**Kirklees Council**

**Children Missing from Home or Care**

**Practice Standards Manual**

**August 2016**

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**Practice Standards for Children Missing from Home or Care**

When a child goes missing or runs away they are at risk. Children running away and going missing from home or care is a safeguarding issue. Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children is a key duty on all Local Authorities and requires effective joint working between agencies and professionals.

This manual sets out standards that relate to good practice when it comes to responding to children who go missing from home or care in Kirklees.

It is aimed at all professionals who come into contact with and respond to missing children in Kirklees and adherence to the standards will play a vital role in good multi-agency working to improve outcomes for this group of vulnerable children and young people.

The Practice Standards for Missing Children will provide professionals with a clear context for practice and provide auditors with a clear quality assurance framework to measure against.

**What are Practice Standards?**

There are three key drivers in any organisation for determining the way a service is delivered. These are: agreed standards, procedures and policies. The following definitions help show how these drivers are related and dependent on each other.

**Standards**: These are the rules that describe the (minimum) service or practice that can be expected by the Service User. Most of them are legally set through government guidance and legislation, or are based on evidence based research. They are mandatory.

**Procedures**: These are the steps that describe the actions needed to deliver that service or practice – the what, how, when, where and who. They are mandatory.

**Policies**: These provide the strategic context for shaping the standards and procedures, and answer the question of why the service is delivered in particular way and why the service is important.

The delivery of the policy requirements, as set out by Kirklees Council is the responsibility of all staff.

The standards in this manual are designed to improve consistency in practice across the service and to drive up the quality provided to the vulnerable children and young people of Kirklees and their families.

It is important that this Missing Children Practice Standards Manual is read in conjunction with the Missing Children’s Procedures (LAC and Non-LAC) and the Safeguarding Procedures available online. The Kirklees Missing Children standards and procedures are underpinned by the Statutory Guidance (2014) policy – see the links below.

**Useful Links**

Kirklees Children’s Services Procedures – Local Missing Children Procedure for Looked After Children;

<http://kirkleeschildcare.proceduresonline.com/chapters/p_missing_absent.html>

Kirklees Children’s Services Procedures – Local Missing Children Procedure for Non-Looked After Children and Other Local Authority Children placed in Kirklees;

<http://kirkleeschildcare.proceduresonline.com/chapters/p_local_missing_non_lac.html>

West Yorkshire Consortium Procedures – Joint Protocol for Children Missing from Home or Care;

<http://westyorkscb.proceduresonline.com/pdfs/pr_missing.pdf>

Kirklees Safeguarding Childrens Board – Information for Professionals: Missing Children;

<http://www.kirkleessafeguardingchildren.co.uk/missing-children.html>

Statutory Guidance on Children who Runaway or go Missing from Home or Care, January 2014 (DfE);

<https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/307867/Statutory_Guidance_-_Missing_from_care__3_.pdf>

**Practice Standards 1: Prevention**

**Outcome: Reducing the number of children who go missing.**

Local strategies and services are in place to prevent children and young people from running away or going missing, and to support their parents/carers and families.

* 1. Formally assess all children and young people who have been reported missing, to identify the risks and needs associated with further missing episodes, using the appropriate assessment tool: Independent Return Interview; Missing Risk Assessment; Single Assessment.
  2. Formulate all intervention plans using the ‘Missing’ assessment and record information accurately and effectively using the CareFirst information management system.
  3. Involve children and young people and their parents/carers in the design and review of individual ‘Missing’ interventions and plan.

**Kirklees Police Responsibilities;**

* 1. West Yorkshire Police are committed to the management, recording and investigation of missing persons;
  2. Assess risk to differentiate between people who are at genuine risk of harm and those who are not and conduct high quality investigations in line with the risk to that person;
  3. Police Classifications:

‘Missing’ – Anyone whose whereabouts cannot be established and where the circumstances are out of character or the context suggests the person may be subject of crime or at risk of harm to themselves or another;

‘Absent’ – A person not at a place where they are expected or required to be and there is no apparent risk;

* 1. Create and continually update Trigger Plans;
  2. Save missing risk assessment and trigger plans to nominal references to ensure access is available to district hub commanders on receipt of missing/absent call;
  3. Complete MISPER 7 return interviews – ‘Safe and Well’;
  4. Complete safeguarding (other) referrals to relevant agencies;
  5. Monitor all missing reports to identify risk and initiate partnership interventions to mitigate and reduce risk and prevent repeats;
  6. Attend regular missing strategy meetings with partners to maximise opportunities for early intervention and to minimise risk for vulnerable, persistent and top 10 missing persons.

