



CHILDREN MISSING FROM HOME AND CARE PROTOCOL January 2022

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INTRODUCTION

This procedure is written in accordance with the West Yorkshire Police Missing Protocol and Statutory Guidance on 'Children Who Run Away and Go Missing from Home or Care'. This procedure should be read in conjunction with the Child Exploitation Protocol.

For any child who goes missing there is a range of safeguarding risks depending upon their age and stage of development and what we understand about the child's lived experience. There is a duty to ensure that appropriate risk assessments are undertaken for individual children and that if a child repeatedly is missing, to measure risks situationally each time.

Every "child missing episode" should trigger proper attention from professionals involved with the child and information gathered during return home interviews should be analysed to inform planning for the child. It should be noted that there are strong links between child missing episodes and child exploitation, particularly children in our care.

Each instance of a child going missing should be taken seriously, both for issues that may have led to it and issues that may arise from it. Further each episode must be recorded to give a true picture of the child's missing episodes.

PURPOSE

To provide an agreed inter-agency framework for;

1. Assessing and classifying the level of risk when a child goes missing from home or care when a missing child comes our attention
2. When a child is absent without authorisation following their individual missing reporting strategy and/or trigger plan
3. To provide guidance on what responses different agencies will offer in relation to each level of risk
4. To ensure that Police National College of Policing, 'missing' definitions are aligned to Children Services interpretation of vulnerability of a child with due consideration given to their age, vulnerability and development factors.

STRATEGIC OVERSIGHT

Strategic Managers/ Team Managers - Daily reports are produced to provide the partnership with up to date data reports on children who are missing, including being missing from their home, from education and from all care settings including supported living providers. A dashboard of data is also provided by the police and EDT where missing episodes go into 'out of office hours'.

Integrated Front Door (IFD) - The IFD will receive missing notifications from police forces across the UK during office hours. These to be progressed to the Child Exploitation Hub's **MissingPSSInbox**, allowing for the Child Exploitation Hub to take forward all strategic oversight of all missing children.

The Exploitation Hub - support children who are actively being exploited and or at risk of exploitation, oversee children who are missing and undertake return home interviews. The exploitation Hub screen all young people identified as being at risk of exploitation. Children who are assessed and screened are measured against the Continuum of Need in the same way as the Integrated Front Door would all referrals for children. The screening incorporates health, police and education checks.

Children who have an allocated social worker will be notified by the Child Exploitation Hub, further to the missing episode being recorded onto LCS, and support all work linked to the missing episode and return.

Children in Care that are placed within our area from other local authorities are also reviewed within the Child Exploitation Hub on a daily basis. If the missing episode goes into 'out of office hours' they are also reviewed by our Emergency Duty team and joint work takes place between the relevant placing Local Authority both during office hours by locality teams and via our EDT service, out of hours.

Missing coordinators- sit within the Child Exploitation Hub and undertake 'Return Interviews' with young people upon their return. For Children in our Care who go missing, return interviews are undertaken by an independent, externally commissioned service The Children's Society, in line with statutory duty.

RAM (Risk Assessment Meetings) - are specific forums that frontline practitioners will present risk profiling of young people to a multi-agency panel. The panel members will consider allocation to an appropriate service, provide advisories on safety planning and clear steer on disruption planning. Children who go missing will present to this panel on the basis their missing episodes are placing them at risk of harm, further to a child's risk profile assessment being completed. Practitioners will continue to present

to RAM whilst a child's risk grading is moderate or significant, until such a time the risks have been reduced to a safer level (emerging risk). Locality and Early Help will lead on children grading as Emerging Risk, independent of the RAM process.

MACE board - meet on a six weekly basis for review and strategic oversight for the high risk and most vulnerable children and young people. They also hold responsibility of wider strategic mapping and prevention of exploitation. The partnerships will work together to ensure children and their families receive the help and support they require, such as services coordinated in this board. MACE support the most complex exploited children in our district and will work together to expedite support and remove barriers to the right help being provided. Children who are at chronic risk when Missing and where support planning is not improving the safety of a child, may be invited to be discussed at MACE.

Emergency Duty Team (EDT) - Dashboard data of missing children is to be collated and reviewed by the emergency duty team over the weekend and bank holiday periods. EDT will support work to locate and recover children during out of hours, with a view to progressing children to day time services, aligned to procedures already in place. The Child Exploitation and or locality teams will take forward during day time hours all work to locate and recover children.

SCOPE

This procedure provides a framework for missing children or children absent without authorisation in following categories:

- a) Children looked after
- b) Children in need / in need of protection
- c) Children not previously known to Children's Social Care or closed cases
- d) Children placed in our area from Other Local Authorities
- e) 18 years and still vulnerable (children previously in our care)

DEFINITIONS

Missing child:

Children whose whereabouts are unknown to statutory agencies including:

- Children whose whereabouts cannot be confirmed or confirmation they are safe with an appropriate/ safe adult
- Children in families who have to go into hiding suddenly
- Children in families who have disappeared without leaving a forwarding address

- Children in families who have gone on extended leave and have failed to return when due to do so
- Children who have been abducted/ trafficked

The College of Policing defines missing as:

