Grwp Adolygu Canllawiau Amddiffyn Plant Cymru Gyfan

All Wales Child Protection Procedures Review Group



ALL WALES

PROTOCOL

MISSING CHILDREN

CHILDREN WHO RUN AWAY OR GO MISSING FROM HOME OR CARE

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Mae'r ddogfen hon ar gael yn Gymraeg, ac mewn ieithoedd a fformatau eraill ar gais.
This document is available in Welsh, and in other languages and formats on request.

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1. Introduction

1.1 The Children's Society *Still Running* II (2005) survey estimates that around 100,000 young people under the age of 16 run away from home or care each year across the UK.

The survey found that:

- 1 in 6 runaways sleeps rough
- 1 in 12 runaways is hurt or harmed while away

1.2 Research continues to highlight **the dangerousness** of these situations, given the vulnerability of young people and the risks they are exposed to. 'For a number of runaways, the act of running away itself puts them in danger. Running away can also mean a greater risk of social exclusion later in life. We know that the more often children go missing, the more risks they face and the less anchored they are to their home. While they are away substantial numbers of runaways are more likely to resort to crime or be sexually exploited in order to survive, and may also be physically assaulted' ref: *'Young Runaways'* Social *Exclusion Unit November 2002.*

1.3 Guidance for practitioners on what to do if they encounter a child who is being sexually exploited or is at risk of being sexually exploited can be found in the All Wales Protocol: Safeguarding and Promoting the Welfare of Children who are at Risk of Abuse through Sexual Exploitation (October 2008) and Welsh Assembly Guidance published in March 2011.

1.4 It is also recognised that there are strong links between going missing, child trafficking and forced marriage. Guidance for practitioners who encounter a child who may have been trafficked can be found in Welsh Assembly Government supplementary guidance: Safeguarding Children who may have been Trafficked (Welsh Assembly Government, April 2008). (Note: An All Wales protocol is also due to be issued).

1.5 Guidance for practitioners who encounter a case in which forced marriage may be an issue can be found in the multi-agency practice guidance: Handling Cases of Forced Marriage (Home Office, June 2009).

1.6 Children who run away or go missing are sending us a clear message – that they need help in dealing with problems in their lives. Clearly the circumstances surrounding these absences (the combination of 'push' or 'pull' factors) will vary enormously. It is important that the reasons for which children run away are sought and listened to and acted upon.

1.7 It is imperative that all agencies work together to safeguard children who go missing. Each incident of a child going missing should be considered serious as the risks are serious each time. When there are multiple incidents, professionals will need to consider whether the child's placement is appropriate and whether, for example, a change of placement is necessary to provide a more stable situation for the child. 'Every missing episode should attract proper attention from the professionals involved with the missing person and they must collaborate to ensure a consistent and coherent response is given to the missing person on his/her return.' ('Guidance on the

management recording and investigation of missing persons' Association of Chief Police Officers, 2005).

2. Principles

2.1 A Child-Centred Approach
The safety and welfare of the child is the primary aim. Whilst the child is missing the prime objective of all agencies must be to locate and return the missing child.

2.2 Inter-Agency Working
Police officers, social workers, carers, education, health and all other agencies should share information in order to work co-operatively to effect the safe recovery of children who are missing from home or care. Police should ensure all information in respect of missing children will be shared between other divisional officers and the Public Protection Unit (PPU). The process and procedures for the reporting of missing children by the Local Authority and other agencies will comply with this protocol. The All Wales Child Protection procedures will be followed in respect of all children.

2.3 Responsive Services
Children who go missing can be difficult to engage, however, this should not lead to labelling children as the problem. Agencies should beware of dismissing multiple incidents and of failing to analyse and address the underlying causes or the risks to the child whilst he or she is missing. Agencies should work proactively with children at risk of running away who should be identified and given access to support services. As a corporate parent for Children Looked After, the local authority has a duty to care for the wellbeing and safety of children. This responsibility is not absolved when a child/young person is reported missing. Similarly, the police will act on any report of a child missing.

2.4 Diversity
Children who go missing are all individuals and will come from a range of backgrounds and cultures. Agencies need to work in a way that is sensitive to the child's background and identity whilst at all times ensuring their safety and well-being remains the paramount concern.

3. Scope

3.1 This document applies to all children and young people up to the age of 18 and includes:

- Children who go missing who are living within their families
- Children who are Looked After by the Local Authority who go missing from their placement (including children on remand)

3.2 Not all children who are looked after away from the parental home are placed according to sections in the Children Act 1989. Some children reside in residential education or health / disability resources. These children are equally in need of safeguarding and protection should they go missing. Such establishments, and those responsible for placing children within such establishments, should be aware of this protocol and make arrangements for responding to incidents of children going missing in accordance with the protocol.

3.3 This document does not apply when child trafficking, abduction or serious crime is suspected and these situations must be reported to Police and dealt with as a criminal enquiry. However, Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking children are a particularly high risk group in terms of going missing and are vulnerable in these circumstances. There are clear links between Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children and children who go missing from Local Authority care and children who are at risk of trafficking.

3.4 It is intended that this protocol should complement existing good practice. It seeks to provide guidance to carers, police officers, social workers, education and other relevant agencies in dealing with situations where children go missing. It cannot anticipate every situation and therefore it follows that all staff must continue to exercise professional judgement and take any action necessary to protect the safety of any child based on a risk assessment of their individual circumstances. Individual risk assessment is a key element of this whole process.

4. Definitions

4.1 Children are defined as any person up to 18 years of age. The words 'child' or 'children' shall be used throughout the document to mean any person up to 18 years of age.

