gone missing in UK
- any other relevant factors.

APPENDIX 2

Activation of Child Protection Procedures

Activation of 'Child Protection' (C.P.) Procedures



APPENDIX 3

Personal Descriptive Form

Descriptive Form

THE CHILD OR YOUNG PERSON SUBJECT OF THIS DOCUMENT IS TO BE INFORMED THAT THE INFORMATION BEING RECORDED WILL ONLY BE USED IN THE EVENT THAT THEY ARE MISSING / ABSENT FROM THE CARE OF THE LOCAL AUTHORITY. THIS DOCUMENT IS TO BE TREATED AS CONFIDENTIAL AND STORED SECURELY WITHIN THE CARE ESTABLISHMENT.

PERSONAL DETAILS:

Surname _____

Forenames _____

Title: _____ **Sex:** _____

Date of birth: _____ **Birthplace:** _____

Other Names:
Maiden Name _____

Any other name:

Surname: _____ Forenames: _____ Nickname etc: _____

Care Placement Details	
Placement Date	
Legal Status	

**Occupation/
Pupil:** _____
**Employer/School/college details
&address** _____

**Home/
Parental Address:** _____
Postcode: _____

Telephone numbers:
Home Tel. No: _____ Bus Tel. No: _____ Mobile Tel. No: _____

**Significant illness or medical needs
(include pregnancy if appropriate)**

Doctor's details:

DESCRIPTIVE DETAILS

Height: _____

Build:

Slim

Medium

Well Built

Ethnicity:			
A White	B Mixed		
• British	• White and Black Caribbean		
• Irish	• White and Black		
• Any other white background	• White and Asian African		
	• Any other Mixed Background		
C Asian or Asian British	D Black or Black British		
• Indian	• Caribbean		
• Pakistani	• African		
• Bangladeshi	• Any other Black Background		
• Any other Asian Background			
E Chinese or other ethnic group			
• Chinese			
• Any other			

Body Hair:

Shaven

Eyebrows

Plucked

Shaven

Straight

Tramlines

Pierced

Facial Hair:

Bushy Stubble

Clean Shaven Long Sideburns

Curly Greying

Full Beard Other

Goatee

Head Hair:

Very Long Straight Mohican Other

Shoulder Length Curly Dyed

Collar Length Wavy Streaked

Short Afro Caribbean Thinning

Cropped Pony Tail Greying

Shaven Dreadlocks

Hair Colour:

Black Auburn Grey Purple

Dark Brown Red White Blue

Brown Fair Multi Pink

Lt Brown Blonde Streaked Orange

Mousy Sandy Yellow Green

Glasses:

No Glasses Contact Lenses Glasses

Frame Description:

Glasses Use:

Constant Driving Reading

Complexion:

Fair Freckled Pale Tanned Mature

Distinguishing Features:

Pierced: _____

Mark /Scar: _____

Tattoos: _____

Other: _____

Accent General:

English Irish Other Scottish Welsh

Accent Specific:

Asian <input type="checkbox"/>	French <input type="checkbox"/>	Liverpool <input type="checkbox"/>	North West <input type="checkbox"/>	Spanish <input type="checkbox"/>
Australian <input type="checkbox"/>	German <input type="checkbox"/>	London <input type="checkbox"/>	Northern <input type="checkbox"/>	West Country <input type="checkbox"/>
Birmingham <input type="checkbox"/>	Glasgow <input type="checkbox"/>	Midland <input type="checkbox"/>	Oriental <input type="checkbox"/>	West Indian <input type="checkbox"/>
East Anglia <input type="checkbox"/>	Italian <input type="checkbox"/>	North East <input type="checkbox"/>	Southern <input type="checkbox"/>	Yorkshire <input type="checkbox"/>

Accent Other: Give details: _____

Noticeable Jewellery: _____

Clothing worn and belongings taken at material time (always relevant to police investigation) :

Time and location last seen _____

Person last seen by (inc telephone number of this person) _____

ANY RELEVANT BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Circumstances under which child has gone missing. Also list any previous episodes and circumstances of missing/absent from care etc:- _____

Any known Associates, Siblings, Friends or Places Frequented (important for police investigation) :