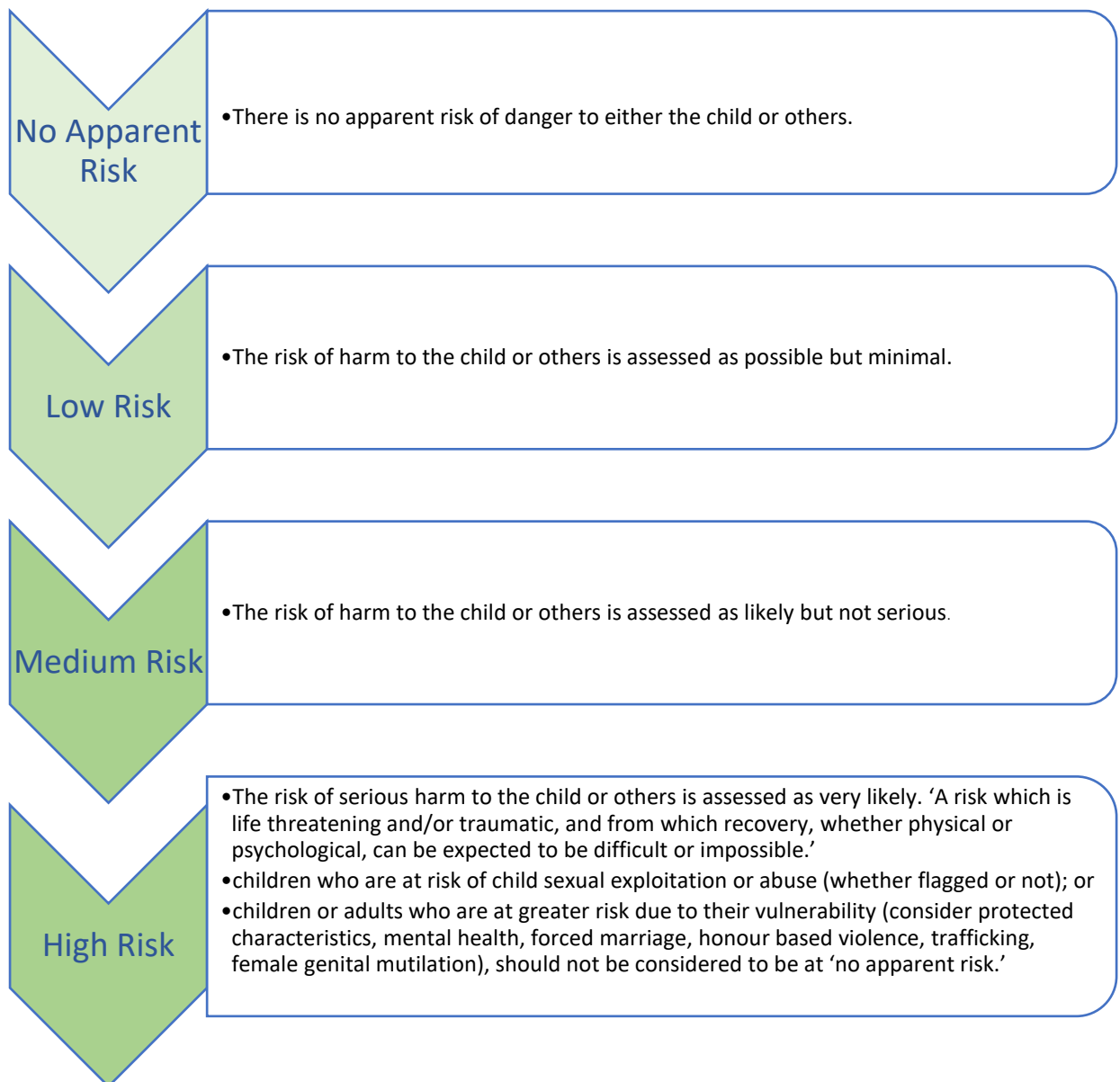
“Anyone whose whereabouts cannot be established will be considered as missing until located and their well-being or otherwise confirmed.”

Philomena Plans and Missing Prevention Plans (grading)

The Philomena Protocol is a Police initiative to help locate and safely return a young person as quickly as possible when they are missing, Bradford Children Services are fully signed up to using the Philomena Protocol.

The basis of the scheme is for vital information about the young person to be recorded on a form so that this can be used to help locate them safely and quickly. The form should then be stored safely – on LCS. It may need to be located quickly, at any time of day or night, by the person who needs the information to begin the initial searches. When the form is complete, it will contain confidential information and need to be regularly reviewed and updated.

The definition below is for all age groups, therefore Children under the age of 18 years and who may have additional needs or vulnerabilities would likely fall into the latter 3 grading. This is a guide for social care staff to consider risk levels and responses.



*West Yorkshire Police have their own separate grading, not dissimilar.

Philomena Plan/ Missing prevention plans - must be placed on the child's LCS file under the heading Missing Prevention and Philomena Plan. This ensuring the Child Exploitation Hub, EDT and Police can quickly retrieve this plan. Practitioners circled around the child must complete the missing prevention planning elements. This must be reviewed regularly if deemed to not be working.

Philomena Plans are fluid documents that need to be reviewed at least **3 monthly** and at any RCPC/ CIC Review meetings for the child. These are useful forums to ensure all agencies and parents/ carers can assist in Philomena Plans being up to date, therefore effective in their purpose.

Audits will be undertaken regularly by the CE Hub Missing coordinators and guidance and support offered to staff accordingly.

Missing from Placement / our Care or children absent without authorisation

Missing – A child who is in our care (looked after) who is not at their placement or the place they are expected to be (e.g., school) and their whereabouts is not known will be classed as missing. Until they are located and they have been determined as safe and well with an appropriate adult. Practitioners, foster carers and or Provider staff are expected to trigger the Philomena actions in the child's plan and make every attempt to locate and make a child safe, prior to seeking police assistance. Missing episodes requires the practitioner to formulate a missing prevent plan for the child, before the event. This recorded on their Philomena protocol plan. Should a child be referred to police as missing, staff will have to demonstrate what reasonable actions have been undertaken. If a risk is deemed life threatening, then making contact with Police must not be delayed. Professionals and Police would joint plan actions where risks are extreme and life threatening.

Absent without leave (AWA) - When a child has been located and remains with a safe and appropriate adult, this will be recorded as AWA, until they return to placement or the place they are supposed to be i.e. school.

Children who have an AWA episode require the practitioner to formulate a missing prevent plan for the child. This recorded on their Philomena protocol plan. To ensure any adult is appropriate agency checks must be undertaken. Consideration of the child's contact plan with significant others should follow, allowing for updated approved contact checks to be undertaken. A family member for example.

