

CHILDREN MISSING FROM HOME AND CARE PROTOCOL

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1. **INTRODUCTION**

Serious issues often lie behind children going missing. These include problems at school, as well as the issue of trafficking. The most frequent reason given by young people who have gone missing is ‘problems at home’. Occasional runaways are seven times more likely to say they had been ‘hit a lot’ by their parents, and repeat runaways 17 times more likely. Children in care are particularly at risk of going missing and three times more likely to run away. 25% of missing children and young people reported mental health problems, with 5% citing mental health problems as the reason for running away. Young people with drugs and alcohol problems are at least four times as likely to run away as those without. *(Missing Children and Adults: a cross government strategy (December 2011) paras 3.6-3.10)*

Children in care go missing for different reasons, including being unhappy, missing family or not being able to participate in activities. Some young people also ‘run for fun’ – staff may know where they are and they come back. Other young people are running away from something intolerable. This could be bullying or abuse, a feeling that they are in the wrong placement or not feeling ‘listened to’. Some young people are running to where they want to be: back with family or friends. The evidence presented to the All-Party Parliamentary Inquiry into children missing from care also suggested there is a strong link between children in care who go missing and those being groomed or sexually exploited. *(APPG inquiry into children missing from care 2012, paras 5 and 7)*

Each instance of a child going missing should be taken seriously, both for issues that may have led to it and issues that may arise from it.

1. **PURPOSE**

To provide an agreed inter-agency framework for assessing and classifying the degree of risk when a child goes missing from home or care, when a missing child comes to agency notice or when a child is absent without authorisation following their individual missing reporting strategy and/or trigger plan.

To provide guidance on what responses different agencies will offer in relation to each level of risk

To provide an agreed list of measures to ensure that police ‘missing’ definitions are applied to children with due consideration given to their age, vulnerability and development factors.

1. **STRATEGIC OVERSIGHT**

Childrens Advisors receives information/data daily about all children known to have gone missing, including from home, from education and from care. Lists are circulated daily in the integrated front door to a designated manager and this is Live Report which updates on a daily basis provided by the police, if the missing episode overspills into out of hours, this list is reviewed by the Emergency Duty Team. This list will be reviewed by emergency duty team over the weekend and bank holiday period.

The Missing and RAM, Multi Agency Children at risk of Exploitation meetings are held tri weekly, this multi-agency meeting, reviews and recommends actions in relation to children and young people who are ‘Missing’/Exploited. An up to date CE Risk Assessment is presented at the MACE panel on a six weekly basis for review and strategic oversight for the high risk and most vulnerable children and young people.

The IFD Screen all unallocated / new cases presented by the Police or EDT. The cases have to have an outcome within 24 hours and have to be signed off with a clear recommendation from the IFD Nominated Team Manager.

Any Looked After Children that are placed within our area from other local authorities are also reviewed within the IFD Team on a daily basis. If the missing episode goes into out of office hours they are also reviewed by our Emergency Duty team and liaison takes place between the relevant Local Authority with updates provided by the IDF SW.

1. **RELATED DOCUMENTS**

This procedure should be used in conjunction with the local area on Children Missing from Care and Home and Education -

The procedure follows [Statutory Guidance on Children Who Run Away or Go Missing from Home or Care](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/children-who-run-away-or-go-missing-from-home-or-care) (January 2014). It also draws on the Children’s Homes Regulations 2001.

For guidance on children M*issing from Education*, please refer to the Bradford Guidance on Children Missing from Education

<https://bso.bradford.gov.uk/content/children-missing-education>

<https://bso.bradford.gov.uk/userfiles/file/Education%20Safeguarding/Guidance%20for%20referrers%20CME%20V1.pdf>

<http://bradfordscb.org.uk/practitionersprofessionals/documents/>

This procedure should also be used in conjunction with the Tri-x procedures for Bradford Multi Agency Child Protection Protocol.

1. **SCOPE**

This procedure provides a framework for missing children or children absent without authorisation in following categories:

1. Children looked after
2. Children in need / in need of protection
3. Children not previously known to Children’s Social Care or closed cases
4. Children placed in our area from Other Local Authorities
5. **DEFINITIONS**

### **Missing child:**

### Children whose whereabouts are unknown to statutory agencies including:

### Children in families who are victims of domestic violence and have to go into hiding suddenly

### Children in families who have disappeared without leaving a forwarding address

### Children in families who have gone on extended leave and have failed to return when due to do so

### **Missing:**

### Social Care: A child not where they should be, and their whereabouts are unknown.

**Police:** **‘**’Anyone whose whereabouts cannot be established will be considered as missing until located, and their wellbeing or otherwise confirmed’’.

* No apparent risk (absent) There is no apparent risk of danger to either the subject or the public. In considering whether a person is missing or no apparent risk (absent)’:
* children who are at risk of child sexual exploitation or abuse (whether flagged or not); or
* children or adults who are at greater risk due to their vulnerability (consider protected characteristics, mental health, forced marriage, honour based violence, trafficking, female genital mutilation), should not be considered to be at ‘no apparent risk.’
* Low risk

The risk of harm to the subject or the public is assessed as possible but minimal.

* Medium risk

The risk of harm to the subject or the public is assessed as likely but not serious.

* High:

The risk of serious harm to the subject or the public is assessed as very likely. ‘A risk which is life threatening and/or traumatic, and from which recovery, whether physical or psychological, can be expected to be difficult or impossible.’

### **Missing from Placement / Care or children absent without authorisation:**

### A looked after child who is not at their placement or the place they are expected to be (e.g., school) and their whereabouts is not known. Children who fail to return to their specified placement and not considered to be at risk are classified as absent without authorisation.

### **Children Missing from Home:**

### A child or young person under the age of 18 who has gone missing from home or feels they have been forced or lured to leave, or whose whereabouts is unknown.

**Children Missing from Education**

All children, regardless of their circumstances, are entitled to an efficient, full time education which is suitable to their age, ability, aptitude and any special educational needs they may have.

The definition of Children Missing in Education is children of compulsory school age who are not registered pupils at a school and are not receiving suitable education otherwise than at a school. Children missing education are at significant risk of underachieving, being victims of harm, exploitation or radicalisation, and becoming NEET (not in education, employment or training) later in life. Effective information sharing between parents, schools and local authorities is critical to ensuring that all children of compulsory school age are safe and receiving suitable education. Please see guidance above.