Any access to vehicles:

Reg. No. _____ Make _____ Model _____

Colour _____ Type _____ User _____

Reg. No. _____ Make _____ Model _____

Colour _____ Type _____ User _____

PHOTOGRAPHS

Photograph taken on admission and attached **Y/N**

Recent photograph available **Y/N** (If yes where located)

Any other information: (Including any Illnesses or Medication or details of any dependants assumed also missing):

(Use Continuation sheets were necessary)

Name of person completing form: _____

Date Taken: _____

THIS FORM IS NOT TO BE REGARDED OR USED FOR GATHERING OF INFORMATION ABOUT THE PERSON DETAILED WITHIN IT FOR ANY PURPOSE OTHER THAN TO RETAIN A RECORD FOR USE BY RELEVANT

AGENCIES IN ORDER TO LOCATE THE PERSON IF THEY ARE MISSING /ABSENT FROM THE CARE OF THE LOCAL AUTHORITY.

ANY CONCERNS REGARDING ACTIVITY OF THE INDIVIDUAL OR ANY RISK THEY MAY BE AT / CAUSE IS TO BE DOCUMENTED AND CONSIDERED IN LINE WITH ESTABLISHED PROTOCOLS.

APPENDIX 4

Return Interview

Missing Person Return Interview Record

YP Full Name		MPDB Number		
Sex M / F	Date Reported Missing / /	Date Returned / /	Legal Status of YP	
YP Age				
Disability	Ethnicity			

Why did you go missing?

Do you feel safe now you are back at home/at the children's home/with your carers?

Did anybody assault you, abuse you or threaten to harm you whilst you were missing?
Are you afraid of anybody?

When you were missing what happened?

Where did you stay

Who did you meet

Who returned you home

What might have made you safer when you were missing?

What do you feel can be done to support you now? (Someone to talk to, speak to parents/school etc.)

What is the likelihood of you going missing again?

Recommendations for further action

Child referral
and when Referral

YES

NO

If YES who has made the Child Protection referral and when

No further action- If so why not

Does YP agree with the decision and written content of the report?

YES **NO**

Child/YP signature: _____

WORKERS: _____

AGENCY: _____

DATE: _____

Please now email a copy of this record to the local Thames Valley Police missing person coordinator and Children’s Social Care

Guide to Return Interview

This form is a guide for the return interview.

It has several purposes, but it is important to remember that the welfare of the child is paramount and the prime purpose of the interview is to safeguard the child.

Other purposes are:

- To ensure the child is safe in his/her placement (home, care etc):
- To investigate how the child's welfare can be safeguarded and promoted in the future:
- To prevent further episodes of the child going missing;
- To promote safe behaviour if the child does go missing again;
- To obtain intelligence to facilitate finding the child if he/she go missing again;
- To assess whether child protection procedures should be initiated;
- To decide whether a criminal investigation should be initiated in respect of the child going missing, actions done to the child missing while missing

The list is not exhaustive.

The interview should take place as soon as possible after the return home.

The interviewer should conduct the interview in a sensitive matter, and as far as is possible not with carers. The interviewer should be mindful that the child may be running away from an abusive situation and conduct the interview accordingly.

The form should not be rigorously adhered to. It is a guide to help the young person share information and therefore the interviewer should use their discretion to deviate from this guide.

APPENDIX 5

Section 2 Child Abduction Act 1984 Sample statements and notices.

On (date)

You,.....
.....
(insert full name & DoB of person receiving notice)

are now receiving an official warning that the parent / carer of

.....(insert full name &
DoB of young person)

being a child under the age of 16 years has absolutely banned outright

with no exceptions
(insert full name of young person)

from visiting any address which you reside, or you are at, and / or from associating with you at
any place. If you subsequently allow

.....(insert full name of
young person) to be at an address at which you reside or are at and / or associate with this child
you will be arrested for Child Abduction.

You have now been shown a photograph of

.....(insert full name of
young person)

PC.....
(insert name and number of officer serving form)

Child Abduction carries a maximum sentence of seven years imprisonment

:

THIS FORM MUST BE FAXED THROUGH TO THE PNC BUREAU AS SOON AS POSSIBLE
TOGETHER WITH THE SUPPORTING MG11 STATEMENT.

