

TELFORD & WREKIN

RUNAWAY AND MISSING FROM HOME OR CARE PROTOCOL.

The Role and responsibility of Foster Carer.

“To consider someone who goes “Missing” to be at risk of harm underplays the situation and it is more correct to consider them to be actually suffering harm and therefore in need of safeguarding.”

“Missing children reports must be seen as a Multi-agency investigation to identify the reasons for the young person going missing, find them, and take action to prevent them going missing again”

(Interim guidance on the management recording and investigation of missing persons 2013, Association of Chief Police Officers).

Introduction

Purpose of the document

The purpose of this Runaway and Missing From Home and Care Protocol, (RMFHC) document is to describe the processes and procedures involved in working with Children and Young People in Telford & Wrekin (T&W) who have gone “MISSING” or are considered to be “ABSENT”.

This document only seeks to outline the responsibility for Foster Carers providing homes for young people in Telford and Wrekin (T&W). It should be read alongside the full RMFHC Protocol for T&W which explains the procedures for all parties involved in the Missing Children process.

Following new statutory guidance in January 2014, and a change in definition, this Protocol will set out the expectations upon all Foster Carers in Telford and Wrekin when young people in their care go “Missing”.

This document sets out the information and child details that should be available or completed prior to the young person arriving in the placement or if placed in an Emergency, within 3 days.

Also within this document is a clear expectation upon the carers to do everything they can to locate the young person prior to contacting the police as well as their responsibilities upon the return of the young person.

Background

The production of a Runaway and Missing From Home and care Protocol (RMFHC Protocol) is a statutory requirement for Telford & Wrekin and as such will be monitored by the Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB). The content of this document will be reviewed, along with any further practice guidance offered via the Department for Education, by the T&W LSCB Sub Group for Missing Children.

The procedures identified in this document are integral as part of the full Telford and Wrekin (RMFHC) Protocol. This document runs alongside all of the other processes and procedures identified in the full (RMFHC) Protocol.

The chief officers in attendance at the LSCB will be accountable for ensuring that the procedures are agreed and undertaken as identified. This document is local guidance based upon the West Mercia Joint Protocol for Missing Children February 2015, as well as detailing the statutory guidance elements as required from the government paper “Statutory guidance on children who run away or go missing from home or care” June 2013.

The T&W (RMFHC) Protocol also takes into account, amongst others, information taken from West Mercia police, Missing People charity, OFSTED, Telford and Wrekin practitioners as well as the Missing Children Sub group of the Local safeguarding Board.

Objectives

This document aims to set out clear guidance for all Foster Carers in order to be clear about their own responsibilities regarding missing children.

Moreover this document is part of the wider Telford and Wrekin (RMFHC) Protocol that is in place in order to:

- to keep young people safe.
- enable a process of intervention, recording and monitoring.
- enable reporting, to ensure that we meet the statutory requirement of holding a Return Interview within 72 hours of the missing episode.
- identify, as early as possible, those young people and families who are in need of services following a Return Home Interview.
- identify a Pathway into Telford and Wrekin Children Services for all Families and young people identified as being “in need” following a return home Interview.
- hold agencies, teams and staff to account when working in partnership within this process.
- ensure that a clear data set is available that can be analyzed with a view to improve services to young people who go missing.

Definitions

In January 2014 the department for Education produced “Statutory guidance on children who run away or go missing from home or care” which included the following definitions.

MISSING:

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

ABSENT:

“A person not at a place where they are expected or required to be.”

Who decides Missing or Absent?

In order for a decision to be made about what category the young person should be identified as, “Missing” or “Absent”, the person taking the call within the police reception will ask a set series of 19 questions in order to assist in this decision making.

These can be found in APPENDIX 1

Relevant young people

- Young people placed within Telford and Wrekin by another local authority placed in your home.
- Young people placed by Telford and Wrekin in your home.

Missing Children and Young People Procedures in Telford and Wrekin.

Foster Carers role and responsibility.

The role of Foster Carer commences as soon as they are contacted by a relevant authority wishing to place a child or young person within their home and their acceptance of this.

From this first contact the Carer needs to consider their requirements carefully in order to ensure that all the details and information required is in place prior to the arrival of the young person at their home. (Or in emergency placements as soon as is practically possible.)

There is a statutory responsibility upon local authorities to notify the host authority that a young person is being placed in their area as well as an expectation that other checks are made concerning suitability and safety for the young person to be placed in that placement, at that time.

It is also now expected within Telford and Wrekin that the receiving carer also notifies the local authority that the young person is being placed with them as well as providing relevant information in advance of the young person's arrival to save delay should the young person go missing within a short time of their placement.

