Newcastle Safeguarding Children Board

Missing Children and Young People protocol
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1. Introduction

This protocol refers to situations when children go missing from home or when children who are looked after by the local authority go missing from residential or foster care. It defines the roles and responsibilities of agencies and staff concerned with safeguarding children and young people.

This document should be read as guidance, which cannot anticipate every situation. Police, Children’s Social Care (CSC) staff and foster carers should use their professional judgement to take any action they feel necessary to protect the safety of the child based on an assessment of risk for each individual child.

All parties involved in the protocol should be clear about the definition of a “missing person”, and discourage the casual reporting of ‘unauthorised absences’ as missing persons.

Children who go missing may place themselves and others at risk. As well as short term risks there are also long term implications, adults with serious problems have often run away as children.

The reasons for their absence are often varied and complex and cannot be viewed in isolation from their home circumstances and their experiences of care.

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.
2. **Definitions**

Where this protocol refers to a ‘child’ or ‘children’, these terms include young people under the age of 18 years.

**Missing**

For the purposes of this protocol, where the child’s location or reason for absence is unknown and/or there is cause for concern for the child because of their vulnerability, or there is a potential danger to the public they should be categorised as missing. A child or young person who is absent should be classified as missing if one or more of the criteria below applies:

- There is identified or imminent risk of the child being exposed to significant harm
- The child poses a risk of significant harm to others
- There are suspicious circumstances
- The absence is out of character or unusual behaviour
- There are indications that the child has already come to harm
- There are indications that the episode is not a deliberate or careless act
- There are indications that the child
  - Is not expected to return within reasonable time limits
  - Is not staying at homes of others known to them
  - Will not be easily located

A child in this category must be reported to the police.

**Unauthorised absence from Local Authority Care**

Clearly some children absent themselves for a short period and then return and during their absence their whereabouts was known. Sometimes children stay out longer than agreed, either on purpose or accidentally, and may be testing boundaries. This kind of boundary testing is within the range of normal teenage behaviour and not necessarily considered a risk.

Whether the absence is careless or deliberate, if there is no apparent risk for their immediate safety it may fall within the unauthorised absence category. If a child’s whereabouts are known then they cannot be ‘missing’. Unauthorised absences must be carefully monitored however as the child may subsequently go missing.

For example, in some circumstances young people staying with a friend without prior agreement may not be ‘at risk’ and it would be inappropriate to flag this event as a missing from care incident or report it to the police.

In situations where a child is absent without permission the first response may be that providers of their care along with any relevant staff from their responsible authority, which could include the child’s social worker, should act like a responsible parent and take all practical steps to establish the child’s location and to ensure that they return to their placement without delay.
A child who is absent should be classified as unauthorised absence if the criteria below apply:

- They have deliberately or carelessly absented themselves
- They are likely to return of their own accord or they are staying with others known to them
- They are likely to be easily located
- They are unlikely to suffer or cause significant harm whilst absent

The person’s absence must be kept under review and if he/she has not returned within a reasonable period of time, (generally after 8 hours) serious consideration must be given to reporting them as missing. The responsibility for managing this type of absence lies with the staff of the care home or the foster carer.

A child in this category should not routinely be reported to the Police.

**Children missing from education**

Children missing education are defined as

- Children of compulsory school age who are not on a school role, not placed in alternative provision by a local authority, and who are not receiving a suitable education at home.

Local authorities must have robust measures in place to identify quickly when a child is not receiving a suitable education. When a child is absent from education it is possible that this is due to other behaviour, associations or activity that puts them at risk of harm. The local authority should investigate all cases of children missing from education.

A child in this category should be referred to the Police or CSC where appropriate.

**Absconder**

An absconder is a child or young person who is absent without the permission of the responsible person and who is either, a Ward of Court, on a Care Order or Emergency Protection Order or on Remand, (to local authority accommodation).

A child in this category must be reported to the Police as soon as possible and treated as a wanted person.
3. **Risk Assessment**

In assessing the significance of any child’s absence a risk assessment must be conducted.