**Please ensure you include details of all vehicles known to be used by the ‘offender’ and all addresses
markers will be placed against the PNC for ANPR purposes. (enter on a separate sheet if necessary)**

1. National Insurance Number:

2. Passport Number:

3. Driving Licence number:

4. Known associates:.....
.....
.....
.....

5. Offender’s address (s):
.....
.....
.....

6. Offender’s vehicle (s):
.....
.....
.....
.....

Section 2 – Child Abduction Act 1984

On

You,....., are now receiving an official warning that the parent / carer of being a child under the age of 16 years has **absolutely banned outright with no exceptions** from visiting any address which you reside, or you are at, and / or from associating with you at any place.

If you subsequently allow to be at an address at which you reside or are at and / or associate with this child you

will be regarded as taking or detaining the child and you will be liable to be arrested for Child Abduction.

You have now been shown a photograph of

P.C

Child Abduction carries a maximum sentence of seven years imprisonment

Signature

Signature witnessed by

Signature

Signature witnessed by

Witness Statement

(CJ Act 1967, s.9 MC Act 1980, s.s.5A (3a) and 5B MC Rules 1981, r.70)

Statement of

Age if under 18 (if over 18 insert "over 18"). Occupation

This statement (consisting of page(s) each signed by me) is true to the best of my knowledge and belief and I make it knowing that, if it is tendered in evidence, I shall be liable to prosecution if I have wilfully stated in it anything which I know to be false or do not believe to be true.

Dated the day of 20

Tick if witness evidence is visually recorded

(supply witness details on rear)

Signature

I am a Police Officer in the Thames Valley Police.

Athrs on I attended and spoke to the defendant

I formally cautioned her and issued a warning notice to under Section 2 of the Child Abduction Act 1984.

I also verbally explained the notice and confirmed that she understood it.

The notice was in relation to the child,

I also showed a photograph of that child.

She replied

Signature

Signature witnessed by

Witness Statement

(CJ Act 1967, s.9 MC Act 1980, s.s.5A (3a) and 5B MC Rules 1981, r.70)

Statement of

Age if under 18 (if over 18 insert "over 18"). Occupation

This statement (consisting of page(s) each signed by me) is true to the best of my knowledge and belief and I make it knowing that, if it is tendered in evidence, I shall be liable to prosecution if I have wilfully stated in it anything which I know to be false or do not believe to be true.

Dated the day of 20

Tick if witness evidence is visually recorded
(supply witness details on rear)

Signature

I am the parent / carer of who is a child under the age of sixteen years, date of birth being.....

Athrs on I have absolutely banned outright, with no exceptions from visiting any address at which is residing or at and / or from associating with at any place whatsoever.

I am the person with lawful control over and can say that has no lawful authority to take, remove, keep or detain from my lawful control.

I believe that by making this statement I am acting in the best interest of and support Police action.

I also consent to the use of a photograph of when the Police issue a warning to

Signature

Signature Witnessed by

APPENDIX 6

National Indicator 71

National Indicator 71: missing from Home and Care

Criteria

Introduction

1. Young people (up to the age of 18) who run away from home or care, or who feel that they have had to leave, face a particular range of risks from having to find alternative places to stay and means to survive. Often, they are extremely vulnerable: we know that 1 in 6 of these young people will sleep rough, and that 1 in 12 will be hurt or harmed whilst they are away.
2. Therefore, this indicator has been introduced to raise local area awareness to create a focus on the provision of services to this vulnerable group of young people. The indicator will support joint working between the police and Children's Services and other relevant bodies, to support local strategic partnerships and children's trusts in establishing the scale of running away in their local area and to put services in place to respond accordingly and effectively.
3. The indicator asks local areas to assess whether appropriate systems, procedures and protocols are in place to identify the levels of running in their area, and whether the response to instances of running is appropriate to the needs of young people who run away. The intention is not to ask local areas to provide information about the level of running, or the detail of their service provision, rather to provide a picture of the extent to which appropriate services are provided. This information should also be used to assist local Safeguarding Children's Boards and Children's Trusts to improve local service provision for runaways, and support them in achieving the five Every Child Matters outcomes.
4. It is recognised that this indicator is focused on service provision rather than outcomes for young people. At present, the recording and sharing of data at a local level can be so patchy, that it would be impossible to have an indicator based on this data (as a proxy for outcomes). It is hoped that the improvements in processes and service provision that this indicator will bring about will allow a move to a more outcome focused indicator in 2011.
5. Local areas will have the opportunity to explain why they have given themselves a particular score in the "comment" box. Whilst using this box is not compulsory, local areas may wish to use it to explain why they have given themselves a particular score, especially where failure to meet a one or two points in the criteria has prevented them achieving a higher score, where the majority of their provision is at a higher level. They also may wish to use it to set out how they plan to improve their services, and therefore improve their score in the future. This will help DCSF to understand the provision available in the area, and identify how they can support the local area to improve that