4.2 Looked After Children includes all children and young people who are looked after by a Local Authority, be that under Section 20 Children Act 1989, or a Care Order under Section 31, or an Interim Care Order under Section 38 or an Emergency Protection Order. It applies to children remanded to the care of the Local Authority; however, it should be noted that children subject of a Remand Order might be subject to conditions applied by the Courts as part of their remand. This may necessarily influence how an episode of absconding is responded to and may require a response under the Bail act.

4.3 UNAUTHORISED ABSENCE
This category is critical to the clarification of roles of the Police, Social Services and service providers and refers only to children who are Looked After by a Local Authority.

4.3.1 The category of 'Unauthorised Absence' will only be applicable for a maximum of 6 hours or until midnight on the first day of absence (However, for some children the risk assessment may identify a quicker response is required). Any absence exceeding that period, where the location / whereabouts of the child are not known or are unconfirmed, will be re-categorised as 'Missing' and the Police will be notified. No child should remain unreported as missing after six hours or after midnight. Clearly, some children absent themselves for a short period and then return. Such children may be testing boundaries and are not necessarily considered at risk. Any child's absence falling within this category will not be routinely reported to the Police and the responsibility for managing this lies with the staff of the care home or the foster carer.

4.3.2 Children who fall within this category must be the subject of continuous risk assessment whilst they remain absent. During their absence circumstances may change the view of risk and necessitate a different response.

4.3.3 During this period of absence Social Services and provider services will take all reasonable and practical steps which a good parent would take to establish the whereabouts of a child, or the location of any persons with whom he/she is likely to be associating and arrange for those places to be checked.

4.3.4 If the location of the child is known or suspected, then it is the Service Provider's responsibility to locate and return them. However, if there are believed to be specific issues of safety or public order difficulties involved in returning them, then the Police will assist in the recovery process. These circumstances would not mean that the child / young person should be categorised as 'missing'.

4.3.5 All steps and enquires which have been undertaken to find the child should be recorded by each individual agency and notified to the Police on reporting the child as missing.

4.4 MISSING

A child is defined as missing when their location or reason for their absence is unknown and there is cause for concern for them because of their vulnerability, or there is potential danger to the public. They will be considered missing until located and their wellbeing or otherwise established.

4.4.1 A child is missing if they have been considered as unauthorised absent for more than six hours or past midnight. Six hours should be seen as a MAXIMUM period and in most situations much shorter periods will be appropriate.

4.4.2 The absence of Children in the above circumstances should be notified immediately to the Police.

4.5 ABSCONDED

An absconder is a child/young person who has, as a result of a Court Order, been remanded into Local Authority accommodation. If the young person is in breach of a court order this would evoke a warrant of arrest (depending on whether they have been arrested.) If a young person is in breach of police bail conditions the police will be informed.

4.5.1 Consideration needs to be given by both Social Services and Police to the legal status of the child who is remanded by the Courts. The management of such absences may therefore not be their sole responsibility. The involvement of the Youth Offending Team (YOT), the CPS and the Youth Court may be necessary.

5. Process for looked after children

5.1 All children 'looked after' are placed under the terms of the following statutory instruments: The Placement of Children with Parents Regulations 1991, The Fostering Services (Wales) Regulations 2003, The Fostering Services (Wales) (Amendment) Regulations 2003, The Placement of Children (Wales) Regulations 2007, The Children's Homes Regulations (Wales) 2002, The Children's Homes (Wales) (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations 2007.

5.2 Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children

Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children are a particularly high risk group in terms of going missing and are vulnerable in these circumstances. Local Authorities should have local multi agency protocols which must be followed if a child goes missing. The All Wales Child Protection Procedures also provide specific guidance regarding children that go missing who are on the Child Protection Register. Further advice and guidance can be found in the All Wales Safeguarding Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children Protocol.

5.3 Child Trafficking

There are clear links between Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children, children who go missing from Local Authority care and children who are at risk of trafficking. UK research suggests that many trafficked children will present as being unaccompanied and seeking asylum and will subsequently go missing from care, usually within 48 hours. Further advice and guidance on child trafficking can be found in the Welsh Assembly Government guidance, Safeguarding Children who may have been Trafficked, WAG, April 2008.

5.4 Pre-Planning

In the preparation of a care plan and at placement meetings, Children's Services staff will consider the vulnerability and associated risks of a child going missing. (See Appendix D.)

5.4.1 In cases where there have been previous concerns about the child going missing, the care plan will include:

- the likelihood of the child going missing
- the level of supervision/support offered to the child
- the parents' and carers advice on what action they feel should be taken if the child goes missing
- the level of risk presented if the child is missing,(to include the child vulnerability and the risk to the public)
- the impact of any conditions imposed by the courts e.g. curfew

5.4.2 The child should be given a copy of Appendix C to this protocol explaining the actions to be taken if he/she is missing or absents him/herself from the usual place of residence. Every effort should be made to convey the principles of the protocol in cases where the child cannot read.

5.4.3 When children are known to go missing regularly, Social workers and carers should always consider the involvement of the local police at the pre-planning stage.

5.5 Responding to an incident

5.5.1 When a child absents him/herself without permission it is necessary to initiate procedures which encourage him/her to return as quickly and safely as possible.

5.5.2 Whoever discovers that a child has absented his/herself without permission from a residential home should inform the Manager or in their absence the senior person on duty of this immediately or, if a child absents him/herself from foster care, the Social Services Duty Officer (or out of hours, the Social Services Emergency Duty Team) for the area from which the child comes from.

5.5.3 Those with responsibility for the child should immediately consider whether the child is 'unauthorised absent' or 'missing' as defined in section 4 of this document.

5.5.4 In the circumstances of an 'unauthorised absence' the carer will be expected to take all reasonable and practical steps to establish where the child is and/or why they are absent and to continually review the situation. Prior to contacting the police, foster carers and care homes should have searched the home and grounds and contacted family/ friends and associates. Police attending missing from care incidents, must check that the above has been carried out. Consideration should be given at this point to having an early discussion with Police and other relevant agencies as to the current situation and the response so far.