Where a child is missing, relevant staff from the Local Authority and Police, must consider the above definitions and take into consideration guidance already agreed on and incorporated into the child’s care plan and factors listed below, when assessing risk:

- The legal status of the person in care (e.g. Emergency Protection Order, Remanded, Curfew conditions etc.
- Previous behaviour patterns. (Such as a history of absence and quick return)
- The child’s state of mind/perceived risk. (Is child likely to self-harm or commit suicide? Does child see risks in a balanced way?)
- Group behaviour at the time of the absence.
- Whether the child is perceived as running to someone or running from a situation.
- Any physical or learning disabilities the child may have which increase the risk to them.
- Is the child vulnerable due to age or infirmity or any other factor?
- Is the child suspected to be the victim of a significant crime in progress, e.g. abduction?
- Are there family /relationship problems or recent history of family conflict, including domestic abuse?
- Does the missing person have any physical illness, disability or mental health problems?
- Are they in the company of a person who may cause them harm?
- Do they require essential medication which is not likely to be available?
- Is there ongoing bullying or harassment, e.g. racial, sexual, homophobic or local community concerns and/or cultural issues?
- Do they pose a threat of harm to others?
- Is there drug or alcohol dependency?
- Any other particular circumstances at the time of the incident influencing the risk assessment?

As a minimum requirement the risk assessment should be reviewed every eight hours and the level of prevailing risk agreed by carers and other professionals responsible for that young person’s health safety and well being.
Categories of risk

High risk

- The risk posed is immediate and there are substantial grounds for believing that the child is in danger through their own vulnerability or may have been the victim of a serious crime, or
- The risk posed is immediate and there are substantial grounds for believing that the public are in danger.

Medium risk

- The risk posed is likely to place the child in danger or they are a threat to themselves or others.

Low risk

- There is no apparent threat of danger to either the child or the public.

Important.

The assessment of risk is a dynamic process and should be reconsidered and challenged at every point during a child’s absence.
4. Police responsibilities & powers

Police will investigate all cases falling within the ‘missing’ definition and will respond in accordance with the Northumbria Police Missing Person policy and procedure, keeping a record on the appropriate missing person report / computer system.

The table below sets out the definition of each category and what each category means in terms of operational response:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DEFINITION OF RISK</th>
<th>OPERATIONAL RESPONSE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>HIGH RISK</strong></td>
<td>This category will attract silver command (Duty Superintendent or Critical incident Manager) and requires the immediate deployment of police resources. The Duty Superintendent must be involved in the examination of initial enquiry lines and approval of appropriate staffing levels and allocation of ownership. Such cases will always have allocated a named investigating officer. There should be a press/media strategy and/or close contact with outside agencies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The risk posed is immediate, and there are substantial grounds for believing that the missing person is in danger through their own vulnerability or may have been the victim of a serious crime, or The risk posed is immediate and there are substantial grounds for believing that the missing person presents a danger to the public</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>MEDIUM RISK</strong></td>
<td>This category requires an active and measured response by police and other agencies in order to trace the missing person and support the person reporting.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The risk posed is likely to place the missing person in danger or they are a threat to themselves or others.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>LOW RISK</strong></td>
<td>In addition to recording the information on the PNC, the police will advise the person reporting the disappearance that following basic enquiries and unless circumstances change, further active enquiries will not be carried out by the police. Low risk missing persons, however must be kept under review as risk can increase with the passage of time.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There is no apparent threat of danger to the missing person or the public.</td>
<td></td>
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CSC will work collaboratively with police during any enquiry to locate a missing child. When Police locate a child reported as missing, Police will return the child to parent/carer/placement. In some instances it may be inappropriate to return a child to their home or placement and in all such cases Police will contact CSC (EDT out of office hours) for an evaluation of their safety.
Even after reporting a child missing, parents and carers should recognise that they are responsible for children in their care at all times and this responsibility remains when they have reported a missing child to the Police.

A child under the age of 16 will not be assessed as being of low risk.

In all cases, police will inform CSC of all children who are reported missing within 1 working day.

**Police Powers**

Police powers are limited and difficulties can arise when missing children are found but do not want to return to their home or placement. In some instances it may be inappropriate to return a child to their home or placement, in all such cases Police will contact CSC (EDT if out of office hours).

Under the Children Act 1989, where there is reasonable cause to believe that a child could suffer significant harm the police can take that child into **Police Protection** and remove them to suitable accommodation which could include the home from which the child originally went missing.

The Police are not given the power to use force to take a child into Police Protection but reasonable force may be used to prevent a child suffering significant harm.

Where **Police Protection** is taken Police will inform the Local authority via the local CAIU (Child Abuse Investigation Unit) during office hours, or EDT will be contacted out of hours.

Any child who is unlawfully at large from a secure unit or penal establishment may be arrested and returned by Police.