- AWA **must not** be used if there is no confirmation the child is with a safe adult.
- AWA **must not** be used if the child is absent for longer than **72 hours** as per the flow chart below.

Children Missing from Home

A child or young person under the age of 18 who has gone missing from home or feels they have been forced or coerced or controlled in some way to leave, or whose whereabouts is unknown. Missing episodes requires the practitioner to formulate a missing prevention plan for the child, this recorded as part of their Philomena Plan.

Children Missing from Education

Children missing from education are children of compulsory school age who are not registered pupils at a school and are not receiving suitable education otherwise than at a school. Children missing education are at significant risk of underachieving, being victims of harm, exploitation or radicalisation, and becoming NEET (not in education, employment or training) later in life. Effective information sharing between parents, schools and local authorities is critical to ensuring that all children of compulsory school age are safe and receiving suitable education.

Absenteeism is another factor for children who are likely to and or currently exploited. All children whose absence falls under 85% require special focus on how this can be increased, given the lifelong impact education loss can have. Childrens plans must incorporate education plan outcomes if this is an identified factor.

Vulnerable Learners/ Not in Receipt of Full-time Education

Vulnerable learners are defined as children and young people at greater risk of poor educational outcomes. This covers a number of categories of children including those formally recognised to be receiving programmes of alternative provision.

- Children who are looked after
- Young carers and those affected by circumstances
- Children from a Gypsy, Roma or Traveller background
- Children who are disabled and have special educational needs
- Children who have missed education i.e. poor attendance
- Children known to Childrens services and or on a protection plan
- Children with medical needs
- Children where English is an additional language
- Disadvantaged children
- Children in danger of radicalisation and extremism
- Children of asylum seeking families/ or unaccompanied children
- Children who attend unregulated schools
- Children who have been or at risk of exclusion
- Very young children
- Children with mental and emotional health conditions
- Children who qualify for 2 years funding

Missing Children Tracker

An electronic tracker to help locate children aged 18 or younger who have gone missing from the district and, once they have been found, refer them on to the appropriate agencies. Missing children from other local authority areas are recorded and checked against the tracker. A notification is then sent to the relevant Local Authority with any additional updates should the young person be found. This will be updated and tracked by the CE Hub. Children who Bradford hold responsibility make use of LCS for tracking and monitoring missing children.

MISSING PROCESS MAP

The flowchart below sets out the procedure for responding to children under 18 years who are 'missing' from home or care. It outlines the required safeguarding processes for every allocated child.

**Bradford
Missing Process Map
January 2022**

**Child/ young person goes missing
Parent/carers/ placement staff must make all reasonable
enquires to establish their whereabouts and circumstances**

**Parent report to Police
Carers/Placements report to Police/ EDT guidance given re what
actions required of carer/ placement staff & submit up to date
Philomena Plan**

**Police complete a Misper Report and send copy to Childrens.
Enquiries IFD who forward to the IAT duty tray**

**Children open to CS - CE Hub
puts details of missing episode
on to LCS and, if open to CSC
informs allocated Social Worker /
Team Manager/ SM and IRO for
CIC of the missing episode.
*If not open to CSC a Multi-
Agency Referral Form is
completed* these children are
notified from Police Missing
Coordinator and following liaison
with CE hub, decision made on
final outcome.
**Exploitation team alerted
Initial risk grading formulated****

Police Investigation

Young Person not located

Young Person is located
Arrangement to transport child-
parent/carer/ placement/police

Police conduct safe and well check, finalise
Misper 7 and send copy to Childrens
Enquiries Inbox

CE Hub/EDT update LCS missing episode
& alert locality team/ worker.
1. Exploitation & Missing Hub allocate return
home interview Missing Coordinator
2. EDT allocates RHI children looked after

Return Home Interview conducted within 72
hours of child's or young person return.
Placed on LCS- team/worker alerted

Social Worker puts case note on LCS
confirming that they have read RHI & will
review Missing prevention plan and
Philomena to be updated i.e. new locations

- Police risk assessment
- Missing notification
- MARF if required

Missing 24 Hours
**Open to CSC – Team Manager conducts strategy
discussion within 24 hours**
**Not open to CSC – MARF will be triggered & CE
Hub TM will recommend a strategy meeting is
convened. Area assessment team will conduct.
IRO/ CP chair notified. Service manager to be
notified for escalation to DCS. IRO/ CP chair notified**

- CS Safeguarding Response**
- Assessment
 - Missing prevention plan
 - Philomena Plan
 - Exploitation Risk Assessment plan
 - RAM
 - MACE
 - Low Level – Step down to Early Help

Missing 3 days
**Open to CSC – Area Team Manager
conducts a follow up strategy meeting
within 72 hours –Service manager to be
notified for escalation to Deputy Director
CS. IRO/ CP chair notified.**

Any child that has been missing for over
24 hours will be subject to an

**Frequent
missing
episodes**

3 x missing
episodes in
a 4-week
period – a
strategy
meeting to
be convened

**Allocated Worker sends copy
of RHI/missing prevention plan
and updated Philomena Plan
to other practitioners involved
in support with child or young
person**

Child missing 5 days or more
Weekly strategy meetings until the child
is located chaired by the area SM.
5th day child is missing SIN notification
completed and sent to **Deputy Director
& Director of Childrens Service.** IRO/
CP chair updated daily



1. WHEN A CHILD GOES MISSING

1.1. Exploitation, Missing Risk Assessment and Missing prevention planning

- I. An exploitation and missing Risk (Profiling) Assessment
- II. Missing prevention plan
- III. Philomena Plan

The exploitation and missing Risk Profiling Assessment, the missing prevention plan and the Philomena Plan are key documents to enable rapid information sharing when it is required, seeking to reduce future harms. Risk Profiling Assessments should be completed for every child we are working with as part of the Children and Family Assessment, where such risks are assessed. Further the Philomena Plan are live documents as they provide vital information and intelligence about the child or young person. These plans must be evaluated for their effectiveness/ updated every time a child goes missing. Plans that are not working will need to be reviewed and updated.