5.5.5 As soon as the child is defined as **missing** the following steps must be taken:

- Notify the Police (if a child is living out of area notify the placing authority Police as the child may return to the home area)
- Notify the parents and anyone else with Parental Responsibility
- Notify the Local Authority responsible for the child, Social Worker, Relevant Line Manager or follow out of hours procedure (Emergency Duty Team)
- Notify the Registered Home Manager/on call Manager

5.5.6 On receiving notification, any case of a missing child which causes particular concern or difficulty, this should be brought to the attention of the Senior Manager - Services and Divisional Commander or member of the Command Team without delay. The Senior Manager - Services and Divisional Command Team member will then decide on further action and consider the need to inform the Head of Operations/Assistant Chief Constable.

5.6 Information to be made available to the police

When reporting a missing child, the following information, where known, should be made available immediately over the phone and in writing as soon as reasonably practical (Appendix E):

- What action has been undertaken by carers and others to locate the child/young person(including mobile contact, access to social networking sites)
- A description of the child and their clothing
- The child's legal status
- The circumstances of them going missing

- When the child was last seen and with whom
- A recent photograph (if possible)
- The child's mobile phone details
- Family addresses
- Known acquaintances/addresses
- Any previous history of being missing/absconding
- The name and address of the GP and the dentist
- Known indicators of risk to self or others
- Any circumstances which increase the risk to the child
- Efforts already made to locate the child
- Any medication the child is taking/medical condition
- Any other information that may be relevant or helpful
- Risk assessment pro forma (see appendix D).
- Distinguishing features i.e. marks, scars, tattoos.

5.6.1 In circumstances where police require premises to be searched, full access should be afforded police officers.

5.6.2 Even after reporting a child as missing, it should be recognised that social services and carers are responsible for children in their care at all times and that responsibility is not absolved when they have reported a child missing to the police. It is recommended that the care provider maintains regular contact with the police (at least 12 hourly) in order to updates of the progress made, in locating the child.

5.6.3 Whilst the child is missing all agencies involved should liaise with one another and discuss what ongoing actions will be taken to try and locate the child.

5.7 Risk Assessment

Decision making must be based on an individual assessment of risk. In assessing the significance of a child being missing and the risks involved, all workers must consider a range of factors including those identified below. However, this list is not exhaustive and assessments must be based on the individual circumstances of the case. The following should be taken into consideration:

- Guidance already agreed in the child's care plan;
- The age and maturity of the child;
- The legal status of the child in care/whether subject of a Court Order or Police Bail conditions
- Previous behaviour patterns/history of unauthorised absence
- Previous behaviour patterns/history of going missing
- History of self harm or concerns of self harm
- Any concerns about substance misuse;
- The vulnerability of the child due to
  - Mental or physical condition
  - Learning difficulties
  - Medical requirements
  - Gender
  - Disability
  - Ethnicity
  - Language/communication needs

Religion
Sexual orientation
Immigration status;

- Group behaviour;
- Whether the child is perceived to be running to, or from, someone or a situation;
- State of mind at time of going missing;
- Whether the child is at risk of sexual exploitation/forced marriage;
- Whether the child is involved in criminal activity;
- The time of day;
- Any other particular circumstances at the time of the incident;
- Whether the child is on the Child Protection Register.

5.7.1 A risk assessment pro forma is attached at Appendix D. Workers involved will need to agree who will complete the risk assessment pro forma and how this will be shared with the Police.

5.7.2 On notification, Police will undertake their own risk assessment in line with their internal procedures and should incorporate the risk assessment undertaken by the placing authority residential home and foster carers assessment.

5.8 Recording
Each agency should have its own guidance and recording systems in respect of children going missing. Social work staff, foster carers and police officers should refer to their individual agency guidance.

5.9 Missing from care during an external organised activity
The person in charge of the external activity will:

- Undertake an immediate risk assessment of the circumstances which should determine the actions should be taken. (The actions and timescales will depend on a number of factors including; circumstances, location, environmental factors, child and staff levels. If possible advice should be sought from senior management, e.g., if it is appropriate in the circumstances to institute a local search if staffing levels permit or is an immediate telephone call to the police necessary in order to safeguard the child. Also any other emergency services if needed.
- Notify the local Police in that area IMMEDIATELY;
- Notify the carer, the person(s) with parental responsibility, Emergency Duty team. Social Worker and Social Work Manager;
- Institute a local search if staffing levels permit;

5.9.1 In circumstances where a child or young person goes missing from a party of people on an externally organised activity a decision will need to be made as soon as possible about whether the other members of the group should return home. The person in charge of the external activity must discuss this with senior management. The police located in the area where the child has gone missing should be informed of this decision.

5.9.2 On-going communication regarding the missing child will be maintained between Children's Services in the locality where the absence occurred and or the responsible authority and the Police Force for the locality where the absence occurred.

5.10 Continued Period of Missing

Any period of missing lasting for 24 hours should be reported to a Children's Services Senior Manager by the Home Manager, Social Worker or Foster Carer the responsibility of this should be agreed by these parties.

5.10.1 Any period of missing lasting for 48 hours should be reported to the Children's Services Head of Service.

5.10.2 All absences will be subject of an on-going review process.

5.10.3 Whenever a child is missing for a period of 7 days, or sooner if required, a strategy meeting will be held in line with the All Wales Child Protection Procedures (if this has not already taken place). This meeting will be Chaired by a senior manager for children's services and attended by a police representative and any other appropriate representative from each agency.