If the child is on remand without conditions, the Police will return the child to the designated placement. If the child is on remand with conditions (e.g. curfew) they will be detained and appear before a court.
5. **Responsibilities of the Local Authority when children in care are reported missing**

**Initial action to be taken by carers, when a child is missing**

Carers must take all reasonable and practical steps to:

- Establish the whereabouts and well-being of the child
- Determine the level of risk of harm to the child
- Determine the nature and reasons for absenteeism
- Ascertain the likely intentions of the child **before** contacting the Police

Actions should include

- Searching their own premises and immediate locality
- Make enquiries with other children in the home / school / workplace
- Make enquiries with other professionals
- Make enquiries with relatives unless it is considered not in the child's best interests
- Consider recent events
- Telephone / text the child to establish their safety and well-being

All issues / decisions / actions should be fully documented.

**Informing the Police**

Whenever a child goes missing from a children’s home or foster home then the foster carer or the manager on duty in the children’s home must ensure that the following individuals and agencies are informed (within the timescales set out in local protocols):

- The parents or those who have parental responsibility
- The Social Worker or Team Manager
- The Emergency Duty Team, if out of hours.

If the absence is considered to fall within the definition of ‘missing’ or there is identified and imminent risk of harm to the child, the carer or other responsible person must inform the Police without delay.

If the absence is considered to fall within the definition of ‘unauthorised absence’ the carer should seek the views of other professionals responsible for that child’s health, safety and well-being and continually review the status of the child.

If the absence continues for an extended period of time consideration must be given as to whether the absence should fall within the definition of ‘missing’.

It remains entirely a matter of professional judgement - taking into account all known factors and the views of other professionals - as to when an ‘unauthorised absence’ has gone on too long and the child’s absence should be reported to the Police.

Any case of an absent child which causes significant concern or the circumstances give rise to suspicion that the child is at risk of significant harm, should be brought to the attention of the relevant manager and the Police as soon as possible.
Reporting procedure

Once a decision has been made to report the absence of a child the carer should contact Northumbria Police using the non emergency telephone number 03456 043 043.

The carer, in consultation with other professionals responsible for the child’s health, safety and well-being, must be explicit when reporting an episode to the Police so that the level of perceived risk to the child is clear from the outset. **This will determine the level of Police response.** The carer will be given a unique reference number which should be retained and used in any future contact with the Police.

**Information to be made available**

When reporting to the police the following minimum information is required:

1. Description of the child including their clothing
2. Details of where the child was last seen and with whom
3. Recent photograph
4. Relevant addresses
5. Known associates and addresses frequented
6. Personal details of the child
7. Previous history of absenteeism and circumstances of where found
8. Circumstances under which the child is absent
9. Any factors which increase the risk to the child
10. Name of the staff member completing the risk assessment and/or the search of the home and locality.

**Missing during external activity**

If a child becomes absent outside of their area, the carer in charge of the external activity will:

- Arrange a search in the area where the child became absent
- Notify the local police for that area
- Notify the child’s parent or guardian
- Notify the child’s Social Worker or Team Manager
- Notify a senior manager of the home
- Notify the Youth Offending Team if the child is on remand
- Notify the Emergency Duty Team, if out of hours

**Longer absences**

Whenever a child is missing for a longer period of time and in any case where the child has been missing for **2 days**, the Director of Social Care and Safeguarding will be notified.

A responsible person in CSC will make the decision to convene a meeting for the purpose of developing a strategy to locate and return that child to safety.

This decision will be based on ongoing risk assessment and depend upon the child’s individual circumstances.
The meeting will involve

- The Team Manager from the Authority responsible for the child’s welfare
- An Area Command Police Superintendent (or their nominee).
- Other relevant staff representatives from the Authority where the child is living.
- The registered manager of the children’s home or fostering service
- Parents or carers.

These senior officers will review the actions taken up to this point and satisfy themselves that all possible steps are being taken to locate and return the child.

If the child has been missing for **28 days** a senior Police manager and the appropriate CSC manager for the area should jointly review the case and take any actions they consider necessary to locate and return the child.

**Recording**

Throughout the period that the child is absent carers and Social Workers must keep a full record of all actions taken and messages received or given.

Police will keep a record on the appropriate missing person report / computer system.

The records should clearly include details of where the child was found, any reasons the child has given for going missing and any actions taken in light of those reasons. This information is important for any future missing from care episodes.