The above assessments and plans must be made available to parents, so they are clear what their child's plans are, where PR is shared or they hold PR.

For children in our care, carers and provider staff must receive these assessments and plans at the start of the placement. Further placement provider staff have a shared responsibility to keep Philomena plans up to date. **No less than 3 monthly reviews.**

Young people should form an integral part of their risk assessing, safety planning and be aware of what plan will be triggered upon a risk being posed. Where appropriate be given a copy of their assessment and plans.

Young People and parents should be specifically asked about key factors below as part of this assessment and missing prevention activity, including when a child is in our care wherever possible under CO/ Under Sec 20. For details of the factors that should be considered as part of the risk assessment, please refer to CE & Missing Risk Assessment plan.

- Child's view on current placement / stability or of their relationships at home
- Level of supervision & support that parents/ care staff propose to provide for the child
- The degree of risk to the child if they go missing

- The views of parents / carers / placement providers, on the child's needs and the action that needs to be taken if the child is missing
- Consideration of any external influences which may result in a child going missing (family / known associates / persons of concern)

Children – Young People not previously known to agencies

Where a child is not known to the police or there is limited information available, a joint assessment should be undertaken with multi-agency partners at the earliest opportunity to inform the risk level. **Extreme caution should be exercised before making a decision of low or no risk for a child for whom there is limited information and / or to go missing, is out of character.**

Risk levels can be reduced following new information but should they have been inappropriately deemed low risk the first instance valuable time may have been lost to safely locate a child. This risk grading will be continuously reviewed during the missing episode.

Once a child is located an updated family assessment will need to be considered. A review of the current plans, including Philomena plan for a child or young person must be undertaken an exploitation Risk Profiling Assessment will need to be submitted to the Exploitation Hub and RAM scheduled.

1.2. Missing Notification & Advice

Missing from Placement - When a child does not return to his / her placement at the designated time the carer / placement provider should take the action that would reasonably be expected of any parent, i.e. attempt to contact the child to ascertain their whereabouts and establish when they will be returning. This might include contacting known friends and relatives and visiting them and collecting the child; subject to the current risk assessment, Philomena Plan intelligence held and professional advice. Where the foster carer or residential worker have been unable to contact the child or ascertain their whereabouts, the carer or the Senior Residential Worker should contact the allocated Social Worker, to then go through any risk assessments that are available and the Philomena protocol. The carer will then call the police if it appears that the child is 'missing', clearly outlining the risks and sharing the up to date Philomena Plan and all attempts to locate a child has been made.

Whenever a looked after child goes missing from a placement, the foster carer or the manager on duty in the children's home is responsible for ensuring that parents and

any other person with parental responsibility are informed, unless it is not reasonably practicable or to do so would be inconsistent with the child's welfare.

Foster carers must inform their own supervising social worker (or duty social worker) at the first opportunity. A residential worker / placement provider should contact the child's social worker or EDT and taking advice and instruction for locating a child. The child's social worker will then alert their manager and the IRO.

Missing from Home- Where a child is missing from the family home, parents, should be advised to take the steps set out above, if they have not done so already. The allocated social worker or EDT, will support the evaluation of risk and consider any known history of the child's circumstances and key events and risks. EDT will inform the allocated team as their out of hours' work activity ends, allowing for the day service to continue supporting the child/family.

EDT - Out of hours, the parent/ carer should contact the Emergency Duty Team (EDT) who will generate a Missing Episode. EDT will support partners and parents with advice and guidance and may be required to making enquiries i.e. other local authority EDT teams. EDT will support the evaluation of risk and consider any held CE Risk Assessment, Philomena forms will advise the referrer the report directly to the Police, if not already done by another. Please note EDT will provide this support outside the Missing Coordinators working hours which is Monday to Saturday service, 07:00 - 10:00 pm.

Found or still missing "Out of Hours" EDT at the end of the shift will reassign to the LCS Missing Tray, ensuring a case note notification has been added to alert the allocated worker and Team Manager and the Exploitation Hub.

Contact with children / Young People when missing - If a missing child is texting or phoning in from time to time, the opportunity should be taken to understand if they are safe and what support they need to return home/ to placement.

Transporting a child home/ placement - Once a child is located and their wellbeing confirmed, it is the responsibility of the child's parent/ carers (including staff in Children's Homes) to arrange for the return of that young person back to their address or a safe place.

Police assistance to return a child home should only be sought if:

- Access to the child is being denied;
- There is evidence to suggest the child is at risk of harm; or
- It is necessary to prevent a breach of the peace.

Placed out of area, Social Workers are to follow Appendix 2 – see attached.

Service Managers - in whose service the missing child is allocated, must be notified by locality Team Managers in their area and Service Manager should maintain strategic oversight until a child is found. Service Managers should place direction and oversight case notes on LCS for all children/ young people missing over 24 hours and again at 3 days. Service Managers must notify the Deputy Director & Director of Childrens Service via a Serious Incident Notification report at **24 hours missing** and report to the Deputy Director & Director of Childrens Service when a child is found.

Top 10 Missing reports will be sent to all service managers by the CE Hub to consider where risks do not appear to be reducing as a child or young person continues to regularly go missing despite multi-agency planning and safeguarding activity.

1.3 Police response when a child or young person goes missing

Reporting a Missing Child to the Police

When a child is reported as missing, the Police will request a high level of information to aid their own agency assessment level of risk (if any) the child is likely to face. The fact that a vulnerable child has a history of going missing (including any occurrences of absence) does not mitigate risk, and each report of missing will be considered in its own right. Risks will be quantified each time. Police have their own agency triaging processes and may take a decision to 'pause' before activating any investigation. This risk being owned and managed by a senior officer who will be required to review risks as the missing episode progresses. Non- police staff must continue efforts to locate and return a child to their care.

The Philomena form provides the level of information to be shared and the police need to have specific risk information from any previous CP/CIN/Exploitation Risk Assessment and plans. Upon the police receiving this information and carrying out their risk analysis, investigations may commence, as noted above.

