



**Sutton** LSCP  
Local Safeguarding  
Children Partnership

# **SUTTON LSCP** **MULTI-AGENCY PROTOCOL** *for* **MISSING CHILDREN**

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

This local protocol sets out how to respond when a child or young person goes missing and helps ensure that there are effective, collaborative, safeguarding responses from all agencies involved. There are particular concerns about the links between children running away and the risks of sexual and criminal exploitation and this protocol should be read alongside the [LSCP Multi-Agency Protocol for Safeguarding Adolescents](#) and the [children missing education guidance](#).

The protocol is based on [Working Together 2018](#), the statutory guidance on [children who run away or go missing](#) and [London Child Protection procedures](#). This protocol should be followed by all professionals and volunteers working with children and young people and is covered in depth in LSCP multi-agency missing training.

This protocol also refers to the roles and responsibilities of the Local Safeguarding Children Partnership (LSCP) and its partners to seek assurance that services work effectively together to prevent children from going missing and to act when they do go missing. It includes scrutinising local intelligence on children and young people going missing on a regular basis and review of cases, which covers that children who go missing have access to return home interviews and family support to minimise the risk of further missing episodes.

## 2. PURPOSE

The protocol provides guidance about reporting children and young people missing, the requirements by agencies to undertake a risk assessment and information sharing guidance between school and education services, police and the local authority.

A set of flowcharts sets out the process for actions that should be taken by professionals to locate the child, to assist with their return and to identify the issues which caused, and may continue to cause, the child to run away or go missing.

It also sets expectations about accurate recording and the use of templates to ensure that there are consistent and effective responses across agencies to assess risk, plan and intervene to prevent the child or young person from suffering harm. For children in care who run away and go missing there are specific procedures that must be followed which are covered within this protocol.

### **3. SCOPE**

This protocol covers children and young people under the age of 18 (up to 25 for children with disabilities/SEN and Care Leavers) including:

- Children who are missing or absent from care (including residential care homes);
- Children who are missing from home;
- Children going missing from education.

It recognises that there are additional risk factors that should be incorporated into the risk assessment that relate to Child Exploitation, including Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) and Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE), domestic abuse and self-harm. There are additional vulnerability factors for Children Looked After (CLA), Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC), and children with learning difficulties and disabilities that require consideration by specialists in the risk assessment.

### **4. KEY PRINCIPLES**

The following principles should be adopted by all agencies in relation to identifying and locating missing children:

- The safety and welfare of the child is paramount;
- Locating and returning the child to safe environment;
- Child protection procedures will be initiated whenever there are concerns that a child who is missing has suffered or is likely to suffer significant harm;
- Notification to the Police will only take place following a risk assessment and in clearly defined circumstances set out in this guidance;
- The Police will act on any report of a child missing on the understanding that a risk assessment has been completed;
- Every missing child who returns will be interviewed by someone other than the direct carer;
- Where the child is known to Children's Services or meets the criteria for referral, the Local Authority will ensure that there are a range of service options to address the child's needs when they return.

### **5. DEFINITIONS**

The Police in Sutton are the lead agency for investigating and finding missing children and use these definitions:

**Missing:** It refers to any child aged 12 or below whose whereabouts cannot be established would automatically be classed as missing. Or, anyone whose whereabouts cannot be established and where the circumstances are out of character or the context suggests the person may be the subject of crime or at risk of harm to themselves or another (Police APP - Authorised Professional Practice).

The Police will respond to children and young people going missing based on on-going risk assessments in line with the Metropolitan Police Guidance. The police will undertake risk assessments for all children reported to them. Any child at known risk of exploitation whose whereabouts cannot be established should be classed as missing.

**Missing from care:** a looked after child who is not at their placement or the place they are expected to be (e.g., school) and their whereabouts are unknown.

**Absent:** any person when they are not at a place where they are expected or required to be.

**Away/absent from placement without authorisation:** a looked after child whose whereabouts are known but who is not at their placement or place they are expected to be.

**Child Missing Education (CME):** a child who is not on a school roll or receiving suitable education otherwise than at school. Children who are CME are reviewed by an Education Safeguarding Lead to screen for any concerns about exploitation and referred into Referral and Assessment if required. The list of children who are CME is checked by the Specialist Safeguarding Leads monthly to further screen for any exploitation concerns.

**Children Absent from Education:** those who are regularly absent or who have missed 10 school days or more without permission. These children are at increased risk of becoming 'children missing education'. These are also children who may be going missing, but not being reported as missing by their carers. Schools are expected to risk assess these children for risk of exploitation and refer them into the Local Authority. CFCS or the allocated Social Worker needs to complete the Child Exploitation Risk Screening Tool for all children over 11 years of age who are frequently absent from school without permission.<sup>1</sup>

**Hidden Missing:** Local authorities and LSCBs should also consider the 'hidden missing', who are children who have not been reported missing to the police, but have come to an agency's attention after accessing other

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<sup>1</sup> Statutory guidance:

[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/395138/Children\\_missing\\_education\\_Statutory\\_guidance\\_for\\_local\\_authorities.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/395138/Children_missing_education_Statutory_guidance_for_local_authorities.pdf)

services. There may also be trafficked children who have not previously come to the attention of children's services or the police. *Research demonstrates that children from black and minority ethnic groups, and children that go missing from education are less likely to be reported as missing.* Local authorities and the police should be proactive in places where they believe under reporting may be more likely because of the relationships some communities, or individuals, have with the statutory sector.

## **6. RISK FACTORS**

Children who are missing from home may be at greater risk of harm as a consequence of their basic need for food, safety and shelter and/or from the people with whom they may come into contact with. Risks can include physical harm, sexual exploitation, criminal exploitation, drug abuse, and involvement in a range of other criminal activities. Additional vulnerability is also assessed in relation to their age, level of understanding, or the significance and seriousness of the circumstances that led to the missing episode may also be present.

## **7. EARLY HELP APPROACH**

A mixed multi-agency early help approach is required to reduce the risk of children going missing and to effectively manage the coordination of multi-agency responses, covering the following:

- Identification of concerns through the use of the early help assessment and accompanying guidance;
- Effective use of performance data, return home interviews and advocacy services to better understand the needs of children who go missing;
- Ensure consistent and robust information sharing and pooling of resources to provide early help support to children and their families;
- Alignment of practice and recording data;
- Strengthened strategic planning and preventative work to inform practice on the ground;
- All agencies participating in learning and development activities to develop a shared understanding about the roles and responsibilities to protect children from going missing and how to best support them to prevent further missing episodes.

## 8. REFERRAL AND RISK ASSESSMENT

A child or young person who goes missing should always be reported to the Police as a missing person and set procedures are followed for undertaking searches and locating the child. A notification is sent by the Police to the Children's First Contact Service (CFCS) which is the single access point for referring children. Where there is the likelihood of significant harm, a social work assessment will be undertaken by the Referral and Assessment Service (RAS) under S.47 of the Children Act 1989 and a multi-agency strategy meeting will be convened.

