EARLY HELP SERVICES: MISSING PRACTICE GUIDANCE

The following practice guidance is for professionals from **Early Help Services** to follow when any child under 18 years of age or relevant young person goes missing:

Missing From Home: *a child whose whereabouts cannot be established - where the circumstances are out of character or there are indicators to suggest that the child may be at risk of harm to themselves or others. Any child who fits the above definition, where there are additional concerns regarding CSE, gangs, radicalisation, FGM, forced marriage etc…should be considered 'missing' and not 'absent' (reasonable professional judgement)*	**Missing From Care:** *includes children that have stayed out longer than allowed (unauthorised absence), run away (missing) and/or been removed from care by an adult (missing). A child where the circumstances are out of character or there are indicators to suggest that the child may be at risk of harm to themselves or others. (Including additional concerns regarding CSE, gangs, radicalisation, FGM, forced marriage etc.) should be considered 'missing' and not 'absent' (reasonable professional judgement)*

Reporting and Responding to Missing:

- If another professional informs you that a child is missing: in this instance you need to advise the professional that it is their duty to report that child missing to the Police by calling 101.

- If a parent or carer informs you that a child is missing: in this situation you should encourage that parent to report the child missing to the Police by calling 101, and provide support to enable them to do so. Encourage the parent or carer to write down the Police reference number (or CAD number) so that this can be recorded.

- If you feel unsure that a parent or carer has reported the child missing to the Police or they do not feel able to do so and give you their consent – you will need to report the child missing to Police by calling 101 directly.

- If a parent or carer refuses to report a child missing and refuses to give consent for you to report the child missing to the police. Then the case will need to be escalated to The Children's Services Contact Team (CSCT). Referrals can be made to CSCT on CSCreferrals@islington.gov.uk advising them the child is missing and the circumstances in relation to the parent refusing to inform the police or provide consent to do so.

In all of the above situations you will need to record that the child is missing and your professional response on a case-note. If you have reported a child missing to the police you will need to record the Police reference (or CAD) number on case-notes.

The Islington 'Threshold Document' provides clear guidance on when referrals in relation to missing should be escalated to CSC. http://www.islingtonscb.org.uk/SiteCollectionDocuments/2015.05.21%20ISCB%20Threshold%20Document.pdf

Children's Social Care Response to Missing:

When a child allocated to a statutory social care team (CIN, CLA, Independent Futures or DCS) is reported as missing from home or care, the Social Work team is expected to undertake the following process:

- Record the child missing on LCS via the 'ICS Missing Episode' tab
- Ensure that there is an updated 'Risk Assessment' form on the case file and share this with Police as necessary
- Consider the need for a 'Missing Meeting': this may be called a Missing from Care or Home meeting or may be a strategy meeting. Any practitioners working with the child and family may be invited to attend and participate in this multi-agency meeting – including Early Help Service professionals.
- Record a 'Missing Safety Plan' for any cases where a missing meeting has been held

For all children that that go missing a request is made to the Targeted Youth Service for a Return to Home Interview (RHI) where an independent RHI professional offers the child a chance to discuss the missing episode, listen to any concerns and offer support.

Islington Police also have a duty to provide every child returned from a missing episode with a safe and well check (sometimes recorded as a 'de-brief').