**Practice Standard 2: Independent Return Interviews**

**Outcome: All children and young people who are reported missing to be offered an Independent Return Interview.**

Independent Return Interviews are in-depth assessments to help identify further need.

2.1 Independent Return Interviews must be *offered* within 72hrs of the child/young person having returned from a missing episode;

2.2 Independent Return Interviews must be *completed* within 72hrs and up to 7 working days of the child/young person having returned home from a missing episode;

2.3 Independent Return Interviews must be written up using the CareAssess document (Missing Episode - Return Interview) on the CareFirst information management system;

2.4 Independent Return Interviews must not be carried out by the child/young person’s Social Worker unless the child/young person is looked after (in care) and wishes to speak to their Social Worker instead of an independent person;

2.5 All Kirklees LAC placed out-of-authority must be offered an Independent Return Interview by the host Local Authority if the Kirklees Children’s Rights Team are unable to offer it – this must be agreed at the Placement Planning Meeting;

2.6 Independent Return Interviews must be completed face-to-face;

2.7 Independent Return Interviews must take place in a neutral place/venue where the child/young person feels comfortable;

2.8 Independent Return Interviews should aim to establish what has caused the child/young person to run away; what experiences they have encountered; individuals associated; what could help resolve issues as identified by the child/young person etc.;

2.9 Independent Return Interviews should aim to establish if the child/young person is at risk of significant harm;

2.10 Independent Return Interviews should identify and deal with any harm the child/young person has suffered either before or during their missing episode and help the child/young person to understand they have options and provide them with information on how to stay safe if they run away again;

2.11 Independent Return Interviews must be a starting point for or continuation of intervention from services and not ‘the end’ of the missing incident;

2.12 Independent Return Interviews should support the child/young person and their family in accessing Early Help and Specialist services as necessary;

2.13 Any relevant information/intelligence gleaned as a result of the Independent Return Interview must be shared with the Police Safeguarding Unit in the interests of child protection, crime detection and prevention.

2.14 Any decision to discontinue or abandon the Independent Return Interview as a result of a decline or inapplicability must be done in a timely manner and the ‘Missing Episode – M7 and Interview Information’ CareAssess form must be completed (Ofsted Annexe A data).

**Kirklees Police Responsibilities;**

2.15 Carry out a Missing ‘Safe and Well’ check for all children and young people classified as ‘Missing’ and ‘Absent’ (where applicable);

2.16 Notify Kirklees Children’s Services (via secure email) as soon as is practical and within 24hrs of the child/young person having returned from a missing episode;

2.17 Ensure the Missing Notification (M7) details are accurate and full occurrence times and dates of the missing episode are included, including a report of the incident;

2.18 Refer all cases of child protection to Kirklees Referral and Response Team for consideration of a front of house assessment and/or joint S47 Enquiry.

**Missing Co-ordinator’s Responsibilities;**

2.19 All completed Independent Return Interviews must be authorised within 5 working days by the Missing Co-ordinator and the ‘Manager’s Comments’ section completed;

2.20 The ‘Missing Episode – M7 and Interview Information’ CareAssess form must be completed on the child/young person’s CareFirst electronic file for every authorised Independent Return Interview (Ofsted Annexe A data);

2.21 Copies of all Independent Return Interviews completed with children/young people who are actively managed by the CSE Hub must be sent to the dedicated CSE Police Officers via secure email.

**Social Worker’s Responsibilities;**

2.22 SW Return Interviews must be completed within 72hrs of the child/young person having returned from a missing episode by the allocated or Duty Social Worker for all children and young people subject to CIN/CP/LAC plans;

2.23 SW Return Interviews must be written up using the CareAssess document (‘Missing Episode - Return Interview’) on the CareFirst information management system;

2.24 Information gleaned from the Return Interviews should be incorporated with the child/young person’s plan;

2.25 For all Kirklees Looked After Children, details of the missing episode and the child/young person’s views should be discussed with the Independent Reviewing Officer to consider convening the LAC review earlier than scheduled.

**Practice Standard 3: Missing Risk Assessments**

**Outcome: All children and young people at risk of running away or missing to have a completed Missing Risk Assessment.**

All children and young people at risk of running away or going missing benefit from a Missing Risk Assessment designed to identify the risks and protective factors associated with their behaviour and to inform effective intervention plans.