For cases open to children's social care, a risk assessment must be undertaken which involves completing the Missing Person Record (located within the MOSAIC recording system), and available in Appendix 6.

For children in care, the [Grab Pack](#) must be completed by the social worker, uploaded to the child's Mosaic profile, provided to the carer or placement provider at the Placement Planning Meeting, and submitted to the Police when a child goes missing.

If a child has an established pattern of running away, a safety plan with a clear strategy should be written, highlighting any risk of child sexual exploitation (CSE), offending behaviour, criminal exploitation (CE), or trafficking by using the [Trigger Plan](#) which is developed in partnership with the police and carers during strategy or safety planning meetings

Where there are concerns about child exploitation social workers should complete the Child Exploitation Risk Assessment Tool on MOSAIC.

## 9. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Working Together to Safeguard Children (2018) outlines the roles and responsibilities the local authority, police, CCG and other partners have to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. Adolescent safeguarding is no different. The overriding principle is that preventing and responding to safeguarding matters is everyone's responsibility under local child safeguarding procedures.

All agencies are expected to comply with the following statutory guidance on children who run away or go missing:

### **The role of the Local Safeguarding Children Partnership**

The statutory guidance sets out that:

In fulfilling their statutory roles, LSCPs should give due consideration to the safeguarding risks and issues associated with children missing from home or care.

To do this, they will need to see that partners from children's social care, police, health, education and other services work effectively together to prevent children from going missing and to act when they do go missing. They should ensure that the local missing children protocol is adequate and up to date. They should receive and scrutinise regular reports from the local authority analysing data on children missing from home and from care. As part of this, they should review analysis of return interviews. They should also review regular reports from children's homes used by the local authority or within the local authority area on the effectiveness of their measures to prevent children from going missing.

In Sutton, the governance of the Missing Children protocol is with the Multi Agency Child Exploitation (MACE Operational Panel) and LSCP Contextual Safeguarding Strategic Subgroup which is under the governance of the Local Safeguarding Children Partnership (LSCP). The membership of this group reflects lead responsibilities for missing children and helps ensure that the link between children and young people going missing and child exploitation is fully addressed.

### **The role of Children's Social Care**

Children's Social Care holds lead responsibility for responding to children who are likely or have suffered actual significant harm through an assessment of need following a missing child or young person's return. When a case is already allocated, concerns may be presented by another professional or by the child's social worker as an incident reported to the Police. The risk of harm to the child needs to be re-assessed in accordance with their responsibilities under the Children Act 1989 in the light of the new information that has emerged from the return interview and information from other professionals. Social workers should consult the Missing Practice Directive for further guidance.

As in all cases of suspected abuse and neglect, Children's Social Care will respond in one of three ways and will advise the referrer which plan is in place:

1. An assessment will be undertaken to identify the child's level of risk and need for service provision;
2. The assessment may identify the child to be at risk of significant harm and in need of protection. This will necessitate a child protection enquiry and a core assessment of need under section 47 of the Children Act 1989; or
3. Where no concerns are identified, there will be no further action. In these cases, LA children's social care will advise the referrer verbally and in writing as to why the agency is to take this position.

In cases where a social work assessment confirms that a child is at risk of significant harm, they will convene a Strategy Discussion, in order to determine whether child protection enquiries must be made. This should be in line with



London Child Protection Procedures. For additional details please read Sutton's children's social care online procedure for undertaking [S.47 investigations](#).

The strategy meeting will coordinate the multi-agency professional response and ensure that all appropriate actions are being taken to locate and return the child to a place of safety. A safety plan must be in place where risk of harm is identified. Active work must be undertaken with the child to address issues set out in the safety and care plan. Whether or not the child is moved from their home or placement, the other children in the placement must be monitored to identify whether they are also contributing to the child going missing. In some cases it may be necessary to seek legal advice via a legal planning meeting in regards to these duties where all other efforts have proven unsuccessful.

If the assessment identifies concerns about the child or young person being at risk, or having been subject to child exploitation, the Child Exploitation Risk Assessment Tool will be completed on Mosaic, to refer the case to the MACE operational panel. See the [Safeguarding Adolescent Protocol](#) and the Child Exploitation Practice Directive for further details.

Children's social care is responsible for ensuring that the information for reporting a looked after child or young person missing to the police is completed in line with guidance in the London Child Protection Procedures. The children's social care quality assurance service is responsible for undertaking regular CLA case audits to ensure compliance with this protocol.

Children's social care should convene a Multi-agency Missing from Care meeting within 3 days of the young person's return home. This is to ensure an effective safety plan is made to address the longer term impact of missing upon the child/young person and to minimise further push/pull factors in the child/young person's life that have led them to go missing. All strategy and safety planning meetings must clarify if a return home interview has been undertaken as this should inform planning for the child/young person.

### **The role of the Police**

The Police are the lead organisation for children and young people missing and there are designated Missing Children Police Officers in the South BCU. All reported incidents are processed through the MERLIN database. When located, the child must be offered a Safe and Well Check by a police officer before the investigation can be closed; a missing person investigation is never closed until the child is found.

Once a child has returned home, the Police will carry out a Safe and Well Check as soon as possible, see ACPO Guidance for further details.<sup>2</sup> The aim of this is to check for any indications that the young person has suffered harm; establish the reasons for their disappearance; find out where and with whom they have been; and to give them an opportunity to disclose any offending by or against them. Even where a young person is going missing frequently, there is a requirement to undertake the Safe and Well Check and every effort should be made to visit those young people missing from home on every occasion.

If during the Safe and Well Check the police identify that there are immediate safeguarding concerns, then a referral should be made to the CFCS team. In addition, if a private fostering arrangement is in place, this should be reported directly to Children's Services.

If there are specific and identified issues of safety or public order associated with returning that child then a coordinated approach to recover the child should be agreed with the Police. In some instances it may be inappropriate to return a child to their home or placement and in such cases Police will liaise with Children's Services or the relevant Emergency Duty Team (out of hours) for an evaluation of their safety. The Police can take that child into Police Protection and remove them to suitable accommodation which could include the home from which the child originally went missing (Section 46 of the Children Act 1989).

The Police have a dual role in contributing to the S.47 child protection investigation whilst also gathering evidence for the prosecution of offenders who have been perpetrated child abuse or exploitation. The South Area BCU has a dedicated Safeguarding Team. This team investigates missing and child exploitation cases and the Sergeant of this team is co-chair of the borough's MACE Panel. This in addition to the CAIT team who will respond to child abuse concerns. This role must be undertaken in accordance with the principle of multi-agency cooperation to safeguard children under Working Together (2018) and London Child Protection Procedures.

For more complex situations where the Police consider the safeguarding issues go above and beyond a focus upon locating the child and ascertaining their immediate wellbeing only, they will complete a Trigger Plan. This plan serves two functions:

- To accurately risk assess and assist the investigation to locate an individual, and;
- To steer an agreed multi-agency response to be actioned once the individual is located and beyond.