**Planning for return**

If a child’s absence is categorised as ‘missing’ the appropriate CSC Manager in consultation with social workers, carers and police as appropriate, should prepare a contingency plan for when the child found.

Considerations should include:

- Arranging for an independent person to talk to the child about the reasons that they went missing.
- Arrangements to escort the child and support them on their return.
- Whether the Police wish to interview the child before he/she is returned to placement.

**Planning before the event**

When children become looked after, parents or carers consideration should be given as part of the core assessment of their needs as to whether they have ever runaway, staying in unknown, possible unsafe, places.

A prevention or early intervention service working with those identified as being at risk of going missing or who have already gone missing should be in place to prevent the continuation and escalation of behavior.

Prevention and early intervention services should be reviewed, and effectiveness evaluated every year, gaps identified and plans made to fill any gaps.
Where children do run away from their care placement then their needs should be reassessed and their care plan updated to incorporate a risk management strategy to minimise missing from care incidents.

The assessment should consider

- Risk factors
- Likelihood of the child going missing
- Previous episodes
- Trigger incidents
- Risk of harm / vulnerability of the child
- Risk of harm posed by the child to others
- The child’s view of placement
- The child’s view of going missing and the associated risks
- Views of parents/relatives/carers of the child’s needs
- External influences
- Risks associated with addresses/locations frequented by the child
- The likelihood of the child being harboured
- Recent photograph
- Description of the child

6. The return

When a child is located, Police, Parents, Social Workers and any other person informed of the child’s absence should be notified without delay.

For Looked after Children the general principle is that the children’s services for the area from where the child is missing will be responsible for recovering the child or young person and returning that individual to their home or placement, unless the child is located by police. In some instances it may be inappropriate to return a child to their home or placement and in all such cases Police will contact CSC (EDT out of hours) for an evaluation of their safety.

If there are specific and identified issues of safety or public order associated with returning that child then a coordinated approach to recover the child should be agreed with the Police.

The return interview

Police interview or ‘Safe and Well Check’

The Police will interview all children when they return from a Missing episode. The purpose of the interview will be to gather intelligence about the missing episode and it serves to confirm the identity of the child and that they have returned. If the child makes an allegation of crime that occurred whilst they were missing or that contributed to him/her running away, the Police will record this allegation and take appropriate action.
CSC or SCARPA return interview (see flow chart appendix 2)

Return interviews will be conducted by CSC or an independent organisation for every instance of running where a child has:
- been missing for over 24 hours
- been missing on two or more occasions
- engaged (or believed to have engaged) in criminal activities during their absence
- been hurt or harmed whilst they have been missing (or this is believed to be the case)
- known mental health issues
- known risk of sexual exploitation or contact with persons posing risk to children

This interview should take place within 72 hours of the child or young person’s return. Information gathered as part of the return interview should be shared with CSC, police and other professionals working with the child.

Where any allegation of physical or sexual abuse is made or becomes evident, NSCB child protection procedures must be implemented.

If there is evidence that a child has been a victim or perpetrator of crime, consideration must be given to securing evidence by Police, including forensic examination (with appropriate consent). It is essential to recognise that the welfare of the child is paramount and careful consideration should be given to the potential effects of the procedures on the child.

Where children are in Local Authority care the Social Worker and Line Manager should decide in consultation with residential staff and the child, whether they should convene a statutory review of the child’s care plan.

7. Repeat absences

If a child repeatedly goes missing or causes specific concerns due to risk factors when missing, a multi-agency meeting should be held to develop a strategy to prevent future missing events and reduce the risk of harm to the child should they go missing again.

The purpose of the strategy meeting is to:
- Agree and record a pre-risk assessment
- Agree a reporting strategy
- Recommend the minimum enquiries to be undertaken by:
  - Carers
  - Children’s Social Care
  - Police
- Agree an appropriate return strategy
- Consider appropriate interventions to address the long term issues

An action plan to bring about behaviour change should be put in place, and regularly reviewed for its effectiveness.

Research has shown that there is no developing pattern in which the risks to a child escalate the more often that they run away. Short absences may present the same risk as longer
ones and should be viewed with equal seriousness and urgency. The assessment of the risk that a child might run away again should be based on information about their:

- individual circumstances, including family circumstances
- motivation for running
- possible destination
- recent pattern of absences (if any)

It is not the number of previous absences but the particular information about what happened when the child was away from home that indicates the level of risk that they might face should they go missing again.