5.10.4 Following this meeting an open dialogue should be kept between all services involved, exchanging information and providing updates as appropriate. Any actions required by the All Wales Child Protection procedures must also be applied.

5.10.5 Where a child is missing for longer than 7 days, the case should be formally reviewed weekly with the relevant parties by the appropriate team manager, and the Senior Manager kept informed. This review will include contact with the police to update each agency in respect of any developments.

5.11. Media Publicity, Communication & Planning

5.11.1 As soon as a child or young person is reported to the police as missing the first attending officer is responsible for a number of actions including placing the child as 'missing' on the Police National Computer.

5.11.2 Where circumstances dictate Police will circulate information to other forces nationally via the National Missing Persons Bureau – consideration at this stage may be given to using the U.K. Missing Persons Website (www.missingkids.co.uk)

5.11.3 The police have responsibility for the missing person enquiry and will decide whether media involvement will assist or hamper their efforts. However there can be no media involvement without the consent of those with parental responsibility.

5.11.4 When consideration is being given to informing the media, discussions must take place, as appropriate between;

- The police
- Senior Manager from Children's Services
- The Child's Social Worker
- The Parents or any other individuals with PR (where appropriate)
- Foster parents or any other relevant individuals

- Whether or not publicity should be sought in relation to the missing child;
- Which parts of the media should be involved (e.g. local press only, or wider press and television coverage); recognition should be given to the more intrusive and wider reaching nature of television involvement, and the potential impact on the child and her/his family;
- What information and level of detail should be shared (only in exceptional circumstances should the fact that a child is looked after be included);
- Whether a photograph should be provided;
- Who should speak to the media - the police will take the lead role, supported by Children's Services. All professionals and agencies involved with the child must not speak to the media unless agreed, this includes foster carers. To do so may hamper the investigation and may also breach the Data protection rights of the individuals involved. Parents and those with PR may choose to talk to the media however, they should have a clear understanding from the Police about what effect uncoordinated information in the media sphere could have.

5.11.5 Where media publicity is required, any statement made between agencies will normally be agreed between press officers. Where a missing child enquiry is to receive publicity through the media, every effort will be made to inform the parents beforehand of when the press release will be issued.

5.11.6 Within a residential unit, arrangements may need to be made to inform all children and staff within any relevant establishment(s) about the current situation. In this way distressing rumours may be avoided and additional intelligence regarding the missing child's whereabouts and associations may be obtained.

5.12 Planning for when the child is found

Agencies should consider what will happen when a child is found and plan for the child's safety and wellbeing. Multi agency discussion should include:

- Whether the child will return to the previous placement or alternative placement;
- How the child will be conveyed there;
- Who will interview/debrief the child and how will this be facilitated;
- Identification of an appropriate 'independent person' to support the child once they've been found.

5.13 Location and Return

When the child is located it is the responsibility of the placing social services department to make arrangements for transporting a child to his/her residence. The police will assist where resources allow.

The child should, where appropriate, be conveyed direct to his/her placement and not to or via a police station, unless any information suggests that a direct return is not in the child's interests (for example, if a return to the placement raised concerns about his / her safety or well-being).

5.14 Powers to detain the child once found

The police do NOT automatically have power to detain a child unless the following apply:

- The child is at risk of significant harm;
- The child is subject of a Section 31 Court Order;
- The child is in breach of bail conditions or remand conditions imposed by a court.

5.14.1 Recovery orders can be applied for in respect of a child who is on a care order, the subject of an Emergency Protection Order, or in police protection.

5.15 When a Child Returns

Parents, police, social worker and anyone else informed that the child was missing should be informed of their return. On finding a child it is important to clarify any immediate safety and / or welfare needs and take all reasonable steps to address these. It is important to give the child the opportunity to talk about their experiences as well as to ascertain why they ran away. This interview/de-brief should take place as soon as possible but at least within 3 working days. It should be determined and agreed as to who is the most appropriate person to talk to the child. This could be a police officer or social worker but where local agreement exists a suitable independent person should be utilised.

5.15.1 The purpose of this interview is to establish the following:

- Why the child/young person went missing and, in particular whether they have been subject to abuse or bullying;
- Were they encouraged to go missing as a result of grooming?
- Whether they were a victim of crime before or whilst missing;
- Where and by whom they have been 'harboured';
- Obtain any information which may lead to their early discovery should they disappear again;
- To put in place any support to prevent the child/young person from running away again
- To provide information on local services/support available to the young person.

5.15.2 The interview should take account of the child's mental and physical condition. If there are any concerns, or if the child makes allegations of sexual or physical abuse a medical examination should be arranged, in consultation with the local Consultant Child Protection Paediatrician. The interview should consider:

- The child's explanation of the absence.
- Physical symptoms, suggestive of physical, sexual assault or substance misuse.
- Possession of large amounts of money or unexplained property.

5.15.3 In circumstances where the interview identifies a child has suffered, or is at risk of suffering significant harm the All Wales Child Protection Procedures must be followed. As part of these procedures a strategy meeting may be required which will identify whether child protection enquiries need to be undertaken and/or respond to the risks identify. It may be appropriate to convene a Looked After Child (LAC) review at this point. This is particularly important in the case of repeated instances of a child going missing.

5.15.4 Agencies must be mindful that many situations where children have been missing from home will require continued multi-agency involvement and support beyond the stage of initial inquiries and intervention.

5.15.5 If a Looked After child/young person has gone missing they must always be offered contact with an Advocacy Service and given a list of local information and telephone numbers in order to safeguard their welfare.

