

CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD – April 2017

Title of paper:	The Response to Missing Children		
Director(s)/ Corporate Director(s):	Helen Blackman – Director, Children’s Integrated Services	Wards affected:	All
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Other colleagues who have provided input:			
Date of consultation with Portfolio Holder(s) (if relevant)			
Relevant Council Plan Key Theme:			
Strategic Regeneration and Development			<input type="checkbox"/>
Schools			<input type="checkbox"/>
Planning and Housing			<input type="checkbox"/>
Community Services			<input type="checkbox"/>
Energy, Sustainability and Customer			<input type="checkbox"/>
Jobs, Growth and Transport			<input type="checkbox"/>
Adults, Health and Community Sector			<input type="checkbox"/>
Children, Early Intervention and Early Years			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Leisure and Culture			<input type="checkbox"/>
Resources and Neighbourhood Regeneration			<input type="checkbox"/>
Summary of issues (including benefits to citizens/service users):			
<p>This report sets out the local arrangements in place to respond to children who go missing from home or care. These arrangements have been established because children who go missing have a range of vulnerabilities, including the risk of potential sexual exploitation.</p> <p>The current local protocol uses the following terms:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Missing - those children whose whereabouts are not known or who are deemed vulnerable for other reasons, e.g. concern regarding possible sexual exploitation. Absent - i.e. those children who are not where they are supposed to be. <p>These definitions will be amended in the near future to reflect changes to national Police guidance.</p>			
Recommendation(s):			
1	To note the content of this report.		

1 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1.1 Corporate Parenting Board members are asked to note this report given the implications for the safety and well-being of children in care.

2 BACKGROUND (INCLUDING OUTCOMES OF CONSULTATION)

- 2.1 Children from all backgrounds will go missing, but there are some groups more likely to run away than others. Research suggests that nationally, 10,000 children run away from care, home or foster placements each year. These children may face an increased risk of significant harm, including the potential of being exposed to the risk of alcohol and drugs, criminal and sexual exploitation.
- 2.2 As indicated in the previous report to the Corporate Parenting Board regarding missing children (March 2016), there are well established arrangements to respond to missing children in Nottingham City. These are based on effective partnership working with key agencies, particularly the Police. This work is undertaken in accordance with both national and local practice guidance, particularly the Nottingham City Safeguarding Children Board (NCSCB) and the Missing Children Protocol, which is jointly agreed between Nottingham City Safeguarding Children Board and the corresponding Board in the County.
- 2.3 The protocol recognises the importance of identifying and targeting the response to missing children who are most vulnerable. A key mechanism for doing this has, until recently, been a differentiation between children who are missing (i.e. those children whose whereabouts are not known or who are deemed vulnerable for other reasons, e.g. concern regarding possible sexual exploitation) and absent (i.e. those children who are not where they are supposed to be). These were nationally agreed definitions that reflected Association of Chief Police Officer (ACPO) guidance.
- 2.4 The definition of absent has come under increasing scrutiny, due to concerns that a number of vulnerable children were not being fully safeguarded as they were deemed absent rather than missing. As a consequence, in November 2016 the National College of Policing issued further guidance which removed the term absent and introduced a graded risk scale in relation to reports of missing people. Although we plan to update the local practice guidance in response to this development, it is important to note that within Nottingham City Council we have consistently adopted the same approach to children reported missing to the Police, irrespective of whether they were categorised as missing or absent.
- 2.5 Local arrangements are comprised of a number of connected elements:
- Strategic – The NCSCB has a multi-agency Missing Children sub-group. This group ensures that there is effective communication and co-ordination of local activity. The Board also receives performance information in relation to Missing Children.
 - Operational – Work with missing children takes place in the context of the wider safeguarding arrangements. Other safeguarding measures make a direct contribution to promoting the safety of vulnerable children who go missing, e.g. the Multi Agency Sexual Exploitation (MASE) panel receives information about children who are at risk of sexual exploitation and also go missing.