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<sup>2</sup> ACPO practice on children going missing: <https://www.app.college.police.uk/app-content/major-investigation-and-public-protection/missing-persons/>

The decision to complete a Trigger Plan will be based upon the consideration of the 'Recency, Frequency and Gravity' of the individual situation and the Plan should remain in place as long as is necessary to ensure a consistent response where there are frequent missing episodes for one child/young person.

### **The role of the CFCS team**

Upon receipt of a CFCS referral, CFCS will screen the referral by conducting checks with partner agencies. All new MISPER or MERLIN reports received by the CFCS will be researched by Police staff within CFCS. This information assists CFCS social workers with their risk assessments for the child. For any MISPER reports received, CFCS will open a Missing Episode on MOSAIC.

Where the referral indicates concerns in relation to extrafamilial harm, CFCS will use the Child Exploitation Risk Screening Tool to assess the level of concern. This information will allow CFCS to make a determination in regards to the level of need, in accordance with the Sutton LSCP Multi Agency Threshold Guidance<sup>3</sup>.

All open cases which CFCS have become aware of via an electronic notification (MISPER) will have an initial Police PPD triage in order to provide Police research to aid Police colleagues in the location/protection of the missing child. CFCS information product should be used to inform risk analysis during a missing episode and on return home.

### **The role of Commissioned foster carers/placement providers**

When the child is not where they should be, the carer (foster carer, residential staff, or semi-independent staff) must take action to try to locate them and encourage them to return home.

A decision will be made as to whether the child is away from placement without authorisation, absent or missing. This may be decided by the placement staff or the foster carer, but they may seek guidance from the allocated social worker or Emergency Duty Team (if out of hours) or the Supervising Fostering social worker as available.

#### **ABSENT/AWAY FROM PLACEMENT WITHOUT AUTHORISATION**

The carers, residential or semi-independent staff **do not** need to report a child absent or away from placement without authorisation to EDT or police, but should update the social work team daily during working hours until the child is deemed

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<sup>3</sup> Sutton LSCP Multi Agency Threshold Guidance

[https://suttonlscp.org.uk/static/guidance\\_files/LSCP\\_Sutton\\_Threshold\\_Guidance\\_Oct\\_2020.pdf](https://suttonlscp.org.uk/static/guidance_files/LSCP_Sutton_Threshold_Guidance_Oct_2020.pdf)

to be missing. *However, if the child is absent or away from placement but is at significant risk of harm to themselves or others police should be notified immediately.*

When it is decided that a child is absent or away from placement without authorisation but is not technically 'missing' the following steps must be taken:

- Carers (including residential staff and foster carers) if the child is looked after should take action to try to locate the child and return them home;
- The carers should keep records of what has happened, the details of the child not being where they should be and the steps taken to locate the child;
- The carers should continue to try to locate the child and return them home;
- The carers should review the situation at a minimum of every 6 hours and again at 11pm and 8am and decide if still absent or away from placement without authorisation or whether the child is now missing;
- If it is decided that the child is still absent or away from placement without authorisation, the carers should continue to try to locate the child and return them home. They should continue to share information with the allocated social work team and keep written records of what has happened;
- **If a child's whereabouts is unknown or has not been in contact for a maximum of 24 hours, then carers should treat the child as missing;**
- **If a child's whereabouts is known but has not returned home, carers should wait no longer than 72 hours before deciding to treat the child as missing.**

For those children who are frequently absent due to coming home past curfew or where their whereabouts are known, a plan should be agreed between the social worker and carers on how to manage those incidents.

## MISSING

In order to assist police, social workers should complete Part 1 of the [Grab Pack](#) for all children who are in care or are open to Children's Services and likely to go missing. The Grab Pack should be provided to the carers or residential placement upon placing the child as part of the Placement Planning Meeting. The child's carer or placement should complete Part 2 when the child has gone missing, and Part 3 once the child has returned.

If a child is deemed to be missing, the carer should report them to police by sharing the Grab Pack after completing section 2. The carer needs to report the child to EDT (if out of hours) and share the CAD reference number and details of circumstances surrounding the missing incident. For a protracted missing incident, the carer should update the allocated social work team during working hours and does not need to update EDT and/or police unless information is received which suggests that the child's circumstances have changed, the child might be at increased risk, or has returned home.

For children who are likely to use trains, tubes, or spend time in stations or their car parks whilst missing, British Transport Police (BTP) should be contacted. The Grab Pack or Trigger Plan should be provided to BTP when the child is reported missing, which should detail frequented train stations and what to do if they find the child. When the child goes missing, the carer should also notify BTP and can share pictures, images, and other relevant details to the BTP control room number on 0800 40 50 40, 61016 text number. Carers can also use this when someone is missing so stations can be made aware and look out for them.

### **The role of schools, further education colleges and other education establishments**

The education service provides guidance and procedures for responding to children who are missing from education with their family and those who do not turn up to school because of truanting. These guidance and procedures are linked to the LSCP Missing Children protocol because they are vulnerable to being reported missing, and sometimes are reported missing to the Police under the definition of a missing child in the London Child Protection Procedure. The flowchart for children going missing from education and links to the missing children referral and assessment process is set out in appendix 2.

Being absent and excluded from school are risk factors which are known to increase vulnerability to exploitation and as previously mentioned those with SEND may also be more easily exploited because of their needs. The Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel<sup>4</sup> noted that 'Permanent exclusion was identified by practitioners and family members as a trigger for a significant escalation of risk.

The school also has a role to identify concerns about children and young people going missing through early help assessment processes, and the Designated Safeguarding Leads would be expected to have undertaken training to identify the risk factors of children and young people going missing, including those at risk of Child Exploitation.

There is also a role for schools and education services to deliver education programmes in schools. For example, Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE) programmes can help children make informed and healthy choices about issues such as sexual activity, grooming techniques, online safety, substance misuse, and keeping them safe.

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<sup>4</sup> Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel 'It was hard to escape: Safeguarding Children at risk of criminal exploitation (2020)

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/870035/Safeguarding\\_children\\_at\\_risk\\_from\\_criminal\\_exploitation\\_review.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/870035/Safeguarding_children_at_risk_from_criminal_exploitation_review.pdf)

Schools have a key role in contributing towards contextual safeguarding assessments. Whether it be the completion of school's assessments or contributing to peer group mapping as part of a peer group assessment, the knowledge that school staff have regarding potential safeguarding risks that their students may be exposed to is critical to the development of a contextual safeguarding system.

Safeguarding representatives from schools and Cognus are represented on MACE Panel.

### **The role of the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG)**

The CCG is responsible for assuring themselves and the LSCP that providers within the health economy are:

- Equipped with the knowledge to identify risk factors relating to child exploitation;
- Aware and execute their role responsibilities to report children who are vulnerable to risk factors; and
- Contribute to risk assessments, multi-agency strategy meetings and delivery of care plans to protect them from significant harm under London child protection procedures.

The CCG has a significant role to undertake and contribute to needs assessments to inform commissioning processes for early intervention and support services for children who are vulnerable or already have a pattern of being exploited or going missing.

