

Joint Protocol for Children Missing from Home or Care

(Updated March 2026)

**Bradford District Safeguarding Children Partnership
Calderdale Safeguarding Children Partnership
Kirklees Safeguarding Children Partnership
Leeds Safeguarding Children Partnership
Wakefield Safeguarding Children Partnership**



Contents

1. Introduction.....	3
2. Definitions.....	4
3. Responding to a Child who is Absent	5
4. Police Response to a Child Reported Missing.....	7
5. Planning for the Child’s Return.....	11
6. Police Prevention (Safe and Well) Checks	12
7. Independent Return Home Interviews -	13
8. Children Looked After by the Local Authority	15
9. Multi Agency Missing Planning Meetings and Missing Safety Plans.....	19
10. Media.....	20
11. Related Procedures.....	24

1. Introduction

This protocol has been produced jointly by Safeguarding Children Partnerships in Bradford, Calderdale, Kirklees, Leeds, and Wakefield.

A document of this nature cannot anticipate every situation but seeks to set out the overarching principles which should guide any response to a child who is missing from home or care. Individual judgement – based on an assessment of risk - will be needed to determine what action is deemed necessary on a case-by-case basis to protect the safety of a child or young person.

The reasons why children go missing from home or care are complex and frequently involve a number of 'push' and 'pull' factors which should not be viewed in isolation from a child's daily life experiences. Every absence or missing occurrence should warrant professional attention, and practitioners need to offer a consistent and coherent response in order to safeguard children from any risk of harm. **Any missing episode should always be treated as a clear indicator that something is not right in the child's life.**

The following safeguarding principles underlie this protocol:

- The safety and welfare of the missing child is paramount;
- Locating and returning the missing child to a safe environment is the main objective;
- Whenever there are concerns that a child who has been, or is missing, has suffered or is likely to suffer, Significant Harm, the [West Yorkshire Consortium Safeguarding and Child Protection Procedures](#) should be followed.

This protocol applies to all children who are absent or go missing, including;

- All children under 18 who go missing from their family home;
- All children in the care of a local authority Children's Home within West Yorkshire;
- All children in the care of a West Yorkshire local authority, placed outside of West Yorkshire with a host authority;
- All children in the care of a West Yorkshire local authority, placed with local authority foster carers;
- All children placed in private establishments or with Independent Fostering Agencies within West Yorkshire, where compliance with this protocol is specified in the contract or placement agreement;
- Children in the care of a responsible local authority who are placed in West Yorkshire (as the host authority); and
- All children admitted to hospitals and mental health units in West Yorkshire.

PLEASE NOTE - Supplementary local area missing children procedures provide specific guidance on actions required by practitioners and should be consulted (where available) alongside this protocol.

2. Definitions

Child	Anyone who has not yet reached their 18th birthday.
Missing child	A child reported as missing to the Police by their family or carers.
Absent Child	A child not at a place where they are expected or required to be.
Child Looked After	A child who is looked after by a local authority by reason of a Care Order, or accommodated under section 20 of the Children Act 1989
Away from placement without authorisation	A Child Looked After whose whereabouts are known but who is not at their placement or place they are expected to be and the <i>carer has concerns or the incident has been notified to the local authority or the Police.</i>
Responsible local authority	The local authority that is responsible for a Child Looked After's care and care planning.
Host local authority	The local authority in which a Child Looked After is placed when placed outside of the responsible local authority's area.
Absconded	When a missing child is subject to a court order, such as curfew or bail conditions.
Long Term missing child	A long term missing child is defined by West Yorkshire Police as a child who has been missing in excess of 28 days. All children missing long term will remain subject to Police review.

N.B. For the purposes of this protocol a child who has run away or who is missing will be defined as a missing child when the episode has been reported to the Police.

3. Responding to a Child who is Absent

Absent: *A child not at a place where they are expected or required to be.*

When a child is absent, parents/carers and professionals should consider the child's individual circumstances and any additional vulnerabilities (such as their age, level of understanding, friendships / associations and / or substance misuse).

Periods of absence may involve children staying out longer than agreed, either purposely, accidentally or to test boundaries, and may include:

- Not arriving home at an agreed time;
- Staying out at a known location;
- Being with friends;
- Attending a known address;
- Being at the home of family members; and
- Staying out/being with a girlfriend /boyfriend.