3.1 Missing Risk Assessments should be completed by the allocated Social Worker for all children and young people who have had one reported missing episode or more;

3.2 All Looked After Children (where applicable) should have a completed Missing Risk Assessment prior to a new placement or within 72hrs of being placed;

3.3 Missing Risk Assessments should have the self-expressed views of the child/young person and their parents/carers;

3.4 Missing Risk Assessments should hold relevant information from other agencies such as the Police; YOT; Education etc.;

3.5 Missing Risk Assessments should include a clear reporting strategy, identified triggers and an action plan detailing who should do what in the event of the child/young person running away and to prevent a further missing episode;

3.6 Missing Risk Assessments should be reviewed after every significant missing episode or at the child/young person’s CIN/CP/LAC review – whichever is sooner;

3.7 For all TYS managed cases where the child/young person does not have an allocated Social Worker, the TYS Worker should complete the missing risk assessment section included in the Independent Return Interview after every reported missing episode.

**Missing Co-ordinator’s Responsibilities;**

3.8 Missing Risk Assessments should be screened by the Missing Co-ordinator and a Key Classification entered on the child/young person’s CareFirst Client Screen detailing the level of risk associated with a repeat missing episode and/or any potential harm to the child/young person during a missing episode (Low/Medium/High);

3.9 Missing Risk Assessments should be shared with the Local Police (or other relevant external force) Safeguarding Unit to inform their Trigger Plans.

**Practice Standard 4: Missing Strategy Meetings**

**Outcome: The needs of children and young people who are deemed as ‘Medium’ or ‘High’ risk of going missing are addressed in a co-ordinated and holistic way to reduce the risks.**

The purpose of the Missing Strategy Meeting is to bring together key professionals and the parents/carers (if appropriate) to discuss and approve the child/young person’s immediate safeguarding concerns, missing risk factors, reporting strategy, trigger and action plan.

4.1 A Missing Strategy Meeting should be convened if a child/young person has had x3 or more reported missing episodes in the past 30 days and/or has been reported missing for a period of over 24hrs;

4.2 Once the decision has been taken to convene a Missing Strategy Meeting it must be held within 24hrs;

4.3 The allocated Social Worker or Team Manager should organise the Missing Strategy Meeting and invite all key people;

4.4 The Missing Strategy Meeting should be chaired by the Team Manager and recorded electronically on the ‘Strategy Discussion’ CareAssess form on the CareFirst information management system;

4.5 The Missing Strategy Meeting should discuss and agree a Missing Risk Management Plan to address the child/young person’s risk factors to reduce the missing episodes;

4.6 Details of the Missing Strategy Meeting should be recorded on the ‘Missing Planning Meeting and Risk Management Plan’ WISDOM template on the child/young person’s CareFirst information management system;

4.7 In cases whereby the child/young person has a CSE Classification, a joint CSE/Missing Strategy or Review Meeting should be convened to avoid replication;

4.8 All actions agreed at the Missing Strategy Meeting should be reviewed by the Social Worker’s line manager at the next case supervision or at the child/young person’s review meeting – whichever is sooner.

**Practice Standard 5: Independent Reviewing Officers**

**Outcome: Kirklees Independent Reviewing Officers contribute to achieving a significant improvement in outcomes for Looked After Children. This includes reducing missing episodes and keeping Looked After Children safe.**

Independent Reviewing Officers monitoring the performance by the Local Authority of their functions in relation to a Looked After Child’s case must identify and challenge any poor areas of practice in relation to the management of Missing/Unauthorised Absences and the Missing Risk Management Plan.

5.1 The Independent Reviewing Officer for the Looked After Child who is missing must be alerted of their situation by the LAC Social Worker/Emergency Duty Team/Duty Worker (as applicable);

5.2 Independent Reviewing Officers must be invited to attend the Missing Strategy Meetings for the Looked After Child;

5.3 Independent Reviewing Officers will oversee the work planned for the Looked After Child and quality assure the Missing Risk Management Plan;

5.4 Independent Reviewing Officers must decide if the child’s Looked After Review meeting should be brought forward in light of the missing episode/s and any significant changes in risk;

5.5 Independent Reviewing Officers must ensure the Missing Risk Assessment and Risk Management Plan is taken into consideration in the child’s Looked After Review and case/care planning meeting.

**Practice Standard 6: Missing Intervention Programme**

**Outcome: All children and young people on caseloads that have been reported missing or are at risk of going missing to undergo the Missing Intervention Programme.**

Children and young people and their parents/carers should receive appropriate information, advice and support about the risks associated with running away and going missing; what to do and how to prevent it.

6.1 All children and young people reported missing or at risk of going missing and receiving individual Targeted Youth Support (TYS) must have the Missing Intervention Programme included in their plan and delivered by the TYS Worker;

6.2 All children and young people actively managed by the CSE Integrated Specialist Hub must have the Missing Intervention Programme included in their plan and delivered by the CSE Community Care Officer;

6.3 All Kirklees Looked After Children and young people residing at residential children’s homes must have the Missing Intervention Programme included as part of their one-to-one sessions with their allocated key worker or their TYS Worker;

6.4 The Missing Intervention Programme should commence within 30 days of the need being identified;

6.5 The Missing Intervention Programme should be a minimum of 3 sessions, with at least one session involving the parent/carer;

6.6 The Missing Intervention Programme should contain a ‘Staying Safe Agreement’;

6.7 For all children and young people living at home, the Missing Intervention Programme should contain a ‘TYS Parent/Carer Missing Advice Form’.