### **The role of health services**

Health professionals have a crucial role in providing support for the physical and mental health of children who are at risk of or have returned from going missing. The named safeguarding professional within each provider will monitor information to identify when any child in the community may be being targeted for sexual and criminal exploitation, which involves considering patterns and trends for going missing from home.

Where health professionals have immediate concerns about a child or young person suffering likely or actual harm as a result of a child going missing, including links to CSE/CE, they must follow the standard London Child Protection Procedures to make a referral to CFCS. Where the concerns are not immediate or are unclear, staff must discuss the case with their named safeguarding lead and consult with the CFCS team as required. If a multi-agency meeting is convened the following health professionals must attend or contribute with a report:

- All current health professionals involved with the child, including school nurses, specialist CLA nurses, GP's, practice nurses, CAMHs, sexual health and family planning resources;
- Any previously involved health professionals (recent past) who would have a useful contribution to make to the meeting (i.e. most recent health reports and knowledge of child while at school);
- Health professionals involved in any screening or medicals involving the child who is the subject of the meeting (e.g. Designated CLA Dr, Paediatrician, GP); or
- When no other health professional is involved, consultation will take place with the Designated Nurse for Child Protection and CLA to identify who from Health is best placed to attend.

### **The role of voluntary and community groups / agencies**

Statutory guidelines on children and young people going missing from home or care recognise the role the voluntary sector, as well as youth workers working in both statutory and voluntary services, have in building trusted relationships with children and young people. In Sutton, there is a commissioning arrangement with Jigsaw4u to provide return home interviews for children who have gone missing and report on the outcome of this work to the Local Authority commissioner (Children's Social Care).

In Sutton, there is an arrangement for voluntary and community groups/agencies to be represented on the LSCP and its subgroups which includes a commitment to ensure that professionals and volunteers in voluntary and community groups /agencies are alert and competent to identify and act upon concerns that a child is at risk of going missing with the additional risk of experiencing abuse through sexual and criminal exploitation. Where a professional or volunteer in a voluntary or community group / agency has immediate concerns, they should refer to this protocol and the referral and assessment pathways to the Police and CFCS.

## **10. MACE OPERATIONAL PANEL**

The Multi-Agency Child Exploitation Panel has oversight of children and young people who meet the following criteria:

- Sexual Exploitation,
- Criminal Exploitation (incl. Gangs, county lines and serious youth violence),
- Trafficking/Modern Slavery,
- Exploitative behaviour (eg. online abuse), and

- Harmful Sexual Behaviour.

Referrals for children who have been reported missing and deemed at risk of one or more of the above forms of exploitation or harmful behaviours will also be accepted.

MACE ensures operational oversight of multi-agency plans, and seeks to ensure that multi-agency action required to improve prevention, intervention, disruption and prosecution is taken in a timely way. This may include actions whereby repeat key locations and/or persons of concern are identified.

MACE is supported by a data analyst who maps police and local authority data to ensure that there is a comprehensive and accurate data set that is matching, and to ensure that there are no gaps in service provision. This data is reviewed at a fortnightly Missing Meeting and individual actions that may be required by agencies are addressed with them following this meeting.

## **11. QUALITY ASSURANCE**

The governance for the Missing Children protocol is with the LSCP Contextual Safeguarding Strategic Subgroup. The Chair of the MACE Operational Panel is a member of the Contextual Safeguarding Strategic Subgroup and it is a standing agenda item for the group to receive an update and progress report on MACE operational activities and impact on reducing the risk of children and young people going missing.

The LSCP Quality Assurance (QA) Subgroup is responsible for scrutinising the effectiveness of MACE strategic and operational activities and report back to the LSCP. MACE operational updates are provided at each Contextual Safeguarding Strategic meeting and the annual report is submitted to the LSCP QA Subgroup for scrutiny. The LSCP QA Subgroup is also responsible for ensuring that regular multi-agency case audits are undertaken and that any actions and learning outcomes are implemented.

The quarterly and annual reports provided to the Contextual Safeguarding Strategic Subgroup and the QA Subgroup include data in regards to missing children and return home interview completion. The data is used to identify patterns, track trends and support decisions about any performance management action that needs to be addressed by individual agencies and the LSCP partnership.

It is the role of the Corporate Parenting Board to scrutinise the performance management of Children Looked After who go missing from care.

There is a LSCP escalation policy and procedure to address any case management concern that relates to children going missing, which relates to both strategic and



operational issues; specifically where there may be professional disagreement about a referral and case management decision.

## **12. MISSING CHILDREN LEAD ARRANGEMENTS**

### **Local Authority Strategic Lead for Missing Children and CSE**

- Jonathan Williams, Interim Assistant Director for Children's Services
- Telephone: 020 8770 6534
- E-mail: [jonathan.williams@sutton.gov.uk](mailto:jonathan.williams@sutton.gov.uk)

### **Police Strategic Lead for Missing Children and Child Sexual Exploitation**

- DSI Fiona Martin, South Area BCU, Public Protection
- Mobile 07557 485929
- Email: [fiona.martin@met.police.uk](mailto:fiona.martin@met.police.uk)

### **Children Social Care Head of Service Strategic Lead for CSE and Missing Children**

- Averil Kathan, Head of Service Referral, Assessment and Safeguarding, Co-chair of MACE
- Telephone: 0208 770 4326
- Email [averil.kathan@sutton.gov.uk](mailto:averil.kathan@sutton.gov.uk)

### **Children's Specialist Safeguarding Leads**

- General enquiry email: [Complexsafeguarding@sutton.gov.uk](mailto:Complexsafeguarding@sutton.gov.uk)
  
- Raquel Vieth, Specialist Safeguarding Practice Lead, Quality Assurance
- Tel: 020 8770 6516
- Mobile No.: 0788 940 3761
- Email: [raquel.vieth@sutton.gov.uk](mailto:raquel.vieth@sutton.gov.uk)
  
- Mandy Jallow, Specialist Safeguarding Practice Lead, Quality Assurance
- Tel: 0208 770 6777
- Mobile: 07395 374606
- Email: [mandy.jallow@sutton.gov.uk](mailto:mandy.jallow@sutton.gov.uk)

### **Missing Data Analyst**

- Nick Wyatt, Data & Intelligence Analyst, Data & Intelligence Team
- Email: [nick.wyatt@sutton.gov.uk](mailto:nick.wyatt@sutton.gov.uk)

### **Police Missing Persons-coordinator**

- DI Mark Hine, Missing Persons Unit, Mental Health Team, Child Exploitation Team

- South Area BCU
- Tel: 07769 243609
- Email: [mark.hine2@met.pnn.police.uk](mailto:mark.hine2@met.pnn.police.uk) or [SNMailbox-.PublicProtectionReferrals@met.police.uk](mailto:SNMailbox-.PublicProtectionReferrals@met.police.uk)

### **Children's First Contact Service (CFCS) Manager**

- Mike Montrose-Francis
- Telephone: 0208 770 6001
- Email: [mike.montrose-francis@sutton.gov.uk](mailto:mike.montrose-francis@sutton.gov.uk)

