



Havering Safeguarding Children Partnership
Missing from Home or Care Protocol 2023 -
2025

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Purpose and scope of this Protocol

When children go missing from home or care, this is a clear signal that something is wrong in their lives. Running away has serious implications for a child's welfare as it puts them at risk of harm in the short term and will affect longer term outcomes. Research also indicates that children who go missing are more vulnerable to Extra Familial harm such as grooming for sexual and criminal exploitation, and being missing from home, care or education can often be an indicator that exploitation is taking place.

This protocol provides guidance and a framework for practitioners and managers across all services that come across or work with children/young people when they are reported missing from home or care.

Children who go missing are vulnerable to harm and each missing episode is potentially serious. The reasons are often varied and complex and cannot be viewed in isolation from home circumstances or experiences of care. Every missing episode needs to be responded to by the professionals involved, who must collaborate to ensure a consistent and coherent response to the child.

The Safeguarding Partnership aims to reduce, prevent and protect the children and young people that do go missing, adherence to this protocol will be how we do this. This includes planning to prevent children from going missing and to protect them when they do.

This local procedure is intended as a supplement to existing procedures, should be read in conjunction with the **London Child Safeguarding Procedures, Children Missing from Care, Home and School Procedure and the HSCP Exploitation Protocol**.

This Missing Protocol covers:

- All children and young people aged under 18 years of age living in the Havering area who are reported as missing.
- All Havering children who are in our care who are living in and out of borough, and who are reported as missing.
- All children in the care of other Local Authorities who are placed in Havering and are reported as missing.

Definitions

Within this context Children in Care refers to children accommodated under Section 20 of the Children Act 1989, children subject to Care Orders including interim Care Orders, sections 31 and 38 Children Act 1989, and children who are otherwise provided with accommodation under section 21 Children Act 1989. These include Police and Criminal Evidence Act (PACE) transfers, children on remand and children subject to a supervision order with a residence requirement.

It is important to define what is meant by "missing from home or care" and how this differs from children being reported by their placement providers as absent or "away from placement without authorisation".

Missing

Anyone whose whereabouts cannot be established will be considered as missing until located and their well-being or otherwise confirmed. (College of Policing 2020)

Absent / Away from placement without authorisation

A child in care may be noted as absent when their whereabouts are known but they are not at their placement or place they are expected to be; and their carer has concerns or an incident has been notified to the local authority or the police

Sometimes a child in our care may be away from their placement without authorisation. While they are not missing, they may still be placed at and experience risk. The caregiver or social worker must take reasonable steps to ascertain the well-being of the child including, when appropriate, visiting the location.

Children absent from their placements must not be ignored, and must be monitored daily. If there is a concern the child may be at significant risk of harm to themselves or to others, then police must also be notified in order that appropriate safeguarding measures can be taken. This must not be confused with reporting a child missing. Any unauthorised absence must be addressed in a timely manner because these types of behaviour may later evolve into a child being reported as missing.

Information Sharing and data analysis

In order to implement this protocol fully and ensure that children who are absent or are missing are kept safe, all agencies will share information about all missing incidents and the circumstances surrounding them. Information shared with the child and family, should be appropriate for their needs, eg translated if their first language is not English, easy read, giving details of who to call etc. Interpreters should be used as required instead of relying on family members.

Havering collects and collates information about children who are absent or missing from home, care and education. This includes children from other local authorities who have been placed in Havering.

Information is shared with partners in Police, Health, School, Children's Safeguarding and Social Care, Youth Justice Service and Havering Education Services and other relevant partners, such as substance misuse providers, or voluntary sector organisations. This helps agencies to offer the right support to individual children and allows partner agencies to gain an understanding of patterns, trends and push- pull factors of absent and missing episodes and how this links with risks such as Child Exploitation, Trafficking and Gang and Group activity in the borough. Sharing information assists partners to target resources to disrupt and safeguard children.

A quarterly report analysing missing children data is presented to the Havering Safeguarding Children Partnership via the Adolescent Safeguarding Strategic Board so that partners are

able to scrutinise the quality of the multi-agency responses to missing children and ensure children are receiving the help they need to safeguard and promote their welfare.

This data will also be provided to front line staff and managers to inform care planning and decision making on individual cases.

Responsibilities

Responsibility of parents/carers

Parents and those with Parental Responsibility are expected to undertake the following basic measures to try to locate their missing child, if it considered safe to do so. Anyone who has care of a child without parental responsibility needs to be supported to take all reasonable steps to locate the child and find out if they are safe.

Parents/Carers must inform the Police without delay when a child goes missing from home. However, before a child is reported missing the following actions must be undertaken. Parents / Carers should:

- make contact with the child/ young person by mobile, social media and or email
- search the local area including bedroom/ accommodation/ outbuildings/ vehicles
- contact known friends and relatives where the child may be
- visit locations that the child is known to frequent, if it is possible (and safe to do so)
- undertake checks on Oyster card usage with TFL (if this has been registered by the parent)

When it is established that the child or young person is missing from home, the child needs to be reported as missing to the Police via 101 or preferably online [Report a missing person | Metropolitan Police](#)

Responsibility of Police, Havering Children's Services and partner agencies when children go missing from home

Police

Where a member of the public wishes to report a person missing (on 101 or the police online portal, the Single Online Home reporting page), the Police will:

- Consider the circumstances of an incident and determine whether a child is to be investigated as a missing person and a missing report is generated.
- Take action if a decision is made to treat the report as a missing person by sending the incident to the relevant police Borough Command Unit (BCU) where the circumstances and available information will be assessed.
- Consider all risk factors and the individual's personal vulnerabilities to grade the incident – either high, medium or low risk, so the risk category can determine the level of police response.

Once the Police generate a missing report the initial enquiries and investigation remains with the Initial Response Officers (or local resolution team); a Duty Inspector will review the risk assessment level and investigation outcomes regularly throughout their shift and set further enquiries to be carried out. The Missing report will not be transferred to the BCU MISPer Unit until 48 hours after the report has been created, not from when the child went missing or was reported missing.

The Police will follow their safeguarding procedures and are responsible for on-going enquiries, risk assessment and proportionate actions. This is especially pertinent when making an assessment of risk and harm for children who are wanted in relation to their suspected involvement in a criminal investigation, have an outstanding warrant issued by a court or have absconded from lawful custody/care. Once a missing report has been created; a copy of the Police Merlin will be shared with MASH for information and consideration.

MASH (Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub)

If a Havering child is missing from home, the MASH contact officer (BSO) will record the Merlin missing notification on the case recording system and establish whether the child is already known and currently open to services.

- 1) If the child is already known and open the contact officer will update LCS by opening a missing episode and send the missing notification to the allocated worker, their line manager and the RHI Worker and the Specialist Safeguarding Team Manager.
- 2) Where a child is not known and /or not currently open to Social Care or the Early Help Service, the contact officer will send the notification to the MASH Triage for processing, where contact will be made with the family and notify the RHI Worker and the Specialist Safeguarding Team Manager.