Ideally the Carer should request all the usual information as well as a photograph if available to aid identification should the young person go missing.

Within the required documentation there should also be an initial discussion with the referring authority concerning the risk of the young person going missing. This discussion is very important and should cover:

- The likelihood of the young person going missing
- The risk to the young person should they go missing
- The risk to others should the young person go missing
- Potential addresses to which the young person may head
- Potential individuals to whom the young person is likely to meet
- General issues of vulnerability including potential of being exploited
- Any individuals the young person should not associate with
- Other information considered useful should the young person go missing
- An indication whether the young person should always be considered "Missing" and never "Absent" due to the risks identified.

This information should be gathered from the relevant authority Social Worker (S/W). These, along with the questions that will be asked by the police, can be documented on the Placement Notification/Termination Form and Risk Assessment APPENDIX 1.

This form needs to be completed with all the demographic information and underlying risk factors and also, upon each Missing episode, the details about that specific episode needs to be added. This should save time due to the general information already being on the form. The person reporting will just need to add any new information and check the form is up to date.

It is important to specify any concerns about exploitation or radicalization and to be aware of potential risks or indicators in these areas which need to be clear in the information gathering form.

(See Appendix 2 for Useful information about Sexual exploitation indicators and general information about young people who go Missing.)

Once this form has been completed it needs to be forwarded to the identified email addresses for the local authority:

familyconnect@telford.gov.uk

and Family Connect will then forward this to the police Harm Assessment Unit (HAU).

If access to a computer in order to facilitate this is not possible or difficult then it is important to discuss with your local authority worker how this information can be delivered to T&W authority as well as the police.

This information will allow the police to record initial information and to input onto Compact (Police recording and Notification system) and any risks identified. This will also ensure that, should the vulnerability and Risk be considered high that the system will always indicate that the young person should be considered Missing and not Absent.

Once in placement the young person will be managed in accordance with the Foster Carers usual policies and procedures as well as those laid down under Safeguarding protocols.

Should the young person go Missing then the following process needs to be followed in accordance with the Telford and Wrekin Runaway and Missing from Home or Care Protocol (RMFHC).

Remember that this document is specific to you as a Foster Carer, the wider corporate responsibilities are laid out in the full protocol.

If any young person goes missing from the placement the Foster Carer should be completely aware of the risks that they pose being out in the community. If following the information gathering process the young person is deemed to be at High risk either to themselves or the wider community, then a call to the police to report them as "Missing" should be considered as soon as the house and relevant immediate areas are searched and the template as described above completed/updated.

Upon contacting the police a series of questions will be asked to gather information and to confirm whether the young person should be considered "Missing" or "Absent". The final category, unless already agreed on Compact following earlier information exchange, is decided by the Duty police Sergeant.

All of this information requested by the police is included in the information gathering template.

IF "MISSING" CATEGORY.

If the young person is identified as being suitable to be classed as "Missing" the police will carry out investigations immediately to try and locate the young person as soon as possible. The police will forward an initial "Missing" notification to the local authority and then subsequently a "Found" notification once located and returned to you.

Once the young person is back at the Carers home the police are required to complete a "Safe and Well" check. (See APPENDIX 3).

Because the young person has been identified as "Missing" they are also entitled to a Return Home Interview (RHI). This should be carried out within 72 hours of the young persons return. At this time these will be carried out by the SW known to the young person or another worker appointed to complete this if the SW is unavailable.

The Return Home Interview should be carried out by the SW or an independent person and is not the responsibility of you as the Foster Carer to complete this. However it is good practice to show concern and discuss if any harm has come to them in case early investigation or treatment is required. It would also assist in talking to the young person about what will happen now they have returned. This document will assist in that discussion.

It is the responsibility of the placing authority to arrange for the Return Home interview to be completed.

You should expect contact from the placing SW in order to complete the interview and to assist in the facilitation of this.

This is an important process to complete so it is important that the Foster Carers make every effort to encourage and support the young person to attend this interview.

The worker undertaking the interview will want a short discussion with the Foster Carer for a brief outline of the young person's situation prior to and after the RHI.

The young person can have the Foster Carer present if they so wish but it is also desirable for the young person to be seen alone for at least part of the interview so they are free to make comment without fear of repercussions, if this is safe to do so.

It may be appropriate or desirable for the interview to take place away from the Foster Carers home address, at school for example. This may assist in achieving the interview within 72hrs and may be easier for the young person to speak freely.

A copy of the completed Return Home Interview will generally be available to the relevant Social Worker and the Carer via S/W unless to do so is considered not to be in the young person's best interests and if the young person expressly indicates that they do not wish the contents to be shared. If during the interview a Safeguarding disclosure is made, or information received gives cause for concern, this will always be prioritized and dealt with as per Telford and Wrekin safeguarding procedures.

