

CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD - 21st March 2016

Title of paper:	NCSCB Missing Update Report	
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Other colleagues who have provided input:		
Date of consultation with Portfolio Holder(s) (if relevant)	8th March 2016	
Relevant Council Plan Strategic Priority:		
Cutting unemployment by a quarter		<input type="checkbox"/>
Cut crime and anti-social behaviour		<input type="checkbox"/>
Ensure more school leavers get a job, training or further education than any other City		<input type="checkbox"/>
Your neighbourhood as clean as the City Centre		<input type="checkbox"/>
Help keep your energy bills down		<input type="checkbox"/>
Good access to public transport		<input type="checkbox"/>
Nottingham has a good mix of housing		<input type="checkbox"/>
Nottingham is a good place to do business, invest and create jobs		<input type="checkbox"/>
Nottingham offers a wide range of leisure activities, parks and sporting events		<input type="checkbox"/>
Support early intervention activities		<input type="checkbox"/>
Deliver effective, value for money services to our citizens		<input checked="" 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 as children who go missing are potentially vulnerable</p>		
Recommendation(s):		
1	To consider the work being carried out by Nottingham City Council in supporting children who go missing from care and from home.	

1. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

1.0 Corporate Parenting Panel 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 go missing in a variety of circumstances. Local practice guidance published by the Nottingham City Safeguarding Children Board recognises the importance of differentiating between these circumstances in order to identify the most vulnerable children and young people. A key aspect of this is differentiating 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). The full definitions, which are set out in statutory guidance, are as follows

- **Missing child:** a child reported as missing to the police by their family or carers and whose whereabouts cannot be established and where the circumstances are out of character or the context suggests the child may be subject of crime or at risk of harm to themselves or another.
- **Absent child:** a child reported as missing to the police by their family or carers but deemed to be absent by the police as they are not at the place they are expected or required to be.

2.2 Although children from all backgrounds will go missing, there are some groups more likely to runaway than others. For example, nationally, 10,000 children run away from care home or foster placements each year.¹ 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.

2.3 Approximately 250,000 people go missing every year in the United Kingdom. Estimates suggest that roughly two-thirds of all missing cases relate to children and young people, meaning around 140,000 people under the age of 18 go missing each year.²

2.4 In Nottingham City there are well established arrangements to respond to missing children. 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) Missing Children Protocol.

2.6 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 coordination of local activity. The group also examines local practice in relation to children missing from education.
- Operational – Work with missing children takes place in the context of the wider safeguarding arrangements. Measures which have been previously considered by the Scrutiny Committee make a direct contribution to promoting the safety of vulnerable children who go missing, e.g. the MASE panel receives information about children who are at risk of sexual exploitation who 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. It has recently been agreed that a manager from one of the City Council’s residential unit will attend these meetings to ensure the needs of children living in residential settings are

¹ The Children’s Society, <http://www.childrensociety.org.uk/news-and-blogs/our-blog/why-international-missing-childrens-day-matters>

² Missing People, registered charity. <https://www.missingpeople.org.uk/about-us/about-the-issue/policy-parliamentary-work/69-auto-generate-from-title.html>

given ongoing consideration. Further elements of the response to individual children are set out in the following section.

The systems in place to effectively respond to children who go missing or absent.

- 2.7 The Police share information about all children who are reported missing with the City Council. This information differentiates between those children reported missing and those who are identified as absent. The Police also notify the City Council when children who have returned. This information sharing takes place with the City Council Missing Children team, which is a small team that is now line-managed by the Child Sexual Exploitation Coordinator.
- 2.8 When a child has returned their family will either be written to, offering information and guidance, or, where concerns are more serious a return interview will be offered. There is a differentiated response as most young people who are reported missing are absent for very short periods. Some young people however are more vulnerable e.g. go missing on more than one occasion or are identified as being at risk of CSE. It is important therefore that there is a proportionate response. For children who are in care these arrangements are replicated but reports go to the allocated social worker.
- 2.9 The purpose of a return interview is to offer support to the young person and their family and to identify/address safeguarding needs. All return interviews are undertaken by someone independent, i.e. not responsible for the day to day care of the young person. Return interviews are always undertaken by someone independent of the placement where the young person lives.
- 2.10 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 an Independent Reviewing Officer and will involve staff from all agencies who work with the child and family.

Developing an increased understanding and awareness of missing children, their parents and carers.

- 2.11 The missing children sub-group of the Safeguarding Children Board receives quarterly reports about the number of young people reported as missing and so can identify any local trends or developments. This identifies numbers of children who go missing from care as a specific category. At an individual level return interviews provide an insight into the needs and challenges faced by children, young people and their carers.
- 2.12 Further work is planned to develop a system of analysing the information in return interviews to provide a more qualitative insight into the local profile of children and young people who go missing. This will also provide useful intelligence which will be shared with Police colleagues to further strengthen the response to children who go missing.

Is there a multi-agency response to meeting the needs of children and young people who are missing or absent?

- 2.13 As will be seen from 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. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS (INCLUDING VALUE FOR MONEY/VAT)

4.1 None

5. RISK MANAGEMENT ISSUES (INCLUDING LEGAL IMPLICATIONS AND CRIME AND DISORDER ACT IMPLICATIONS)

5.1 None

6. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Has the equality impact been assessed?

Not needed (report does not contain proposals or financial decisions)

No

Yes – Equality Impact Assessment attached

Due regard should be given to the equality implications identified in the EIA.

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

7.1 Nottingham City and Nottinghamshire Safeguarding Children Board Missing Children Protocol.
http://nottinghamshirescb.proceduresonline.com/files/ch_miss_home_care_it_prot.pdf

8. PUBLISHED DOCUMENTS REFERRED TO IN COMPILING THIS REPORT

8.1 Statutory Guidance on Children who Run Away or go Missing from Home or Care (Department for Education, January 2014).
https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/307867/Statutory_Guidance_-_Missing_from_care_3_.pdf