National Advocacy Service MEIC Phone 080880 23456 SMS txt: 84001
www.meiccymru.org
Children's Commissioner for Wales Advice and Support Service
Free phone: 0808 801 1000 Free text: 80800 Email: advice@childcomwales.org.uk

6. Process for Children missing from home

6.1 Children Who are Known to the Social Services Department
When a child is reported missing, police officers need to enquire whether they are already known to the social services department. Whilst living at home they may be subject to a statutory order giving the social services department shared parental responsibility, they may be on the Child Protection Register and therefore subject to a protection plan or have been identified as a child in need of services and support.

6.1.2 When a child's name is on the Child Protection Register, police officers and social workers should refer to the All Wales Child Protection Procedures section 3.27.6 for guidance. These circumstances will necessitate information sharing and close liaison between police officers and social workers.

6.1.3 In all circumstances consideration must be given to the convening of a strategy meeting as soon as possible, but at least within 7 working days. The need for, and timing of such a meeting will be determined by the assessed level of risk.

6.1.4 Indications that a child has suffered or is at risk of suffering significant harm will prompt the convening of a child protection conference.

6.2 Children not Currently Known to the Social Services Department
Where a child is reported missing and not currently known to the social services department, police officers need to consider making a referral to the department for an assessment of need/risk as a consequence of the child's experiences whilst missing or the situation on their return home.

6.3 Informing Other Police Forces – Publicity
If a child is missing from home consideration of an appropriate publicity strategy, and the process to be followed, is outlined in section 5.9 of this protocol.

6.4 When a Child Returns
Parents, police, social worker and anyone else informed that the child is missing should be informed of their return. It is important to give the child the opportunity to talk about their experiences as well as to ascertain why they ran away. This interview/de-brief should take place as soon as possible but at least within 3 working days. It should therefore be determined and agreed as to who is the most appropriate person to talk to the child. This could be a police officer, social worker, teacher or independent person. The purpose of this interview is to establish the following:

- Why the child/young person went missing and, in particular whether they have been subject to abuse or bullying;
- Whether they were a victim of crime before or while missing;
- Where and by whom they have been 'harboured';
- Obtain any information which may lead to their early discovery should they disappear again;
- To put in place any support to prevent the child/young person from running away again;
- To provide information on local services/support available to the young person.

6.4.1 The assessment should take account of the child's mental and physical condition. If there are any concerns a medical examination should be arranged, in consultation with the local Consultant Child Protection Paediatrician. The assessment should consider:

- The child's explanation of the absence;
- Physical symptoms, suggestive of physical, sexual assault, or substance misuse;
- Possession of large amounts of money or expensive items.

6.4.2 In circumstances where the assessment identifies a child has suffered, or is at risk of suffering significant harm a strategy meeting will be required to plan child protection enquiries if appropriate, or respond to the risks identified. This is particularly important in the case of repeated instances of a child going missing.

6.4.3 Agencies must be mindful that many situations where children have been missing from home will require continued multi-agency involvement and support beyond the stage of initial inquiries and intervention.

7. Strategic Monitoring Arrangements and Overview

7.1 Individual agencies should follow their own guidance and procedures in respect of monitoring and recording incidence of absence.

7.2 The Local Safeguarding Children Board will have responsibility for reviewing agency data of children missing and making recommendations for improved practices where necessary.

8. The role of individual agencies

8.1 All agencies have a responsibility to safeguard children and young people and to comply with these protocols. Respective roles are outlined below:

8.2 The Social Services Department
The social services department's responsibilities in respect of safeguarding children and promoting their welfare are outlined in the Children Acts 1989 and 2004.

8.2.1 In every case where a child has been missing from home three times in twelve months, Social Services must convene a strategy meeting in accordance with the All Wales Child Protection Procedures. The role of social services is to co-ordinate multi agency arrangements to respond to children who go missing.

8.3 The Police
The investigation into a missing person begins at the point of first notification to the police.

8.3.1 The priorities of the police service in responding to a report of missing persons can be summarised as follows:

- To ensure that every report of missing persons is risk assessed so the missing persons who may be vulnerable or represent high risk are immediately identified;

- To investigate reports of missing persons;
- To have clear policies in place which describe organisational roles and responses to report of missing persons;
- To adopt a pro-active multi-agency approach in dealing with missing persons;
- To support the needs of the family, those close to the missing person and the community;
- To ensure staff are adequately trained to investigate missing person cases;
- To preserve evidence where a crime has been committed.

8.4 Education

Teachers and other staff in schools also have duties under the Children Acts 1989 and 2004. They are in close and regular contact with children who may be at risk of running or who have run away. They should be aware of the risks that children may be drawn into and be alert to changes in patterns of behaviour. Any concerns should be raised with the school's designated teacher for child protection, who may then need to refer to the police and/or social services and advise the school's attached education welfare officer.

8.4.1 The National Framework for Personal, Social Education provides clear opportunities for teachers to discuss personal, social and moral issues and to assist children to develop personal and social skills. Teachers will be able to direct children to contact points for those who have problems at home or elsewhere, this includes the school based counselling services.

8.4.2 Where children have been missing from home and are being reintegrated into school, school staff should be aware of any identified needs.

8.5 Health

The Health Service has an important part to play in working with children and young people involved in running away from home. If a young person presents for a health service and if it becomes apparent that they have been involved in running away from home or from Local Authority care, then the Health Service should make a referral to social services.

8.5.1 If a young person runs away from a hospital the police should be notified by the hospital staff who would make a risk assessment in accordance with this protocol.

8.5.2 Every school has an attached school nurse who can provide advice on a range of health related issues.

8.6 Youth Service and Voluntary Sector

The Youth Service and Voluntary Sector have an important part to play in working with children who go missing. Due to their lifestyle and past family experiences, many young people are reluctant to engage with other statutory services and often find the Youth Service and Voluntary Agencies more approachable sources of help. The Youth Service and the Voluntary Sector has a duty to identify and refer concerns to Social Services and to contribute to multi agency working.