**Vulnerable Learners/** **Not in Receipt of Full-time Education**

Vulnerable learners are defined as children and young people at greater risk of poor educational outcomes. This covers a number of categories of children including those formally recognised to be receiving programmes of alternative provision. The categories Ofsted has named are:

### Perm Excluded - Have been permanently excluded;

### Behaviour - Have particular social and behavioural difficulties;

### Mental Health - Have mental health needs and access CAMHS;

### Medical - Have medical needs other than mental health needs;

### Non-Attendance - Rarely attend school and have personalised learning plans as part of attempts to re-integrate them into full-time education;

### Teenage Pregnancy - Are pregnant or are young mothers of compulsory school age;

### SEND - Have complex needs and no suitable school place is available;

### Return from Custody - Are returning from custody and a school place has not been found for them;

### New Arrivals to UK/ESOL - Are new to the country and are awaiting a school place;

### GRT - Are from a Gypsy, Roma or Traveller background and alternative provision has been made;

### CME - Have moved from another area and a school place has not been secured; this may include children who are looked-after;

### Elective Home Education – children whose parents choose to make their own arrangements to educate them at home or otherwise;

### Children who do not attend well enough.

### **Missing Children Tracker:**

### An electronic database to help locate children aged 18 or younger who have gone missing from the district and, once they have been found, refer them on to the appropriate agencies. Missing children from other local authority areas are recorded and checked against the tracker. A notification is then sent to the relevant Local Authority with any additional updates should the young person be found.

1. **MISSING PROCESS MAP**

The flowchart below sets out the procedure for responding to children under 18 years who are ‘missing’ from home or care. It outlines the required safeguarding processes for every allocated child.

**Bradford**

**Child/ young person goes missing**

**Parent/carers must make all reasonable enquires to establish their whereabouts and circumstances**

**Parent** report to **Police**

**Carers/Placements** report to **EDT** and guidance given and inform police if advised.

**Police** to complete a Misper Report and send copy to **Childrens.Enquiries IFD** who forward to the **IAT duty tray**

**Police Investigation**

Police conduct safe and well check, finalise Misper 7 and send copy to Childrens Enquires Inbox

CA/EDT updates LCS missing episode.

1.MFHT/ EDT allocates RHI regarding all missing children not looked after to MFHT

 2. EDT allocates RHI children looked after to AF

AF/ MFHT return MRHI conducted within 72 hours of child’s or young person return. AF Sent to children’s enquiries MFHT update LCS

Social Worker puts case note on LL confirming that they have read RHI and will also evidence on LL their response and interventions to any concerns raised in RHI document

**Allocated Worker** sends copy of RHI to other parties involved with planning interventions with child or young person

**CA for IFD** puts details of missing episode on to LCS and, if open to CSC informs allocated Social Worker/Team Manager/SM and IRO for LAC of the missing episode.

***If not open to CSC a Multi-Agency Referral Form is completed*** these cases are picked up from Police Missing Coordinator and following liaison with IFD, decision made on final outcome

**Young Person not located**

**Missing 24 Hours**

**Open to CSC –** Team Manager conducts strategy discussion within 24 hours

**Not open to CSC – MARF will be processed and the IFD TM will recommend a strategy meeting is convened by the area assessment team**

**Missing 3 days**

**Open to CSC –** Team Manager conducts a follow up strategy meeting within 72 hours – SIN form to be completed and sent to Service manager for escalation to DDCS.

**Not open to CSC – it is an expectation that any child that has been missing for over 24 hours or at risk of significant harm would be subject to assessment.**

**Child missing 5 days or more**

Weekly strategy meetings until the child is located chaired by the TM 5 day missing child SIN notification completed and sent to **Deputy Director & Director of Childrens Service**

**Missing Process Map**

**Young Person is located**

**October 2019**

* Police risk assessment
* Misper 1
* Misper 7
* MARF if required

CSC

* Missing Risk
* High to medium- refer to RAM tri weekly CE
* Trigger/Disruptive Plan
* Low Level – Step down to Early Help
1. **WHEN A CHILD GOES MISSING**
	1. **Risk Assessment**

A risk assessment should be completed for every child we are working with for whom a missing episode(s) would raise particular concerns, a CE Risk Assessment should be completed, especially children at risk of any form of child exploitation. (Add link to CE protocol).

The CE Risk Assessment should be updated in-line with the CE Protocol or when risk / circumstances require it. This will guide carers and social workers as to what action to take. The CE Risk Assessment must be made available to the carers at the start of the placement for all children and to parents / Carers and placement providers (unless this would place this child / young person at risk of significant harm). The CE Risk Assessment should be shared with the child / young person. If the child / young person is deemed “Gillick / Fraser” competent, consideration must be given to their wishes to share this information with parents or carers unless this places them at risk of significant harm.

Where there is concern that a child may go missing, the CE Risk Assessment should be used to assess:

1. Child’s view on current placement / stability or of their relationships at home
2. Level of supervision / support that care staff propose to provide for the child
3. The degree of risk to the child if they go missing
4. The views of parents / carers / placement providers, on the child’s needs and the action that needs to be taken if the child is missing
5. Consideration of any external influences which may result in a child going missing (family / known associates / persons of concern)

For details of the factors that should be considered as part of the risk assessment, please refer to [CE Risk Assessment](https://www.saferbradford.co.uk/media/p2xnewxy/ce-risk-assessment-v-3-january-2020.docx)

It should be explained to the child that actions will be taken if he / she absents him / herself without permission. Where appropriate, the child should be given a copy of the CE Risk Assessment. The CE Risk Assessment should be on the child’s file in all agencies working with the child / young person.

The CE Risk Assessment should be reviewed, and where appropriate, updated on every occasion a child goes missing, or in-line with the CE protocol.

Where a child is not known to the police or there is limited information available, a joint assessment should be undertaken with multi-agency partners at the earliest opportunity to inform a review of the risk level. **Extreme caution should be exercised before making a decision of low or no risk for a child for whom there is limited information and / or to go missing, is out of character**. Risk levels can be reduced following new information but should they have been inappropriately deemed low risk the first instance valuable time may have been lost to safely locate a child. This Risk Assessment will be reviewed periodically at the CE tri- weekly meeting and escalated if high risk to the MACE six weekly meeting.

* 1. **Missing notification**

When a child does not return to his / her placement at the designated time the carer / placement provider should take the action that would reasonably be expected of any parent, i.e. attempt to contact the child to ascertain their whereabouts and establish when they will be returning. This might include contacting known friends and relatives and visiting them and collecting the child; subject to the current risk assessment and professional advice.

Where a child is missing from the family home, parents, carers or placement providers should be advised to take the steps set out above, if they have not done so already.

Where the foster carer or residential worker have been unable to contact the child or ascertain their whereabouts, the carer or the Senior Residential Duty Worker should contact the allocated Social Worker, or Duty Worker, if they are not available, and then go through any risk assessments that are available. The carer will then call the police if it appears that the child is ‘missing’.

**Out of normal working hours**, the carer should contact the Emergency Duty Team (EDT) who will generate a Missing Episode. This will be worked and if the young person is or is not found “Out of Hours” EDT at the end of the shift will reassign to the LCS Missing Tray, ensuring a case note notification has been added to alert the allocated worker and Team Manager. EDT, following consultation with the parent / carer / placement provider and with reference to the CE Risk Assessment, will request the carer to contact the Police and give a full description of the child, what the child is wearing and circumstances around the missing episode.

