

Lancashire Strategy for Children Who Go Missing

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1. Introduction

We all have a responsibility to safeguard the young and vulnerable.

1.1 Lancashire is continuing to build a society that enables all young people to have:

- **Supportive relationships** – with parents, families and carers, and access to support for those at risk;
- **Strong outcomes**– being healthy and safe, achieving in education and work, and active in society;
- **Good opportunities** – in education, personal and social development and having a voice in society.

1.2 This strategy has been developed to ensure a consistent approach across all agencies and in response to recent government guidance. It has been agreed between children's social care, health, the police and other partner agencies including voluntary sector agencies. The strategy will be reviewed in August 2013 and thereafter on a regular basis.

It is informed by Lancashire's Children and Young People's Plan 2011-14 and takes into account the 'Working Together in Lancashire' approach to working with families and carers.

We aim to draw together all existing protocols and procedures that relate to children who go missing. This will raise awareness and support the effective collaborative response of all the agencies that are involved in the process of improving the safety and outcomes for children, young people and families.

1.3 The cross government strategy 2011 proposes the following objectives to which all agencies, statutory or voluntary sector, should work collectively to deliver:

- **Prevention – reducing the number of people who go missing** – through prevention strategies, education work and early intervention in cases where children, young people and adults repeatedly go missing.
- **Protection – reducing the risk of harm to those who go missing** – by ensuring local agencies provide a tailored, risk based response to cases of missing children, young people and adults and that they work together to find the person and to close cases as quickly as possible at a local and national level.

- **Provision – providing missing people and their families with support and guidance** – by referring promptly and ensuring that missing people and their families understand how and where to access help and support.

(*Missing Children and Adults – A cross government strategy*, Home Office, p.5, 2011).

1.4 The Lancashire Children and Young People's Plan 2011-14, Stay Safe Priority 3 is: "Children and young people are safe and effectively protected from physical and emotional harm and neglect.

- We will make our county a safer place for children and young people.
- We will improve safeguarding outcomes for all vulnerable children and young people."

1.5 To help achieve these outcomes, in relation to children missing or in danger of going missing, it is essential that everyone in Lancashire working with children, young people and families continues to:

- regularly update their knowledge of the LSCB safeguarding procedures;
- follow the missing children guidance, protocols and procedures as they continue to be developed;
- identify and locate children who go missing and liaise with the other services most likely to come into contact with them (*Working Together, 2010*);
- use the reporting mechanisms to report missing children to the police children's social care and the children missing from education team;
- raise awareness of children who are missing with all professionals and others who work with children, young people, families and the general public;
- protect and prevent vulnerable children and adults from going missing and contribute to reducing the number of people going missing;
- provide effective and early intervention and prevention strategies to help reduce the potential of repeat cases of vulnerable children going missing;
- be aware of the name of the lead LSCB person in their own organisations;
- ensure that all new employees receive safeguarding training that explains the potential vulnerability of all categories of missing children, and the procedures to follow.

1.6 Children with mental health needs, learning and physical disabilities are particularly vulnerable when missing. They may have communication difficulties and fewer opportunities to disclose reasons for running away. All agencies should be alert to the particular needs of disabled children, making sure they know how to raise concerns and receive whatever assistance and support they require.

1.7 A key principle underpinning all our work is that:

"The wishes and feelings of children and young people should be sought and taken into account in reaching any decisions about the provision of services which affect them. However, professionals should be aware that children and young people do not always acknowledge what may be, objectively, a situation of risk, or may not feel comfortable talking honestly about the problems in their lives. The particular needs or sensitivities of girls and boys, children from ethnic communities, or those with physical disabilities or learning difficulties should be reflected in provision of services." (*Statutory guidance on children who run away and go missing from care*, 2009).

2. Children Missing

"A missing person is anyone whose whereabouts are unknown, whatever the circumstances of disappearance. He or she will be considered missing until located and his or her well being, or otherwise, established." (*Association of Chief Police Officers*, 2010).

2.1 By clarifying some of the different terms and forms of children who go missing, it is hoped to provide insights for agencies, to consider their contribution in protecting missing children.

- The term 'children who go missing' refers to children or young people up to the age of 18 and some children up to the age of 19 if looked after or up to 25 if they are the responsibility of the local authority and in receipt of full time education, whose whereabouts is unknown. Any person 18yrs and over will be reported as a missing adult by the police.
- "The terms "young runaway" and "missing" in this context refer to children or young people, who have run away from their home or care placement, have been forced to leave, or whose whereabouts is unknown." (*Statutory guidance on children who are run away and go missing from home or care*, p51, DCSF, 2009).
- If a person is simply not where they should be this does not necessarily mean there "whereabouts is unknown". If you believe that a person is at a known address or location that address or location should be checked by reporting persons prior to reporting to the Police, unless their

presence at the location exposes them to risk and requires Police intervention.