Attending officer

If the Police assess a child as missing and there are concern for the child and/or others, they will attend to take a missing person report and investigate in accordance with the assessed level of risk and vulnerability.

The police officer attending will:

- Take details of all the enquiries conducted so far
- Request a photograph of the missing child
- Make all necessary enquiries at the scene to locate the missing child, including undertaking a thorough search of the premises
- Ensure during any search of premises that they also search for items which will assist subsequent enquiries or inform the Risk Assessment, e.g. suicide notes, diaries, and mobile phones
- Gather information relating to any Police flags, reporting strategies, Missing Action Plans, and /or Risk Assessments to help determine whether the child is at risk of Child Sexual and/or Criminal Exploitation, Trafficking / Modern Day Slavery, Forced Marriage, So Called Honour Based Violence, or Female Genital Mutilation and to establish if an immediate investigation is required
- Provide the reporting person and other significant individuals with details on who to contact should they require an update from the Police.

Police Investigation

If a child is not located as a result of the initial enquiries, the police officer will create a missing person occurrence record on the Police computer system and a formal investigation will commence. The police will continuously review any missing from home report in line with the West Yorkshire Police Missing Person's policy.

Parents / carers, practitioners and all relevant agencies will be expected to continue to help the Police to find the child and to work co-operatively with the Police during any investigation. No one agency holds sole responsibility and there is a shared objective to locate and make children safe.

Cross Border Investigations

When a child is reported as missing to West Yorkshire Police, the responsibility for the report and enquires to locate the missing child will ordinarily lie with the Police district in which the report was originally received. However, where it becomes apparent that the missing child has left that area and is now likely to be in a different force or district area, then the 'ownership' of the report and enquiries may be transferred from one district area to another within West Yorkshire Police or to another Police force.

In respect of Children Looked After, the home / responsible local authority retains legal responsibility for the child and therefore the Police force responsible for any enquiries to locate the child, should liaise with both the child's home / responsible local authority Children's Social Care Services, as well as the update the host local authority.

1.4 Strategy Discussion

A strategy meeting should be called as soon as there are serious concerns about the child.

In any event, whenever a child is missing for 24hrs a strategy meeting should be held. This will be arranged by Children's Social Care, West Yorkshire Police and Missing Person Investigators for police invited (01274 376611 check number), and any other agencies who may have important information including Youth Justice and Be Positive Pathways Service, Health and Education, External providers or any other relevant professional should also be invited to attend.

The strategy meeting should be chaired by the allocated social worker's team manager or delegated officer at the same level. The purpose of this meeting is to ensure sharing of information between all relevant agencies, to confirm what action has been taken to locate the child and to agree what further action is possible or necessary. Missing Prevention planning should also be considered at the strategy meeting.

If **two or more children have gone missing together** from their home or placement(s), the responsible social workers for all the children should liaise with the placement provider/s and consider whether to arrange a **Complex Strategy Meeting**. To minimise duplication and ensure a plan of action is timely co-ordinated. Careful consideration should be given to the issue of confidentiality. A separate individual record of the meeting and a separate action plan must be drawn up for each child.

Children in Our Care	
Stage 1	<p>Children Looked After that go missing</p> <p>3 times within a 4-week period, or 1 significant missing episode (over 24 hours and / or with high risk indicators/perpetrators).</p> <p>A Strategy Meeting should be convened 24 hours to be chaired by the appropriate Team Manager.</p> <p>The Police to be invited along with all involved partner agencies including Health, Education, Independent Providers, etc.</p> <p>IRO to be notified- kept informed.</p>

Stage 2	<p>Children Looked After who go missing in excess of 5 times up to 10 times within a 3-month period or have had previous significant missing episodes, it is unclear whether the child is under duress to go missing or there are concerns the child may be groomed or exploited, or other influences/locations that are dangerous and are impacting the child with subsequent significant incidents, a Strategy Meeting should be convened within 24 hours chaired by the Team Manager.</p> <p>The Police to be invited along with all involved partner agencies.</p> <p>IRO to be notified- kept informed.</p>
Stage 3	<p>Any children Looked After who continue to go missing post stage 1 and 2 and at continued risk of exploitation a Complex Strategy Meeting must be convened within 24 hours to be chaired by the locality Service Manager.</p> <p>The Police to be invited along with all involved partner agencies as above.</p> <p>IRO to be notified and invited to the strategy meeting/ informed and the placement reviewed of its ability to keep child safe.</p> <p>Head of Service, ADCSC & DCSC to be updated.</p>

Children Missing from home, not Looked After	
Stage 1	<p>Children who are <u>not</u> looked after that go missing 3 x in a 4 week period, or 1 significant (over 24 hours with high risk indicators/perpetrators). A Strategy Meeting should be convened within 24 hours to be chaired by the appropriate Team Manager.</p> <p>The Police to be invited along with all involved partner agencies.</p> <p>CP chair to be notified if a CP plan in place.</p>

Stage 2	<p>Any children <u>not</u> Looked After who continues to go missing over 5 times and been subject to Step 1, a Complex Strategy Meeting must be convened within 24 hours to be chaired by the Service Manager.</p> <p>The Police to be invited along with all involved partner agencies.</p> <p>CP chair to be notified if a CP plan in place</p> <p>Legal advice/options considered to protect child by the LA.</p>
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Young people in semi-independent living who go missing from their placement (16 & 17 year old)

Stage 1	<p>Young people are entitled to 3 nights away - missing to be reported from day 4.</p> <p>Social worker establishes where they are staying and risk assess and undertake checks. Records of nominated approved place to visit must be recorded on LCS.</p> <p>Report to the police if the young person's whereabouts is unknown or thought child deemed to be at significant risk.</p> <p>During the 3 days' absence if any professional has concerns for young person's safety this could trigger a Stage 1 Missing from Home Strategy Meeting. Chaired by a Team Manager.</p> <p>3 x 4-week period, or 1 significant (over 24 hours with high risk indicators/perpetrators).</p> <p>IRO notified / kept informed.</p>
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Stage 2	<p>Any young person who continues to go missing over 10 times and been subject to Step 1, a Complex Strategy Meeting must be convened within 24 hours to be chaired by the locality Service Manager.</p> <p>The Police to be invited along with all involved partner agencies.</p> <p>IRO notified / kept informed.</p>
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1.5 Media Alerts

The Police have responsibility for any missing person investigation and will decide whether media involvement will assist or hamper the enquiry. A decision to use the media will only be made after consultation between the Police and Bradford Childrens Social Care, the parents / Carers who hold Parental Responsibility (PR) and family should also be informed and involved. The usual mechanism for this action will be through a strategy meeting/ discussion. Where media publicity is required, any statement made must be agreed through press officers. Where a child is to be publicised through the media, every effort will be made to include the parents/carers beforehand.