Whenever a looked after child goes missing from a placement, the foster carer or the manager on duty in the children’s home is responsible for ensuring that parents and any other person with parental responsibility are informed, unless it is not reasonably practicable or to do so would be inconsistent with the child’s welfare.

Foster carers must inform their own supervising social worker (or duty social worker) at the first opportunity. A residential worker / placement provider should contact the child’s social worker or EDT. The child’s social worker will then alert their manager and the IRO.

If a missing child is texting or phoning in from time to time, the opportunity should be taken to ask how they are feeling and why they are not at home.

Once a child is located and their wellbeing confirmed, it is the responsibility of the child’s parent/ carers (including staff in Children’s Homes) to arrange for the return of that young person back to their address or a safe place.

 Police assistance to return a 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.

Once the police have been informed that the young person has returned from a missing episode, CSC will alert Advocacy Focus who will complete and submit the **‘Return Home Interview’.** Designated Social Worker who will upload the Return Home Interview onto LCSfor CLA, if there are significant concerns then a CE risk assessment will be completed and considered at the CE RAM tri weekly meeting. For those children and young people placed out of area, Social Workers are to follow Appendix 2 – see attached.

The relevant Service Managers in whose service the missing child is allocated, will receive a 48 hour notification and should review all cases where a child is absent for 24hrs significant information form is completed and sent to the service manager who will notify the Head of service and Deputy Director. . Please see “Strategy meetings” below.

The **Liquid Logic Missing Episode** must be completed for any missing child.

 **8.2 Police response when a child or young person goes missing**

**Reporting a Missing Child to the Police:**

When a child is reported as missing, the Police will request the following information to assess the level of risk (if any) 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 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.

**Attending officer**

If the Police assess a child as missing and there are concern for the child and/or others, they will attend to take a missing person report and investigate in accordance with the assessed level of risk and vulnerability.

The police officer attending will:

• Take details of all the enquiries conducted so far;

• Request a photograph of the missing child;

• Make all necessary enquiries at the scene to locate the missing child, including undertaking a thorough search of the premises;

• Ensure during any search of premises that they also search for items which will assist subsequent enquiries or inform the Risk Assessment, e.g. suicide notes, diaries, and mobile phones;

• Gather information relating to any Police flags, reporting strategies, Missing Action Plans, and /or Risk Assessments to help determine whether the child is at risk of Child Sexual and/or Criminal Exploitation, Trafficking / Modern Day Slavery, Forced Marriage, So Called Honour Based Violence, or Female Genital Mutilation and to establish if an immediate investigation is required; and

• Provide the reporting person and other significant individuals with details on who to contact should they require an update from the Police.

**Police Investigation**

If a child is not located as a result of the initial enquiries, the police officer will create a missing person occurrence record on the Police computer system and a formal investigation will commence.

The police will continuously review any missing from home report in line with the West Yorkshire Police Missing Person’s policy

Parents / carers, practitioners and all relevant agencies will be expected to help the Police to find the child and to work co-operatively with the Police during any investigation.

**Cross border investigations**

When a child is reported as missing to West Yorkshire Police, the responsibility for the report and enquires to locate the missing child will ordinarily lie with the Police district in which the report was originally received.

However, where it becomes apparent that the missing child has left that area and is now likely to be in a different force or district area , then the ‘ownership’ of the report and enquiries may be transferred from one district area to another within West Yorkshire Police or to another Police force.  In respect of Children Looked After, the home / responsible local authority retains legal responsibility for the child and therefore the Police force responsible for any enquiries to locate the child, should liaise with both the child’s home / responsible local authority Children’s Social Care Services, as well as the host local authority.

* 1. **Strategy Discussion**

A strategy meeting should be called as soon as there are serious concerns about the child. In any event, whenever a child is missing for 24hrs a strategy meetings should be held. This will be arranged by Children’s Social Care, West Yorkshire Police and Missing person Investigators for police invited (01274 376611), and any other agencies who may have important information including Youth Justice and Be Positive Pathways Service, Health and Education, External provider or any other relevant professional should also be invited to attend.

The strategy meeting should be chaired by the allocated social worker’s team manager or delegated officer at the same level. The purpose of this meeting is to ensure sharing of information between all relevant agencies, to confirm what action has been taken to locate the child and to agree what further action is possible or necessary.

If **two or more children have gone missing together** from their home or placement(s), the responsible social workers for all the children should liaise with the placement provider/s and consider whether to arrange a Complex Strategy Meeting. Unless there is a specific reason as to why this meeting should not or cannot take place, this should be considered as the most appropriate way to ensure a holistic picture is obtained, minimise duplication and ensure a plan of action is timely and co-ordinated. Careful consideration should be given to the issue of confidentiality. A separate individual record of the meeting and a separate action plan must be drawn up for each child.

* 1. **Media Alerts**

The Police have responsibility for any missing person investigation and will decide whether media involvement will assist or hamper the enquiry. A decision to use the media will only be made after consultation between the Police and Bradford Childrens Social Care, The parents / Carers who hold Parental Responsibility (PR) and family should also be informed and involved. The usual mechanism for this action will be through a strategy meeting/ discussion.

Where media publicity is required, any statement made between agencies will normally be agreed through press officers. Where a child is to be publicised through the media, every effort will be made to include the parents/carers beforehand.

The Service Manager, Children Looked After must be notified of any proposal to publicise a child and will advise the Head of Service and Deputy Director.

 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.

* 1. **Planning for return**

Where a looked after child has gone missing from their placement the responsible social worker should ensure that plans are in place to respond promptly once the child is located.

While the child is missing the social worker, manager, carer, supervising social worker and home manager as appropriate should consider whether the child can return to the placement once recovered and if not should plan an alternative suitable placement. The IRO should also be consulted about this decision. The expectation should be that the child will return to the placement, at least in the short term, unless there are safeguarding reasons why that should not happen.

* 1. **Children subject to CP Plans or S47 enquiries**

Children who have a Child Protection Plan or who are subject to a Section 47 enquiry need additional action to that required for other children. This includes ensuring that a Strategy Meeting is arranged – as soon as practicable, within 24 hours, the social worker should arrange a strategy meeting if the child is still missing. (see Follow Strategy meetings as above).

For families who abscond whilst their children who are subject to child protection plans, without notification of change address/area will be deemed as missing. The Police and Child Protection coordinator/ Education and Health must be notified and a strategy meeting convened and consideration give to national alerts.