- In addition to the wider arrangements, there are specific measures in place for missing children. Every month there is a meeting between Police and Children's Social Care staff, to discuss those children who have been reported missing most frequently in the previous period. A manager from one of Nottingham City's residential units attends these meetings. Where a young person is identified as being particularly vulnerable, a meeting will take place to look at how best to support and protect them. This meeting will be chaired by a Team Manager or Independent Reviewing Officer and will involve staff from all agencies who work with the child and family.

Return Interviews

- 2.6 The Police share information about all young people who are reported missing with Nottingham City Council. The Police also notify Nottingham City when a young person has returned. This information sharing takes place with Nottingham City's Missing Children team, which is a small team that is line-managed by the Child Sexual Exploitation Co-ordinator (CSE Co-ordinator).
- 2.7 If a child goes missing on two or more occasions, or only once but is identified as being vulnerable, they will be offered a return interview. All return interviews are undertaken by someone independent, i.e. not responsible for the day to day care of the young person. Return interviews for children in care are always undertaken by someone independent of the placement where the young person lives.
- 2.8 The primary purpose of a return interview is to identify / address safeguarding needs and signpost the young person and their family to support. Key to this is identifying the factors which led to the young person going missing. Consideration is given to both push factors, things that are causing the young person to be unhappy or feel unsafe, or pull factors, things outside the home which are attracting the young person.
- 2.9 There is a secondary benefit from return interviews in that they provide potentially valuable insights into the experiences of the young person who went missing, which can be used to help protect other young people. Prior to the transition to the new IT system (Liquid Logic), the CSE Co-ordinator had been reviewing return interviews and cross-referencing the information in them. This has enabled us to identify some young people who were missing but not being reported to the Police, potential locations where young people may congregate and potential adults of concern. This facility was not available on the initial transfer to Liquid Logic.
- 2.10 The Ofsted inspection in January 2017 identified the need to increase the take up of return interviews, and ensure that they were all being reviewed. We have already taken a number of measures in response to this:
- The CSE Coordinator is once again able to review return interviews, and authorise them.
 - We have worked with the Police to revise the information that they give to families and young people, when a young person goes missing. The revised information makes the expectation that a return interview will take place much clearer.
 - We have revised the letter sent to parents regarding return interviews to similarly strengthen this.

- We have drafted a Regional Protocol for missing children, which has been through one round of consultation with other local authorities and is therefore expected to be agreed shortly.

Further work is planned to build on these developments:

- We will be delivering training regarding return interviews for all staff who undertake them.
- We plan to introduce a specific target, for the take up of return interviews, into the Children's Integrated Services Directorate delivery plan.

2.11 As reflected in the information above, the response to children who go missing in Nottingham is multi-agency in nature with all key organisations fully engaged in supporting vulnerable children.

3 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED IN MAKING RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1 None.

4 FINANCE COMMENTS (INCLUDING IMPLICATIONS AND VALUE FOR MONEY/VAT)

4.1 There are no direct financial implications or value for money issues arising from this report.

5 LEGAL AND PROCUREMENT COMMENTS (INCLUDING RISK MANAGEMENT ISSUES, AND LEGAL, CRIME AND DISORDER ACT AND PROCUREMENT IMPLICATIONS)

5.1 None.

6 STRATEGIC ASSETS & PROPERTY COMMENTS (FOR DECISION RELATING TO ALL PROPERTY ASSETS AND ASSOCIATED INFRASTRUCTURE) (AREA COMMITTEE REPORTS ONLY)

6.1 None.

7 EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

7.1 Has the equality impact of the proposals in this report been assessed?

No



An EIA is not required because:

(Please explain why an EIA is not necessary)

The report does not contain proposals or financial decisions.

8 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS OTHER THAN PUBLISHED WORKS OR THOSE DISCLOSING CONFIDENTIAL OR EXEMPT INFORMATION

8.1 None.

9 PUBLISHED DOCUMENTS REFERRED TO IN COMPILING THIS REPORT

9.1 National College of Policing guidance
<https://www.app.college.police.uk/app-content/major-investigation-and-public-protection/missing-persons/>

9.2 Nottingham City Safeguarding Children Board Missing Children Protocol