- The term "absconder" is used when a child or young person is absent from their placement without permission and who is subject to an order resulting from the criminal justice process such as curfews, tagging etc. Children under the age 16 who have absconded from care will also be treated as missing persons. Children over the age of 16 in the absence of aggravating factors suggesting they are at risk or acting out of character, will be treated as a absconders rather than missing from persons.
- The term 'children missing education' refers to: "A compulsory school-age child who is not on the roll of a school, not placed in alternative provision by a local authority, and who is not receiving a suitable education at home." (*Revised statutory guidance for local authorities in England to identify children not receiving an education*, DCSF, 2009).

2.2 In all of the above situations these children or young people are vulnerable and will be considered as missing until they are found and their wellbeing (or otherwise) has been established. The criteria for launching a police child recue alert are strict and are found in the joint protocol.

2.3 Research has shown that children are more likely to go missing than adults. This may place them in risky situations and increasing their vulnerability to drugs, alcohol, homelessness, crime, and sexual exploitation. 'Children and young people who decide to run away are generally unhappy, vulnerable and may be in danger.' (*Missing Children and Adults – a Cross government strategy*, p.7, Home Office 2011).

Some of the main reasons for running away are:

- Problems at home – ranging from arguments with parents and carers to long term abuse or maltreatment.
- Family break-up where young people are drawn into their parents' conflict.
- Mental health problems.
- Bullying, racism and racial harassment, homophobia.
- Teenage pregnancy.
- Wanting to be near friends or family - especially where a young person is in care and there are problems with contact.
- Grooming for sexual exploitation - evidence indicates that 90% of children subject to sexual exploitation go missing at some point.

- Child trafficking - young people may go missing when they are being trafficked.
- Forced Marriage - some young people may run away because they are at risk of or in a forced marriage.

Information produced by the Children's Society in 2012 states that:

"Every five minutes a child runs away from home or carer in this country. Even more shocking is that a quarter of them, that is 70 each day, are forced out of their homes by parents or carers." (*'Make Runaways Safe'* campaign 2012).

- 2.4 Missing children and young people are at real risk of harm when missing. Just over half of child sexual exploitation cases involve a young person who has at some time been reported missing. A Child Exploitation and Online Protection (CEOP) report *'Out of mind, out of sight'*, (2011) found that repeatedly going missing from home is increasingly recognized as a key indicator to agencies that a child may be the victim of child sexual exploitation. Young people who run away may also become involved in criminality and homelessness and may suffer mental health problems.

"As well as short term risks to their immediate safety there are longer-term implications. Children and young people who go missing are less likely to fulfil their educational potential and live happy, healthy and economically productive lives as adults. It is essential, therefore, that everyone concerned with the welfare of children and young people is equipped to respond appropriately when a child or young person goes missing."

(*Statutory Guidance on children who run away or go missing from home or care*, DCSF, 2009; *Safeguarding children and Young people from Sexual Exploitation*, HM, 2009)

3. Lancashire Procedures and Protocols

- 3.1 Lancashire missing children protocols and procedures are continually being improved to remain robust and to include the views of services, partner agencies, children, young people and their families.

The key protocols are:

- Lancashire Safeguarding Procedures.
- Joint protocol: Children and young people who run away or go missing from home or care.
- Children Missing Education.

- 3.2 It is important that every organisation follows the **Lancashire Safeguarding Procedures** and their own service/agency guidance. Other authorities will usually follow their own procedures where the child is resident in Lancashire.
- 3.3 The Lancashire Safeguarding Procedures must be followed if there are safeguarding concerns about a child or young person. The Safeguarding Procedures can be accessed on-line:
www.lancashire.gov.uk/safeguardingchildrenboard

The roles and responsibilities of partner agencies are defined within the Lancashire Safeguarding Procedures. They include:

- an agreed definition of a missing or runaway child or young person;
- an agreed inter-agency framework for classifying the degree of risk when a child goes missing from home or when a missing young person comes to agency notice;
- guidance on the threshold for referrals to social care;
- where CAF would be beneficial and the parents/carers agree, details of who should carry out a CAF and how this information should be shared, where appropriate;
- the basis on which agencies offer 'Return interviews' for children who have run away from home; and details of preventative approaches.

Protocols and procedures are regularly reviewed in alignment with the latest government recommendations, guidance, and research.

3.4 **The Lancashire 'Joint Protocol - Children and young people who run away or go missing from home or care.'**

"Running away can be symptomatic of wider problems in a child or young person's life, but whatever the reason, one thing is very clear: children who decide to run away are unhappy, vulnerable and in danger."

(Statutory guidance on children who run away and go missing from home or care, p3, DCSF, 2009)

Lancashire constabulary has a key role in partnership with other agencies and services that are trying to locate children who are missing and in reducing the instances where the same children go repeatedly missing from home or care in an area.

- An incident log is opened by the police on all occasions when a child is reported to them as missing. The following actions should be considered prior to making the report:
 - Have you searched the home address?

- Have you attempted to contact the MFH?
 - Have you contacted family and associates?
 - Have you checked known addresses and places frequented?
 - Have you checked social network sites?
 - Have you contacted local hospitals?
- A missing person report and action log is created for all missing children. The police notify the Police National Computer (PNC) immediately and inform Children's Social Care via an automated email within 24 hours.
 - Any person 18 years or older would be reported as a missing adult including those for whom Lancashire County Council, Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council or Blackpool Council have continuing responsibilities under The Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000. (*Joint protocol: Children and young people who run away or go missing from home or car, p11, DCSF, 2009*).