provision, and consequently their indicator score. Existing inspection procedures will monitor whether evidence supports the awarding of such scores.

6. In some instances, we have indicated where a different response to children missing from home when compared to children missing from care is acceptable to achieve a certain score. Where this has not been made explicit in the criteria, then the expectation applies to all children and young people. In these instances you should judge yourselves against the provision in place for children missing from home.

1) Local information about running is gathered

To score 0:

- A child welfare report is not sent by the police to children's services or a representative agent for **all** children missing from home; or in the case of children missing from care, it is not sent to an identified receiving point. No expectation that this will change within the next three months.
- Aggregate data in relation to missing children is not collated or only collated from certain groups of missing children and there are no plans in place to change this within the next three months.
- Local area, through the local Safeguarding Children's Board, or the Children's Trust Board is not able to identify the number of :
 - incidences of running;
 - individuals who have run
 - individuals who have run on two or more occasions

and there is no expectation that this will change in the next three months.

To score 1:

- A child and young person referral¹ is sent by the police to children's services or an appropriate representative agent for **all** children missing from home, and to an identified receiving point for children missing from care. Although there is no written protocol for the timescales of such reports in place.
- Aggregate data about the profile of running in the area is collated and shared on a regular basis between police and Children's services.

¹ Different police forces may know this referral by different guises. Alternative names include a juvenile referral form or a child welfare referral. However, all polices should have a mechanism in place to alert local authorities when a young person in their area (whether they are looked after or not) comes to the police's attention.

- Local area, through the local Safeguarding Children’s Board, or the Children’s Trust Board is able to identify (or will be able to identify in the next three months) the number of:
 - incidences of running;
 - individuals who have run;
 - individuals who have run on two or more occasions;

but this is not necessarily able to be broken down by the child’s age, gender and ethnicity, and whether the child is running from home or care.

Local areas may award themselves a 1 if they meet all but one of the criteria above, and have a clear action plan in place setting out how they will fulfil the remaining criterion within the next three months.

To score 2:

- A child and young person referral is sent by the police to children’s services or an appropriate representative agent for **all** children missing from home, and to an identified receiving point for children missing from care and there is a written protocol in place setting out the required timescales for such reports to be made enabling services to co-ordinate and act quickly to secure the location and safeguard the child.
- Information is shared, on a regular basis, between the police and children’s services enabling them to identify the following patterns where a child has:
 - gone missing on two or more occasions;
 - been missing for more than 48 hours;
 - has been involved as a victim or perpetrator criminal behaviour whilst missing.
- Referrals from the police are supplemented by information from other statutory partners. Relevant information sharing protocols are in place to support this.
- Aggregate data about the profile of running in the area is collated between police and Children’s services and shared.
- From this data the local area, through the local Safeguarding Children’s Board, or the Children’s Trust Board is able to identify the number of :
 - incidences of running;
 - individuals who have run
 - individuals who have run on two or more occasions

This information can be able to be broken down by the child's age and gender, and whether the child is running from home or care.

- Local area, through the local Safeguarding Children's Board, or the Children's Trust Board is able to identify:
 - children's homes that have particularly high levels of missing report in relation to other homes in the area;
 - the proportion of young people who are hurt or harmed whilst they are away; and
 - the proportion of young people who have committed an offence whilst they are away.