Allocated Social Worker or Early Help/Targeted Youth Practitioner

On the day a MERLIN missing notification is received, the child's allocated worker or duty worker in the absence of the allocated worker will make contact with the parent/carer to find out if the child has returned. If allocated to a social worker and if they have not returned, the social worker will inform their Team Manager who will review whether a strategy discussion or meeting is required based on the child's vulnerability, the number of missing episodes, child exploitation, other vulnerability indicators and their circumstances.

Missing Strategy Meetings are to be requested via CAIT (Police Child Abuse Investigation Team) referrals or the relevant BCU MISPer Unit if the child remains missing over 48 hours, or if a Havering child is placed out of borough. *(please note that the missing report will not be transferred to the MISPer Unit until 48 hours after it has been created).*

Missing strategy meetings should be held as quickly as possible dependent on the child's level of vulnerability but no later than the 7th day if the child has not been located or returned home. Strategy meetings can be requested and need to be convened sooner depending on the risk of harm to the child e.g. if classified as High Risk.

If the child is allocated to the Early Help Service or is not open to any services, the MASH team will monitor the missing episode (including making contact with the parent/s) and progress any requirement for a strategy meeting as above.

Child protection procedures must be initiated in collaboration with all relevant partner agencies whenever there are concerns that a child who is missing may be suffering, or likely to suffer, significant harm. Consideration to be given to update the Havering Risk and Vulnerability Assessment (HaRVA) in light of new risks and concerns.

Return Home Interview (RHI) Workers

RHI (Return Home Interview) or Conversation Workers will receive an instruction to undertake a RHI with every child that has returned from a missing episode. RHI must be offered to every child within 72 hours of the notification of return. It is reasonable to make

offers via different communication means and to try and engage a child/caregiver at different times as they may be at school/work/with others etc. It is important to be persistent and consistent but also mindful of the child's circumstances, exploitation risk and safety and wellbeing.

All work associated with the missing episode must be recorded in the child's file. (see guidance section below and Appendix H for more information).

Health

Health encompasses a broad spectrum of disciplines - including sexual health, substance use support, mental health, Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), and physical health.

Health professionals are required to have an understanding of the vulnerabilities and risks associated with children who go missing. Staff working in NHS provider settings must be aware of their professional responsibilities and the responses undertaken by the multi-agency partnership. Risks may include Sexual and/or Criminal Exploitation, Trafficking, Forced Marriage, Female Genital Mutilation and radicalisation.

Within each Integrated Care Board (ICB) a Designated Nurse and Doctor for Safeguarding Children and Looked after children are employed. These are statutory posts and they are responsible for the strategic oversight and scrutiny of all health services that relate to safeguarding or children in care. Designated health professionals have a duty to share relevant information and intelligence relating to high-risk individuals or emerging themes and patterns indicative of organised and targeted abuse within the wider network. They also ensure that NHS staff within their localities know how to identify, report and respond to a child who is missing from care.

Healthcare professionals have a key role in identifying and reporting children who may be missing from care, home and school. Missing children access a number of services in a range of NHS settings, for example:

- Urgent Care Units
- GP (General Practitioner) Services, Dentist,
- Accident and Emergency Departments
- Genito-Urinary Medicine Clinics (GUM)
- Community Sexual Health Services
- Community Pharmacy Services
- Maternity Services & Gynaecology Services

Health needs should be considered whilst the child is missing, including a review Health Assessment (if in care), and / or Child Protection Medical, when there are concerns for physical or sexual abuse (whether or not any injuries are evident), dental care, or any urgent or routine treatment when the child is found, including contraceptive support and advice, or consideration of the application of Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (DoLS) for young people aged over 16 years.

All involved health agencies, including the GP, can use an alert system if a child is missing, and therefore likely to turn up in urgent care settings, such as with the Ambulance Services, and they should all be kept up to date with key information, including when the child is found. They should be engaged with Strategy Meetings and any other planning meetings. All young people aged 14 years and above with a Learning Disability or Autism should have an annual GP Assessment.

Education

The Admissions, Attendance & Inclusions Team sits within Havering's Education Service and is responsible for delivering the Council's Educational Statutory Duties and has responsibility to ensure:

- every pupil who lives in Havering has access to a school place
- parents are given the right of independent appeal hearings
- schools Adjudicators and the DfE are provided with statistical data on time
- annual consultations for parents and schools are provided
- prospectus to be updated in line with all other LA's
- term dates are set for all Havering schools in line with neighbouring LA's
- processes, administering and representing the LA in court for attendance fines
- permanent exclusions are processed in accordance with legislation
- schools inform the LA of deletion from registers
- schools inform the LA of suspensions
- the fair access panel is operated in accordance to the protocol
- has available quality assured Alternative Provisions (medical / exclusions)
- children missing education (CME) without a school place are tracked and monitored
- parents who electively home educate (EHE) are tracked and monitored
- traveller families are supported with accessing education
- children who have medical conditions are provided with education
- children who are in hospital (Queens) are educated (regardless of where they live)
- year 11 pupils new to country / borough provided with access to education
- the LA has oversight of children educated otherwise than at school (EOTAS)

The team manages and processes Inclusions Gateway Referral forms from schools for pupils who are vulnerable, complex and at risk of Suspension, Permanent Exclusions and Children Missing Education and at risk of exploitation.

The team work closely with all education establishments including Independent schools and Alternative provisions across Havering including all Multi Agency and voluntary sector services to provide advice, guidance and support and to intervene when required to reduce risks and engage pupils back into education.

All schools which are involved should be informed when the child is missing and when they are found, in order to plan reintegration into education as required. Police Schools Officers are an additional helpful source of support and intelligence and could help support Police missing debrief meetings in School.

Procedures for children missing from care – see Appendix E

Philomena Protocol

The Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) has introduced the Philomena Protocol as an important tactic to increase partnership and supportive engagement with children's social care placements across London and to highlight the importance of information sharing. This process builds on existing expectations set out in the London Child Protection Procedures in terms of maintaining information sharing and the preparedness of care professionals to give accurate information on risk to police at the point of reporting. In addition, children's social care placements in London are expected to report children in their care as missing via the online portal. This approach prevents delays experienced via the 101 system and requires the informant to outline the risk concerns and as much information as is held to allow police to respond proportionately. (Appendix C – Philomena Protocol)

On admission to placement

The Local Authority's approach to managing missing from care episodes is a key element of the authority's wider strategy to ensure that Havering is a responsible corporate parent, enabling all children in care, whether placed by Havering or other local authorities in Havering achieve the best possible outcomes.

Each child in care should have a care/pathway plan based on a full assessment of the child's current and future needs, including potential risk to self or others. The care plan and/or pathway 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. Any risks for the child must be clearly set out within the Plan (these can be taken from the HaRVA) and actions to be followed detailed. There must be a robust, and agreed safety plan in place that responds to children going missing, that is reviewed regularly, with any responses to a child's missing and risk being.

Children's residential and fostering service staff need to contribute to this assessment. All information must be included in the placement plan and in the child's care plan. A recent photograph should be available immediately. Any relevant information must be included in the Grab Pack. This forms part of the commissioned contract with the carer.