* 1. **Children at risk of extremism**

Where a child has left the country, and where there is some evidence to suggest that this might be linked to extremism, that young person should be deemed ‘missing’. The situation should be considered at a strategy meeting, chaired by the Service Manager for Prevent Strategy, at the earliest opportunity, within 24 hours.

Where there is a strong suggestion that a child is at risk of flight linked to extremism but has not yet left the country; that young person will not be considered ‘missing’. However, a strategy meeting will need be held as a matter of urgency chaired by the service manager for [Prevent Strategy](https://www.proceduresonline.com/nesubregion/Sunderland_SCB/p_sg_ch_extremism.html) at the earliest opportunity within 24 hours.

* 1. **Looked after children who may have been trafficked**

Some of the children looked after by Bradford children social care may be unaccompanied asylum seeking children or other migrant children. Some of this group may have been trafficked into the UK and may remain under the influence of their traffickers even while they are looked after.

Trafficked children are at risk of going missing, with most going missing within one week of becoming looked after and many within 48 hours. Unaccompanied migrant or asylum seeking children who go missing immediately after becoming looked after should be treated as children who may be victims of trafficking.

The Child Exploitation Risk Assessment to inform the care plan as this will be critical in these circumstances and should be completed immediately as the window for intervention is very narrow. The assessment must seek to establish:

1. Age of Child – Age Assessment to be undertaken
2. relevant details about the child’s background before they came to the UK;
3. an understanding of the reasons why the child came to the UK and
4. an analysis of the child’s vulnerability to remaining under the influence of traffickers

Following the assessment close co-operation with the UK Human Trafficking Centre (UKTC) and immigration staff will be necessary. Notification to be made in consultation with the Service Manager for the Integrated Front Door. Immigration staff will be able to advice on whether the assessment indicates that the child fits the profile of a trafficked child.

Provision may need to be made for the child to be in a safe place before any assessment takes place. The location of the child should not be divulged to any enquirers until their identity and relationship with the child has been established. The roles and responsibilities of care providers must be fully understood and recorded in the placement plan. Proportionate safety measures that keep the child safe and take into account their best interests should also be put in place to safeguard the child from going missing from care or from being re-trafficked.

‘Safeguarding Children Who May Have Been Trafficked’ contains practical guidance for agencies which are likely to encounter, or have referred to them, children and young people who may have been trafficked. Where it is suspected that a child has been trafficked, they should be referred into the UK’s victim identification framework, the National Referral Mechanism (NRM).

NSPCC Child Trafficking Advice Centre (CTAC) provides specialist advice and information to professionals who have concerns that a child may have been trafficked. Phone **0808 800 5000** Monday to Friday 9.30am-4.30pm; emailhelp@ncpcc.org.uk or visit the [CTAC website](https://www.nspcc.org.uk/services-and-resources/services-for-children-and-families/child-trafficking-advice-centre-ctac/).

* 1. **Children who repeatedly go missing or absent without authorisation**

Repeat episodes of a child going missing can indicate **Child exploitation** repeatedly going missing should not be viewed as a normal pattern of behaviour. In addition to strategies and issues already highlighted, the following should also be considered when dealing with this specific group. See child exploitation protocol [Child Exploitation Protocol](https://www.saferbradford.co.uk/media/q3lko4l3/child-exploitation-protocol-january-2020.docx)

If a child has gone missing three or more times, Bradford Children Social Care should ensure the young person is discussed at the CE RAM Tri weekly meeting. Information should be shared with the child, their family or both, to offer further support and guidance. Actions following earlier incidents should be reviewed and alternative strategies considered.

If a child is repeatedly absent without authorisation there is a need to understand this pattern of behaviour, every effort must be taken to assess and understand the pressures and reasons for this behaviour and consideration should be give to reclassification to a missing status should risks warrant this.

* 1. **16 and 17 year olds**

Whilst young people aged 16 and 17 have a greater degree of independence and self-determination than younger children, they are not adults and are subject to safeguarding procedures. It should be noted that for some children; particularly care leavers, the transition to adulthood may increase their level of vulnerability including risks such as trafficking, sexual exploitation or gang activity, as it is a period of significant change and potential uncertainty.

Age should not be used as an indicator of lower risk when a 16 or 17 year old child cannot be located, and protective action should be as swift and decisive for vulnerable 16 and 17 year olds to determine their location and return them to a place of safety. This policy applies in its entirety to 16 and 17 year olds who go missing, absent without authorisation or are made homeless.

Children and young people who go missing under the age of 16 are not legally considered as being able to live independently away from home. For children and young people over the age of 16, consideration should be given to their physical and emotional needs and the potential risk of harm when making a judgment as to whether they can live independently away from home.

* 1. **Looked After Children and relevant/eligible care leavers aged 16+**

From the age of 16 young people in care are referred to as care leavers, however, it is important to note that local authorities have very similar duties and responsibilities towards 16 and 17 year old care leavers as they do to children in care and for the purposes of this guidance, the response to a missing care leaver age 16 and 17 should be the same.

Bradford Children’s Social Care continues to have a range of responsibilities towards children leaving care until the young person’s 25th Birthday Pathway plans should reflect any risks to the child from abuse or exploitation and missing episodes and actions to reduce the risk. Police continue to have a duty to investigate missing adults; particularly if they remain vulnerable or at risk.

16 and 17 year olds who are S.20 Accommodated and have ‘capacity’ can withdraw their consent to be accommodated – refusal of permission to ‘stay out’ beyond agreed limits can be a trigger for this. It is in the best interests of care leavers to remain in suitable accommodation. Therefore in such circumstances a Child In Care Review chaired by an IRO should be held to explore this decision with the young person and their support network, with the aim of maintaining the living arrangement.

Semi-independent living arrangements are classed as ‘unregulated’ and not covered by the regulations that apply to fostering and residential placements. This is to enable semi-independent provision to realistically prepare young people for their transition to adulthood; for example, via the planned stepping down of monitoring and support.

In practice most semi-independent arrangements allow for care leavers to have periods of time, including overnights, away from their accommodation. This will be included in the placement plan, placement information record; and a clear agreement reached between the provider, the care leaver and the allocated social worker.

1. **WHEN A CHILD IS FOUND**

Carers for looked-after children should inform the child’s social worker and Police if appropriate that the child has returned.

The social worker should inform the child’s parents as appropriate, the IRO, and the police immediately. The **Liquid Logic Missing Episode** is completedby the Designated CA and a Return Home Interview is triggered by Advocacy Focus.

Welfare Checks are carried out by the police as soon as possible after the child reported as missing has been found. Their purpose is to check for any indications that the child has suffered harm, where and with whom they have been, and to give them an opportunity to disclose any offending by or against them.

A police officer, PCSO or Investigation Officer must **always** conduct a prevention check of a young person who was categorised as **missing** when they are found or return no matter how many times they have been missing before **unless** the district missing person co-ordinator has agreed a prevention check strategy with the local authority whereby it is considered to be in the best interests of the child or young person  that it would not be beneficial or appropriate for a prevention check to be completed by a police officer and that a comprehensive return interview can be conducted by a professional from another agency.