Local areas may award themselves a 2 if they meet all but one of the criteria above, and have a clear action plan in place setting out how they will fulfil the remaining criterion within the next three months.

To score 3:

- A child and young person referral is sent by the police to children's services or an appropriate representative agent (where there is an identified receiving point) for **all** children missing from home or care and there is a written protocol in place setting out the required timescales for such reports to be made enabling services to co-ordinate and act quickly to secure the location and safeguard the child.
- Information is shared, on a regular basis, between the police and children's services enabling them to identify the following patterns where a child has:
 - gone missing on two or more occasions;
 - been missing for more than **24** hours;
 - has been involved as a victim or perpetrator criminal behaviour whilst missing;
 - known mental health issues; or
 - known risk of sexual exploitation; or
 - known risk of contact with persons posing risk to children; or
 - incidents that have generated assessment of needs via Common Assessment Framework, S47 or S17 of the Children Act 1989.
- Police information is supplemented by information from other statutory partners, and where appropriate, the voluntary sector. Relevant information sharing protocols are in place to support this.
- Aggregate data about the profile of running in the area is collated between Police, Children's services and other partner agencies and shared at least every three months.

- From this data, the local area, through the local Safeguarding Children's Board, or the Children's Trust Board is able to identify:
 - incidences of running;
 - individuals who have run
 - individuals who have run on two or more occasions
 - incidents that have generated a case conference or professionals meeting.

This information can be broken down by the child's age, gender **and ethnicity**, whether the child is running from home or care, and in the case of children running from care, whether the child is in an out of area placement.

- Local area, through the local Safeguarding Children's Board, or the Children's Trust Board is able to identify:
 - 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 located;
 - the proportion of young people who are hurt or harmed whilst they are away; and
 - the proportion of young people who have committed an offence whilst they are away.

2) Local needs analysis based information gathered about levels or causes of running are in place.

To score 0:

- No procedure is in place for the collecting, sharing, and analysis of data collected by the police and other statutory partners in relation young people who run away from home or care, and no action is taken as a result.

To score 1:

- Procedure is in place for the collecting and sharing of data collected by the police and children's services (or will be in place in 3 months), **but** the data is not frequently analysed and reviewed by the local safeguarding children board, or the local Children's Trust Board. This collection and analysis of data may only cover particular wards or areas within the local authority.

To score 2:

- 3) Procedure is in place for the collecting and sharing of data collected by the police, children's services and other partners, the data is frequently analysed and reviewed by this group informing patterns and trends in practice but not frequently analysed and reviewed by the local safeguarding children board, or the local Children's Trust Board. This collection and analysis of data covers the whole of the local authority area.

To score 3:

- 4) Procedure is in place for the collecting and sharing of data collected by the police, children's services and other partners, it is frequently analysed and reviewed by the local safeguarding children board, or the local Children's Trust Board, and it is used to inform a proactive response to running and patterns of running in the local area. This collection and analysis of data covers the whole of the local authority area.

3) Local procedures to meet the needs of runaways agreed

To score 0:

- No agreed protocols for responding to all instances of running, and no existing multi-agency response to the needs of runaways in place. No evidence that this will change within the next six months.
- Welfare return interviews not conducted and a child's welfare assessment is limited to the police safe and well check. No plans to implement systematic return interviews within the next six months
- There is no risk assessment in place for children missing from home or care and as such all incidents are given the same response.

To score 1:

- Runaways services are in place but not necessarily informed by a local needs analysis.
- Risk assessment tool is not in place but is planned within the next three months which will enable each incident of running to be assessed and an appropriate response planned and carried out.
- Procedures for responses to all instances of running are under development with clear plans for them to be reviewed frequently, with outcomes of the review acted upon.
- The protocols and procedures will be reviewed and updated at least every 2 years.
- Return interviews (as opposed to police safe and well checks) are conducted for every instance of running where a child has:
 - been missing for over 24 hours; or
 - been missing on two or more occasions; or
 - engaged (or is believed to have engaged) in criminal activities during their absence.

A score of 1 may be awarded where there is clear evidence that this will happen within the next six months.

- Information gathered as part of return interviews is shared with children's services, police and other professionals working with the child. A score of 1 may be awarded where there is clear evidence that this will happen within the next six months.