Contacting the Emergency Duty Team (EDT)

The Placement Plan must clearly evidence any requirements and the circumstances by which the provider must contact EDT. In-house foster carers can access the Out of Hours Fostering Service for support and advice. Placement Providers are not to contact EDT for over 18 year olds unless specifically agreed by the Service Manager/Head of Service which must be recorded on the child's plan or risk assessment.

Grab Packs

Any child who is/becomes a child in care from the age of 11 must have an up to date Grab Pack available, with the initial document being shared with the placement and Police within 72 hours of the placement commencing. The Oyster Card must be registered. It is the responsibility of the Team Manager to ensure this is in place and the IRO to confirm this has been actioned through the child in care Review process.

Grab Packs are documents that contain key information pertaining to a child that must be used to assist in the risk assessment and enquiry plans and/or investigations for a missing child. Where there are additional risks for children who go missing from home it is expected that a Grab Pack is created and kept on the Children's Social Care and Police file.

Should a child in care 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 risk, the Police and Local Authority may decide to use the photograph more widely and even involve publishing the photograph to national, local or social media (including the Missing People Charity). Therefore, it is very important for an up to date photograph to be retained on the child's file. Consent from the person with parental responsibility will need to be obtained. If possible it is good practice to encourage the child to sign consent as well.

The safeguarding procedures which need to be followed for children missing from care are identical to the procedures for children who are missing from home.

Responsibility of Havering Partners when children go missing from care

Placement

Each placement is responsible for ensuring they have an up to date Grab Pack from the Social Worker for the child on file. Prior to reporting a child missing to 101 the placement is expected to follow the Philomena Protocol. All staff are to have up to date knowledge of any vulnerabilities and risks for the child and must be able to share these with 101 when reporting the child missing.

Written records must be kept of what the child was wearing on leaving placement, their presentation, details of any vehicles they may have entered or the direction they went when they left. Details of any conversations held with them/overheard prior to them leaving and the making of the missing report must also be recorded. Placement staff must make all efforts to regularly contact the child during the missing episode and ensure the Police (via 101) and Social Worker are kept updated.

Placement staff must attend any relevant Missing Strategy Meetings and ensure all up to date information is available. Any actions agreed for the placement must be carried out immediately.

Police

Children have to be reported missing to police in the area in which they reside. The police force where the child was reported missing, is responsible for leading on the work to find the child. In exceptional circumstances, i.e. where there is sufficient information that a child is most likely to be found in another area; that responsibility may transfer to another police force.

Local authority placement staff will liaise and remind providers of accommodation to Children in Care, of the MPS expectations when carers report children missing that carers must articulate sufficient knowledge of the child and any associated risks so that police can respond appropriately. Providing high quality information at the time of reporting will empower police procedures to occur and allow safer decisions around necessity and levels of police intervention. Please see above for the process the Police follow once a child is reported missing to them. Refer to Appendix C- for details on the Philomena Protocol.

Police Powers

The Police have significant powers to safeguard vulnerable children, including those who are not looked after. These include powers to enter premises, to recover children and to place them into Police Protection. However, Police powers to enter premises which come from

section 17 of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act (PACE) 1984 – are for the purpose to save life/limb or arrest a criminal at large. Entry without relevant court orders is limited to this only. If Officers do not/ cannot get permission to enter a property then they cannot enter unless there is an immediate recognised danger to the missing person which constitutes the use of their section 17 PACE powers.

The police also have powers to issue Child Abduction Warning Notices (CAWN). A non-statutory notice issued by the police when they become aware of a child spending time with an adult, who they believe could be harmful to them.

A CAWN is served on suspects who are believed to present a risk to children of offences being committed against them under the following legislation:

- abduction of child by other persons where the child is under 16 years of age – section 2 Child Abduction Act 1984
- abduction of children in care where the child is under 18 years AND in local authority care under section 31(1) (a) Children Act 1989 – section 49 Children Act 1989

CAWN notices are used to disrupt the adult's association with the child and to warn the adult that the association could result in arrest and prosecution.

Recovery Order s50 Children Act 1989

Where it can be shown that a child:

- Has been unlawfully taken away or is being unlawfully kept away from the responsible person;
- Has run away or is staying away from the responsible person; or
- Is missing.

The Local Authority may apply to the Court for a Recovery Order under s50 of the Children Act 1989. The powers obtained through a Recovery Order would be additional to those obtained by virtue of an existing Care Order. They may, however, already be covered by orders and warrants obtained at the time of the making of an Emergency Protection Order and therefore may not be additionally needed.

Allocated Social Worker

On the day a MERLIN missing notification is received, the child's social worker must make contact with the placement to ascertain if the child has returned; all actions taken must be recorded on the case recording system. If the child has not returned, the allocated social worker will inform their Team Manager who will review whether a strategy discussion or meeting is required based on the child's vulnerability, the number of missing episodes, potential exploitation and other vulnerability indicators and their circumstances.

Child Protection procedures must be initiated in collaboration with all relevant partner agencies whenever there are concerns that a child who is missing may be suffering, or likely to suffer, significant harm.

Partners

Key Partners can offer support and guidance and all, including the IRO (Independent Reviewing Officer if involved) should be regularly updated. Health needs should be considered while the child is missing, including the impact of missing appointments and medication. Health assessments, including sexual health support should be planned before the child returns or is found. Education is a protective factor and plans should be made for the child to return to school or her education setting, with any necessary support.

Missing Strategy Meetings - see appendix G

Once a child has been missing for 48 hours or earlier depending on the vulnerability of the child a Missing Strategy Meeting is to be requested by the social worker by completion of a form 87a which is submitted to the CAIT (EAMailbox-PublicProtectionReferrals@met.police.uk) or to the East Area missing unit (EAMailbox-PublicProtectionMISPER@met.police.uk)

(please note that the missing report will not be transferred to the MISPer Unit until 48 hours after it has been created).

A Missing Strategy meeting must to be held by the 7th day if the child has not been located or returned home. Strategy meetings can be convened sooner depending on the risk of harm to the child or young person e.g. if the episode / child's vulnerability is classified as High. Please refer to Appendix G for the details on the criteria for when to hold a Missing Strategy meeting and guidance on what is to be considered and recorded during Missing Strategy meetings, including expected actions of the Police, Partners, Parents and placements.

Review of continued missing

If the child continues to be missing after 7 days, then a further Strategy Meeting will take place after the initial one was held. Further Strategy meetings must take place weekly until the child has been located/returned. This must be reviewed up until 12 weeks, where it is then recommended for the Assistant Director of Children's Social Care to formally review all cases where a child has been missing for 3 months to satisfy themselves on the actions taken to recover the child.

Where a child has been missing from care for 12 weeks, the above will be adhered to. Following the information gathered from the Strategy meetings, the Assistant Director of Children's Social Care will be advised of any requested decision to end a placement pending the child's return/location. The decision to end a placement for a missing child can only be made by the Assistant Director or above. If the decision outcome is to end the placement, then the rationale must be recorded and plan for when the child is found, how a placement will be sought.