9. Agency Signatures

Agency	Name	Status	Date	Signature

Appendix A Matrix: Actions, Responsibilities, Timescales and Monitoring

Children Missing from Local Authority Accommodation

CIRCUMSTANCES	ACTION	RESPONSIBILITY	TIMESCALES	MONITORING
At the point of admission to accommodation	• Consider risks and vulnerability re child missing – pre-planning arrangements (see 5.2.1). • To be recorded on the child's Care Plan. • Work in accordance with 'Towards a Stable Life and a Brighter Future' Regulations.	Social worker; Team Manager, Carer; Child / Young Person; Family	First and subsequent Reviews [LAC]	At all stages of the process, police and social services should comply with their agency recording and monitoring guidelines • Looked After Children [LAC] Assessing, Planning & Reviewing process • Supervision • LAC and file audits • YOS Planning Forum • CSSIW Inspections

CIRCUMSTANCES	ACTION	RESPONSIBILITY	TIMESCALES	MONITORING
Child missing: Absconder Child subject of criminal Court Order [i.e remand, curfew, bail or conditions of residence] or Secure Order	• Report child missing to the police (see 5.4 and 5.5) • Inform social worker • Inform YOS (where applicable YOS should liaise with the appropriate electronic surveillance company)	Carer; unit worker	Immediate	• Looked After Children [LAC] Assessing, Planning & Reviewing process • Supervision • LAC and file audits
Child Missing a. Unauthorised absence	Risk Assessment Taking into consideration all aspects noted at 5.4. and 5.5 to be recorded on Assessment pro forma, as at Appendix D. Young person categorised as 'unauthorised absence' – risk assessment ongoing	Carer and social worker / team manager Carer and social worker / team manager	Immediate Ongoing	• Looked After Children [LAC] Assessing, Planning & Reviewing process • Supervision • LAC and file audits
b. 'Missing' children	• Child/young person to be reported to the police as missing by the carer • Social worker to be informed	Carer	High risk – after 6 hours or by midnight of the first day of absence	• LAC processes as above
b. Child's name on the Child	In addition to the above – follow All Wales Child Protection Procedures	All agencies involved with the family	Immediately	• Child Protection Review Conference

CIRCUMSTANCES	ACTION	RESPONSIBILITY	TIMESCALES	MONITORING
Protection Register				• Supervision • LAC and file audits •
Recording	Each agency to follow agency guidelines in respect of recording	Police and social services	Ongoing	• Police Command & Control system • LAC Planning & Review system • Supervision • LAC and file audits •
Media – informing other Police Forces	Police will inform other forces via the National Missing Persons Bureau – consideration given to use of UK Missing Persons Website	Police Officer leading the enquiry	After child missing for more than 12 hours	• Police Command & Control system • LAC Planning & Review system • Supervision • LAC and file audits
Media	Informing local media	Police lead role – Police Officer leading the enquiry, following discussions with social services group manager and those with parental responsibility	Ongoing consideration	Police Command & Control system

Child Found	a. Return to placement: (Unless information suggests that to do so would likely place the child at risk of significant harm) Parents and all relevant agencies to be informed Child to be interviewed by person independent of the placement. The purpose being to form an assessment of the absence.	Social worker Tasks to be agreed between Police and social services Person independent of placement. Responsibility to be agreed between police and social worker – child always to be offered contact with Children's Advocacy Project	As soon as possible Immediately Within three working days	• Police Command & Control system • LAC Planning & Review system • Supervision • LAC and file audits
Particular concerns arising from assessment of absence e.g. multiple instances of absence	Strategy meeting is held and / or consideration of LAC review	Social Services Manager	Within 7 days of absence or according to the risk assessment	• Strategy minutes • LAC Planning & Review system • Supervision • LAC and file audits

Child missing for 7 days	Strategy meeting is held	Social Services Manager	After 7 days absence	• Strategy minutes • LAC Planning & Review system • Supervision • LAC and file audits •
Child missing for longer period	• Weekly review by Team Manager • The Group Manager is informed • Weekly liaison with police	Social Services Manager	Weekly for the duration of child missing	• Police Command & Control system • LAC Planning & Review system • LAC and file audit