### **Education Safeguarding Lead**

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### **Children Missing from Education Lead**

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- Tel: 0208 770 6001

### **Designated Nurse for Safeguarding Children**

- Sarah Galvin, Designated Nurse for CP and LAC, SWL CCG
- Telephone: 020 8770 4718
- Email: [sarah.galvin@swlondon.nhs.uk](mailto:sarah.galvin@swlondon.nhs.uk)

### **Commissioned provider for return home interviews for Missing Children**

- Sharon McCann, Missing and CSE Team Manager, Jigsaw4u
- Tel: 0208 687 1384
- Mob: 07932911993
- [www.jigsaw4u.org.uk](http://www.jigsaw4u.org.uk)

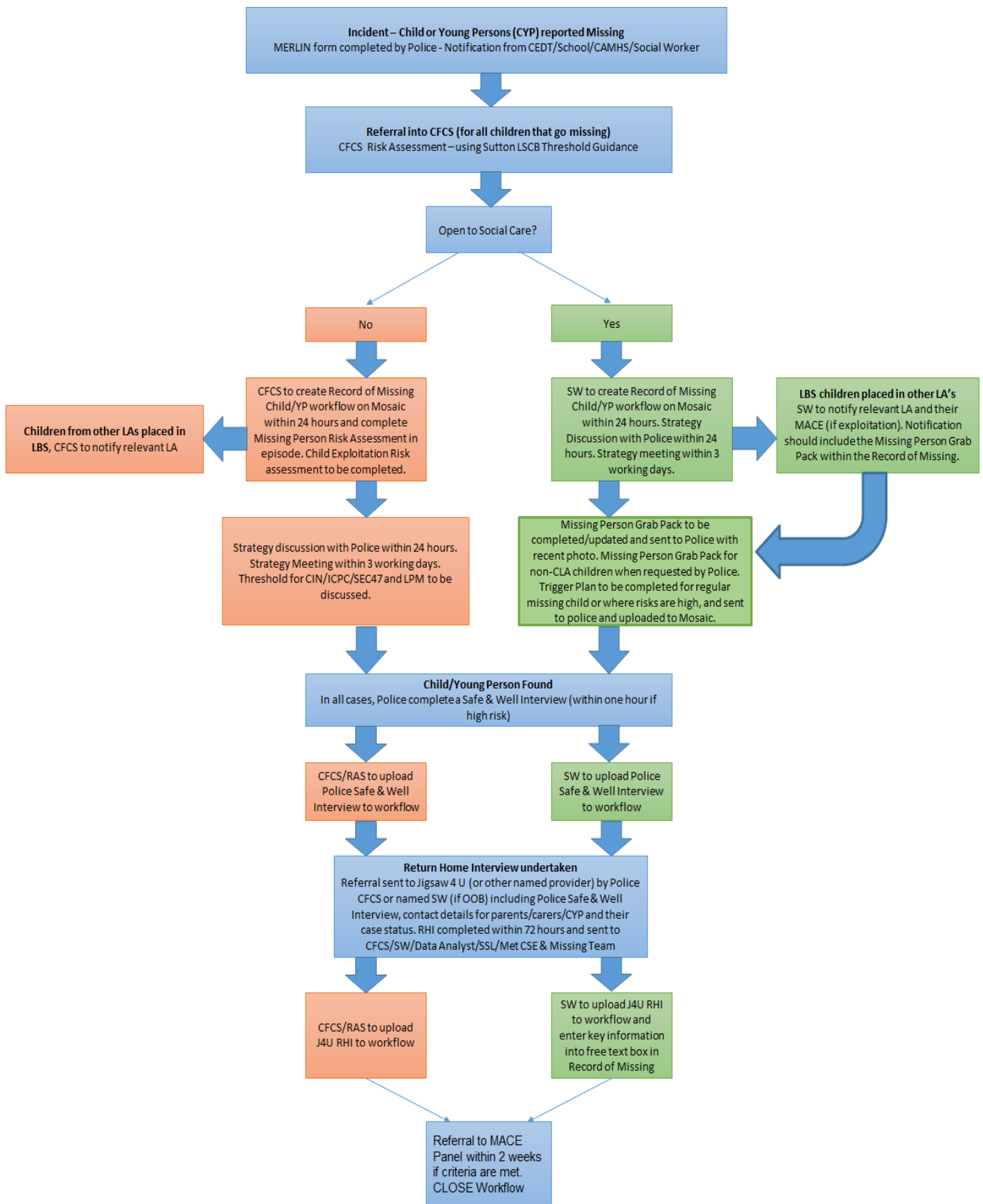
### **MACE operational group**

- Averil Kathan, Head of Service Referral, Out of Hours and Children and Young People with Disabilities, Co-chair of MACE
- Telephone: 0208 770 4326
- Email [averil.kathan@sutton.gov.uk](mailto:averil.kathan@sutton.gov.uk)
  
- DI Mark Hine, Co-Chair MACE Operational Panel

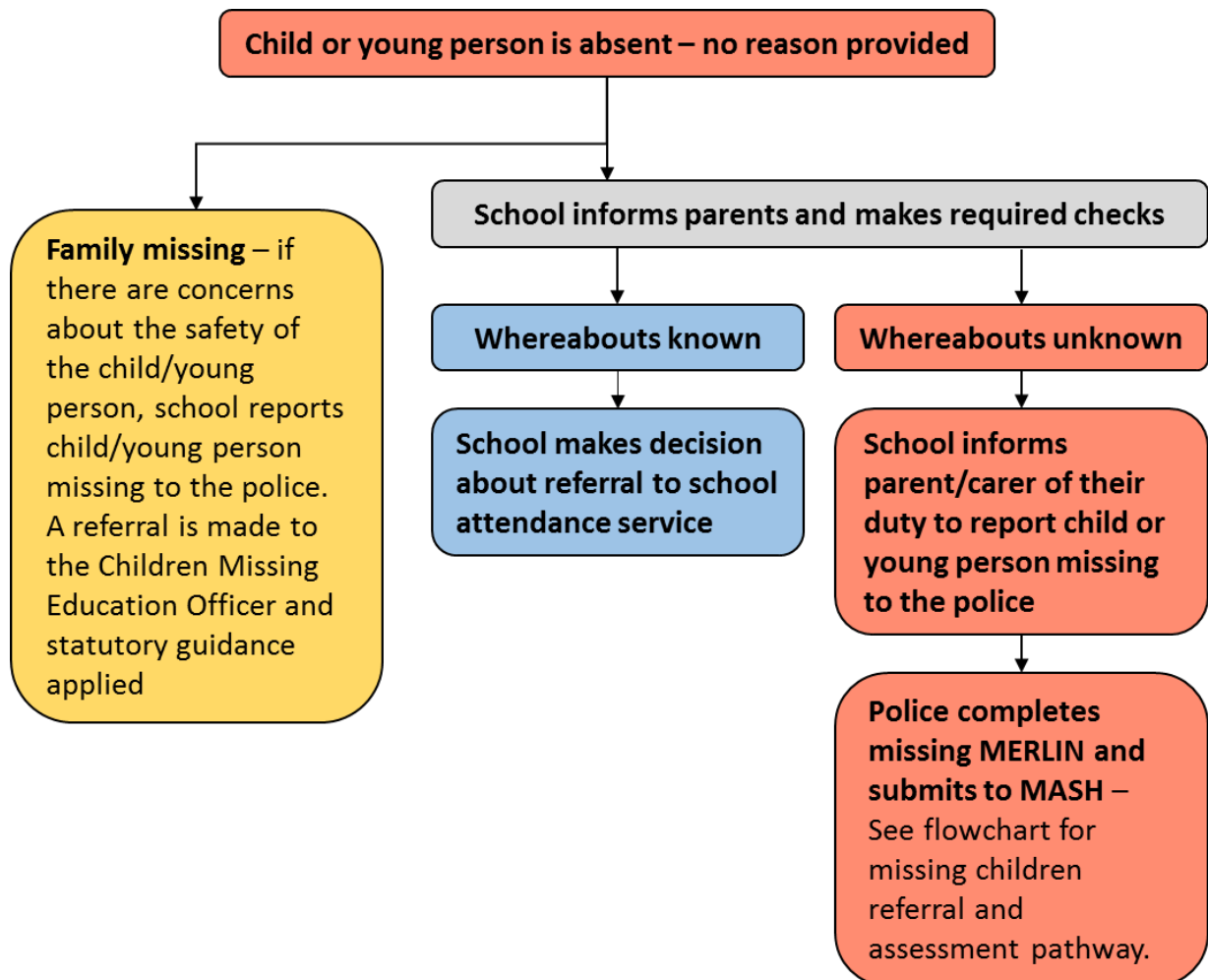
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## APPENDIX 1 – MISSING CHILDREN REFERRAL AND ASSESSMENT PATHWAY