3.5 Missing From Care

From December 2010 the Senior Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) has managed the process in relation to the second stage intervention meetings required for children who are looked after who go missing more than 9 times in a 90 day period. The senior IRO is the named person for contact within Lancashire for the police. This effectively means there is a mechanism in place for young people to be identified at an early stage if they start to go missing from care whilst ensuring that the initial missing from care intervention meetings are followed up along with the action plan following such a meeting.

The missing from care process as outlined above only relates to those missing from care who are looked after by Lancashire, either within Lancashire or placed elsewhere. Where the child is placed within Lancashire and the corporate parent responsibility remains with the placing authority, then the relevant procedures of that authority will dictate the action to be followed. However, the safety and well being of all children and young people is paramount and Lancashire LSCB's procedures will, where appropriate, take precedent.

The Police Development and Compliance Officer will hold monthly meetings with the Divisional Missing Person co-ordinators to discuss any issues that have arisen and also look at specific young people who may be a concern. IRO managers will be invited to these. The return Interviews, intervention meetings and frequent missing people and reported locations, will be standing items for discussion at each meeting. This will facilitate a much closer scrutiny of the missing from care agenda.

Cross border issues are dealt with within the individual services procedures and protocols.

3.6 Out of County Placements

If a local authority places a child outside of its boundaries it has a statutory responsibility to notify the receiving authority of the placement. On receipt of

this notification in Lancashire we would then notify our Alternative and Complementary Education and Residential Services and Health colleagues.

The LA that places a child outside their authority boundary continues to hold responsibility for that child. The receiving LA will respond to any immediate child protection concerns in order to safeguard the child, but it is the placing LA who retains case responsibility.

When a child is reported missing to the police, the force where the report is lodged will report the episode and commence an investigation.

If it is discovered from the investigation that the missing child or young person is located within a different police area, contact and formal recorded agreement will be made for the investigation to continue and for the case to be transferred to the force where the child has been located.

If the transfer is agreed, the responsibility of the investigation passes to the force where the child has been located.

Lancashire Constabulary will liaise with this force regarding the progress of the investigation and will update the local authority and home as to where responsibility for the case lies. It is expected that the local authority and home will liaise with the investigating force.

When the missing person is found the process is as per the locating force's procedures and agreed protocols, including in relation to safe and well checks. If the child is from a care home, the care home may be contacted directly to make arrangements for the child to return.

3.7 Children Missing Education

All local authorities have a statutory duty to identify children missing from education (*Revised Statutory Guidance for local authorities in England to identify children not receiving education*, p.11, 2009).

Children and young people who are missing from education and not receiving a suitable education are at increased risk of a range of negative outcomes that could have long term damaging consequences for their life chances. They may also be at increased risk of abuse or neglect. Similarly children who are the victims of abuse or neglect may also be more likely to go missing from education.

Lancashire Local Authority has a children missing education team working closely with schools (and school nurses) and other services to check that educational provision is in place and to ensure the safety and welfare of potentially missing children.

In some instances children and young people may become more vulnerable where they have fallen out of the education system and when there is no knowledge of them being in receipt of an education.

Where children are identified as not receiving education, the children missing education team will identify if they have been entered on the roll of a new school. If the child is not on a school roll or receiving appropriate education, then support is given to ensure that appropriate education is provided.

Where there are known safeguarding concerns about missing children, and where there are concerns about trafficking or sexual exploitation, the person responsible for identifying these concerns follows the safeguarding procedures and immediately contacts children's social care.

3.8 **Children Missing and who are Subject of a Child Protection Plan**

Children subject of a Child Protection Plan may go missing alone/with peers, or with a parent/family member seeking to avoid measures to protect the child. Children who are subject of CP plans will have clearly detailed agreements for the frequency of contact with the child/family by members of the Core Group and where a risk of going missing or flight from agencies is identified this should be specifically addressed within the CP Plan or contingency arrangements. Children who are missing on CP Plans may have links to or involvement with agencies in other parts of the country and therefore it is important that responsibility for the child is clearly identified and appropriate information sharing takes place across statutory agencies.

Such children are potentially at risk of further/increased harm and therefore it is essential that a professional who believes a child/young person subject to a CP plan may have gone missing should contact the key social worker (or manager/duty worker in their absence) to report this concern. This will enable an urgent strategy discussion/meeting between agencies to consider the context of the missing episode, the degree and nature of risk to any children involved and what actions should be triggered to locate the child/family. The strategy discussion/meeting will also need to explicitly consider the timing of a further meeting should the child/young person remain missing and further escalation that may be required.

3.9 **Parental Abduction - Parental Abduction Act 1984**

It is an offence for a person connected to a child under 16yrs to take or send that child out of the UK without appropriate consent. Parental Abduction can be both a civil offence and / or a criminal offence punishable by 7yrs imprisonment. The key to Police action is based upon the threat to the child being 'real and imminent'.