The Service Manager, Children Looked After must be notified of any proposal to publicise a child and will advise the Head of Service and Deputy Director.

Where agreement over publicity cannot be reached between the Police and the local authority, the ultimate decision rests with the police.

1.6 Planning for return

Where a looked after child has been missing from their placement the responsible social worker should ensure that plans are in place to respond promptly once the child is located.

While the child is missing the social worker, manager, carer, supervising social worker and home manager as appropriate should consider whether the child can return to the placement once recovered and if not should plan an alternative suitable placement. The IRO should also be consulted about this decision. The expectation should be that the child will return to the placement, at least in the short term, unless there are safeguarding reasons why that should not happen.

1.7 Children subject to CP Plans or S47 enquiries

Children who have a Child Protection Plan or who are subject to a Section 47 enquiry need additional action to that required for other children. This includes reviewing their child protection plan/ CIN plan and consideration of legal advice during a section 47 enquiry. Further the exploitation Risk Profiling assessment must be completed or updated and submitted this to the Exploitation HUB.

For families who abscond whilst their children who are subject to child protection plans, without notification of change address/area will be deemed as missing. The Police and Child Protection coordinator/ Education and Health must be notified and a strategy meeting convened and consideration given to national alerts via health, Police and or local authority alerts channels.

1.8 Children at risk of extremism

Where a child has left the country, and where there is some evidence to suggest that this might be linked to extremism, that young person should be deemed 'missing'. The situation should be considered at a strategy meeting, chaired by the Service Manager and in line with the Prevent Strategy, at the earliest opportunity, within 24 hours.

Where there is a strong suggestion that a child is at risk of flight linked to extremism but has not yet left the country; that young person will not be considered 'missing'. However, a strategy meeting will need be held as a matter of urgency chaired by the service manager and in line with the [Prevent Strategy](#) at the earliest opportunity within 24 hours. Consideration of legal routes to prevent a child leaving the country must be given.

1.9 Children who may have been trafficked or at risk of being trafficked

Unaccompanied asylum seeking children, other migrant children or children who are being exploited are at greater risk of being trafficked. Some may have been trafficked into the UK and may remain under the influence of their traffickers even while they are looked after.

Unaccompanied migrant or asylum seeking children who go missing immediately after becoming looked after should be treated as children who may be victims of trafficking.

Child Exploitation Risk Profiling Assessment will be critical in these circumstances and should be completed immediately as the window for intervention is very narrow. The assessment must seek to establish:

- a) Age of Child – Age Assessment may be required
- b) relevant details about the child's background before they came to the UK;

- c) an understanding of the reasons why the child came to the UK and
- d) an analysis of the child's vulnerability to remaining under the influence of traffickers

Following the assessment close co-operation with the UK Human Trafficking Centre (UKTC) and immigration staff will be necessary. Notification to be made in consultation with the Service Manager for the Integrated Front Door. Immigration staff will be able to advise on whether the assessment indicates that the child fits the profile of a trafficked child.

The location of the child should not be divulged to any enquirers until their identity and relationship with the child has been established. Proportionate safety measures that keep the child safe and take into account their best interests should also be put in place to safeguard the child from going missing from care or from being re-trafficked.

'Safeguarding Children Who May Have Been Trafficked' contains practical guidance for agencies which are likely to encounter, or have referred to them, children and young people who may have been trafficked. Where it is suspected that a child has been trafficked, they should be referred into the UK's victim identification framework, the National Referral Mechanism (NRM).

NSPCC Child Trafficking Advice Centre (CTAC) provides specialist advice and information to professionals who have concerns that a child may have been trafficked. Phone **0808 800 5000** or visit the [CTAC website](#).

1.10 Children who repeatedly go missing or absent without authorisation

Repeat episodes of a child going missing can indicate **Child exploitation** repeatedly going missing should not be viewed as a *normal pattern of behaviour*. The social worker must complete a missing prevention plan and review this regularly and after each missing episode, alongside updating a Philomena Plan.

If a child has gone missing **three or more times**, Children's Services should ensure the young person is discussed at a CE RAM meetings. Information should be shared with the child, their family or both, to offer further support and guidance to prevent missing. Actions following earlier incidents should be reviewed and alternative strategies considered.

If a child is repeatedly absent without authorisation from residential care there is a need to understand this pattern of behaviour, every effort must be taken to assess and understand the pressures and reasons for this behaviour and consideration should be given to reclassification to a missing status should risks warrant this. All children who have been absent without leave will receive the same return home interviews.

1.11 16 and 17 year olds

Whilst young people aged 16 and 17 have a greater degree of independence and self-determination than younger children, they are not adults and are subject to safeguarding procedures. It should be noted that for some children; particularly care leavers, those transitioning to adulthood may increase their level of vulnerability including risks such as trafficking, sexual exploitation or gang activity.

Age should not be used as an indicator of lower risk when a 16 or 17-year-old child cannot be located, and protective action should be as swift and decisive for vulnerable 16 and 17 year olds to determine their location and return them to a place of safety. This policy applies in its entirety to 16 and 17 year olds who go missing, absent without authorisation or are made homeless. Recognition must be made of a 16 or 17 year old operates in line with their biological age, e.g. previous EHCP plans outline developmental delays.