**Practice Standard 7: Other Local Authority Looked After Children (OLA LAC)**

**Outcome: All Looked After Children placed in Kirklees by other Local Authorities to be supported with the aim of reducing further missing episodes.**

Services available to OLA LAC placed in Kirklees should be provided to support their placement and prevent them from going missing.

7.1 All OLA LAC must be *offered* an Independent Return Interview within 72hrs of them having returned from a missing episode – unless the responsible Local Authority has declined this service;

7.2 All OLA LAC receiving individual Targeted Youth Support (TYS) must have the Missing Intervention Programme included in their plan and delivered by the TYS Worker;

7.3 All OLA LAC actively managed by the CSE Integrated Specialist Hub must have the Missing Intervention Programme included in their plan and delivered by the CSE Community Care Officer;

**Missing Co-ordinator’s Responsibilities;**

7.4 Request a completed Missing Risk Assessment by the allocated Social Worker from the responsible Local Authority, if the OLA LAC is likely to or has been reported missing previously;

7.5 Share the completed Missing Risk Assessment with the Kirklees Police Safeguarding Unit to inform their Trigger Plan;

7.6 Request a Missing Strategy Meeting and invite the allocated Social Worker and a Kirklees Police MISPER Co-ordinator if the OLA LAC is reported missing x3 or more in the past 30 days and/or has been missing for over 24hrs;

7.7 In cases whereby the OLA LAC has a CSE Classification, a joint CSE/Missing Planning or Review Meeting should be convened to avoid replication;

7.8 Discuss the OLA LAC at the monthly Police Top 10 Missing Meetings if he/she is listed.

**Kirklees Police Responsibilities;**

7.9 Create and continually update Trigger Plans for OLA LAC;

7.10 Save missing risk assessment and trigger plans for OLA LAC to nominal references to ensure access is available to district hub commanders on receipt of missing/absent call;

7.11 Complete MISPER 7 return interviews for all OLA LAC – ‘Safe and Well’;

7.12 Monitor all OLA LAC missing reports to identify risk and initiate partnership interventions to mitigate and reduce risk and prevent repeats;

7.13 Discuss the OLA LAC at the monthly Police Top 10 Missing Meetings if he/she is listed.

**Practice Standard 8: Accurate Recording of all Missing Children Data**

**Outcome: All information relating to missing children to be accurately recorded on the CareFirst information management system.**

The Department for Education require Local Authorities to record details of children and young people that go missing from home, and Looked After Children that go missing from Care. This requirement also includes Looked After Children who are ‘Away from Placement Without Authorisation’. Accurate recording of all missing episodes and unauthorised absences relating to children and young people is crucial for data interrogation to inform themes and patterns, deliver evidence based practice and potentially inform commissioning.

8.1 All Missing episodes for children living at home to be recorded under ‘Classifications’ once the Missing Notification (M7) has been received from Kirklees Police.

8.2 All Missing episodes for OLA LAC placed in Kirklees to be recorded under ‘Classifications’ once the Missing Notification (M7) has been received from Kirklees Police.

8.3 All Missing and Away from Placement Without Authorisation episodes for all Kirklees LAC to be recorded under ‘Placement Absences’;

8.4 All ‘Record Sheet Entry Observations’ relating to missing children dealt with by TYS, should use the subject field ‘TYS Involvement – Missing’ when adding an entry;

8.5 All ‘Record Sheet Entry Observations’ relating to missing or Away from Placement Without Authorisation for Looked After Children, should use the subject field ‘LAC Missing / UA’;

8.6 All Independent Return Interviews and SW Return Interviews to be recorded on the CareAssess form ‘Missing Episode – Return Interview’;

**Kirklees Police Responsibilities;**

8.7 Police MISPER (Adult Safeguarding) Unit to alert (via secure email) Children’s Social Care daily of any current missing children and young people;

8.8 Alert (via secure email) Children’s Social Care as soon as is practical and within 24hrs of the child/young person having returned from a missing episode;

8.9 Ensure the Missing Notification (M7) details are accurate and full occurrence times and dates of the missing episode are included, including a report of the incident.

**Missing Co-ordinator’s Responsibilities;**

8.10 Using the ‘CLA Absent/Missing Weekly Report’ provided by the Information Unit, close off any LAC CLA Episodes if the child/young person has returned.