## APPENDIX 2 – CHILDREN MISSING FROM EDUCATION REFERRAL PATHWAY



## APPENDIX 3 – SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN MISSING EDUCATION PROCESS FOR SCHOOLS

**Day One:** The school identifies that a child is not in school. A staff member telephones the child’s home to seek reasons for the absence and reassurance from a parent/carer that the child is safe at home.

Result of call	Action
There is no answer at the home or on mobile numbers	Call back, and risk assess after two hours
The parent/carer answered the call and the child is safe with them	Ask for a reason for the absence and record response
The person answering is not the parent/carer and the school is not reassured that the child is at home or safe	The school’s designated lead for child protection should be consulted on a risk assessment and the degree of vulnerability of the child
The parent/carer answered the call, the child is not with them or safe and the parent is concerned	School to advise the parent to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Contact all people and places the child is known to talk to and visit to tell them that the child is missing and ask if they can help to find the child by providing information which may shed light on the child’s whereabouts or actively searching for the child;</li> <li>• Contact the family GP and A&amp;E Centres near where the child lives and goes to school in case they have sustained an injury and been taken in for medical treatment;</li> <li>• Contact the local police station to inform them that the child is missing;</li> <li>• Report back to the school if the child is found or remains missing.</li> </ul>

If the judgement on Day One is that there is reason to believe that the child is at risk of harm the school will contact the police and/or MASH or Children’s Services immediately

If the judgement on Day One is that there is no reason to believe that the child is at risk of harm the school will continue to make enquiries and inform the Education Welfare Service on Day Three that the child is missing education

## APPENDIX 4 – CHILDREN MISSING FROM EDUCATION RISK ASSESSMENT TEMPLATE

Assessing vulnerability requires a combination of professional knowledge and experience of child welfare issues and knowledge of local circumstances. Considering the following questions could assist the process. If in doubt always consult with managers or other services.

Criteria	Risk	Action
Is there good reason to believe that the child may be the victim of a crime?	High	Inform the police and/or Children's Services immediately.
Does the child have a formal child protection plan?		
Is the child in care i.e. looked after by the Local Authority?		
Is there planned or current LA Children's Services or LA Adults' Services involvement? E.g. section 47 enquiry about to start.		
Is there a person present or visiting the family who poses an ongoing risk to children, or who is suspected of previously harming a child?		
Is the child at risk of sexual exploitation?		
Has there been LA Children's Services, LA Adults' Services, or Criminal Justice System involvement in the past?	Medium	Give consideration to the vulnerability of the child and following risk assessment, inform one or all of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Police;</li> <li>● Safer school officer;</li> <li>● Children's Services;</li> <li>● Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO);</li> <li>● Education Welfare Service;</li> <li>● School nurse.</li> </ul>
Are there religious or cultural reasons to believe that the child is at risk? E.g. FGM or forced marriage.		
Is there any known history of drug or alcohol dependency within the family?		
Is there any known history of domestic violence?		
Is there concern about the parent/carer's ability to protect the child from harm?		
Was there any significant incident prior to the child's unexplained absence?		
Has the child been a victim of bullying?		

Does the child need essential medication or health care?		Use other services to help with your risk assessment, including the above.
Was the child noted to be depressed prior to the child's unexplained absence?		
Has the child gone missing with their family?		
Have the parents been subject to proceedings in relation to attendance?		
Is there a history of poor attendance?		
Has there been any change in the child/family's financial circumstances?		
Age of the child		



## APPENDIX 5 – MACE PANEL TERMS OF REFERENCE

### LONDON BOROUGH OF SUTTON

### MULTI-AGENCY CHILD EXPLOITATION PANEL (MACE)

#### TERMS OF REFERENCE

#### 1. Introduction

These are the Terms of Reference which apply to the Multi-Agency Child Exploitation Panel (MACE).

This panel was formed following a decision made by the Multi Agency Child Exploitation (MACE) Strategic Group in May 2019 to consolidate all operational panels dealing with child exploitation and adolescent safeguarding concerns, namely the MACE Operational Panel, Criminal Exploitation and Child Sexual Exploitation MACE Pre-Panels.

#### 2. Background

At a national, regional, and local level it has been recognised that there is a need for professionals to holistically consider the needs of vulnerable adolescents and move away from risk assessments and intervention which separate or silo different types of exploitation.

The risk factors for young people vulnerable to sexual or criminal exploitation, anti-social behaviour, group offending, gang involvement and going missing from home, school or care are often the same (e.g. exposure to domestic abuse, school exclusion, poor mental health and poverty). Similarly, adolescents may be vulnerable to more than one type of exploitation and the grooming/coercion tactics used by exploiters/perpetrators are similar, regardless of whether young people are people being trafficked for sexual or criminal purposes.

The increasing media attention on serious youth violence (i.e. knife crime) and the link this has to 'county lines' drug dealing (criminal exploitation) has seen Ofsted, the Children Commissioner and others write about the need for stronger partnership working to tackle these issues.