In these types of situations, it would usually be appropriate to initially consider the child as absent, and at this stage it would not be necessary to report the child as missing to the Police.

When a child is absent, the child's parent/carers (including staff in Children's Homes) should take all reasonable and practical steps to establish the whereabouts of the child, confirm their well-being and return them home.

Police assistance to return an absent child home should only be sought if:

- Access to the child is being denied;
- There is evidence to suggest the child is at risk of harm; or
- It is necessary to prevent a breach of the peace.

If the child refuses to return, their parent or carer and /or the child's social worker will need to make a decision about whether to allow the child to temporarily remain at that location. When the child is subject of a Social Care Single Assessment and /or a S47 Child Protection Enquiry, is a Child in Need or subject to a Child Protection Plan or is Looked After, any decision to allow them to remain at an alternative location, and the reasons for this, must be clearly recorded on their electronic record.

If a practitioner involved with the child or family becomes aware that a child is absent they should:

- Establish when the child was last seen and, if they or others have any concerns about the child, they should discuss these with the child's parent/carers. Where there are concerns they must advise the parent to inform the Police and Children's Social Care.
- Inform the child's social worker (or the Children's Social Care Services duty worker) if the child who is absent is subject of a Social Care Single Assessment and /or a S47 Child Protection Enquiry, a Child in Need or Child Protection Plan or is Looked After; and

- Make a record of their actions.

If Children's Social Care Services or Early Help Services are already involved with the child, the social worker / team responsible for the child will:

- Inform the child's parents / carers and other local agencies who know the child;
- Inform all practitioners involved with the child's plan;
- Ensure that the absent episode is recorded on the child's electronic file.

All practitioners should keep a log showing the dates and times of any contact / attempted contact with the child, the child's response (or lack of), an indication of the assessed risk and a review period of the absence.

4. Police Response to a Child Reported Missing

[West Yorkshire Police Missing Person's Policy](#) – provides further details on the contents below.

Missing: *A child whose whereabouts cannot be established and who has been reported to the Police as missing. They will be considered missing until located and their well-being or otherwise is confirmed.*

West Yorkshire Police adopt a structured approach to managing reports of missing children. This approach is grounded in the **Children Missing from Care Framework** and the **Levels of Intervention Model**. The goal is to ensure timely, proportionate responses that safeguard children while avoiding unnecessary criminalisation.

Children Missing from Care Framework - Children in care are significantly more likely to be reported missing compared to their peers. This framework addresses the risks associated with missing episodes, which can include exploitation, mental health issues, and harm. It also seeks to reduce inappropriate reporting that can damage relationships and lead to unnecessary police involvement.

The framework is built on four pillars:

- Partnerships & Accountability
- Prevention & Planning
- Responding to Missing Occurrences
- Escalation

Each pillar ensures that agencies work collaboratively, focusing on prevention and proportionate response.

Levels of Intervention Model - The Levels of Intervention Model provides a structured way to assess risk and determine the appropriate response. It consists of three levels:

1. **No Immediate Intervention Required:** The child is likely to return on their own. Example: A child is slightly late returning from a known friend's house.
2. **Parental/Carer Intervention:** The carer actively searches for the child. Example: A child has not returned from school and cannot be contacted, but there are no immediate safety concerns.
3. **Police Intervention:** Immediate police action is required due to high risk. Example: A child is suspected of being with an exploiter or has exhibited antecedent behavior indicating danger.

Risk Assessment - Every report of a missing person will be subject to a risk assessment guided by:

- College of Policing Risk Principles
- National Decision Model
- Police Code of Ethics

Risk Levels:

Low Risk:	Unlikely that the child or public would suffer significant harm
Medium Risk	Likely that the child or public will suffer significant harm
High Risk	Likely that the child or public will suffer serious harm

Definitions:

- **Serious Harm** (Ministry of Justice, 2020): “An event which is life-threatening and/or traumatic and from which recovery, whether physical or psychological, can be expected to be difficult or impossible.”
- **Significant Harm** for a Child (Children Act 1989): “Ill-treatment or the impairment of health or development, including, for example, impairment suffered from seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another.”
 - Development: physical, intellectual, emotional, social, or behavioral.
 - Health: physical or mental health.
 - Ill-treatment: includes sexual abuse and non-physical forms of harm.
- **Significant Harm for an Adult:** Level of harm that creates a duty under Article 3 of the Human Rights Act 1998.