As stated above Return Home Interviews should be held on each occasion that a young person goes missing, however if the missing episodes becomes daily it will not always be possible to complete an interview on each occasion. There is provision in T&W procedures to account for this.

In cases such as this the person undertaking the interview will be aware of the persistent nature of the missing episodes and undertake the interview accordingly.

Good practice would dictate that episodes of missing should be an integral part of all placement meetings and care planning processes. This is with a view to completing a robust plan together which will address running away and agree actions to reduce and prevent further episodes.

Episodes of missing should not be taken lightly and the Foster Carers should be proactive in taking relevant actions to cease the persistence of missing episodes from their care.

If "Missing" episodes continue there will be cause for concern and expectations that further Missing Intervention Meetings are held to specifically identify plans to prevent further "Missing" occurrences. These will be chaired by the relevant S/W or police and all relevant parties invited to attend.

IF “ABSENT” CATEGORY

If the young person is categorized as “Absent” the police will delay action until such time as the young person has been missing for 6 hours or further information suggests an increase in risk. The Duty sergeant will regularly review each case of “Absent” and will record all decisions made in relation to this. If new information suggests further cause for concern the escalation to “Missing” category will take place without delay. This change to “Missing” will then necessitate the process as indicated above.

It is desirable for Foster Carers to inform the police regularly of new information or just an update, whilst also continuing to make every effort to contact and locate the young person if it is considered safe to do so.

If the young person is located the Foster Carer must inform the police as soon as they return so the police do not need to continue their reviewing processes.

If the young person remains in the category of “Absent” up to the point they are found or return of their own accord the police will send a Notification to the local authority Family Connect team advising of this absence.

The Foster carers should keep in regular contact with the relevant S/W and other agreed parties to inform them of developments.

APPENDICES

1. Risk Assessment and Notification Form
2. Useful Information about Exploitation and Missing Children and Young People
 - Warning signs of CSE
 - Certain groups of C&YP are more likely to go missing
 - Pull factors
 - Push factors
 - What works in reducing repeated missing episodes
 - What can help to reduce running away
 - Why does running away matter
 - Who is at risk
3. Police Safe and well Check
4. Missing Intervention Meeting procedures.

APPENDIX 1

PLACEMENT NOTIFICATION/ TERMINATION FORM AND MISSING RISK ASSESSMENT

Section A – This constitutes a notification form to satisfy regulation 12B of the Children’s Home Regulation 2011 (as amended by the Children’s Home and looked After Children’s (Miscellaneous Amendments) (England) Regulation 2013,) as well as a missing from care risk assessment utilised by the Police and our Cohesion Teams. To be completed by the Provider for each Child/ Young Person (CYP) placed in Telford and Wrekin by another local authority and emailed to familyconnect@telford.gov.uk and HAUNorth@westmercia.pnn.police.uk. The form should ideally be completed at the point of placement or in advance for planned placement because CYP can go missing on their first day in placement; however we require this information no later than 72 hours after the placement has commenced.

Section B – To be completed by the Provider for each missing episode and sent to familyconnect@telford.gov.uk and HAUNorth@westmercia.pnn.police.uk as soon as possible, we recommend completing the form whilst reporting the CYP missing to the Police. Section B should be attached to Section A – please ensure that information contained within Section A is still correct; update the information with Section A if required. We suggest completing the form electronically so it can easily be kept up to date.

Section C – To be completed by the Provider as soon as a CYP, placed by another local authority within Telford and Wrekin, is terminated/ comes to an end. Please send the form to familyconnect@telford.gov.uk and HAUNorth@westmercia.pnn.police.uk

SECTION A

Basic Information

Name of CYP:		Aliases/ Otherwise Known as:	
Date of Birth:		Gender:	
Ethnicity:		Date of Admission:	
Placing Local Authority:		Care Status:	
Is there a current child protection plan:		Registered disability – please provide details (if applicable):	
GP Name and Address:		Dentist name and Address:	

CYPs Mobile Number:			
Name of Social Worker allocated by Placing Authority:		Name of Social Worker's Team Manager/ Duty Team:	
Phone number:		Phone number:	
Email Address:		Email Address:	
Name of IRO and Contact Details:		Is a Photograph Available:	

Education Details:

Details of SEN (if applicable):		Which LA maintains the SEN (if applicable):	
Current PEP:		Education Provision Name:	
Education Provision Address:		Is the current Education Provision to continue:	
If the Education Provision is not to continue, please provide details of alternative education arrangements. What date were the School Admissions and SEN department (if applicable) of the host authority contacted.			