When children missing from home are located but have not been reported missing to the police by their families, parents and carers should be encouraged to report any future episodes of missing. This may require particular work in some communities, for example those with high levels of anti-social behaviour. Children’s Social Care should pro-actively consider investigating further to identify early any safeguarding concerns, or whether the child and their family need further support.

* 1. **Independent Return Interview**

When a child is found, they must be offered an independent return interview. Independent return interviews provide an opportunity to uncover information that can help protect children from the risk of going missing again, from risks they may have been exposed to while missing or from risk factors in their home.

If there is any suggestion or information from the IRHI that the young person or another has been subject of a crime or any other incident of note, this should be reported back to Police in the appropriate channels.

Once information is received of a looked after young person who has gone missing returning, the information will be shared with Advocacy Focus as soon as possible.

**Advocacy Focus** will then make arrangements to contact the young person with the aim of conducting a return interview within 72 hours of the child returning to their home or care setting. This timescale is partly dependent on the police making a prompt referral when the child has returned.

**Advocacy Focus** will record the interview on their Return of Missing Child Interview form.

Once completed, **Advocacy Focus** will submit the form back to the designated Business Support for through care service to ensure the document is uploaded to LCS and relevant social worker and team manager are aware, and circulate to other professionals as appropriate.

Where possible, a looked-after child should be given the opportunity to talk before they return to their placement.

The interview and actions that follow from it should:

* 1. Identify and deal with any harm the child has suffered – including harm that might not have already been disclosed as part of the ‘Safe and Well check’ – either before they went missing or whilst missing.
	2. Understand and address the reasons why the child went missing.
	3. Help the child feel they are cared for and their absence is unsafe, and understand that they have options, to prevent repeat instances of them going missing
	4. Provide them with information on how to stay safe if they choose to go missing again, including helpline numbers (116000) , and cover how they will keep in touch at a distance and with whom during this period.

The interview should be held in a neutral place where the child feels safe. The interview provides an opportunity to hear from the child about why they went missing and to understand the risks and issues faced by the child while missing. This could include exploring issues where a child:

* + - 1. Has been reported missing on two or more occasions
			2. Is frequently absent without authorisation
			3. Has been hurt or harmed while they have been missing
			4. Is at known or suspected risk of sexual exploitation or trafficking
			5. Is at known or suspected risk of involvement in criminal activity, gangs or drugs
			6. Has contact with persons posing risk to children; and/or
			7. Has been engaged (or is believed to have engaged) in criminal activities

during their absence

The assessment of whether a child might go missing again should be based on analysis of previous and current risk assessments.

Following the Welfare Check and Independent Return Interview, Children’s Social Care , police, health, education and voluntary services should work together:

1. To build up a comprehensive picture of why the child went missing
2. To understand what happened while they were missing
3. To understand who they were missing with and where they were found; and,
4. To understand what support they require upon returning home or to their care placement in accordance with the ‘Working Together’ guidance

Consideration of the above risks will be monitored in the tri weekly multi agency child exploitation meetings and considered at the 6 weekly MACE meetings.

The outcomes of all checks and interviews should be recorded on the child’s LCS record.

Where children refuse to engage with the interviewer, parents and carers should be offered the opportunity to provide any relevant information and intelligence they may be aware of.

* 1. **Return to placement**

When a child has been located, it must be decided whether the child’s placement remains appropriate. The decision should be informed by discussions with the child and carers where appropriate. The decision will also be informed by discussion held while the child is missing (see section **8.5.** **Planning for return** above).

Placement plans must be kept up to date and include a strategy to reduce the pressure on the child to go missing.

1. **RESPONDING TO THE ABDUCTION OF CHILDREN IN CARE**

When a child for whom Bradford Children’s Social Care has parental responsibility is missing from placement or abducted, and the child’s location is known, consideration should first be given to recovering the child by negotiation. However, in an emergency situation, the Police can be requested to take suitable action. There are also a number of legal tools that can be accessed by Bradford Children’s Social Care to allow for the recovery or collection of a missing child.

* 1. **Harbouring Notice**

If Bradford Children’s Social Care or the police have reason to believe that an adult is adversely involved with a child who is missing from home, they may consider making a witness statement by the Bradford Children’s Social Care manager specifically prohibiting that adult from having any contact with the named child, without exceptions. The Police would intervene and serve upon that adult a Child warning abduction notice and explaining that any breach would be dealt with by arrest under section 2 Child Abduction Act 1984.

* 1. **Recovery Order**

Where Bradford Children’s Social Care has parental responsibility for the child, when there is no immediate risk that the child will be harmed or moved elsewhere, the person holding or harbouring the child should be notified by letter of the Department’s intention to apply for a Recovery Order.

If there continues to be no agreement following this, a Recovery Order should be applied for. Legal Services should be consulted and will provide the necessary court form for completion by the social worker.

Recovery Orders may be served on persons who are thought to be withholding information about the whereabouts of the missing child. A Recovery Order empowers the Police to enter the premises to search for the missing child.

The social worker will attend court to make the application.

The social worker will need to decide whether the assistance of a police officer is likely to be required in recovering the child, as this must be specified in the order.

When the social worker (or other authorised person) goes to enact the order, s/he must take the order and be able to produce it as evidence of authorisation.

Within 48 hours of the order being made, the social worker must serve copies on:

1. The parties
2. Any person who has actual care of the child or had it immediately prior to the order being made
3. The local authority in whose area the child lives or was found

For further details about Recovery Orders, please refer to [Section 50 of the Children Act 1989](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1989/41/section/50).

* 1. **Collection Orders**

If Bradford Children’s Social Care social work team are unsure of the whereabouts of a child and have cause to believe the child to be at risk of harm, a Collection order can be applied for at the High Court. This mandates the Court Tipstaff to find and collect the child.

Collection Orders can be applied for out of hours but must only be sought following consultation with Legal Services and the agreement of the Director, Children’s Social Care and/or the Out of Hours Duty Head of Service.

**Bradford’s Child Exploitation Risk Assessment**

**A MARF will need completing prior to submitting this assessment.**

Please read the protocol prior to completing this form.