Decision Whether to Record Someone as Missing:

The Police must:

- Ascertain circumstances of absence.
- Assess vulnerability and risk exposure.
- Complete risk assessment.
- Consider grounds for serious crime or significant harm.

Identifying Behaviour and Incidents That Indicate Risk:

Professionals must consider and recognise:

- Antecedent behaviour - Turning off mobile phone, unusual makeup use, secretive phone activity
- Trigger incidents - Getting into unknown car, going to hotel with unknown adults, distress on key anniversaries

- Out of character behaviour - Behaviour unusual for the individual; family/carer concern is often the best indicator
- Post-incident behaviour/indicators - Appearing withdrawn, hiding underwear, unexplained injuries or gifts

Practical Steps for Carers, Police, and Local Authorities

- Carers should maintain up-to-date information on the child, including known associates and frequent locations.
- Attempt reasonable actions to locate the child before contacting the police unless there is an immediate risk.
- Police will conduct a risk assessment upon receiving a report and may delay intervention if appropriate.
- Local authorities must ensure placement planning considers missing risks and implement protocols like the Philomena Protocol.

When a child is reported missing the police will request the following information to assess the level of risk the child is likely to face:

- Name and gender of the child (including all names and aliases), their date of birth and age.
- Description of the child and their clothing.
- The child's home address (and, if different, the child's family home address).
- The location the child is missing from, and details of when the child was last seen and the details of the person who last saw them.
- Whether this is this out of character, and if they have been missing before, if so, how often, and what were the circumstances.
- Circumstances of the missing episode, including any signs of pre-planning (have they taken any money, clothing? Did they tell anyone they intended to leave?).
- Whether the child has any illnesses or takes any medication; Whether they have mental health problems and /or if there are concerns for the child's emotional well-being.
- If the child has any issues with alcohol/drug misuse, and/or if the child has recently received any unexplained items or money.
- The child's mobile phone number.
- If any contact has been made with the child.
- Details of the child's social media profiles.
- Locations where the child may have gone, including places where they normally go, any places where they have been found previously, and details of any friends and associates they may be with.
- Name, address and telephone number of the reporting person and their relationship to

the child; and

- Summary of all actions already undertaken to locate the child.

*The fact that a vulnerable child has a history of going missing (including any occurrences of absence) does **not** mitigate risk, and each report of missing will be considered in its own right.

Trigger Plans

- Persistent missing people require a Missing Trigger Plan.
- Plan includes agreed reporting strategy and must not delay police response if followed.

Philomena Protocol

- Completed for children in care likely to go missing.
- Gathers information to assess likelihood and risks.
- Records key details to assist in locating child.
- Must be updated regularly and transferred when child moves placement.

Escalation Policy

Escalating at the Time of the Incident: Carers can escalate to the District Operational Commander (DOC or PACE) or Critical Incident Manager (CIM) if they strongly disagree with an inspector's decision to delay response.

Responsibilities of the District Inspector:

- Record concerns on the Storm log.
- Contact reporting person to discuss concerns.
- Offer opportunity to speak directly with the District Inspector.
- Inform the reporting person they can escalate to SLT level if disagreement persists.
- Contact and request a review if escalation is requested.

Escalation After the Event:

- Partnership review process must consider concerns from social workers, police officers, and inspectors.
- Senior Leadership Teams should agree with Local Authority colleagues on mechanisms for escalation – using [Resolving Multi Agency Professional Disagreements and escalation](#)

5. Planning for the Child's Return

From the moment a child is reported as missing, parents /carers, social workers, and the Police should start planning for when they are found.

Planning for a child's return is extremely important, especially in relation to children who go repeatedly missing and / or those who are assessed as high risk. This planning may include identifying suitable alternative short term accommodation for the child. It is important that if alternative accommodation is required, that this is risk assessed and meets the child's needs. Children must not be placed in accommodation that leaves them vulnerable.