Local areas may award themselves a 1 if they meet all but one of the criteria above, and have a clear action plan in place setting out how they will fulfil the remaining criterion within the next three months.

To score 2:

- Runaways services are informed by a local needs analysis.
- Risk Assessment tool is in place which enables each incident of running to be assessed and an appropriate response planned and carried out.
- Procedures for responses to instances of running are in place, implemented and reviewed, with outcomes of the review acted upon.
- The protocols and procedures are reviewed and updated at least every 2 years.
- Return interviews (as opposed to police safe and well checks) are conducted for every instance of running where a child has:
 - been missing for over 24 hours; or
 - been missing on two or more occasions; or
 - engaged (or is believed to have engaged) in criminal activities during their absence.
- Information gathered as part of return interviews is shared with children's services, police and other professional working with the child. Relevant information sharing protocols are in place to support this.
- Where the young person has run from local authority care, this information is shared with the independent reviewing officer and is used to inform care planning.

Local areas may award themselves a 2 if they meet all but one of the criteria above, and have a clear action plan in place setting out how they will fulfil the remaining criterion within the next three months.

To score 3:

- Runaways services are informed by a local needs analysis.
- Risk Assessment tool is in place which enables each incident of running to be assessed and an appropriate response planned and carried out. This risk assessment is a joint tool for police and children's services.
- Procedures for responses to instances of running are in place, implemented and reviewed, with outcomes of the review acted upon. The protocols and procedures are reviewed and updated at least every 2 years.

- Return interviews are conducted, where appropriate *by independent organisation*, for every instance of running where a child has:
 - been missing for over 24 hours; or
 - been missing on two or more occasions; or
 - engaged (or is believed to have engaged) in criminal activities during their absence;
 - been hurt or harmed whilst they have been missing (or this is believed to have been the case); or
 - known mental health issues; or
 - known risk of sexual exploitation or contact with persons posing risk to children.
- Information gathered as part of return interviews is shared with children's services, police and other professional working with the child. Relevant information sharing protocols are in place to support this.
- Where there are multiple incidents of running involving a young person, an action plan to bring about behaviour change is put in place, and implemented and is regularly reviewed for its effectiveness.
- In cases where the area has a child running from an out of authority placement, the area (as the home authority) calls a professionals meeting involving the relevant organisations from the host authority, to determine action, and to ensure change.
- When a child who has a history of running is put in an out of authority placement, the host authority is informed of the risk, and as part of the placement agreement appropriate details shared to support the home authority to manage that risk and inform care planning for the individual child.

4) Protocols for responding to urgent/out of hours referrals from the police or other agencies are in place

Out of hours referrals, made from the police or other agency to children's services because a child or young person who has run away has been found, or has presented themselves, should be considered to be any referral that takes place outside normal working hours (so in most cases, referrals that take place before 9am or after 5pm Monday to Friday, and referrals that take place over the weekend).

To score 0:

- Out of hours referrals are not made, or are not made in every instance of a young person being found (or presenting themselves) out of hours.
- No protocols for out of hours referrals are in place, or under development, and there are no plans to develop them.
- The number of out of hours referrals is not monitored and recorded.
- No assessment of suitability of the emergency accommodation in which young people are placed.
- No onward referral procedures are in place.

To score 1:

- Out of hours referrals are made **whenever** any missing young person is found or presents themselves and it is inappropriate for them to return home.
- Multi-agency protocols are under development and will be in place within the next three months. These protocols will include a system for monitoring whether each out of hours referral is handled in line with the protocols.
- The number of out of hours referrals is monitored and recorded, or there are clear plans to do so within three months.
- Young people who need emergency accommodation are placed appropriately, and the location of each placement is recorded. Onward referral procedures are in place.

To score 2:

- Out of hours referrals are made **whenever** any missing young person is found or presents themselves and it is inappropriate for them to return home.

- Multi-agency protocols for out of hours referrals are in place. These protocols include a system for monitoring whether each out of hours referral is handled in line with the protocols.
- The number of out of hours referrals is monitored and recorded, or there are clear plans to do so within three months.
- Young people who need emergency accommodation are placed appropriately, and the location of each placement is recorded. Onward referral procedures are in place.