In the rare occurrence that a decision is required to end a Child in Care status or close a child to Children's Social Care; this must be made by the Assistant Director or above. This step must be discussed with involved multi-agency Partners.

In addition to recording the information on the Police National Computer (PNC); in the case of long standing missing reports the Police will advise the person reporting the disappearance that once all active enquiries have been exhausted, the report will be deferred to a regular review pending further information coming to notice. In these cases, they may be categorised as 'inactive' provided the review process continues. In the event this is relevant for any child, the Local Authority will be kept informed.

Return of, or location of the child

If the whereabouts of a missing child becomes known or suspected, it is the responsibility of the parents or carers to arrange for the child's collection/return. In exceptional circumstances, in the interests of the safe and speedy return of the child, the Police may agree to requests from parents or carers to assist. The Police must not unreasonably withhold assistance in cases involving local recovery and transport for vulnerable children and joint collaboration between Police and Children's Social Care must take place in the event the missing young person is a child in care.

Once a missing child returns home or is located, it is important that the return is managed by relevant partners and they are fully debriefed to identify any risks the child may have been exposed to.

Responsibility of Havering Children's Services

Please refer to appendices D to F for the actions to be followed once the Merlin detailing the Police Prevention Interview is received by MASH. If the child has an allocated worker, they will check the Police Prevention Interview Merlin to determine if any safeguarding issues were identified by the police and to familiarise themselves with the circumstances of the location. *This process must be followed even if the RHI is being offered by one of the Borough's RHI Workers.*

Additionally, in matters of Child Exploitation, or any other situation that indicates that the child may have been subject to, or at risk of, significant harm, a referral must be made by the Police to the Local Authority, Children's Social Care in accordance with local safeguarding procedures. Likewise, if concerns are noted by the Social Worker or Early Help Worker of the above on receipt of the Merlin relevant safeguarding procedures must be followed and the HaRVA (Havering Risk and Vulnerability Assessment) completed or updated.

Return Home Interview (RHI) – Appendix H

Statutory guidance states that when a child is found/returned after a missing episode; they need to be offered an independent RHI (Return Home Interview) or Conversation within 72 hours. However, it is the young person's choice when to speak and this may not be in their timescales. If the RHI is refused/declined by the young person, then parents/carers can be given the opportunity to input into the information gathering.

RHIs are described as an in-depth discussion and a way in which risk, or actual harm can be uncovered and dealt with. RHIs must always be prioritised on a child returning/being located and their purpose is to:

- identify and deal with any harm the child has suffered (any medical condition must be discussed immediately and any need for medical attention assessed),
- understand and try to address the reasons why they went missing including identifying what help they may need to resolve any issues (push/pull factors) highlighted/hypothesised (for example, their living arrangements/placement or care plan may require review),
- understand what experiences and individuals they encountered while away,
- help them feel safe and understand that they have options to prevent further instances of them being reported missing
- provide them with information on how to stay safe, including helpline numbers.

For children in care, the placement may complete their own Return Home Interview and must always share details of any observations or conversations with a young person on their return with the allocated social worker for considering in the risk assessment, safety planning and RHI. In the case of Other LA Children in Care placed in Havering; it is the responsibility of the placing authority to ensure that an RHI is offered.

Information relating to RHIs for all children will be recorded on the case recording system even if these have been offered and declined. All attempts to offer an RHI must be recorded on the child's file and within the RHI form. Once a child's RHI has been completed, this must be reviewed by the Specialist Safeguarding Team Manager who will send onto the allocated Social Worker, and their manager, Independent Reviewing Officer and a copy shared with the relevant BCU MISPer Unit. Intelligence captured must be shared with the relevant BCU officers and concerned local authorities. Once the child or young person's 'push / pull factors' are understood, then direct work must be undertaken with the child to improve their safety and reduce the need for them to continue to go missing. Safety Planning and Keep Safe work is imperative and must form part of the ongoing conversations held with young people as part of direct work.

The child's Care Plan and or Pathway Plan must be updated after each missing episode to reflect the level of risk and intervention. Where applicable, the Local Authority needs to review whether the child's placement remains appropriate particularly in those instances where it has been identified as a push factor for the missing episode. The Independent Reviewing Officer must ensure that a child's missing episodes form part of the discussion and planning during each LAC Review meeting with all involved Partners. If concerns are raised in relation to children placed by other local authorities in Havering, a letter will be written by the Director of Children's Services to the Director of Children's Services for the placing authority.

If any safeguarding concerns are raised/disclosures made it is imperative to ensure that safeguarding procedures are followed without delay. This must include facilitating Missing Strategy meetings.

HARM Panel

The Havering Adolescent Risk Management (HARM) Panel has been introduced to consolidate a number of existing panels and create one forum for oversight of children currently open to Children's Social Care that have either gone missing and/or are being exploited. These children are identified in the Specialist Safeguarding Single View dashboard as the 'Top 10 children open to services at risk' (cohort one) in the preceding weeks. The HARM Panel also acts as a multi-agency prevention and early intervention network to discuss children at risk of exploitation not open to Children's Social Care (CSC), as well as all high risk missing children and those with open exploitation episodes. These children are identified in the Specialist Safeguarding Single View dashboard as the 'Top 10 children not open to services' (Cohort two) and through liaison with the Missing and Exploitation Police.

Role of HARM Panel

1. To oversee operational decision making and responses of all professionals working with missing children and/or children at risk of, or being exploited.
2. To scrutinise operational delivery of services and responses to children at risk of exploitation, working to make sure that interventions are fit for purpose, sustainable, including activity to disrupt exploiters.
3. To give oversight of the arrangements to safeguard and or disrupt missing children and children at risk of any form of exploitation e.g. child sexual exploitation, child criminal exploitation, modern slavery and trafficking and their siblings where appropriate.
4. To maintain oversight of risk assessments and interventions to reduce risks.
5. To ensure consistent multi-agency challenge in accordance with Havering Safeguarding Children Partnership procedures.
6. To assess risk for repeat and ongoing episodes of missing children and examine any links to child exploitation and/or links to Organised Crime Groups.
7. Act as a forum to collate information, locations and people of concern, resource issues and trends and inform the MACE meeting to inform and develop a strategic overview, which will be reported regularly to the Adolescent Safeguarding Strategic Board.

8. To enable professionals who work with children aged 10yrs-18yrs old , or up to 25yrs old with SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities) to identify vulnerabilities, risks of exploitation and harm, and maximise preventative opportunities.
9. To coordinate partnership work to support vulnerable children aged 10yrs-18yrs old, or up to 25yr olds with SEND and their families and respond in a targeted, proportionate way to risks.
10. To agree and review actions to reduce risks and support to children and families
11. To identify underlying issues that may be making a child vulnerable to exploitation
12. To make best use of information sharing between partner agencies to establish a comprehensive picture of exploitation, and use problem solving to reduce exploitation and harm.
13. To focus partnership attention on areas that generate concern, including child vulnerability factors, places and spaces of concern, emerging issues, patterns and trends, including those arising from local intelligence.
14. To identify additional support that can be offered to those at risk of exploitation and harm, including support from education, community, and voluntary sectors.
15. To develop and share best practice between professionals involved in working with children who are subject to harm, abuse, and exploitation

The HARM Panel does not replace the requirement for Strategy or Risk Management meetings and information sharing across the Partnership.