Consideration should be given as to who will support the child once they have been found / returned and to who is the most appropriate person to conduct an Independent Return Interview with the child. (Please note, that whilst the most appropriate person cannot be the person who provides direct care for the child/allocated key worker in residential settings for example, a parent/Foster Carer. It may be someone who is a significant professional in that child's life, such as an allocated Social Worker or, another member of staff within the residential care setting). When the child returns or is located, all individuals who were notified of the child's absence should be advised without delay so that they can support the child (and their family / carers).

The child's parents or carers are responsible for recovering and returning a child to their home. If the child has an allocated social worker, they may be in a position to support returning the child home safely. The parent or carer should only request Police assistance to recover a child if;

- The parent / carer is prevented from obtaining access to the child;
- There is evidence to suggest that the child is at immediate risk of serious harm; or
- This is necessary to prevent a breach of the peace due to a threat of violence or disorder.

If the Police locate a child, they should not leave them at a location where they are likely to be exposed to a risk of harm or at a location where they are likely to go missing from again.

If the Police are considering leaving a child at an address to be collected by the local authority, they must contact Children's Social Care Services to ensure that any known risk factors are shared and taken into account.

On occasions the Police may need to consider returning the child directly to their home or consider taking the child to a local Police Station after confirming a collection time with a parent / carer or the local authority.

Children should not be returned to the place they ran away from until their safety is fully evaluated. If there are concerns that doing so would place a child at risk of Significant Harm, a referral must be made to Children's Social Care Services. The Police may consider the use of Police powers of protection to ensure the safety of the child until Section 47 Enquiries are commenced by the local authority, and /or a coordinated plan of intervention is agreed.

If there is any suggestion that a child has been the victim or perpetrator of crime, consideration

must be given to the securing of evidence including forensic examination. Where an allegation of physical or sexual abuse is made or becomes evident, the [West Yorkshire Consortium Safeguarding and Children Procedures](#) must be followed.

6. Police Prevention (Safe and Well) Checks

As defined in the West Yorkshire Police Missing Person Policy, when a child who has been reported as missing is located or returns, the Police may conduct a Prevention Check (commonly referred to as a Safe and Well Check). Unless the child:

- Was returned or was found by the carer before initial Police attendance.
- Is a mental health patient;
- Is in the care of the local authority and a prior Prevention Check strategy has been agreed between the Police district Missing Person Co-Ordinator and Children's Social Care Services; or
- It is considered in the circumstances more appropriate to make a mutually convenient appointment.

The purpose of a Police Prevention Check is to seek to establish;

- That the child is safe and well;
- Why the child went missing (considering the push and pull factors as well as possible triggers);
- What the child did when they were missing, including where they went and who they were with;
- If any offences were committed against or by the missing child;
- The child's demeanor (e.g., sad, defiant, unconcerned, or relaxed) and appearance (e.g., clean, dirty, hungry, torn clothes or in possession of new clothing/possessions)
- What action is required to help prevent the child going missing again? This may include exploring with the child positive alternative options to going 'missing' so that if a similar situation arises the child can consider what alternative action they might take, and where they could get support.

7. Independent Return Home Interviews -

When a child is found or returns, they should be offered an Independent Return Home Interview, in accordance with procedures in each local area.

An Independent Return Home Interview provides the opportunity to identify and understand any risk or vulnerability the child might be experiencing, discuss the child's needs and explore alternative strategies to help prevent further missing occurrences. It can also determine if any referrals for services are required.

The interview should be initiated and, where possible, completed within 72 hours of the child returning to their home or care setting, and be held in a neutral place, where the child feels safe and that they are spoken to alone. This interview should be undertaken by someone independent of the direct care for the child; unless the child requests or indicates they would prefer the interview with someone they are familiar with and therefore, they should be able to attend and support alongside the independent person.

Return interviews should explore the push and pull factors as well as any risk and vulnerability factors. This should include exploring with the child;

- Whether they have been hurt or harmed
- Any concerns around Sexual Exploitation, Trafficking, Modern Day Slavery, Forced Marriage, so called Honour Based Violence and /or Female Genital Mutilation
- Any offending behaviour (including Criminal Exploitation) and /or substance misuse;
- Whether the child has had any contact with people who could be considered as a risk to children;
- The frequency of the child's missing episodes;
- Any on-going risk or vulnerability factors that may impact on the child going missing again; and
- Any risk or vulnerability factors the child may be experiencing at home or in their placement or in their education and social settings.

