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| **6.5 Children Who Run Away and Go Missing from Home, Care, or Education** |

**RELATED GUIDANCE**

[**NSCP Procedures Manual, Children Missing from Home and Care Joint Protocol**](http://nottinghamshirescb.proceduresonline.com/local_resources.html)

[**NSCP Procedures Manual, Children Missing Care, Home and Education Procedure**](http://nottinghamshirescb.proceduresonline.com/p_ch_miss_care_home_ed.html)

[**Statutory Guidance: Children who run away or go missing from home or care January 2014**](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/children-who-run-away-or-go-missing-from-home-or-care)

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 **1.****Introduction**

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| 1.1 | This practice guidance is intended to support staff in Nottinghamshire to implement the NSCP/NCSCP Joint Protocol for Children Who Run Away and Go Missing from Home, Care or Education.[**Click here to view Children Missing from Home and Care Joint Procedures**](http://nottinghamshirescb.proceduresonline.com/local_resources.html) |
| 1.2 | Within Nottinghamshire, services to children who go missing from home or care are provided by Children’s Social Care, the Nottinghamshire Runaways Service or other parts of the Targeted Support & Youth Justice Service where there is an allocated worker. |
| 1.3 | This procedure will be used in conjunction with other guidance, processes and procedures where appropriate for example Looked After Children guidance. |

 **2.****Principles**

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| 2.1 | Children who go missing should receive a robust and professional response in line with the Joint Protocol. |
| 2.2 | Missing Children is a safeguarding issue. |
| 2.3 | Professional judgement should be applied when dealing with these cases. |

 **3.****Roles, Responsibilities and Definitions**

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| 3.1 | **Children Missing Officer (CMO)**: The role of the CMO is to act as a central point of contact for all missing children notifications and to disseminate them with requests for a return interview, multi-agency meeting or referral to social care in line with the missing children protocol. |
| 3.2 | **Nottinghamshire Runaways Service (NRS)**: The Nottinghamshire Runaways Service (NRS) is a commissioned service, provided by the Voluntary Organisation Catch 22, and is managed by the Targeted Support & Youth Justice Service (TSYJS) |
| 3.3 | **Children’s Social Care Service (CSCS)**: Where a young person is open to a statutory team within CSCS, or where they are not, but the threshold for CSCS involvement is made, then CSCS social workers will undertake the functions outlined in this PPG and by the Joint Protocol. |
| 3.4 | **Return Interview (RI)**: Return interviews will be completed on children who have been missing: |
|   | a. | On two or more occasions; |
|   | b. | For the first time but with the vulnerability factors referred to in the protocol including missing for more than 24 hours. |
| The NSCP/NCSCP Joint Protocol identifies that the return interview should be carried out within 72 hours of the young person’s return. In the case of a looked after child, this should be carried out by someone who is independent of the child’s placement (i.e. not a residential worker or foster carer). The timeliness of the return interview is a key factor in responding to missing children. |
| 3.5 | **Multi-Agency Meeting (MAM)**. |
|   | Multi-Agency Meetings will generally be held when: |
|   | a. | A child has been missing three times in 90 days; |
|   | b. | A child has been missing for 72 hours but has returned. |
| 3.6 | **Strategy Discussion** |
|   | A [**Strategy Discussion**](http://trixresources.proceduresonline.com/nat_key/keywords/strategy_discussion.html) is the conversation with social care that arises when a young person has been missing for 72 hours. |