Removal or Detention of a child under 16yrs by a person who does NOT have 'Appropriate Consent' is also an offence under Section 2 of the Act.

Exceptions to the rule do exist but only when specified by current Court Orders.

Any attempt to abduct a child will be dealt with under the Criminal Attempts Act 1981.

The following links will provide further information:

- www.reunite.org Reunite can provide advice and assistance to agencies/parents/carers regarding all aspects of Parental Child Abduction.
- www.fco.gov.uk
- www.soca.gov.uk
- www.justice.gov.uk/courts/procedure-rules/family/rules_pd_menu The Family Procedure Rules concerning Child Abduction can be downloaded from a list, which explains what can be done if a child is taken or kept out of England and Wales and also covers what can be done if a child is brought into England and Wales by an abducting parent.

3.10 Child Rescue Alert

The Child Rescue Alert (CRA) is a partnership between the police, media and the public, to seek immediate assistance when a child has been abducted. It is a tactical option for the Senior Police Investigating Officer to consider as part of an overt response to a case of child abduction, where the release of specific information to the public is made via the media to assist the safe recovery of a child.

Criteria for use of the CRA...**All criteria must be met.**

1. Child under 18yrs **and**
2. Reasonable belief that the child has been abducted or kidnapped **and**
3. Reasonable belief that the child is in imminent danger of serious harm or death **and**
4. There is sufficient information available to enable the public to assist the Police in locating the child.

For further information: www.soca.gov.uk

4. Child Sexual Exploitation

- 4.1 Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) is the abuse of a young person by someone in a position of power or trust who involves them in inappropriate sexual activities often in exchange for some form of payment such as alcohol, drugs, gifts or services. Sexual exploitation of young people is child abuse. Children and young people who become involved in sexual exploitation face huge risks to their physical, emotional and psychological health.

The common issues are because they are extremely vulnerable, have low self-esteem and poor self-image. Young people who run away from home are recognised as being much more at risk of being targeted as a victim of sexual exploitation. Vulnerability is identified and targeted by the abusers, whether

the young person is living with their family, looked after away from home or they have run away. The young persons may not see themselves as victims and may claim to be acting voluntarily. In reality this is NOT voluntary or consenting behaviour.

The ability to capture information and concerns regarding CSE is crucial and shapes the police response and investigation. For example; details of associates, common behaviours such as social network sites, how a child may travel, where they would shop.

5. Lancashire Children and Young People's Trust and the Children's Workforce

- 5.1 Lancashire Children and Young People's Trust supports the development of new ways of working and promotes strong joint planning and commissioning of services. The District Children and Young People's Trusts lead in the planning and commissioning of local services to meet the needs of the local communities, review district children and young people's plans to ensure they are working in the best interests of children young people and their families.
- 5.2 Lancashire Children and Young People's Trust are aware that:
- multi-agency working must be at the core of all procedures and protocols with strong partnerships between children's services, youth services, the police, health, schools and early learning and the voluntary sector;
 - multi agency working is essential to minimising the chances of child trafficking, sexual exploitation, children running away, or children missing.

6. Working Together in Lancashire

- 6.1 Key partners: local authority, police, health, local multi-agency structures, voluntary sector.

All agencies and professionals working with children who are missing are expected to follow the relevant procedures to ensure that the correct interventions are in place to improve responses and practice and deliver better outcomes.

At a local level legislation (Children Act, 2004) places responsibilities on a range of local partners including local authorities, the police and health partners to work together in relation to the care and protection of young people under the age of 18. "Local authority children's services in England also have a number of specific duties to organise and plan services and to safeguard and promote the welfare of children under section 18 of the Children Act 2004." (*Missing Children and Adults – A cross government strategy*, Home Office, 2011).

- 6.2 As a result of research, serious case reviews and enquiries, (Laming Review 2009; Munro Report, 2011) there is national recognition that there are weaknesses in the way that agencies and individual professionals share pertinent information with each other. It is important that we continue to follow the '*Information Sharing: Guidance for practitioners and managers*', 2009 and work together when a child or young person is vulnerable or at risk or missing.

The Munro reports have led to a review of partnership working across Lancashire which includes a review of Early Support service pathways and the further development of more specialist pathways.

All agencies have already signed up to key transformation principles: shared locations, shared information, shared ownership, shared pathways and shared commissioning and delivery.

All agencies and professionals will continue to implement the LSCB's protocols to ensure that all employees are aware of the risks to children who are missing.

- 6.3 The Lancashire '*Multi-agency Safeguarding Hub*' will act as a way in which multi agency information is gathered prior to making a decision regarding referral to Children's Social Care and also a way of using multi agency information to assess risk, assign a lead agency or professional and determine which action should be taken if referral does not meet the threshold for Children's Social Care. It will also act as a way of 'stepping down' suitable cases when statutory involvement is ceasing to ensure that support continues. Agencies and services providing early support and intervention will work closely together in '*District Multi-agency Delivery Hubs*' (*workplaces with facilities for professionals from various services to work alongside one another*). The '*Multi-agency Hub Panels*' and the workforce will provide an effective delivery of early support and intensive work with families.
- 6.4 The continued strengthening of partnership and implementation of early support arrangements will contribute to the engagement by all agencies to help prevent children going missing and in taking actions to reduce instances where the same children repeatedly go missing.
- 6.5 Listening to the voice of children and young people, of their reasons for running away and going missing, of their experiences of the services that help them and of how they think services should be improved is paramount to our shared understanding, improved service development and ultimately our ability to help keep children and young people living in Lancashire safe, healthy and achieving.