Children remanded to local authority accommodation

Children may become children in care because they have been remanded to local authority accommodation (RLAA) by a youth court. The child may be placed in secure accommodation, in a non-secure children's home, foster placement, with parents or their wider family friends. They will likely have a number of conditions imposed in relations to their remand, which limit their movements and associations.

A child who goes missing when RLAA in legal terms has escaped custody. The police will need to liaise with the Youth Justice Service and the Social Worker to act to find them. A risk assessment and appropriate safeguarding action must be undertaken to ensure they are returned safely.

Children who may have been trafficked from abroad

Some unaccompanied asylum seeking children (UASC) may have been trafficked into the UK and may remain under the influence of their traffickers whilst they are in our care. Trafficked children are at a high risk of going missing, with most going missing within days of becoming looked after. UASC who go missing immediately after coming into care should be treated as potential victims of trafficking. The London Safeguarding Procedures for children missing from home, care and education can be viewed [here](#)

The assessment of need to inform the care plan will be particularly critical in these circumstance and should be done immediately. The assessment must seek to establish:

- Relevant details about the child's background before they came to the UK
- An understanding of the reasons why the child came to the UK and
- An analysis of the child's vulnerability to remaining under the influence of traffickers.

Proportionate safety measures that keep the child safe and take into account their best interests should be put in place, and information shared with the police and immigration staff concerning potential crimes against the child and/or their risk to others.

[Safeguarding children who may have been trafficked - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/safeguarding-children-who-may-have-been-trafficked) contains practical guidance.

The London Safeguarding Procedures for Safeguarding Trafficked and Exploited Children can be viewed [here](#)

Appendix A Legal Framework

Havering's Missing Protocol is underpinned by the legal frameworks and guidance documents below and links with the HSCP Exploitation Protocol [here](#)

This protocol is based on the following legislation, statutory guidance and reports:

- [Working together to safeguard children - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk)
- [Children who run away or go missing from home or care - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk)
- [Missing Children and Adults strategy - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk)
- [Child sexual exploitation: definition and guide for practitioners - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk)
- [Tackling child sexual exploitation: progress report - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk)
- [Children Act 1989: care planning, placement and case review - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk)
- [Care of unaccompanied migrant children and child victims of modern slavery - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk)
- [Safeguarding children who may have been trafficked - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk)
- [Children missing education: Statutory guidance for local authorities \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](http://publishing.service.gov.uk)
- [Missing persons | College of Policing](#)
- [The right to choose: government guidance on forced marriage - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk)
- [Child Abduction Act 1984 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](http://legislation.gov.uk)

Appendix B: Push / Pull Factors

Children go missing from home, or Care for a variety of reasons. Whatever the cause, going missing indicates that there is likely to be something significantly wrong in their lives and a response must be made quickly to identify the cause and plan a response. Below are some reasons that may contribute towards a child going missing:

Push factors

- Problems at home/placement, ranging from a specific argument with parents/carers to long-term abuse, neglect, or maltreatment.
- Family break-up: children drawn into their parents' conflicts or neglected because of parents focusing more on their own needs are less likely to do well at school and more likely to truant or to run away from home.
- Domestic violence and abuse and the desire to get away from it.
- Parents failing to meet the needs of their child.
- Parents being unable to protect their child due to alcohol, or substance misuse.
- Bullying at school, or in the local community or other problems at school – children who are being severely bullied are more likely to go missing from school and home or care.
- Teenage pregnancy - some young women may go missing, or be forced to leave home, because they are pregnant (or fear they may be pregnant). They may also be in denial about their pregnancy, meaning that they are not getting the advice they need about pregnancy options. There is also a greater risk of pregnancy when girls go missing, and those working with them will need to ensure they have rapid access to confidential contraception and sexual health services.
- Mental health problems (usually linked to one, or more of the above) - a disproportionate number of children who go missing from home have mental health problems.
- Struggling to cope with emotional health, i.e. sexuality / gender confusion or self-esteem.
- Child in care who are unhappy with their placement, or unhappy that their placement is going to change as the child expects the placement to continue and be stable.

Pull factors

- Spending time with friends or family
- Seeing family or friends without restrictions associated with being in care
- Being encouraged to go missing with a friend, or sibling. This is a recognised link between missing and Child Exploitation.
- Grooming by adults for sexual or criminal exploitation or trafficking (including county lines) – children may run away or go missing following grooming by adults who will seek to exploit them.
- Being involved with a gang and/or criminal activity.

All adults involved with the child must be vigilant to signs that the child is unhappy and may be planning to go missing. They must speak to the child to try and understand what is wrong, how it can be resolved **and then act on this information**

Appendix C: Philomena Protocol

The MPS has introduced the Philomena Protocol as an important tactic to increase partnership and supportive engagement with children's social care placements across London and to highlight the importance of information sharing. This process builds on existing expectations set out in the London Child Protection Procedures in terms of maintaining information sharing and the preparedness of care professionals to accurately reflect risk to police at the point of reporting. In addition, children's social care placements in London are expected to report children in their care as missing via the online portal – This approach prevents delays experienced via the 101 system and requires the informant to outline the risk concerns and as much information as is held to allow police to respond proportionately.

The engagement opportunities created by the Philomena Protocol will include the police roles of Youth Engagement Officers and Youth Problem Solvers alongside BCU safeguarding officers and the Missing Person Coordinators. This allows for greater opportunity to support care placements in improving practice and to optimise information sharing opportunities.