Complete the relevant section below based on the relevant placement type

Name of Fostering Agency		Name of Residential Provider:	
Name of Foster Carers		Name of Service/ Home:	
URN Number:		URN Number:	
Foster Carers Address:		Service/ Home Address:	

Missing from Care Risk Assessment			
CYPs Vulnerability Rating:	<input type="checkbox"/> LOW	<input type="checkbox"/> MED	<input type="checkbox"/> HIGH
Explanation for Vulnerability Rating:			
Should the CYP be considered MISSING and never ABSENT:	<input type="checkbox"/> YES	<input type="checkbox"/> NO	
Explanation for MISSING/ ABSENT Classification:			
Does the CYP have a history of going missing:	<input type="checkbox"/> YES	<input type="checkbox"/> NO	
Likelihood of the CYP going missing:	<input type="checkbox"/> LOW	<input type="checkbox"/> MED	<input type="checkbox"/> HIGH
Has the CYP been exposed to harm during previous missing episodes: <i>Have they been a victim of crime</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> YES	<input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> N/A
Please provide a brief explanation of the above:			
The risk to the CYP should they go missing: <i>Consider self harm</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> LOW	<input type="checkbox"/> MED	<input type="checkbox"/> HIGH
Please provide a brief explanation of the above:			
Risk to others should the CYP go missing:	<input type="checkbox"/> LOW	<input type="checkbox"/> MED	<input type="checkbox"/> HIGH
Please provide a brief explanation of the above: <i>explain the nature of the risk including any criminality, is the CYP a sex offender or perpetrator of sexual exploitation.</i>			
The risk to the CYP of sexual exploitation:	<input type="checkbox"/> LOW	<input type="checkbox"/> MED	<input type="checkbox"/> HIGH
Please provide a brief explanation of the above:			
General issues of vulnerability including potential of being harmed: <i>Are they subject to bullying or harassment, racial abuse, homophobia</i>			

Potential addresses to which the CYP may gravitate towards (<i>parents, friends, previous carers</i>):					
Name:		Relationship:		Address:	
Name:		Relationship:		Address:	
Name:		Relationship:		Address:	

Individuals with whom the CYP may meet:			
Name 1:		Adult/ Child:	
Name 2:		Adult/ Child:	
Name 3:		Adult/ Child:	

Any individual that CYP should not associate with:			
Name:		Relationship:	
Address (if known):		Reason:	
Name:		Relationship:	
Address (if known):		Reason:	

SECTION B			
Complete the information below giving regard the current missing episode			
Date of Missing Episode:		Time Last Seen:	
Number of Previous Episodes:			
Details of clothing the CYP was last observed to be wearing:			

How would you describe the CYPs frame of mind when you last saw them/ had contact:	
Did the CYP leave with anyone else:	
What actions have been taken to locate the CYP:	
Have you had any contact with the CYP since they have been missing, if so what information have you obtained: <i>Consider background noise - have you heard other voices, male/ female, do you recognise any voices, traffic, announcements at train stations etc.</i>	
Do you believe the CYP has access to weapons:	
Does the CYP have a physical illness or other health issue:	
Does the CYP need essential medication: <i>Please provide the name of the medication and when their next dose is due</i>	
What are the effects if medication is not taken:	
Have the CYP prepared to go missing, if so, how:	
Are you aware if the CYP has money on their person or access to money, if so how much:	
Are there any family issues to be aware of:	
Date returned to placement:	
Details gathered from initial return home discussion:	

SECTION C

Placement termination

Date of Placement Termination		Reason for Placement Termination		
New Placement Type:	<input type="checkbox"/> Fostering	<input type="checkbox"/> Residential	<input type="checkbox"/> Supported accommodation	<input type="checkbox"/> Other <i>please specify</i>
New Placement Address:		New Host Authority:		
Education Provision Name and Address:		Is the current Education Provision to continue:		

Form Completed by:

Name:	
Designation:	
Date:	

APPENDIX 2

CHILD SEXUAL EXPLOITATION

WARNING SIGNS AND VULNERABILITIES CHECKLIST

Telford and Wrekin have a robust Risk assessment that is completed by CATE (Children Abused Through Exploitation) practitioners that is taken to a Multi Agency Risk Panel in order to ascertain the risk level of each individual referred.

If you are considering a young person for CATE referral please be aware of the information contained in this paper in order to inform your referral and help the assessment to identify the immediate presenting issues.

Your CATE referral should clearly identify all elements below that you consider to be an issue once the case is assessed.