There have also been a number of recent thematic and serious case reviews (i.e. Croydon SCB Vulnerable Adolescents Thematic Review and Newham SCR) which add impetus to review how services are addressing child exploitation risks and for the need to review practice and procedure in response to rapidly changing risk dynamics.

### **3. Scope and purpose**

The MACE Panel aims to reduce the extrafamilial safeguarding risks that children and adolescents may be exposed to, by building an understanding of the links between victims and perpetrators, identifying themes and trends, and using these to inform diversionary measures and tactical interventions.

The Panel will be the key forum for information sharing across agencies to ensure that the multi-agency partnership is working together to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people to effectively tackle exploitation, vulnerability and risk.

The MACE Panel focuses on children under the age of 18 years; however, the panel will also consider transition plans for vulnerable young adults who are care leavers open to the Leaving Care Team or young people with learning difficulties open to the Children with Disabilities & Transitions Team or in receipt of an Education, Health Care Plan. The Panel will have a role in ensuring that relevant transitional safeguarding arrangements are in place for any adolescent already open to MACE who is approaching 18 years of age.

The Panel will consider referrals where a strategy meeting has been held and safeguarding risks have been identified in relation to:

- Sexual Exploitation,
- Criminal Exploitation (incl. Gangs, county lines and serious youth violence),
- Trafficking/Modern Slavery,
- Exploitative behaviour (eg. online abuse), and
- Harmful Sexual Behaviour.

Due to the prevalence of peer-on-peer abuse amongst young people, whereby both the victim and perpetrator of violence can be a young person, the panel will receive referrals for young people causing serious harm to others (or those where they have been a victim of a serious assault and as a result they pose a risk of retaliation and/or weapon carrying).

Only cases where there is significant cause for concern in relation to the exhibiting of sexually harmful behaviour by a young person or groups of young people and where a multi-agency plan is required to curtail and reduce the risk that the young person poses to the wider community should be referred to the panel.

Referrals for children who have been reported missing and deemed at risk of one or more of the above forms of exploitation or harmful behaviours will also be accepted.

The Panel will not consider referrals for cases which are already being monitored via other multi-agency risk panel arrangements, such as MAPPA or Channel.

#### 4. Definitions

For the purposes of this ToR:

**Child** is defined as anyone who has not yet reached 18 years of age.

**Vulnerable young adults** are deemed to be young people in receipt of local authority services via Leaving Care provisions or the Children with Disabilities & Transitions team.

**Child sexual exploitation** (CSE) is a form of **child sexual abuse**. It occurs where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance or power to coerce, manipulate, or deceive a child or young person under the age of 18 into sexual activity:

- in exchange for something the victim needs or wants; and/or
- for the financial advantage or increased status of the perpetrator or facilitator.

The victim may have been sexually exploited even if the sexual activity appears consensual. Child sexual exploitation does not always involve physical contact; it can also occur through the use of technology.

**Child criminal exploitation** is defined by the **Home Office** as:

*'Where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, control, manipulate or deceive a child or young person under the age of 18. The victim may have been criminally exploited even if the activity appears consensual. Child Criminal Exploitation does not always involve physical contact; it can also occur through the use of technology.'*

*Criminal exploitation of children... includes for instance children forced to work on cannabis farms or to commit theft.'*

Criminal exploitation of children can involve children being encouraged or coerced to engage in serious youth violence (including gangs) or criminal activity. It is also worth noting that some perpetrators of child criminal exploitation may themselves be children who are being criminally exploited. Victims of child criminal exploitation may also be at risk of becoming perpetrators themselves.

**Gangs** are defined broadly by the London Child Protection Procedures as 'a relatively durable, predominantly street-based group of children who see

themselves (and are seen by others) as a discernible group for whom crime and violence is integral to the group's identity'.

**Serious Youth Violence** is defined by the Home Office Assessment of Policing and Community Safety (APACS) as 'any offence of most serious violence or weapon enabled crime, where the victim is aged 1-19', i.e. murder, manslaughter, rape, wounding with intent and causing grievous bodily harm.

**County Lines** is a form of criminal exploitation and is defined by the Home Office as:

*'a term used to describe gangs and organised criminal networks involved in exporting illegal drugs into one or more importing areas within the UK, using dedicated mobile phone lines or other form of "deal line". They are likely to exploit children and vulnerable adults to move and store the drugs and money and they will often use coercion, intimidation, violence (including sexual violence) and weapons.*

Gangs establish a base in the market location, typically by taking over the homes of local vulnerable adults by force or coercion in a practice referred to as 'cuckooing'. County Lines is a form of modern slavery and human trafficking.

**Child Trafficking** is the process whereby children are recruited, moved, or transported and then exploited, forced to work, or sold. This movement could be for the purposes of child sexual or criminal exploitation, forced marriage, domestic servitude, or forced labour. Children may be trafficked from outside the UK (e.g. bringing a child to the UK to work on a cannabis farm) or internally, as in the case of County Lines drug dealing.

**Missing-** A child (i.e. a young person under the age of 18 years) is to be considered 'missing' if their whereabouts cannot be established and where circumstances are out of character or the context suggests the person may be subject of a crime or at risk of harm to themselves or another. They will be considered missing until they are located and their well-being or otherwise is established.

Absences that cause concern are those where:

- Staff or carers have no indication as to the child's whereabouts; and/or
- There is no indication that the child is likely to return within a reasonable period of time; and
- There is immediate concern for the child's safety.

There may be circumstances when a child who goes missing from home / care / education is experiencing harm or is at risk of harm.

**Harmful sexual behaviour** are behaviours expressed by children and young people under the age of 18 years old that are developmentally inappropriate, that either harm self or others, or are abusive towards another child, young person or adult (derived from Hackett, 2014).

**Persons of Concern (POC)** are individuals who 'appear to be developing a friendship or relationship based on power over a child by virtue of their age, gender, intellect, physical strength and/or economic or other resources'.

**Persons of Interest (POI)** are individuals who are suspected by Police of potentially having been involved in a crime but are yet to be arrested.

## **5. Functions**

### **Referrals**

Agencies should follow established referral routes for safeguarding concerns via referral to Sutton's Child First Contact Service (CFCS). CFCS will conduct the relevant screenings and where the threshold is met, forward the case to the Referral and Assessment Service (RAS) for a Strategy Meeting.

Where a child is already known and currently open to Children's Services, the allocated social worker should complete the Child Exploitation Risk Screening Tool on MOSAIC and arrange for a Strategy Meeting to take place.

All cases referred to the MACE Panel will have been discussed and screened via a Strategy Meeting and the pre-MACE Screening Panel in the first instance.

### **Pre-MACE Screening Panel**

The pre-MACE Screening Panel takes place monthly and will review all new referrals to ensure that they are discussed at MACE in a timely way and to ensure that referrals which do not meet the threshold have appropriate plans in place for the young person. The pre-MACE Screening Panel will also review any cases that are due to return to the MACE Panel that month and ensure that the Screening Tool has been appropriately reviewed and it is appropriate for the case to return to Panel.