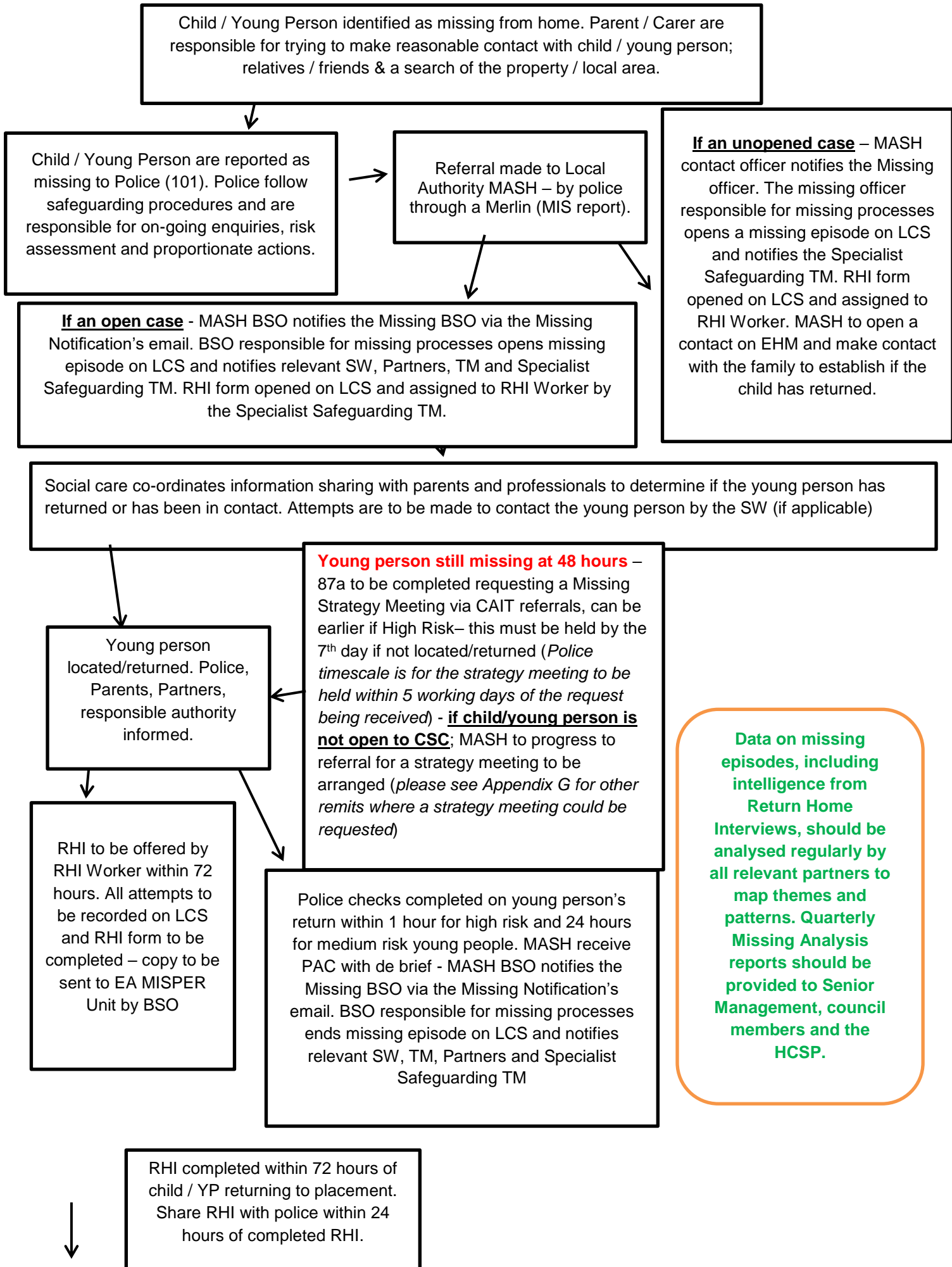
The Philomena Protocol is an initiative to help locate and safely return a young person as quickly as possible when they are missing. The basis of the scheme is for vital information concerning the young person to be recorded by the care provider. The wider scope of the protocol is also to reduce the premature reporting of young people in care and to enhance relationships with care providers.

The protocol was trialled in Durham Constabulary with successful outcomes, including a 38% reduction in the number of young people being reported missing. Police in the East Area (EA) have worked in partnership with Havering Children's Services to push forward with initiating this protocol. Too often care providers are reporting a young person missing without having the required information, which hinders initial investigative leads and adequate risk assessment by police. Care providers need to meet their responsibilities as a corporate parent when a child does not return home but need to be able to improve the care they provide through having the required information and adequately understanding the risks and needs of the young person. This will be monitored by the Placement Commissioners as part of contract monitoring.

Outcomes of the Philomena Protocol

- Enhanced information sharing
- Locating missing children and young people quickly
- Reducing the number of missing episodes
- Better care provisions and effective safeguarding

Appendix D MISSING FROM HOME FLOWCHART



Appendix E MISSING FROM CARE FLOWCHART

YP's Care / Placement Plan should include an assessment of appropriate placement arrangements to protect the child from the risk of going missing, and strategies for dealing with any known risks of running away. Placement Plans must include details of when EDT would be contacted. *N/B Over 18's are not to be reported as missing to EDT unless with the specific agreement of the Service Manager/Head of Service recorded within the pathway plan*

Every Child in Care aged 11 and above should have an up to date Grab Pack that is shared with the relevant BCU MISPer Unit, placement provider, LAC Specialist Nurse (within 72 hours for new LAC/placement moves) and saved on the child's LCS file.

YP's photo will go on file subject to relevant consents as a medium to assist searches during missing period.

Young person identified as missing after residential staff/foster carers/ Carer have made all relevant enquiries with relatives/friends and searched accommodation/local area. These expectations are as detailed within the Philomena Protocol. **Missing report to be made to Police via the Online Portal 101**

If a missing report is not deemed necessary/made to Police or generated by Police and the event is an Unauthorised absence – placement to inform allocated social worker at the earliest opportunity by email – these are to be monitored by the SW and must be recorded

EDT to only be advised of a missing report if (a) agreed as part of the Placement Plan and / or (b) if there are additional vulnerabilities that increase the risk to the child/YP whilst missing

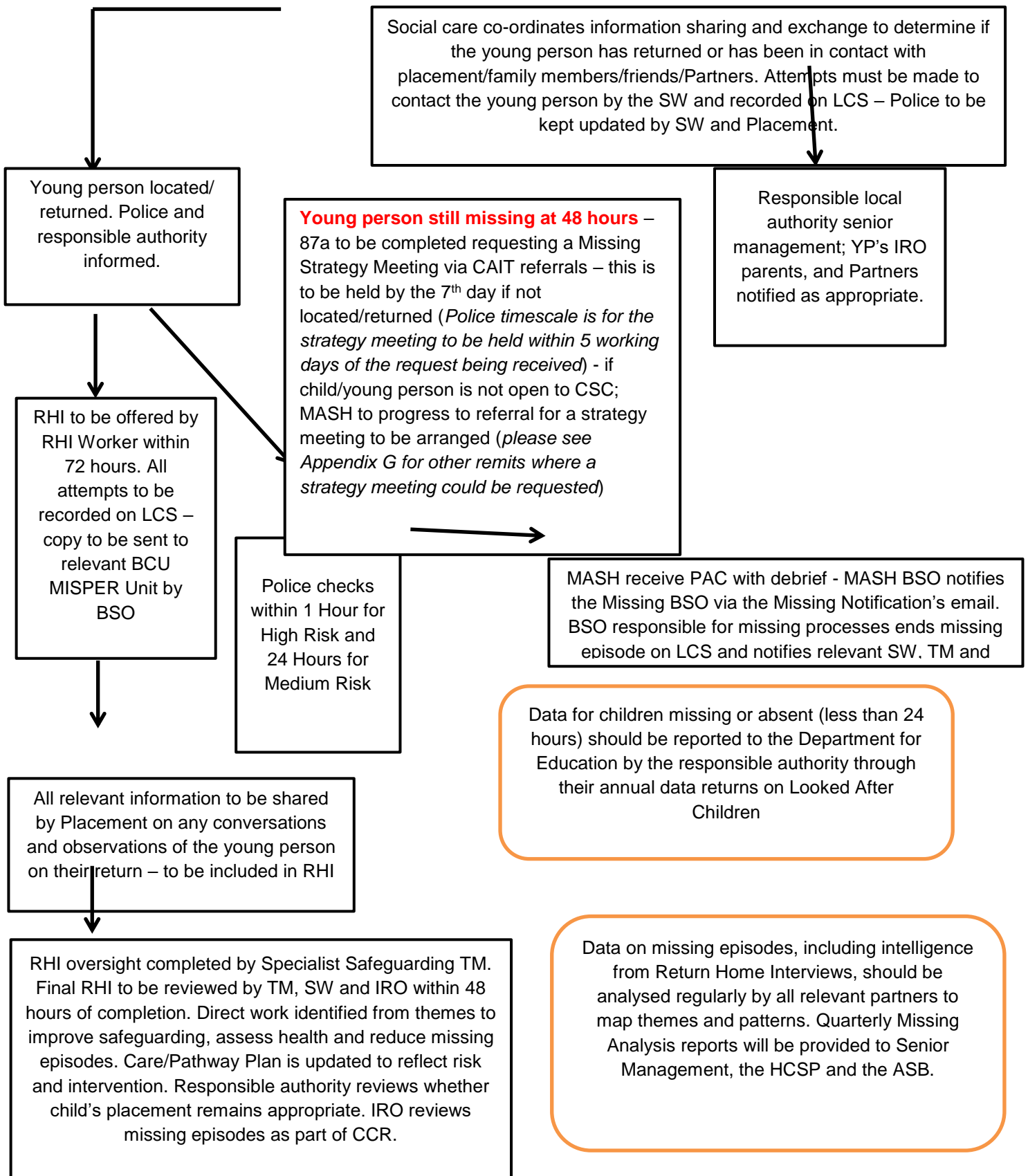
Management of children's home/foster services informed by provider staff

