



Gloucestershire
COUNTY COUNCIL

Protocol on partnership working when children and young people run away and go missing from home or care



Safeguarding Children



Gloucestershire **NHS**
Health Community

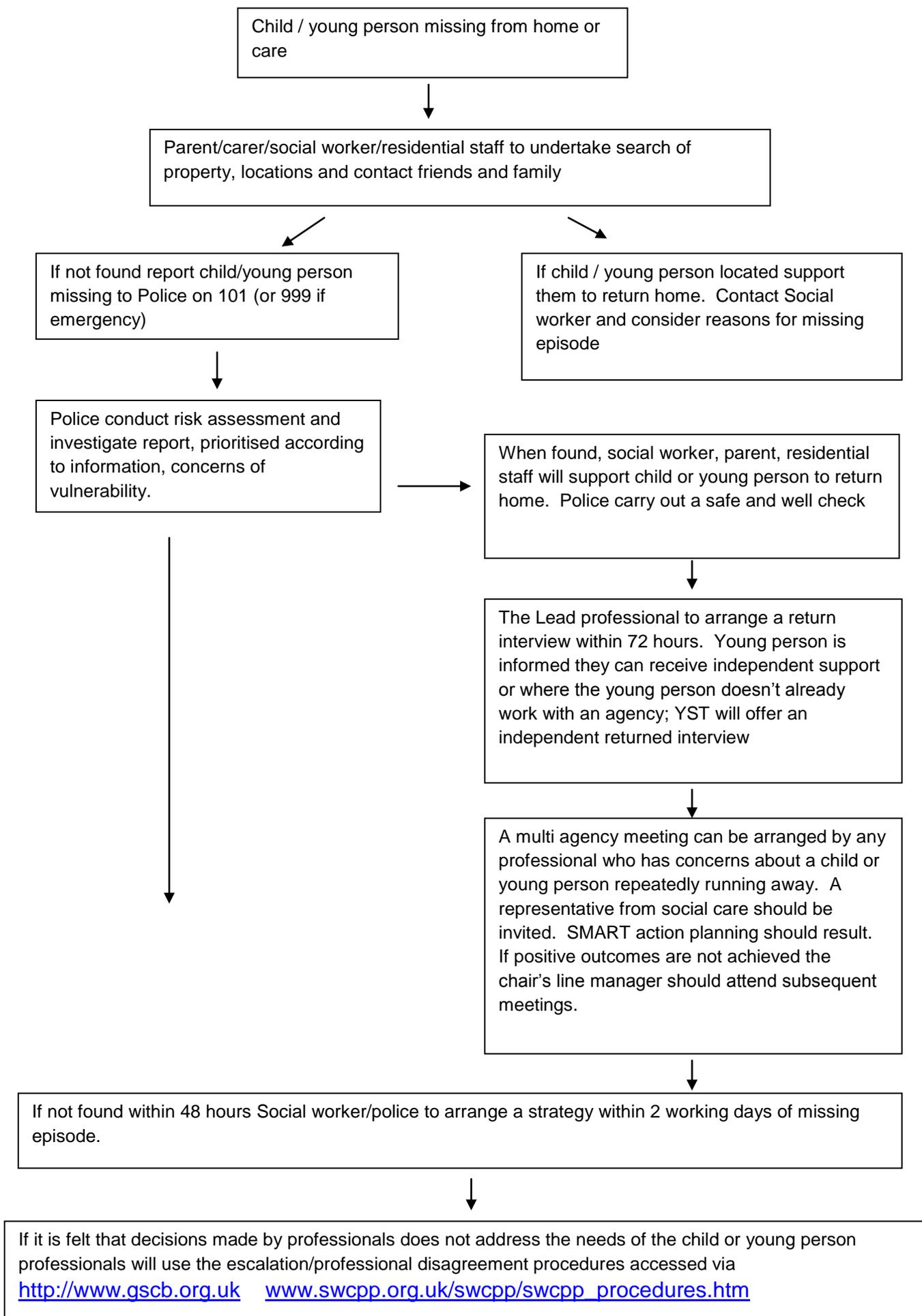
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Quick Reference Guide



1.0 Introduction

1.1 Children and young people go missing for a variety of reasons. There may have been a misunderstanding about what time they were due to be back or they may have been the victim of a serious crime. The job of the authorities is to record and investigate missing person reports in order to work to prevent children and young people from being harmed / exploited.

1.2 The Gloucestershire Safeguarding Children's Board (GSCB) provides a multi-agency framework to ensure that all agencies in the County work together to safeguard children. This guidance has been produced (and will be reviewed annually) by the Child Sexual Exploitation / Missing from Home and Care sub group of the GSCB. For the purposes of this guidance, a child or young person is deemed to be anyone who has not yet reached their 18th birthday.

1.3 This guidance applies to those with parental responsibility and all agencies working with children and young people in Gloucestershire, including private companies and local authorities outside Gloucestershire which place children in care settings within the County. All partner agencies will ensure their staff are aware of it and how to use it. It should be read and implemented by all practitioners and managers working with children or young people who are at risk of going missing from home or care or who are already doing so.

1.4 Children looked after by the local authority (children in care) are over-represented in the numbers of children and young people reported as missing. This may be because they are more likely to be reported missing, nevertheless, the vulnerability of this particular group must be acknowledged and planned for on both a strategic and operational level for each child.

2.0 Purpose

2.1 In 2011, the Government published "Missing Children and Adults. A Cross Government Strategy" which set out three clear objectives for anyone working in the field of missing people;

- reducing the number of people who go missing
- reducing the risk of harm to those who go missing
- providing missing people and their families with support and guidance

2.2 In January 2014, the Department for Education released new statutory guidance on children who run away or go missing from home or care. Local authorities are now required to offer young people reported missing an independent return interview (someone not involved in caring for the young person). The guidance requires local authorities to adapt practice, processes and procedures with the implementation of the 'absent' definition which in Gloucestershire is only going to be used for low risk cases, young people will not be seen as low risk so will not be categorised as absent.

2.3 In January 2014 the Department for Health also introduced a special edition on amendments to the Children's Home Regulations called In House; in which registered children's home managers must notify a local authority in writing when a new home is opened, when a young person is placed in the authority and have in place a missing child policy.

2.4 It is intended that the application of this guidance will improve the support offered to children, young people and families, lead to a reduction in the total number of children reported missing in Gloucestershire and in the frequency of children missing repeatedly. It will strengthen working relationships between partner agencies involved in safeguarding children and reduce the harm suffered by them or caused to communities when they are missing. We will achieve our purpose by partnership working, information sharing, risk assessment and risk mitigation.