1.12 Looked After Children and relevant/eligible care leavers aged 16+

Local authorities have very similar duties and responsibilities towards 16 and 17-year-old care leavers as they do to children in care and for the purposes of this guidance, the response to a missing care leaver age 16 and 17 should be the same. Children's Social Care continues to have a range of responsibilities towards children leaving care until the young person's 25th Birthday. Pathway plans should reflect any risks to the child from abuse or exploitation and missing episodes and actions to reduce the risk. Police continue to have a duty to investigate missing adults; particularly if they remain vulnerable or at risk.

16 and 17 year olds who are S.20 Accommodated and have 'capacity' can withdraw their consent to be accommodated. Therefore, in such circumstances a Child In Care Review chaired by an IRO should be held to explore this decision with the young person and their support network, with the aim of ensuring suitable accommodation and support can be put in place. If the child withdraws consent to S20 this will need oversight and sign off from the deputy director.

Semi-independent living arrangements are classed as 'unregulated' and not covered by the regulations that apply to fostering and residential placements. This is to enable semi-independent provision to realistically prepare young people for their transition to adulthood. Most semi-independent arrangements allow for care leavers to have periods of time, including overnight, away from their accommodation. This will be included in the placement plan, placement information record; and a clear agreement reached between the provider, the care leaver and the allocated social worker. This can mitigate missing episodes being reported. However young people at risk of exploitation must follow the exploitation policies and procedures. If a young person at

risk of exploitation is going missing and exploitation remains a concern, the placements suitability must be reviewed.

2 WHEN A CHILD IS FOUND

If a child returns of their own violation parents/ carers and placement staff must inform both Childrens services and police immediately. If one of the partners locate a child, they must inform the other key agencies and police immediately.

Once the police have been informed that the young person has returned from a missing episode, welfare checks are carried out by the police as soon as possible after the child reported as missing has been found. Their purpose is to check for any indications that the child 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, PCSO or Investigation Officer must always conduct a prevention check of a young person who was categorised as missing when they are found or return no matter how many times they have been missing before. Unless the district missing person co-ordinator has agreed a prevention check strategy with the local authority. That it is considered to be in the best interests of the child or young person, that it would not be beneficial or appropriate for a prevention check to be completed by a police officer. Agreement that a comprehensive return interview can be conducted by a professional from another agency.

The Exploitation HUB will coordinate a Missing Coordinator or Independent Service (for children in our care) to undertake and submit the **'Return Home Interview'**. Once these are completed they will be uploaded onto the child's file on LCS. An alert will be sent to the social worker/ team manager and IRO/CP chair. The exploitation Hub may provide clear advisories, such as complete risk profiling assessment, missing prevention plan and or update Philomena plan.

For children and young people from other areas placed in Bradford the CE Hub will coordinate the same activity and ensure LCS files held are kept up to date.

2.1 Return Interviews

When a child is found, they must be offered a return interview. Return interviews provide an opportunity to uncover information that can help protect children from the risk of going missing again and from risks they may have been exposed to while missing or from risk factors in their home. If there is any suggestion or information from the IRHI that the young person or another has been subject of a crime or any other incident of note, this should be reported to Police through the appropriate channels immediately.

An independent commissioned service support children and young people in our care and will make arrangements to contact the young person who are in our care with the aim of conducting a return interview within 72 hours of the child returning to their home or care setting. Once completed, the service will submit the form back to the designated Business Support in the CE Hub who will ensure the document is uploaded to LCS and relevant social worker and team manager are alerted, and circulate to other professionals as appropriate.

Missing Coordinators support children and young people not living in our care. They will make arrangements to contact the young person who are in our care with the aim of conducting a return interview within 72 hours of the child returning to their home. Once completed, Missing Coordinators will ensure the document is uploaded to LCS and relevant social worker and team manager are alerted, and the social worker will be required to circulate to other professionals as appropriate.

A child or young person should be given the opportunity to talk before they return to their home/ placement. The interview should be held in a neutral place where the child feels safe.

- Identify and deal with any harm the child has suffered – including harm that might not have already been disclosed as part of the ‘Safe and Well check’
- Understand and address the reasons why the child went missing.
- Help the child feel they are cared for and to prevent repeat instances of them going missing (missing prevention planning with them directly)
- Provide them with information on how to stay safe if they go missing again, including helpline numbers
- and cover how they will keep in touch at a distance and with whom during this period.

The interview and actions that follow from it should:

Assess whether a child might go missing again should be based on analysis of previous and current risk assessments. Provide information to professionals who would want to update safety plans, missing prevention plans and Philomena Plans where required.

Following the Welfare Check and Independent Return Interview, Children’s Social Care, police, health, education and voluntary services should work together:

- a) To build up a comprehensive picture of why the child went missing

- b) To understand what happened while they were missing
- c) To understand who they were missing with and where they were found; and,
- d) To understand what support they require upon returning home or to their care placement in accordance with the 'Working Together' guidance

Consideration of the above risks being monitored in the RAM or MACE meetings further to submitting an Exploitation Risk Profiling Assessment and any LAC review/ CIN or Core group forums.

Where children refuse to engage with the interviewer, parents and carers should be offered the opportunity to provide any relevant information and intelligence they may be aware of.

2.2 Return to placement

When a child has been located, it must be decided whether the child's placement remains appropriate. The decision should be informed by discussions with the child and carers where appropriate parents who retain PR (shared). The decision will also be informed by discussion held while the child is missing in strategy meetings.

Placement plans must be kept up to date and Missing prevention plans and Philomena Plans updated.

The IRO must be notified.

3 RESPONDING TO THE ABDUCTION OF CHILDREN IN CARE

When a child for whom Bradford Children's Social Care has parental responsibility is missing from placement or abducted, and the child's location is known, consideration should first be given to recovering the child by negotiation. However, in an emergency situation, the Police can be requested to take appropriate action. There are also a number of legal options that can be accessed by Bradford Children's Social Care and the Police to allow for the recovery or collection of a missing child and future prevention activity.