Parent/carer /Partners informed as appropriate and at the earliest opportunity by placement and/ or SW.

Referral made to Local Authority MASH by police through a Merlin (MIS report). MASH contact officer notifies the Missing officer via the Missing Notification's email. Contact officer responsible for missing processes opens missing episode on LCS and notifies relevant SW, TM and Specialist Safeguarding TM. RHI form opened on LCS and assigned to RHI Worker by the Specialist Safeguarding TM

Missing child risk assessment completed by Police. Police follow safeguarding procedures and are responsible for on-going enquiries, risk assessment and proportionate actions

Forms basis for subsequent investigation into child's disappearance.



Appendix F OOB (Out of Borough) LAC MISSING FROM CARE FLOWCHART

Notification received from Placing/Home LA and young person added to LCS - Care plan should include an assessment of appropriate placement arrangements to protect the child from the risk of going missing, and strategies for dealing with any known risks of running away. Copies to be shared with LA the young person is placed in.

Young person identified as missing after residential staff/foster carers have made all relevant enquiries with relatives/friends and searched accommodation/local area. IRO and multi-agency partners informed. These expectations are as detailed within the Philomena Protocol. **Missing report to be made to Police via the Online Portal / 101**

Referral made to Placement Local Authority MASH by police through a Merlin (MIS report).

MASH BSO notifies the Missing BSO via the Missing Notification's email. BSO responsible for missing processes opens missing episode on LCS and notifies the placing/home LA of the missing episode and Havering's Specialist Safeguarding TM

Contact to be made with relevant placing/home LA SW if the young person remains missing over 5 days to request any relevant information and attendance at any Missing Strategy Meetings. Files to be updated with ALL communication

Young person located/ returned. Police and responsible authority informed. MASH receive PAC with de brief - MASH BSO notifies the Missing BSO via the Missing Notification's email. BSO responsible for missing processes ends missing episode on LCS and notifies the placement/home LA of the missing episode and Havering's Specialist Safeguarding TM. Health Assessment considered, partners & IRO informed

Appendix G: Guidance for Missing Strategy Meetings

Remit for Missing Young People's Strategy Meetings

YP missing for over 48 hours, missing strategy meeting to be held by the 5th day if not located.

If YP has had 3 missing episodes within a 3 month period a strategy meeting is to be requested. If there is a CSE or CCE report open to Police, the missing can be incorporated within the CSE/CCE strategy meeting.

87a to be sent to the East Area Misper Unit-this unit will not be aware of the missing episode until the YP has been missing for 48 hours. Prior to this it will be with uniformed officers.

If a YP remains missing past five days, weekly reviews need to take place.

Strategy meetings can also be convened after one missing episode if concerns warrant it. For example, age, exploitation, vulnerabilities, mental health, etc. Professional judgement should be used.

Requests for Missing YP strategy meetings for those residing with Havering should be sent securely to EastAreaEABCUMailbox-SafeguardingMISPER@met.pnn.police.uk This may differ if the YP is out of borough and not within the Police Tri Borough remit. Therefore the LA where the child is placed may need to be contacted for specific area details.

87A can be completed when the YP has been missing for 48 hours, in prep for strategy meeting at 72 hours missing.

A YP missing episode will not reach the Police MISPER Unit until the YP has been missing for 48 hours,

Aspects for consideration during Missing Strategy Meeting

Historical missing or absences of the YP- it identifies themes and patterns or likely places they could be.

Current missing episodes and any concerns/worries: changes in behaviours, peer group, criminal activity, emotional well-being, info shared by parents/carers/friends/teachers etc

Record all aspects of strategy meeting and ensure that the Police risk level is recorded.

Actions/options of Police/CYPS

Hospital Checks

Border Agency Checks

Briefing packs to officers- inc British Transport Police- record areas sent to and date.

Oyster card checks- confirm who registered Oyster card for timeliness and info is requested from TFL.

Social media checks- provide all aspects of known apps/platforms (if grab pack up to date this should be on there.

Can make contact with parents, carers, placements, friends, family members.

Optica checks- Mobile phone checks. If these have been requested document outcome

Any addresses visited or planned to visit should be noted with outcome

Social media alerts- Police determine this. Consent has to be sought from those with PR. If s31 LA need to give permission. If there are CCE concerns this could increase risk to the YP.

Ensure Grab Pack is up to date- for ease of sharing info

Details of all attempted contact with the YP- successful or unsuccessful.

Details of all communication with parents/carers/family members/placement.

Share, document and raise any concerns with line manager (or similar) if unclear

Actions of parents/carers/placement

Details of attempted calls, visits, contact with the YP

What attempts have been made to locate the YP (visits to friends, areas of interest

Absent parents to be considered if this is a push factor for the YP.

'Food for thought' for Missing Strategy Meetings

Risk and Vulnerabilities. Has CCE or CSE risk assessment identified concerns? Mental health, abuse in the home, fractious relationships, substance misuse, criminality

Mapping- has this been completed, does it shed any light into peers, are they missing? If not completed is this required moving forward?

Other professionals' views, schools, AP's, partner agencies YP/family. How can they support what info do they have?

Is your Grab Pack up to date and sent to the Police? Hospital safeguarding to also receive a copy

Are there any persons of concerns associated with the YP? If yes, consideration could be given, if warranted to CAWN's (if under 16 or over 16 but on s31). Criminal Behaviour Orders, Police letters of concern.