2.5 Missing person investigations are hugely expensive both in terms of cost and resources diverted from community policing. The average cost of a medium risk missing person investigation is approximately £2,500. However, it is the personal and social cost rather than financial cost which is of greatest concern. Reductions in costs will allow greater capacity for early intervention and prevention work. (*Cost of investigation - Karen Shalev Greene and Francis Pakes - **The Cost of Missing Person Investigations: Implications for Current Debates** Policing (2014)*)

3.0 Why Children Go Missing

Children and young people go missing for a variety of reasons, such as:

- Arguments and conflicts
- Conflict within a placement
- Poor family relationships
- Physical and emotional abuse
- Boundaries and control
- Step parent issues

They may be “pushed away” by factors at home or “pulled away” by outside factors. Whichever, when they are missing they face immediate risks for which they may be ill-prepared:

- Being groomed for sexual exploitation
- Involvement in criminal activities
- Victim of crime
- Alcohol/substance misuse
- Deterioration of physical and mental health
- No means of support or legitimate income – leading to high risk activities
- Missing out on schooling and education

Longer-term risks include:

- Long-term drug dependency / alcohol dependency
- Crime
- Homelessness
- Disengagement from education
- Sexual exploitation, prostitution
- Poor physical and/or mental health

3.1 Children who go missing persistently have sometimes been described as “streetwise”. This refers to their level of resourcefulness in avoiding being found by the authorities. However, the more times a child runs away, the greater opportunity is offered to people who exploit them. The process of grooming a child is subtle and the child may well not recognise that they are a victim of

exploitation. The term “streetwise” tends to allow police and other practitioners to become complacent to the risks, and fails to recognise / acknowledge their vulnerability. The term “streetwise is therefore best avoided. Ofsted’s thematic review of children and young people who are at risk of going missing or running away 2013 reminds professionals that the more children run away the more action needs to be taken, summary of review findings can be found in appendix 10.

3.2 All children in care should be educated about the dangers and risks of going missing. In particular, they should be taught about the risks and signs of child sexual exploitation and be encouraged to seek help for themselves or any friend who may have become a victim.

4.0 Preparation and pre-planning for placements in Gloucestershire

4.1 All care providers, both local authority and private, should inform the Detective Chief Inspector (DCI) in the Public Protection Bureau of any new children’s homes in Gloucestershire prior to the placement of any children or young people. This will enable a joined up approach in planning and delivering strategies to minimise risk and incidents as well as a local policing response should children subsequently be reported missing. On admission to the placement, the consent of a person with parental responsibility and the child (depending on their age and understanding) will be sought for a photograph to be used in any subsequent missing person investigation. If the child is suspected of being trafficked, a photograph must be obtained immediately on admission.

4.2 Prior to any placement, a written Placement Information Record (PIR) should be completed, outlining expectations about how it will meet the child’s needs, how positive routines will be maintained, and how they will be supported to achieve their potential. Every looked after child must have a care plan, subject to regular review, that sits alongside the PIR. This process must include an evaluation of whether a child is likely to run away. Where this is likely, strategies should be put in place to minimise risk.

5.0 YST

5.1 The Youth Support Team are commissioned to support the local authority and Gloucestershire Police to support the missing agenda. To this end YST are central to understanding emerging patterns about young people reported missing; support lead professionals manage missing episodes and where appropriate offer independent return interviews to young people reported missing.

6.0 Procedures for a Missing Child

6.1 When a child or young person goes missing from home or care, it is expected that carers will act in the capacity of a ‘good parent’. They should act to encourage him / her to return as quickly and safely as possible, ensuring s/he is treated positively on return and are first expected to take the following measures to try to locate the missing child:

- Search bedroom / accommodation / outbuildings/ vehicles
- Contact friends and relatives where child may be
- Visit locations / premises that the child is known to frequent or where they were last seen or were to go unless there are people there who pose a significant threat of aggression or violence, (when they should arrange a visit with 2 police officers)
- Inform the Social Worker, EDT (if out of office hours) and Parent if the child is in care

6.2 The local authority has a range of corporate parenting duties in relation to children in care and should always apply the “reasonable parent” test when planning and making decisions in relation to the children in its care. This means having the same interest as any reasonable parent would have for their own children in relation to safeguarding and promoting welfare. Both the Gloucestershire Safeguarding Children Board and the Corporate Parenting Panel have a key role in monitoring the incidents of children and young people who go missing from care.

6.3 If the child’s whereabouts are known it is the responsibility of the parent, carer or individual with concerns to consider the appropriateness of their location. This will inform the decision whether to allow the young person to remain at that location temporarily or to arrange for their return (foster carers should refer this to the child’s Social Worker or the Out of Hours Duty Worker to make a decision).

6.4 In the past, the Police Control Room sometimes accepted missing person reports without basic enquiries being made and sometimes provided transport when there was no risk. However in future, police deployment will be restricted to instances where they are genuinely needed (when there is an identified risk of harm to the child or young person or to carers or staff) and where it is the police core role.

On 05/11/14 Gloucestershire Constabulary implemented the new ACPO missing person definition. This differentiates between people who are missing and those who are classed as absent.

Missing – “Anyone whose whereabouts cannot be established and where the circumstances are out of character or the context suggests the person may be the subject of crime or at risk of harm to themselves or another.”

Absent – “A person not at a place where they are expected or required to be and there is no apparent risk”.

The reporting process remains the same as it has always been: it will be a police decision whether a person is classified as missing or absent. The classification is determined on the perceived level of risk to the individual. Only a person who is assessed as **no risk** will be classified as absent. No person under the age of 18 will be assessed as being **no risk**, and as such no person under 18 will be classified as absent.

6.5 Foster carers are expected to conduct basic enquiries as outlined in paragraph 6.1, where necessary this will be supported by social workers or EDT before notifying the police. These checks are required before involving police.

6.6 Nevertheless, the Police Control Room will not refuse to accept missing reports for children where the child may be in immediate danger of harm.

6.7 If the child’s whereabouts are unknown the Police assess and record risk as High, Medium or Low and the caller needs to inform the Police of all known risks as the risk assessment will determine the urgency and resource level of the investigation. See page 8 for examples. (See appendix 2 for Compact risk assessment template)

6.8 Professionals across agencies need to be certain that they are communicating their concerns in a way that other professionals understand. Terminology can mean different things to different professionals, each person is responsible for articulating their actions, meaning and concerns in a way that does not make assumptions. For example, social care are often concerned about a young person who is not staying where they are supposed to be staying. However, because contact has been made with them the young person is not technically 'missing'. A different response is therefore needed by the Police.

7.0 Missing from Health

7.1 When a child or family are known by health care staff to be missing, the subsequent actions of the staff will depend on the circumstances of the particular case (i.e. whether there are concerns, or the child/family is known to social care). Staff should have access to and adhere to this protocol and also follow any specific guidance within their own organisation.