Consideration should be given to carrying out a new assessment every time a child runs away. Repeat runaways should be viewed with as much concern as children who run away for the first time. The persistence of this behaviour would suggest at least that the action following from earlier assessments should be reviewed and alternative options considered.

### 8. Harbouring

Vulnerable children who abscend or go missing risk placing themselves at additional risk of harm. It is frequently the case that parents, foster carers or social workers know where the child is staying but feel powerless to prevent the adult in question from harbouring the child because there is no proof of a crime being committed against the child. In accordance with the Missing Children Protocols, the Police are usually called upon to assist with retrieving the child, which involves their service in a great deal of time and resources, often with no positive outcome for the child.

In order to deal with harbouring issues, agencies involved should consider the use of ‘harbouring notices’ issued to advise/warn adults about section 2 of the Child Abduction Act 1984. These notices are issued by the police following a direction from the parent or legal guardian to the child that they must not attend the address or be in the company of a named person.

To maximise this tactic:

- Children Social Care will inform the police of any vulnerable or young child, who absconds, or is reported missing who associates with an adult deemed unsuitable for the care of that child and which places that child at additional risk of harm.
- If the Local Authority have parental responsibly CSC will consider police requests to supply a written statement confirming that the child in question is under the care of the local authority, that they have been instructed not to frequent the address and that no permission has given for the adult in question to be in that child’s company.

Where a child is subject to a care order, emergency protection order or police protection, section 49 Children Act 1989 ‘Abduction of Children in Care’ should be considered.
9. **Safeguarding and Child Protection**

On each occasion that a child is reported missing from home or Local Authority care:

- Police will submit a child concern to Children’s Social Care in accordance with Northumbria Police procedures.
- A full needs assessment (CAF) should be considered by Children’s Social Care so that their broader needs can be identified and addressed.
- CSC will provide early intervention and support where necessary to understand and address reasons for running away.
- Where there is any child protection concern, the Police CAIU should be involved and local procedures followed.
- At the point of return a Police Officer will visit the child. Where possible the child should be seen alone. The officer will provide contact details to the child to allow future contact if child wishes.
- Police information will be supplemented by information from other statutory partners and where appropriate the voluntary sector. Information from return interviews will be shared with Police and CSC.

10. **Information Sharing and data collection**

Information will be shared on a regular basis between the Police and CSC to enable them to identify patterns where a child has:

- Gone missing on 2 or more occasions
- Has been involved as a victim or perpetrator in criminal behaviour whilst missing
- Known mental health issues
- Known risk of sexual exploitation
- Known risk of contact with persons posing risk to children
- Incidents that have generated assessments of needs via Common Assessment Framework, S47, or S17 of the Children Act 1989

Aggregate data about the profile of running away in the area will be collated between Police, CSC and other partner agencies and shared on a regular basis. This will allow the NSCB to identify:

- Incidences of running away
- Individuals who have run away
- Individuals who have run away on more than 2 occasions
- Incidents that have generated a case conference or professionals meeting
- Children’s homes that have particularly high levels of missing report in relation to other homes in the area
- Areas where missing young people are frequently located
- The proportion of children who are hurt or harmed whilst they are away
- The proportion of children who have committed an offence whilst they are away
Information will be broken down by:
- child’s age
- gender
- ethnicity
- missing from home
- missing from care
- whether the child is an out of area placement
The data will be regularly reviewed and analysed by the M-SET sub group on behalf of the NSCB and inform a proactive response to running and patterns of running in the Newcastle area.

11. **Finding children who are not reported missing to Police**

When children are located in circumstances where identified risk factors are evident, but have not been reported missing to the police by their families or carers, further investigation may be warranted. It may be necessary to consider police protection and enquire into whether there are any continuing child protection concerns, or whether the child and their family or carers should be offered family support services. Information will be shared via a child concern in such circumstances.

12. **Informing the media**

The Police have responsibility for advising the media regarding children who are missing in order to assist in locating that person or warning the public if the child poses a significant threat.

Decisions to publicise will always be made in consultation with CSC who in turn will consult with parents and/or carers prior to any media coverage.

13. **Supporting Agencies**

Missing children cannot be managed effectively by the Police service alone. There are a number of statutory and voluntary organisations that play a role in the prevention and management of all missing children.