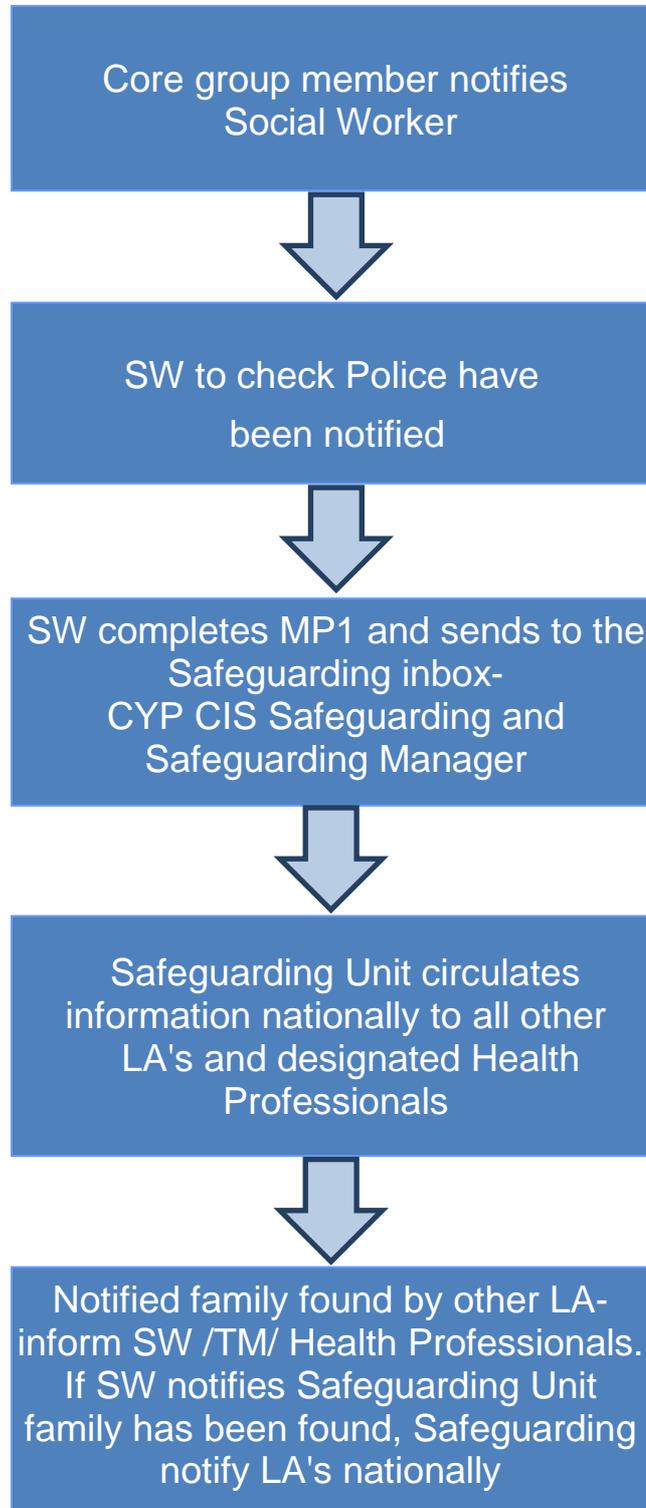
Appendix 1

Missing Children in Lancashire



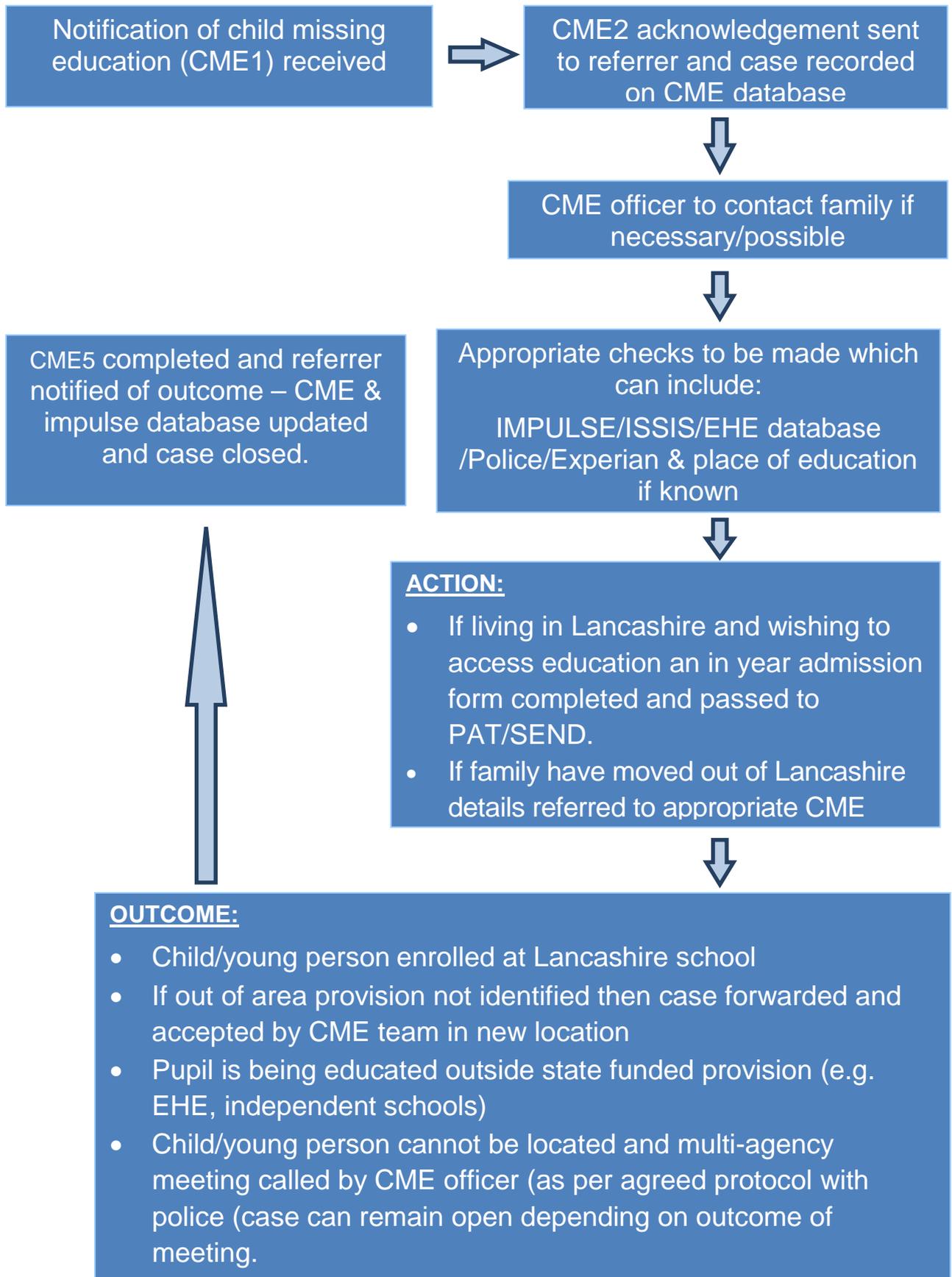
Appendix 2

Missing Children Subject to CP



Appendix 3

Lancashire Children Missing Education Procedures



Appendix 4

Children and Young People Who Are Looked After Pledge

you said... we pledge...

Rights, responsibilities and participation

- We want people to have high expectations of us. We will support you in school and help you catch up if you fall behind. We will also make sure you know about support available when you enter further and higher education. We will celebrate your success with an annual event.
- We want to get a good start in adult life. We will make sure you know about the financial support and other entitlements available when you leave care and support you into employment.
- We should always be on the radar. We will make sure to involve you in decisions that affect you. If you have a complaint an advocacy service will support you.
- We should have at least one adult to form a long term trusting relationship with us and act as a role model. As well as your named worker and teacher, we also have plans to set up a mentoring scheme.
- We would like the CIOC representative to continue promoting participation and representing the views of children who are looked after to decision makers. We would also like them to be trained to review services. We are committed to ensuring that young people are involved in reviewing services.
- We want to be included in decisions. We will involve you in decisions which affect you and take account of your views on the services you receive. You will be involved in regular reviews.
- We want to be able to contact our birth family, if it is appropriate. We will discuss family contact with you as part of the care planning arrangements.