8.0 Children Missing Education

8.1 If a child is on a school roll and has stopped attending and no contact can be made with the parent to establish a reason for the absence, or if they have ceased to attend the school, and the forwarding address/new school is not known, or if they have not returned from holiday within 10 schools days of the expected date of return, the school should try to establish the family's whereabouts within 10 school days before making a referral to the Education Entitlement & Inclusion Team. The Local Authority guidance on Children Missing Education and Missing pupils (family whereabouts unknown) is available to download from Schoolsnet www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/eei

8.2 Children who truant from school are not automatically missing from home or care. Schools should follow their own Attendance Policy working closely with parents/carers or guardians and only if a child's whereabouts are unknown after all reasonable checks and searches have been made (see section 6 of this policy) and there are concerns about the child's safety that parents/carers/guardians and schools should contact the police.

9.0 Missing from Care during External Activity

9.1 The person in charge of the activity or trip will act *in loco parentis*. Every effort will be made to find the child or young person, before and after reporting them to the police. They will organise a local search if staffing levels permit. They will notify:

- Police - in the area of the activity

- Children's Services emergency team on 01452 427171 (24 hours)

- A senior manager within the organisation running the trip

9.2 The senior manager of the team will be responsible for ensuring the general procedures in relation to a missing child are followed. The senior manager of the team and the person in charge of the party will decide within 24 hours of the absence whether the party should return to the home. Ongoing communication regarding the missing child will be maintained between the home and the Police local to where the child went missing.

9.3 Before planning any off-site visits/activities for children in care, activity leaders and care managers are advised to read Gloucestershire County council guidance on offsite activities.

10.0 Unaccompanied Children Seeking Asylum

10.1 The local authority is responsible for looking after unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASC), who are a particularly vulnerable group. They may have been trafficked into the UK and are likely to remain under the influence of their traffickers, even whilst they are looked after. It is possible the child may be contacted by their traffickers and abducted again. They may already have been reported missing from the care of other local authorities.

10.2 The assessment of need is critical and will seek to establish:

- Child's background before they came to the UK
- Reasons that the child came to the UK
- Child's vulnerability to the influence of traffickers

10.3 The local authority will work with the UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI) and UK Human Trafficking Centre (UKHTC) who are knowledgeable about trafficking into the UK. UKVI staff will advise if the child fits the profile of a trafficked child.

10.4 The care plan will include a risk-assessment of the UASC going missing. The assessment and risk-assessment process will need to be sensitively managed. The child may not be able to disclose full information about their circumstances immediately and will need to feel they are in a safe and secure place. The location of the child should not be divulged to any enquirer until their identity and relationship with the child has been verified, if necessary with the help of police and immigration services.

10.5 It will be necessary to continue to share information with the police and UKVI about suspected crimes against the child, risks to other children, and other immigration matters.

11.0 Role of Gloucestershire Police

11.1 After these reasonable steps have been taken and the child is still missing, the Police should then be informed and given a recent photograph of the missing child or young person. If the most recent or only available photograph of the missing person is in electronic format (e.g. on a mobile phone), call 101 and ask to be given the Constabulary MMS number.

11.2 Responsibility for leading and managing investigations into missing people lies with the duty inspector. There is a duty inspector on duty 24 hours a day in each territorial area. There are two territorial areas, East (Cheltenham, the Cotswolds and Tewkesbury) and West (Gloucester, Stroud and the Forest of Dean). The duty inspector can be contacted via the Police Contact Centre on the non-emergency number 101 or on 999 in case of emergency.

11.3 Strategic responsibility for missing persons sits with a Detective Chief Inspector in the Public Protection Bureau who can be contacted through the police non-emergency number 101. Support

is provided by the Community Protection Inspector and the Missing Persons Coordinator, both also within PPB.

Missing person Coordinator

In August 2014 Gloucestershire Constabulary appointed a Missing Person Coordinator, who is co-located with the Child Sexual Exploitation Team. This is part of the Public Protection Bureau, based at County Police Headquarters, Quedgeley. Responsibility for and ownership of investigations will still sit with the duty inspector, but the missing person coordinator is available to give advice and assistance to both police officers and partners involved in dealing with missing persons.

The role of Missing Person Coordinator includes the following responsibilities:

- Monitoring all current investigations and offering assistance and guidance;
- Quality assuring both open and closed investigations;
- Act as a central point of contact for external partners such as Missing People, National Missing Persons Bureau and Social Services;
- Manage and coordinate Child Abduction Warning Notices (Harbourers Warnings)
- Organise multi-agency meetings to manage CSE risks;
- Undertake administrator role for Compact;
- Assist Staff Development Unit in delivering training on good practice for missing person investigations and using Compact.

The appointment of a Missing Person Coordinator will enable the Force to adopt a much more coordinated approach to the investigation of missing persons and the associated assessment of risk.

11.4 On receiving a report of a child or young person missing from home or care, the police will carry out enquiries to locate them as soon as possible. Each investigation will be tailored to the particular circumstances of the disappearance.

11.5 A risk assessment is carried out for each missing person on every separate occasion they are reported missing. The incident will be assessed as high, medium or low risk, according to the definitions below. It is reviewed by a supervising officer and is kept under review at all times. It determines the urgency and resource level of the investigation.

High Risk	
The 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.	Immediate deployment
Medium Risk	
The risk posed is likely to place the subject in danger or they	Measured deployment

are a threat to themselves or others.	
Low Risk	
The threat of danger to either the subject or the public is extremely low	Measured deployment
Absent – No Risk	
There is no apparent threat or danger to either the subject or the public. Children and young people under 18 years of age will not be included in this classification.	No investigation. Call back time to informant agreed to check if any circumstances have changed. Regularly reviewed to decide if it needs to be escalated to Missing status or remain as Absent.

RISK	EXAMPLES
High	A 3 yr old toddler who has wandered out of the gate into the estate. A 17 yr old female who has left supported lodgings to be with her boyfriend who is a high risk domestic abuse perpetrator and currently wanted by police. A 14 yr old girl who has left her placement. Her Facebook page shows she may have been groomed for sex by a 35 yr old man in another part of the country.
Medium	A 15 yr old who repeatedly goes missing for a few hours, when they are involved in stealing from shops and antisocial behaviour. No other risks identified. A 14 yr old boy who has left home after a dispute with their parents over his use of alcohol and cannabis. No other risks identified.
Low	An 18 yr old has left their supported accommodation, stating their intention to return to their family in Bristol. No other risks identified, not at risk of harm from their family

11.6 The police record the details of each missing person report as an incident on “Storm”, the Constabulary’s command and control system. The details are then recorded on the missing person system, “Compact”.

In cases where the person is classified as ‘Absent’, there will be no investigation. The case is managed by the Control Room and frequent contact is maintained with the informant until the person either returns or because of a change in circumstances is upgraded to ‘Missing’.