 **4.****Initial Processes**

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| 4.1 | **Receipt of missing children notifications from the Police (via COMPACT)** |
|   | a. | The CMO receives daily (Monday-Friday) all reported missing children notifications from the police through a secure GCSX account which is checked at regular intervals during the day. The police also send found notifications, which are married up to the missing notification on the individual child. Notifications following weekends and bank holidays will be picked up on the next working day. For any urgent or child protection issues arising from a missing episode the police would access the emergency duty service; |
|   | b. | Cover arrangements are in place for any absence of the CMO; |
|   | c. | All notifications will be processed, in a consistent manner, by the CMO within the same working day. |
| 4.2 | **Initial Screening and Referral** |
|   | a. | The CMO applies the Joint Protocol in respect of whether or not a return interview, multi-agency meeting or a referral to CSCS for a Strategy Discussion is required; |
|   | b. | In the first instance, the CMO checks all notifications against Mosaic and CareWorks to ascertain whether the young person is an open case to CSCS, TSYJS or the NRS. Where they are, the notification will be forwarded to the relevant worker with the request for a return interview or multi-agency meeting, if appropriate; |
|   | c. | Where young person is not open to a service but there are concerns of a [**Child Protection**](http://trixresources.proceduresonline.com/nat_key/keywords/child_protection.html) nature contact will be made with CSCS for a discussion about whether or not the threshold for CSCS intervention is met. The result of these discussions will determine which service will undertake the return interview, i.e. CSCS or the NRS; |
|   | d. | For other first time missing children, that may be considered vulnerable by the CMO, a referral will be made to the NRS who will apply the [**Pathway to Provision - Multi-Agency Thresholds Guidance**](http://www.nottinghamshire.gov.uk/caring/childrenstrust/pathway-to-provision/pathway-to-provision-documents/) to support the decision making in terms of the threshold for their service (Tier 3). For those children who do not meet the threshold, no further action will be taken; |
|   | e. | For second or subsequent missing episodes, where the young person is not open to a service, the notification will be passed to the NRS for the completion of a return interview unless there are concerns of a [**Child Protection**](http://trixresources.proceduresonline.com/nat_key/keywords/child_protection.html) nature; in which case the above process of contact with CSCS would apply; |
|   | f. | For the NRS or other TSYJS cases, the CMO will send the request via e-mail to the following: the three NRS Case Managers, Targeted Support Business Support and the Specialist Services Team Manager or to the TSYJS Case Manager named on CareWorks, as appropriate; |
|   | g. | For CSCS allocated cases, the request will go direct to the social worker via the Framework episode task system; |
|   | h. | If the case is not open to any services, and there is no requirement for a RI or MAM, then the information will be stored on Framework but with no further action recorded. |

 **5.****Escalation**

If there are differing views as to whether a RI should be completed or a MAM held, there should be an initial discussion between the CMO and the relevant worker. If no agreement is reached, the worker’s manager should escalate this by email to the Service Manager Safeguarding Children (Strategic) who will then respond. In the case of continuing disagreement, within NRS, the response will be via the Commissioning & Partnership Manager for TSYJS and if necessary within CSCS to the Service Manager.

