***From the beginning***

**Do** make sure the young person and parent/carers know that no one is in trouble for being reported missing.

**Don’t** make this about you – a young person doesn’t need to feel a professionals’ exasperation – this is a conversation to make sure they are okay and to help if they aren’t . ‘*Some try to understand and others just tell us to stop going missing and being silly.’* . Ofsted 2013 voice of a child

**Do** get comfortable – are they happy to face you or have a parent in the room? Are they happier with something to fiddle with whilst you chat?

**Do** give them the chance put their own voice across use the Mind of My Own - Return from Missing – app on your work phone

***During the conversation***

Did you know that approx. 60% of children in care and 60% of children in the criminal justice system have some form of communication difficulty?

Communication difficulties include.

* Planning, tracking, or telling (understanding) time
* Telling a story with key information in a logical order
* Remembering what has been said
* Understanding and using (complex) words i.e. appearance (what you look like)
* Explaining and interpreting feelings
* Understanding social rules and conventions i.e. eye contact
* Reading between the lines

**Don’t** start with “why did you go Missing” – too big a question that often gets a small answer. Think about just asking what happened – remember the difficulties above.

* **Do** break time up differently – “*was it dark”?* or “*was it a school day*”
* **Do** use ‘comic conversations’ – using post it notes draw stick people to illustrate the moment
* **Do** keep your questions to one thing at a time “*were you hurt?”*
* **Do** use words that your person uses – instead of *disappointed* use *sad or angry*
* **Don’t** be surprised if talking feelings is hard being reported Missing is a big deal and creates all sorts of feelings it can be difficult to pull those apart – especially if they struggle to regulate emotions
* **Don’t** judge if a young person struggles to understand why people act cross when they … consider what support is being used to help them understand
* **Do** think about howinformation is taken by young people ‘it’s cold in here’ generally means shut the door or put the heating on – but only if you understand that. Sarcasm and not being directive (in a nice way) makes it difficult to know what is expected of you.

**Do** keep an open mind when listening to a young person – each missing episode is a bit different from the one before – don’t assume that you know what has happened. On hearing each new event we can identify risks of exploitation or abuse.

**Don’t** lead a young person in the conversation “*Did you and Mable go to that house again*?”, a young person will just agree to get you out the door because you’ve already started judging them. By not hearing their words you miss the chance to protect against exploitation and abuse.

**Don’t** push it – if your young person is unwilling or becoming distressed by the conversation – step back. This isn’t a forensic investigation but the opportunity for a child to feel that you are interested and care

**Don’t** dismiss what you are being told – it may not make sense or feel as if you are being given all of the information. No one likes to be made to feel they are not believed – ask questions to clarify a point but if things don’t add up take it away and try to check out the facts – trust to tell a professional the full story is hard to earn.

**Do** keep trying time and time again – “*The staff at the children’s home tried to talk to me about why I went missing. The more I went missing, the less they tried*”. Voice of a child Ofsted 2013 Missing Children report. Still relevant 7 years later

The more times we take time to talk with a young person about being reported Missing the less times they go missing

Good communication should take time and patience

Please **don’t** assume that because you’ve ‘talked’ that the message has been understood.

***After the conversation – complete the Return Interview form to help you evidence and analyse the information***