**NATIONAL POLICE IMPROVEMENT AGENCY**

Notification to National Police Improvement Agency Missing Persons Bureau must be made in the following circumstances:
- all missing persons outstanding after 14 days
- all foreign nationals missing in the UK or British nationals missing abroad
- all unidentified bodies or body parts to be notified to NPIA within 48 hours

**MISSING PEOPLE (formerly National Missing Persons Helpline)**

Missing people (formerly the National Missing Persons Helpline) is a charity dedicated to helping missing people, their families and those who care for them. Missing People receive information from Police and other public, private and voluntary organisations, and from
individuals. National Missing Person Helpline (NMPH) and Police will share information in accordance with the ACPO/NMPH National Data Exchange Protocol of April 2007.

Police and families can contact the 24 hour freephone confidential helpline on 0500 700700.

Whenever a report is received by the police and the risk assessment authorised by a Supervisor is assessed as **HIGH**, the Investigating Officer will consider notifying Missing People as a matter of urgency in order that Missing People can record the disappearance, search their records and inform Police of any information held by them which could assist the investigation. Otherwise, the details will be forwarded by Police to Missing People as soon as practicable. The Investigating Officer must make clear to Missing People what action, if any, they require of Missing People in terms of publicity to assist the Police media strategy. A record shall be made on the missing person report that the information has been shared with Missing People. Prior to sharing the information with Missing People, Police will ask the family or carer who made the missing person report, for their representations regarding the proposal to share information with Missing People.

For reports assessed as **MEDIUM** risk, the Police will notify Missing People **72 hours** after the time the missing person was reported to the police, and will make a record on the missing person report that the information has been shared with Missing People. Missing People will make a record of the disappearance, search their records and inform Police of any information which will assist the investigation. Prior to sharing the information with Missing People, Police will ask the family or carer who made the missing person report, for their representations regarding the proposal to share information with Missing People.

For reports assessed as **LOW** risk, if the person is still missing after 14 days, details will be forwarded to Missing People. The parent/carer making the missing person report **must consent** to the sharing of the information in low risk cases.

In all cases, Police will share the following information:
- Name/gender/date of birth/ethnicity/height/build/hair colour
- Date reported missing/date last seen
- Risk assessment
- PNCID no./Force/Station/Police reference no./Single point of contact

Other information may be shared at the investigating officers discretion, having regard to the 1st Data Protection principle as contained within the Data Protection Act 1998: namely, that sensitive personal data must be processes fairly and lawfully where it is necessary to protect the interests of the data subject or for the exercise of a function of a public nature exercised in the public interest.

Police will inform Missing People as soon as practicable when a missing person has returned.
UK MISSING KIDS WEB-SITE
The UK Missing Kids Website, http://uk.missingkids.com helps the police to find missing and abducted children. The website enables the police to transmit photographs and information about a missing child to other forces around the UK and abroad.

To improve the likelihood of locating a missing child, police officers are advised to submit cases for entry onto the website, where all of the following criteria are met:

- The child was under 18 years when he or she went missing.
- There are descriptive details and photographs of the child, sufficient to enable identification by a visitor of the website.
- The SIO believes there will be no risk to the child through placement on the website or associated media campaigns.
- The parent or guardian or the child agrees to the child being featured, OR the SIO believes that it is in the child's best interests to be featured on the site against the parent or guardian's wishes.
- EITHER the child has just been reported missing and is at extremely high risk OR the child has been missing for over 48 hours and may be at a lower risk.

How to use the site
In the UK the Missing Kids Website is run by a network of hub forces, which input case information from their surrounding regions. Quality control and policy development is provided by the Police National Missing Persons Bureau. The charity PACT (Parents and Abducted Children Together) helps the police to promote this site in the UK.

Features of the website - missing kids.com
Only trained police officers in South Yorkshire Police can input information on the site. It is extremely secure. Website content is fully protected from unauthorised interference by a complex security system.

It allows posters to be quickly and easily distributed. It enables police forces to instantly transmit the photograph and details of a missing child to other forces around the UK and abroad. The website has now been introduced in 14 countries, with 10 more countries in development.

The national sites are linked together with in-built translation technology, so the cases placed on the site in English can be read worldwide, and posters produced in the local language. This feature can be particularly useful in cases of international abduction.

The technology also includes age progression techniques that have proven successful in identifying and retrieving children years after they went missing.
CHILD RESCUE ALERT
The scheme is intended to be used within tightly defined criteria in relation to the abduction of a child. It is a fast response scheme designed to save a child from harm and should only be used in **HIGH** risk cases and with the authority of the on call SIO (Detective Superintendent).