Children Missing from Home

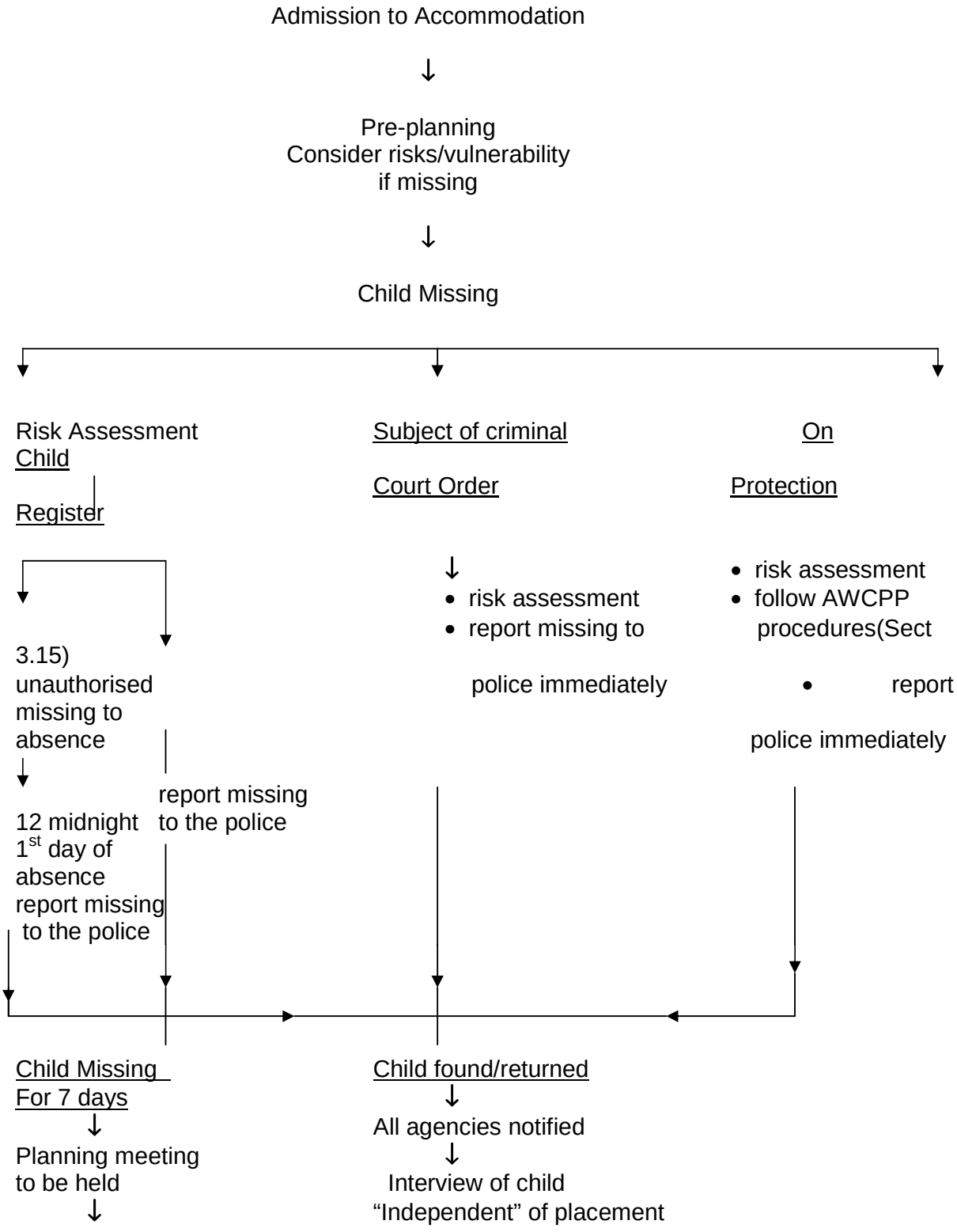
CIRCUMSTANCES	ACTION	RESPONSIBILITY	TIMESCALES	MONITORING
Child reported missing to the police	Police to enquire if child is known to social services	Police officer leading the enquiry	Immediately	Police Command & Control system
Child's name on the Child Protection Register	Follow All Wales Child Protection Procedures	All agencies involved with the family	Immediately	Individual agencies supervision and monitoring systems Child Protection Register review system
Child missing	a. Risk Assessment, taking into account all considerations indicated at section 5.5	Police and social services, if child and family known to them	Immediate and ongoing	Police Command & Control system Social Services Recording & Supervision process
	b. Consideration of a strategy meeting to be held based on assessment of risk	Police officer leading the enquiry/social services team manager	Immediate and ongoing	Police Command & Control system Social services recording & supervision process
	c. Inform other police forces	Police officer leading the enquiry	After child is missing for more than 12 hours	Police Command & Control system
	d. Media	Police lead role. Police officer leading the	Ongoing consideration	Social services via recording and supervision process

CIRCUMSTANCES	ACTION	RESPONSIBILITY	TIMESCALES	MONITORING
		enquiry, following discussion with Social services group manager (if social services involved) and those with parental responsibility		
Child/young person who has been missing x 3 in a twelve month period.	Strategy Discussion / Meeting to be held	Social services and police	Within 7 days of last absence or according to the risk assessment	Social Services and Police records of strategy discussion
Child found/returned	a. Inform all agencies, persons notified of child's absence b. Child to be interviewed, de-briefing assessment of absence (to be agreed with those with parental responsibility) c. Police consideration of referral to social services, if not already involved d. Consideration to be given to the convening of a strategy meeting	Police officer leading the enquiry Police officer leading the enquiry and/or referral to Social services (see below) Police officer leading the enquiry Police officer leading the enquiry/social services team manager	Immediate on child's return Within 3 working days of child's return Within 3 working days of child's return Within 3 working days of child's return	Police Command & Control system Police Command & Control system Police Command & Control system Police Command & Control System social services recording and supervision process

Appendix B Flow Charts

CHILDREN LOOKED AFTER

Outline of the process for managing concerns



Continued missing
Weekly review.
Social Services Group
Manager to be kept informed.

↓

Consideration of planning meeting.

CHILDREN MISSING FROM HOME

Outline of the process for managing concerns

Child Missing

↓

Reported to the police

↓

Check if known to Social Services

↓

Risk Assessment

Police
Social Services if known

Child on Child Protection Register.
(Follow All Wales Child Protection Procedures Section 3.15)

Child Found

↓

Police notify Social Services (if involved).

↓

Child interviewed/assessment of absence (police and/or discussion with social services if involved)

↓

Consideration of:-

i referral to social services (if not already known).

ii Convening of a strategy meeting

Appendix C: Information Sheet for Young People

WHAT WILL HAPPEN IF YOU GO MISSING?

The most important thing for everyone is that you are safe and well and that you feel you can talk to someone about ANYTHING that is wrong

- **What is meant by 'missing'?**

  You are missing if you go away from where you are meant to be without permission and fail to tell people where you are going or who you are with.

- **What will happen if you go missing?**

  The people who look after you will ask your friends and family for any information. They will look in your room for clues to where you may be or whom you are with, and may contact people who you might be with. The police will be told straight away if there are concerns for your safety.

- **What happens if we don't find you after a while?**

  If they haven't already been informed, then police will be told, given your name and information about what you are wearing and a recent picture, if there is one available.