 **6.****Persistent or Lengthy Missing Episode**

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| 6.1 | **Missing 72 hours or more** |
|   | a. | When a child/young person has been missing for 72 hours from the time reported to the police, the CMO will refer to CSCS as outlined in the NSCP/NCSCP Joint Protocol; |
|   | b. | There needs to be a distinction between children/young people who remain missing and thus have not returned after 72 hours and those that return at or around the point of 72 hours. |
| 6.2 | **Missing 72 hours or more and not returned** |
|   | a. | Where the child/young person has not returned within 72 hours, and has an allocated worker, the CMO will contact the allocated worker to advise of the need for a strategy discussion between the police and the relevant manager, to agree the level of concern and appropriate action required; |
|   | b. | For children not open to CSCS, NRS or TSYJS the CMO will contact the MASH for a decision about whether or not the threshold for CSCS involvement is met. If the threshold for social care involvement is not met, the CMO will refer to the NRS. The police will drive the enquiries in relation to the young person remaining missing but there will need to be engagement with the workers involved; |
|   | c. | The situation may also warrant a Strategy Meeting between the police, the appropriate social worker or caseworkers (and relevant managers). The purpose of this meeting would be to establish the on-going level of risk and coordinate efforts to locate the child or young person; |
|   | d. | Where the child/young person either is subject to a [**Child Protection Plan**](http://trixresources.proceduresonline.com/nat_key/keywords/child_protection_plan.html) or [**Looked After**](http://trixresources.proceduresonline.com/nat_key/keywords/looked_after.html) by the Local Authority, the Service Director should be notified of the child/young person’s absence at the latest by the time they have been missing for 24 hours with a subsequent update at 72 hours or earlier as determined by professional judgment; |
|   | e. | Where a child/young person has been missing for 28 days, the Divisional Public Protection DCI (or representative) will meet with senior managers from relevant agencies; |
|   | f. | The Group Manager for CSCS should also be made aware of any [**Child in Need**](http://trixresources.proceduresonline.com/nat_key/keywords/child_in_need.html) (CiN) young person who remains missing after 72 hours at the latest or earlier as determined by professional judgment; |
|   | g. | For those children and young people, who are open to NRS or other targeted services and are still missing after 72 hours, the Group Manager for Targeted Support Service and Youth Justice Service should be informed by the relevant manager. |
| 6.3 | **Missing for 72 hours but returned** |
|   | Where the young person returns on the cusp of 72 hours, a discussion will be held with CSCS about whether or not the threshold for CSCS involvement is met. The outcome of this discussion will determine which Service will undertake subsequent work. |
| 6.4 | **On-going Monitoring for Persistent Missing** |
|   | Where a case is open to a particular service within CSCS, NRS or other TSYJS case managers and the young person continues to go missing then there should be regular MAM’s to review the plan of intervention. The frequency will need to be agreed but six weekly frequencies may be appropriate. |
| 6.5 | **Looked After Children (LAC)** |
|   | It is important that for missing children who are looked after that LAC guidance and processes are followed both in the prevention of children going missing (i.e. though good care planning and risk assessment) but also in response to any missing episode. For example, it would be expected that concerns about missing episodes are raised at the LAC Review and that the[**Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO)**](http://trixresources.proceduresonline.com/nat_key/keywords/indep_reviewing_officer.html) is aware, particularly with regard to persistent missing episodes. |

 **7.****Additional Practice Considerations**

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| 7.1 | **Information sharing**: The young person should be made aware by the relevant worker that information would be shared with other professionals as appropriate. This should also have been made clear by police officers dealing with the missing person’s report. |
| 7.2 | **Sharing of Intelligence** |
|   | a. | It is important that any relevant information or intelligence gained from the RI or MAM is shared with the police to enable any disruption tactics to be utilised or other safeguarding measures. This is the responsibility of the worker for the child undertaking the Return Interview; |
|   | b. | The police will be notified of any further involvement beyond the completion of the RI by NRS Case Managers and the police will enter this information onto COMPACT. The worker will advise the police when they close the case. |
| 7.3 | **Interview Refused** |
|   | a. | Where a young person has refused to participate in a RI, then as much information should be gathered during the refusal discussion as is possible and recorded appropriately. This may involve sharing intelligence with the police. If the young person initially refused but the discussion evolved into a meaningful dialogue, allowing the return interview to be completed, then this should be done in the usual manner and explained to the young person. For cases within the NRS, a follow up letter and leaflet on Missing Children should be sent to the young person and their parent(s); |
|   | b. | Where there is a refusal by a young person to engage with the NRS and there remains concern, from available intelligence or information about the degree of vulnerability of the young person, then the NRS may need to make a professional judgement about the need to refer to CSCS. |
| 7.4 | **The “Clock” and Professional Judgement** |
|   | In terms of determining the time at which a young person is deemed to have been missing, in order to determine if a RI or a MAM is required the point at which the child/young person was reported missing to the police is used. However, professional judgement and common sense needs to be used when applying the Protocol. For example, if a child/young person has been missing and no one has appropriately exercised parental responsibility for reporting them in a timely way then the response will need to reflect this. Equally there may be other circumstances where the child/young person has been at a place for a period with the permission of the parent or carer (but then not returned home) but the police report reflects a ‘last seen’ time (by the parent) which potentially distorts the degree of missing activity. |
| 7.5 | **Multi-Agency Meeting (MAM) Coordination** |
|   | a. | The social worker, NRS or TSYJS case manager will be responsible for arranging and chairing the meeting. In some serious/complex cases, it may be more appropriate for a manager to chair the meeting. A summary of the meeting and actions should be taken, disseminated to attendees and uploaded onto Framework with an accompanying case note and alert to the CMO; |
|   | b. | For cases within the NRS or other part of the TSYJS, where there is a concern that the threshold for CSCS intervention has or may be met then CSCS will be invited. If multi-agency information shared at the meeting raises additional concerns that the CSCS threshold has been reached (using the Pathway to Provision) then the case should be referred to CSCS in the usual manner; |
|   | c. | Where there is non-engagement from agencies or disagreement regarding planned actions and responsibilities, this should be escalated. |
| 7.6 | **Multi-Agency Meeting (MAM) Integration** |
|   | It is possible to incorporate the need for a MAM under this guidance into, for example a Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) Meeting, [**CAF**](http://trixresources.proceduresonline.com/nat_key/keywords/common_assess_frame.html) Meeting or a [**Core Group**](http://trixresources.proceduresonline.com/nat_key/keywords/core_group.html) Meeting. To enable there to be a clear focus on the missing issues however this should be a clear agenda item with a summary of the discussion and actions. This should be made available to the CMO to enable compliance to be recorded. |
| 7.7 | **Return Interview Substitution for Initial Assessment by Children’s Social Care** |
|   | To prevent unnecessary duplication of work a RI may be used as an alternative to an initial assessment on Framework. Social Care, through the MASH, will process any new referral in the usual way with a contact and referral episode but once a Return Interview has been completed (in 72 hours) the dates can be added to the initial assessment record with the note to refer to the return interview and the initial assessment may be deemed to be completed. |