The following are typical vulnerabilities in children prior to abuse:

- Living in a chaotic or dysfunctional household (including parental substance use, domestic violence, parental mental health issues, parental criminality).
- History of abuse (including familial child sexual abuse, risk of forced marriage, risk of 'honour'-based violence, physical and emotional abuse and neglect).
- Recent bereavement or loss.
- Gang association either through relatives, peers or intimate relationships (in cases of gang associated CSE only).
- Attending school with young people who are sexually exploited.
- Learning disabilities.
- Unsure about their sexual orientation or unable to disclose sexual orientation to their families.
- Friends with young people who are sexually exploited.
- Homeless.
- Lacking friends from the same age group.
- Living in a gang neighbourhood.
- Living in residential care.
- Living in hostel, bed and breakfast accommodation or a foyer.
- Low self-esteem or self-confidence.
- Young carer.

The following signs and behaviour are generally seen in children who are already being sexually exploited:

- Missing from home or care.
- Physical injuries.
- Drug or alcohol misuse.
- Involvement in offending.
- Repeat sexually-transmitted infections, pregnancy and terminations.
- Absent from school.
- Change in physical appearance.
- Excessive and secret use of the internet and/or mobile phone. (Potential for grooming!).
- Mood swings and changes in behaviour.
- Having several SIM cards, frequent mobile phone top ups.
- Being unusually secretive. I.e. where they have been? Who they have been with? Who their friends are?
- Alcohol/Substance misuse.
- Unexplained injuries.
- Lacking self-esteem, leading to a change in personal appearance.
- Excessive washing or bathing particularly when returning from missing episodes.
- Evidence of sexual bullying and/or vulnerability through the internet and/or social networking sites.
- Estranged from their family.
- Receipt of gifts from unknown sources.
- Recruiting others into exploitative situations.
- Poor mental health.
- Self-harm.
- Thoughts of or attempts at suicide.

Evidence shows that any child displaying several vulnerabilities from the above lists should be considered to be at high risk of sexual exploitation. Professionals should immediately start an investigation to determine the risk, along with preventative and protective action as required. However, it is important to note that children without pre-existing vulnerabilities can still be sexually exploited. Therefore, any child showing risk indicators in the second list, but none of the vulnerabilities in the first, should also be considered as a potential victim, with appropriate assessment and action put in place as required.

It is very important to remember that ALL children are vulnerable and a 17year old is still a child. It is also very important to acknowledge that boys and young men are equally vulnerable and the same considerations should be afforded to males as well as females in this arena. We are considering Risk not Gender.

It should be noted that there could be other innocent explanations for these behaviours and further exploration with family, carers, friends and other information gathering systems could prove useful to clarify this.

If a child confides in you or another member of staff it is important that you believe them and make it clear that confiding in you was the right thing to do.

If you are concerned then act with immediate effect.

Certain groups of vulnerable children are more likely than others to go missing.

- Young people who have committed offences
- Children living in women's refuges
- Children of homeless families, perhaps living in temporary accommodation
- Young runaways
- Children with long-term medical or emotional problems
- Looked After children
- Children with a gypsy/traveller background
- Young carers
- Children with transient families
- Teenage mothers
- Children who are permanently excluded from school
- Migrant children, whether in families seeking asylum or economic migrants
- Trafficked children

For detailed guidance, see [‘Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities in England to identify children not receiving education’](#), published by the DfE in February 2007.

WARNING SIGNS AND VULNERABILITIES CHECKLIST

The following are typical vulnerabilities in children prior to abuse:

- Living in a chaotic or dysfunctional household (including parental substance use, domestic violence, parental mental health issues, parental criminality).
- History of abuse (including familial child sexual abuse, risk of forced marriage, risk of ‘honor’-based violence, physical and emotional abuse and neglect).
- Recent bereavement or loss.
- Gang association either through relatives, peers or intimate relationships (in cases of gang associated CSE only).
- Attending school with young people who are sexually exploited.
- Learning disabilities.

- Unsure about their sexual orientation or unable to disclose sexual orientation to their families.
- Friends with young people who are sexually exploited.
- Homeless.
- Lacking friends from the same age group.
- Living in a gang neighbourhood.
- Living in residential care.
- Living in hostel, bed and breakfast accommodation or a foyer.
- Low self-esteem or self-confidence.
- Young carer.

The following signs and behaviour are generally seen in children who are already being sexually exploited.

- Missing from home or care.
 - Physical injuries.
 - Drug or alcohol misuse.
 - Involvement in offending.
 - Repeat sexually-transmitted infections, pregnancy and terminations.
 - Absent from school.
 - Change in physical appearance.
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- Evidence of sexual bullying and/or vulnerability through the internet and/or social networking sites.
 - Estranged from their family.
 - Receipt of gifts from unknown sources.
 - Recruiting others into exploitative situations.
 - Poor mental health.
 - Self-harm.
 - Thoughts of or attempts at suicide.