- There should be a participation strategy with a number of ways to enable us to actively participate in service decisions and delivery. This should be made known to all children looked after. A participation strategy is being developed in consultation with young people.
- We should be supported to develop skills and confidence to enable us to actively participate in a variety of ways. We will make sure you are supported to take part in positive leisure activities and through other ways to increase your confidence.
- We want to be healthy. We will make sure you have regular assessments of your health and access to health information.

Reviews and meetings

- We want people to acknowledge us in meetings. We will make sure that we listen to your views and opinions in meetings, use language which you will understand and talk to you directly.
- There should be a smaller number of people at our review meetings. We will only include those people necessary to the meeting.
- We should be given feedback after the meeting in a way we understand. We will give you clear, understandable feedback on how you felt the meeting went.
- We should be in charge of who is at our review meetings and should be able to invite a Children's Rights worker if we want one. You have the right to invite a Children's Rights worker to your meetings but it will not always be possible for you to choose who is there. An Independent Reviewing Officer will ensure your rights are upheld.
- We should be told beforehand what the meeting is about and have the implications of any decisions explained to us so we can make an informed decision. We will make sure you have the right information at the right time and presented in a way that you can understand. We will try to avoid using jargon and abbreviations and will ask for your feedback on the information we give you to make sure it is always clear and understandable.