11.7 In all ‘Missing’ cases the duty inspector creates an investigation strategy. They consider the use of specialist resources to assist the investigation. Police officers are deployed to carry out the investigation.

11.8 Staff in the Control Room manages the initial stages of the investigation such as searches which will include searching the home address or foster placement where the young person lives, computer research and checks with hospitals and custody suites. Once the immediate investigation has been completed, the Control Room inspector passes responsibility for the investigation to the LPA duty inspector, who leads and manages all investigations.

11.9 The duty inspector will set a media strategy in liaison with the Gloucestershire Constabulary Press Office and any partner agency. Where a missing child is felt to be especially vulnerable or where they have been missing for a long time, it may be helpful to make a media release. This would normally be done in consultation with parents and the Children's social worker. However, for operational reasons primacy for such decisions lies with the police.

11.10 Compact sends an automatic email referral to the Children's Helpdesk at Gloucestershire County Council. This is followed up by LPA administration staff who email further details to the Children's Helpdesk, including the child or young person's contact details, description, social care details, police risk assessment and circumstances of the current report.

11.11 Child Rescue Alert is a procedure for urgently publicising case details when a child under 18 is suspected to have been abducted and may be in danger of death. Therefore, any decision to publicise the case is likely to be urgent. It will be made in accordance with nationally agreed procedures by the Senior Investigating Officer. Where possible, Gloucestershire County Council will be consulted in advance.

11.12 Gloucestershire Constabulary may use the websites www.missingpeople.org.uk and www.missingkids.co.uk to publicise the fact that a child or young person is missing.

12.0 Child Abduction Warning Notices

12.1 Child Abduction Warning Notices (CAWNs), or Harbours' Warnings as they are also known, are a useful tool aimed at tackling incidents where children or young people under 16 yrs old (or 18 under a full Care Order) go missing and are found with families or partners who are much older than them. It is anticipated that this procedure will be used in a limited number of cases per year and should reduce the opportunity for children and young people to go missing. It will be used to tackle people who target children and young people for sexual exploitation. Partner agencies should contact the Missing Persons Coordinator in PPB to discuss the potential use of this procedure.

12.2 Relevant legislation:

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

13.0 Return of the Child

13.1 It is the responsibility of the carer to contact the police and confirm that the missing child has returned.

13.2 If the whereabouts are known or suspected, it is the responsibility of the carers to arrange for the child's return. Police will only provide transport if the child poses a risk to themselves, their carers or the public.

13.3 Outside office hours, Emergency Duty Team will take responsibility for arranging emergency accommodation when necessary.

14.0 Arranging for the Return of the Child or Young Person

14.1 The social worker / EDT worker should help carers in arranging the child's return. They will inform the police that the child has been located. Police officers will not routinely transport children missing from care once they have been found – this remains the responsibility of carers, the social worker or EDT worker. Police will provide transport only in those very few cases where the child poses a risk to themselves, their carers or the public.

14.2 The local authority will consider whether the child or young person should be returned to their current placement. This will be done in consultation with other professionals. If there are suspicions about abuse in the placement, alternative options will be considered by the child or young person's social worker to identify a suitable responsible adult and/or accommodation. Out-of-hours, EDT will be contacted. Police may be requested to check their computer systems for information about the suitability of potential addresses.

14.3 On their return, children and young people will be given care and support and their immediate needs will be met i.e. hot drink, food and medical attention as necessary. Children and young people will be given the opportunity to talk about their experiences, their reasons for running away and any concerns should be taken seriously. Arrangements should also be made for the child or young person to have a formal interview.

14.4 If a child is located but refuses to return home, and there is a risk of further running away, alternative accommodation needs to be considered and professionals may contact the Police Control Room to perform a check on alternative addresses.

14.5 The child or young person's electronic file should be kept up to date throughout the process with clear recording of all decisions and actions taken.

15.0 Safe and Well Check

15.1 A police officer will carry out a 'Safe and Well' Check as soon as possible after the child or young person has returned. Its purpose is to check whether the child or young person has suffered harm, where and with whom they have been, and to give them an opportunity to disclose any offending by or against them. A police officer will give the young person and their family a YST card in which the offer of an independent return interview is made and it is made clear that Gloucestershire police share information with Gloucestershire County Council.

15.2 If it is suspected that the child or young person has been a victim of sexual exploitation whilst they were missing, consideration will be given to a detective with child protection experience conducting a video-interview with them. Police will be alert for the signs of child sexual exploitation and will, where appropriate, apply the CSE Protocol (a protocol agreed between Police and partner agencies setting out how to respond to and investigate suspected exploitation).

15.3 Where a crime is revealed, the police will investigate and may need to secure evidence such as the child or young person's clothing or mobile phone. It may be necessary to identify and secure the scene of the crime.

15.4 Once the Safe and Well Check has been completed, Police will close the missing person investigation.

15.5 Where significant information has been revealed in the Safe and Well check, this may be shared with partner agencies.

15.6 When a duty inspector has concerns about a child who is or has been missing and feels that partner agencies should be involved to keep them safe, they will inform the Missing Person Coordinator who will then contact Children's Services to request a Section 47 strategy meeting (if there are concerns that the child is at significant risk of harm) or a professionals meeting. They will allocate a sergeant to attend (mandatory for Sec 47) or other officer.

15.7 The DCI will take any issues raised to the quarterly Child Sexual Exploitation / Missing from Home and Care meeting for discussion.

16.0 Return Interviews

16.1 'Return interview' is the term applied to the safety, needs and risk assessment carried out by a child or young person's social worker or independent worker from YST. The return interview is additional to the police 'safe and well' check.

16.2 The Local Authority is responsible for deciding whether a return interview is conducted for each missing episode, this should happen as soon as possible and it is recommended that this interview takes place within 72 hours.

16.3 The purpose of the interview is to:

- Identify and address any harm the child has suffered
- Understand the reasons the child went missing
- Establish the circumstances which led to the missing episode
- Inform future prevention strategies
- Inform any future missing person investigation
- Gather information about who harboured the child to enable proactive strategies such as the use of a Child Abduction Warning Notice

16.4 Agreement should be reached with the child / young person about when and where to undertake the interview using Fraser guidelines to ascertain if parents need to be informed. Those with parental responsibility should be told if a child is 12 years of age or younger.

http://www.nspcc.org.uk/inform/research/questions/gillick_wda61289.html

17.0 The outcome of interview

17.1 Assessed as low risk – missing for short period of time, no particular risks identified, understanding of where child has been, parents engaged or child thinking about running away – support will be offered to the child or young person and parents signposted into support.

17.2 Assessed as medium risk – Missing multiple times and where there are significant and immediate concerns such as sexual exploitation or offending. Return Home Interview to be conducted, support to young person or child offered; parents signposted to support and CAF to be undertaken if appropriate.