To score 3:

- Out of hours referrals are made ***whenever*** any missing young person is found or presents themselves and it is inappropriate for them to return home.
- Multi-agency protocols for out of hours referrals are in place. These protocols include a system for monitoring whether each out of hours referral is handled in line with the protocols and a way of ensuring that remedial action is instituted following the identification that the protocols have not been followed.
- The number of out of hours referrals is monitored and recorded.
- Young people who need emergency accommodation are placed appropriately, and the location of each placement is recorded. Onward referral procedures are in place.

5) Local procedures to support effective prevention and early intervention work

To score 0:

- No prevention or early intervention service in place, and no demonstrable plans for this to change.

To score 1:

- A prevention or early intervention service is under development that facilitates early intervention working with those young people who have already run in order to prevent the continuation and escalation of running behaviour.

To score 2:

- A prevention or early intervention service in place that facilitates prevention of running, working with those young people identified as of risk of running, but who have not run yet, and early intervention working with those young people who have already run in order to prevent the continuation and escalation of running behaviour. This service will draw on local voluntary sector expertise.
- A service in place so that those working with young people can refer those who they believe are at risk of running, and this service is well publicised, known, and available to all those working with young people.
- Clear escalation protocols in place, including referrals into local assessment procedures.
- Young person's family and/or carers are engaged in and where possible agree any prevention or early intervention strategy.

To score 3:

- A service in place that facilitates prevention of running, working with those young people identified as of risk of running, but who have not run yet, and early intervention working with those young people who have already run, to prevent the continuation and escalation of running behaviour. This draws on local voluntary sector expertise.
- There is a specific referral point to where all those working with young people can make referrals when they believe a young person is believed to be likely to run.
- Service is well publicised, known, and available to all those working with young people.

- Clear escalation protocols in place, including referrals into local assessment procedures.
- Young person's family and/or carers are engaged in and where possible agree any prevention or early intervention strategy.
- Prevention and early intervention service is reviewed, and effectiveness evaluated every year, gaps identified and plans made to fill any gaps.

APPENDIX 7

**Actions to be taken when sexual exploitation
is suspected.**

Actions to be taken when sexual exploitation is suspected.

In cases of suspected sexual exploitation child protection procedures must be initiated. The following provides additional guidance for dealing with such circumstances.

When a missing child is found or known to have been in company with any older person during any missing episode, in circumstances which afford reasonable grounds to suspect that an offence has been committed by that older person 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.

Police officers dealing with such incidents are encouraged to use the full range of powers of arrest available to them. Police officers should ensure that all the available evidence is collated in order that an informed decision can be made relating to whether a prosecution should be pursued. It is recognised that children who have been the victim of a serious offence may not always see themselves as victims or be willing to assist in the investigation, particularly in the early stages. Likewise those whom others have used for criminal purposes may not be willing to assist the police. A complaint from a victim is not required to make an arrest. Usually 'reasonable suspicion' is enough to arrest (subject to the existence of the necessary arrest criteria). When such an offence has occurred and a power of arrest exists, the police will always positively intervene and consider arrest. An officer should be prepared to justify a decision not to arrest in these circumstances.

Where there is concern that the child has been subject to sexual assault, the carer must

- Call Thames Valley Police **08458 505 505**
- Discourage the child from washing
- Identify and preserve clothing worn by the child.
- Preserve the mobile telephone of the missing child
- Where the scene of offending is identified by the child and this is within the control of the carer it should be sealed off and no entry permitted.

- Where the scene of offending is identified by the child and this is outside the control of the carer the police should be informed of the location immediately.
- The child **MUST NOT** be questioned by the carer beyond the level necessary to ensure the immediate safety of the missing child or any other child who has gone missing with the first child

Signatories

Name	Organisation
_____	Thames Valley Police
_____	Milton Keynes Borough Council
_____	Buckinghamshire County Council
_____	Oxfordshire County Council
_____	West Berkshire Borough Council
_____	Reading Borough Council
_____	Wokingham Borough Council
_____	Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead Council
_____	Bracknell Forest Borough Council
_____	Slough Borough Council