The interviewer needs to;

- Help the child feel safe and understand that they have options to prevent repeat instances of missing episodes.
- Provide the child with information on how they can stay safe if they are missing, including helpline numbers; and
- Undertake an assessment of whether a child might be missing again in the future.

Although Independent Return Interviews provide children with an opportunity to speak in confidence about why they went missing, if the child shares information which suggests that they or another child or vulnerable adult are at risk of significant harm this will be shared with Children's Social Care / the Police. At the start of the interview the child must be helped to understand what types of information might be shared with other agencies and why.

If a child chooses not to engage with the Independent Return Interview, the professional / agency responsible for conducting the interview should offer the child's parents /carers the opportunity to

provide any relevant information.

If the child has an allocated local authority social worker, details of the Independent Return Interview should be recorded and retained on the child's electronic file.

When a child has been reported as missing on two or more occasions, the local authority should refer to previous Prevention Checks and Independent Return Interviews to inform a discussion with the child and /or their parents /carers.

8. Children Looked After by the Local Authority

Placement planning for every Child Looked After must include consideration of the likelihood of them going missing, and any associated risks and vulnerabilities. This information should then be used to inform an agreement with the placement provider about how to respond if the child is absent, missing or 'away from placement without authorisation'.

The child's social worker has responsibility for ensuring that an assessment of risk is completed when a child is accommodated. Please see linked Philomena Protocol document.

The Missing Risk Assessment and any Missing Strategy documents should be reviewed as part of the Looked After reviewing processes. Please refer to your local area missing procedures.

A Missing Risk Assessment for a Child Looked After should address:

Prevention planning	<p>Considerations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has the child been absent, missing or 'away from placement without authorisation' before and if so, what is the pattern of previous occurrences? <p>What factors or potential incidents act as trigger events?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are there any other circumstances, behaviours or indicators that may influence a child to be absent, missing or away from placement without authorisation in the future? • Who will raise the child's awareness of the risks of going missing. • Who will provide guidance to carers on what they should do to help prevent the child going missing. <p>Carers / Placement Providers should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be clear about any persons or addresses that the child should not be having any direct contact with or visiting, with the child and the carer(s). • Ensure that the child is aware of what action will be taken by the carers, the local authority and the Police if they go absent, missing or are away from placement without authorisation.
Risk and Vulnerability	<p>Whether the child is likely to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Likely to visit a person or people known to be a risk to children; • At risk of Child Sexual Exploitation, Criminal Exploitation, interpersonal abuse /violence, Trafficking / Modern Day Slavery, so called Honour Based Violence, FGM, Forced Marriage, bullying, self-harm? • Likely to misuse substances and/or become involved in offending behaviour? • Sleep / visit / stay in risky places?

Actions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who needs to be contacted when the child’s whereabouts is unknown and contact cannot be made? • Which addresses need to be visited and by who? • Which places the child is known to visit should be checked? How and by who? • What actions are expected of the child to stay in contact /keep the carer informed of their whereabouts • When should the Police be contacted?
---------	---

Two recent digital photographs of the child (face and full body length) should be retained by the carer for missing from care purposes. Copies of these photographs should also be held on the child’s Children Social Care Services electronic record. Photograph should be regularly updated and immediately following any significant change in the child’s appearance (e.g., major change in hairstyle, hair colour, weight, use of mobility aids, or other identifiable features).

Away from Placement Without Authorisation: This is used to describe a Child Looked After whose whereabouts are known but who is not at their placement or place they are expected to be and the carer has concerns, or the incident has been notified to the local authority or the Police

All episodes of away from placement without authorisation should be recorded by the carer and reported to the child’s social worker or the Children’s Social Care Services ‘Out of Hours’ duty team immediately.

If the carer or child’s social worker knows of the child’s whereabouts, they should take all reasonable and practical steps to locate and return the child, keeping their own safety in mind.

The responsibility for managing these types of absences remains with the carer, the child’s social worker and the local authority which placed the child.

Children Looked After who are absent or “away from placement without authorisation” must be the subject of a continuous local authority risk assessment. During their absence, circumstances may change and carers and agencies need to be in a position to respond accordingly.

An assessment should be made in each individual case as to the length of time that lapses before a Child Looked After who is absent or ‘away from placement without authorisation’ is reported to the Police as missing from care.