The scheme relies on coordinated action with the media who will broadcast the alert via radio and T.V. The criteria for issuing an alert have to be strict or there is a risk that the public and media will become de-sensitised to them. There are four factors which must be met before a Child Rescue Alert is authorised:

- The child is under 18 years of age;
- There is reasonable belief that the child has been kidnapped or abducted;
- There is reasonable belief that the child is in imminent danger of serious harm or death (decision by on call SIO Detective Superintendent);
- There is sufficient information available to enable the public to assist the police in locating the child.

The alert will normally be enforced for a maximum of **four hours** but this could be extended by **up to two hours** if authorised by the on call SIO.

Alerts should be cancelled at the conclusion of their use.

SCARPA
SCARPA is a partnership between The Children’s Society and Barnardo’s reporting to the M-SET group which provides targeted youth support to children who go missing or are at risk of sexual exploitation. The service is delivered from a base in Newcastle city centre. SCARPA aims to help children:

- be ‘Safe from Harm’
- stop going missing
- reduce risky behaviours
- exit situations of exploitation.

SCARPA can work with children who **run away / go missing** if:

- they live in Newcastle
- they are aged under 18
- they have been involved in episodes of going missing.

SCARPA can work with children either experiencing or at risk from **sexual exploitation** if:

- they live anywhere in Northumbria
- they are aged under 18
- they have displayed risk factors connected to possible sexual exploitation.

SCARPA also work with the families of children affected by these issues to complement direct work taking place with young people, and are accountable.
Appendix 1

Young People Missing from Care

Unauthorised Absence

- Constantly review UA status. (minimum every 8 hours) May need to change to Missing

To be monitored by carers/Social Worker

- Assessment of care plan
- Support services
- Action plan to change behaviour

Sharing of information between the Police, Parents and other agencies as appropriate

MISSING PERSON is located or returns to the residence

When a missing child is located, unless the circumstances pose a risk to the Residential Staff / Foster Carer, it is the Residential Staff or Foster Carers responsibility to return the child in the first Instance. Where a risk is present, a police officer may be requested to accompany them or the police may be requested to collect and return the child/young person to the place of residence.

Foster carer / Residential staff to:
1. Provide positive non-judgemental return
2. Check child’s medical condition and make necessary arrangements

Foster carer / Residential staff to notify Social Worker / Team manager

Registered manager of Children’s Home or Fostering Services to be informed the next working day

Parents to be informed as agreed.

The Police will conduct a Safe & Well check to establish the missing persons well being, and to establish whether they were the victim of crime or abuse whilst missing.

Placement staff to inform the social worker and team manager of the child’s return

Arrangements for return interview to be agreed in consultation with the child

NOT PROTECTIVELY MARKED
Appendix 2

NEWCASTLE RETURN, MISSING FROM HOME OR CARE (RMFHC) PROCEDURES

Young person goes missing and is reported to the police. Police send child concern notification (CCN) to Children’s Social Care (CSC)’s Initial Response Service (IRS).

- **Open Case to CSC**
  - CCN forwarded to social worker

- **Not known to CSC**
  - SCARPA – undertake N171 Return Interview

  - If you person deemed to have complex needs or there are child protection issues, discuss with IRS/make referral
  - If young person deemed to have additional needs
  - If no concerns, copy of N171 Return Interview to be sent to CSC/IRS. To be attached to CCN and filed

- **Single Agency Response - SCARPA**
- **CAF – Identify a Lead Professional**

- Consideration needs to be given to where the N171 Return Interview is held as there may be concerns relating to violence and abuse, honour based violence and forced marriage. In these circumstances, a neutral setting may be more appropriate.
Appendix 3

**Approval and Implementation**

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**Implementation plan**

NSCB member organisations, through their Policy and Procedure Committee Representative or safeguarding lead are responsible for ensuring that all relevant staff are made aware of the revised procedure and how and where to access it.

**Approval**

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Approving body and date</th>
<th>NSCB Policy and Procedures Committee 2 December 2009</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>2 December 2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Review date</td>
<td>December 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Circulation, email &amp; website</td>
<td>8 January 2010</td>
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<tr>
<td>Date signed off and by whom</td>
<td>Alison Steele, Chair, NSCB Policy and Procedures Committee 8 January 2010</td>
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