Pre-MACE Screening Panel is chaired by the PSW for Children's and is attended by the Specialist Safeguarding Leads, a representative from Jigsaw 4 U and IYS. Minutes are taken by Business Support.

### **MACE Operational Panel**

The Social Worker for cases due to be discussed at MACE Operational Panel will be invited to share the context of concerns, what actions have been taken, and seek advice about what further interventions or resources may need to be considered. Where the case is also open to IYS, the relevant keyworker/YOT SW will also be invited.

The MACE Panel will facilitate focused discussions for each child concentrating on:

- Multi-agency information sharing including triangulation of intelligence;
- Outcomes of contextual mapping of victims, perpetrators, local hotspot addresses through data;
- Seeking assurance that the relevant referrals have been made to services (i.e NRM) and other multi-agency risk assessment panels (i.e. MARAC);
- Reviewing the effectiveness of interventions to reduce safeguarding risks and confirming assessed risk levels;
- Identifying and responding to service gaps and barriers to progress; and
- Senior Management oversight.

The Panel will not seek to replicate the detailed case discussion which has already taken place at the Strategy Meeting but rather focus on seeking assurance that all relevant actions are being carried out as required, identifying any trends or themes and resolving any service gaps or barriers.

At the conclusion of each case discussion the panel will decide the frequency of review based on required actions and assessed risk levels. Generally, cases will be reviewed monthly if they are at a risk level 3, bi-monthly if at risk level 2 and every three months if they are at risk level 1.

Before discharge from the Panel, the CE Risk Screening Tool shall be reviewed by the allocated social worker to evidence a reduction in risk.

The MACE Panel will also discuss cases in regards to suspected or known perpetrators of grooming or exploitation (i.e. Persons of Concern & Persons of Interest) so that partnership activity can be targeted and prioritised to deter, disrupt and detect. Only referrals for Persons of Concern and Persons of Interest involved in extrafamilial abuse will be discussed by the Panel. A referral for a Person of Concern or Interest can either be made in writing or shared verbally by a panel member.

By compiling information on those vulnerable to exploitation and those potentially involved in grooming or exploitation, the multi-agency panel will be able to:

- Understand the level and nature of exploitation activity in the borough and trends and emerging risk issues as they relate to adolescents;
- Identify and support intervention for vulnerable adolescents; and others
- Identify locations within the borough where exploitation maybe taking place;
- Identify links between victims, perpetrators and locations, including cross-border issues;
- Support the prosecution of perpetrators of exploitation;
- Inform strategic decisions regarding preventative strategies and education;
- Assess the effectiveness of current actions and strategies to prevent or disrupt exploitation;
- Support the implementation of contextual safeguarding in Sutton.

## **6. Governance and accountability**

The MACE Panel is under the governance of Sutton Local Child Safeguarding Partnership and reports into the LSCP Contextual Safeguarding (MACE) subgroup for assurance under the LSCP constitution and the Local arrangements to safeguard children under Working Together 2018.

The membership of the strategic group must include one of the co-chairs of the MACE panel to be quorate, and the assurance report is a standing item at each meeting. The annual subgroup report is based on the quarterly assurance reports which includes the following details:

- Volume of cases.
- Identified patterns of exploitation and harm to allow awareness raising and targeted intervention.
- Activity against perpetrators.
- Performance of individual agencies.
- Number and type of disruptions e.g. civil orders, charging of offenders, closure of premises etc.
- Attendance at panel meetings by partner agencies
- Any identified gaps or barriers in service provision.

- Recommendations and actions requiring support from the strategic leadership.

The annual report contains the following:

- Policy and practice updates
- Profiles of those both at risk of and involved in perpetrating exploitation;
- Information about effective interventions;
- Issues, themes and patterns emerging from analysis of cases
- Recommendations and actions requiring support from the strategic leadership.

## **7. Frequency and location of meetings**

Pre-MACE panel takes place two weeks prior to any full MACE Panel. These meetings generally take place at The Quad or virtually. This meeting is scheduled for 2 hours from 9.30-11.30am.

The MACE Operational Panel meets monthly on a Tuesday. The meeting location will vary and may take place virtually. The morning session from 9.30am-12.30pm is a case focused discussion panel. The afternoon session from 1.00pm-3.00pm considers emerging trends/themes, disruption, people of interest/concern, cross border and what work may need to be undertaken at a strategic level to address these issues (including contextual safeguarding responses).

## **8. Administration**

Business Support will attend the pre-MACE Screening Panel and the MACE Panel and minute the meetings.

Cases for discussion at the pre-MACE Screening Panel will be circulated to the MACE Panel members one week before the meeting by Business Support, in order that Panel members can undertake checks and advise if they wish to attend the Screening Panel.

Referrals into the MACE Panel will be collated by Business Support, with cases allocated a 15 minute window in the agenda to be discussed upon initial referral and a 5 minute window for any subsequent review discussions.

The agenda, papers and minutes for the MACE Panel will be circulated no later than 5 days prior to an upcoming MACE meeting.



## 9. Membership and responsibility of members

The Operational Panel has multi-agency membership and nominated members (see table below) are responsible for ensuring that their agency is appropriately represented and sending a suitable deputy where they can not attend. The Panel will not be quorate without appropriate representation from Police and Children's Services.

There may be a need to invite specialist invitees depending upon panel content. Flexibility of membership is therefore required.

Names and details of new referrals need to be checked by all agencies in advance of the meeting so that any relevant contributions can be made at the panel.

All agencies are to:

- Record the relevant details of the case on their systems to ensure that the oversight and actions from the panel is recorded.
- Adhere to and comply with Data Protection laws and regulations, understanding that the purpose of information sharing is to safeguard vulnerable children and/or to detect and prevent crime.
- Review the information sharing agreement and agree to this when signing into the panel.

ROLE	SERVICE
Head of Service for Referral, Assessment & Intervention (Co-Chair)	Sutton Children's Services
DS for Safeguarding (Co-Chair)	South BCU, MET Police
CSE/CE & Missing Person Leads*	South BCU, MET Police
IOM Sgt and/or Gangs Unit*	South BCU, MET Police
Partnership Coordinator	Response & Rescue
Education Safeguarding Lead	Cognus
Virtual Head Teacher	Cognus
Designated Safeguarding Lead	Limes College

Team Manager	Jigsaw4U
Young Person's Team Leader	SWITCH
Named Nurse Safeguarding Children	St Helier
Young People's Support Outreach Officer	Check It Out
Sexual Health Advisor	Public Health
LAC Health Service Manager	Public Health
Clinician	Sutton CAMHS
IYS Probation Officer	National Probation Service
Data Insight & Intelligence Officer	Commissioning, Quality & Performance, London Borough of Sutton
Specialist Safeguarding Leads	Commissioning, Quality & Performance, London Borough of Sutton
Team Manager	Integrated Youth Services, Sutton Children's Services
Early Help Strategic Manager	Early Help Service, Sutton Children's Services
CFCS Team Manager	CFCS, Sutton Children's Services
Business Support Officer	Business Support Team, London Borough of Sutton