Where there is a difference of opinion between Children's Social Care Services and the Police over the appropriate category of absence, the Police will make the final decision about the Police response.

Local authorities should keep accurate records for all absent, and away from placement without authorisation occurrences relating to a Child Looked After.

The child's Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) must be informed of all instances of a child Looked After being absent, missing or away from placement without authorisation.

If a Child Looked After is repeatedly away from their placement, the child's individual missing risk assessment and plan must be reviewed and updated to reflect the issues and risk and consideration should be given to arranging an early review of the child's care planning, including whether their current placement remains appropriate.

External activity or outings

If the whereabouts of a child Looked After becomes unknown during an activity which is outside the Local Authority area the child resides in, the carer in charge of the external activity will:

- Take all reasonable steps to try and locate /make contact with the child including a search of the immediate area;
- Notify the local Police force.

The Police force for the area in which the child is reported missing in, and the Police for the area where the child normally resides will decide which Police force will take responsibility for managing the investigation; this will normally be the Police force and division that covers the area where the majority of enquiries are likely to be conducted.

The child's social worker should inform the child's parent, any other person with parental responsibility and the child's Independent Reviewing Officer, so soon as it practical to do so.

Children who are subject to Placement with Parents Regulations

A child living at home under Placement with Parents Regulations is a Child Looked After.

It is the responsibility of the parent to inform the child's social worker or the Children's Social Care Services "Out of Hours" Service and the Police when it is evident that the child has gone missing. This responsibility should be discussed with the parents before the placement is agreed and it must be part of the Placement Agreement.

The child's social worker must check that the child has been reported as missing to the Police and must record the missing incident on the child's electronic file.

On a child's return, the child's social worker (or an agreed alternative professional) must arrange to visit the child within 72 hours. A return interview must be completed, in line with the local area arrangements.

Missing, absent or away from placement without authorisation - Out of Area Placements

An Out of Authority Placement is a placement of a child by one local authority:

- In a residential placement that is located in another local authority area, (the host authority); or

- With foster parents who live in another local authority area.

Before a West Yorkshire child is placed in an out of authority placement, the child's social worker should check with the residential / foster care agency provider that local area protocols are in place which are consistent with this protocol, and if not, that the placement provider agrees to comply with this protocol. The placement provider should be fully informed, and an agreement reached regarding what actions are required to be taken if a child is reported as absent, missing or away from placement without authorisation from their placement. The responsible authority must make a record of this on the child's electronic file.

The placement provider /agency should contact the child's social worker or the responsible authority's Out of Hours Service as soon as it is confirmed that a child is absent, missing or away from placement without authorisation.

On receiving this information, the child's social worker or their team manager should inform the appropriate responsible Children's Social Care Service Manager and the child's Independent Reviewing Officer within 24 hours.

The child's social worker must inform the child's parent or any other person with parental responsibility within 24 hours of the child being reported as absent, missing or away from placement without authorisation.

An Independent Return Interview must be completed within 72 hours of the child being found / returning. The child's allocated social worker /the responsible local authority, is responsible for requesting that the identified appropriate person /agency completes the interview.

Children Looked After who may have been trafficked from abroad.

Children Looked After who have been exploited and trafficked are at high risk of going missing, and unaccompanied migrant or asylum-seeking children whose whereabouts cannot be established after becoming looked should be treated as potential victims of trafficking.

Proportionate safeguarding measures should be put in place to minimise the risk of the child going missing from care, or from being contacted by those who seek to exploit them. These will need to give consideration to the child's accommodation location only being shared on a need to know basis.

See also [Children from Abroad, including Victims of Modern Slavery, Trafficking and Exploitation](#)

9. Multi Agency Missing Planning Meetings and Missing Safety Plans

A child who is repeatedly absent, away from their placement without authorisation and /or missing should not be viewed as a normal pattern of behaviour.

If any child is repeatedly absent, missing, or away from placement without authorisation, a multi-agency meeting should be held and a Missing Safety Plan developed. (following local area arrangements)

If another type of multi-agency professional planning meeting is already in place, these can be utilised to incorporate discussions relating to the child's missing occurrences and to formulate a missing safety plan, rather than hold a separate meeting.