 **8.****Administrative Issues**

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| 8.1 | **Mosaic Recording** |
|   | a. | Police notifications will be uploaded onto the missing episode section on Mosaic with a case note to indicate that this has been done. Where no record exists then a client record will be created; |
|   | b. | For each notification, a Mosaic episode will be created and the CMO only will complete all parts of the episode for those being forwarded to the relevant service, only completing it once the RI and/or MAM has been completed; |
|   | c. | All communication, such as telephone calls or e-mails, relating to a particular missing notification will be copied onto [**Mosaic**](https://intranet.nottscc.gov.uk/index/departments/asch/framework/) or CareWorks as appropriate. For Mosaic the task alert system should be used for open cases but an accompanying e-mail/telephone call should be considered for any significant information; |
|   | d. | Once the RI has been completed, it should be uploaded onto Framework documents. This should be done within 10 days of the notification of the child/young person missing by the CMO and the CMO should be alerted. |
| 8.2 | **CareWorks Recording & Nottinghamshire Runaways Service** |
|   | a. | On receipt of a notification from the CMO, the TSS Business Support will add a note to Mosaic with the CareWorks individual identification number; |
|   | b. | Following case closure by the NRS & other parts of the TSYJS, an appropriate step-down process will be applied; |
|   | c. | The closure summary will be uploaded by the TSYJS Business Support onto Mosaic as well as CareWorks; |
|   | d. | The Police COMPACT Administrator will be advised of any on-going work by the NRS and the opening and closing of a case. |

 **9.****Strategic Issues**

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| 9.1 | **Accountability and Governance** |
|   | a. | The strategic safeguarding lead for Missing Children remains with the Service Manager, Safeguarding (Strategic) who reports to the NSCP Performance and Quality Sub-Group on a quarterly basis; |
|   | b. | The Missing Children Steering Group meets quarterly with the focus of the group being on the strategic coordination of inter-agency work in relation to children who go missing in Nottinghamshire; |
|   | c. | The contract for the NRS is managed by the TSYJS through quarterly meetings involving Catch 22, the Police, the CMO, Service Manager Safeguarding (Strategic), Targeted Support’s Specialist Services Team Manager and Commissioning and Partnerships Manager. |
| 9.2 | **Monitoring and Data Analysis** |
|   | The CMO and the Service Manager, Safeguarding (Strategic) collates monthly data in relation to all missing episodes, RI and MAM. This information is shared with the Contract Manager, Catch 22 and the TSYJS Manager responsible for the NRS caseworkers. The data is also shared with the steering group and the NSCP sub-group. |