Safety Plan with YP. Has this been completed before, if not who is best positioned to complete this on the YP's return? Consider positive relationships. Should include Missing People contact number (text 116000, email 116000@missingpeople.org.uk, EDT number, YP's safe adult/location, agree a safe word with YP for texting/communicating.

Do the concerns meet the threshold for a trigger plan being added to Police PNC?

If location of YP is known/strongly suspected and concerns of harbouring does a Recovery Order need to be applied for?

Information from previous RHI's completed, who will complete RHI on return?

FTT, Parents Surgery, Parenting Course, Wize Up, Talking Therapies for parents, counselling for YP's.

Examples of actions that could be possible for strategy meetings

| ACTION | BY WHOM | Timescale |
|---|------------------------|--|
| Grab Pack to be completed / updated and sent to CSE & Missing Coordinator for dissemination to the EA MISPER Unit and BHRUT. | SW | 24 hours |
| Mobile number/new mobile number for XX to be shared with the EA MISPER Unit | Placement/SW | 24 hours |
| Optica check request for XX mobile phone to be progressed | Police | 48 hours |
| Parent / Placement to keep CYPS and Police updated on all contacts made with XX - 101 to be advised without delay | Parent / Placement | With immediate effect and ongoing |
| Circulate / Re circulate alerts to all areas XX is known to frequent including the British Transport Police | Police | <i>(timescale to be agreed with Officer)</i> |
| CAD to be raised for YY's address to be visited by Officers to ascertain if XX is there or has been there. | Police | 24 hours |
| Confirmation to be ascertained from parent/carer on the number XX texts/rings from | SW | 24 hours |
| Parent / carer to be asked to encourage XX to meet with them – Police to be kept updated via 101. | SW | With immediate effect and ongoing |
| Social media checks to be progressed / details on social media accounts to be confirmed and provided to the Police | Police / SW | 24 hours |
| Contact to be made with ZZ on any contact they have had with XX during this missing episode | Police / SW | 24 hours |
| Trigger Plan to be considered and progressed | Police | 72 hours |
| Strategy meetings to be held once a week for the next four weeks – rooms to be booked | SW / TM | With immediate effect and ongoing |
| RHI to be offered by ZZ on XX's return/location. This is to include exploration of triggers, push and pull factors and an agreed safety plan with XX in order to prevent further missing episodes/reduce risk during future missing episodes. | SW/Family Practitioner | 72 hours of return |

Appendix H: Guidance for Return Home Interviews (RHI)

A RHI should be offered to all children who have been reported missing within 72 hours of them being found. A child is not obliged to accept or engage with the RHI but it is compulsory that the RHI is offered to them.

Providing children with the opportunity to talk is key to safeguarding them. The RHI aims to safeguard children by exploring the events that occurred during the missing episode and any push or pull factors that likely influenced the missing incident. RHI should be formally documented as this enables practitioners to recognise key locations, themes and patterns within this period of time. This will assist a practitioner identifying what level of risk or harm, if any the young person may be exposed or subjected to.

Delays in RHIs can lead to:

- retraction of statements and disclosures and
- loss of the child's confidence in the agency's response.
- 72 hours is deemed as timely and the recalling of information by the young person is better.

However, it is the young person's choice when to speak and this may not be in their timescales. It is therefore important to build a relationship with them initially and for the RHI to take place in a neutral setting where they feel safe. They need to be advised that they can change their mind on engaging with the RHI at a later date and an appointment will be given.

Consideration will also be given to talking to caregivers or other relevant adults/professionals to gain any relevant information and intelligence of which they may be aware and facilitate any support for the caregivers.

Statutory guidance states that the Police, LA and voluntary services must collaborate to try and fully understand why the missing episode occurred, what happened whilst the young person was away, where they were and with whom and what support they need.

Undertaking the Return Home Interview (RHI)

The timescale is **72 hours** after the child has returned. This is the maximum statutory timescale so the process is to be started as soon as possible on their return.

Make contact directly with the child (if over 16); introduce yourself and explain your role. If under 16 and parental consent is required; contact the main care giver and explain the need for the RHI. **The parent/carer cannot decline an RHI on behalf of the young person; this has to be from the young person directly.**

Explain the need for an RHI (*they had been reported missing and it is important to speak with them to understand why they went missing from their perspective and identify any support they may need*)

Let the young person agree the location of the RHI (*if this is to be in the community, explain confidentiality and how this could be compromised in a public place*).

If they agree, explore with them how their caregiver will be advised of the RHI.

Reassurance is to be given to parents when talking about the RHI; this is to give their child the opportunity to talk and identify if any support is needed.

When discussing consent, limits to confidentiality and safeguarding it is best practice to make some of the following considerations prior to the interview:

- How will this information be used?;
- Will this information be shared with others?
- Does the child understand and consent with full knowledge of limitations to confidentiality?

Do not give up - it can take a few days for the young person to agree to meet; if resistance is still met, explain that it would be good to meet with them to provide advice and access to support.

Be consistent and trustworthy – if you say you will ring them back; ring them back. If they do not answer, text them.

Be creative re the RHI process – offer a colleague to undertake it if the young person would feel more comfortable with someone else, use skype/FaceTime, offer to meet them at school etc.

Always keep a chronology of attempts made and include in the online RHI form.

Always record the date and time of the RHI and the missing episode it is covering.

Be aware of your body language when with the young person; **be aware of Social GRACES.**

Share information already known with the young person i.e. go through the initial Police missing report and prevention interview on their return. Use this as a tool to open lines of communication.

Use a time line to help the young person identify what led up to the missing episode; this could be correlated to a single incident for them or a number of concerns spanning weeks/months/years. **It is their story and so help them tell it.**

Do not give up if the young person is initially silent or vague – explain that the time is their time to use it as they choose; you will wait. If they do not want to talk, offer another appointment and make sure you keep it.

Undertake safety planning with the young person (this has to be THEIR plan and needs to be developed with your support) - evidence this on the write up.

Always keep your manager updated and **escalate any concerns without delay.**

If a disclosure is made; listen, take them seriously, remain calm, confident and not anxious, be non-judgemental, use appropriate language and tone, give them options and be honest.

If any safeguarding concerns are raised/disclosures made ensure safeguarding procedures are followed without delay.

Missing People charity have a free helpline that can be accessed by young people who are thinking of going missing, are missing or after they return from missing **11600**. This can also be used by parents/carers who are worried about a young person who is missing. Advice and support is available for them also.

The interview and actions that follow should:

- Identify and deal with any harm the child has suffered wither before they went missing or whilst missing;
- Understand and try to address the reasons they went missing;

- Help the child feel safe and understand that they have options to prevent repeat instances of missing;
- Provide all children with information on how to stay safer, including helpline numbers.

Where a child declines an interview or will not engaging in the interview the RHI Worker needs to record this on LCS and discuss with their line manager so that any risks, concern and other relevant information is shared and acted upon. Consideration will be given as to whether there is another suitable person, with whom the child would engage with and who could undertake the RHI.

Process/evidence of offered interviews:

- Attempted call and/or text
- Unannounced visit with letter posted if unsuccessful
- Follow up call
- If the child has an allocated worker evidence contact with them to see if they can encourage engagement.