PULL FACTORS

- Children and young people who run away to see family because they are in care.
- Young people who are unhappy about their situation so go to friends.
- Young people who go missing to see boyfriends/girlfriends
- Young people who are being exploited so feel they have no choice.

PUSH FACTORS

- Young people who keep falling out with their parents, brothers and sisters.
- Young people who suffer physical abuse.
- Young people who feel unloved
- Young people who suffer sexual abuse.
- Young people who have some form of Mental Health.
- Young people whose family member has Mental Health.
- Young people in families who take drugs and/or drink too much.
- Young people who are bullied.

WHAT WORKS IN REDUCING REPEATED EPISODES OF MISSING?

- Ensure return interviews are carried out promptly allowing young person to have the opportunity to talk about the reasons why they ran away.
- Acting on the outcomes of return home interviews.
- Listening to young people.
- All agencies working together.

WHAT CAN HELP TO REDUCE RUNNING AWAY?

- Joined up working between all agencies.
- Good use of assessment tools.
- Early Intervention and Prevention.
- Support for Young Person and families that need it.

WHY DOES RUNNING AWAY MATTER:

- It impacts greatly on vulnerable young people.
- It increases the prospect of criminality.
- Puts young people at enormous risk of significant harm.
- Limits educational attainment and achievement opportunities.
- Contributes to unemployment and poverty.
- Carries avoidable costs to Police, local authority and other agencies.

WHO IS AT RISK?

- Young People in Care.
- Young People who have or are being sexually exploited.
- Young People in breakdowns of relationships with parents.
- Conflicts with Step Parent.
- Young People with mental health problems.
- Young People bullied at school.
- Young women from some ethnic minority groups.

APPENDIX 3

POLICE SAFE AND WELL CHECKS

Statutory guidance states that these checks should be carried out by the police whenever a child is found.

“A Police Safe and Well Check’ is carried out as soon as possible after the young person has returned “home”. Its purpose is to check for any indications that the young person has suffered harm, where and with whom they have been, and to give them an opportunity to disclose any offending by or against them.

Where a person goes missing frequently, it may not be practicable to see them every time they return. In these cases a reasonable decision should be taken with regard to the frequency of such checks. This will mainly apply to young people missing from care who are likely to have other key people responsible for their welfare to check this. Every effort should be made to visit those young people missing from home on every occasion.

Young people are not always comfortable talking to police officers so it is important that there is the opportunity for young people to talk to someone as well as the option of the Safe and Well visit. The local authority are informed of every missing episode and will also be expected to make contact and visit in order to complete a Return Home Interview with the young person and Parent/Carer.

Once completed the Safe and Well check is recorded on compact and the local authority is made aware that this has taken place via the police Found Notification email. If anything of concern is raised during this check the police will contact Family Connect to share this.

If the young person continues to go “Missing” there are more stringent procedures to follow by all concerned. These concern Return Interviews and other strategic meetings in order to progress the case and to identify appropriate action plans to try and address the level of missing episodes.

Residential unit managers will be invited to attend these meetings as well as the lead provider and home authority Social Worker. This will be to look at the appropriateness of the placement and whether everything is being done to prevent recurring episodes of missing.

It is important to consider that the young person may not always be acting as a result of their own choice but may be in an exploitative relationship from which they need protecting and understanding.

APPENDIX 4

MISSING INTERVENTION MEETING PROCEDURES

PERSISTENT MISSING EPISODES.

If the young person for whom you are responsible continues to go missing there are further steps that are expected to be made in order to try and prevent further episodes.

If the young person goes missing on 3 or more occasions it is likely that you will be expected to attend a series of meetings to try and prevent the repeated episodes of Missing continuing.

If the young person has gone missing 3 times within 90 days a meeting should be held to discuss this.

The meeting will be an Inter agency meeting and chaired by the young persons S/W or a member of T&W Cohesion services:

Attendees include:

- ✓ S/W or member of T&W Cohesion services as Chair
- ✓ Any other Key worker
- ✓ Police
- ✓ Health
- ✓ Education
- ✓ Residential worker/foster carer as appropriate
- ✓ Person who conducted return interview if not yourself.