17.3 Assessed as high risk – Missing multiple times, concerns about offending, concerns about harm to the child, risk of sexual exploitation, previous interventions have not been successful, parents may not be engaging. All children or young people missing from home not currently open to social care assessed as high risk, must be referred to Social Care for an initial assessment.

17.4 The interview will be recorded on the missing person return home interview form and stored in accordance with the Local Authorities administrative procedures.

17.5 In some circumstances the child may make sensitive disclosures that need careful management - these should be recorded separately but referred to on the return interview form. A social worker should share information with the police (via the police central referral unit) – e.g. where it appears a crime has been committed or they have received information which would be relevant if the child goes missing in future.

18.0 The Role of the YST:

18.1 Where appropriate YST will undertake return home interviews with children and young people missing from home or care and can provide short term one to one support. The team's decision about whether or not to offer an independent return interview will depend on:

- Completion of a decision making tool to help identify vulnerable young people
- If the young person requests an independent interview
- If a Social Worker or other lead professional requests an independent interview

All young people who contact YST requesting independent support will be offered an independent return interview, regardless of the social workers response and management of missing episodes.

19.0 Response to escalating risk and need

19.1 If, during the course of a missing person investigation (or during the Safe and Well Check), evidence comes to light which raises concerns that a child is at risk of significant harm, the police officer should complete an Internal Child Protection Referral and send it to the Central Referral Unit (CRU) (complete the form on the Intranet at on-line forms / Operational). The circumstances of the case will be reviewed by the Detective Sergeant in CRU, who will consider making a request for a service (Sec 17 Children's Act 1989) or for a strategy discussion (Sec 47 CA 1989).

Referrals for service should be passed on to children's social care via the children's helpdesk to the Multi-agency Safeguarding hub (MASH). The MASH will make a decision about the best route for social care involvement and pass on to the relevant team for either Section 47 investigation, or section 17 assessment.

19.2 It is the responsibility of the police duty inspector to alert the Missing Person Coordinator to the need for a strategy meeting. The Missing person Coordinator will contact Children's Services

and request a strategy meeting. Children's Services hold the responsibility to co-ordinate and at team manager level chair the strategy meeting if there is a significant risk to the child or young person and will co-ordinate their attendance by either a local policing sergeant or inspector. SMART plans should be agreed to ensure the child or young person's safety and a review meeting arranged within which the plan should be reviewed and any set backs or unmet needs recorded.

19.3 Whenever a child or young person is missing for 48 hours (from date reported), a strategy discussion should take place to determine whether a Section 47 investigation should follow.

19.4 Each agency will share recent relevant information with partners. Risks to the child will be assessed, agreed and harm reduction measures will be identified. The meeting will produce a clear Action Plan, with timescales, named lead professionals and regular review dates. Minutes will be circulated electronically to attendees by secure email. This action plan is also known as a 'Trigger Plan'. This needs to be clearly recorded on the Police and social care records and available to out of hours staff.

19.5 In addition, where the child is Looked After, Social care should advise the Independent Reviewing Officer and consider if it is appropriate to hold a CiC review.

19.6 Where concerns about the child do not meet the section 47 thresholds any agency or professional may call a multi-agency professionals meeting, regardless of the number of missing episodes. A representative from Social Care/Localities Team should attend these meetings where appropriate if a child or young person is not already allocated to a social worker. Best practice would indicate that a multi-agency professionals meeting should be held within 5 working days of any 'trigger' episode. (Trigger episode would be three missing episodes within a rolling 90 day period).

19.7 Where concerns persist and progress has not been made within multi agency professionals meetings a request for a service to social care and subsequent section 47 enquiries and strategy meetings need to be made.

19.8 Within strategy meetings, where concerns about the child or young person persist with no progress or with significant setbacks or the child continues to be reported missing. A meeting should be called and chaired by the line manager of the original chair. Meetings at this level should be rare provided that this guidance has been followed and so the minutes will also be sent to the Service Leader for Children in Care (if child in care) otherwise Service Leader for Front Door and/or Head of Youth Support. In addition senior managers from the Police, Social Care, YST and Education should be asked to consider the case at the monthly Missing / CSE risk meeting, where senior managers oversee practice and share intelligence on missing / CSE cases causing concern. In taking these measures to reduce future missing episodes and risks to the child, meetings should quality assure compliance with the guidance and the outcomes of the first professionals meeting and return home interviews.

20.0 Monitoring and Responsibility for Children and Young People Going Missing

20.1 The designated Missing from Home or Care Heads of Service, with the strategic lead for safeguarding in Gloucestershire, and DCI PPB will ensure:

- Implementation of and compliance with this procedure across partner agencies
- Sharing of information about patterns of absence among looked after children to the GSCB
- Monitor policies and performance relating to children missing from home.
- Monitor use of police transport to return children or young people once they have been found.

20.2 Each month the DCI in PPB will circulate within the Constabulary and also to partners, a list of the most persistent missing people and the establishments from which the most missing episodes were reported over the previous month. The purpose of this is to ensure measures are taken to intervene with the children and young people, and the establishments, that are causing concern and to ensure that there is active partnership working to safeguard the children identified.

20.3 Senior managers within Children's Services, Gloucestershire Police and YST will ensure that missing from home data is analysed and any safeguarding issues are brought to the GSCB so that interventions can be made across all agencies. This will be managed through monthly risk meetings reviewing the top concerning runaways within a three month period prior to each meeting.

20.4 The effectiveness of this guidance will be monitored quarterly by the Child Sexual Exploitation / Missing from Home and Care sub group and there is a clear analysis of information that informs local service development and provision; any issues will be reported to GSCB. The meeting will therefore include consideration of:

- Incidents of missing young people from home and care
- Analysis of missing from home incidents; patterns and outcomes
- Links with other relevant information in relation to Private Fostering and Sexual Exploitation
- Safeguarding implications
- Practice and procedural issues
- The CSE/MFHC Group will present a quarterly report and an annual report to the GSCB

21.0 Resolution of Professional Disagreements / Escalation

21.1 Workers supporting children and young people who runaway should use the Escalation Policy to address concerns about the response of other agencies or departments if it is felt that decisions taken are not addressing safeguarding issues raised in individual cases. This guidance can be accessed through the GSCB website (<http://www.gscb.org.uk>) under Gloucestershire Procedures and Protocols or directly from the SW procedures website (www.swcpp.org.uk/swcpp/swcpp_procedures.htm)

21.2 Staff in partner agencies should consult their line manager on how to escalate a professional disagreement.

Appendix 1 Definitions

The following definitions apply to this guidance and relate to children who go, or have gone missing.

Child: A child or young person under the age of 18 with the exception of a former relevant child within the meaning of the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000; these young people continue to be the responsibility of the local authority up to the age of 21 (24yrs if in receipt of full time education).