  A search may be organized and it could be that your picture and details about you might go into the newspapers in order to help find you.

- **What happens when you are found?**

We think it is important that you should be given the chance to talk to someone about what is troubling you and may have caused you to run away.

You will be returned home, unless it is agreed that it would not be safe for you to do so at that time. If the social worker, foster parent responsible for you or your parent find you, he or she will transport you home.

- **Will anything else happen?**

If you are injured or unwell, you will be checked by a doctor or nurse
If at a later stage you feel you want to talk to someone you can. This might be an Advocacy Service, teacher, carer or police officer etc. It is important it is someone you trust.

Appendix D: Risk Assessment Proforma

CHILDREN MISSING FROM LOCAL AUTHORITY ACCOMMODATION

RISK ASSESSMENT

Name of Child:……

D.O. B/Age: ……..

Legal Status: ……..

HomeAddress:…….
.

……..

Care Address:
……..

……..

Date & time absence was identified:……

---

1. Is there guidance in respect of actions to be taken already agreed in the child's Care Plan? **YES/NO**

   If yes, give details:

   _____

2. Age & Maturity:

   Note down comments in respect of the child's age and maturity.

   Detail:

   _____

3. Is there a history of:

i. Going missing? **YES/NO**
ii. Self harm?
iii. Substance misuse ?

If yes, give details:

_____

YES/NO

4. Is the child particularly vulnerable in any way - i.e. mental or physical condition?

If yes, give details:

_____

5. Is there any information about the child's state of mind at the time of going missing?

YES/NO/DON'T KNOW

If yes, give details:

_____

6. Is there any indication/information at this stage to indicate why the child has gone missing (i.e running from, or to, a particular situation/person, influenced by peers)?

YES/NO/DON'T KNOW

If yes, give details:

_____

7. Is it felt the child may be particularly at risk of sexual exploitation?

YES/NO/DON'T KNOW

If yes, give details:

---

8. Has the child been known to be involved in criminal activity? **YES/NO**

If yes, give details:

---

9. ASSESSMENT OF RISKS
(with reasons given)

---

10. DECISION AND ACTION REQUIRED

---

11. Date & time the child was reported missing to the police:

_____

12. If returned before being reported missing, time of child's return:

_____

Signature of Social Worker: ……**Date**……...**Team**……

Signature of Team Manager……**Date**

Appendix E: Care Planning

Appendix 2

Section 1 to be completed during care planning.

Personal Detail			
Surname		Date of Birth	
Forename		Gender	
Middle Name		Preferred Name	
Home Address			
		Post Code	

Age		Alias/Nickname	
Place of Birth		Home Telephone	
Mobile and Network Provider			
Missing From Address			
		Post Code	

Photograph

Family			
Next of Kin Name		Telephone	
Address			
		Post Code	

Nearest Relative Name		Telephone	
Address			
		Post Code	

Main Carer Name and Relationship		Telephone	
Address			
		Post Code	

School/ Occupation			
NI Number		Occupation	
Unemployed Y/N			
School/ Employer		Telephone	
School/Employment Address			
		Post Code	

Bank			
Sort Code		Acct Number	
Card Type		Card Number	
Bank Name		Bank Phone Number	
Bank Address			
		Post Code	

Description			
Ethnicity		Nationality	
Hair Type (e.g. Long)		Hair Colour Natural	
Hair Feature (e.g. curly)		Hair Colour Artificial	
Dyed Y / N		Greying Y / N	
Facial Hair		Facial Hair Colour	
Body Hair		Body Hair Colour	
Eyebrows Feature		Eyebrows Colour	
Nasal Hair		Nasal Hair Colour	
Ear Hair		Ear Hair Colour	
Eyes Description		Eyes Colour	
Glasses description		Glasses used For	
Mannerisms (Stutter limp, deaf etc)		Build / Weight	
Height from e.g. 6’		Height to e.g. 6’4	
Accent National		Accent regional	

Accent local		Complexion	
Handed		Shoe size.	

Distinguishing Features Include Marks scars piercings amputations and tattoos. E.g. Tattoo, lion, lower right arm and any further description.

Medical			
GP Name		Telephone	
Address		Post Code	

Dentist Name		Telephone	
Address		Post Code	

Social Worker Name		Telephone	
Address		Post Code	

Psychiatric Nurse		Telephone	
Address		Post Code	

Care co-ordinator		Telephone	
Address			
		Post Code	

Other		Telephone	
Address			
		Post Code	

Passport.			
Valid Passport Y/N		Type e.g. UK	
Passport Number		Expiry Date	
Location e.g. Home address			

Places Frequented.

Associates.				
Name	Age/DOB	Address	Telephone	Association Eg Friend

Medication Include potential effect of withdrawal from medication.

Addictions

Mental Health Order.
Include expiry date

Care Status.
Include expiry date

Missing History If previously missing and not reported to police location (s) found.
Include expiry date

Section 2. To be completed where a person is deemed missing

Reported to Police			
Date		Time	
Reported By		Telephone No	

Last Seen			
At Time		On Date	
At Location			
Seen By. Name		Telephone Number	
Address			
		Post Code	

Clothing and Jewellery			
Item E.g. T-shirt / shoes.	Colour (s)	Make/Logo	Other description

Property Carried			
Item E.g. Holdall.	Colour (s)	Make/Logo	Other description

Enquiries / Searches		
Action	Comment	Conducted by
Room Search (Describe extent)		
Building Search (Describe extent)		
Outbuilding Search (describe extent)		
Grounds search (Describe extent)		
Next of Kin contacted		

Social Worker Contacted		
Home Manager contacted		
Other.		

Appendix F: Useful Telephone Numbers (To be inserted by individual LSCB areas