Placements

- We have a right to feel safe. Move us or other young people quickly when things are going wrong for us, for example if we are being bullied. Your individual needs will be assessed and an up-to-date care plan will be produced. We'll do our best to ensure your placement is the safest and most secure for you and discuss options if you are having problems.
- Social workers should have an ongoing relationship with us and our carers so that we can be supported quickly if things start to go wrong. You will have a named worker, qualified social worker and know how to contact them. Sometimes it may be necessary to have to change your worker but we will tell you when this change has to occur and why. You will also have a named teacher to support you in school. There will be other people you can contact if you need extra support, advice or guidance. We will let you know what other support is available.
- We should be involved in meetings to talk about new people who might be moving in to our placement. We will always seek to involve you in decisions concerning you.
- We should have at least three choices for any new placement. We will ensure you have the most possible choices about any new placements, although it would not be possible to guarantee three.

Training and development

- We should have support to identify our perfect placement and receive information about our options, including, where possible, visits to those options. We will provide you with the information you need to make an informed choice about your placement.
- Carers should receive a full range of training, in areas including active participation, equality and diversity, child development, Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services and emotional health and well being. We will make sure that carers are trained and supervised to provide you with good quality care taking account of your individual needs. We will also recognise your ethnic and cultural needs.

Appendix 5

The Local Authorities Role In Relation To Providers Who Have Repeated Missing From Home Issues

- 1) Where providers have repeat missing from home issues they are required to notify both the placing and receiving authority. (See: *Statutory guidance on children who runaway and go missing from home or care DCSF 2009; Working Together To Safeguard Children HM Government, 2010*).
- 2) Lancashire has a list of preferred providers with whom children looked after are placed and who have been measured against agreed criteria including Ofsted judgements.
- 3) Whilst Children's Care Homes are inspected and judged by Ofsted the placing LA should look at the 'vulnerability' of young people when placing a child or young person and not just number of *missing* episodes – strategy and planning meetings should be held promote joint working with agencies.
- 4) The provider must ensure that they are familiar with the missing from home, running away protocol within their own local authority and with the missing from home, running away protocols of each local authority commissioning services from them (*Children Act 1989, Guidance Regulations, Volume 5*).
- 5) When the child or young person is frequently missing from care a meeting should be convened to discuss the level of risk. Where the child or young person is a child looked after, the registered manager in consultation with the placing local authority convenes the multi-agency risk management meeting. (*Children Act 1989, Guidance Regulations, Volume 5; Children's Homes, Sections 2.79, 2.83 pg. 22*). Any action or changes to the child's plan will be discussed at the meeting.
- 6) All Lancashire children and young people and young people missing from care, who are found, must be offered an interview by a social worker and/or police officer or where requested by the person of their choice. Where appropriate, the use of an advocate will also be considered
- 7) In all cases where frequently missing children and young people are found a safe and well check is conducted by the police when the child is returned to their home, with the exception of when the child/young person is returned to a Children's Care Home in which case the safe and well check will be conducted by the Children's Care Home staff.

Appendix 6

Young people's response to the consultation

Young people who go missing is a **big** worry to people who work with and care for children and young people in Lancashire.

So these people have got together to think about how they can best find, support and care for children and young people who go missing. Some of those people are the; police, children's social care and health.

These people are hoping that by working together that they will; reduce the number of children and young people who go missing, reduce the risk of harm to those who do go missing, and provide missing children and young people and their families with support and guidance.

Research has shown that children are more likely to go missing than adults. This may place them in risky situations and increasing their vulnerability to drugs, alcohol, homelessness, crime, and sexual exploitation. (*Missing Children and Adults – A cross government strategy*, Home Office, 2011).

Everyone in Lancashire working with children, young people and families will:

- be trained and know about safeguarding procedures (these are the ways that we all try to make sure children and young people are safe);
- agree to and follow the same ways of working and trying to find missing children and young people;
- identify and find children who go missing and link with the other services most likely to come into contact with them so everyone can work together
- use the same ways of reporting missing children to the police, children's social care and the children missing from education team;
- raise awareness of children who are missing with all professionals and others who work with children, young people, families and the general public;
- try to protect and prevent vulnerable children from going missing;
- try to help reduce the same children and young people running away again;

The main reasons for running away include; problems at home – ranging from arguments with parents and carers to long term abuse or maltreatment and family break-up; mental health problems; bullying, including racism and racial harassment, homophobia; teenage pregnancy; wanting to be near friends or family; feeling 'out of place'; grooming for sexual exploitation (evidence indicates that 90% of children subject to sexual exploitation go missing at some point); child trafficking - young people may go missing when they are being trafficked; forced Marriage - some young people may run away because they are at risk of or in a forced marriage.

Everyone has agreed what they mean by 'missing'.