Missing Person – ACPO Definition: “Anyone whose whereabouts cannot be established and where the circumstances are out of character or the context suggests the person may be the subject of crime or at risk of harm to themselves or another.” This definition of a missing person does not include Truants from school or people who are wanted by the police, unless a specific risk or vulnerability is identified.

Absent – ACPO Definition: “A person not at a place where they are expected or required to be”.

N.B. For the purposes of this protocol a missing child will be defined as one where the missing episode has been reported to the police and or recorded on the police compact database. **Unauthorised absence** is not a category of absence which should be reported to the Police. The responsibility for managing this category of absence lies with the manager of a residential care home or carer.

Runaway: The terms ‘young runaway’ and ‘missing’ in this context refers to children and young people up to the age of 18 who have run away from their home or care placement, have been forced to leave by their parents or carers, feel they have had to leave or whose whereabouts is unknown.

Looked After Child or Young Person: A child is looked after by a local authority if s/he is “in care” by reason of a court order, or if s/he is provided with accommodation for more than 24 hours by agreement with her/his parents or with the child if s/he is aged 16 or more. If the child is subject to a Care Order or Interim Care Order (Section 31 of the Children Act, 1989), then Children’s Services acquire parental responsibility and become a legal parent alongside the parent/guardian. If the child is accommodated under S20 of the Children Act 1989, s/he is looked after by the Local Authority with the voluntary agreement of his/her parents, or with the child if s/he is over 16 years old. Parental responsibility remains with the parent/guardian.

Absconded: When a child or young person has gone missing who is subject to an order or requirement resulting from the criminal justice process (e.g. remands, curfews, tagging, conditions of residence) or a secure order made in either civil or criminal proceedings. A young person in this category must be reported to the police without delay. Police must be made aware of the order under which the child has been placed in the residence and the expiry date of the order for the child to be classified as an absconder. If the expiry date of the order is not known, the child or young person will be classified as a “missing person” not an absconder.

Sexual Exploitation: Sexual exploitation of children and young people under 18 involves exploitative situations, contexts and relationships where young people (or a third person or persons) receive something (e.g. food, accommodation, drugs, alcohol, cigarettes, affection, gifts, money) as a result of them performing, and/or another or others performing on them, sexual activities.
<http://www.cropuk.org.uk/>

Appendix 2 Police COMPACT Risk Assessment

Time/Date of Risk Assessment :

Risk Assessment Level:

Personal Circumstances :

Is the person vulnerable due to age or infirmity or any other similar factor?:	
Behaviour that is out of character is often a strong indicator of risk; are the circumstances of going missing different from normal behaviour patterns?:	
Is the person suspected to be subject of a significant crime in progress eg abduction?:	
Is there any indication that the person is likely to commit suicide?:	
Is there a reason for the person to go missing?:	
Are there any indications that preparations have been made for absence?:	
What was the person intending to do when last seen eg going to the shops or catching a bus and did they fail to complete their intentions?:	
Are there family or relationship problems or recent history of family conflict and/or abuse?:	
Are they the victim or perpetrator of domestic violence?:	
Does the missing person have any physical illness or mental health problem?:	
Are they on the Child Protection register?:	
Previously disappeared and suffered or was exposed to harm?:	
Belief that the person may not have the ability to interact safely with others or an unknown environment?:	
Do they need essential medication that is not likely to be available to them?:	
Ongoing Bullying or harassment e.g. racial, sexual, homophobic or local community concerns or cultural issues etc.?:	
Were they involved in a violent and/or racist incident immediately prior to disappearance?:	
School / college / university / employment or financial problems?:	
Drug or alcohol dependency?:	
Other unlisted factors which the officer or supervisor considers should influence risk assessment?	

Completing Officer's Conclusion :

Risk Assessment Level :

Officers' Details :

Completing Officer :

Supervising Officer :

Signed off by Supervising Officer on :

Appendix 3

Signs of Sexual Exploitation

Source material CROP <http://www.cropuk.org.uk/>

Warning Signs

The process of grooming affects children and young people in different ways. It is not easy to recognise the signs because many could be regarded as 'normal' teenage behaviour.

The following list of warning signs is not exhaustive.

Emotional health

- Unhappy. Lonely. Bored. Withdrawn. Self-harming behaviour. Suicidal tendencies. Low self-esteem. Low self-image. Eating disorder.

Physical health

- Alcohol and drug misuse. Sexually transmitted infections (STIs). Bruising (caused by physical or sexual assault). Pregnancy. Termination. Fatigue. Excessive sleeping.

Behaviour

- Delinquent or anti-social behaviour, e.g. shoplifting. Volatile. Mood swings. Deceptive. Secretive. Sexually risky behaviour/promiscuity.

Education

- Truancing. Disruptive. Confrontational with teachers and students. Disengagement. Considerable change in performance. Identity and presentation. Sudden change in dressing patterns. Sudden changes in personal hygiene/grooming. Refusal to change clothes or shower. New street name, e.g. phone calls from strangers addressing child with a different name. New street language.

Family and social relationships

- Changed attitudes towards self, family and friends. Confrontational, abusive language, physical aggression to family members and pets. Lying to parents and quick to provide answers when confronted by parents. Receiving odd calls and messages from strangers on mobile phones. Going missing from home at odd hours or days and ringing parents with requests to be collected from places where the child has no reason to visit. Not revealing whereabouts and tending either not to answer the phone or to turn it off when contacted by family members. Friendly with older men. Turning up late at night and/or staying out at night. Spending a lot of time alone in bedroom.

Disengaging with others, e.g. siblings and old friends. Entering or leaving vehicles driven by unknown adults. Reports from reliable sources suggesting likelihood of involvement in child sexual exploitation. Detaching from age-appropriate activities. Associating with other young people who are known to be sexually exploited. Sexually active with a significantly older person. Unexplained relationships with older adult. Forming inappropriate relationships over the internet. Adults or older youths loitering outside child's usual place of residence. Sightings at places known to be used for sexual exploitation.

Possessions

- Owning new clothes, mobile phones, accessories and other expensive items that cannot be accounted for. 'Losing' possessions such as mobile phones, credit cards and other valuables.

Having keys to premises other than those known about.

Appendix 4: Police Safe and Well Check

(PCSOs are not trained and should not carry out debriefs)

The interviewing officer should ask the following questions away from parent / carer

- Why did they go missing – were they subjected to violence, bullying, abuse, intimidation or coercion
- Have they been a victim of crime or sexual exploitation while missing
- Have they been committing crime while missing
- Where did they stay - were they harboured & by whom
- Did an adult encourage them to run away
- Is there anything any agency can do to support them further or prevent them going missing in future

Appendix 5 Guidance for police officers in attending strategy meetings

Any officer can attend strategy meetings but they must be in a position to make decisions on behalf of the Constabulary, either through seniority (i.e. holding supervisory rank) or by virtue of specialist position/knowledge (such as a Missing person Coordinator).