The Purpose of the meeting is to:

- ✓ Review the placement/home situation
- ✓ Identify Push factors
- ✓ identify Pull factors
- ✓ Community issues to consider
- ✓ Individual community targets
- ✓ Identify missing episode patterns
- ✓ Agree strategies to prevent further missing episodes

If the young person continues to go missing, further meetings will need to be called in accordance with the Joint Missing Children Protocol for West Mercia, and the T&W RMFHC Protocol, as follows:

If the young person goes missing between 4 and 6 occasions within 12 months the S/W or member of T&W Cohesion services needs to call another strategy meeting. agreed what and who will arrange this. This eventuality should be discussed at the previous meeting and agreed who will call and arrange this.

In this case the meeting is to be chaired by the police Deputy Divisional Missing Persons Champion (or their elected person). This meeting should be prioritized by those concerned and will include the above attendees as well as a Team Manager from Children's Services and partner agencies.

If the young person goes missing again between 7 and 9 occasions within 12 months another meeting should be arranged. This meeting should again be arranged as per discussion in the previous meetings. On this occasion the meeting should be chaired by the Police Divisional Missing Persons Champion (Chief Inspector) or their elected person. This meeting will be to confirm the above meetings content but also to quality assure the compliance with agreed protocols and to consider the efficacy of earlier interventions and Return Home Interviews.

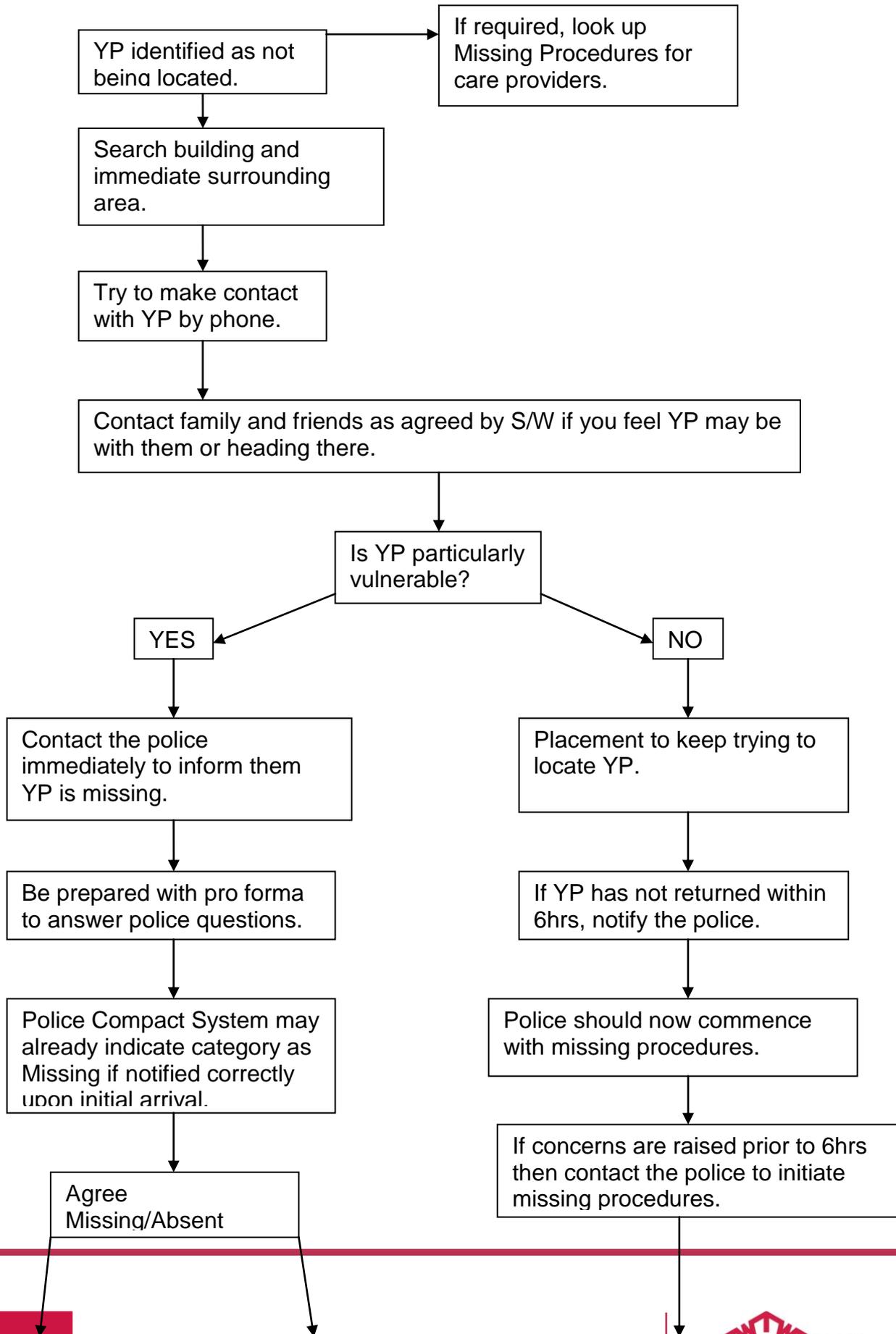
A further outcome of this meeting is to agree a report to be forwarded to the Police Force Missing Persons strategic lead.