3.1 Harboursing Notice

If Children's Social Care or the police have reason to believe that an adult is adversely involved with a child who is missing from home, they may consider making a witness statement via the Children's Social Care Team Manager specifically prohibiting that adult from having any contact with the named child, without exceptions. The Police would intervene and serve upon that adult a Child Warning Abduction Notice.

Explaining that any breach would be dealt with by arrest under section 2 Child Abduction Act 1984.

3.2 Recovery Order

Where Children's Social Care has parental responsibility for the child, when there is no immediate risk that the child will be harmed or moved elsewhere, the person holding or harbouring the child should be notified by letter of the Department's intention to apply for a Recovery Order.

If there continues to be no agreement following this, a Recovery Order should be applied for. Legal Services should be consulted and will provide the necessary court form for completion by the social worker. Recovery Orders may be served on persons who are thought to be withholding information about the whereabouts of the missing child. A Recovery Order empowers the Police to enter the premises to search for the missing child.

3.3 Collection Orders

If Children's Social Care social work team are unsure of the whereabouts of a child and have cause to believe the child to be at risk of harm, a Collection order can be applied for at the High Court. Collection Orders can be applied for out of hours but must only be sought following consultation with Legal Services and the agreement of the Director, Children's Social Care and/or the Out of Hours Duty Head of Service.

Useful Links

This procedure should be used in conjunction with the local area on Children Missing from Care and Home and Education.

The procedure follows [Statutory Guidance on Children Who Run Away or Go Missing from Home or Care](#) (January 2014). It also draws on the Children's Homes Regulations 2001.

For guidance on children *Missing from Education*, please refer to the Bradford Guidance on Children Missing from Education

<https://bso.bradford.gov.uk/content/children-missing-education>

Appendix 1 – Approved addresses form to establish ‘missing’ or ‘absent’

(To be filled out and agreed by the allocated social worker)

In order to assist us in ensuring we only report young people missing when there is a cause for concern, we ask that you fill out the following outlining which situations would warrant a “missing persons” or “absent” call to 101.

PLACES DEEMED SAFE FOR YOUNG PERSON TO SPEND THE NIGHT					Staff to confirm YP is safe with...	
Name	Relation to young person	Contact details	Phone	Conditions of stay	YP only	YP and contact

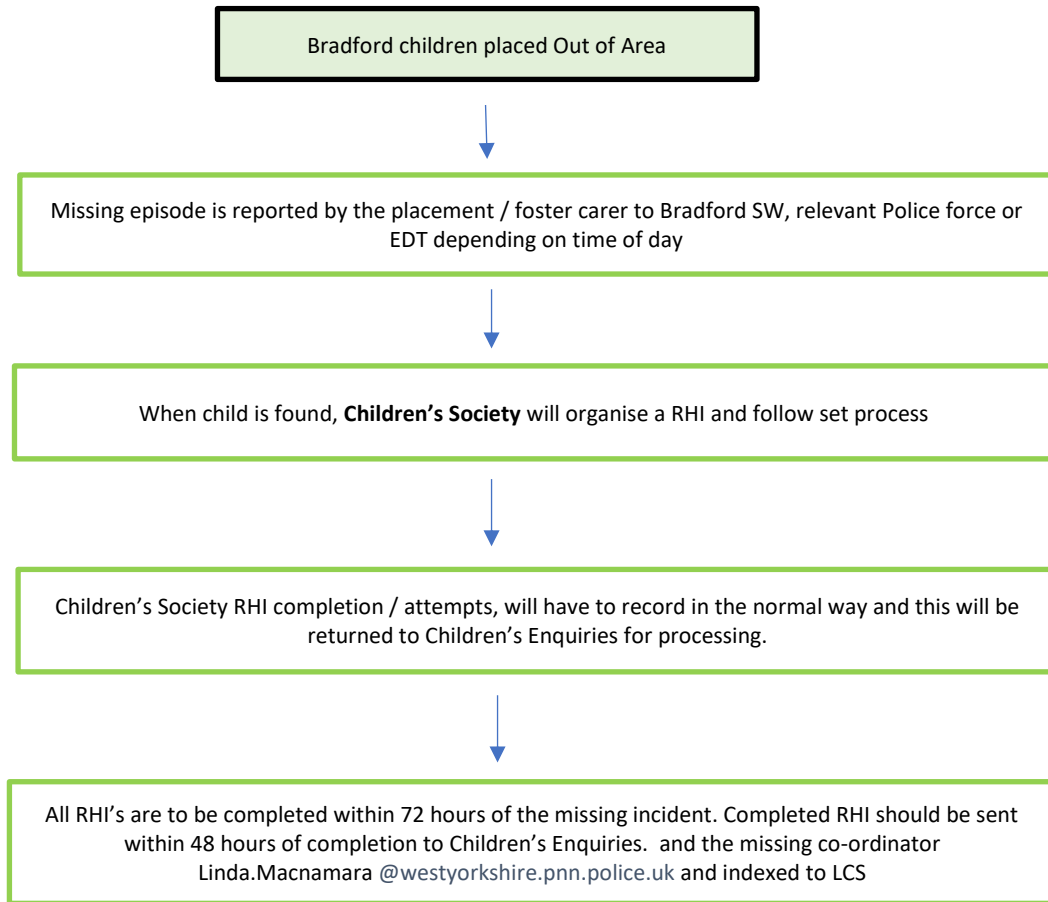
If the young person goes out after curfew and is not in contact please report missing after Hours

Situation	Yes	No
If young person is in contact and confirms that they are safe but cannot/will not evidence where they are, do they need to be reported missing?		

Other Comments

Appendix 2 – Out of Area Return Home Interview Flowchart

Bradford Children placed Out of Area Return Home Interviews



Appendix 3

Missing Flowchart EDT