Officers attending strategy meetings should always share information with other organisations where this is necessary to protect the child.

Attending officers will participate in decision making and work together with other attending professionals to safeguard the child from harm.

The attending police officer will ensure risks and actions identified in the meeting are flagged on UNIFI and Compact.

Appendix 6 Statistics relating to 2011, 2012, 2013

	2011	2012	2013
	Number	Number	Number
Total Misper Reports	2,390	2,095	2,004
Total Individuals	1,334	1,235	1,205
Children U18 Reports	1,165	1,161	1,071
Total Individuals U18	884	493	505
Children found U24 hrs	1,041	1,050	930
Children found within 24 - 48 hrs	70	95	76
Not Found After a Year	0	0	0
Number Children Harmed	7	2	12

Appendix 7 YST MISSING FROM HOME OR CARE RETURN INTERVIEW

Name of YP: Date of Birth: Age:	YST Worker: Date:
Date reported Missing: Date last seen:	Date of Return Interview:
If young person agreed to meet with YST complete questions 1 – 10 If young person did not meet with YST worker complete questions 2 - 10	
1 Young Persons views A Why did you go missing? (push/pull factors) B What led you to go missing? (running from bullying/violence/DA/abuse, running because of coercion/intimidation) C Have you been a victim of crime whilst missing? D Have you committed any criminal activities whilst missing? E Where did you stay when you were missing (were you held against your will, were you made to do anything that you felt uncomfortable with) F Did an adult encourage you to run away?	
2 Any information that indicates young person is scapegoated within the family?	
3 Any concerns around CSE, unhealthy relationships or Internet Use?	
4 Any concerns around drug use? (Any concerns around parental drug use?)	
5 Any concerns around ASB or Offending (including any offending whilst missing)?	
6 Any concerns around witnessing or being a victim of domestic abuse? (historic or current)	
6 Any concerns around emotional health and wellbeing?	
7 Any Diversity/Cultural issues?	
8 Known Resilience factors	
9 Known support network for young person	
10 View of parents/carers (if appropriate)	
Outcome from Return Interview:	

Appendix 8 YST Missing From Home and Care Offer

YST Offer:

<p>Active Lead Professional involved:</p> <p>Liaise with practitioner, signpost to local protocol.</p> <p>Respond to request to offer IRI</p>	<p>Low</p> <p>No further action</p> <p>Signpost young person to missing people 116000</p>	<p>Medium</p> <p>Contact young person to gather more information and offer a return interview (by phone or face to face)</p>	<p>High</p> <p>Active outreach by offering face to face return interview</p>
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If a young person asks for help, regardless of the screening, YST will offer to meet them.

The decision making tool is based on some of the known indicators around a young person's vulnerability and potential risk of further missing episodes. A low rating may include those young people initially reported missing but who actually didn't intend to run away, rather they were not where they were supposed to be.

Complete a Return Interview within **72 hours** of being notified of missing/found episode

Principles of Return Interview:

Informal approach, conversational, non-threatening

Young person focused: Believe the young person and ensure their voice is central

Venue: Neutral venue, school or public venue

Initially: Introduce confidentiality first. Assess capacity to understand and consent to return interview

Consent: Seek young person's consent where possible before checking out parent's views/consent to YST making contact.

Purpose of a return home interview:

Police safe and well checks and independent return interviews enable an opportunity to inform case planning and an opportunity for professionals to take into account young person's views. Information should be recorded in case files so they can be shared with professionals.

- To build a comprehensive picture of why young person went missing
- To understand what happened whilst they were running away
- To understand who they were with when they were missing and where they were found
- To understand what support they require upon returning home or their care placement (working together guidance)

Function of a return home interview:

- To identify and deal with any harm suffered before or whilst a young person was missing
- To understand and try to address reasons for running away
- To help the young person feel safe and understand that they have options to prevent repeat instances of them running away
- To provide information on how to stay safe if they choose to run away again

Confidentiality:

We will share some information with the Police and lead professional working with the young person. We will:

- Let the police know if the young person is working with anyone from YST
- We will share with the Police if we feel the young person is vulnerable i.e. LDD, concerns around emotional well being, CSE etc.
- Tell the Police if we are worried about who or where the young person is running to.
- Tell the Police if we are aware of any professionals meetings planned

We will always talk to a young person to explain what information we will share

Resources to support work with young people reported missing:

Internal to YST:

- Risk Police (Extranet)
- Consent Guidance (Extranet)
- Recording Policy (Extranet)
- Serious Un towards Incidents Guidance (Extranet)

National resources:

Statutory guidance about children who run away or go missing from home or care:

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

Research lead by The Children's Society:

<http://www.childrensociety.org.uk/what-we-do/research/research-areas/young-runaways>

Research lead by The Railway Children, UK:

<http://www.railwaychildren.org.uk/the-issue/research/#UK>

Frazer guidelines are to be followed with regard to informed consent /capacity to consent, irrespective of a young person's age. See YST consent policy for further information

Where a young person is repeatedly reported missing, the YST CRO will collate information (with the Police lead missing person coordinator) and share with the senior management group that meet each month.

A return interview will continue to be offered after each missing episode. Young person's views, multi-agency involvement/response to missing episodes will determine what support YST offer beyond return interviews.

Appendix 9 Resolution of Professional Disagreements in work relating to the safety of children

A tool to record decisions and to monitor the effectiveness of the professional disagreements policy

(Please use in conjunction with the SW procedure 'resolving professional differences procedure' - http://www.swcpp.org.uk/swcpp/swcpp_procedures.htm)

Experience and outcomes of serious case reviews tells us how devastating professional disagreements can be to children. When concerns are raised but not addressed or when services are requested but not provided, without an effective means to address concerns issues escalate, relationships between partner agencies deteriorate, problems drag on for weeks, months and years and, in the worse cases, children do not receive adequate services and are left exposed to harm.

This tool is a means to enable your service to record the agreed outcome of the use of the professional difficulties policy, and to aid Local Safeguarding Boards (LSCBs) to monitor its use.

This form to be used at stage three and at each subsequent stage of the professional's disagreements policy.

Child/Family name	

Summary of reason for dispute – include views of all agencies concerned.	
Agreed outcomes or actions if satisfactorily resolved – includes escalation to next stage if unresolved	

Action Note:

Copy of this form to be held on child/family file in all agencies involved in resolution of professional difficulties, if escalating to next stage use as basis of report to manager at next stage, Please send a copy to the GSCB Office on completion – email to mail@gscb.org.uk Expand as much as required..