All of the following information is required when there are concerns regarding a child being at risk of/or experiencing child exploitation. Where possible this assessment should be completed within

**THE SAME WORKING DAY.**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Child’s full name  |  | Alias |  |
| DOB |  | Age |  | Gender  |  |
| Ethnicity |  | Religion |  |
| Is English their first language? | Child | Yes |  | No |  |
| Parent/Carer | Yes |  | No |  |
| If no, please specify preferred language |  | Is an interpreter required ?  |  |
| Address and postcode |  | Contact number(s) |  |
| School  |  |
| Other children (under 18 years of age) in household | Full Name | Date of Birth/Age | Gender  | Relationship to the above child |
|  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |
| Details of Parent/Carers and other significant adults in the child’s life | Full Name | Date of Birth (if known) | Parental Responsibility(PR) Y/N | Relationship to the above child |
|  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |
| List professional involvement and contact details |  |

|  |
| --- |
| **Professional Completing the Child Exploitation Risk Assessment** |
| **Name** |  |
| **Job Title/Role** |  |
| **Agency** |  |
| **Address & Contact Details** |  |
| **Date Assessment commenced** |  | **Date assessment completed** |  | **Initial/Review****Assessment ?** |  |

|  |
| --- |
| **Reason for completing this risk assessment:** |

|  |
| --- |
| **Details of any known or suspected perpetrators:** |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **What are we worried about:** | **Yes** | **No** |
| Sexual Exploitation |  |  |
| Criminal Exploitation |  |  |
| Trafficking /Modern Day Slavery |  |  |
| Radicalisation | **Follow Prevent Pathway** |  |

Are you aware of a National Referral Mechanism (NRM) form that has been completed for this child? YES / NO

**Professional Assessment of Risk Indicators**

* In order to identify children at risk of / or experiencing exploitation it is imperative to complete a clear and concise assessment which includes the views of the child, the family, and other professionals who are involved.
* The main heading risk indicators are not exhaustive; they are simply those most commonly recognised which may indicate a risk of exploitation; there may be other relevant factors present which require consideration and analysis. **One** tick in a high risk box, or several in low risk may indicate a serious risk of exploitation, alternatively this might be an indication of other concerns that require addressing via the child’s overall plan, or by accessing other appropriate services.
* When assessing a child’s risk of exploitation, it is essential to highlight if the concerns and the information being provided is **current or historic**. If the concern or information is historic but relevant, it is necessary to evidence how this relates to the current assessed risk.
* When completing this risk assessment, it is crucial that the child’s use of **social media** is considered throughout.

\*Please indicate a level of risk and analysis against **ALL** the following risk indicators, ensure that as part of this we are clear what behaviours we are worried about & what is the evidence

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **1.****Family Relationships** | **Risk Indicator** |
| No known risk  | No concerns identified.  |  |
| Emerging  | No concerns regarding parenting, rules and boundaries not always adhered to by child, some recent change in behaviour.  |  |
| Moderate   | Some concerns regarding parenting capacity, poor/strained relationships, lack of communication and reduced contact or engagement.  |  |
| Significant | Suspected or confirmed neglect/abuse in family. Relationship breakdown / no contact. Lack of family support.  |  |
| **Analysis** | *Who are the significant adults in the child’s life, quality of relationships, protective factors / risk factors?* |
| **2.****Peer** **Relationships** | **Risk Indicator** |
| No known risk | No concerns identified.  |  |
| Emerging  | Some concerns regarding risky friendships / negative influence.  |  |
| Moderate   | Change in child’s friends / associates, concerns regarding negative influence, some friends considered at risk of exploitation. Child is being attracted to Gang related indicators/ activities. Has relationships with a perceived negative imbalance of power. Believed to be spending time with local gangs. |  |
| Significant | Known association with gangs, concerns child is being groomed in gang related activities or indicative activities. |  |
| **Analysis** | *Detail the child’s friends / associates, ability to form and maintain friendships, positive or negative influences, how and where they socialise / spend time, any indicators relevant to gang association including online activities?* |
| **3. Accommodation** | **Risk Indicator** |
| No known risk | No concerns identified.  |  |
| Emerging  | Some concerns but overall accommodation meets the child’s needs |  |
| Moderate   | Unsuitable, unstable, conditions are concerning.  |  |
| Significant | Temporary, overcrowded, unsupported, homeless / sofa surfing or repeated breakdowns. Concern home is being exploited by gangs.  |  |
| **Analysis** | *Who does the child live with, detail the property and it’s condition, describe the local area and any concerns?* |
| **4.** **Education** | **Risk Indicator** |
| No known risk | No concerns identified. |  |
| Emerging  | Mainly engaged, some limited concerns i.e. truanting / behaviour |  |
| Moderate   | Irregular or low attendance, whereabouts often unknown, breakdown in School placements/ fixed term exclusions. Noticeable change in child’s presentation in School.  |  |
| Significant | Significant absence from school or no school placement/ permanent exclusion. Whereabouts unknown.  |  |
| **Analysis** | *Detail attendance, attainment, support offered in School and any concerns raised?* |
| **5.****Emotional Health / behaviour** | **Risk Indicator** |
| No known risk | No concerns identified. |  |
| Emerging  | Low self-esteem, confidence, struggles to verbalise feelings. Some signs of anger. |  |
| Moderate   | Significant low self-esteem, self-confidence, self-harm, overdosing, eating disorder, noticeable change / decline in emotional health. Child aggressive at home. |  |
| Significant | Recognised or suspected mental health needs. Regular self-harming, overdosing, suicidal attempts / ideation. Child causing physical / emotional harm to others.  |  |
| **Analysis** | *Describe how the child presents emotionally, any identified triggers, support already in place? What works / what exasperates the child’s emotional wellbeing? Add dates / details of any concerning incidents i.e. self-harm / overdose.*  |
| **6.****Experience of Violence** | **Risk Indicator** |
|  |
| No known risk | No concerns identified. |  |
| Emerging  | Some concerns child is exposed to violence at home or in the community.  |  |
| Moderate   | Reported concerns of violence at home or in the community. Evidence of injuries. Disclosures followed by withdrawal.  |  |
| Significant | Significant concerns child is experiencing violence at home or in the community. Injuries. Fear or refusal of accessing medical treatment. Reluctant to disclose. |  |
| **Analysis** | *Detail all known incidents, who is the victim / perpetrator, nature of injuries and treatment accessed?* |
| **7.****Running away / going missing** | **Risk Indicator** |
| No known risk | No concerns identified. |  |
| Emerging  | Stays out late, no missing episodes.  |  |
| Moderate   | Occasional goes missing for short or prolonged periods.  |  |
| Significant | Frequently goes missing for short or prolonged periods. |   |
| **Analysis** | *Detail missing episodes – times, whereabouts, associates, where located, was they reported missing?* |
| **8.****Contact with abusive adults and / or unsafe environments** | **Risk Indicator** |
| No known risk | No concerns identified. |  |
| Emerging  | Some concerns child is associating with adults / unsafe environments; this is a change in behaviour.  |  |
| Moderate   | Child is occasionally associating with adults/ unsafe environments. Concerns regarding phone / social media use. |  |
| Significant | Child is frequency associating with adults / unsafe environments, secretive with phone, multiple calls being received. Getting in and out of cars / unknown premises. Significant concerns regarding Gangs.  |  |
| **Analysis** | *Who are the adults, how are they known to the child, where is the child spending time and frequency of association?* |
| **9.****Alcohol / substance misuse** | **Risk Indicator** |
| No known risk | No concerns identified. |  |
| Emerging  | Occasional Use of alcohol and substances. |  |
| Moderate   | Evidence of increasing or regular alcohol / substance misuse.  |  |
| Significant | Evidence of frequent / dependant alcohol / substance misuse. |  |
| **Analysis** | *Detail nature of alcohol / substance misuse? Has the child been found in possession but not believed to be misusing?* |
| **10.****Coercion / control** | **Risk Indicator** |
| No known risk | No concerns identified |  |
| Emerging  | Some concerns the child is vulnerable to coercion or control / negative influences. |  |
| Moderate   | Concerns child presents coerced or controlled by others and displays signs of fear. |  |
| Significant | Significant concerns child is being coerced, controlled, in fear of others. Stories appear rehearsed (eg coached) |  |
| **Analysis** | *Describe how the child presents? Detail the perpetrators and their behaviours?*  |
| **11.****Unexplained items** | **Risk Indicator** |
| No known risk | No concerns identified |  |
| Emerging  | Suspect that child has some unexplained items and no finances to have purchased these. |  |
| Moderate   | Evidence of concerns about unexplained items with no finances to purchase. |  |
| Significant | Child is in possession of significant unexplained items, no finances to purchase. More than one mobile phone and or sim card. |  |
| **Analysis** | *What is the child in possession of? what moneys do they get from family? what is unexplained? Ie money, taxis, takeaways,drugs.* |
| **12.****Sexual abuse concerns** | **Risk Indicator** |
| No known risk | No concerns identified  |  |
| Emerging  | Concerns child may be at risk of coercion into unhealthy relationships. |  |
| Moderate   | Suspicion of Child is being coerced into unhealthy relationships.Suspicion that the child is being coerced sexual acts/at risk of sexual abuse are not considered safe or child is feeling pressured. |  |
| Significant | Evidence child of sexual coercion, sexually assaults rapes. Recurring or multiple STI’s / signs of genital anal injuries consistent with sexual assaults or violence, pregnancies – treated or untreated. Concerns child is made to watch sexual assault / rape on others.  |  |
| **Analysis** | *Detail nature of sexual health needs and any concerns? List any concerning people? Are Police involved and has child accessed sexual health services? Detail any injuries?* *Penetrative sexual contact with a Child under 13 will always constitute rape.* *Consideration should be given to the age of alleged perpetrators*  |
| **13.****Risk to others** | **Risk Indicator** |
| No known risk | No concerns identified  |  |
| Emerging  | Some concerns child influences others into risky situations. |  |
| Moderate   | Concerns child is influencing other children into risky situations and introducing to adults who pose a risk. Some bullying / threatening behaviour displayed.  |  |
| Significant | Significant concerns child is causing harm to other children, introducing to adults or environments that pose a potential risk.  |  |
| **Analysis** | *Detail the behaviours displayed by the child and to whom? Are any weapons involved?**This includes sexually harmful behaviours.*  |
| **14.****Ability to identify exploitative behaviours** | **Risk Indicator** |
| No Known risk  | No concerns identified  |  |
| Emerging  | Some understanding and ability to recognise exploitative behaviours and safeguard themselves, including online. Significant numbers of followers on social media. |  |
| Moderate   | Some understanding, cannot recognise exploitative behaviours and unable to apply knowledge to safeguard themselves, including online. |  |
| Significant | No recognition of exploitative behaviours and unable to safeguard themselves, including online. Including the sending and and receiving of indecent images  |  |
| **Analysis** | *What is the child’s understanding of exploitation, how are they able to safeguard themselves, what social media are they using and how are they keeping themselves safe online / identified risks?*  |