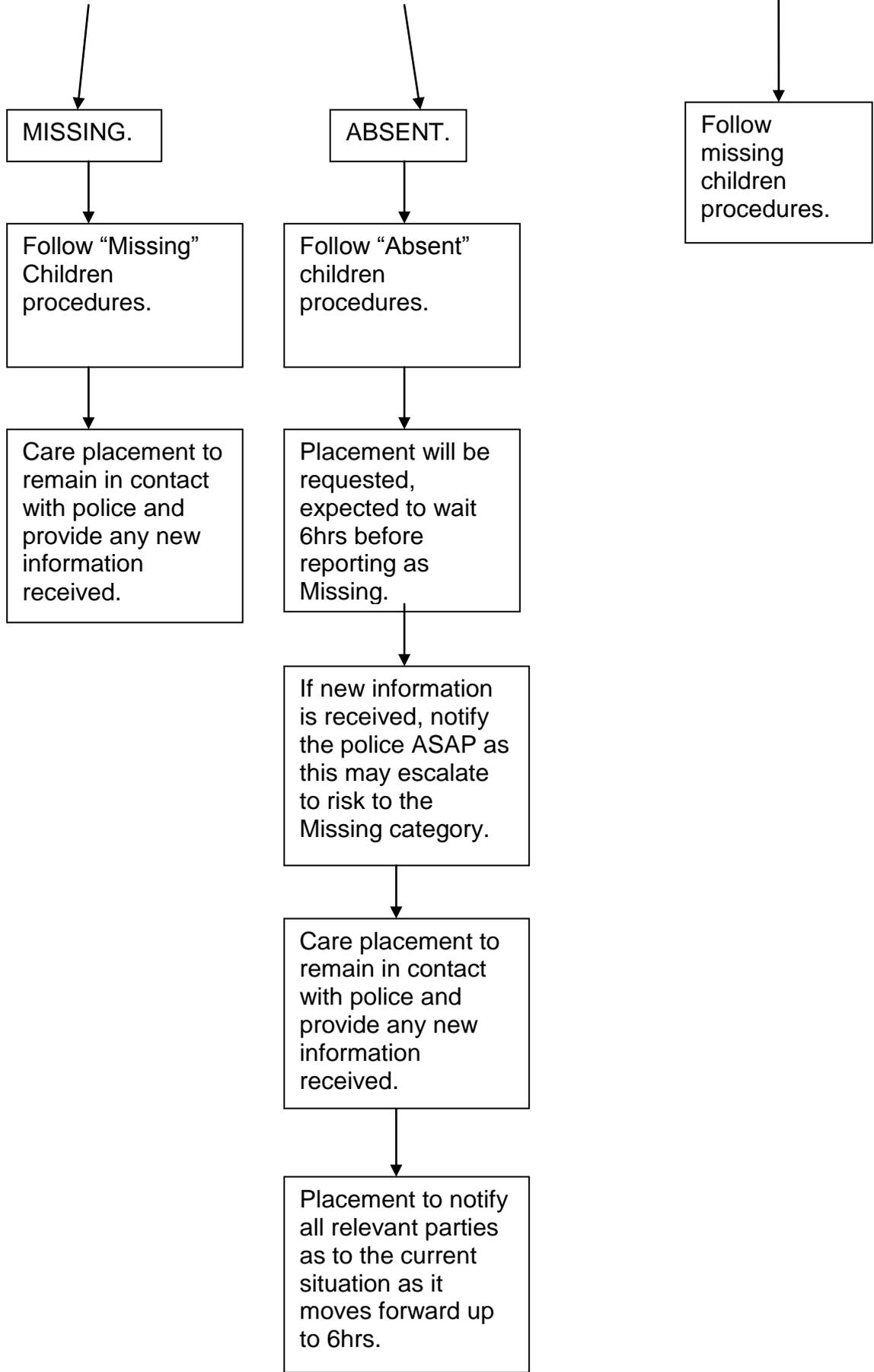
If there are further prolonged and persistent missing episodes then consideration should be made to the appropriateness of intervention from the Assistant Chief Constable.

This should also be considered where:

- risks associated with a single missing episode is VERY HIGH
- And
- cases where it has been identified that IMMEDIATE action is necessary to ensure the well being of the young person.

Flowchart: Missing from Care Placement





YP Returns to Placement