Signature of challenger manager -----	Name	
	Designation	
	Agency	
	Date	
Signature of challenged manger -----	Name	
	Designation	
	Agency	
	Date	

Please complete for monitoring purposes

Stage at which resolution achieved-

Time taken to reach resolution-

Please note how effective this policy was in resolving the issue and please make suggestions as to how the policy can be improved:

Appendix 10: Ofsted Report on Missing Children 2013

Executive summary

Children represented approximately two thirds of the estimated 360,000 missing person incidents in 2009–10. Children in care are three times more likely to go missing from their home than children who are not in care.¹ However, due to the unreliability of available data, it is likely that the true scale of the problem is not fully understood.

A number of recent high-profile court cases concerning child sexual exploitation and high-profile inquiries have highlighted the vulnerability of children who go missing, and the associated risks of sexual exploitation. The government published proposals to tackle child sexual exploitation in November 2011 and announced urgent action to look at the quality of residential care for looked after children in July 2012.²

This report explores the effectiveness of arrangements to safeguard children and young people, including those who are looked after by the local authority, who are at risk of going missing or running away from home. Inspectors visited a sample of 10 local authority areas. The report draws on evidence from 105 cases and from the views of children and young people, carers, and professionals from the local authority and from partner agencies.

The complex and varied reasons identified on a national basis why children go missing were reflected in the nature of the cases seen by inspectors. Children's histories included inadequate parenting, past or current abuse, bullying and domestic violence. Some children who were looked after had experienced several placement moves. Children who went missing were subjected to considerable associated risk, most often from sexual exploitation, drug and alcohol abuse, and becoming the victim or perpetrator of crime.

Inspectors saw evidence of some tenacious partnership working across relevant agencies to safeguard children at risk of going missing. Information was generally shared effectively when children were reported missing and there were some persistent efforts by professionals to engage children.

However, some inconsistency and gaps in practice meant that professionals were not always fully attuned to the needs of children who went missing. For example, it was not often clear whether checks, usually undertaken by police officers, to ensure that children were safe and well after returning home had been undertaken. When they had been, the outcomes of the checks were often not routinely shared with carers and professionals. Similarly, more in-depth return interviews with children by an independent person to explore the reasons why they had run away and to identify any support needs were rarely evident. Updated risk management plans that identified specific actions to be taken to prevent children from running away and to keep them safe were rarely evident in the cases seen by inspectors.

The lack of routine attention to learning from the experiences of children also contributed to a generally weak understanding at a senior level of the reasons why children go missing. Strategic

¹ Data from End Child Prostitution and Trafficking (ECPAT); www.ecpat.org.uk.

² *Tackling child sexual exploitation action plan*, Department for Education, 2011; updated 2012;

www.education.gov.uk/tackling-child-sexual-exploitation. *Reforms of children's residential care*, Department for Education, 2012; www.education.gov.uk/childrenandyoungpeople/safeguardingchildren/a00213690/childrens-residential-care-reform.

planning of services to reduce the number of children who go missing was underdeveloped in most local authorities and was hindered further by some poor record management and unreliable data systems. There was, however, an increasing awareness of several related issues, particularly sexual exploitation, which was supported by relevant training.

Nearly all of the cases tracked by inspectors displayed a sensitive and child-centred approach to protecting children who went missing. However, some evidence heard by inspectors about some professionals' attitudes suggests there is no room for complacency.

Key findings

- There is little or no reliable data on missing children, including numbers, characteristics and trends. In most areas and at a national level, the data on incidence reported by local authorities and that reported by the police are very significantly different.
- Common features of cases where the frequency of missing incidents had reduced and children's outcomes had improved were:
 - effective multi-agency cooperation
 - timely and persistent family support
 - continuity of workers
 - listening to and taking account of the views of children.
- Multi-agency working was embedded most strongly at an operational level and inspectors saw evidence of effective and tenacious joint working between professionals to keep children safe.
- A strategic approach to addressing the needs of missing children was less well developed. In nearly all authorities visited there was not a full understanding at a senior level of the reasons why children go missing. Most authorities were unable to evidence the impact of different interventions.
- Poor recording practices meant that local authorities struggled to collate and analyse children's views accurately in order to inform service planning.
- While most procedures and protocols were clear and in place, staff awareness and understanding of those procedures and protocols were variable. Compliance with procedures was generally not effectively tracked by managers.
- Reports to the police of incidents of missing children were shared with relevant agencies promptly.
- Safe and well checks, which should be carried out by police whenever a missing child returns or is found, were not always evident on case file records. In most local authorities visited, the outcomes of those checks that do take place were not routinely shared with all relevant professionals.
- In nearly all local authorities the limited evidence of effective return interviews with children undermined the capacity of professionals to learn more about the reasons and risks attached to children-missing episodes.
- In the cases seen, risk assessments and risk management plans were rarely evident. Those that were in place were often insufficiently specific or up-to-date.

There was evidence in some local authorities of the effective use of legal action to safeguard children, such as harbouring notices issued to adults who might present a risk.

- Placement instability was a feature of at least a third of the 30 tracked cases where the children were looked after.

The attention given within procedures to cross-boundary issues, such as looked after children placed out of authority, was variable. Information-sharing between professionals and placement providers based outside the local authority area was of variable quality.

- Reports about missing looked after children were not routinely provided to corporate parenting boards in all local authorities.

Inspectors saw evidence of some imaginative preventative work, mainly in schools, but the degree of attention paid to prevention was variable.

Full report can be downloaded from:

www.gov.uk/government/publications/missing-children

Appendix 11: Useful Contact Numbers

Gloucestershire Constabulary
Non emergency number 101
Emergency 999

Force lead for missing persons:

Detective Chief Inspector Steve Bean (Public Protection Bureau) – 01242 247944

Email: [steve.beam@gloucestershire.pnn.police.uk](mailto:steve.bean@gloucestershire.pnn.police.uk)

Head of Service – Youth Support:

Mark Bone - 01452 551276

Email: mark.bone@gloucestershire.gov.uk

Missing Person Co-ordinator:

PC Christine Pfister

Child Sexual Exploitation Unit (Public Protection Bureau) – 01242 276410

Email: Christine.Pfister@gloucestershire.pnn.police.uk

Service Leader Children in Care:

Sharon Davies - 01452 426941

Email: Sharon.davies@gloucestershire.gov.uk

Strategic lead for Missing and CSE – Children’s Social Care:

Julie Miles - 01452 583589

Email: julie.miles@gloucestershire.gov.uk

Deputy Director Safeguarding and Care:

Vicki Butler 01452 425119

Email: vicki.butler@gloucestershire.gov.uk

Missing from Home and Care (Youth Support Team) Case Responsible Officer

Hattie Darkin 01452 547540

Email: hattie.darkin@gloucestershire.gov.uk or alison.darkin@prospects.co.uk