|  |
| --- |
| **Other factors to consider eg, wider environmental factors:** |
|  | **Yes** | **No** | **Details:** |
| Domestic Abuse |  |  |  |
| Parental Alcohol / Substance Misuse |  |  |  |
| Parental Mental Health |  |  |  |
| Parental Health Needs / Disabilities |  |  |  |
| Parental Learning Needs |  |  |  |
| Parental Trauma |  |  |  |
| Previous abuse of child |  |  |  |
| Engagement with services |  |  |  |
| Criminality in family / Anti-Social Behaviour |  |  |  |
| Parents / carers understanding of grooming / exploitation and ability to protect |  |  |  |
| Poverty / debt / financial pressures in the family |  |  |  |
| Child Protection / Abuse |  |  |  |
| Family separation / bereavement / imprisonment |  |  |  |
| Parents in Prison |  |  |  |
| **Views of the child or young person:** (regarding any identified/ potential risksand any support they would want/need, regarding existing strengths and protective factors) |  |
| **Has the child/young person contributed to this assessment** (Yes/No and if no please explain why ) |  |
| **Views of the parent / carer:** (regarding any identified/ potential risksand any support they would want/need) |  |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Views of other professionals:** (regarding risk of exploitation) |  |
| **Overall analysis** | *Detail date referral was received / by who / and initial concerns. Analysis the information you have gathered during this assessment and what this is telling you about the child, their life, and the current risk and protective factors. Consider: is this a repeat referral, any information that is missing from agencies, any grey areas and any other information which may be relevant and indicate a risk. Provide an overall views / risk level in respect of exploitation.*  |

**Bradford’s Child Exploitation Risk Assessment Decisions and Further Action**

* On completion of this risk identification tool, please make an initial judgement about the level of risk of Exploitation for the child.
* Please **tick** against your assessed level of risk and formulate a **robust safeguarding plan** in conjunction with the child, family, and other professional involved, in accordance with the Local Authority / BSCB procedures.

**Overall Assessed Level of Risk**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **No risk**  | No identified risk of exploitation. Other identified concerns which may require alternative provision. |  |
| **Emerging** | Some concerns that the child is vulnerable of exploitation.  |  |
| **Moderate** | Child is at risk of exploitation, concerns not immediate / urgent safeguarding. Child may be a risk of opportunistic abuse, or is being targeted / groomed.  |  |
| **Significant** | Child is at risk of exploitation or being exploited.  |  |

**Review timescales**

For those children who are judged to be at emerging, moderate or significant risk of Exploitation, the level of risk must be reviewed with an updated risk assessment at the following frequency unless additional concerns are raised which require an immediate updated risk assessment.