A Missing Safety Meeting should:

- a. Consider the 'push and pull factors for the child, which are assessed to be influencing absent, missing or away from placement without authorisation occurrences;
- b. Review the action taken to reduce the risk to the child, their vulnerability and future absent/missing occurrences;
- c. Review missing and absent occurrences, to determine if there is a pattern to the occurrences, who the child visits /associates with when absent/missing/away from placement without authorisation. Consideration for any child exploitation risks.
- d. Identify what action needs to be taken, by whom and timescales;
- e. Identify the most appropriate person to undertake Independent Return Interviews with the child when they are found or return;
- f. Review what the child has shared in their return interviews and take what the child and their parent /carer is saying into account;
- g. Consider whether it is appropriate and safe to return the child to their home address and consider if there is a need for alternative accommodation to be identified;
- h. Agree Missing Safety Plans; and
- i. Accurate records of decisions should be made.
- j. Ensure there is an active Child Protection Information Sharing (CPIS) alert on records for Children Looked After including Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children and Children who are subject to a Child Protection Plan.

A Missing Safety Plan should include:

- A missing Risk Assessment;
- A reporting strategy – which should include guidance to parents/carers as to when to report the child as absent and when to report them as missing;
- Outline the minimum enquiries to be conducted by the local authority, parents, or carers, prior to reporting the child as missing;
- Recommendations on the minimum enquiries to be conducted by the Police;
- A Return Interview strategy, and
- An intervention strategy to address long-term risk and vulnerability factors.

Missing interventions seek to reduce the risks that a child may be exposed to and prevent the likelihood of further incidents of the child being absent / missing / away from placement without authorisation.

Common intervention strategies include:

- Disrupting the child's contact with adults or peers suspected of being involved in grooming, abuse, coercion, trafficking, violence, use and supply of illegal substances, illegal activities, and exploitation.
- Gathering evidence to prosecute those suspected of being involved in grooming, abuse, coercion, trafficking, violence, use and supply of illegal substances, illegal activities, and exploitation.
- Listening and taking account of the child's wishes and feelings.
- Promoting positive relationships with family, friends, and carers.
- Identifying ways of physically protecting the child.
- Ensuring contact is maintained with a child whilst absent.
- Enhancing the return procedure to ensure it is a positive experience.
- Setting clear boundaries and developing contracts regarding expectations and responsibilities.
- Motivating positive behaviour.
- Empowering the parent / carer.
- Building the child's self-esteem, self-confidence, and self-worth through the provision of positive activities.
- Raising awareness of the risks associated with running / staying away or being missing.
- Meeting any physical, emotional, mental health needs the child might have.
- Working with carers or parents to make the child's home a place where they want to be.
- Working with education and training providers to meet the child's needs; and
- Providing specialist support through multi-agency partnerships
- Consider further family support for parents and carers.

10. Media

The Police have responsibility for considering whether to use or inform the media regarding children being missing.

However, when the child is looked after by the local authority, discussions regarding the use of the media must take place between senior representatives from the Police and local authority to agree a media strategy. Unless it is absolutely necessary, the child should not be identified as a Child Looked After.

Where agreement over publicity cannot be reached between the Police and the Local Authority, the ultimate decision regarding the use of publicity rests with the Police.

In all other cases where a missing child has a local authority social worker, the Police should consult with /inform the child's social worker and the child's parents /carers prior to any publicity.

11. Related Procedures and Guidance

West Yorkshire Procedures and Protocols

- [Child Exploitation - Policy, Procedures and Guidance](#)
- [Children from Abroad, including Victims of Modern Slavery, Trafficking and Exploitation](#)
- [Children and Families Who Go Missing](#)
- [Missing Children](#)
- [So Called Honour Based Violence](#)
- [Forced Marriage](#)
- Domestic Abuse
- [Radicalisation, Terrorist and Extremist Ideology](#)
- [Children Missing Education and Children in Education other than in Registered Schools](#)

Other Guidance or Resources

- [West Yorkshire Police Missing Person's Policy](#)
- [national-philomena-protocol-form.docx](#)
- [npcc.police.uk](#)
-

[Bradford District Safeguarding Children Partnership](#)

[Calderdale Safeguarding Children Partnership](#)

[Kirklees Safeguarding Children Partnership](#)

[Leeds Safeguarding Children Partnership](#)

[Wakefield Safeguarding Children Partnership](#)