- Children or young people up to the age of 18 (and some children up to the age of 19 if looked after or up to 25 if they are the responsibility of the local authority)
- children or young people, who have run away from their home or care placement, have been forced to leave, or whose whereabouts is unknown
- If a person is simply not where they should be this does not necessarily mean they are missing. People must check first if they believe that the child/ young person is at a known address or location that before they report to the Police, unless they would be in danger by checking and need police support.
- The term "absconder" is used when a child or young person is absent from their placement without permission and who is subject to an order resulting from the criminal justice process such as curfews, tagging etc. Children under the age 16 who have absconded from care will also be treated as missing persons. For children over the age of 16 in the absence of aggravating factors suggesting they are at risk or acting of character, will be treated as a absconders rather than missing from persons.
- The term 'children missing education' means anyone who should be in school, by law, who is not registered at a school, not placed in any other type of education by a local authority, and/ or who is not receiving a suitable education at home

Everyone has agreed that they need to do.

- Be aware that children and young people with disabilities need more support as they are often more vulnerable
- Make sure that children and young people wishes and feelings are taken into account

What happens?

A STORM log is opened by the police on all occasions when a child is reported to them as missing. The following questions will be asked of informants when reporting and are actions that should be considered prior to making the report:

- Have you searched the home address?
- Have you attempted to contact the MFH?
- Have you contacted family and associates?
- Have you checked known addresses and places frequented?
- Have you checked social network sites?
- Have you contacted local hospitals?

A SLEUTH report log is opened and a report is created for all missing children. The submission of the report triggers the Police National Computer (PNC) circulation. The police notify the relevant Children's Services single point of contact via an automated email within 24 hours.

Details of friends, people the missing child hangs out with, behaviours, clothing, risk factors and places they hang out are all crucial elements in a police investigation. Information on police systems only paints part of the picture for officers conducting an investigation. Information should be maintained and sought out at the time of reporting, allowing officers the best possible chance of protecting and locating children

Appendix 7

Useful Information & Websites

Procedures and Statutory Guidance

The following websites, guidance and documentation provide information that assists continued improvement, shared understanding and working together.

Lancashire safeguarding procedures

<http://panlancashirescb.proceduresonline.com/index.htm>

Joint protocol: Children and young people who run away or go missing from home or care

This protocol is important for safeguarding of children and families across Lancashire and has enabled the development of robust responses to running away.

Lancashire	0845 053 0000
Blackpool	01253 477600
Blackburn with Darwen	01254 587547

Children Missing Education

Information about children missing education can be found on the Lancashire County Council Web pages

http://www3.lancashire.gov.uk/corporate/atoz/a_to_z/service.asp?u_id=2056&tab=1

Further guidance for can be found in the safeguarding procedures pages for children and families who go missing (section 5.13).

National Guidance/Strategy/Reports

Missing Children And Adults – a cross government strategy (2012)

(<http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/publications/police/missing-persons-strategy>)

Running away – Young people's views on running way from care. Reported by the Children's Rights Director for England (Ofsted 2012)

<http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/running-away-2012>

Report from the joint enquiry into children who go missing from care (DfE 2012)

<https://www.education.gov.uk/publications/standard/EarlyYearseducationandchildcare/Page1/APPG-INQUIRY>

Children's Homes: National minimum Standards (DfE, 2011)

<https://www.education.gov.uk/publications/standard/Lookedafterchildren/Page1/DFE-00030-2011>

Out of school Out of mind, Local Government Ombudsman September (2011)

(<http://www.lgo.org.uk/publications/advice-and-guidance>)

Safeguarding children who may have been trafficked, HM, (2011)

(<https://www.education.gov.uk/publications/standard/publicationDetail/Page1/DFE-00084-2011>)

Runaways Charter. A clear code for agencies with a duty to protect children who run away or go missing from home and care (2011) <http://makerunawayssafe.org.uk/>

Changes to Working Together to Safeguard Children (2010)
(<http://www.education.gov.uk/childrenandyoungpeople/strategy/laupdates/a0071041/changes-to-working-together-to-safeguard-children-statutory-guidance-2010>)

Children missing from education, Ofsted report summary – August (2010)
(<http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/children-missing-education>)

Working together to Safeguard Children A guide to inter agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children (2010)
(<https://www.education.gov.uk/publications/standard/Integratedworking/Page1/DCSF-00305-2010>)

Safeguarding Children and Young People from Sexual Exploitation: Supplementary guidance to Working Together to Safeguard Children (2009)
(<https://www.education.gov.uk/publications/standard/publicationDetail/Page1/DCSF-00689-2009>)

Statutory guidance on children who run away and go missing from home or care, (DCfS, July 2009)
(<https://www.education.gov.uk/publications/standard/publicationDetail/Page1/DCSF-00670-2009>)

Revised statutory guidance for local authorities in England to identify children not receiving a suitable education (2009)
(<https://www.education.gov.uk/publications/standard/publicationDetail/Page1/STATUTORY-LA-GUIDE>)

National Websites

Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre (CEOP) - <http://ceop.police.uk/>

Department for Education Publications - <https://www.education.gov.uk/publications/>

Missingkids - <http://www.missingkids.co.uk/>

Missing People - <https://www.missingpeople.org.uk/>

Missing persons - <http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/travel-and-living-abroad/when-things-go-wrong/missing>

Thinkuknow - <http://www.thinkuknow.co.uk/>