**Emerging – every 90 DAYS**

**Moderate – every 60 DAYS**

**Significant - every 30 DAYS**

**Send via email to** **childrens.enquiries@bradford.gov.uk**

1. **Appendix 2 – Approved addresses form to establish ‘missing’ or ‘absent’**





Appendix 3 – Out of Area Return Home Interview Flowchart

***Bradford Children placed Out of Area***

When child is found, Advocacy Focus will organise a RHI and follow set process

Missing episode is reported by the placement / foster carer to SW, relevant Police force or EDT depending on time of day

Bradford children placed Out of Area

Whoever is carrying out the RHI completion / attempts, will have to record in the normal way and this will be returned to Children’s Enquiries for processing.

All RHI’s are to be completed within 72 hours of the missing incident. Completed RHI should be sent within 48 hours of completion to Children’s Enquiries. and the missing co-ordinator Linda.Macnamara @westyorkshire.pnn.police.uk and indexed to LCS

Appendix 4 – Missing from home Review Strategy Process



**Missing from home Review Strategy Process**

**Introduction.**

Serious issues often lie behind children going missing. These include problems at school, as well as the issue of trafficking. The most frequent reason given by young people who have gone missing is ‘problems at home’. Occasional runaways are seven times more likely to say they had been ‘hit a lot’ by their parents, and repeat runaways 17 times more likely. Children in care are particularly at risk of going missing and three times more likely to run away. 25% of missing children and young people reported mental health problems, with 5% citing mental health problems as the reason for running away. Young people with drugs and alcohol problems are at least four times as likely to run away as those without. (*Missing Children and Adults: a cross government strategy (December 2011) paras 3.6-3.10)*

Children in care go missing for different reasons, including being unhappy, missing family or not being able to participate in activities. Some young people also ‘run for fun’ – staff may know where they are and they come back. Other young people are running away from something intolerable. This could be bullying or abuse, a feeling that they are in the wrong placement or not feeling listened to. Some young people are running to where they want to be: back with family or friends. The evidence presented to the All-Party Parliamentary Inquiry into children missing from care also suggested there is a strong link between children in care who go missing and those being groomed or sexually exploited. *(APPG inquiry into children missing from care 2012, paras 5 and 7).*

Each instance of a child going missing should be taken seriously, both for issues that may have led to it and issues that may arise from it.

 **1. SCOPE**

This procedure provides a framework for missing children in following categories:

1. Children looked after
2. Children in need / in need of protection
3. Children not previously known to Children’s Social Care or closed cases.

**Stage 1**

Children Looked After that go missing 5 times within a 3 month period, or 1 significant missing episode (re: over 24 hours –and or with high risk indicators/perpetrators.)

Missing episodes, a Strategy Meeting should be convened 24 hours to be chaired by the appropriate Team Manager.

The Police to be invited along with all involved partner agencies including Health, Education, Independent Providers, etc.

**Stage 2**

Children Looked After who go missing in excess of 5 times up to10 times within a 3 month period or have had previous significant missing episodes, with subsequent significant incidents, a Strategy Meeting should be convened within 24 hours chaired by the IRO. The Police to be invited along with all involved partner agencies.

**Stage 3**

Any children Looked After who has gone missing and been subject to Step 1 or/and 2 a Strategy Meeting must be convened within 24 hours to be chaired by the relevant Service Manager. The Police to be invited along with all involved partner agencies as above.

**Children Missing from home, not currently Looked After.**

**Stage 1**

Children who are not looked after that go missing 5 times within a 3 month period, or 1 significant (re: over 24 hours – with high risk indicators/perpetrators). A Strategy Meeting should be convened within 24 hours to be chaired by the appropriate Team Manager.

The Police to be invited along with all involved partner agencies.

**Stage 2**

Any children not Looked After who has gone missing over 5 times and been subject to Step 1, a Strategy Meeting must be convened within 24 hours to be chaired by the Service Manager. The Police to be invited along with all involved partner agencies.

**Key for significant events (only a guide, seek manager advice)**

1. Missing over 24 hours, no sighting.
2. Sighted with person of concern, including young persons of concern.

If you are concerned please discuss with your Line Manager or Service Manager.

**Young people in semi-independent living who go missing from their home.**

**Introduction**

Whilst young people aged 16 and 17 have a greater degree of independence and self-determination than younger children, they are not adults and are subject to safeguarding procedures. It should be noted that for some children, particularly care leavers, the transition to adulthood may increase their level of vulnerability including risks such as trafficking, sexual exploitation or gang activity, as it is a period of significant change and potential uncertainty.

Age should not be used as an indicator of lower risk when a 16 or 17 year old child cannot be located, and protective action should be as swift and decisive for vulnerable 16 and 17 year olds to determine their location and return them to a place of safety. This Missing from Home Protocol applies in its entirety to 16 and 17 year olds who go missing, run away or are made homeless.

**Stage 1**

With this group of young people they are entitled to 3 nights away from their accommodation, in an approved / known address. Missing episodes could only be triggered on what could be day 4. There is a requirement that the allocated SW visit and establish the level of risk and possible location of the young person and only report to the police If the young persons whereabouts is unknown or thought to be at significant risk.

If a young person has been absent for 3 days and there is a level of professional concern/evasiveness by the young person on where they have been, this could trigger a Stage 1 Missing from Home Strategy Meeting. This meeting should be chaired by the appropriate Team Manager. The Police to be invited along with all involved partner agencies.

**Stage 2**

Any young person who has gone missing and been subject to Step 1 , a Strategy Meeting must be convened within 24 hours to be chaired by the Service Manager. The Police to be invited along with all involved partner agencies.

This guidance should be considered alongside the Bradford Children’s Social Child exploitation protocol.

**Appendix 5**

**Missing Flowchart EDT**

ICRT to notify relevant Local Authority and close missing episode within 24 hours

EDT create missing episode or child if not already on LCS. LAC Admin notify ICRT MSET Co-ordinator via task tray

If child goes missing and is living in the Area from other Local Authority, the Host Authority (TfC), need to be notified by Police or other agencies

If on any Bank Holiday weekend, 48 hour trigger is activated, EDT will consider a strategy discussion within 72 hours if risk remains high. Safety Plan formulated and EDT SSM notified

Police contact if child found and EDT close Missing Episode and alert SW/TM duty box of outcome and allocated SW to finalise Missing Episode

Police & other agencies contact EDT with regards to new missing episodes and EDT open on Liquid Logic. If child is closed a Contact will be added on LCS and assigned to ICRT

Case automatically returns to SW responsibility the following working day if child still missing. If the child is found during the daytime, SW ends Missing Episode

EDT follow up each shift/weekend – update SW and Team Manager via their in Trays if child found

Out of Area Missing / LAC Children

EDT check ‘Live’ Missing Report on LCS at 5.15pm – week days and over the weekend

EDT Missing Process

If child is still missing, EDT send missing notification to ICRT next working day and ICRT MSET Co-Ordinator updates Missing Spreadsheet

If child is found, Missing Episode is closed off to ICRT by ICRT MSET Co-ordinator after notifying relevant Local Authority where child originates from and discussion with ICRT Team Manager