

**FACT SHEET: Think Missing**

**Reasons why Children go Missing:**

The Children’s Society through research has identified the following risk factors that can precede a missing incident for a young person, otherwise known as ‘push/pull’ factors:

* Arguments and conflicts at home including being told/forced to leave
* Poor family relationships including specific step-parent issues
* Physical and emotional abuse including Domestic Abuse
* Personal wellbeing – feeling depressed, needing someone to talk to
* Problems at school
* Problems with alcohol and/or drugs
* Grooming and Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE)
* Placement instability for looked after children, and children who are placed at some distance from their family and friends.

**Missing Children Team (MCT)**

**In Northamptonshire**

Upon children and young people returning or being found; Northamptonshire Police will carry out a ‘Safe and well check’ and refer them to the MCT who will create the missing/found episode on Care First (CF). The MCT will then arrange to carry out an Independent Return Interview (IRI) and aim to complete all IRIs within 72 hours of the child or young person being found. The IRI is updated on CF and where the child or young person has an allocated social worker they are notified, if they are looked after the Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) is also notified.

**Out of Northamptonshire**

Where children and young people are looked after and are placed out of county, it is the local Police to their placement that are responsible for carrying out the Safe and well visit.

The placement provider will notify the allocated Social Worker, or an Emergency Duty Team (EDT) Family Support Worker if out of hours, that the child or young person has gone missing and then subsequently when the child is found. The allocated Social Worker or Family Support Worker should notify the MCT at the earliest possible opportunity that the young person is missing/found. (See Flowcharts).

If the young person lives in the any of the boarding local authorities namely Bedfordshire (including Luton), Buckinghamshire (including Milton Keynes) Leicestershire, Cambridgeshire, Oxfordshire, Warwickshire (including Coventry) the MCT will take ownership for completion of the Independent Return Interview.

For all young people who do not live in the named local authorities above, it will be the responsibility of the OOC Missing Engagement Worker to undertake the IRI. If the OOC Engagement Worker is unable to complete the IRI and there is no capacity within the MCT to complete the IRI, the MCT must notify the allocated social work team immediately. It will then be the responsibility of the allocated social work team to perform this task.

It is essential that information obtained from the IRI is reviewed in order to identify necessary actions. All arising actions should be recorded on CF by the allocated Social Worker.

The allocated Social Worker should arrange to visit the child or young person as soon after the missing episode as possible to talk about why they went missing and consider any current or possible risks.

**Social Worker Visits**

When visiting children and young people who have been missing and have returned, social work visits must include discussions about the missing episode (having taken into account the information from the IRI) and what can be done to the child or young person from going missing again.

For looked after children and young people, the allocated Social Worker must ensure those with parental responsibility are informed about the missing episode, subsequent visits and outcomes from the visits.

**Missing Child Strategy Meetings**

You should always inform your Team Manager and Service Manager when a child or young person is reported missing.

The ‘[Northamptonshire Multi-agency Protocol for Children who run away or go missing from home or Care](http://www.northamptonshirescb.org.uk/policies/missing-children-protocol/)’ details your responsibilities for carrying out strategy meetings when children and young people go missing.

**Flowchart One: Missing Child Response**

Child **goes missing**

Placement provider **notifies allocated Social Worker or the Emergency Duty Team (EDT)** (if out of hours) **of the missing episode**

Allocated Social Worker or the EDT Family Support Worker **notifies the Missing Children’s Team (MCT) of the missing episode, as soon as possible –** before the close of the day

MCT **creates a ‘Missing assessment’ on CareFirst and assigns to the allocated team to begin (remains open whilst young person remains missing)**

**Flowchart Two: Independent Return Interview (IRI) Process for Looked After Children**

Child **found** or has **returned**

Placement provider **notifies allocated Social Worker or the Emergency Duty Team (EDT)** (if out of hours) **that young person has returned**

Allocated Social Worker or EDT **notifies the Missing Children’s Team (MCT) that young person has returned as soon as possible –** before the close of the day

**Does the child live in a bordering local authority?**

**(I.e. Bedfordshire (including Luton) / Buckinghamshire (including Milton Keynes) / Leicestershire / Cambridgeshire / Oxfordshire / Warwickshire (including Coventry))**

**IRI is arranged and undertaken by the OOC Missing Engagement Worker within 72 hours of the child returning. The IRI is recorded on CareFirst – a copy is sent to the allocated Social Worker (and IRO if applicable). If the OOC Missing Engagement Officer is unable to complete the IRI and there is no capacity within MCT, MCT informs the allocated social work team who must complete the IRI**

Allocated team **completes the CareFirst Missing Assessment and subsequent Found Assessment up to point 7.14 and assign to MCT to complete and trigger an IRI**

**IRI is arranged and undertaken by the MCT within 72 hours of the child returning. The IRI is recorded on CareFirst – a copy is sent to allocated Social Worker (and Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO), if applicable)**

**No**

**Yes**